

# **The Citizens' Curriculum as a holistic approach to learning basic skills**

## **Upskilling Pathways in AE-PRO**

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# The Basic and Life Skills Challenge

- **OECD Survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC)** (2013): 16.4% scored at the lowest level for literacy; 24% for numeracy (ENG / NI).
- Census data (2011) records around **850,000 adults in the UK 'non-proficient' in the English language**
- **11.3m people in the UK do not have the basic digital skills** they need (Lloyds Bank UK Consumer Digital Index 2018)
- In England, Government data shows that adult (19+) **participation in formal English, maths and ESOL provision is falling** by approx. 25% over last five years.

So, L&W believes that ....

More **flexible**, creative and innovative models are needed to **engage and motivate** learners and meet the challenge of poor basic language, literacy, numeracy and digital skills in the context of rapid social change.

Tom Schuller • David Watson

# Learning Through Life

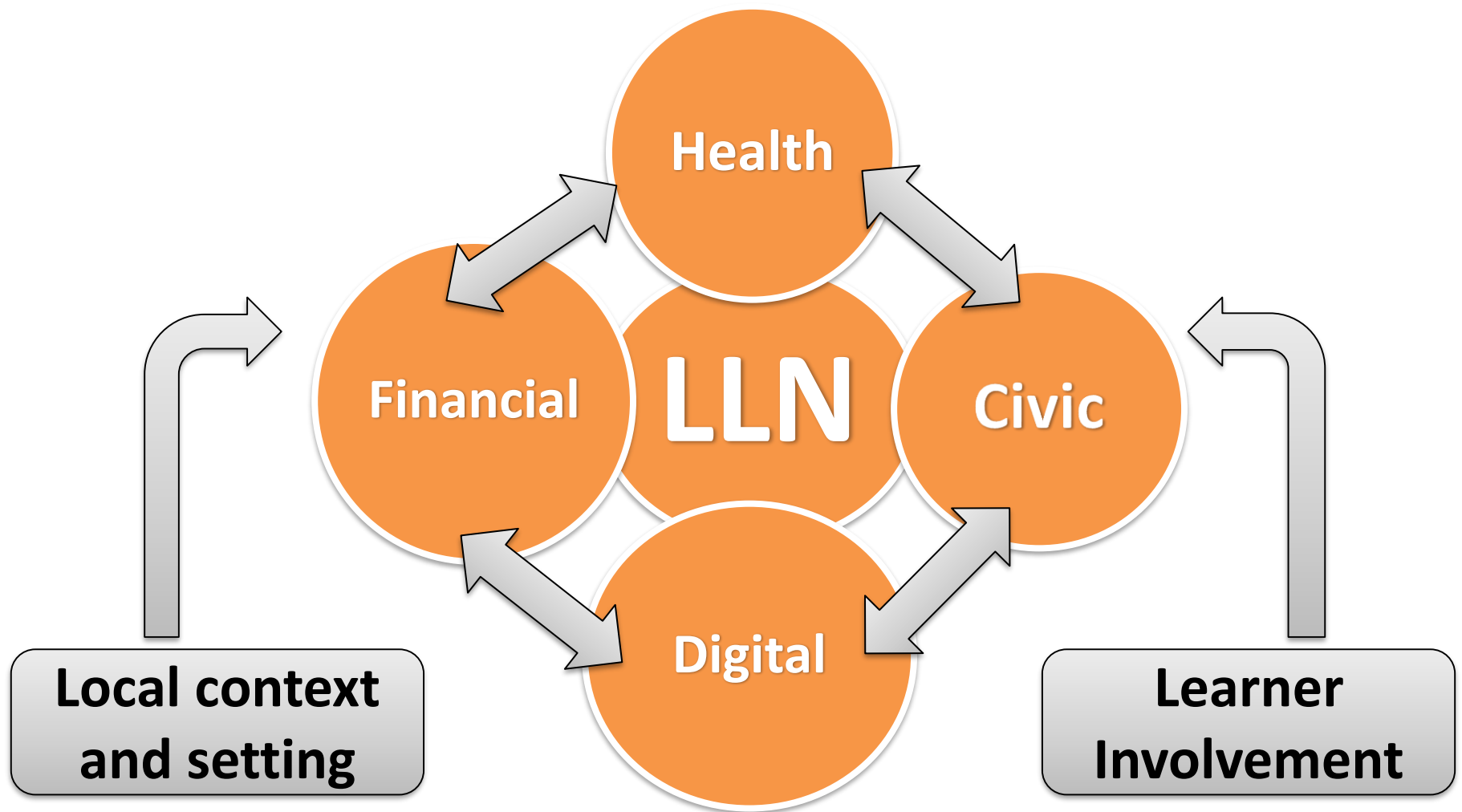
Inquiry into the Future for Lifelong Learning

Summary



- Schuller and Watson ( NIACE, 2009)
- NIACE / NRDC Evidence on impact of embedded basic skills – Eldred (2005); Casey (2006)
- Adult learning perspectives on participatory approaches and co-design of the curriculum.

“A citizens’ curriculum is learning which is **locally-led**, developed with the **active participation** of learners, and **interlinks life skills** such as language, literacy and numeracy with health, financial, digital and civic **capabilities.**”



# Piloting the Citizens' Curriculum

- Our **pilots** helped us to learn more about how a Citizens' Curriculum approach can work in **different contexts**.
- In 14/15 - **13 providers** (incl. Further Education colleges, adult learning centres and civil society organisations) targeting disadvantaged groups – over **160 learners**.
- In 15/16 – **13 providers (incl. 5 returners)** with a focus on language, literacy and numeracy provision – **152 learners**.

# Implementation

- Focus on **Entry Level** – tutors did not need to be expert in all capability subject areas.
- In both **formal and non-formal** settings, within existing funding stream and quality assurance.
- In formal settings, accredited **qualifications were mapped against Citizens' Curriculum capabilities** to develop a programme of learning.
- Formal basic skills provision – **wider capabilities used as contexts** for literacy, numeracy and language learning.
- Providers and practitioners supported with a '**health check**', **resources** and **community of practice**.



## Key Overall Findings – Practitioners (15/16)

- Increased confidence in **adopting a learner-led approach**
- Enhanced capability to adopt interlinked and **contextualised approaches** to teaching Citizens' Curriculum capabilities
- Improved **practitioner morale** through greater autonomy and involvement in curriculum design and development

# Key Overall Findings – Providers (15/16)

- Improved **understanding of their impact** on learners
- **Improved organisational ways of working**, including the sharing and adoption of good practice and expertise across curriculum teams;
- **More effective planning** and interlinking of provision through adoption of a recognised and evidence-based framework; and
- Increased number of **learners returning as volunteers**.

# Key Overall Findings – Learners (15/16)

- Increased **social and civic engagement**, with
  - 73% making new friends
  - 59% reporting an improved social life
  - 28% improving their relationships with their family
  - 16% joining a community group
- Improved **self-efficacy**, with
  - 67% improving their self-confidence
  - 65% reporting a greater satisfaction with their life
  - 31% reporting improved physical health.

# Key Overall Findings – Learners (15/16)

- Changes in their **employability**, with
  - 8% finding a new job
  - 20% starting to apply for jobs
  - 33% starting to look for work
  - 49% improving their work-related skills
  - 14% starting to volunteer on a regular basis.
- Improvements in their **attitudes towards learning**, with
  - 94% feeling more motivated to learn
  - 42% signing up for another course.

# Engaging Learners – Key Messages

- In **community settings**, wider capabilities relevant to learners' lives (esp. financial, health, digital) can provide a 'way in' to other learning e.g. literacy, numeracy.
- Some pilots used '**taster courses**' and **community learning champions** to engage learners around the wider capabilities.
- In non-formal settings, **participatory approaches to curriculum development** allowed a focus on meaningful issues (e.g. access to healthcare, housing conditions) – practitioners designed the programme with learners, to develop literacy and language skills which helped address issues the learners had identified.
- Providers of formal learning undertook **greater engagement with learners** (e.g. negotiation of course content) within the framework of their accredited qualifications.

# Application 1: Strategic Skills Planning

- In England, the **Adult Education Budget** is being devolved to 8 cities / regions which have elected Mayors (Mayoral Combined Authorities – e.g. Greater London, Greater Manchester, Liverpool City Region, the West Midlands ...)
- The Citizens' Curriculum offers **a potential commissioning framework** – including planning the learning offer, and also the range of outcomes to be supported e.g. **health, wellbeing, civic engagement**.

# Application 2: Providers

- Inspiring and **supporting the development of a basic and life skills curriculum** in organisations new to delivering adult basic education
- For existing and experienced providers, **refreshing the existing basic skills offer** to learners, building on existing practice.
- Finding **new ways of engaging learners**, by adopting elements of learner co-creation of the curriculum, and/or participatory approaches to teaching and learning.

# Application 3: Practice

