

Mr Gareth Price  
Clerk of the Finance Committee  
National Assembly for Wales  
Cardiff Bay  
Cardiff  
CF99 1NA

14 September 2012

Dear Mr Price

The National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE) is a charity that exists to promote adult learning. NIACE Dysgu Cymru conducts work in Wales under the umbrella of NIACE, supported by an elected Management Group.

We welcome the opportunity to submit evidence to help inform the scrutiny of the Welsh Government's 2013-14 draft budget proposals.

NIACE Dysgu Cymru recognises the challenges of the budget round. We also appreciate that the proposed budget for *Education and Skills* for 2013-14 (as set out in the indicative allocations for 2012-13) shows a small increase, whereas the overall resources available to the Welsh Government decrease in that year. Nevertheless, we do feel that more should be done to exploit the wider benefits of adult learning across all Welsh Government departments – within the context of the *Making the Connections* agenda.

There is a significant body of evidence to demonstrate that investment in adult learning can:

- Improve health and well-being;
- Contribute to a resilient and productive economy;
- Help manage a changing demographic profile;
- Improve social mobility, social justice and equity;
- Promote strong and healthy families; and
- Develop active citizenship and empowered, cohesive communities.

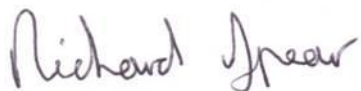
These outcomes contribute directly to the objectives of the Welsh Government across a range of departments. Supporting evidence relating to these points is set out at **Annex A** to this letter.

Although often seen as competing priorities, we would ask the Committees to be particularly cognisant of the fact that adult education and the educational performance of children are inextricably linked. There is a risk that focusing more and more resources on compulsory education rather than adult learning could be counter-productive. A range of research shows that parental education and involvement has a major influence on the development and life chances of their children. This evidence does not question the importance of good schools, which are critical, but it serves as a reminder that the education of young people and the education of adults are not distinct and separate policy issues.

We would ask that the Committees of the National Assembly are mindful of the evidence in this letter when scrutinising the draft budget. In particular, we highlight the potential for investment in adult learning to make significant savings in other areas, by preventing or minimising the need for more costly, future interventions.

I hope this evidence is of help. We would be happy to provide further information to any of the committees of the National Assembly for Wales.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Richard Spear". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'R'.

Richard Spear  
Director for Wales