



# Learning Never Stops

Charity 1095713

President: Sir Bob Russell

To the UK Parliament Education Committee  
Adult Skills and Lifelong Learning Inquiry

The Charity would like to present this submission on the topic ...

## **WHAT ROLE CAN LOCAL AUTHORITIES / COMBINED AUTHORITY AREAS PLAY IN A.S.A.L.L. PROVISION? ...** suggesting a vital co-ordinating role.

### **Preface**

A century ago the Ministry of Reconstruction's 1919 Report deemed adult education "a permanent national necessity" needing to be "spread uniformly and systematically", but the 1944 Education Act's nebulous "duty" upon LEAs to "secure adequate facilities" did nothing to ensure this. Consequently, provision for adult learning developed very differently throughout the country. Some areas had a dedicated adult college, others a widely-scattered 'service' with no discernible curriculum.

Recent public spending cutbacks have seriously eroded adult learning opportunities. Latest statistics suggest we are approaching an irreversible decline in some areas, whilst others, such as London, still have substantial provision.

Therefore, in the C21st there is a postcode lottery of adult education opportunity. It depends entirely upon where you live for how accessible lifelong learning can be. Also, some LAs are providers, others are not. There needs to be equity of opportunity.

### **Our context**

Colchester, the area we serve, once had its own home-grown Adult Community College with a fully-comprehensive curriculum complementing other sectors' provision.

Additionally, a Learning Shop - an alliance of all post-school providers, led by the adult college - provided impartial enquirer-based information, advice and guidance. Despite their undoubted success, and proven excellence, both have now been closed.

Currently, although there is still a significant post-school curriculum on offer, it is largely un-coordinated and consequently not fully accessible. Indeed, individual publicity confuses potential participants. This is in common with many areas of the UK.

We do not expect that our lost adult college could be replaced, but we do believe that the remaining adult learning opportunities could be better accessed if a spirit of co-operation was engendered and a coherent offer displayed by remaining providers.

To this end, we are campaigning locally for a reinstatement of the Learning Shop philosophy, if not the practice, and feel that this could be replicated nationally.

### **Suggested national strategy**

This straight-forward and inexpensive solution, implemented "uniformly and systematically" across the country, could open up opportunities to all adults, ensuring that resources given to lifelong learning are utilised as fully as possible. We suggest that Government legislate to ensure:

- a) LAs are required to survey all local post-school learning opportunities to present a coherent road map of post-school learning in definable communities, so that the breadth and depth of the curriculum available is fully understandable.
- b) They do this by bringing together the various providers in a spirit of co-operation to support an information, advice and guidance service promoting all lifelong learning, whatever the motivation, whatever the subject, whoever the provider.
- c) This information, together with guidance on accessibility, to be made readily available through a clearly-understood and supportive system.
- d) All the above to be in the context of addressing the learning needs of the enquirer, not filling vacancies in specific organisations' courses.

Our Charity has implemented aspects of this on a shoestring budget over the last three years and we feel that this could be replicated nationwide by Local Authorities.

We are willing to give **verbal evidence**, sharing our experience of running the "Colchester Festival of Lifelong Learning" and accompanying "Colchester, Learning Town" website.

**For further details** contact the Charity's Hon. Secretary: A.V.Skinner MBE

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