



Adult Learners' Forum in Edinburgh

A Manifesto for Adult Education

We think that Adult Education has dropped off the political agenda and seems lost in the range of government policy initiatives. Adult Education has the potential to continue to make a unique contribution to education provision as a whole. This Manifesto is an attempt to get it back on to the political agenda.

Therefore, we urge all electors, politicians and political parties to commit to the following pledges:

- 1. That all adult citizens of Scotland will have equal access to adult education, with physical, financial and dispositional barriers removed. See (a) and (b) below.**
- 2. That adult education providers will encourage the involvement of learners, at all stages and levels, in decisions which affect their learning. See (c) below**
- 3. That a specific department of the Scottish Executive will be accountable for adult education to a permanent committee of the Parliament, and a Scottish Adult Education Council will be established which will have full responsibility for the development of all aspects of Adult Education. This body will be complementary to the Teaching, Further Education and Higher Education Councils.**

We believe that the actions above will lead in the longer term to:

- A more diverse range of adult learning providers in Scotland beyond the central institutions, and a much wider role for voluntary adult education provision in which learners play a greater role in management.
- Learners being taught by qualified and competent tutors who have appropriate subject-related knowledge as well as knowledge and

understanding of adults' learning needs; a national adult tutors' qualification delivered in all local authority areas; and the formation of a support body for tutors.

(a) Local Adult Learning Centres will be developed to ensure that learning can take place near at hand; is relevant to local people and their needs; is accessible and open to all; is provided in fully accessible buildings with all other support needs being met and all physical, financial and dispositional* barriers to participation in adult education removed. These centres will offer support for a range of study requirements, for example, books, IT resources, tutorials, to encourage all types of learning, including distance learning. (*whatever the person's circumstances).

(b) A national adult learners' fund will be introduced to ensure that structures of social support are met, for example childcare and other dependant care, travel costs and other financial needs. This fund will also ensure that a national scheme for paid educational leave is established not only for vocational purposes but also personal and community development purposes, as is the case in some other European Union countries.

(c) Representative bodies of learners will be formed and supported to play their part in the design and evaluation of their courses at all stages and levels. Learner-led local adult learners' forums will be encouraged and supported to form a learner-led national adult learners' association in Scotland. Such an association will be fully funded and supported through the learners' support fund.

Why a Manifesto for Adult Education?

To build a Scotland that works for everyone there has to be a wide range of opportunities for learning. Knowledge is power and the more we know the more we are able to make informed choices for ourselves and our communities. This manifesto aims to ensure that life in Scotland will be full of chances to learn for work and for life. As adult learners we want to help promote the benefits of learning for all, but we also want to be regarded as partners in the process of building a truly democratic learning society.

The Manifesto was first presented at a seminar organised by ALFiE and held in Edinburgh on 25th October 2006. Seminar speakers included, Jayne Stuart, Director, Learning Link Scotland and keynote speaker, Ian Martin, Reader in Adult and Community Education, Department of Higher and Community Education, University of Edinburgh.

As well as learners and people working in the Adult Education field, MSPs Richard Baker (Labour), Robin Harper (Green), Fiona Hyslop (SNP) and Edinburgh Councillor Jim Lowrie (Lib Dems) attended the seminar and spoke about their support for adult education and generally welcomed ALFiE's Manifesto, although they each had comments and suggestions about it.

Following the speakers and responses from the political party representatives the Manifesto was discussed in small groups. The Manifesto which was presented to the seminar as *a work in progress* has now been revised taking into account the views and comments from the seminar.

In March 2007 ALFiE also met with Margo MacDonald, MSP (Ind), who had been unable to attend the seminar.

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We regard the Manifesto as a *work in progress* and hope it will stimulate discussion and debate. Comments and ideas welcome. Please send to:

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ALFiE

ABOUT ALFiE

ALFiE is a voluntary organisation with charitable status, run by and for adult learners, which aims to ensure adult learners have a voice in policy and decision making at city wide and national level.

- ALFiE is for adult learners of any age, from teenagers to those who've retired
- ALFiE provides opportunities for adult learners to get together to share their experiences of learning
- ALFiE gathers learners' views about the aspects of education which are important to them
- ALFiE aims to give adult learners a say in policy and decision-making

ALFiE is led by a voluntary committee of ten learners who come from various settings.

For more information, please contact:



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