

The Wider benefits of Adult Learning 2008

There has been a growing recognition that participation in adult learning can have positive effects on a range of wider social outcomes. Hence, researchers have argued that there are close relationships between educational participation and health outcomes, wider social and political attitudes and community-based benefits.

The Centre for Research on the Wider Benefits of Learning also provides evidence on the social impacts of participation specifically in adult learning (of all kinds) (Feinstein and Hammond, 2004). It is shown that adults who have taken one or two courses are significantly more likely to have:

- given up smoking (one in eight additional people gave up smoking);
- increased their level of exercise (almost one in five people); and
- increased their reported life satisfaction (the general decline in life satisfaction that takes place in mid adulthood was reduced by 14 per cent).

There are also some grounds for concluding that participation in adult learning is related to:

- reduced alcohol consumption;
- reduced incidence of depression; and
- an enhanced likelihood of recovering from depression.

All forms of learning (academic accredited, vocational accredited, work-related and learning for leisure) have effects on improved health practices. Intriguingly, however, the effects of taking leisure courses are especially pronounced