



Independent national experts network in the area of adult education/adult skills

Full Country Report – United Kingdom

Written by Mark Ravenhall
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1.0 COUNTRY OVERVIEW

1.1 Key statistical indicators

1.1.1 Employment

Table 1.1 Employment rate of adults aged 20-64 and progress against EU2020 targets and EU average

	Low qualified adults (ISCED levels 0-2)	All levels
EU 2020 target	-	75% of the 20-64 year-olds to be employed
National 2020 targets	-	"No UK target in NRP" [source: http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/pdf/targets_en.pdf]
EU average 2015	52.6	70
2015	59.7	76.9
2014	58.8	76.2
2013	56.8	74.8
2012	56.4	74.1
2011	55.6	73.5
2010	55.5	73.5

Source: Employment rates by age and educational attainment level (%) Eurostat code *lfsa_ergaed*, last updated 13 July 2016.

Explanatory note: This table compares the employment rates of those with low qualifications (ISCED levels 0-2) to the average employment rate of the population (ISCED all levels) aged 20 to 64 in a given Member State over the period 2010-2015. This table contains some information to compare this national data to the EU average. It also compares national data to targets for the EU as a whole as well as by the given Member State.

As Table 1.1 indicates, the UK employment rate was 76.9% in 2015 above the EU2020 target. However, the current rate (published by UK government and accurate as of 14 September 2016) is 74.5%; above the EU average, but below the EU2020 target. The latest 'records' are about two percentage points below those before the economic crisis of 2008/9. However, in real terms there has been some progress. The reason is that what is meant by 'working age' changed in 2010 when women's state pension age started being raised towards 65 – a process that will not be complete until 2018 – after which pension ages will rise for both men and women. Before the recession, employment rates were calculated on the state pension age that was current at the time – 60 for women and 65 for men. Since 2010, figures have been published on the basis that retirement is at 65 – so is automatically lowered because women's state pension age is not 65 yet. Learning and Work Institute estimates that 'around 1 percentage point of the recent employment

and inactivity rate rise is due to state pension reform, not any other part of welfare reform'.¹

A total of 81,000 were counted as in employment while on 'government employment and training programmes', as the UK Office for National Statistics continues to count Work Programme (and other unemployed training programme) participants as 'in employment' by default. Youth unemployment is showing a quarterly fall. There are still 621,000 unemployed young people, and 412,000 (5.7% of the youth population) who are unemployed and not in full-time education. The proportion of unemployed young people (not counting students) who are not claiming Jobseeker's Allowance and therefore are not receiving official help with their job search is now 59.5% and has risen by more than 20 percentage points since October 2012. There are 1.6m people who have been on out-of-work benefits for more than 5 years. Within these headlines figures, certain groups are more likely not to be in work than others. For example, increasing employment for people with health problems and disabilities. 90% of Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) claimants are not currently accessing employment support so are disadvantaged in accessing work. Employment rates for disabled people are currently 33 percentage points lower than those for non-disabled people.²

As the demand for high-skilled jobs increases, the employment rate for low-skilled adults (levels 0-2 EQF) (source: Table 1.1) continues to remain at below 60%. Evidence from the OECD Survey of Adult Skills (2013) shows that the UK is declining in performance in literacy, numeracy and intermediate skills and is positioned at 19th out of 34 countries for low skills.

However, there are some regional disparities. For the 3 months ending July 2016, the highest employment rate in the UK was in the South East of England (78.3%) and the lowest was in Northern Ireland (69.4%), which is the only other area with an employment rate currently below the EU 2015 average (70%). However, the North East of England has an employment rate only just above the EU average at 70.9% (July 2016). The UK Office for National Statistics reports: 'the pattern for all regions at the moment suggests either flat or gently increasing employment rates'.³ The employment rate for women across the UK is 69.8%,⁴ about ten percentage points less than for men, which reflects the situation noted in the Europe 2020 indicators.⁵ This means that the UK is not reaching the Europe 2020 target for 'men and women aged 20-64' (emphasis added).

¹ Learning and Work Institute. (2014). *Are employment / inactivity rates near records?* Available at: <http://www.learningandwork.org.uk/our-thinking/blog/are-employment-inactivity-rates-near-records-paul-bivand-looks-figures-little-more> [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

² Learning and Work Institute. (2017). *Full Employment*. Available at: <http://www.learningandwork.org.uk/full-employment> [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

³ Office for National Statistics (2016) *Regional Labour Market Statistics in the UK: September 2016*. Available at: <http://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/bulletins/regional-labour-market/sep2016> [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

⁴ Office for National Statistics (2016) *UK Labour Market: September 2016*. Available at: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/bulletins/uk-labour-market/september2016#employment> [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

⁵ Eurostat. (2017). *Europe 2020 Indicators—employment*. Available at: http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Europe_2020_indicators_-_employment [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

Although younger people are at a higher risk of unemployment (as noted in the Europe 2020 indicators), in the UK there is a dynamic relationship between learning and work in this age group. Partly due to financing of full-time further and higher education (income-contingent loans and the removal of bursaries/living allowances in England), of the 3.94 million employed people aged 16 to 24, 917,000 (23%) were full-time students with part-time jobs.⁶

Despite the UK's employment rates being relatively high by international standards, 4.5 million people are on out-of-work benefits and disjointed back-to-work and in-work support, which has resulted in a significant number of people being stuck in a 'low pay, no pay' cycle. In addition, 5 million people in work are paid below the Living Wage, resulting in more people experiencing in-work poverty, which has led to low productivity, limited career opportunities, inadequate living standards, and a lack of business prosperity.

1.1.2 Participation in lifelong learning (LLL)

Table 1.2 Lifelong learning participation rates of adults aged 25-64 and progress against EU2020 target and EU average

	Low qualified adults (levels 0-2)	All levels
EU 2020 target	-	15% of adults should participate in lifelong learning (LLL)
National 2020 targets	-	-
EU average 2015	4.3	10.7
2015	6.8	15.7
2014	7.7	16.3
2013	7.9	16.6
2012	7.8	16.3
2011	7.6	16.3
2010	9.9	20.1

Source: Participation rate in education and training by age, Eurostat trng_lfse_01, last updated 26 April 2016.

Explanatory note: This table compares the participation rate in lifelong learning of adults aged 25-64 for those with low qualification levels (ISCED levels 0-2) and the average population over the period 2010-2015. This table contains some information to compare this national data to the EU average. It also compares national data to targets for the EU as a whole as well as by the given Member State.

In 2015, Learning and Work Institute surveyed 5,000 adults (aged 17 and over across the UK) on participation in formal, non-formal and informal learning, whether publicly funded or not. It found 22% were currently learning, with around two in five adults (41%) having

⁶ Office for National Statistics (2016) *UK Labour Market: September 2016. (Section 15)*. Available at: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/bulletins/uklabourmarket/september2016#young-people-in-the-labour-market> [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

taken part in some form of learning in the previous three years (Source Table 1.2). A third of adults (33%) had not participated in learning since leaving full-time education, a slight decrease from 35% in 2014. As with the figures above, participation in the UK is strongly linked to prior educational attainment. The proportion of unemployed adults who were taking part in learning had decreased since 2014, falling from 41% to the previous level of 35% found in 2013.

Furthermore, the proportion of unemployed adults who had not taken part in learning since leaving full-time education had increased from 32% to 41%. However, the proportion of adults 'not seeking work' who were taking part in learning had risen from 21% to 28%, reversing the decline over 2014. Among those in employment, inequalities also exist in the participation rates of those working in different occupations. Sixty-six percent of adults in professional occupations and 62% of those in service had taken part in learning in the previous three years, compared with just over a third of those in elementary occupations or process, plant and machine operatives (34% and 35% respectively). Since 2014, the participation of those in skilled trade occupations had fallen from 43% to 33%, while the proportion of managers, directors and senior officials had increased from 41% to 50%.⁷

To some extent, participation in learning becomes a 'virtuous circle' in that those in learning are most likely to say they will participate in learning again in the future. This is one of the key questions in the Learning and Work Institute surveys and those coordinated by Eurostat. The L&W 2015 survey found that when asked about their intentions to take up learning in the next three years, 41% of adults say that they are likely to do so, and 56% say that they are unlikely to learn. The report concludes, 'As in previous years, current participation in learning is a key indicator of future intentions to learn. In the 2014 survey, 80% of current learners say that they are likely to take up learning in the next three years, compared with just 13% of those who have done no learning since leaving full-time education.'⁸

According to the Eurostat data, and its method of collection, overall participation in learning in the UK has been declining since 2006. This overall decline is reflected in the participation in learning of low-qualified adults. Based on the 2011 UK Census, 22% of the population had 'no qualifications', which is broadly consistent with level 0-2 EQF.⁹ If this remains the case, it would be desirable to see this level of participation for this cohort. But as this data includes the over-65 age group (where the incidence of no qualifications is 53%), and the lowest age group (16-24) is 11%, the 2021 census could show a narrowing of this gap.

⁷ Learning and Work Institute. (2015). *NIACE Adult Participation in Learning Survey: headline findings*. Available at: http://www.learningandwork.org.uk/sites/niace_en/files/resources/2015%20Adult%20Participation%20in%20Learning%20-%20Headline%20Findings.pdf [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

⁸ Learning and Work Institute. (2014). *NIACE Adult Participation in Learning Survey: headline findings*. Available at: http://www.learningandwork.org.uk/sites/niace_en/files/resources/2014%20Adult%20Participation%20in%20Learning%20Survey.pdf [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

⁹ The National Archive. (2014). Highest levels of qualification across England and Wales infographic. Available at: <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20160105160709/http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/census/2011-census-analysis/local-area-analysis-of-qualifications-across-england-and-wales/info-highest-qualifications.html> [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

The most recent data for England (as reported in Skills Funding Agency Statistical First Release published 23 June 2016, and updated 28 September 2016 for vocational qualifications)¹⁰ shows that the total number of adult learners participating in government-funded further education in 2014/15 was 2,613,700, a decrease of 10.8% on 2013/14. The main reason for the reduction in participation is funding cuts to learning providers.

In Wales, there were 195,700 learners (28% of these were 16-19) at Further Education (FE) Institutions, Community Learning or Work-based Learning providers during 2014/15, a reduction of 12% on 2013/14. The total full-time learner numbers in changed little but part-time numbers declined by 16%. Local authority-led community learning fell by 31%. Total work-based learner numbers fell by 12% but the number of higher apprentices rose by 44%. The main reason for these changes was funding cut for providers.

In Scotland, the overall number of total FE college students has fallen between 2009-10 and 2014-15, but at the same time the number of full-time students has increased. The proportion of full-time students increased from 22.1% in 2009-10 to 34.9% in 2014-15. According to a 2016 report of the Scottish Funding Council, 'In response to the economic downturn, during this time, colleges were asked to prioritise more substantive courses designed to improve student's employment prospects, and reduce enrolments on leisure programmes or very short programmes of study (less than 10 hours in length) unlikely to lead to employment or further study, which explains the changing student population numbers.'¹¹

In Wales, between 2004/05 and 2013/14, part-time adult learners had reduced by 46%. Colleges Wales reports that in 2014 there were around 90,000 fewer adults in part-time learning than there were ten years ago in colleges of further education.¹²

The decline in part-time participation needs further study in order for us to ascertain whether it is an unintended outcome of policy or founded on a belief that full-time is more effective in delivering outcomes. Either way, on the face of it, the decline in part-time provision would seem to indicate fewer opportunities for adults whose participation is influenced by other factors: childcare, low-paid work, disabilities, elder care etc. Pan-European research indicates that participation in learning is strongly linked to the availability of learning opportunities that governments fund in whole or in part, and in general to the amount of government investment in learning¹³. Although this is true of the UK, not enough research has been done on the rise of so-called 'self-organised' activities

¹⁰ UK Government (2016) *Statistical First release: Further Education and Skills*. Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/556015/SFR_commentary_June_2016_final_JuneOfqual_update.pdf [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

¹¹ Scottish Funding Council. (2016). *Learning for all: measures of success*. Available at: http://www.sfc.ac.uk/web/FILES/Statistical_publications_SFCST062016_LearningforAll/SFCST062016_Learning_for_All.pdf [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

¹² Colleges Wales. (2015), *Further Education Funding; Briefing Paper*. Available at: <http://www.collegeswales.ac.uk/File/199/en-GB> [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

¹³ European Commission, Directorate General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion (2015). *An in-depth analysis of adult learning policies and their effectiveness in Europe*

through organisations such as the University of the Third Age (U3A),¹⁴ which has 383,795 members across 999 U3As (a 37.5% increase in membership since 2008).¹⁵

1.1.3 Attainment levels

Table 1.3 Share of low-qualified adults (ISCED 0-2)

EU average 2015	23.5
2015	20.3
2014	20.8
2013	21.7
2012	22.1
2011	23.6
2010	23.9

Source: Population by educational attainment level, age (%) – main indicators, Eurostat edat_ifse_03, last updated 18 April 2016.

Explanatory note: This table compares the percentage of the population with low qualifications (ISCED levels 0-2) over the period 2010 to 2015.

According to Table 1.3, UK attainment rates of low-skilled qualifications (levels 0-2 EQF) (25-64 years) continue to improve at a slow pace. This is below the respective EU-28 averages. In recent years there has been a strong policy focus on the achievement of a 'full level 2' (EQF3) and 'full level 3' (EQF 4) qualifications. This is largely based on analysis of benefits accrued to society (for a UK full level 2) and individuals/employers (for a full UK level 3). Adult attainment data for England shows the proportion of men and women qualified to each of Level 2, 3 and 4 have risen each year between 2008 and 2014: from 73.2% in 2008 to 81.0% in 2014 qualified to at least Level 2; from 54.3% in 2008 to 62.6% in 2014 qualified to at least Level 3; from 34.2% in 2008 to 41.0% in 2014 qualified to at least Level 4.

One of the reasons that more progress has not been made could be linked to the decline in adult participation. For example, the number of adult learners participating in below Level 2 courses (excluding English and Maths) declined sharply in 2014/15 to 597,300 (a decrease of 21.4% from 2013/14), while the number participating in English and Maths fell by 4.9% between 2013/14 and 2014/15 to 905,600. The total number of adult learners achieving a government-funded further education qualification was 1,983,200 in 2014/15, a decrease of 12.4% on 2013/14.¹⁶

¹⁴ Third Age Trust. (2015). *What is U3A?* Available at: <http://www.u3a.org.uk> [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

¹⁵ Beckett, F. (2014) *The U3A Story*. Available at: <https://www.u3a.org.uk/about/history>

¹⁶ UK Government (2016) *Statistical First release: Further Education and Skills*. Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/556015/SFR_commentary_June_2016_final_JuneOfqual_update.pdf [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

1.2 Progress against Country Specific Recommendations (CSRs) and National Reform Programme

In relation to the 2016 CSR 3 ('Address skills mismatches and provide for skills progression, including by strengthening the quality of apprenticeships'), UK skills mismatches lead to current job vacancies remaining unfilled. The Office for National Statistics reports that in the three months from September to December 2015, 68.7% of those in employment had a level of education close to the average of their job (that is they were skill matched). The remaining 31.3% were therefore either under- or over-educated for their role. While it is possible to see an upward trend, this does not take into account the cohort effect of (1) those entering the UK labour market with higher average levels of qualifications than previously seen and (2) those leaving the labour market – through retirement with the lowest average level of qualification.¹⁷ The strengthening of Apprenticeship programmes (and their quality through revised frameworks) is partly to address this issue. Such an approach has been linked at a regional and sub-national level through planning for all levels of apprenticeships in growth sectors and sub-sectors. An example of this is the Midlands Engine for Growth initiative in England, and particularly the planning for High Speed Rail by 2022-4.¹⁸

¹⁷ Office for National Statistics. (2015). *Analysis of the UK Labour Market 2015*. Available at: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/articles/analysisoftheuklabourmarketestimatesofskillsmismatchusingmeasuresofoverandundereducation/2015> [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

¹⁸ UK Government. (2016). *The Midlands Engine for Growth: prospectus*. Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/482247/midlands-engine-for-growth.pdf [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

2.0 BRIEF OVERVIEW OF ADULT LEARNING SYSTEM

For the most part¹⁹, adult learning in the UK is a devolved responsibility of administrations (and government agencies) in England, Scotland, Northern Ireland, and Wales. Within the largest of these, England, there have been further discussions about the devolution of skills decision-making on funding to English regions and/or cities. In many areas, devolution of skills planning agreements is likely to be enacted in 2017/18 as a partnership between local authorities, business representatives, learning providers, and executive agencies of central government. This is part of a much wider debate in the UK about the most effective spatial level for policy implementation. How spatial planning intersects with industry sector planning is a key part of the system in the UK. Again, this is most apparent in devolved policy contexts.

Given the devolved context of adult learning in the UK, each section includes separate reference to England, Northern Ireland, Scotland, and Wales.

2.1 Main features and a concise summary of historic development

There is no single adult learning system in the UK. Despite political consensus that the priorities are around having a skilled and productive workforce, high level of employment, progression at work, as well as opportunities for enrichment and involvement in civic, social and community life, there are increasingly divergent policy approaches. Although England has experimented with regionalisation, it is only recently that steps have been taken to devolved adult learning policy and funding. Successive governments in England have designed (and adjusted) a social market system characterised by high levels of institutional autonomy regulated by centralised funding systems, regulation and inspection.

The less populous countries (Northern Ireland, Scotland, and Wales) have taken different approaches to England, due to political leadership as well as population size. One characteristic of all four countries, however, is the amount of policy change that affects adult learning. Frequent 'machinery of government' changes have led to the responsibility for adult learning being changed regularly. Similarly, because adult learning is not a high-level ministerial post, ministers change regularly and policy leadership has been diminished by staffing reductions to the UK Civil Service.

In recent years, there have been moves, partly due to economic austerity, to see adult learning as part of a package of measures to address generic outcomes. Outcome-based 'programmes for government' in Northern Ireland, Scotland, and Wales, have led to thinking about similar measures in the English cities and Combined Authorities (coalitions of local government areas or municipalities). For example, an area may suffer from low local productivity despite relatively high skill level. The answer is not just to raise skills, but to combine this with greater investment in innovation, labour market information, and

¹⁹ Some aspects of policy to support for unemployed people is made on a UK-wide or Great Britain basis (i.e. England, Scotland, and Wales).

occupational health. In the light of 'Brexit', and uncertainties around the ability to source skilled labour from within the European Union, this has led to a greater focus in the past year on how to create learning pathways from low-skilled to high-skilled jobs in future.

Table 2.1 shows the latest figures (October 2017) from Eurostat in terms of participation in formal education and training. The figures offer a breakdown by educational level and age group. It is difficult to see how these data are useful in the UK policy context. This is due to its devolved nature; the absence of non-formal learning; the use of 20 as the starting point (when most UK policy is designed around 14-14, 16-18, 19-23, 24+). It is also difficult from the data source to make an accurate assessment on the timeliness and accuracy of these data.

Table 2.1 Number of participants in formal education and training by level of education and age (2015)

	Age 20-24	Age 25+	Total
Level of education (i.e. basic, vocational, higher)	No data available	No data available	No data available
Primary	0	0	0
Lower secondary	24,728	57,903	82,631
Upper secondary	317,729	489,835	807,564
Post-secondary non-tertiary education	No data available	No data available	No data available
Short-cycle tertiary education	64,465	164,287	228,752
Bachelor's or equivalent level	811,389	277,841	1,089,230
Master's or equivalent level	142,784	278,091	420,875
Doctoral or equivalent level	21,493	91,286	112,779

Source: Eurostat, Eurostat database table "Pupils and students enrolled by education level, sex and age (educ_uoe_enra02)", accessed 2017.08.21

2.2 Provision

The main types of adult learning provision in the UK are outlined below.

2.2.1 *Helps adults improve their Basic Skills*

The area of adult basic skills remains a major governmental priority across the UK. The terminology for this provision is different across the UK. For example, in England the term 'English and maths' is used in policy and statistical documents. English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) is included within this category. In other parts of the UK, the

term Essential Skills is more commonly used. Despite widespread recognition of the importance of digital competences across the UK, this inclusion of digital skills as a 'skill for life' is the exception rather than the rule. But wherever they are placed, digital skills are seen as a major issue across the whole of the UK. The UK Digital Strategy²⁰ published on 1 March 2017 highlight the UK's digital divide. For example, in Wales 38% of people lack basic digital skills; in Scotland that figure is 19%, in London 16%. This is seen as one of the reasons behind differential growth and productivity rates within the UK.²¹

Most adult learning providers across the UK include an approach to basic / essential / digital skills within their wider curriculum offer, even if not linked to their specialism. However, there are also some specialist providers that focus on literacy and numeracy for specific target groups (such as migrants). There is no consistent approach to this across the UK, and the work is often led by small, civil society organisations.

In England, all adults have a legal entitlement to government-funded English and Maths (numeracy) courses up to and including Level 2 (QCF). For ESOL students, the picture is different: unemployed students are fully funded; all other categories are co-funded (employers or individuals have to make a contribution to fees). In addition, a limited number of 'stepping stone', Functional Skills qualifications are supported, which enable progression to full qualifications.²² The Department for Education is consulting on the future of functional skills between 12 September and 7 November 2017. Despite the focus on qualifications as output of the adult learning system, there is also an interest in non-formal provision that leads to improved basic skills outcomes such as enhanced competences or capabilities. One such approach is the Citizens' Curriculum.²³ The Government has continued to support piloting of the Citizens' Curriculum approach (based on learner choice and the attainment of capabilities) as a means of delivering what employers and learners want. The recent reform of the Adult Education Budget in England, and the move towards outcomes-based funding, has meant a renewed interest in how providers assure quality in non-accredited learning. The revival of interest in approaches like RARPA (Recognising And Rewarding Progress and Achievement), has continued with information on the approach linked to government funding guidance.²⁴

Northern Ireland benefits from a more centralised approach to Essential Skills. It is written into the lead strategy Further Education Means Success (2016). Policy Commitment 7 – Improving Literacy, Numeracy and Information and Communication Technology (ICT) states, 'Colleges will raise the level of literacy, numeracy and ICT competence in Northern

²⁰ Gov.UK. (2017). *UK Digital Strategy*. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-digital-strategy> [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

²¹ Learning and Work Institute. (2017). *Action to Tackle Britain's Digital Divide*. Available at: <http://www.learningandwork.org.uk/2017/03/01/action-tackle-britains-digital-skills-divide/> [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

²² Skills Funding Agency. (2016). *Adult Education Budget: 2016-17*. Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/496195/Adult_Education_Budget_changing_context_and_arrangements_for_2016_to_2017.pdf [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

²³ Learning and Work Institute. (2017). *Citizens' Curriculum Programme*. Available at: <http://www.learningandwork.org.uk/our-work/promoting-learning-and-skills/ten-policies-for-ten-people/citizens-curriculum-programme/> [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

²⁴ Learning and Work Institute. (2017). *RARPA Guidance and Case Studies*. Available at: <http://www.learningandwork.org.uk/resource/updated-rarpa-guidance-and-case-studies/> [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

Ireland by adopting the new qualifications that are being developed through the refreshed Essential Skills strategy and the reviews of GCSEs in English and mathematics in Northern Ireland.' Provision is aimed at: reading, writing, speaking and listening; working with numbers; and, use of computers and technology. Essential Skills courses are free, via colleges, at workplaces or community organisations. Classes are designed to be 'small and informal' with crèche facilities available. ESOL courses are also available as is support to take the 'Life in the UK' (British Citizenship) test.²⁵ After extensive international research, linked to analysis of the OECD Skills Survey (2013), new standards were implemented from September 2016. The smaller number of standards is contextualised for each of three contexts: Society and Citizenship – personal and community; Economy – workplace and employment; and Individual – education and training.²⁶

The focus on Essential Skills in Scotland was prioritised by the Scottish Government in Skills for Scotland: A Lifelong Skills Strategy (2007) and reinforced in its refreshed Skills Strategy (2010). The definition of Essential Skills, included: personal and learning skills that enable individuals to become effective lifelong learners; literacy and numeracy; the five core skills of communication, numeracy, problem solving, information technology and working with others; employability skills that prepare individuals for employment rather than for a specific occupation; and, vocational skills that are specific to a particular occupation or sector, as well as 'softer' interpersonal skills valued by employers. The Scottish Qualifications Authority has developed (in 2016), three new Essential Skills Units to allow learners to gain recognition for essential skills developed during their learning.²⁷

In Wales, the introduction of Essential Skills Wales (ESW) in September 2010 brought clarity and consistency to Basic and Key Skills qualifications. These standards and the associated qualifications provided a single ladder of progression from Entry Level 1 to Level 4 in the skills of Communication, Application of Number and Information and Communication Technology (ICT). These standards were developed by converging and drawing on best practice from the standards for Adult Literacy, Adult Numeracy and Adult ICT, and the standards for Key Skills Communication, Application of Number and ICT. The wider key skills (Working with Others, Improving Own Learning and Performance and Problem Solving) were a set of thinking, organisational and people skills aimed at equipping individuals for further learning and for work and adult life. New stand-alone Essential Employability Skills (EES) have been developed to replace the wider key skills. In the spirit of the Review of Qualifications (2012), one suite of Essential Skills qualifications for Wales has been developed to include Essential Skills for Work and Life.

²⁵ NI Direct. (2017). *Essential Skills*. Available at: <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/essential-skills> [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

²⁶ Department for the Economy. (2017). *Essential Skills: Standards and Curriculum*. Available at: <https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/economy/Essential%20Skills%20Interactive%20PDF%20%28revised%29.pdf> [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

²⁷ SQA. (2017) *Essential Skills*. Available at: <http://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/75022.html> [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

The aim is to simplify and clarify the qualification offer to ensure the relevance and value of this learning and these qualifications for candidates.²⁸

2.2.2 *Helps adults achieve a Recognised Qualification*

Across the UK, the primary end goal of adult learning is gaining a recognised qualification; this drives funding and planning systems. Such systems differ across the four nations, as do what is deemed a 'recognised qualification.' For many years, there are several national qualifications frameworks in operation, which to varying degrees incorporate non-formal qualifications or credits towards them. Increasingly qualifications are employer-driven and are seen as needing to respond to the fast-changing world of industrial sectors such as 'Creative and Digital'. Similarly, entrance requirements and further study pathways are outlined in the descriptions of qualifications.²⁹

Further education ('classroom-based') courses form the majority of provision in the UK outside of Apprenticeships. Increasingly the focus of such learning programmes has been Vocational Education and Training (VET), with the policy aim of ensuring that outcomes are relevant to modern workplace practices as well as those industrial sectors likely to grow. 'Employability' programmes are increasingly integrated into this provision, ensuring new or returning entrants to the labour market have the 'soft' skills to obtain and retain work. Recently, the role of non-formal learning in delivering useful outcomes for learners has been recognised. In the UK as a whole there has been a general move from policy that delivers 'outputs' (such as qualifications) to 'outcomes' (such as competences, attributes and wider social efficacy). Policy is increasingly designed to avoid the proposed impact that comes from achieving outcomes (using the logic chain model of planning, which distinguishes between input, outputs and outcomes, and impacts). To this end, there has been a movement towards designing social metrics that measure the impact of learning interventions. Some of this is based on cost-benefit analysis.

There are 334 FE colleges in the UK of which 288 are in England. Of these, most are general further education colleges (189), with the remainder comprising sixth form colleges (73); land-based colleges (14) and specialist colleges (12). In addition, there are over 4,000 training providers, small and large. In recent years, there have been some consolidation of the provider base through mergers and federations. In England, a series of Area Based Reviews has provided detailed analysis of the rational for mergers on the basis of curriculum and financial viability. Sub-contracting of provision is common practice, sometimes outside of the immediate geographical area in which the contracting institution is situated. The approach to the delivery of qualifications is predominately a market-based approach, regulated by: 1) funding, financing and sub-contracting rules; 2) qualifications frameworks; and, 3) quality assurance and inspection. In other words, providers can

²⁸ Qualifications Wales. (2015). *Design Principles for the Essential Skills Wales. Suite of Qualifications*. Available at: <http://qualificationswales.org/media/1371/qwrd1088-final - esw suite design principles - june 2015 pdf2.pdf> [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

²⁹ UK NARIC (2016). *Vocational education and training in Europe – United Kingdom*. Cedefop ReferNew VET in Europe reports; 2016. P11.

respond to consumer demand for provision, but availability and cost to the consumer (employer or individual) will depend on the regulatory environment.

2.2.3 Helps adults develop other knowledge and skills, not for vocational purposes

Non-formal learning in the UK is often delivered by employers in the workplace, but this is not publicly funded. In terms of state-funded, or co-funded provision, 'community learning' is the term that is often used for non-formal learning that takes place at venues close to the learner ('in the community'). Approaches to community learning differ widely across the UK according to need and factors such as historical funding allocations, local culture, local infrastructure arrangements. Generally speaking, the public funding of community learning has been in decline for the last decade. However, in this period, self-organised or self-funded initiatives such as University of the Third Age has increased.

Across the UK, non-formal adult learning is delivered by a range of partners in local areas, either working together or in direct competition. Local authorities (local government) has traditionally led provision, but over the last two decades there had been increasing centralisation (through central government planning and funding agencies). More recently the emergence of regional planning, combined authorities and area-reviews has led to more locally-based planning of delivery based on local needs. Provider partnerships are encouraged between local authorities, further education colleges, university-based part-time continuing education (where it still exists), and the voluntary sector. The involvement of place-based or issue-based organisations (such as those focussing on health or integration of migrants) creates opportunities for funding across policy silos (such as health and education).

In the past year, community learning in England has been incorporated into the Adult Education Budget (which included basic skills and regulated qualification provision). Prior to that change, the budget line 'Community Learning' was 'ring-fenced' (or protected) so that it was used for non-formal learning. However, there was increasing pressure for providers of non-formal learning to show progression to formal (often vocational) provision as an aim (and outcome) of the course. The current Government definition of community learning is that it 'helps people of different ages and backgrounds gain a new skill, reconnect with learning, pursue an interest, learn how to support their children better, or prepare for progression to more formal courses / employment.'³⁰

Therefore, there has been pressure on providers to cease funding courses that did not lead to progression (or convert them into self-funding 'learning clubs'). Inevitably some of this provision moved into the private, unregulated sector, with tutors often becoming part of the UK's growing self-employed economy. An issue is that such provision is not captured in official statistics. This means that discussion of the decline of non-formal adult learning

³⁰Education and Skills Funding Agency. (2017) *Adult Education Budget: funding and performance management rules 2017-18*. Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/640223/Adult_education_budget_funding_and_performance_management_rules_version_2.pdf [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

is based on publicly funded provision only. In England, participation in publicly funded non-formal adult learning was just under 700,000 people. Of this, most provision was co-funded by participants.

The linkages between non-formal and formal learning in Wales have been highlighted in the recent policy document *Adult Learning in Wales*, published by the Welsh Government in 2017. This followed on two important reviews of 'Adult Community Learning' (ACL) by ARAD Research and Estyn (the inspectorate) in 2016. Both reviews highlighted concerns about the decline in part-time adult learning participation in recent years (see section 1.1.2 above),³¹ the lack of strategic coherence, but also highlighted what the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning terms the 'overlapping benefits' of adult learning. That is to say, that adult learning has an impact on health and well-being; employment and the labour market; and, civic, social and community life.³²

In Wales, the ARAD Review outlined the purpose of ACL as 'taking the first steps into learning; providing skills for life and embedding basic skills; providing skills for independent living and skills for work; contributing to personal development and wellbeing, and developing active citizenship'.³³ In Scotland, the Scottish Government adopts an even broader term: Community Learning and Development (CLD), which embraces a range of activities and policies including youth work, family and adult learning; adult literacy; English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL); community development and community capacity-building.

In Northern Ireland, over three-quarters of students work towards recognised qualifications and 97% of all funding is targeted at provision that leads to qualifications.³⁴ Publicly-funded non-formal adult has been in marked decline and some well-established institution such as the Workers' Educational Association (NI) have ceased to operate.

2.2.4 Facilitates Transition to the Labour Market for unemployed people or those at risk of unemployment (ALMPs)

The Work Programme was part of a suite of welfare-to-work reforms aimed at getting unemployed people into lasting work. It was a payment by results programme where a small number of prime providers (about 20) hold contracts with the government. Prime providers, who are allowed to subcontract work, are paid when individuals reach six months in work (or three months for those requiring more assistance). Additional payments are made at 104 weeks. As of December 2015, 1.48m people had completed their allotted time on the scheme. About 25% of these were still in work at the 104-week point. As an outcome-based policy, the focus of The Work Programme is not on skills outputs such as qualifications, but on the provision of hard/soft skills. In Autumn 2017 it

³¹ Between 2004/05 and 2013/14, part-time adult learners reduced by 46%. In 2014, there were around 90,000 fewer adults in part-time learning than there were ten years ago in colleges of further education. (Colleges Wales, 2016).

³² UNESCO-UIL (2016), *Third Global Report on Adult Education and Training*, UNESCO-UIL, Hamburg.

³³ Welsh Government (2016): *Review of adult community learning in Wales*; Welsh Government

³⁴ Irwin, T. (2017) *Further Education in Northern Ireland*, UCL—IOE Research Paper for Policy Learning Across the four countries of the UK, 2017.

will be superseded by the Work and Health Programme (announced in the UK Government's Spending Review of 2015). This programme will have a much smaller budget (which will also be devolved for Scotland) and focus on welfare claimants with health conditions and disabilities, and longer term unemployed.

In recent years there has been a lack of integration between skills planning for those in work, those seeking work, and those people who are economically inactive for a variety of reasons (including retired people). This is in the process of changing with better links planned between policy silos. One of the drivers for this is the proposed devolution of employment-related programmes funded by the UK-wide (ministry), Department of Work Pensions. As highlighted above, the current Work Programme³⁵ and related programmes such as Work Choice (in England and Wales)³⁶ will be replaced by the Health and Work Programme³⁷, a welfare-to-work programme to be launched in Autumn 2017. It will provide specialised support for those unemployed for over two years and, on a voluntary basis, to those with health conditions or disabilities. The Government expects that the majority of people referred to the Programme will have a disability. The Programme will be run by service providers awarded contracts by the Government. Alongside devolution of funding to Scotland and certain English city-regions (such as Greater Manchester), there will be a decline in funding and provision. However, it is envisaged that devolved approaches will lead to more innovative use of funding across policy silos, such as health, employment services and housing.

The UK government's main approach for training for those out of work is 'Sector Based Work Academies' (SBWA). This delivers usually up to six weeks of sector-based pre-employment training and work experience combined, followed by a guaranteed job interview. This is delivered in partnership between Jobcentre Plus (the public employment service) and local colleges and training providers, who hold devolved training budgets but are restricted in how they can use that funding.

There were approximately 50,000 people who started a SBWA programme in 2015/16.³⁸ This is an evidence-led approach – building on the extensive evidence that short, work-focused training with placements can deliver results. In 2016 DWP published an impact assessment and cost-benefit analysis which suggested that SBWAs have a significant and lasting impact on employment for participants compared with a control group, and that they more than pay for themselves based on eighteen months of monitoring impacts (with the assessment suggesting that benefits persist beyond this point).³⁹ Research from 2014 also suggested that customers had positive views of SBWAs – with 87% reporting positive experiences. However, that same research also suggests that SBWAs may be of variable

³⁵ <http://researchbriefings.parliament.uk/ResearchBriefing/Summary/SN06340> [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

³⁶ <https://www.gov.uk/work-choice> [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

³⁷ <http://researchbriefings.parliament.uk/ResearchBriefing/Summary/CBP-7845> [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

³⁸ Department for Work and Pensions. (2016). *Youth Offer Statistics*. Available at: (https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/550389/youth-offer-statistics-to-may-2016.pdf) [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

³⁹ Gov. UK. (2017). *An Introduction to Sector-Based Work Academies*. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sector-based-work-academies-employer-guide/sector-based-work-academies-employer-guide> [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

quality – with just one in five of those interviewed having completed the training, work experience and guaranteed interview.

2.2.5 Opens up Higher Education to adults

Higher Education (HE) in the UK is predominately delivered by universities. However, many providers of adult learning below level 4 (EQF 5) also provide HE as well as courses that ensure progression to HE. HE non-formal 'continuing education', as provided by universities, is in decline. The different approaches across the UK to funding HE (through grants or loans) also affects progression routes in those devolved contexts. The Access to Higher Education (HE) Diploma is a fast-track route designed for adults returning to education and lacking the qualifications needed to access HE.

In the UK, a significant amount of HE is delivered outside of the university sector. Access courses can be taken in a FE college and students stay at the college to take a degree. Typically, the Diploma is taken full-time over one year. There is a clear link between Access courses and the funding / availability of HE, which is funded differently in different parts of the UK. For example, in England where HE is financed through student loans, Access courses are financed in the same way for adults over the age of 24 years. However, after concerns were raised by stakeholders, loans for Access courses are 'written off' on completion of a degree qualification.⁴⁰

2.2.6 Enables adult employees to develop their work-related skills

Workplace learning is generally the responsibility of employers and businesses to develop their own staff. However, government continues to support trades unions to provide learning through the Union Learning Fund in all four UK nations. There are variations in delivery methods, but the central model is one of developing Union Learning Representatives (ULRs) who are trained to promote and broker learning for union members. Unionlearn is a UK-wide initiative led by the Trades Union Congress and is a government-supported training scheme for trades union members already in the workforce. Over the last twelve years (up to 2016) Unionlearn has trained 35,000 ULRs to act as workplace learning advocates and brokers. Every year more than 220,000 workers receive training and learning opportunities through their trade unions, in **England**.

2.2.7 Other (if any)

Without a doubt, Apprenticeships are the flagship employment-related provision in the UK. Although Apprenticeships are available for 16-19 year-olds, most apprentices are over the age of 19. Apprenticeships are defined slightly differently in each part of the UK but, generally speaking, they 'are paid jobs that incorporate on- and off-the job training leading to nationally recognised qualifications.' (Source: Statistical First Release, 23 June 2016.)⁴¹

⁴⁰ Gov. UK. (2017). *Advanced Learner Loan*. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/advanced-learner-loan/repayments> [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

⁴¹ Skills Funding Agency (2016) *Statistical First Release*. Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/552632/SFA_SFR_commentary_June_2016_final_ofqual_update_June_2016.pdf [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

In this instance, 'nationally recognised' means UK-wide reflecting the reality of portability of qualifications within the UK. Targets for apprenticeship starts are ambitious and closely linked to election manifesto commitments made by the current UK (Conservative) government. However, in other parts of the UK (with a different political complexion), similar targets have been set. For example, in Wales, government has set an ambitious target for 100,000 new apprenticeships by 2021. This new programme will involve an all-age in approach.

In **Scotland**, Skills Development Scotland (SDS) aims to provide 30,000 new Modern Apprenticeship opportunities a year by 2020. The Modern Apprenticeship (MA) programme is a central element of vocational education in Scotland. The programme continues to deliver against the Scottish Government's ambition to support economic growth. For those aged 25+, SDS offers MA opportunities in key and supporting sectors. Priority is given to higher level frameworks (Level 3 / SCQF 6 and above) and to those in STEM occupations.

An Apprenticeship (or a Modern Apprenticeship in **Scotland**) is a programme or work-based learning combined with paid employment. Apprenticeships are marketed as a 'real job' which allows the apprentice to 'earn while they learn'. Apprenticeships can take between one and five years to complete and cover 1,500 job roles. They operate from Level 2 to levels 6/7 (degree level). These are broadly equivalent to EQF levels 3 to 7. New apprenticeship standards developed by employers will replace all frameworks by 2020. This highlights the policy imperative of employer involvement in the development of skills provision. With greater power, it is envisaged, comes responsibility for maintaining quality and co-investment (through the Apprenticeship Levy).

In **England**, below Level 2, Traineeships have been established to form one progression route into Apprenticeships. A traineeship is an education and training programme with work experience that is focused on giving young people the skills and experience that employers are looking for. Traineeships are very flexible, and by working closely with an eligible training organisation, providers/employers can design a programme which suits their needs and those of the trainee. Traineeships can last up to a maximum of 6 months and include: work preparation training provided by the training organisation, English and maths support if required, provided by the training organisation and a high-quality work experience placement with an employer.

In addition to these basic elements, employers and training providers can add flexible additional content to meet the needs of the business and the local labour market. At the end of their traineeship, each young person will be guaranteed a job interview if a role becomes available or an exit interview together with 'meaningful written feedback' to help them secure an apprenticeship or employment with another employer.

In **Northern Ireland**, the Apprenticeships programme offers training, across a wide range of apprenticeships, to people aged 16 and over. Generating our Success: The Northern Ireland Strategy for Youth Training provides the future direction for a new youth training system, setting out the new policy commitments with an implementation plan to ensure delivery. It builds on the interim report of the Review of Youth Training published in November 2014 and is connected to the Securing our success: Northern Ireland Strategy on Apprenticeships.

In **Scotland**, there is clear evidence that completing a higher-level apprenticeship brings with it earning potential to rival that of some university degrees. Evidence from the UK Commission for Employment and Skills and others also shows there is growing demand for skilled workers at technical and professional level across a range of occupational areas ranging from care to engineering. Skills Development Scotland have noted the trend for vocational learning moving further down into schools, but notes the need to understand the challenges faced by teachers and others and the desire for a clear route map of the work-based learning system for professionals. 'Modern Apprenticeships' (MA) work towards an SQA-accredited qualification. These are mapped to the SCQ Framework, and focus on 'the industry standard, recognised by employers.'

Apprenticeships in **Wales** are promoted as 'a way to earn a wage and work alongside experienced staff to gain job-specific skills.' Anyone who is over 16, living in Wales and who is not in full-time education, can apply. An apprentice works towards a work-based qualification at least Level 2 from the Qualification and Credit Framework (QCF), (EQF Level 3). The Apprenticeship Programme is funded by the Welsh Government with support from the European Social Fund.

Traineeships have also been introduced for young people aged between 16 to 18 years old in Wales. The programme will give young people the skills needed to get a job or progress to further learning at a higher level, such as an apprenticeship or further education. Participation on the Traineeships programme is available at three distinct levels. This will ensure that individual learners get the support and encouragement needed to help them to progress.

3.0 ADULT LEARNING POLICIES

3.1 Context

There is no UK-wide Lifelong Learning Strategy or national policy framework for adult learning. However, adult learning is referred to in overarching UK-wide policy documents such as the annual UK Government budget,⁴² and the annual Spending Review. The 2016 and 2017 Budget refer to the concept of 'lifetime learning' (2016) or lifelong learning (2017) where individuals will be able to access loans from higher level study (EQF 4-7) within the current parliamentary cycle. It is likely that adult 'basic skills' will be part of the same approach. Apart from Apprenticeships, adult learning is barely mentioned elsewhere; once in relation to the devolution of the Adult Education Budget in 2018-19 to those areas of England that have an agreement with central government.

In May 2016 it was announced that the UK Government Office for Science would be undertaking a project to explore what changes in technology and work could mean for education and training across someone's lifetime. The project will also consider the role that science and technology can play in understanding this and providing solutions. The project will provide policy-makers with evidence on lifelong learning in a digital age. It will begin to develop an evidence base in the following areas: the level and mix of skills of the UK and what is likely to be needed over the next 10 to 20 years; the critical factors that influence learning across a lifetime; the value of informal learning; implications for different models of responsibility, and how accountability and innovation can be maintained.⁴³

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) is responsible for welfare, pensions and child maintenance policy. As the UK's biggest public service department, it administers the State Pension and a range of working age, disability and ill health benefits to over 22 million people. Currently employment policy is a reserved matter (i.e. kept within the jurisdiction of the UK Parliament). This includes approaches that include adult learning to obtain work. For example, the Work Programme was launched throughout Great Britain (England, Scotland, and Wales) in June 2011 as part of a number of welfare to work reforms aimed at getting unemployed people into sustained work. It uses private and public companies, called providers, to find work for claimants. This may include learning interventions alongside other support.

⁴² Gov. UK (2016). *Budget 2016: Executive Summary*. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/budget-2016-documents/budget-2016#executive-summary> [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

⁴³ Gov. UK. (2016) *Future of Skills and Lifelong Learning*. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/future-of-skills-and-lifelong-learning> [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

3.1.1 *Distribution of responsibilities regarding adult learning*

Adult learning in England is primarily the responsibility of the Department for Education, with the Department for Work and Pensions responsible for the public employment service (Jobcentre Plus) across the UK. The public employment service is responsible for some employability programmes for welfare claimants.

Relevant legislation in England includes the Further and Higher Education Act 1992, which has been amended by the Learning and Skills Act 2000, the Further Education and Training Act 2007, the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009⁴⁴, and the Education Act 2011 (which focuses mainly on young people). The Post-16 Skills Plan (2016) which sets the agenda for government adult learning policy in England. The focus is on vocational education and training, and further reform of the system (particularly the supply-side). Further detail as to how this will be achieved has been published recently by the Department for Education in Implementing the further education and skills reform programme: DfE brief on progress for FE governors and leaders, 21 October 2016.⁴⁵ This paper announced the formal responsibility for the education of adults in English prisons passed to the Ministry of Justice on 1 October 2016.

Earlier in 2017, the Technical and Further Education Act (2017)⁴⁶ (England) enacted measures set out in the Post-16 Skills Plan (2016)⁴⁷ to reform technical education by creating an Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (IFATE). It has created an insolvency regime for further education and sixth form colleges, and ensures that information relating to further education is passed onto the Secretary of State for Education once the adult education budget has been devolved to combined authorities. The Enterprise Act (2016) amended the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act (2009) to allow the Secretary of State to set apprenticeship targets for prescribed public bodies. The apprenticeship target relates to the number of apprentices working for a public body in England.⁴⁸

Ministerial responsibility for adult learning policy and funding for adult learning in England lies with the Department for Education. The two executive agencies responsible for fund allocation from the Department of Education, the Skills Funding Agency (SFA) and the Education Funding Agency (EFA), were merged on 1 April 2017 into a single executive agency, the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA). The two organisations had been sharing a Chief Executive since November 2014. The new body will perform the combined roles of the two former bodies, and will thus be responsible for: the funding of education

⁴⁴ UK Government. (2009). *Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009*. Available at: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2009/22/contents> [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

⁴⁵ Department for Education (2016). *Implementing the Further Education and Skills Reform Programme*. Available at:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/561683/Termly_Letter_Policy_Annex_Oct_2016_FINAL.pdf [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

⁴⁶ National Archives. (2017). *Technical and Further Education Act*. Available at:

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2017/19/contents> [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

⁴⁷ Department for Education. (2016). *Post 16 Skills Plan*. Available at:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/536043/Post-16_Skills_Plan.pdf [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

⁴⁸ Gov. UK. (2016). *Enterprise Act Becomes Law*. Available at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/enterprise-act-becomes-law> [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

for students aged 5 to 16; education and training for students aged 16 to 19; apprenticeships and adult education; and the management of school building programmes.

The aim of the merger is to offer a more joined-up approach and provide a streamlined provision of services. The ESFA is accountable for £63 billion of annual funding across the education and training sector. This money will be allocated to academies, further education and sixth-form colleges, and training providers. It will also be used to deliver major projects related to the broader remit of the agency, such as school capital programmes, the National Careers Service, the National Apprenticeship Service and the Learning Records Service.

In the first business plan since the merger, Business Plan for the Financial Year 2017–2018, the ESFA stressed the agency's priority, in line with broader government policy, to develop the 'social mobility' of students from all walks of life: 'Education and skills lie at the heart of the government's drive to extend opportunity, deliver real social justice and raise economic productivity.'⁴⁹ The plan goes on to outline five priority areas for policy. Of these five, four are, to varying extents, related to adult education: 1) 'the changes in the design, delivery and funding of apprenticeships'; 2) 'the implementation of area review recommendations for the further education sector'; 3) 'the technical education reforms' (the Technical and Further Education Act 2017); 4) 'the devolution of the adult education budget to a number of local areas'.

The primary role of the merged agency in relation to adult learning is managing the £3 billion annual skills funding budget. This includes both Apprenticeships and the 'Adult Education Budget' (AEB). The ESFA will continue to work with policy colleagues and other stakeholders on the proposals to devolve adult education funding from the 2018 / 2019 academic year. The ESFA will also:

- Champion the opportunities for learners and employers to engage in high quality education and training opportunities (non-apprenticeships);
- Make traineeships, the statutory entitlement to fully-funded English and maths, entitlements for 19- to 23-year-olds and support English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) priorities within the adult education budget;
- Support Local Enterprise Partnerships' (LEP) strategic economic plans and further education capital plans, through effective service delivery of the 2014 to 2020 European Social Fund programme and other devolved budgets, and by reinforcing government's requirement that colleges and other training organisations take account of LEP priorities;
- Support the reform of technical education across young people and adults.

The devolved institutions in **Northern Ireland** are constituted under the Northern Ireland Act 1998. The Northern Ireland devolution settlement gives legislative control over certain matters (known as 'transferred matters') to the elected Northern Ireland Assembly. These include 'employment and skills'. Success through Skills is the current Skills Strategy for

⁴⁹Education and Skills Funding Agency (2017). *Business Plan 2017-18*. Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/638379/ESFA_Business_Plan_2017_to_2018.pdf [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

Northern Ireland. It provides an overarching framework for the development of skills in Northern Ireland. The strategy looks at the current skills base, examines the skills we will need in future to grow the Northern Ireland economy and highlights areas for action. This ten-year strategy looks at the current skills base, examines the skills needed in future to grow the Northern Ireland economy and highlights areas for action.

Alongside the need for higher level skills, there will be a need to upskill the current workforce, address sectoral imbalances, increase leadership and management skills, attract skilled labour into NI, and create a fully integrated employment and skills service. Part of the strategy has been to improve the skills infrastructure of NI, through the Further Education Means Business initiative (2006) recently followed by Further Education Means Success (2016). This strategy document has nine themes, under which there are a total of 21 policy commitments.

The Northern Ireland Executive is made up of the First Minister, deputy First Minister, two Junior Ministers and eight departmental ministers. In 2016 it consulted on its Draft Programme for Government Framework 2016-21⁵⁰. However, since then the power-sharing agreement broke down and the Assembly has not met and the document remains in draft. It is an outcomes-based approach, with 14 outcomes supported by 42 'indicators' which are intended to articulate the changes the Executive wants to make. For each indicator an appropriate 'measure' has been selected to allow progress to be tracked quantifiably. Indicators such as 'improve educational outcomes' (11), 'reduce educational inequality' (12), and 'improve the quality of education' (13) focus on the statutory education phase ('schools') in terms of how they will be measured. Indicator 14 ('improve the skills profile of the population') will be measured by proportions of the workforce qualified to various levels. Responsibility for the implementation of adult learning policies lies with a number of departments: Department of Education, Department for the Economy, and Department for Communities.

With regard to **Scotland**, the various bodies responsible for adult learning include the Scottish Funding Council (SFC), Skills Development Scotland (SDS), and the South of Scotland Agency, in addition to Enterprise-focused groups, such as Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise. One of the recommendations of the Enterprise and Skills Review published in October 2016 was that a Strategic Board (SB) be set up to co-ordinate strategy between these various organisations in order to ensure effective skills training in response to skills gaps.⁵¹ The governance framework and organisational structure was considered as part of the Enterprise and Skills Review: Proposals on Governance and the Creation of a Strategic Board, published in February 2017.⁵² The Strategic Board will play an increasing role in the design of a broad cross-sectoral 'skills strategy' at a national level

⁵⁰ Northern Ireland Executive. (2016). *Draft Programme for Government Framework 2016-21*. Available at: <https://www.northernireland.gov.uk/sites/default/files/consultations/newnigov/draft-pfg-framework-2016-21.pdf> [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

⁵¹ Gov. Scot. (2017). *Enterprise and Skills Review*. Available at: <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Economy/EntandSkillsreview> [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

⁵² Gov. Scot. (2017). *Enterprise and Skills Review; proposal on governance*. Available at <https://beta.gov.scot/publications/enterprise-and-skills-review-crerar/Enterprise%20and%20Skills%20Review%20-%20Prof.%20Crerar%20recommendations%20February%202017.pdf?inline=true> [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

to 'ensure maximum impact from our £2 billion investment each year in enterprise and skills'. The Strategic Board will be fully operational from October 2017.

In its Programme for Government 2016-17, the Scottish Government sets out clearly what it expects from adult learning and skills in two sections on the education system and the economy. There appears to be, in policy documents at least, the intention to create synergies through, for example, the government's remit letters to the Scottish Funding Council and Skills Development Scotland. The former funds Scotland's further education and higher education systems (i.e. a tertiary approach), but not 'community learning and development' (delivered largely through local authorities / municipalities).

The Scottish Government's Adult Learning in Scotland: Statement of Ambition set out three strategic routes that it saw as the way to develop adult learning: 'Learning should be lifelong'; 'Adult learning should be life-wide'; 'Adult learning should be learner-centred'. Following publication of the Statement of Ambition, a cross-sectoral task group was charged with developing an Implementation Plan.

The delivery of adult learning in Scotland is governed by the 2012 Strategic Guidance for Community Planning Partnerships: Community Learning and Development, which required each local authority area to have a three-year plan that outlines how CLD will be delivered. This was further backed by the Requirements for Community Learning and Development (Scotland) Regulations (2013). Community Learning and Development Plans 2015-18 - Planning for change in Scotland's communities brought the current strategies up to date.

Skills Development Scotland (SDS) is the national skills agency of Scotland. It is an executive non-departmental public body of the Scottish Government. It focuses on a number of key areas relating to Scotland's economy and the role adult learning and skills plays in this. Undertaking Skills Investment Plans and Regional Skills Assessments in consultation with stakeholders, is seen as making an important contribution to the planning and management of the Scottish skills and education system. It aims to provide the basis for a unified, single skills narrative against which government bodies and educational institutions can plan more effectively.

Supporting the development of digital skills remains a priority for SDS. Activity in 2015/16 focused on implementing the actions of the ICT & Digital Technologies Skills Investment Plan and, as the host organisation for the Skills Programme Office for the Digital Scotland – Business Excellence Partnership, ensure that all partners work within the appropriate operational and strategic framework to deliver immediate impact in 2015/16 and beyond.

SDS works closely with the European Structural Funds Division of the Scottish Government and with policy officials to take forward the opportunities presented by various streams of European Structural Funds. SDS should continue to lead the development and delivery of an ESF challenge fund for national third sector organisations. SDS has a strategic role in the modernisation of public services. SDS's collaboration with the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) on outcome agreements for colleges and universities remains important: it will support a single, coherent framework for the development of skills across different stages of education, training and work, and contribute substantially to ensuring that planning of further and higher education provision is aligned with economic and labour market need.

For **Wales**, the Welsh Government has responsibility for most key areas of public life including health, education and environment, which are thus devolved matters. The other areas devolved (as set out in the Government of Wales Act 2006) include adult learning, which currently comes under the oversight of the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills, and her colleagues, the Ministers for Lifelong Learning and Welsh Language and Minister for Skills and Science. Despite the reference to lifelong learning in a Minister's job title there is no current Strategy for Lifelong Learning in Wales. However, the responsible ministry, Education and Skills, has a lifelong remit. The Minister for Lifelong Learning is responsible for: an all-age approach across the formal, non-formal, and informal range of provision.

The ministry's remit is to set the policy direction for adult learning providers in Wales, rather than micro-manage provision by being over-directive. An annual policy and funding letter to providers sets out the Priorities for the Further Education Sector. In 2016/17 academic year. The priorities are set out in the context of the Skills Agenda and the resulting Skills Implementation Plan, published in September 2014.

The four priorities are: jobs and growth; financial sustainability; equality and equity; and, international skills benchmarking. Some of this comprehensive programme of reform will be highlighted in Section 4.0 of this report, but it is worth highlighting Qualifications Wales, whose powers replace those of Ministers in relation to the regulation of qualifications. The new body has two principal aims: ensuring that qualifications and the Welsh qualification system are effective for meeting the reasonable needs of learners in Wales; and promoting confidence in qualifications and in the Welsh qualification system. In parallel, the Welsh Government has set up a new qualifications database to replace DAQW (the Database of Approved Qualifications in Wales). The new database will be called QiW, (Qualifications in Wales). The intention is that all qualifications that Qualifications Wales approves will appear on QiW.

The Education (Wales) Act 2014 reconfigured and renamed the General Teaching Council for Wales (GTCW); extending the remit of the body; and the composition of its membership to become the Education Workforce Council ('the Council'). This reconfiguration took place on 1 April 2015, which was also the point at which the requirement for professional registration was extended to Further Education (FE) lecturers, in addition to school teachers. Through the New Deal and the Professional Learning Passport, teachers in FE (lecturers) will be supported to enhance their continued professionalism and the reputation of the education profession in Wales.

3.1.2 Major national socio-economic strategies governing the provision of Adult Learning

In England, another aspect of the government's policy framework has been related to the 'city deals' and 'growth deals' agreed between the Department for Communities and local government. This is linked to adult learning in that skills provision for local business needs (except for Apprenticeships) are to be organised at a regional, rather than central, level. The first allocation of funds came through City Deals between 2012–14 in two separate waves by which 26 different local bodies received varying investment. After the HM

Treasury report into local infrastructure, *Investing in Britain's Future* of June 2013,⁵³ Government worked with Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) to offer more substantial Growth Deals, which were announced in England over three rounds of funding (July 2014, January 2015, January–March 2017). For example, as part of the 'Northern Powerhouse', the Greater Manchester Growth Deal, highlights the importance of investment (a part of the £663.4m total) into training provision 'to deliver an integrated post-16 learning infrastructure across Greater Manchester that meets the city region's needs.'⁵⁴ In May 2017, the devolution process was furthered in Greater Manchester and five other regions across England as 'powers, budgets and responsibilities' were 'passed down from central government to new combined authority mayors'.⁵⁵ This devolution of the adult education budget to local areas appears as one of five policy priorities in the ESFA's Business Plan 2017–2018.⁵⁶

Overarching Programmes for Government in **Northern Ireland**, **Scotland**, and **Wales**, provide a socio-economic framework into which adult learning provision fits.

3.2 Adult learning policy framework

3.2.1 *A summary of major developments/ changes since 2010*

Since 2010, there have been a number of significant changes in **England**. These developments can be summarised as: 1) vastly increased funding and policy focus on Apprenticeships (both 16-19 and 19+); 2) devolution deals between central and local government through which training provision is organised at a regional level; 3) concentration of policy on 'skills gaps' in STEM-based and digital industries, in Further, as well as Higher, Education (FE); 4) funding of Advanced Learner Loans to both students aged 19–24 and 24+; 5) reforms of the vocational qualification system, largely to allow for more employer engagement; 6) locally-led Area Reviews being carried out to restructure the FE sector to ensure future sustainability; and, 7) a major change in the agencies responsible for the implementation of policy.

The provision of Apprenticeships – the widely-used term for employment-based technical education – has been one of the main government priorities since 2010, in line with various research reports that indicate their importance for national economic growth. Alison Wolf's March 2011 report on the vocational education system in England, *Review of Vocational Education – The Wolf Report*, made recommendations concerning the importance of

⁵³HM Treasury. (2013) *Investing in Britain's Future*. Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/209279/PU1524_IUK_new_template.pdf [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

⁵⁴ Gov. UK. (undated) *Growth Deal Factsheet*. Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/585213/Manchester_Factsheet.pdf [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

⁵⁵ Gov. UK. (undated) *Devolution and Mayors; what does it mean?* Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/devolution-and-mayors-what-does-it-mean> [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

⁵⁶ Gov. UK. (undated) *Growth Deal Factsheet*. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/esfa-business-plan> [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

Apprenticeships in current learning provision.⁵⁷ More specific research carried out includes Jason Holt's study of Apprenticeships for Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SMEs) published in May 2012,⁵⁸ and Doug Richard's broader look at the future of the Apprenticeship system later that year in November 2012.⁵⁹ The development of the Apprenticeship system featured in the recommendations of the Heseltine Review of October 2012, *No stone unturned: in pursuit of growth* – Lord Heseltine review, and was subsequently accepted in the government's response in March 2013.⁶⁰ There have been continual increases in the funding allocation for Apprenticeships, and part of the rationale between the merger between the Skills Funding Agency and Education Funding Agency was that 16–19 and 19+ Apprenticeships could benefit from singular organisation and a joined-up approach.⁶¹ This, in fact, constitutes a return to the pre-2010 situation regarding the remit of the Learning and Skills Council.⁶²

The position of Minister for Apprenticeships and Skills was formed in 2016 following a change in the Machinery of Government. In March 2017, the Government released its Apprenticeship Reform Programme, in which it highlighted the changes needed to be made in order to reach its ambitious targets.⁶³ The Government introduced an apprenticeship levy of 0.5% on large employers in April 2017, based on the findings that it was difficult to engage all employers voluntarily in skills provision. The target for 3 million apprenticeship starts by 2020, first established by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) in 2015, marks clearly the government's continued prioritisation of Apprenticeships within FE.⁶⁴

The government continues to focus on Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) and digital skills in order to address a 'skills gap' that has been reported in numerous government-funded reviews.⁶⁵ The (now-dissolved) Department for Business Innovation and Skills in 2015 also called for higher-level training in tourism, food, farming

⁵⁷ Gov. UK. (2011) *Review of Vocational Education: The Wolf Report*. Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/180504/DFE-00031-2011.pdf [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

⁵⁸ Gov. UK. (2012) *Holt Review*. Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/34731/12-891-making-apprenticeships-more-accessible-to-smes-holt-review.pdf [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

⁵⁹ Gov. UK. (2012) *Richard Review*. Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/34708/richard-review-full.pdf [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

⁶⁰ Gov. UK. (2012) *No Stone Unturned in the Pursuit of Growth*. Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/34648/12-1213-no-stone-unturned-in-pursuit-of-growth.pdf [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

⁶¹ Gov. UK. (2017) *New Agency to Provide Joined-Up Education and Skills Funding*. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-agency-to-provide-joined-up-education-and-skills-funding> [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

⁶² Gov. UK. (2010) *Learning and Skills Council has closed*. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/learning-and-skills-council> [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

⁶³ Gov. UK. (2017) *Apprenticeship Reform Programme; benefit realisation strategy*. Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/604401/Apprenticeship_Reform_Programme_-_Benefits_Realisation_Strategy.pdf [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

⁶⁴ Gov. UK. (2017) *Spring Budget 2017*. Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/597471/spring_budget_2017_print.pdf [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

⁶⁵ UKCES. (undated) *Reviewing the Requirements of Higher-Level STEM Skills*. Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/444048/High_level_STEM_skills_requirements_in_the_UK_labour_market_FINAL.pdf [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

and agri-tech.⁶⁶ This is seen as responsive to wider employer and business demands for higher-level and more specialised qualifications that directly relate to a career path. The government acknowledges the UK's competitiveness at a global level (particularly with reference to 'Brexit') as a main reason for investing in STEM and digital skills.

Most recently, a policy review led by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport resulted in a policy paper published on 5 April 2017 entitled Digital Skills and Inclusion Policy, which calls for both higher level skills to boost economic productivity (such as Degree Apprenticeships) in addition to wider low-level skills amongst those with little digital experience (as part of lifelong learning).⁶⁷ The policy recognises the increasing training services offered by the private and third sectors and is therefore focused on not duplicating provision, but in integrating it into a strategic vision that ensures provision is distributed across England as fairly as possible.

The Government has been developing the scope of loans for adults wishing to study a qualification above Level 3 [EQF4] since 2013. In 2013, 24+ Advanced Learning Loans were only available to those aged 24 and above and applying to study for a Level 3 or 4 qualification. From 1 August 2016, Advanced Learner Loans became open to learners aged 19 and above, and for technical and professional qualifications at levels 3 to 6. The Government, as part of the ESFA Priorities and Funding for the 2017 to 2018 Financial Year, has increased the funding allocation for Advanced Learner Loans by 25% in 2017-18, and indicative figures show further 35% and 9% increases until 2020. The 2017 Spring Budget announced that, in order to promote 'real parity with the academic route', maintenance loans would be introduced from 2019-20 onwards for 'students on technical education courses at levels 4 to 6 in National Colleges and Institutes of Technology' and 'will also support adults to retrain at these institutions.'⁶⁸ This indicates a wider government move to make FE and AE a loans-based system, similar to the one adopted in HE.

Locally-led Area Reviews were announced in Reviewing post-16 Education and Training Institutions published in July 2015.⁶⁹ According to the Spending Review and Autumn Statement 2015 published in November that year, the rationale of these Area Reviews is partly that they will allow the government to cut the adult skills budget by £360 million between 2015–2020.⁷⁰ 37 areas have been targeted, and the FE commissioner works with FE and sixth-form colleges, as well as local business, training providers and LEPs, to establish changes needed to boost effective skills provision in line with broader

⁶⁶ Gov. UK. (2016) *BIS Single Departmental Plan 2015-20*. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/bis-single-departmental-plan-2015-to-2020/bis-single-departmental-plan-2015-to-2020> [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

⁶⁷ Gov. UK. (2017) *Digital Skills and Inclusion Policy*. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/digital-inclusion-and-skills-policy/digital-skills-and-inclusion-policy> [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

⁶⁸ Gov. UK. (2017) *Spring Budget 2017*. Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/597471/spring_budget_2017_print.pdf [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

⁶⁹ Gov. UK. (2015) *Reviewing Post-16 Education and Training Institutions*. Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/446516/BIS-15-433-reviewing-post-16-education-policy.pdf [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

⁷⁰ HM Treasury. (2015). *Spending Review and autumn Statement 2015*. Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/479749/52229_Blue_Book_PU_1865_Web_Accessible.pdf [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

government targets. Five waves of reviews have taken place, the first starting in September 2015 and the fifth starting in November 2016.⁷¹

Adult learning policy in **Northern Ireland** follows broadly the same direction as other parts of the UK, but with a greater policy focus on careers guidance and continued investment in literacy and numeracy, where other parts of the UK have reduced their expenditure in those sectors. There have been four main policy priority areas since 2010: 1) reforms and development to the Apprenticeship system; 2) a careers education system that has an increasingly online presence and responds to skills needs; 3) investment and research into STEM and digital training provision; and, 4) training in lower-level employability skills.

As with other parts of the UK, the Northern Ireland Assembly has invested considerably in Apprenticeships, both in terms of research and funding. The strategy document *Success through Skills – Transforming Futures* published in 2011 highlighted the need to make a number of changes to the way Government delivers Apprenticeships.⁷² The Strategic Goals required not only an improvement of educational tools and training, but also greater awareness of skills gaps and an increased engagement of stakeholders. A more specific set of policy commitments was proposed in *Apprenticeships Securing our Success*, the Strategy on Apprenticeships published in June 2014.⁷³ These policies were aligned 'with the priorities set out in both the Executive's Programme for Government and Economic Strategy to pursue relentlessly economic growth and prosperity for all citizens.' A new employer-led model aimed to ensure a strategic partnership between the parties involved in delivering an Apprenticeship, and a new flexible progression pathway aimed to open up a wider range of occupational areas and support a variety of learning preferences through both on-the-job and off-the-job training. Since late 2014, a 'strategic advisory forum, based on a partnership comprising employers, government, trade unions and providers of off-the-job training', has advised government on the provision of Apprenticeships. The Government has also established sectoral partnerships 'to design and agree apprenticeship provision and inform demand at a sectoral level.'

Following a development of its careers education services, in September 2016, the Government launched its 'Connect to Success NI' scheme, which is a free online system developed by the Department for the Economy that advertises and promotes work experience and apprenticeship opportunities for young people.⁷⁴ This is part of a wider ongoing Government initiative to improve online services through www.nidirect.gov.uk, as outlined in Policy Commitment 2 of *Preparing for Success, A Strategy for Careers Education*

⁷¹ Gov. UK. (2016) *Reviewing Post-16 Education and Training Institutions: area reviews waves 1 to 5*. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/reviewing-post-16-education-and-training-institutions-list-of-area-reviews/reviewing-post-16-education-and-training-institutions-area-reviews-waves-1-to-5> [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

⁷² DELNI. (2011). *Success Through Skills*. Available at: http://www.opf.fi/download/145612_success-through-skills-transforming-futures.pdf [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

⁷³ DELNI. (2014). *Securing our Success*. Available at: <https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/del/Securing%20our%20Success%20The%20NI%20Strategy%20on%20Apprenticeships.pdf> [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

⁷⁴ NI Business Info (undated) *Connect to success NI*. Available at: <https://www.nibusinessinfo.co.uk/connect-to-success> [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

and Guidance published in March 2016.⁷⁵ Apprenticeship and youth training guidance is shaped by the Northern Ireland Skills Barometer commissioned by the Department for the Economy, and published by Ulster University in June 2017.⁷⁶ The report 'analyses where the skills gaps are currently, where they are emerging and where they are likely to emerge over the longer term' in order to assess the skills landscape of the Northern Ireland economy up to 2026.

In **Scotland**, adult learning policy priorities are similar to those of the other constituent parts of the UK, following common research trends and economic forecasts. The Scottish Government carries out its own reviews and uses them as basis to design policy related to national priorities. Since 2010, there have been some considerable transformations surrounding the policy framework: 1) increased investment in Modern, Technical and Professional Apprenticeships; 2) the creation of a Strategic Board that co-ordinates the strategy of several skills and enterprise bodies; 3) focus on addressing skills gaps, particularly in STEM and digital industries; 4) more substantial support for rural and post-industrial communities in Scotland; and, 5) wider reforms made to vocational training, especially to tackle relatively high youth unemployment levels.

Apprenticeships, which are the responsibility of the Skills Development Scotland (SDS), have been since 2010 a clear priority for the Scottish Government, which has set a target of 30,000 Modern Apprenticeship (EQF 3-5) starts per year until 2020. These are comparable to the targets set in England relative to population size. Various reports into Scotland's future economic situation, such as Skills for Scotland: Accelerating the Recovery and Increasing Sustainable Economic Growth (2010), have indicated the importance of Apprenticeships in addressing skills shortages across the country.⁷⁷ The Review of Post-16 Education and Vocational Training in Scotland led by Willy Roe and published in August 2011 emphasised the need for a series of reforms to the apprenticeship system.⁷⁸

The Enterprise and Skills Review published in October 2016 re-iterated the need for these reforms and recommended that organisational changes be made in order for the various bodies responsible for skills provision to be better co-ordinated.⁷⁹ Since June 2014, the Scottish Apprenticeship Advisory Board (SAAB) has acted as the liaison between employers, policy makers, funding bodies, and training providers to ensure a more streamlined approach to Apprenticeship provision.⁸⁰ In the most recent Scottish Government policy statement of September 2017, the investment of £100 million per year

⁷⁵ DELNI. (2016). *Skills to Succeed*. Available at <https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/de/Careers-strategy.pdf> [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

⁷⁶ Ulster University (2017) *NI Skills Barometer 2017*. Available at: <https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/economy/NI-Skills-Barometer-2017-Summary-Report.pdf> [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

⁷⁷ Gov. Scot. (2010). *Skills for Scotland*. Available at: <http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2010/10/04125111/0> [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

⁷⁸ Gov. Scot. (2011). *Review of Education and Vocational training in Scotland*. Available at <http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2011/08/15095448/1> [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

⁷⁹ Gov. Scot. (2016). *Enterprise and Skills Review*. Available at <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Economy/EntandSkillsreview> [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

⁸⁰ Skills Development Scotland. (undated). *The Scottish Apprenticeship Advisory Board*. Available at <https://www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk/what-we-do/partnerships/the-scottish-apprenticeship-advisory-board/>

into 16+ Apprenticeships was highlighted.⁸¹ The announcement of the Apprenticeship Levy to be introduced in April 2017 by the UK Government prompted the Scottish devolved administration, making it clear that they were not consulted prior to the decision, to re-invest £10 million of their share of these funds into the establishment of the Flexible Workforce Development Fund (FWDF) in December 2016, to be extended in 2018–19. The purpose of the FWDF is 'to provide employers with flexible workforce development training opportunities to support inclusive economic growth through up-skilling or re-skilling of employees.'⁸²

Like the other Governments of the United Kingdom, the Scottish Government has focused since 2010 on skills shortages in STEM and digital industries. These areas have been covered by various Skills Investment Plans (SIPs), and in 2014 SDS worked with Scotland's ICT and Digital Technologies sector to develop a SIP for the industry. This builds upon a review published by the Scottish Government in 2011 entitled Scotland's Digital Future: A Strategy for Scotland, in which the authors set out a vision for Scotland to be 'a world-class digital nation by 2020, and the actions to achieve this.'⁸³ Both higher- and lower-level digital skills are reported as priorities, the former for Scotland's competition at a global level, and the latter for wider social benefits as part of informal Community Learning.

In March 2017, the Scottish Government announced a £36-million Digital Growth Fund to be functional from April 2018, which would provide funded digital skills training in order to improve individual and business capacities.⁸⁴ Funds have also been put aside for STEM subjects at both a school and post-16 level, as the Scottish Government in 2017 announced that it would be 'expanding STEM hubs to strengthen partnerships between schools, colleges, universities, science centres and employers.'⁸⁵

The Scottish Government is also looking to develop skills provision and encourage inward investment in rural and post-industrial areas of Scotland in order to tackle regional inequality. The Scottish Government has continued to invest in Adult Literacy and Community Learning projects following the Skills for Scotland: Accelerating the Recovery and Increasing Sustainable Economic Growth of 2010,⁸⁶ and Adult Learning in Scotland: Statement of Ambition of 2014.⁸⁷ In 2017, the Scottish Government announced that, in addition to Growth Deal funding allocated by the UK Central Government, it would use

⁸¹ Scottish Government. (2016). *A Nation with Ambition. Programme for Government 2017-18*. Available at: <https://beta.gov.scot/publications/nation-ambition-governments-programme-scotland-2017-18/documents/00524214.pdf?inline=true> [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

⁸² Scottish Funding Council (2017). *Flexible Workforce Development Fund 2018-18*. Available at: http://www.sfc.ac.uk/web/FILES/announcements_sfc132017/SFCAN132017-flexible-workforce-development-fund-2017-18.pdf

⁸³ Scottish Government (2011) *Scotland's Digital Future* Available at: <http://www.gov.scot/resource/doc/981/0114237.pdf> [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

⁸⁴ Gov. Scot. (2017). *Increased Funding for Digital Skills*. Available at <https://news.gov.scot/news/increased-funding-for-digital-skills> [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

⁸⁵ Scottish Government. (2016). *A Nation with Ambition. Programme for Government 2017-18*. Available at: <https://beta.gov.scot/publications/nation-ambition-governments-programme-scotland-2017-18/documents/00524214.pdf?inline=true> [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

⁸⁶ Gov. Scot. (2010). *Skills for Scotland*. Available at <http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2010/10/04125111/0> [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

⁸⁷ Gov. Scot. (2014). *Statement of Ambition*. Available at <https://www.education.gov.scot/Documents/adult-learning-statement.pdf> [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

European Structural Funds to invest in post-industrial areas of Scotland to fill clear skills gaps in those communities, with an additional £12 million available for the development of skills for new and emerging markets in these communities.⁸⁸ They also announced the proposed creation of a Rural Skills Action Plan in 2018 to help provide opportunities for young people outside of the main urban centres.

The Scottish Government has also made changes to the shape of vocational education since 2010. The Roe Review of Post-16 Education and Vocational Training in Scotland in 2011 made recommendations about changes to the funding system and that the Scottish and UK Governments 'should negotiate to achieve a more unified, coherent and devolved employment and skills system for Scotland.'⁸⁹ This is consistent with reforms made across the UK. The Roe Review equally argued for a higher employer engagement in vocational training, in which businesses viewed themselves as co-investors and co-designers, as opposed to customers, in the education of young and adult learners.

Further changes were proposed as part of the 2014 Education Working for All! Commission for Developing Scotland's Young Workforce, in which chair Sir Ian Wood focused on improvements to the vocational education system 'to drive the creation of a world class vocational education system to reduce youth unemployment by 40% by 2021.'⁹⁰ The recommendations included closer co-ordination between vocational education policy and the skills needs identified in the Regional Skills Assessments (RSAs) and addressed in the Skills Investment Plans (SIPs). The report also called for there to be more communication between training providers and real-life industry experts so that course content properly equips learners for employment. The 2017 Scottish Government's broader focus on youth employment means that changes made to vocational training will also have a considerable impact on adult learners.

In **Wales**, policy from 2010 was set out in the overarching Programme for Government 2011-16.⁹¹ This document established 'Jobs Growth Wales', offering employment or training for young people (from April 2012) as well as expanded apprenticeship opportunities for young people; introduced the 'Steps to Employment' programme for those aged 18+; evaluated post-16 basic skills activity; refocussed resources on the most effective interventions to help people not in education, training or employment; supported company growth opportunities through investment in skills development for the workforce; and, the Wales Union Learning Fund (WULF).

More recently, Welsh Government set out a new five-year plan, Taking Wales Forward 2016-2021, which includes priorities under the 'ambitious and learning heading' to pilot a new model of Community Learning Centres to provide extended services including family

⁸⁸ Scottish Government. (2016). *A Nation with Ambition. Programme for Government 2017-18*. Available at: <https://beta.gov.scot/publications/nation-ambition-governments-programme-scotland-2017-18/documents/00524214.pdf?inline=true> [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

⁸⁹ Gov. Scot. (2011). *Review of Post-16*. Available at: <http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2011/08/15095448/1> [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

⁹⁰ Scottish Government. (2014). *Education Working for All!* Available at: <http://www.gov.scot/resource/0045/00451746.pdf> [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

⁹¹ Welsh Government. (2016). *Programme for Government*. Available at: <http://gov.wales/docs/strategies/110929fullen.pdf> [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

learning.⁹² In January 2017, the Welsh Government also responded to the recommendations in the Hazelkorn Report (2016) on 'a framework for building a world-class post-compulsory education system.' Welsh Government committed to consult on the creation of a new, single planning body to oversee post-compulsory education at a strategic level.⁹³ the development of the all-age employability strategy⁹⁴ and the new Adult Learning in Wales policy ⁹⁵ has opened the prospect of better links between work, health and communities and a wider understanding of the impact of adult learning. Regionally based schemes, such as City Region deals in Cardiff and Swansea, the potential for a North Wales Growth Deal, and the work of the Valleys Task Force.⁹⁶

3.2.2 *Main legislative act(s) governing the provision of adult learning*

The UK Government Budget (2017) committed to invest up to £40 million by 2018–19 to 'test different approaches to help people to retrain and upskill throughout their working lives.'⁹⁷ This included testing new approaches to community learning and lifelong learning. It is too early to say how these ideas will be implemented.

The Technical and Further Education Act 2017⁹⁸ (England) takes forward measures setting out the commitment in the Post-16 Skills Plan (2016)⁹⁹ to reform technical education by creating an Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (IFATE); create an insolvency regime for further education and sixth form colleges established under the Further and Higher Education Act 1992; and, ensures that information relating to further education is passed onto the Secretary of State for Education once the adult education budget has been devolved to combined authorities.

The Enterprise Act 2016 (England) amended the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009 to allow the Secretary of State to set apprenticeship targets for prescribed public bodies. The apprenticeship target relates to the number of apprentices working for a public body in England.¹⁰⁰

⁹² Welsh Government. (2016). *Programme for Government (summary)*. Available at <http://gov.wales/about/programme-for-government/?lang=en> [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

⁹³ Welsh Government. (2017). *Towards 2030*. Available at <http://gov.wales/topics/educationandskills/publications/reports/review-of-the-oversight-and-regulation-of-post-compulsory-education-and-training-in-wales/?lang=en> [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

⁹⁴ Welsh Government. (2017). *Employability Support*. Available at <http://gov.wales/topics/educationandskills/skillsandtraining/employability-plan-for-wales/?lang=en> [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

⁹⁵ Welsh Government. (2017). *Adult Learning in Wales*. Available at <http://gov.wales/docs/dcells/publications/170712-adult-learning-policy-statement-en.pdf> [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

⁹⁶ Welsh Government. (2017). *Swansea Bay City Region*. Available at <http://gov.wales/newsroom/firstminister/2017/170320cd/?lang=en> [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

⁹⁷ HM Treasury. (2017). *Spring Budget 2017*. Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/597471/spring_budget_2017_print.pdf

⁹⁸ National Archives. (2017). *Technical and Further Education Act 2017*. Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2017/19/contents> [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

⁹⁹ Department for Education. (2016). *Post-16 Skills Plan*. Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/536043/Post-16_Skills_Plan.pdf [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

¹⁰⁰ Gov. UK. (2016). *Enterprise Act becomes law*. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/enterprise-act-becomes-law> [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009 (England and Wales) established Apprenticeship Frameworks in **England and Wales**, as well as some regulatory and funding functions.¹⁰¹ Under the provisions of the Act recent targets have been set for prescribed groups and public sector bodies with 250 or more staff in **England**. They have a target to employ an average of at least 2.3% of their staff as new apprentice starts over the period of 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2021.¹⁰²

Draft Programme for Government Framework 2016–21 (Northern Ireland), set out measures for an increase of skills in the **Northern Ireland** population features in Outcomes 1, 5 and 6.¹⁰³ These are expected to have both economic and social benefits.¹⁰⁴

Scotland Act 2016, Scottish Government control of skills training as part of employment support.¹⁰⁵ While the overall budget is provided centrally from Westminster, the Scottish Government has control over policy decisions linked to education and skills.

The Government of Wales Act 2006 (as amended) enables the Welsh Government to bring forward its own programme of legislation in the 20 areas devolved to Wales, including adult learning.¹⁰⁶

3.2.3 *Main strategy(-ies) (setting vision, goals and directions for the development of AL, usually with a long-term end-date)*

UK Digital Strategy 2017 is a policy paper that outlines the UK's plans to be a world-leading digital economy. For this, it is argued, it is crucial that everyone has the digital skills they need to participate fully in society. This aspect of the strategy is targeted at the ten million people who are digitally excluded in the UK¹⁰⁷.

In **England**, the **Post-16 Skills Plan 2016** proposes the development of 15 new Technical Routes (T Levels) based on the apprenticeship standards, and formalises this approach further by separating academic and vocational learning more explicitly, while given parity of esteem to both. The Plan was published following a review of technical education led by Lord Sainsbury. For young people who are not yet ready for an employment or college based technical training route, the **Post-16 Skills Plan** introduces a 'transition year' which government wants to be made available at the same time as the

¹⁰¹ National Archives. (2017). *Apprenticeships, Children, Skills and Learning Act 2009*. Available at <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2009/22/contents> [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

¹⁰² Department for Education. (2017). *Meeting the Public Sector Apprenticeship Target*. Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/606955/Public_Sector_Statutory_Guidance.pdf [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

¹⁰³ Northern Ireland Executive. (2016). *Draft Programme for Government Framework 2016-21*. Available at <https://www.northernireland.gov.uk/sites/default/files/consultations/newnigov/draft-pfg-framework-2016-21.pdf> [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

¹⁰⁴ Northern Ireland Executive. (2016). *Draft Programme for Government Framework 2016-21 and Questionnaire*. Available at: <https://www.northernireland.gov.uk/consultations/draft-programme-government-framework-2016-21-and-questionnaire> [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

¹⁰⁵ UK Government. (2016). *Scotland Act 2016*. Available at: http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2016/11/pdfs/ukpga_20160011_en.pdf [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

¹⁰⁶ Gov. Wales. (2016) *Legislation*. Available at: <http://gov.wales/legislation/?lang=en> [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

¹⁰⁷ Gov.UK. (2017). *UK Digital Strategy*. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-digital-strategy> [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

reforms so young people, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities do not lose out.¹⁰⁸

In **Northern Ireland, Apprenticeships Securing our Success**, the Strategy on Apprenticeships,¹⁰⁹ published in June 2014, outlines the future direction of apprenticeships. The new apprenticeship model is driven by strategic partnership; puts employers at its very heart; aligns supply with demand; and, affords opportunities in a wider range of occupations and offers a flexible progression pathway across professional education and training. The new employer-led model will provide an alternative pathway to recruit and train skilled individuals and will extend apprenticeships into a wider range of occupational areas. Apprenticeships will be offered from skills level 3 to 8 and provide a pathway to higher level qualifications including at degree level and above. Apprenticeships will deliver a range of benefits to participants by supporting a variety of learning preferences through both on-the-job and off-the-job training, and affording opportunities for well-paid jobs and sustainable employment.

The **Northern Ireland Skills Barometer** also repeated the need for increased education and training provision in STEM and digital subjects. The **Report of the STEM Review** published in 2009 stressed the need for investment in these areas.¹¹⁰ These findings have been reflected in policy papers since 2011, in the Government's response to the review **Success through STEM**,¹¹¹ and in Strategic Goal 4 of **Success through Skills – Transforming Futures**.¹¹²

The **Programme for Government 2011–2015: Building a better future** also aimed to 'increase uptake in economically relevant Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) places.'¹¹³ The Department for Education is responsible for STEM curriculum design and innovation in the schools and university system, while the Department for the Economy has responsibility for vocational education and training (VET) and adult learners. In **Economy 2030: A consultation on an Industrial Strategy for Northern Ireland**, published in January 2017, the Government promises to 'meet the bespoke upskilling needs of employers' and focus on 'high growth, high technology areas such as data analytics, cyber security, cloud computing and software engineering' in order to provide for 'the economy's growing need for transformative digital skills.'¹¹⁴ The Skills

¹⁰⁸ Department for Education. (2016). *Post-16 Skills Plan*. Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/536043/Post-16_Skills_Plan.pdf [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

¹⁰⁹ Department for the Economy. (2016). *Securing our Success*. Available at: <https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/publications/securing-our-success-northern-ireland-strategy-apprenticeships> [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

¹¹⁰ Department for the Economy. (2009). *Report of the STEM Review*. Available <https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/del/report-of-the-stem-review.pdf> [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

¹¹¹ <https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/del/STEM%20Strategy-Success%20through%20STEM.pdf> [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

¹¹² Department for the Economy. (2016). *Success through Skills: transforming futures*. Available at: http://www.opf.fi/download/145612_success-through-skills-transforming-futures.pdf [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

¹¹³ Northern Ireland Executive. (2011). *Programme for Government 2011-15*. Available at: <https://www.northernireland.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/nigov/pfg-2011-2015-report.pdf> [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

¹¹⁴ Northern Ireland Executive. (2017). *Economy 2030*. Available at: <https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/consultations/economy/industrial-strategy-ni-consultation-document.pdf> [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

Barometer of June 2017 asserted that 'the research has shown for a second year that STEM related subjects are under-supplied.'¹¹⁵

Skills for Scotland 2010 outlined plans to simplify the skills systems and strengthen partnerships. This led to a programme of reorganisation in the adult learning provider base with a stronger focus on jobs and economic growth. **A Nation with Ambition: The Government's plan for Scotland 2017–18**¹¹⁶ established a Strategic Board to focus enterprise and skills agencies on supporting the growth of key sectors and ensuring that adult learning providers produce the skills that businesses and individuals need. It included a commitment to increase the number of modern apprenticeships, to 30,000 by 2020, and empower communities to take more decisions themselves, placing greater control of budgets in the hands of local people. The Government will continue to invest £100 million per year in apprenticeships, flexible workforce development and individual training accounts. Skills Development Scotland will continue to assess the current and future industry demand for skills, and ensure that the system is closely aligned with evolving industry needs.

3.2.4 *Main implementing act(s) (setting concrete actions, budget, targets and guiding the implementation of national adult learning policy, usually with a short-term end-date*

In **England, Reviewing Post-16 Education and Training Institutions 2015**¹¹⁷ sets out measures for rationalising the provider base to fewer, more financially stable institutions on an area basis. **City Deals and Growth Deals**. From May 2017, budgets and responsibilities were passed down from central government to new combined authority mayors in 6 regions across England: Cambridgeshire and Peterborough; Greater Manchester; Liverpool City Region; Tees Valley; West Midlands; and, West of England. An elected mayor now represents these regions across the country and around the world. They will work with leaders of local councils and businesses to create jobs, boost skills, build homes and improve infrastructure. Adult learning funding is planned to be devolved to these areas from 2018/19. Though it is not adopting a directly elected mayor, Cornwall is also taking forward a devolution deal.¹¹⁸

The annual letter from the Department of Education to the Chief Executive of the Education and Skills Funding Agency (latest: 14 March 2017) sets out the funding available for apprenticeships, adult further education and skills for 2017-18. Although the budget for the Offender Learning and Skills Service was transferred to the Ministry of Justice in

¹¹⁵ Ulster University. (2017). *Northern Ireland Skills Barometer* report. Available at: <https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/economy/NI-Skills-Barometer-2017-Summary-Report.pdf> [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

¹¹⁶ Scottish Government. (2017). *A Nation with Ambition: The Government's plan for Scotland 2017–18*. Available at: <https://beta.gov.scot/publications/nation-ambition-governments-programme-scotland-2017-18/documents/00524214.pdf?inline=true> [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

¹¹⁷ UK Government. (2015). *Reviewing Post-16 Education and Training Institutions*. Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/446516/BIS-15-433-reviewing-post-16-education-policy.pdf [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

¹¹⁸ Gov. UK. (2017). *Devolution and Mayors. What does it mean?* Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/devolution-and-mayors-what-does-it-mean> [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

October 2016 (following a Machinery of Government change), it was also represented in the SFS budget for the sake of completion. For 2017-18, government is investing: £1.9 billion to fund participation in apprenticeship training for all ages; £1.5 billion to support participation in adult learning through the Adult Education Budget; £325 million available for provision at Levels 3 to 6 through Advanced Learner Loans, £130million to support offender learning.¹¹⁹

In **Northern Ireland**, Government has also continued to invest in Literacy, Numeracy and ICT skills to help those with very low capacities in these areas. In **Preparing for Success 2015–2020: A Strategy for Careers Education and Guidance**, published in March 2016, the Government noted that training needs to be given to those with low or no qualifications or have barriers to learning in order to reduce unemployment more widely. This forms part of the 'Essential Skills' programme that offers free courses in Literacy, Numeracy and ICT. This remains a priority for the Northern Ireland Government, as part of the broader target of lowering joblessness and economic inactivity. In 2011, they set target of 84-90% with Level 2 skills in employment (from a baseline of 71.2% in 2008) by 2020.¹²⁰

Further Education Means Success, the new further education strategy for **Northern Ireland** was published in January 2016. The vision is that further education colleges will be recognised locally, nationally and internationally for high quality and economically relevant education and training provision. Colleges will be focussed on achieving excellence in delivering the skills needed for the economy of today and tomorrow, and will be ambitious for their learners and for the contribution they make to improving the competitiveness of the economy of Northern Ireland. The new further education strategy highlights the challenging dual role that colleges play. They are pivotal to the development of strong and vibrant economies through the provision of professional and technical skills, increasingly at higher levels, and through the many ways they help employers to innovate and to develop new products and markets. They also have an important responsibility to help to fight poverty and support social inclusion by providing those with low or no qualifications, or who have barriers to learning, with the skills and 23 qualifications they need to find employment – in particular the essential skills of literacy and numeracy.

In **Scotland**, there has been a renewed focus on youth employment. This was initially emphasised in **Opportunities for All** (2012) which made a commitment of an offer of an appropriate place in learning, education or training for all 16-19 year-olds who not already in employment, education or training. This was then followed by the establishment of the **Commission for Developing Scotland's Young Workforce**. The final report of this group **Education Working for All** (2014) suggested a programme of action which was then adopted by the Scottish Government in their implementation document **Developing the Young Workforce: Scotland's Youth Employment Strategy** (2014). This outlines

¹¹⁹ Department for Education. (2017). *Skills Funding Letter, 2017-18*. Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/599089/SFA_Letter_2017-18_final.pdf [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

¹²⁰ Department for the Economy. (2016). *Success through Skills: transforming futures*. Available at: http://www.oph.fi/download/145612_success-through-skills-transforming-futures.pdf [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

a 7-year strategy involving greater partnership working between schools, colleges, and employers.

In **Wales**, the **Policy Statement on Skills** (2014)¹²¹ was followed by a **Skills Implementation Plan** (2014)¹²². These contained a series of proposed actions including setting up Skills Performance Measures, and a new Flexible Skills Programme in which Government would make targeted interventions to meet new needs from employers or where existing provision could not respond. A full set of targets was published in **Our Ambition for Skills in Wales** (2015)¹²³. **Aligning the Apprenticeship Model to the needs of the Welsh Economy** (February 2017) announced the Welsh Government would be increasing its investment in apprenticeships from £96 million to £111.5 million for 2017-18. Of the additional funding, £15.5 million will be invested to ensure that both public and private sector employers are not disadvantaged as a result of the Apprenticeship Levy.¹²⁴ The Welsh Government predict a doubling of the demand for level 4-6 qualified workers by 2024. The target is for a minimum of 100,000 Apprenticeships by May 2021.

3.3 National quantitative policy targets

Table 3.1 outlines the national level targets (where they exist) in relation to adult learning. Increasingly target-setting is done at the sub-national or local levels to avoid the unintended consequences of a target-led policy making.

Table 3.1: Targets linked to Adult Learning in broader economic policies/LLL strategies/framework or implementing act

General information		Progress toward target		
Target (target figure and date to be achieved by)	Adoption date (e.g. 31/03/2018)	Initial value (at date of adoption)	Current value	Summary of progress against target
3 million new Apprenticeship starts by 2020 in England	01/05/2015	£1.5bn per annum	£1.8bn per annum	There have been 1.06 million apprenticeship starts since May 2015, there have been 3.44 million starts since May 2010 reported to date.

¹²¹ Welsh Government. (2014). *Policy Statement on Skills*. Available at: <http://gov.wales/topics/educationandskills/skillsandtraining/policy-statement-on-skills/?lang=en> [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

¹²² Welsh Government. (2014). *Skill Implementation Plan*. Available at: <http://gov.wales/topics/educationandskills/skillsandtraining/policy-statement-on-skills/skills-implementation-plan/?lang=en> [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

¹²³ Welsh Government. (2015). *Our Ambition for Skills in Wales*. Available at: <http://gov.wales/docs/dcells/publications/150430-our-ambition-for-skills-en.pdf> [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

¹²⁴ Welsh Government. (2017). *Aligning the Apprenticeship Model to the Needs of the Welsh Economy*. Available at: <http://gov.wales/about/cabinet/cabinetstatements/2017/apprenticeship/?lang=en> [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

Independent national experts network in the area of adult education/adult skills
Full country report – United Kingdom

				<p>Provisional figures from August 2016 to April 2017: 440,300 apprenticeships started; 31,600 higher apprenticeships started; 879,500 apprenticeships participating; 11,000 apprenticeships started on standards.</p> <p>Source: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/627687/SFR27-2017-vocational-qualifications-update.pdf)</p>
There are no longer specific national targets in England by level	NA	NA	NA	<p>The proportion of men and women qualified to each of Level 2, 3 and 4 have risen each year between 2008 and 2016: from 73.2 per cent in 2008 to 82.8 per cent in 2016 qualified to at least Level 2 [EQF3]; from 54.3 per cent in 2008 to 65.3 per cent in 2016 qualified to at least Level 3 [EQF4]; from 34.2 per cent in 2008 to 43.8 per cent in 2016 qualified to at least Level 4 [EQF5]. (Source: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/627687/SFR27-2017-vocational-qualifications-update.pdf)</p>
Modern Apprenticeships in Scotland: 22,000 per annum rising to 30,000 in 2020 (Source: http://www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk/media/43591/letter-of-guidance-2017-18.pdf)	01/08/17	NA	NA	<p>26,700 in 2016-17 (Source: http://www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk/media/43616/operating-plan-2017-18-final-15aug17-pdf-02.pdf)</p>

3.4 Quality assurance

In **England**, the Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual) is responsible for qualifications (including vocational ones), examinations and assessments. Ofqual was established in April 2010 following the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009. Following the recommendations of the Wolf Report in 2011, over 6,000

'low-value' FE courses and qualifications have been stripped away.¹²⁵ Ofqual have set out their first and second priorities for 2017–20 to reform general, technical and vocational qualifications.¹²⁶ Functional Skills, which were first introduced in England in September 2010 and fully replaced Key Skills in October 2012, offer training in English, Maths and IT for both vocational and lifelong learning purposes. They have been a mandatory element of Apprenticeships as well as a stand-alone qualification.

Functional Skills are to be reformed by the Government in line with broader changes to the qualification and awards framework, such as the introduction of the new GCSE. As part of Ofqual's third objective of their Corporate Plan 2017–20, they plan to 'set regulatory requirements for reformed Functional Skills qualifications to be taught from 2019' and 'evaluate these new Functional Skills qualifications before they enter the market.'¹²⁷ By 2020, they aim to 'complete the introduction of reformed Functional Skills qualifications.' Ofqual is also working on vocational and technical qualification reform, following *Getting the Job Done: The Government's Reform Plan for Vocational Qualifications* of March 2014,¹²⁸ and the recommendations of the Post-16 Skills Plan of July 2016 based on Lord Sainsbury's review of technical education.¹²⁹ As part of the proposed Quality Partnership, Ofqual will work alongside the Institute for Apprenticeships, the Department for Education, Ofsted and the ESFA to implement these reforms.

The other non-ministerial government department in England is the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) inspects and regulates services that care for children and young people, and services providing education and skills for learners of all ages. It reports directly to Parliament and is independent. It directly contracts with over 1,500 Ofsted Inspectors to carry out inspections of schools and further education and skills provision. Ofsted covers all education outside of Higher Education.

For non-formal adult learning in **England** and **Wales** providers are encouraged to use the RARPA (Recognising And Rewarding Progress and Achievement) approach. Since 2016, in **England** government funding guidance has included information on the RARPA approach linked to QA and inspection regimes.¹³⁰

In **Northern Ireland**, the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) is a 'unitary' inspectorate and part of the Department of Education (DE), providing independent

¹²⁵ UK Government. (2015) *Reviewing Post-16 Education and Training Institutions*. Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/446516/BIS-15-433-reviewing-post-16-education-policy.pdf [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

¹²⁶ Gov. UK. (undated). *Ofqual: about us*. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofqual/about> [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

¹²⁷ Ofqual. (2017). *Corporate Plan 2017-20*. Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/633421/Ofqual-17-6174-Corporate_Plan_2017-20-27.07.17.pdf [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

¹²⁸ Department for Business, Innovation and Skills. (2014). *Getting the Job Done; the government's reform plan for vocational education. Executive summary*. Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/286750/bis-14-577es-vocational-qualification-reform-plan-summary.pdf [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

¹²⁹ Department for Education. (2016). *Post-16 Skills Plan*. Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/536068/56259_Cm_9280_print.pdf [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

¹³⁰ Learning and Work Institute. (2017). *RARPA Guidance and Case Studies*. Available at: <http://www.learningandwork.org.uk/resource/updated-rarpa-guidance-and-case-studies/> [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

inspection services and policy advice for DE. The ETI also provides independent inspection services and policy advice for other government departments including the Department for the Economy and the Department for Communities. The legal basis for ETI's work is set out in The Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 1986 (Articles 102 and 102A). The ETI inspects: the pre-school sector; primary, post primary and special schools; colleges of further education; work-based learning organisations; youth organisations and out-of-school provision

In **Scotland**, Education Scotland is the agency of government responsible for inspection of adult learning including colleges and third sector organisations. A revised How Good is the Learning and Development in Our Community has been issued by Education Scotland in July 2016 as a framework for self-evaluation by those adopting a CLD approach. Skills Development Scotland works with Education Scotland on developing and improving quality assurance processes in relation to developing an appropriate mechanism to ensure the quality of the off-the-job training elements of Modern Apprenticeships and in undertaking quality assurance reviews of the delivery of career management skills through the Careers Information Advice and Guidance reviews.

In **Wales**, the organisation Estyn inspects quality and standards¹³¹. It is a Crown body, established under the Education Act 1992. Estyn is independent of the National Assembly for Wales but receives its funding from the Welsh Government under Section 104 of the Government of Wales Act 1998.

3.5 Future policy developments

Given the devolved nature of adult learning policy making in the UK, it is only possible to summarise the latest policy reforms and priorities on a thematic basis with examples of how these are being implemented in each of the devolved authorities.

These themes are chosen because of their relevance across the UK, although specific examples may be at a sub-national level due to the devolved nature of adult learning and skills planning and funding.

Devolution and place-based approaches. The UK Government is preparing to devolve planning and funding of the adult education budget in England through devolution deals with combined authorities and city regions.¹³² The government believes that local areas are better placed to shape adult education provision in their area as they have a better understanding of employer demand. If done correctly, the government hopes devolution of the adult education budget, set to take place in 2018 to some local areas, will increase economic growth, boost productivity, improve employer engagement, allow for better joining up of local services (such as health and employment support) and promote innovation. It should be noted that the funding of apprenticeships though will remain with

¹³¹ Estyn is a Welsh word meaning 'to reach out' and 'to stretch'

¹³² Sandford, M. (2015) *Cities and Local Government Devolution Bill, 2015-16*. House of Common Library, October 2015. Available at: <http://researchbriefings.parliament.uk/ResearchBriefing/Summary/CBP-7322>

central government in England. As devolution of funding progresses there will be more interest in outcomes-based approaches rather than funding outputs (qualifications).

Area Reviews of Post-16 Education and Training in **England** were set up to examine quality of provision on offer and financial resilience of further education and sixth form colleges. Other providers, such as schools, universities and private training providers, can also be involved if they choose, but only further education and sixth form colleges are bound to respond to recommendations. Area Reviews have catalysed institutional collaboration and mergers, even in places where area reviews had not yet begun.

Across the UK, since the Brexit vote, the uncertainty around European labour mobility has resulted in local areas considering how future skills needs will be met upskilling or prolonging the working lives of current UK residents. This is likely to result in planning for more inclusive approaches to developing learning pathways so that future skills needs will be met. At the same time, devolution in England is likely to mean greater integration of adult learning with planning in those areas where adult learning has an impact: such as health and well-being, social integration, democratic engagement as well as skills.

Apprenticeships remains the flagship policy across the UK. Ostensibly designed for new entrants to the labour market – and associated in the public mind at least with young adults – the majority of take-up has been with adults. But participation by those people disadvantaged in labour market terms in other ways: the disabled, women (in certain sectors), and Black Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) groups has been lower than expected. To address this, the UK government has recently introduced a target for increasing employment level and apprenticeship take-up of BAME people by 20 per cent by 2020. An Apprenticeship (or a Modern Apprenticeship in Scotland) is a programme or work-based learning combined with paid employment. Apprenticeships are marketed as a 'real job' which allows the apprentice to 'earn while they learn'. Apprenticeships can take between one and five years to complete and cover 1,500 job roles. They operate from Level 2 to levels 6/7 (degree level) (equivalent to EQT levels 3-7) Below Level 2 (EQF3). Traineeships have been established in England to form another progression route into Apprenticeships.

Traineeships are a key progression route to employment and Apprenticeships for young people aged 16-24. In 2014/15 academic year there were 19,400 traineeship starts. However, the national progression rate from a Traineeship to an Apprenticeship, is currently around 1 in 4 (25% progression rate).

Co-investment in adult learning. In England the adult education budget has been cut significantly since 2010, but has now been protected in cash terms until 2020. The resulting decline in learner numbers has not picked up despite focus on apprenticeships and policy drivers such as Advanced Learner Loans designed to increase demand. Employer investment in skills has long been an issue. Government and learning providers have struggled to convince employers to invest in education and training. The Government is therefore introducing an Apprenticeship Levy; a new tax on large employers of 0.5% of their annual payroll bill on companies with payrolls of more than £3,000,000 per annum. Government collects the Apprenticeship Levy and employers are able to purchase apprenticeship training through a new Digital Apprenticeship Service. Government is then

able to provide top-ups, for example current plans include a 10% top-up per £1 paid by an employer.

Essential and life skills will remain a priority and become more broadly defined. In England there is an ongoing debate about the appropriateness of generic English and Maths qualifications across all ages has led to a review of so-called 'functional skills'.¹³³ As devolution of funding progresses there will be more interest in outcomes-based approaches rather than funding outputs (qualifications). In the area of digital skills, government has committed to make the UK one of the most digitally-skilled nations. It has committed to fully funded basic digital skills training, answering Learning and Work Institute's call for digital to be recognised as the third essential basic skills alongside literacy and numeracy. The current state of digital inclusion in UK is that approximately 12.6 million adults lack basic digital skills, with the most marginalised/excluded groups making up largest proportion of digitally excluded people. Lack of these skills limit ability of citizens to participate in society, support their families, communicate or retrieve information. The Further Education Learning Technology Action Group report (2013) indicated how important this issue had become for government.¹³⁴ More recently, the House of Lords Digital Skills Committee Make or Break: The UK's Digital Future and Unlocking Potential; the Coates Review of Prison Education indicate how seriously digital skills is being taken by the UK government in a range of educational contexts.

¹³³ Education and training Foundation. (2015). *Reforming Maths and English Functional Skills Qualifications*. Available at: <http://www.et-foundation.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Summary-of-Functional-Skills-reform-programme-for-publication-October-2015-v5-finalBrand-version-2.pdf> [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

¹³⁴ Further Education Learning Technology Action Group (2012). *FELTAG Report Final*. Available at: <http://feltag.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/01/FELTAG-REPORT-FINAL.pdf> [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

4.0 INVESTMENT IN ADULT LEARNING SYSTEMS

4.1 Total investment in adult learning and change over time

The last fully comprehensive analysis of the total investment adult learning at the UK level was undertaken in 2007-08 as part of the Inquiry into the Future for Lifelong Learning. Published in Schuller and Watson (2009) this analysis estimates a total expenditure (shared between individuals, civil society organisations, the private sector, and the state) of £54.88 billion.¹³⁵ What is unusual about such an approach is that it attempts to collate all the contributory factors (outside costing time and capital costs). In this way it includes elements such as publicly funded contributions to training budget through tax relief.

Since 2010 there have been significant reductions in both recurrent and capital budgets across all government spending. It is hard to quantify these across the UK, but estimates are in the regions of 25-30% reductions in funding. Such cuts have not fallen evenly across providers or geographical areas. It should also be noted that austerity measures in related sectors such as local government and civil society organisations has resulted in a diminution of infrastructure that supported the delivery of adult learning. (An example would be the provision of venues or support such as support workers of a crèche.)

For England, headline figures show that government continues to invest heavily in adult learning and skills in England. However, the areas in which it invests is changing dramatically. For example, Advanced Learner Loans have been made available for individuals to undertake designated qualifications with an eligible training organisation in England. For funding year 2015 to 2016 Loans were available to those aged 24 or over for qualifications at Levels 3 and 4 (EQF 4/5) and for the funding year 2016 to 2017 Loans are available for individuals aged 19 or above for qualifications at Levels 3 to 6 (EQF 4/7). Loans give individuals access to financial support for tuition costs similar to that available in higher education (HE). Payments are profiled across a learner's start and end dates and paid to the training organisation each month by the Student Loans Company. This is a move away from funding adult learning to financing it through the taxation system.

In Northern Ireland, the government has made a commitment to review the further education funding model so that it aligns better with other funding streams. The Department for the Economy's 'employment and skills' budget line for 2016-17 is £293m.¹³⁶ In 2014, the FE college sector had an annual turnover of £260 million and operated across 40 campuses¹³⁷. In 2015-16, colleges faced a 6.4% cut in government

¹³⁵ Schuller, T. and Watson, D. (2009). *Learning through Life*, NIACE, Leicester, UK. Summary available at": <http://www.learningandwork.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/Learning-Through-Life-Summary.pdf> [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

¹³⁶ Northern Ireland Executive. (2016). *Budget 2016-17*. Available at: <https://www.northernireland.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/nigov/2016-17-budget-document.pdf> [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

¹³⁷ Colleges NI. (2014). *Response to the Draft Budget 2015-16*. Available at: <http://www.anic.ac.uk/uploads/documents/CNI%20reponse%20to%20DEL%20Draft%20Budget%202015-16.pdf> [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

funding, but was less than the 10.8% anticipated.¹³⁸ Much of the case for a reduction in funding cuts was based on the wider benefits of learning for adults as evidenced through international studies. The Department for the Economy is also the Managing Authority for the Northern Ireland ESF Programme 2014-2020, which has a European funding allocation equivalent to £144 million and a total value of £360 million. The strategic aim of the ESF Programme 2014-2020 is to combat poverty and enhance social inclusion by reducing economic inactivity and to increase the skills base of the adult population. This can create some synergies with the national funding of adult learning in Northern Ireland.

In Scotland, the Further Education Resource budget for 2016-17 is £536.053 million, a small increase on 2015-16.¹³⁹ In addition to funding for further education colleges, the Fair Work, Skills and Training portfolio was created in November 2014, in recognition of fair work as a central element of the Scottish Government's inclusive economic growth agenda, as well as the continuing importance of employability, skills and other forms of work-related training to Scotland's economic ambitions. The majority of the portfolio budget is allocated to support Skills Development Scotland (SDS) to deliver interventions including Modern Apprenticeships (MAs), pre-employment training, careers services, and play a central role in the implementation of 'Developing the Young Workforce – Scotland's Youth Employment Strategy'. The remaining resources are used to fund specific programmes aimed at contributing to reducing youth unemployment by 40 per cent by 2021, including through delivering 30,000 MAs annually by 2020; support employers' contribution to the Youth Employment Strategy; offer support to those furthest from the labour market; challenge inequalities and under-representation in the labour market; and support the Poverty Alliance to increase the adoption of the Living Wage.¹⁴⁰

Community Learning and Development (CLD) is funded by local authorities from their central government grants. The amount varies between local authority areas based on a CLD plan for 2015-18. The first round of plans were evaluated earlier this year.¹⁴¹ In Scotland, individuals who meet the eligibility criteria for an Individual Learning Accounts (ILA) may qualify for £200 a year towards training. This is not a loan, and does not need to be paid back. Over 500 training providers across Scotland are registered to deliver ILA training. In 2014/5, 26,000 people undertook 31,000 courses. Scotland's Employer Recruitment Incentive targets support at unemployed young people with the greatest barriers to employment to enable them to obtain and remain in sustainable employment (including Modern Apprentices). It offers employers up to £4,000 when their company commits to a new job or new MA. The funding is available as a contribution toward the additional costs of recruiting and sustaining a young person during their first 52 weeks of sustainable employment. If the company pays the young person the living wage there will

¹³⁸ Colleges NI. (2014). *Budget cuts to the FE sector confirmed at £12m for 2015/16*. Available at <http://www.anic.ac.uk/uploads/documents/CNI%20Press%20Release%202015-16%20Budget%20Cuts%20-%20Feb%202015.pdf> [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

¹³⁹ Scottish Funding Council. (2016). *Outcome Agreement Funding for Colleges 2016/17*. Available at: http://www.sfc.ac.uk/web/FILES/Announcements/SFCAN072016_Outcomeagreementfundingforcollegesfina/SFCAN_07_2016.pdf [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

¹⁴⁰ Gov. Scot. (2015). *Fair Work Skills and Training*. Available at: <http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2015/12/9056/10> [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

¹⁴¹ Education Scotland. (2017). *Community Learning and Development Planning*. Available at: <https://education.gov.scot/Documents/Aspect-Review-Report-of-CLD-Planning110417.pdf> [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

be an additional payment of £500. As a national minimum, it will be expected that 25% of places allocated to Local Authorities will support young people who are a care leaver or carer, an ex-offender or disabled. The incentive is fully funded by the Scottish Government and is managed and delivered by Local Authorities. Skills Development Scotland administers the programme on behalf of the Government.

In Scotland, the latest figures¹⁴² show an increase in the overall college revenue budget of 2.6% from £536.1 million in 2016/17 to £549.9 million in 2017/18. The final Scottish Budget 2017-18 (approved by the Scottish Parliament on 23 February 2017), the Scottish Government will increase its investment 'to ensure that it continues to add real value to [the] economy and offer opportunities to adults of all age'. This is in addition to funding for Community Learning and Development.

In Wales, The Welsh Government's Framework for Co-investment in Skills (2014) supports the implementation of its policy for rebalancing the responsibility for skills investment. The framework identifies the government-led investments which will continue to provide support for employers to take the lead in the skills needed of their workforce. Between 2011 and 2013, Wales saw total employer expenditure on training increase from £1.5 billion to £1.6 billion. This has helped narrow the gap with other parts of the UK in terms of the level of investment in skills.¹⁴³ Further education colleges received a total post-16 allocation in 2015/16 of £ 274,599,998 – a reduction of more than £18 million compared to 2014/15. This is a 6% cut, which falls disproportionately on adults, as 16-19 programmes are largely protected.¹⁴⁴ The total allocation for adult and community learning (ACL) in 2015/16 was £3,736,624, distributed across 22 local authority areas. A cut of just under 2% from the previous year. Around £10m per annum is allocated to centres that teach the Welsh language to adults.¹⁴⁵ Total funding allocations for work-based learning (WBL) apprenticeships and traineeships is £135,500,085 in 2016/17. WBL also included funding for the 16-month period (April 2015-July 2016): £3m for other work-based learning, and £325,000 for Essential Skills in the Community.¹⁴⁶

As has been noted earlier, across the UK there is a great deal of policy interest in co-investment, where the responsibility for funding workplace learning is shared between the state, employers, and individuals. Government generally sees its role (and public funding) as addressing market failures; that is, those areas that individuals and employers will not fund for themselves. This has prioritised funding for learning below level 2 (EQF level 3) and for younger adults. In some priority sectors (where jobs growth is anticipated) short

¹⁴² Scottish Funding Council. (2017). *Outcome Agreement Funding for Colleges 2017/18*. Available at: http://www.sfc.ac.uk/web/FILES/Announcements_SFCAN022017/Indicative_college_funding_announcement_A_Y_2017-18.pdf [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

¹⁴³ Welsh Government. (2014). *Framework for Co-Investment in Skills*. Available at: <http://gov.wales/docs/dcells/publications/141120-framework-for-co-investment-in-skills-en.pdf> [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

¹⁴⁴ Colleges Wales. (2015). *Further Education Funding*. Available at: <http://www.collegeswales.ac.uk/File/199/en-GB> [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

¹⁴⁵ Welsh Government. (2015). *Post-16 Allocations*. Available at: <http://gov.wales/topics/educationandskills/learningproviders/post-16-planning-and-funding/allocations/post-16-allocations/?lang=en> [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

¹⁴⁶ Welsh Government. (2017). *Work-based Learning Contracts 2015-19*. Available at <http://gov.wales/topics/educationandskills/learningproviders/workbasedlearning/wbl-contracts-2015-to-2019/?lang=en> [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

term initiative based funding is often available. The best example of this are the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) -based industries.

To drive co-investment by employers, the UK Government announced plans for an apprenticeship levy in 2015. Legislation was introduced in 2016 and the levy itself was payable from April 2017 onwards. The levy will apply to all UK employers in both the private and public sectors with annual salary bills of more than £3,000,000. Employers with an annual salary bill smaller than this will not pay the levy. The levy will be charged at a rate of 0.5% of an employer's pay bill. Levy payments will be collected monthly by HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) through Pay as You Earn (PAYE), payable alongside tax and National Insurance.

The UK Government estimates that 2% of employers will be eligible to pay the levy, raising up to £3billion per annum by 2019-20. Of this, it estimates that £2.5billion will be spent in England, with the remaining £500m allocated to devolved administrations in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Skills Development Scotland (SDS) is engaging with Scottish Government; employers and partners ahead of the levy's introduction. The Scottish Government will consult with employers on the best use of the levy to support apprenticeships in Scotland. As the CEDEFOP adult financing database notes there are levies already in existence for the construction industry, the engineering construction industry (both supported by legislation in the Industrial Relations Act, 1964) and a voluntary scheme for the film industry. The same source estimates corporation tax relief for companies investing in training as overall annual cost for the instrument from public sources in tax year 2009/10 as totalling £3.38m (comprising relief on direct training costs: £1.73 million, and relief for wages of employees undertaking training £1.66 million). No statistics are collected on this by UK government and no targets set.

Professional and Career Development Loans are available across the UK via commercial banks for courses up to two years in duration.¹⁴⁷ The most recent figures for usage are for 2013-14 when 8,400 loans were taken out.¹⁴⁸

4.2 Public national investment

¹⁴⁷ Skills Funding Agency. (2015). *Professional and Career Development Loans*. Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/538864/pcdl_bp.pdf [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

¹⁴⁸ Gov. UK. (2014) *Professional and Career Development Loans 2013-14*. Available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/professional-and-career-development-loans-2013-to-2014> [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

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Table 4.1: Breakdown of public national investment

Title of public investment source	Source of funding	Amount of funding	Targeted number of participants	Targeted level of provision	Start/ end date
19+ Apprenticeships (England)	Department for Education (DfE)	£1,076,004,000	No target set at national level	EQF 3-5	2017/18
Adult Education Budget (England)	DfE	£1,503,000,000	No target set at national level	EQF 0 - 4	2017/18
Advanced Learner Loans (England)	DfE	£325,000,000	No target set at national level	EQF 4-5	2017/18
Offender Learning and Skills (England)	Ministry of Justice	£130,350,000	No target set at national level	EQF 0 - 4	2017/18
Support funding (England)	DfE	£405,921,000	No target set at national level	EQF 0 - 4	2017/18
Digital Growth Fund (Scotland)	Scottish Government (SG)	£36,000,000	NA	NA	2018/21
16+ Apprenticeships (Scotland)	SG	£100,000,000	27,000 pa rising to 30,000 in 2020	EQF 3 - 5	2017/20
Flexible Workforce Development Fund	SG	£10,000,000	NA	NA	2016/20
Apprenticeships (Wales)	Welsh Government (WG)	£111,500,000	100,000 (by May 2021)	EQF 3 - 5	2017/18
Further Education Colleges (Northern Ireland)	Department for Economy NI	£170,000,000(£140,000,000 college funding; £30,000 training Apprenticeship)	90,000 (Source: Colleges NI)	EQF 0 - 5	2016/17
Colleges Revenue Budget (Scotland)	Scottish Funding Council	£549,900,000	116,000 full time equivalent college places	EQF 0 - 5	2017/18

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Work and Health Programme	Department for Work and Pensions (DWP)	£130,000,000	NA	NA	2019/20
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4.3 EU support via structural funds (primarily ESF)

4.3.1 *Structural fund support planned as part of 2014-2020 financial framework*

The European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) Growth Programme provides funds to help local areas stimulate growth. The funds support investment in innovation, businesses, skills and employment to improve local growth and create jobs. The European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) led by Department for Communities & Local Government (DCLG). The European Social Fund (ESF) led by Department for Work & Pensions (DWP).¹⁴⁹ The European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) led by Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (DEFRA). The European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF) led by the Marina Management Organisation.

The United Kingdom is using ESF funding to reduce inactivity among young people and the long-term unemployed and to improve training and skills. It is also investing in education and lifelong learning, and is promoting social inclusion by fighting poverty and discrimination. During 2014-2020, the ESF and European Regional Development Fund are investing around €11.8 billion across the UK. The ESF share of €4.9 billion is funding six operational programmes in Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland, England and Gibraltar, and includes €206 million for the Youth Employment Initiative (YEI).¹⁵⁰

4.3.2 *EU support via structural funds (primarily ESF) provided as part of 2007-2013 financial framework*

Currently, the European Social Fund is seen as important across the UK to support a number of projects aimed at raising skills and job prospects. ESF supports the European Union's goal of increasing employment by giving unemployed and disadvantaged people the training and support they need to enter jobs. The ESF also equips the workforce with the skills needed by business in a competitive global economy. The devolved administrations and devolved authorities in England adopt a strategic commissioning role as opposed to a direct delivery role. This approach aims to create a more coherent and integrated portfolio of programmes at national, regional and local level.

In 2007-13, the UK had 22 regional programmes under both the Convergence and Regional Competitiveness and Employment Objectives. Of these, 16 received funding from the ERDF, with 6 programmes funded by the ESF. The supported areas were: West Wales

¹⁴⁹ DWP. (2015). *European Social Fund: operational programme 2014-2020*. Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/461596/ESF_Operational_Programme_2014_-_2020_V.01.pdf [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

¹⁵⁰ European Commission. (2016). *ESF in the United Kingdom*. Available at: <http://ec.europa.eu/esf/main.jsp?catId=381> [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

and the Valleys, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly, and the Highlands and Islands (under the Convergence Objective), and East Wales, Lowlands and Uplands of Scotland, Northern Ireland, Gibraltar, East England, East Midlands, London, Merseyside, North East England, North West England, South East England, South West England, South Yorkshire, West Midlands, and Yorkshire and Humberside (under the Regional Competitiveness and Employment Objective.) Details of the ERDF funding for England and minutes of meetings can be found on the UK government website (last updated 2013).¹⁵¹ Evaluation reports (last updated 2016) are presented on a regional basis rather than England-wide.¹⁵² In terms of ESF, the 2007 to 2013 England ESF programme invested a total £2.5 billion of European funding in jobs and skills. Priority groups for support included: young people not in education, employment or training; families with multiple problems; offenders; and, people with low skill levels. By the end of May 2015 there had been over 5.59 million participant starts on the programme and over: 521,000 unemployed or inactive participants have been helped into jobs; 262,000 participants gained basic skills; 682,000 participants gained qualifications at level 2 or above; 533,000 disadvantaged young people helped to enter employment, education or training.¹⁵³ According to the data on financial support to the Member States between 2014 and 2020, available in July, 2016 for the European Commission from Operational Programmes for the European Social Fund (ESF), the planned financial support from the European Union for the investment priority most directly targeting adult learning, i.e. Investment priority 10.3 – Enhancing access to lifelong learning, is EUR 1.4 billion.

For example, in **Northern Ireland**, there are a number of evaluations as well as an innovative review of 'soft outcomes' on ESF programmes 2007-13¹⁵⁴. The Annual Implementation Report (2014) lists the number of beneficiaries by basic skills qualification gained, level 2 qualifications gained, and level 3 qualifications gained.¹⁵⁵ In **Wales** the Audit Office review¹⁵⁶ of 2007-13 programmes has detailed analyses of skills gained by beneficiaries at a number of levels (including basic skills and level 2 [EQF 3]). In Scotland there appears to be no overarching study, but Annual Implementation Reports for the two regions can be found on the Scottish Government's website. These include skills levels gained.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵¹ Gov. UK (2013). *ERDF Guidance 2007-13 Programmes and Resources (withdrawn August 2017)*. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/erdf-programmes-and-resources> [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

¹⁵² Gov. UK (2013). *ERDF Programmes Progress and Achievements*. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/erdf-programmes-progress-and-achievements> [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

¹⁵³ Gov. UK (2013). *ESF 2007-13 (withdrawn August 2017)*. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/european-social-fund-2007-to-2013> [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

¹⁵⁴ Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency. (2014). *Review of the Measurement of Soft Outcomes in the ESF Programme for Northern Ireland 2007-13*. Available at: https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/del/Review%20of%20the%20Measurement%20of%20Soft%20Outcomes%20in%20the%20ESF%20Programme%20for%20Northern%20Ireland%202007-2013_1.pdf [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

¹⁵⁵ DELNI. (2014). *Northern Ireland ESF 2007-13: implementation report 2014*. Available at: <https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/del/northern-ireland-european-social-fund-programme-2007-to-2013-annual-implementation-report-2014.pdf> [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

¹⁵⁶ Auditor General for Wales. (2014). *European Union Structural Funds in Wales 2007-8*. Available at: https://www.wao.gov.uk/system/files/publications/WAO_EU_Structural_Funding_English_2013.pdf [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

¹⁵⁷ Gov. Scot. (undated). *Annual Implementation Reports*. Available at: <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Business-Industry/support/17404/AIRs> [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

4.4 Effectiveness of investment

At the UK policy level, it is hard to assess the effectiveness of an approach to investment that is increasingly devolved. In fact, the UK as a whole has moved away from setting precise targets at a national level. Increasingly, the approach in all four nations has been to allocate funding against policy priorities (and / or entitlements) and agree outcomes with individual providers. As outcomes become more generic (such as gaining a sustainable job), the output (such as a qualification) that contributes to that outcome becomes less important. With devolution of adult learning funding in England (to city-regions or combined authorities), there will be opportunities to combine adult education budgets with those currently ring-fenced for health and employability. It should also be noted that publicly available funding data varies across the UK. The lack of comparable data makes it difficult to assess the effectiveness of particular policies.

In England, despite extensive impact assessment undertaken by government prior to their introduction¹⁵⁸ and in May 2016,¹⁵⁹ the effectiveness of Advanced Learner Loans has been contested.¹⁶⁰ Recent articles in the education media suggest that Advanced Learner Loans have not been taken up, with the current estimate (22.09.2017) being £1bn since 2013 in England. The other main change is the removal of budget lines within what is now called the Adult Education Budget (AEB). One of these is the Community Learning budget worth £200m per annum and focussed on non-vocational, largely non-formal learning. This has been presented as an opening out of the larger budget to the type of approaches that have been successful in the area of Community Learning with relatively high levels of participation and learner satisfaction.¹⁶¹ Recent media articles (29.09.2017) also report an underspend in the AEB of £200m due to ineffective procurement practice.¹⁶²

The Welsh Government has established a comprehensive Quality and Effectiveness Framework to review the impact of post-16 policy implementation. This includes equalities impact assessments on specific aspects of policy.¹⁶³ However, the overarching impact of funding decisions in Wales, as with the rest of the UK, has been the decline in publicly funded, part-time learning opportunities for adults. As Colleges Wales report in its FE Funding Paper (October 2015): 'The latest figures from the Welsh Government (2013/14) show a total of 222,620 individuals in learning at college, in the workplace or in the peak

¹⁵⁸ Gov. UK. (2012). *24+ Advanced Learning [sic] Loans: impact assessment*. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/advanced-learning-loans-for-people-aged-24-or-older> [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

¹⁵⁹ Department for Business Innovation and Skills. (2016). *Evaluation of 24+ Advanced Learning Loans: an assessment of the first year*. Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/522875/BIS-16-22-evaluation-of-24+-advanced-learning-loans-an-assessment-of-the-first-year.pdf [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

¹⁶⁰ Learning and Work Institute. (2015). *Advanced Learning loans are "not working"*. Available at: <http://www.learningandwork.org.uk/our-thinking/news/advanced-learning-loans-are-not-working> [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

¹⁶¹ Skills Funding Agency. (2015). *FE Choices: community learning survey report*. Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/532805/FE_Choices_Community_Learning_Survey_Report_June_2015.pdf [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

¹⁶² FE Week. (2017). *ESFA finds additional AEB funding in effort to solve funding chaos*. Available at: <https://feweek.co.uk/2017/09/29/esfa-finds-additional-aeb-funding-in-effort-to-solve-tender-chaos/> [Accessed: 9 October 2017] [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

¹⁶³ Welsh Government. (2015). *Quality and Effectiveness Framework*. Available at: <http://gov.wales/topics/educationandskills/learningproviders/raisingqualityandstandards/?lang=en> [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

from which the year on year decline started... [As] 63% of the part-time learner population over the age of 25 in Wales' colleges are women...it follows that a cut in funding for part time adult learners falls disproportionately on women.'¹⁶⁴ Following the Hazelkorn Review, the Welsh Government is consulting on the possibility of a single tertiary funding body for post-16 education and training.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶⁴ Colleges Wales (October 2015), *Further Education Funding; Briefing Paper*.

¹⁶⁵ Welsh Government. (2017). *Public Good and a Prosperous Wales*. Available at: https://consultations.gov.wales/sites/default/files/consultation_doc_files/170620_reformed_pcet_system_final_en.pdf [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

5.0 ASSESSMENT OF EXISTING POLICY

The following sub-sections assess the existing policy through the lens of the six key success factors for effective adult learning policy that have been identified in a recent study.¹⁶⁶

5.1 Develop learners' interest in learning

Promotion of adult learning of all kinds continues to be a key element within adult learning policies in the UK and their implementation. Within that broad field investment in promoting adult learning has a) focused on VET (and in particular apprenticeships), and b) younger adults. Nationwide, prime-time TV Apprenticeships advertisements are common (during, for example, international football matches), alongside significant investment in the development of the Apprenticeship 'brand' and its promotion. Apprenticeships are promoted as both learning and work ('earn while you learn'); an employment opportunity ('an apprenticeship is a real job'); and as an alternative to familiar progression routes (such as to higher education, which requires an income contingent loan for most people in the UK). As the European Commission's document An in-depth analysis of adult learning policies and their effectiveness in Europe notes: 'one of the most effective outcomes of adult learning pathways in England was the connection that was made between work and learning. This connection was identified as being important for making learning attractive for participants because it made learning directly relevant to them.'. This comment is accurate for the UK as a whole. Adult Learners' Week and other learning festivals continue to be supported by policy makers in all parts of the UK (except Northern Ireland where support has been withdrawn). These events celebrate learning (and role models) and provide opportunities for over 100,000 taster events per annum (across England and Wales alone).

This aspect of providing appropriate introductory learning experiences for learners was a key component of co-funding by the UK administrations and ESF Technical Assistance. Festivals of Learning in England, Wales, and Scotland have developed to show the interconnectedness of all types of learning, but these are underfunded compared to Skills Show UK, Apprenticeships Week and other vocational training promotions. Culturally, with a market economy such as the UK's, it may be easier to promote a product like a job role as opposed to a process such as learning. Whatever the reason, it is clear policy makers a) see the need to promote adult skills, b) see the need to target these promotions, c) see the need to focus on employment-related outcomes. (Learning for health, for example, is seen as the province of 'public health education' budgets: such as healthy eating campaigns, rather than improved health as an outcome of informal or non-formal learning.)

¹⁶⁶ Key success factors, indicating the strength of evidence (available in all EU languages): <https://epale.ec.europa.eu/en/policy-tool/key-success-factors>. Study "An in-depth analysis of adult learning policies and their effectiveness in Europe" by EC (2015): <https://epale.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/final-report-20150817-en.pdf>

The previous Prime Minister's thinking on a Life Chances Strategy,¹⁶⁷ is central to designing a lifelong learning strategy that is responsive to learner aspiration and need. It is yet to be seen whether this will be taken up by the new administration. All parts of the UK invest in the structured provision of impartial advice and guidance (separate from the expectations placed on learning providers at an institutional level). These services, devolved to the four administrations, are all called 'careers' services; that is to say, there is a clear focus on supporting people into employment (but they are not connected to the UK employment service, Jobcentre Plus) or to progress at work. The approaches across the UK are very different, with the difference based more on organisational factors than the differing needs of clients. For example, there are differences in careers services offered by age (some are all age services, some not); differences based in approach (face-to-face, online, web-search facilities, career development learning activities); levels of resourcing; support for careers service workforce development. A key element of learning systems in the UK is the engagement of social partners in planning and promotion. Adaptable materials are made available with strong branding and high-quality production values.

5.2 Increase employers' investment in learning

To drive co-investment by employers, the UK Government announced plans for an Apprenticeship Levy payable from April 2017 onwards. The levy will apply to all UK employers in both the private and public sectors with annual salary bills of more than £3,000,000. Levy payments will be collected monthly through the taxation system. There are levies already in existence for the construction industry, the engineering construction industry, and a voluntary scheme for the film industry.

The Apprenticeship Levy has raised some interesting policy tensions between devolved and non-devolved aspect of skills policy. Training levies and their collection are a matter reserved to the UK Government, whereas skills policy including responsibility for apprenticeships is devolved. For example, the Scottish Government assert that the UK Government took the decision to introduce the Apprenticeship Levy without prior consultation with them. The Scottish Government has introduced a Flexible Workforce Development Fund, alongside skills support for priority sectors in the Scottish economy such as digital, care and early years.¹⁶⁸

Although a taxation-based approach may be indicative of government's frustration with some employers, there have been a number of incentives to support employers' involvement in the adult learning system, as well as their investment in learning. According to CEDEFOP (2016), Corporation Tax relief for companies investing in training as overall annual cost for the instrument from public sources in tax year 2009/10 as totalling £3.38m (comprising relief on direct training costs: £1.73 million, and relief for wages of employees

¹⁶⁷ Gov. UK. (2016). *Prime Minister's Speech on Life Chances*. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/prime-ministers-speech-on-life-chances> [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

¹⁶⁸ Scottish Government. (2017). *Response to the UK Government Apprenticeship Levy*. Available at: <http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2017/01/2588> [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

undertaking training £1.66 million). The Apprenticeship Grant for Employers¹⁶⁹ is another tool, as well as the development in England of Local Enterprise Partnerships to ensure employers are involved in planning the system, as well as applying for funding such as the Growth Deal¹⁷⁰.

5.3 Improve equity of access for all

Technical and Further Education reforms increasingly address the vocational-academic divide and the need to ensure the UK workforce has the Intermediate level and above (EQF 4+) technical skills particularly in growth sectors. The driver is relative low UK productivity compared to Germany and the USA as well uncertainty over geographical labour mobility post-Brexit. This is being addressed at UK level, in the devolved nations, and through increased devolution within countries at city, sub-regional, and city region levels. Within this, there is a continued focus on Apprenticeships in terms of target numbers, as well as who participates. For example, a recent government sub-committee report for Education, Skills and the Economy highlighted concerns about focussing on the quantum of participation whilst ignoring underrepresentation by ethnicity or gender. Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic people are half as likely to succeed as their white counterparts in their apprenticeship applications. Of the 17,500 successful engineering apprenticeship applicants, only 600 were women. Apprenticeships as the flagship UK employment and skills policy shows some of the same weaknesses around unequal participation as the rest of post-compulsory education and training.¹⁷¹

Since 2015 adult education providers in 62 local authorities in England have been testing out whether short, part-time community learning courses help people develop strategies to manage their mild to moderate mental health problems. The initiative is funded with up to £20 million over two years (equivalent to 10% of the total Community Learning budget). Department for Education (DfE) leads the initiative, which was announced in the 2014 UK Government's Autumn Statement.¹⁷² The project is due to report in November 2017.

As the equalities impact assessment for the Post-16 Skills Plan for England points out, the factors influencing the educational attainment of certain ethnic groups are complex and may include any or all of socio-economic factors, parental education and aspirations, low expectations, poor attendance, perceived prejudice and higher levels of school exclusions. There is a specific target aimed at increasing the proportion of apprentices who are from

¹⁶⁹ Gov. UK. (undated). *Apprenticeship Grant for Employers; factsheet*. Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/512865/AGE_Employer_Factsheet.pdf [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

¹⁷⁰ Gov. UK. (2016). *Greg Clark offers communities multi-million pound offer to boost local growth*. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/greg-clark-offers-communities-multi-billion-pound-offer-to-boost-local-growth> [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

¹⁷¹ Parliament. UK. (2017). *Apprenticeships*. Available at: <https://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201617/cmselect/cmese/206/20602.htm> [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

¹⁷² HM Treasury (2014) *Autumn Statement*. Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/382327/44695_Accessible.pdf [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

Black Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) backgrounds – specifically, to increase the proportion of BAME apprentices by 20% to 11.9% of total starts by 2020.¹⁷³

The Casey Review (2016)¹⁷⁴ highlighted the link between integration and learning English based, in part, on surveys of the UK population. This view has not gone unchallenged with some practitioners who stress the importance of learners defining their own learning outcomes.

In Northern Ireland, the Further Education Means Business strategy (2004) outlined a role for further education enhancing social cohesion. The primary and secondary educational system in Northern Ireland is divided on religious grounds, by academic selection, and gender. As with other parts of the UK, further education is often the first time many students get the opportunity to learn and work with people from other backgrounds.

In Scotland the targeting of students is written into the funding letter to colleges; that 20% of students should come from the lowest 20% of people in terms of wealth. How institutions achieve this is down to their own approaches. Such outcome-based approaches are becoming more common and are expected to form a large part of devolved planning arrangements in England.

5.4 Deliver learning that is relevant

The advent of a UK Digital Strategy¹⁷⁵ (2017) is seen as an important cross-governmental initiative but it is too early to see whether it will break down policy and planning siloes.¹⁷⁶

In England, the Post-16 Skills Plan continues to restate the need to ensure the voice of employers is reflected in policy-making. The role of Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) is seen as crucial to this as they provide an employer-voice at the planning stage, not just as a customer for learning provision. The Commission for Adult Vocational Teaching and Learning¹⁷⁷; stressed the importance of partnerships between industry and adult learning providers, including a more dynamic relationship between staff in both sectors.

In other areas of public policy, government has supported piloting of approaches such as the Citizens' Curriculum¹⁷⁸ (based on learner choice and the attainment of capabilities) as a means of delivering what employers and learners want. The recent reform of the Adult

¹⁷³ UK Government (2016) *Technical education reform: assessment of equalities impact*. Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/536072/Technical_Education_Reform-Assessment_Of_Equalities_Impact.pdf [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

¹⁷⁴ Department for Communities and Local Government. (2016). *The Casey Review*. Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/575973/The_Casey_Review_Report.pdf [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

¹⁷⁵ Gov. UK. (2016). *UK Digital Strategy*. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-digital-strategy> (accessed 29.05.17) [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

¹⁷⁶ Learning and Work Institute. (2017). *Action to Tackle Britain's Digital Divide*. Available at: <http://www.learningandwork.org.uk/2017/03/01/action-tackle-britains-digital-skills-divide/> [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

¹⁷⁷ CAVTL. (2013). *It's about work... Excellent adult vocational teaching and learning*. Available at: <http://cavtl.excellencegateway.org.uk/about> [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

¹⁷⁸ Learning and Work Institute. (undated). *Citizens' Curriculum Case Studies*. Available at: <http://www.learningandwork.org.uk/resource/citizens-curriculum-case-studies/>

Education Budget in England, and the move towards outcomes-based funding, has meant a renewed interest in how providers assure quality in non-accredited learning. There has been a revival of interest in approaches like RARPA (Recognising And Rewarding Progress and Achievement), which is based on learners setting their own objectives (within the context of the course).

5.5 Deliver learning that is of high quality

Overall, the quality framework across the UK is rigorous, based on self-assessment, use of data, and inspection by government officials (working to agreed inspection frameworks). With increased devolution of skills delivery, it will be interesting to see whether tensions develop between national views of quality via inspection and what learners/employers regard as a high-quality learning experience at a local level.

Across the UK, there is a tension between the provision of high-quality learning and austerity measures that have resulted in funding cuts for adult learning providers. In **Northern Ireland** many public sector organisations had substantial budget cuts, leading to 500 lecturers leaving their posts. In **Wales**, a process of mergers, rationalisation and regionalisation has led to leaders' concerns about ongoing capacity to deliver.¹⁷⁹ In England, in 2015 the UK Parliament raised serious concerns about the financial viability of further education colleges.¹⁸⁰

The adult learning workforce is regulated and supported differently in the four administrations. In England, there have been recent moves towards deregulation. Initial Teacher Training largely focuses on curriculum delivery rather than curriculum development. This could mean that the workforce is more familiar with a role of delivering centrally planned and set curricula, rather than developing their own that are responsive to learners' and employers' needs. Moves in England towards a 'dual-professionalism', where teachers have a vocational trade too, have been broadly welcomed. This is seen as crucial so that teachers remain up-to-date with industrial innovation and best practice.

In **Northern Ireland**, all permanent lecturers have to obtain recognized teaching qualifications. This has been extended to those in the private training sector who are government funded. The recent trend to employ lecturers on term-time and zero-hour casual contractual arrangements also has the potential to seriously impact on quality of learning.

¹⁷⁹ James, D & Unwin, L. (2016) *Fostering High Quality Vocational Further Education in Wales* (Commissioned by the Minister via the Public Policy Institute for Wales) Available at: <http://ppi.w.org.uk/report-publication-fostering-high-quality-vocational-further-education-fe-in-wales/> [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

¹⁸⁰ Parliament. UK. (2015). *Serious concerns about future of further education*. Available at: <https://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/public-accounts-committee/news-parliament-2015/financial-sustainability-in-further-education-report-published-15-16/> [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

5.6 **Ensure coherent policy**

Devolution presents the best opportunity for a coordinated lifelong learning policy that has a positive effect on people's lives. Given the devolved nature of education and skills policy-making and planning, there are few opportunities—other than through the UK taxation system – for one lifelong learning policy that engages all government ministries. At a sub-national level (in relatively small countries in terms of population) there are opportunities through the Programmes for Government in Northern Ireland and Scotland, which set high-level indicators that adult learning can help achieve. But in reality, this does not constitute a lifelong learning policy. In local areas, there have been initiatives to link adult learning to the achievement of goals in policing, community safety, children's learning, drug use, health, and employability. However, these are effective precisely because they are local and relatively easy to measure. The UK government has consistently supported a knowledge base as to what works in adult learning, but this is configured differently in different parts of the UK.

Although devolution has many benefits in linking adult learning with relevant socio-economic policies in local areas, there are some disbenefits. For example, it was disappointing that Wales and Scotland decided not to take part in the most recent OECD Survey of Adult Skills. 'UK' data were presented as either 'UK-England' or 'UK-Northern Ireland'. UK economy and society as a whole has as many points of commonality as divergence, so it appears inefficient to analyse devolved administrations separately. The closure of the UK Commission on Employment and Skills has led to a lack of capacity in analysis at the UK level. Overall, there is a strong belief in evidence-based policy making, but there is currently no compendium of research that would help government take a more holistic view of the role and impact of adult learning in the UK.

6.0 STRENGTH AND WEAKNESSES OF THE ADULT EDUCATION SYSTEM

6.1 Strengths

A commitment to evidence-based policy and international benchmarking

The UK as a whole (and the devolved administrations to differing extents) shows a commitment to evidence-based approaches to policy-making, ongoing research into what works, and to international benchmarking (despite Scotland and Wales not taking part in the most recent OECD Survey of Adult Skills). In fact, the PIAAC survey showed 9 million adults have low literacy, numeracy or both and over 12 million lack basic digital skills. Policy-makers have embraced these findings looking at how they affect life chances, prosperity and social inclusion. The UK Government has now committed to free digital training, making it the third basic skill alongside literacy and numeracy. We also know that 6 million UK citizens are paid below the Living Wage (1m more than if we were at the OECD average). This is related to low productivity and the government policy on Universal Credit, as it is implemented, provides a mechanism to give more support to people in low-paid jobs to progress at work.

Devolution means planning is close to the end user

Local Enterprise Partnerships, Combined Authorities, City Deals, and local councils have a unique opportunity, working in partnership with employers and training providers to provide more flexible and responsive employment and skills services. The government believes that local areas are better placed to shape adult learning provision in their area as they have a better understanding of employer demand. If done correctly, the government hopes devolution of the adult education budget, set to take place in 2018 to some local areas, will increase economic growth, boost productivity, improve employer engagement, allow for better joining up of local services (such as health and employment support) and promote innovation. Linking adult learning to 'right-size' socio-economic planning should lead to more effective adult learning interventions to adults.

Focus on disadvantaged groups through targeted policy-interventions

Although participation in learning is relatively high compared to other European countries, it is highly diverse, depending on prior educational attainment, job level, disabilities, and where people live. All parts of the UK seeking to address this through targeted policies aimed at those groups least likely to participate in adult learning. All administrations are committed to give employment opportunities for people with health problems and disabilities – committed to halving the disability employment rate gap by 2020 – but more effort is needed.

UK government has a target to increase employment level and apprenticeship take-up of BAME people by 20 per cent by 2020. Reforms in the criminal justice system to make education a more central part of the prison system have recently begun.

6.2 Weaknesses

Constant systems reframing and 'machinery of government' changes lead to instability and lack of long-term planning

The UK system is characterised by constant changes to the system at a number of levels: ministry/departmental, agencies of government, the role of status of organisations (such as whether colleges part of the public sector or not, or the role of careers services), the professional status of practitioners, and the entitlements of learners. Some of these changes are necessary responses to the economic situation, whereas others are political or technocratic (such as the creation of two funding agencies from one in England). The lack of a long-term policy, adopted across the political spectrum, leads to short-term ministerial interventions linked to personal knowledge and experience. The brevity of tenure for ministers (average 2-3 years) lead to short-termism and flagship 'legacy' projects, as well as the rejection of successful policies instigated by political opponents.

The possible impact of 'Brexit' on overall planning and decision-making in adult learning is not being addressed yet. The impact of Brexit has become a major concern for sector representative bodies, providers and local planners. Uncertainties over funding and labour mobility are the salient concerns.

Lack of integration of employment and skills policy

Currently, employment and skills systems run on a twin-track approach led by a range of ministries and agencies across the UK. This fragmentation leads to inefficiencies and a tardiness in addressing needs. For example, government is committed to halving the gap employment for people with health problems and disabilities by 2020, but on current rates of progress this will take 200 years. In England, Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) and local authorities set their local growth strategies separately from how they plan to raise skills and career aspirations in their areas. The two need to be joined up. There are encouraging signs in Scotland in terms of regional planning. The work of both the Scottish Funding Council and Skills Development Scotland is becoming closely integrated around a wider skills and workforce development agenda. This has closer relationships with industry and business support agencies such as Scottish Enterprise and the Highlands and Islands Enterprise. There is much to be learned from this approach.¹⁸¹

Lack of co-investment in learning and skills provision

Across the UK there have been significant cuts to the public funding adult learning provision, leading to calls for greater co-investment by employers and individuals. In England, the adult education budget has been cut significantly since 2010, but has now been protected in cash terms until 2020. The resulting decline in learner numbers has not picked up despite focus on apprenticeships and policy drivers such as Advanced Learner Loans designed to increase demand in England. Employer investment in skills has long

¹⁸¹ Keep, E. (2016.) *Skills Planning: Scotland Case Study*, Oxford: Oxford University, SKOPE (mimeo) Available at: <http://www.ucl.ac.uk/ioe/departments-centres-centres/centre-for-post14-education-and-work/projects/fe-skills-four-countries-uk/pdf/scottish-skills-planning-overview> [Accessed: 9 October 2017]

Independent national experts network in the area of adult education/adult skills
Full country report – United Kingdom

been an issue. Government and learning providers have struggled to convince employers to invest in education and training. It will be interesting to see how the Apprenticeship Levy, implemented in different ways across the UK, is able to alleviate this situation.

7.0 FURTHER POLICY REFORMS AND ORIENTATIONS NEEDED

The UK faces a number of key challenges for its adult learning system. The first of these is the nature of devolution of education and skills has led to a number of different approaches being taken in a piecemeal fashion that are not addressing a common problem in terms of equality of access. Where approaches have been successful, they are not always adopted in other parts of the UK (or even locally within those administrations). Where there has been a UK-wide commitment to an approach (around Apprenticeships) it has been more successful in ensuring consistency of approach. The challenge therefore is to provide better knowledge-exchange between administrations so that policy-makers can learn from good practice elsewhere.

The UK requires a long-term policy and strategy to ensure its international competitiveness and achievement of benchmarks in lifelong learning. This should be supported by an annual State of the Nation report that shows progress against agreed targets across the devolved administrations and the overall impact of adult learning. Such an approach would build on good practice across the UK, and be supported by a common approach to research and analysis to create synergies and cost-efficiencies. The strategy should work across government and include the government's own workforce, and arm's length agencies funded by the tax-payer, such as the BBC.

Across the UK, educational achievement and earnings are closely related to family background. To enable everyone to reach their full potential we need to break this link. Family and community learning approaches can support this agenda but need to be integrated with other family support services and strategies. School reforms are important, to ensure everyone gets the basics and education that opens up opportunities. But so too are efforts to make sure that groups such as care leavers and young carers access adult learning. For this reason, any overarching lifelong learning strategy must take into account a Life Chances approach, not just in terms of the role the statutory education phase plays in preparing adults for life, but the guidance and support disadvantaged groups (such as young adult carers) are given at this time.

Currently, employment and skills systems run on a twin-track approach led by a range of ministries and agencies across the UK. This fragmentation leads to inefficiencies and a tardiness in addressing need. For example, government is committed to halving the gap employment for people with health problems and disabilities by 2020, but on current rates of progress this will take 200 years. More effort is needed, more joined-up support, and sustained investment. Approximately half of benefit claimants in this category have no qualifications. Many have been out of the labour market for 5-10 years so need work experience and employability support. As learning benefits health and wellbeing more generally so it should be integrated into wider health support. Some progress is being made on this at local levels but it needs an overarching national commitment, more resource and support. For those in work, 6m people are paid below the Living Wage (1m more than the OECD average), so as part of an integrated employment and skills offer the UK needs tailored support for people to advance while in the workforce. Successful approaches like mid-life careers reviews, personal / individual learning accounts, the role

of workplace learning advocates / union learning representatives should be rolled into the overall plan.

Local delivery for unemployed people could be developed by improving: local flexibility and innovation within Jobcentre Plus – through addressing local barriers, giving permission to Districts and offices to innovate, improving capability, and encouraging collaboration between Districts; establishing a 'datalab' to make it easier to measure impact; refreshing resources for local areas; shaping the wider market – opening out internal 'what works' resources to the wider market; considering the case for a new 'innovation fund' to stimulate innovation; and engaging providers more in generating evidence and sharing learning. Government needs to set a clear national framework for Local Labour Market Agreements, setting out accountabilities, responsibilities, outcomes and resourcing, underpinned by clear national standards. This should also be underpinned by Invest-to-Save principles: using the savings from future benefit payments to fund adequately back-to-work services.

The challenge is how the UK learning system will provide the type of skills that will be needed in growth sectors such as science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) industries. The challenge here is to move from the sophisticated analysis of local labour markets to action that enables growth in an inclusive way.

The second challenge is the decline in recurrent funding and infrastructure that has traditionally supported adult learning as other parts of the public sector have been cut. Direct funding to adult learning providers has declined dramatically since the 2008/9 financial crisis, leading to a significant fall in part-time provision. At the same time, the willingness of employers and individuals to fund their own learning has not filled the gap. Co-investment, therefore, despite recent progress, remains a challenge. Around 10m UK employees still do not access any training at work.

Across the UK, 9 million adults have low literacy, numeracy or both. This holds back life chances, prosperity and social inclusion. It is welcome that Government has committed to free digital training, making that the third basic skills alongside literacy and numeracy. Basic skills should be delivered in an integrated, learner-led way through a Citizens' Curriculum -type approach. More resources are needed given the scale of the challenge (in England, £200m per year for 15 years to double current rates of investment).

The UK faces a major challenge around digital inclusion. Approximately 12.6m adults lack basic digital skills. The most marginalised/excluded groups make up largest proportion of the digitally excluded. Lack of these skills limits the ability of citizens to participate in society, support their families, communicate or retrieve information. By 2020, 90% of all jobs will require digital skills at some level. A digital curriculum for adult learning does not exist for the UK. It should be developed, agreed by all four administrations and used by training and education providers. The curriculum should be based on the Key Competences Framework for Europe which introduces core digital skills competencies in education and training curricula. The adult digital curriculum should include development of creative and future digital skills as well as use of IT software.

The UK Government is committed to expanding apprenticeships funded in part by an Apprenticeship Levy on large employers. The commitment to expansion is welcome. Apprenticeships can be a great way to combine learning and earning. But this will only work if Apprenticeships are high quality and accessible with clear progression routes.

Traineeships (and other routes into Apprenticeships) can make a difference in enabling young people to bridge the gap to employment. By utilising the flexibility of the programme, developing tailored local and sector approaches, and getting the messages out to young people, employers and providers, participation rates and outcomes can be improved. There is also potential to develop a more intensive traineeship offer, which would provide focussed support for young people who face particular challenges in accessing learning and work.

Like most European countries, the UK faces significant challenges in young people who face economic, social and educational disadvantages have the most to gain from the Government's target to increase the volume of Apprenticeships. Yet, it remains the case that apprenticeship growth among young people has been poor, with the majority of the increase in participation coming from adults. Evidence shows that among those young people in Apprenticeships, people with disabilities and from BAME backgrounds are significantly under-represented. In addition, data are not collected on participation in apprenticeships by young people in caring roles or care leavers. There is a need to ensure that all young people gain access to apprenticeship opportunities.

Another challenge is around the provision of impartial advice and guidance for adults wishing to access the system. Most adults can access the information and advice they need, but those who cannot are those who experience other forms of exclusion.

8.0 SUMMARY

The UK is making good progress towards meeting the EU 2020 target for employment rates (age 20-64), but beneath this overarching figure there are a number of concerns: regional disparities; demographic change and the extension working lives; the number of full-time students in part-time employment in order to supplement income-contingent loans in higher education; the relatively high percentage of young adults (5.7% of the youth populations who are unemployed and NEET); the 1.6m adults who have been on out of work benefits for more than 5 years. The growing demand for high-skilled jobs means that the employment rate for low-skilled adults remains below 60%, and yet the UK remains low in terms of competence levels in basic skills. The major concern is around the quality of jobs and the high proportion of workplace roles in the so-called 'gig' or unstable economy.

Participation in learning for adult aged 25-64 remains above the EU 2020 target, but has been declining in recent years. If this trend continues, the UK will not meet the target by 2020. Participation in learning varies between age cohorts, but also according to factors like prior educational attainment. Those who have had recent access to educational opportunities are likely to access more (either through their own motivation, or through being offered learning at work).

The share of local qualified adults is below the EU average for 2015 and there has been slow progress in the UK in terms of lowering this number. As with other European countries the figure remains higher for the older cohort (55-74 years). This would suggest that the figure for the whole working-age population would continue to decline, but recently there has been a decline in participation for provision below level 2 (EQF 3) in England.

The Country Specific Recommendations (CSR) recognise the issue of skills mismatches and the need to ensure progression. The one method mentioned in achieving this is improving the quality of apprenticeships. This is a valid aim, but it excludes a range of approaches and the need, most of all, to ensure clear progression pathways from EQF 0-2 to higher-level skills. Some progress is being made in the devolved context in creating these through City Deals and local area planning. The Apprenticeship programme is a key element of this, and there has been good progress in promoting the brand, revising frameworks, and encouraging co-investment.

The UK faces a number of key challenges for its adult learning system. The first of these is the nature of devolution of education and skills has led to a number of different approaches being taken in a piecemeal fashion that are not addressing a common problem in terms of equality of access. Where approaches have been successful, they are not always adopted in other parts of the UK (or even locally within those administrations). Where there has been a UK-wide commitment to an approach (around Apprenticeships) it has been more successful in ensuring consistency of approach. The challenge therefore is to provide better knowledge-exchange between administrations so that good practice elsewhere can be learnt from.

The second challenge is the decline in recurrent funding and infrastructure that has traditionally supported adult learning as other parts of the public sector have been cut. Direct funding to adult learning providers has declined dramatically since the financial crisis, leading to a significant fall in part-time provision. At the same time, the willingness of employers and individuals to fund their own learning has not filled the gap. Co-investment, therefore, despite recent progress, remains a challenge. Around 10 million UK employees still do not access any training at work. The third challenge is around the provision of impartial advice and guidance for adults wishing to access the system. Most adults can access the information and advice they need, but those who cannot are those who experience other forms of exclusion. The fourth challenge, the UK faces is around digital inclusion. In the UK approximately 12.6m adults lack basic digital skills. The most marginalised/excluded groups make up largest proportion of the digitally excluded. Lack of these skills limit the ability of citizens to participate in society, support their families, communicate or retrieve information. By 2020, 90% of all jobs will require digital skills at some level.

The fifth challenge is how the UK learning system will provide the type of skills that will be needed in growth sectors such as science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) industries. The challenge here is to move from the sophisticated analysis of local labour markets to action that enables growth in an inclusive way. The final challenge is to develop basic skills strategies and approaches that are adult-friendly (not just a continuation of approaches used with children) and relevant to their lives. New approaches such as the Citizens' Curriculum will require investment in the adult learning workforce to deliver them.

The UK needs to take a strategic approach to the planning of adult learning across government. This should be supported by an annual State of the Nation report that shows progress against agreed targets across the devolved administrations and the overall impact of adult learning. This would build on good practice across the UK, and be supported by a common approach to research and analysis to create synergies and cost-efficiencies in the long-term. As part of this, basic skills should be delivered in an integrated, learner-led way through a Citizens' Curriculum style approach. More resources are needed given the scale of the challenge. There are the same challenges in basic skills across the UK, so there should be consideration of one common UK approach, and consistent level of resourcing and competence in delivery.

Apprenticeships should continue to be supported across the UK, with clear progression routes for all learners. They should continue to be available for adults of all ages. Traineeships (and foundation apprenticeships) should be adequate to ensure progression. More should be done to support people into work and advance while in work (particularly for those in low-paid work). For example, the government's current approach to supporting in-work claimants of Universal Credit is too narrow. Support to progress in work should: improve individuals' capability to progress; address their barriers to progression; support individuals to then take up opportunities; and address the barriers for employers in offering progression. In other words, some reform is required of the welfare benefits system and it should be better aligned with the adult learning system. Government needs to set a clear national framework for Local Labour Market Agreements, setting out accountabilities, responsibilities, outcomes and resourcing, underpinned by clear national

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standards. This should also be underpinned by Invest-to-Save principles: using the savings from future benefit payments to adequately fund back-to-work services.

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ANNEXES

Annex 1: List of adopted legal acts, strategies, laws

Name	Date of adoption	Short description of content
The UK Government Budget (2017)	April 2017	Committed to invest up to £40 million by 2018–19 to 'test different approaches to help people to retrain and upskill throughout their working lives.' ¹⁸²
The Technical and Further Education Act 2017 ¹⁸³ (England)	April 2017	Enacted measures setting out the commitment in the Post-16 Skills Plan (2016) ¹⁸⁴ to reform technical education by creating an Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (IFATE); created an insolvency regime for further education and sixth form colleges established under the Further and Higher Education Act 1992; and, ensured that information relating to further education is passed onto the Secretary of State for Education once the adult education budget has been devolved to combined authorities.
The Enterprise Act 2016 (England)	May 2016	Amended the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009 to allow the Secretary of State to set apprenticeship targets for prescribed public bodies. The apprenticeship target relates to the number of apprentices working for a public body in England. ¹⁸⁵
Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009 (England and Wales)	November 2009	Established Apprenticeship Frameworks in England and Wales, as well as some regulatory and funding functions. ¹⁸⁶ Under the provisions of the Act recent targets have been set for prescribed groups and public sector bodies with 250 or more staff in England have a target to employ an average of at least 2.3% of their staff as new apprentice starts over the period of 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2021. ¹⁸⁷
Draft Programme for	Adoption pending	Set out measures for an increase of skills in the Northern Ireland population features in Outcomes

¹⁸²https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/597471/spring_budget_2017_print.pdf

¹⁸³ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2017/19/contents>

¹⁸⁴ https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/536043/Post-16_Skills_Plan.pdf

¹⁸⁵ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/enterprise-act-becomes-law>

¹⁸⁶ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2009/22/contents>

¹⁸⁷

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/606955/Public_Sector_Statutory_Guidance.pdf

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Government Framework 2016–21		1, 5 and 6. ¹⁸⁸ These are expected to have both economic and social benefits. ¹⁸⁹
Scotland Act 2016	March 2016	Scottish Government control of skills training as part of employment support. ¹⁹⁰ While the overall budget is provided centrally from Westminster, the Scottish Government has control over policy decisions linked to education and skills.
Post-16 Skills Plan 2016 (England)	July 2016	Proposed the development of 15 new Technical Routes (T Levels) based on the apprenticeship standards, and formalises this approach further by separating academic and vocational learning more explicitly, while given parity of esteem to both. ¹⁹¹
Apprenticeships Securing our Success (Northern Ireland)	June 2014	the Strategy on Apprenticeships ¹⁹² , published in June 2014 outlines the future direction of apprenticeships. The new apprenticeship model is driven by strategic partnership; puts employers at its very heart; aligns supply with demand; affords opportunities in a wider range of occupations and offers a flexible progression pathway across professional education and training.
Further Education Means Success, (Northern Ireland)	January 2016	The vision is that further education colleges will be recognised locally, nationally and internationally for high quality and economically relevant education and training provision. Colleges will be focussed on achieving excellence in delivering the skills needed for the economy of today and tomorrow, and will be ambitious for their learners and for the contribution they make to improving the competitiveness of the economy of Northern Ireland. The new further education strategy highlights the challenging dual role that colleges play.

¹⁸⁸ <https://www.northernireland.gov.uk/sites/default/files/consultations/newnigov/draft-pfg-framework-2016-21.pdf>

¹⁸⁹ Northern Ireland Executive. (2016). *Draft Programme for Government Framework 2016-21 and Questionnaire*. Available: <https://www.northernireland.gov.uk/consultations/draft-programme-government-framework-2016-21-and-questionnaire>.

¹⁹⁰ http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2016/11/pdfs/ukpga_20160011_en.pdf

¹⁹¹ https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/536043/Post-16_Skills_Plan.pdf

¹⁹² <https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/publications/securing-our-success-northern-ireland-strategy-apprenticeships>

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Developing the Young Workforce: Scotland's Youth Employment Strategy	December 2014	This outlines a 7-year strategy involving greater partnership working between schools, colleges, and employers.
Policy Statement on Skills / Skills Implementation Plan	July 2014	Contained a series of proposed actions including setting up Skills Performance Measures, and a new Flexible Skills Programme in which Government would make targeted interventions to meet new needs from employers or where existing provision could not respond.
The Government of Wales Act 2006 (amended)	Amended 2014, 2017	Enabled the Welsh Government to bring forward its own programme of legislation in the 20 areas devolved to Wales, including adult learning ¹⁹³
Aligning the Apprenticeship Model to the needs of the Welsh Economy	February 2017	Announced the Welsh Government would be increasing its investment in apprenticeships from £96m to £111.5m for 2017-18. Of the additional funding, £15.5m will be invested to support the Levy. The Welsh Government predict a doubling of the demand for level 4-6 qualified workers by 2024. The target is for a minimum of 100,000 Apprenticeships by May 2021.

¹⁹³ ¹⁹³ <http://gov.wales/legislation/?lang=en>

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Annex 2: Inventory of policy interventions

Name of intervention	Source (with hyperlink)	Budget	Outputs	Which of the 6 building blocks for successful adult learning policies does it target? (tick all relevant)						Further details/description (purpose, duration, responsible entity etc.)
				Fosters learners' interest in learning	Employers' investment in learning	Improve equity of access for all	Learning that is relevant	High quality learning	Coherent policy	
The UK Digital Strategy March 2017	https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-digital-strategy			x		x	x		x	Highlights the UK's digital divide. For example, in Wales 38% of people lack basic digital skills; in Scotland that figure is 19%, in London 16%.

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										rates within the UK.
Northern Ireland Skills Barometer	1 https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/del/STEM%20Strategy-Success%20through%20STEM.pdf			x	x	x	x	x	x	Repeated the need for increased education and training provision in STEM and digital subjects.
The Report of the STEM Review published in 2009	1 http://www.opf.fi/download/145612_success-through-skills-transforming-futures.pdf									The Report of the STEM Review published in 2009 stressed the need for investment in these areas. These findings have been reflected in policy papers since 2011, in the Government's response to the review.
Success through STEM and in Strategic Goal 4 of Success through Skills Transforming Futures.	1 https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/del/report-of-the-stem-review.pdf									
Economy 2030: A consultation on an	https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/consultations/economy/industrial-strategy-ni-consultation-document.pdf			x		x	x		x	Government promised to 'meet the bespoke

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Industrial Strategy for Northern Ireland, (January 2017)										upskilling needs of employers' and focus on 'high growth, high technology areas such as data analytics, cyber security, cloud computing and software engineering' in order to provide for 'the economy's growing need for transformative digital skills.'
A Nation with Ambition: The Government's plan for Scotland 2017–18 ¹⁹⁴	https://beta.gov.scot/publications/nation-ambition-governments-programme-scotland-2017-18/documents/00524214.pdf?inline=true	£100 million per year	increase number of modern apprenticeships, to 30,000 by 2020	x		x	x		x	Established a Strategic Board to focus enterprise and skills agencies on supporting the growth of key sectors and ensuring that

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									adult learning providers produce the skills that businesses and individuals need. accounts.
Preparing for Success 2015–2020: A Strategy for Careers Education and Guidance, (Northern Ireland) March 2016,	1 https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/essential-skills			x		x			x NI Executive noted that training needs to be given to those with low or no qualifications or have barriers to learning in order to reduce unemployment more widely. This forms part of the 'Essential Skills' programme that offers free courses in Literacy, Numeracy and ICT.

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