

Adult Learning Strategy for Scotland 2022-27

Equality Impact Assessment

May 2022



Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba
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Equality Impact Assessment – Results

Title of Policy	Adult Learning Strategy
Summary of aims and desired outcomes of Policy	<p>The purpose of creating the Adult Learning Strategy is to remove barriers to learning for the most marginalised people within society. The strategy's vision is that adult learning in Scotland will develop better skilled, educated, confident and empowered people contributing to connected and inclusive communities. Its ambition is to create new and increased positive pathways in collaboration with community-based adult learners. Its aim is to create the conditions for connected adult learning opportunities that link Scotland's communities, local authorities, third sector organisations, colleges and universities around an offer of learning for adults, particularly those furthest from inclusion and experiencing disadvantage.</p> <p>The strategy aims to bring about systemic change to how learners can access and progress through learning to reach their goals. Intended impacts and outcomes are that the strategy will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • deliver better outcomes for learners and make a positive impact to adult learners' lives and their life chances. • remove the barriers that prevent adults participating in learning or that adversely affect their levels of participation. • aim specifically to support those who are not engaging in learning and create clear accessible first steps that enable the most marginalised and excluded adults to begin their learning journey. • clarify and simplify how learners who have taken their first steps into or back into learning can progress. • ensure that all learning is recognised and is given the due credit and recognition that the learners' efforts deserve.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensure that those furthest from formal mainstream education have parity of learning opportunities.
Directorate: Division: team	Advanced Learning and Science: Colleges, Young Workforce and SFC Sponsorship: CLD Policy Unit

1. Executive summary

The Public Sector Equality Duty requires the Scottish Government to pay due regard to the need to meet its obligations under the Equality Act 2010 by assessing the impact of applying a proposed new or revised policy or practice upon equality. Therefore, the Scottish Government undertook an Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) as part of the process to develop the Adult Learning Strategy.

An EQIA aims to consider how a policy may impact, either positively or negatively, on different sectors of the population in different ways. Equality legislation covers the Protected Characteristics of: age, disability, gender reassignment, sex, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership, race, religion and belief, and sexual orientation. A full EQIA was undertaken to consider the impact of the Adult Learning Strategy on people with protected characteristics.

The purpose of creating the Adult Learning Strategy is to remove barriers to learning for the most marginalised people within society and to increase opportunities to adult learners in all of Scotland's communities. Particular areas of focus will be creating opportunities for people who left school with few or no qualifications, those who require help to engage in learning opportunities and people who have faced barriers to learning or require help to navigate their options for learning or progression.

Initial stages of development highlighted that data for learning that takes place under Community Learning and Development (CLD) and adult learning was not collected routinely and in a coherent and consistent way. This highlighted the need for more comprehensive and higher-quality evidence, as well as insight, to enable us to assess how policy decisions in adult learning are fair and are advancing equality of opportunity. A strategic action to develop coherent and consistent data and measurements based on methods used across Scotland was included in the strategy's plan in order for more robust evidence to be collected. This will involve collecting equalities data, which will better enable us to understand the experiences of learners from different protected characteristics.

The EQIA process highlighted that the barriers that adults faced in their learning were numerous and diverse and that extensive work needed to be carried out as part of the strategy's delivery to fully explore them. A theme on Access, Diversity and Inclusion was developed and refined throughout the drafting of the strategy and a strategic action has been developed:

- CLD Standards Council
- College Development Network
- Colleges Scotland
- Convention of Scottish Local Authorities
- Education Scotland
- Inverness College
- LEAD Scotland
- Learning Link Scotland
- Newbattle Abbey College
- NHS Education for Scotland
- Open University
- Robertson Trust
- Sabhal Mòr Ostaig
- Scottish Community Development Centre
- Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework
- Scottish Funding Council
- Scottish Government
- Scottish Libraries
- Scottish Prison Service
- Scottish Union Learning
- Skills Development Scotland
- Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (Scotland)
- Universities Scotland
- Volunteer Scotland
- Workers Education Association

To gather additional evidence, a strategic writing group was formed to help recognise potential barriers to adults taking part in and progressing in learning and to provide knowledge and experience in working with adult learners from protected characteristic groups. Members of the strategic writing group were:

- CLD Managers Scotland
- Education Scotland
- ESOL Practitioners Network
- Adult Literacies Network
- LEAD Scotland
- Learning Link Scotland
- Newbattle Abbey College
- Scottish Government
- Scottish Prison Service
- Workers Educational Association

The writing group engaged with and gathered feedback from adult learners across Scotland to ask about their personal circumstances, barriers to learning, experiences of learning, purposes of learning and aspirations for future development. To ensure that a diverse range of views were captured, questions to gather feedback were translated into thirteen different languages. This engagement and feedback has helped to shape and inform the Adult Learning Strategy's ambition to create new and increased positive pathways for community-based adult learners as well as the

development of a dynamic strategic action plan which sets out twenty three actions that will be refreshed as we work towards removing barriers to learning.

3. Scope of the EQIA

The scope of this EQIA is to consider the impact of the Adult Learning Strategy on people with protected characteristics. The Adult Learning Strategy has the potential to impact on all people in Scotland aged 16 and above. In order to determine the impact, a desk based review of evidence was initially undertaken. This took into account a variety of statistical surveys, reports and other publications including:

- Scotland's Labour Market: People, Places and Regions ²
- National Indicator Performance ³
- Report on Widening Access 2019-20 ⁴
- HE Students and Qualifiers at Scottish Institutions 2019-20 ⁵
- Scottish Household Survey 2019 ⁶
- Scottish Health Survey 2019 ⁷
- Life in Scotland for LGBT Young People ⁸
- Poverty and Income Inequality in Scotland 2017-20 ⁹

In the context of national statistics, existing evidence for what activity was taking place in relation specifically to community based adult learning was limited. In ensuring that the development of an adult learning strategy was approached with fairness, further evidence was required to ascertain how the strategy could impact on each of the protected characteristics and how the strategy could achieve its aim of removing barriers to learning.

Consultation on the strategy began in May 2019 at the Adult Learning Conference where adult learning practitioners across Scotland and national organisations were asked for their views on themes established by the Adult Learning Strategic Forum for Scotland and for their ideas on what the strategy could focus on. Thematic workshops on how each theme should be presented and progressed within the new strategy took place between October to November 2019. Feedback was sought from adult learners across Scotland alongside the delivery of the thematic workshops. Adult learners were asked what they hoped to achieve in their learning, what barriers they faced and what their progression goals were. Feedback from the thematic workshops and adult learners were synthesised and presented to the Adult Learning Strategic Forum in December 2019. A series of engagement events were planned for further consultation, however, most of these were cancelled due to the pandemic and work on the strategy was paused throughout most of 2020. Work was resumed in early 2021 and two online consultations were delivered.

² [Scotland's Labour Market: People, Places and Regions 2020/21](#)

³ [National Indicator Performance | National Performance Framework](#)

⁴ [Report on Widening Access 2019-20 \(sfc.ac.uk\)](#)

⁵ [HE Students and Qualifiers at Scottish Institutions 2019-20 \(sfc.ac.uk\)](#)

⁶ [Scottish Household Survey 2019](#)

⁷ [Scottish Health Survey 2019](#)

⁸ [Life in Scotland for LGBT Young People, FINAL March 2018.cdr \(lgbtyouth.org.uk\)](#)

⁹ [Poverty and income inequality statistics - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](#)

The findings of all consultation exercises were used to develop a consultation draft of the Adult Learning Strategy for Scotland which was circulated to members of the Adult Learning Strategic Forum for Scotland for feedback in May 2021.

Discussions with stakeholders provided anecdotal evidence that Scotland's adult learners have been impacted considerably by the pandemic in many ways, including their mental health, increased isolation and disruption to learning. Evidence also shows that the pandemic has produced disproportionate impacts for a number of groups, including older people, disabled people, minority ethnic groups and women¹⁰. To identify the impact that the strategy may have on the protected characteristics as a result of the pandemic, a further review of evidence was undertaken. This took into account a variety of publications including:

- COVID-19 and Disabled People in Scotland - Health, Social and Economic Harms ¹¹
- Coronavirus (COVID-19): impact on equality ¹²
- If not now, when? - Social Renewal Advisory Board report: January 2021¹³
- Supercharged: A Human Catastrophe ¹⁴
- Scotland's Wellbeing: The Impact of COVID 19 ¹⁵

4. Key Findings

Initial stages of development highlighted that data for learning that takes place under CLD and adult learning was not collected routinely and in a coherent and consistent way. This highlighted the need for more comprehensive and higher-quality evidence, as well as insight, to enable us to assess how policy decisions in adult learning are fair and are advancing equality of opportunity. A strategic action to develop coherent and consistent data and measurements based on methods used across Scotland was included in the strategy's plan in order for more robust evidence to be collected. This will involve collecting equalities data, which will better enable us to understand the experiences of learners from different protected characteristics.

4.1 Age

There are no national data sets for community based adult learners and therefore limited evidence on how community based adult learning can impact on people of different ages. However, there is a reliable evidence base about the wider context within which CLD operates, specifically in relation to access to education, employment, digital inclusion, mental wellbeing, and social isolation. Relevant data is drawn from a range of official statistics publications, as well as anecdotal and qualitative evidence gathered from engagement with adult learners.

¹⁰ [Scotland's Wellbeing: The Impact of COVID-19](#)

¹¹ [COVID-19 and Disabled People in Scotland - Health, Social and Economic Harms \(www.gov.scot\)](#)

¹² [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): impact on equality \(research\) - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](#)

¹³ [If not now, when? - Social Renewal Advisory Board report: January 2021 - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](#)

¹⁴ [Supercharged: A Human Catastrophe](#)

¹⁵ [NPF Impact of COVID-19 December 2020.pdf \(nationalperformance.gov.scot\)](#)

The available evidence tells us that older learners, generally those over 50, often have different experiences and needs when compared with younger learners. This includes different levels of access to higher and further education, motivations for undertaking learning, levels of digital access, barriers to employment, and levels of social isolation.

A key strategic action of the Adult Learning Strategy is to work with learners to explore, define and remove barriers to learning. A further action is to develop consistent and coherent data measurement frameworks for CLD. This will involve collecting equalities data, which will better enable us to understand the experiences of learners of different ages. This may lead to further research if required.

What the evidence tells us:

4.1.1 Access to education and attainment

- 9.7% (324,700) of the population aged 16-64 years have 'low or no qualifications' (SCQF level 4 or below).¹⁶
- The proportion of those with low or no qualifications is higher in the younger (16-24) and older (50-64) age groups than the other age groups.¹⁷
- Approximately 60% of entrants to Higher Education in Scotland were aged under 25 years in 2019/20.¹⁸
- 58.9% of all full-time enrolments in Further Education in 2019/20 were between 16 and 20 years of age. This proportion has been decreasing; in 2015/16, it was 61%.¹⁹
- Adult learners who we engaged with in the development of the strategy told us that they were learning to gain a qualification, however, the most common reason for learning for those aged over 65 was for personal development. Most learners aged 16 – 49 told us that they accessed learning to improve their work life/employability. Learners over 50 participated in learning to improve their personal lives. Our engagement with adult learners suggested that participation in learning decreased with age.

4.1.2 Digital Inclusion

- There are lower rates of internet use among older adults than among younger adults. In 2019, almost all (99%) adults aged 16-24 reported using the internet compared to 43% of those aged 75+.²⁰

¹⁶ [Scotland's Labour Market: People, Places and Regions 2020/21](#)

¹⁷ [National Indicator Performance \(accessed 14/4/22\)](#)

¹⁸ [HE Students and Qualifiers at Scottish Institutions 2019-20](#)

¹⁹ [Report on Widening Access 2019/20](#)

²⁰ [Scottish Household Survey 2019](#)

- Despite general increase in internet access at home (42% in 2003; 89% in 2019) ²¹, digital participation is generally lower among the older population and average internet use decreases with age. ²²
- Across the UK, 28% of adults aged 75+ have “foundation level” digital skills, compared to 97% of 16-24 year olds. ²³
- In 2019, three in 10 adults (30 per cent) reported a long-term physical or mental health condition. This was a larger proportion than previous household surveys conducted in 2012 and 2013. ²⁴

4.1.3 Mental Wellbeing

- In 2019 mental wellbeing was higher among older than younger adults, with an average WEMWBS score of 52.0 recorded among those aged 65-74 and 50.4 among those aged 75 and over. Mean WEMWBS scores in the range 49.1 to 49.7 were recorded among those between the ages of 16 and 64. ²⁵
- Mental health has been impacted by the pandemic. In a representative survey of adults over a third (36%) of adults reported high level of psychological distress. ²⁶ A quarter of adults reported levels of depressive symptoms and almost one in five (19%) reported anxiety symptoms of a level that indicated possible need for treatment. ²⁷ Mental ill health as a result of the pandemic is expected to continue to be an enduring health issue. ²⁸

4.1.4 Social Isolation and Loneliness

- In 2019, one in ten (10%) adults reported having felt lonely often or all of the time. Around two in ten adults (19%) reported having felt lonely sometimes while seven in ten (71%) reported rarely or never feeling lonely. ²⁹
- In 2019, a significant association between loneliness and mental wellbeing was evident in adults. Those who felt lonely often or all of the time had the lowest mean WEMWBS score (37.8) and the highest mean WEMWBS score was recorded among those that reported ‘rarely/never’ having felt lonely in the last two weeks (52.9) in 2019. ³⁰
- Research conducted by the World Health Organisation shows that the pandemic has exacerbated social isolation and loneliness for older people. Social isolation and loneliness damages people’s health and

²¹ [Scottish Household Survey 2019](#)

²² [A Fairer Scotland for Older People: framework for action](#)

²³ [Essential Digital Skills Report 2021](#)

²⁴ [Scottish Household Survey 2019](#)

²⁵ [Scottish Health Survey 2019](#)

²⁶ [Scotland’s Wellbeing: The Impact of COVID 19.](#)

²⁷ [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): mental health tracker study - wave 1 report.](#)

²⁸ [Rapid review of the impact of COVID-19 on mental health](#)

²⁹ [Scottish Health Survey 2019](#)

³⁰ [Scottish Health Survey 2019](#)

shortens lives. The research also shows that limited education can lead to loneliness and social isolation.³¹

4.1.5 Employment

- Parents aged over 50 face employment barriers including ageism, exclusion and lack of willingness to recognise the skills and experience they may have.³²
- The employment rate for people aged 50-64 fell by 2.6 percentage points, in the year to April 2020-March 2021. This is the largest decrease of any age group.³³

The impact of the Adult Learning Strategy:

The Adult Learning Strategy's action plan takes into account adults' motivations for learning, the barriers they face in accessing and progressing in learning and their motivations for learning.

It will support those who are not engaging in learning by increasing public awareness of learning opportunities, guidance and support. Its action to strengthen partnership working which identify and meet the advice, guidance and support needs of adult learners aims to ensure that adults have access to inclusive progression pathways to further and higher education.

To increase digital inclusion, the strategy will increase the availability of, access to, and support for, online learning options for adult learners. The strategy aims to create pathways and remove barriers to employment for adults who face significant barriers to accessing work by connecting community-based adult learning with careers and employability services. In addition, its action to increase access to and support for accredited learning will help to increase the level of qualifications that adults have.

Lifelong learning can impact upon recovery from mental health difficulties, resilience in the face of challenging circumstances, and social integration.³⁴ The Adult Learning Strategy has a particular focus on increasing community based adult learning opportunities that can impact on reducing social isolation and increasing wellbeing.

An ambition of creating new and increased positive pathways in collaboration with community based adult learners has been set. Policy interventions defining what these positive pathways are will be detailed during the initial year of the strategy's lifespan. These will include responding to the motivations of adults including;

- Developing relationships and networks

³¹ [Social isolation and loneliness among older people](#)

³² [A Fairer Scotland for Older People: framework for action](#)

³³ [Scotland's Labour Market: People, Places and Regions 2020/21](#)

³⁴ [Impacts of lifelong learning upon emotional resilience, psychological and mental health](#)

- Improving mental wellbeing
- Improving health and wellbeing
- Developing cultural awareness
- Improving communication skills
- Improving language skills
- Developing creative skills
- Improving confidence
- Improving financial literacy

The strategy will tackle ageism and exclusion by increasing the availability of community-based learning opportunities for adults aged 16+. It builds on the [The Adult Learning Statement of Ambition](#)'s principle that everyone in Scotland has the right to access learning to meet their educational needs and aspirations. By increasing access to adult learning, driving improvements in the learning experience for adults and increasing public awareness of adult learning opportunities, the strategy works towards the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal; "*Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.*"

Adult learning provision is for people aged 16+ and adults of all ages can attend the same learning opportunities. By increasing community-based adult learning opportunities adults will be brought together and this is likely, albeit indirectly, to promote good relations. The strategic action to collaborate with adult learners and equality groups to explore, define and remove barriers to learning has the potential for different groups to learn from each other, thus promoting understanding and good relations.

4.2 Disability

There are no national data sets for community based adult learners and therefore the experiences of disabled people accessing community based learning. However, there is an ample and reliable evidence base about the wider context within which CLD operates, specifically in relation to access to education, attainment and employment. There is some evidence around mental wellbeing, digital inclusion and social isolation. Relevant data is drawn from a range of robust statistical publications and grey literature, as well as anecdotal and qualitative evidence gathered from engagement with adult learners.

The evidence suggests that, while the proportion of disabled people entering higher and further education is increasing, disabled people still face inequalities in education. This includes being more likely to have low or no qualifications, and less likely to be in a positive destination after leaving school. Disabled people are less likely to be in employment and more likely to be in lower paid jobs. There is also some evidence to suggest disabled people were more likely to be made redundant during the pandemic.

A key strategic action of the Adult Learning Strategy is to work with learners to explore, define and remove barriers to learning. A further action is to develop consistent and coherent data measurement frameworks for CLD. This will involve

collecting equalities data, which will better enable us to understand the experiences of disabled learners. This may lead to further research if required.

What the evidence tells us:

4.2.1 Access to education and attainment

- People with disabilities are more likely to have no or low qualifications compared to non-disabled people.³⁵ The proportion of disabled people aged 16-64 with low or no qualifications (19.1 per cent) is over twice as high as those who are not disabled (7.2 per cent).³⁶
- Since 2013/14, the proportion of entrants to Scotland's universities who reported a disability has increased from 8% to 12%.³⁷
- The proportion of Scottish domiciled enrolments in full-time Further Education who reported a disability has increased from 19.3% in 2014/15 to a record high of 26.6% in 2019/20.³⁸
- UK wide data from the Office of National Statistics shows that 21.8% of disabled people had a degree in 2019 compared with 38.0% of non-disabled people.³⁹
- UK wide data from the Office of National Statistics shows that disabled men were three times less likely to gain qualifications than non-disabled men (18.1% compared with 6.3%). This inequality was smaller for women (14.6% compared with 5.6%).⁴⁰
- Young people with disabilities are twice as likely not to be in a positive destination (education, employment or training) six months after leaving school, and three times as likely not to be in a positive destination by the age of 19.⁴¹
- Disabled adult learners who we engaged with in the development of the strategy were slightly more likely to be learning at home than non-disabled adult learners. This may be expected as learning at home might be more practical and convenient for people who identify as physically disabled.
- A greater proportion of disabled people who we engaged with in the development of the strategy reported they were learning on a one-to-one basis than non-disabled people.
- Stakeholders believe that there is a lack of clarity for learners about their rights and entitlements to additional support arrangement and equipment when compared with the experience of adult learners at colleges and universities.

4.2.2 Employment

³⁵ [Summary Statistics for Attainment and Initial Leaver Destinations, No. 3: 2021 Edition.](#)

³⁶ [National Indicator Performance \(accessed 14/4/22\)](#)

³⁷ [Higher Education Student Statistics UK: 2019 to 2020](#)

³⁸ [Report on Widening Access 2019/20](#)

³⁹ [Disability and education, UK: 2019](#)

⁴⁰ [Disability and education, UK: 2019](#)

⁴¹ [Disabled people in the labour market in Scotland](#)

- People with disabilities are less likely to be in employment than non-disabled people and earn less on average than non-disabled people. ⁴²
- The employment rate for people with disabilities was estimated at 47.4% (April 2020-March 2021), significantly lower than the employment rate for non-disabled people (80.2%).⁴³
- Evidence collected by Citizen's Advice Bureau suggests that in August 2020, 1 in 4 disabled people (27%) were facing redundancy, rising to 37% for those people whose disability has a substantial impact on their activities. ⁴⁴
- At UK level, there is some evidence to suggest that employees with disabilities were more likely to be made redundant during the pandemic than non-disabled employees. ⁴⁵
- The proportion of disabled people in employment who received job-related training in the past 3 months (23.8 per cent) is higher than the proportion for non-disabled people (22.1 per cent). ⁴⁶

4.2.3 Mental Wellbeing

- Prior to the pandemic, disabled people had lower mental wellbeing than non-disabled people (45.4 compared to 51.8 on a scale of 14 to 70). ⁴⁷
- Disabled people, who were already more likely to be experiencing mental health problems prior to the pandemic, have experienced increased mental ill-health as a result of the pandemic. ⁴⁸
- Disabled adult learners who we engaged with in the development of the strategy reported that they hoped learning would improve their mental wellbeing more than non-disabled individuals.

4.2.4 Social Isolation and Loneliness

- In 2018 disabled people were more than twice as likely to experience loneliness as non-disabled people. ⁴⁹
- During a snapshot period from March – July 2020, 82% of disabled people consulted by Glasgow Disability Alliance reported that they were worried about isolation during the pandemic. ⁵⁰

4.2.5 Digital Inclusion

⁴² [Fairer Scotland for disabled people - employment action plan: progress report - year 2](#)

⁴³ [Scotland's Labour Market: People, Places and Regions - Statistics from the Annual Population Survey 2020/21](#)

⁴⁴ [An Unequal Crisis](#)

⁴⁵ [Coronavirus and redundancies in the UK labour market: September to November 2020](#)

⁴⁶ [National Indicator Performance \(accessed 14/4/22\)](#)

⁴⁷ [Scottish Health Survey 2019: supplementary tables](#)

⁴⁸ [COVID-19 and Disabled People in Scotland - Health, Social and Economic Harms](#)

⁴⁹ [Scottish Household Survey 2019](#)

⁵⁰ [Supercharged: A Human Catastrophe](#)

- During a snapshot period from March – July 2020, 60% of disabled people consulted by Glasgow Disability Alliance said that they were digitally excluded.⁵¹
- UK wide research into digital inclusion found that people with a registered disability are four times as likely to be offline.⁵²
- In 2019, 64 percent of older adults (aged 60-74) with a disability reported using the internet. This was lower than reported internet usage amongst older adults who are non-disabled (85 percent).⁵³

4.2.6 The impact of the Adult Learning Strategy:

The increased access to accredited learning that the Adult Learning Strategy aims to provide will be beneficial to disabled people by providing more opportunities for disabled people with few or no qualifications, potentially leading to further positive destinations. These destinations could include further and higher education and could involve gaining degree-level qualifications. In addition, increased access to accredited learning could help more disabled people to access employment opportunities, as could the strategy's action to connect community-based adult learning to employment services. This could potentially lead to more meaningful employment and training opportunities for disabled people who use CLD services.

Increased availability of, access to, and support for, online learning options for adult learners will have a positive impact on disabled people by helping to tackle the digital exclusion that our evidence shows disabled people face by increasing access to digital devices for adult learning and enabling disabled people to develop essential digital skills through the creation of more digital learning opportunities.

Disabled people will also benefit from the expansion of community-based adult learning opportunities and creation of positive pathways for adult learner by providing additional opportunities to socialise and minimise isolation and loneliness.

Consultation has suggested that there is a lack of clarity for learners about their rights and entitlements to additional support arrangements and equipment when compared with the experience of adult learners at colleges and universities. Exploring these barriers further has the potential to impact positively on disabled people in areas that matter most to them.

The inclusive nature of adult learning and the aim to increase learning opportunities for all adults has a strong potential to bring together, and support good relations among and between, disabled and non-disabled people. The strategic action to collaborate with adult learners and equality groups to explore, define and remove barriers to learning has the potential for different groups to learn from each other, thus promoting understanding and good relations.

4.3 Sex

⁵¹ [Supercharged: A Human Catastrophe](#)

⁵² [UK Consumer Digital Index 2018](#)

⁵³ [Scottish Household Survey 2019](#)

There are no national data sets for community based adult learners and therefore the experiences of men and women accessing community based learning. However, there is a reliable evidence base about the wider context within which CLD operates, specifically in relation to access to education, attainment and employment. There is some limited evidence around mental wellbeing, digital inclusion and social isolation. Relevant data is drawn from a range of robust statistical publications, grey literature, as well as anecdotal and qualitative evidence gathered from engagement with adult learners.

Evidence shows that the proportion of men with low or no qualifications is higher than that for women. Evidence shows equal access to Further Education, with a slightly higher proportion of women entering Higher Education. However, there remain social and economic inequalities in relation to earnings and caring responsibilities. There are also inequalities affecting the CLD workforce.

A key strategic action of the Adult Learning Strategy is to work with learners to explore, define and remove barriers to learning. A further action is to develop consistent and coherent data measurement frameworks for CLD. This will involve collecting equalities data, which will better enable us to understand the experiences of male and female learners. This may lead to further research if required.

What the evidence tells us:

4.3.1 Access to Education and Attainment

- In 2019/20, 58.5% of entrants into Higher Education in Scotland were women.⁵⁴
- Women made up 51.7% of all full-time Scottish domiciled enrolments and 52.9% of all part-time Scottish domiciled enrolments to Further Education in 2019/20.⁵⁵
- Male adult learners who we engaged with in the development of the strategy were slightly more likely to state that they were wanting to improve their personal life through their current learning than women. Women were more likely to state that they wanted to improve work life/ employability.
- Women disproportionately carry out caring responsibilities in both formal and informal sectors and as either paid or unpaid carers and these responsibilities were exacerbated during Covid-19.⁵⁶ Stakeholders and adult learners told us the significant impact that caring can have on their learning.
- The proportion of men with low or no qualifications (10.8 per cent) is higher than that for women (8.6 per cent).⁵⁷
- Both men and women who we engaged with told us that they were learning towards a qualification. However, there were some notable differences: a much greater proportion of male learners told us that they

⁵⁴ [HE Students and Qualifiers at Scottish Institutions 2019-20](#)

⁵⁵ [Report on Widening Access 2019/20](#)

⁵⁶ [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): impact on equality \(research\).](#)

⁵⁷ [National Indicator Performance \(accessed 14/4/22\)](#)

were learning reading, writing and numbers and digital than woman learners.

4.3.2 Poverty

- In 2017-20, the relative poverty rate after housing costs was higher for single women with children (38%) than for other single working-age adults.⁵⁸

4.3.3 Employment

- The proportion of women earning less than the real living wage in Scotland in 2020 was higher for women than men (16.4% compared to 13.8%).⁵⁹
- In 2021, the gender pay gap for Scotland was 3.0 per cent, an increase of 0.6 percentage points on the previous year. The gender pay gap increases with age. For those aged 16-24, the gap is -17.0 per cent, with median full-time hourly earnings for women exceeding those for men in this age group. This is also true for those aged 25-34, where the gap is -4.3 per cent. Men aged 35-49 and 50-64 have higher median hourly earnings than women, with the gender pay gap for these age groups being 3.5 per cent and 7.7 per cent respectively.⁶⁰
- In 2020, the male employment rate exceeded the female employment rate, with the current gap being 4.7 percentage points, a decrease of 1.5 percentage points since 2019.⁶¹
- There is a gender pay gap affecting women in the Community Learning and Development workforce and male workers are underrepresented in the sector overall.⁶²
- The proportion of women in employment who received job related training (24.5 per cent) is higher than the proportion for men (20.1 per cent).⁶³

4.3.4 Mental Wellbeing

- In 2019 there were no significant variations by sex in WEMWBS scores (49.9 and 49.7, respectively).⁶⁴

4.3.5 Social Isolation and Loneliness

- Among women, 12% reported feeling lonely 'often' or 'all of the time' in the previous two weeks in 2019, a significantly higher proportion than men

⁵⁸ [Poverty and Income Inequality in Scotland 2017-20 \(data.gov.scot\)](#)

⁵⁹ [Best Start, Bright Futures Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan 2022-2026 Annex 7: Equality Impact Assessment](#)

⁶⁰ [National Indicator Performance \(accessed 14/4/22\)](#)

⁶¹ [National Indicator Performance \(accessed 14/4/22\)](#)

⁶² [Working with Scotland's Communities](#)

⁶³ [National Indicator Performance \(accessed 14/4/22\)](#)

⁶⁴ [Scottish Health Survey 2019](#)

(9%). Women were also significantly more likely than men to have reported feeling lonely 'sometimes' (21% compared with 17% respectively) while men were more likely than women to have reported feeling lonely 'rarely' or 'never' in the previous two weeks (75% and 68% respectively).⁶⁵

- Research has found that women report loneliness more than men and are more likely to report feeling lonely than men.⁶⁶
- Research shows that men, especially those over 50, are less likely to report high levels of social contact and support than women and appear to be more at risk of social isolation than women.⁶⁷

4.3.6 Digital Inclusion

- UK wide data from the Office of National Statistics showed that 58% of internet non-users were women.⁶⁸
- UK wide research conducted by Lloyds found that 62% of retired men are in possession of essential digital skills compared to 43% of women.⁶⁹

4.3.7 The impact of the Adult Learning Strategy:

The strategy's ambition to create new and increased positive pathways in a number of areas will be beneficial for both men and women. This will allow for the development of skills and learning in a number of ways that benefit learners from both sexes such as communication skills, confidence building and developing relationships with others, and reflects the different motivations that our engagement with adult learners suggests men and women have in learning. In addition, increased access to accredited learning has the potential to positively impact on men in particular, who are more likely to have low or no qualifications than women, by providing more opportunities for adult learners with few or no qualifications.

Women adult learners in particular will potentially benefit from the strategy's action to connect community-based adult learning to employment services. This could potentially lead to more meaningful employment opportunities and increase incomes from work for women who, as evidence shows, have a lower employment rate than men and proportionately earn less than the real living wage than men.

In addition, women could potentially benefit from the strategy's action to remove barriers to learning. Evidence gathered shows that additional caring responsibilities have put increased financial pressures of mothers and that childcare is a significant barrier to their learning. Further work to be conducted in the lifespan of the strategy could lead to specific policy interventions that address this barrier.

Women in particular will also benefit from increased availability of, access to, and support for, online learning options for adult learners. This will enable women to develop essential digital skills through the creation of more digital learning opportunities.

⁶⁵ [Scottish Health Survey 2019 Social isolation and loneliness among older people.](#)

⁶⁶ [Social isolation and loneliness in Scotland: a review of prevalence and trends](#)

⁶⁷ [Social isolation and loneliness in Scotland: a review of prevalence and trends](#)

⁶⁸ [Exploring the UK's digital divide.](#)

⁶⁹ [Lloyds Bank UK Consumer Digital Index 2020](#)

Both men and women will benefit from the expansion of community-based adult learning opportunities and creation of positive pathways for adult learners by providing additional opportunities to socialise and minimise isolation and loneliness. The strategy also has the potential to impact on men and women who work in CLD. Its action to collaborate to improve diversity in the workforce provides an opportunity to analyse the workforces gender imbalance and pay-gap and develop specific actions to address these.

Increasing adult learning opportunities will inherently bring diverse people together, and this is likely, albeit indirectly, to promote good relations among and between men and women. The strategic action to collaborate with adult learners and equality groups to explore, define and remove barriers to learning has the potential for different groups to learn from each other, thus promoting understanding and good relations.

4.4 Pregnancy and Maternity

There are no national data sets for community based adult learners and so evidence is limited on how pregnancy and maternity impacts on learners. There is some evidence from grey literature about the wider context within which CLD operates, primarily around access to education.

The available evidence primarily relates to the inequalities experienced by young mothers. Our engagement with adult learners provided us with some evidence around the experiences of learners with children.

A key strategic action of the Adult Learning Strategy is to work with learners to explore, define and remove barriers to learning. The strategy will also focus on improving data collection on CLD, including on equalities. If this reveals specific barriers in relation to pregnancy and maternity we may explore whether future research is needed in this area.

What the evidence tells us:

4.4.1 Education and attainment

- Low attainment can be a consequence of teenage pregnancy and can lead to exclusion from education with teenage mothers being less likely to finish their education.⁷⁰
- Adult learners who we engaged with identified childcare as a significant barrier to their learning.
- Young mothers tend to have lower educational levels compared to older mothers when their first child is born, which impacts on subsequent career

⁷⁰ [Early Pregnancy and Education in the UK](#)

prospects. They are less likely to be in work when their first child is 10 months old, with education being found to be a key predictor of later employment. ⁷¹

- Single mothers with low qualifications are particularly concentrated in sectors most impacted by the pandemic. ⁷²

4.4.2 Mental Wellbeing

- Additional caring responsibilities caused by the pandemic have put increased financial and mental health pressures on mothers. ⁷³
- It is estimated that between 1 in 4 or 5 women experience poor mental health in the perinatal period. Perinatal mental health problems affect between 10 to 20% of women during pregnancy and the first year after having a baby. ⁷⁴
- Young mothers and their babies are at greater risk of experiencing negative health and social outcomes compared with older mothers, including poorer mental health (increased rates of stress, anxiety, and depression). ⁷⁵

4.4.3 Social Isolation and Loneliness

- Young mothers are more likely to experience social adversity, stigmatisation and disengagement with education. ⁷⁶
- Young parents have identified that feeling isolated and lonely can be one of the most challenging parts of being a parent as a young person. ⁷⁷

4.4.4 Employment

- Analysis shows that mothers have been more exposed than fathers to job loss during the crisis, either as a result of the shutdown or due to an inability to keep working alongside increases in childcare responsibilities. This is particularly apparent for mothers with the lowest levels of qualification, for whom working from home is much less possible. ⁷⁸
- Pregnancy brings a period of sudden increased financial pressure and sustained money worries have been reported following the birth of a child. ⁷⁹
- Motherhood can have a significant impact on the number of hours that some mothers can work, which then affects their pay and income relative to non-mothers and men. ⁸⁰

4.4.5 The impact of the Adult Learning Strategy:

⁷¹ [Every child, every chance: The Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan 2018-22 Annex 3 – Equality Impact Assessment](#)

⁷² [If not now, when? - Social Renewal Advisory Board report: January 2021](#)

⁷³ [Lockdown One Year On](#)

⁷⁴ [Perinatal and Infant Mental Health Equality Impact Assessment Record](#)

⁷⁵ [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Family Nurse Partnership insights: evaluation report](#)

⁷⁶ [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Family Nurse Partnership insights: evaluation report](#)

⁷⁷ [Pregnancy and Parenthood in Young People Strategy National Progress Report: No 2](#)

⁷⁸ [COVID-19 and inequalities](#)

⁷⁹ [Exploring the Cost of the Pregnancy Pathway](#)

⁸⁰ [Mothers suffer big long-term pay penalty from part-time working](#)

The ambition to create new and increased positive pathways for community-based adult learners should have a positive impact, especially on young mothers who have not finished their education and have been disengaged from education. Increased provision provides an opportunity for young mothers to return to learning and develop new skills. In addition, increased access to accredited learning has the potential to positively impact on young mothers by potentially providing opportunities to gain qualifications that they may have not been able to gain by not finishing their education and therefore raise their education levels. Increased access to accredited learning also provides more opportunities for single mothers with low qualifications who are particularly concentrated in sectors most impacted by the pandemic to gain additional qualifications in the community.

Mothers will also benefit from the expansion of community-based adult learning opportunities and creation of positive pathways for adult learners by providing additional opportunities to socialise, minimise isolation and loneliness and improve their mental wellbeing through participation in learning.

Mothers will also potentially benefit from the action to connect community-based adult learning with employability services. This provides an opportunity for mothers using CLD services to benefit from support to enter, return and sustain employment through improved connections with employability services in their local area.

In addition, mothers could potentially benefit from the strategy's action to remove barriers to learning. Evidence gathered shows that additional caring responsibilities have put increased financial pressures on mothers and that childcare is a significant barrier to their learning. Further work to be conducted in the lifespan of the strategy could lead to specific policy interventions that address this barrier.

Increasing adult learning opportunities will inherently bring diverse people together, and this is likely, albeit indirectly, to promote good relations for those that identify with the pregnancy and maternity protected characteristic. The strategic action to collaborate with adult learners and equality groups to explore, define and remove barriers to learning has the potential for different groups to learn from each other, thus promoting understanding and good relations.

4.5 Gender Reassignment

There are no national data sets for community based adult learners and so evidence is limited on how gender reassignment impacts on learners. There is some limited evidence from grey literature about the wider context within which CLD operates. This primarily relates to the experiences of trans people at school, college and university and in gaining and sustaining employment. There is no comparable evidence for people's experiences in community based adult learning. There is some evidence around trans people's mental wellbeing and social isolation and loneliness.

A key strategic action of the Adult Learning Strategy is to work with learners to explore, define and remove barriers to learning. The strategy will also focus on improving data collection on CLD, including on equalities. If this reveals specific barriers in relation to gender reassignment we may explore whether future research is needed in this area.

The Population Census in 2022 has included voluntary questions on transgender status/history. This will allow for development of baseline data on gender identity, which will be beneficial to monitor.

What the evidence tells us:

4.5.1 Education and Attainment

- Trans people face a range of disadvantages and vulnerabilities in their everyday life and in employment, including discrimination, violence and exclusion.⁸¹
- 27% of transgender young people who responded to a survey of LGBT young people left education as a result of homophobia, biphobia, or transphobia in the learning environment and half rated their school experience as “bad”.⁸²
- 39% of transgender young people who responded to a survey of LGBT young people had experienced bullying at college and 28% had experienced bullying at university.⁸³
- 68% of transgender young people who responded to a survey of LGBT young people who had experienced bullying said that it had negatively affected their educational attainment and reported negative impacts on their mental health and self-esteem.⁸⁴
- 70% of respondents to the Trans Mental Health Study 2012 felt that they had lost or missed out on something as a result of being trans, transitioning or expressing their gender identity. These included education and qualifications.⁸⁵
- Trans people have reported experiencing high levels of barriers to their learning in universities with many not feeling safe and welcome on campus. 35% of participants in a survey conducted in 2017 had left a college or university course with the most common reason cited being mental health issues.⁸⁶
- The findings of a survey by the Scottish Trans Alliance showed that 21.2% of non-binary people had avoided education because of a fear of being harassed.⁸⁷

4.5.2 Mental Wellbeing

- Trans population and LGB populations experience a higher incidence of experience a greater incidence of poor mental health.⁸⁸

⁸¹ [LGBT in Britain Trans Report](#)

⁸² [Life in Scotland for LGBT Young People](#)

⁸³ [Life in Scotland for LGBT Young People](#)

⁸⁴ [Life in Scotland for LGBT Young People](#)

⁸⁵ [Trans Mental Health Study 2012](#)

⁸⁶ [TransEdu Scotland: Researching the experience of trans and gender diverse applicants, students and staff in Scotland's colleges and universities](#)

⁸⁷ [Non-binary people's experiences in the UK](#)

⁸⁸ [LGBTI Populations and Mental Health Inequality](#)

- Seven in ten trans people reported that they had experienced depression in 2018 .⁸⁹
- 88% of respondents to 2012's Trans Mental Health Survey showed symptoms of depression.⁹⁰ 75% of respondents showed symptoms of anxiety, compared to 20% of people in the UK general population.⁹¹

4.5.3 Social Isolation and Loneliness

- 62% of trans people report feeling isolated due to a lack of services aimed at them and problems with discrimination in their area.⁹²
- LGBT people interviewed in rural communities stated that they had feelings of isolation and a fear of isolation.⁹³
- International evidence shows that social isolation and loneliness are key influences on the mental health of trans people with trans people, particularly trans women, showing higher levels of loneliness compared to cisgender people.⁹⁴
- LGBT people are likely to encounter diminished support networks and high levels of isolation as they get older.⁹⁵

4.5.4 Employment

- The National LGBT Survey 2018 found that employment rates are considerably lower for trans and non-binary people. 63% of trans and non-binary respondents had a job in the 12 months preceding the survey, falling to 56% of BAME trans people.⁹⁶
- Many trans people face discrimination, bullying, harassment, prejudiced views and stereotyping throughout employment, including during recruitment processes. More than half of trans people who participated in research conducted by LGBT Health and Wellbeing said they found getting into work challenging or impossible.⁹⁷ 52% of participants in 2012's Trans Mental Health Study had experienced problems with employment due to having a trans history or being trans.⁹⁸
- The Scottish Transgender Alliance found that the workplace is one of the most likely locations for transphobic discrimination and harassment to occur, and as a result many trans people are unemployed, under-employed or self-employed.⁹⁹

⁸⁹ [LGBT in Scotland Health Report](#)

⁹⁰ [Trans Mental Health Study 2012](#)

⁹¹ [The Scottish LGBT Rural Equality Report](#)

⁹² [LGBTI Populations and Mental Health Inequality](#)

⁹³ [The Scottish LGBT Rural Equality Report](#)

⁹⁴ [Being trans and feeling lonely: a reflection on loneliness literature, community connectedness, and mental health in the transgender and gender diverse community](#)

⁹⁵ [A Fairer Scotland for Older People: framework for action](#)

⁹⁶ [The National LGBT Survey 2018](#)

⁹⁷ [Trans People and Work: Survey Report](#)

⁹⁸ [Trans Mental Health Study 2012](#)

⁹⁹ [Changing for the Better How to Include Trans People in Your Workplace](#)

- Half of trans and non-binary people surveyed disguised or hid the fact that they are LGBT at work because they were afraid of discrimination. ¹⁰⁰

4.5.5 Poverty

- Research conducted in 2007 suggested that trans people have low incomes. 30% of respondents had an income of over £20,000, and 48% of respondents had an income if under £10,000. ¹⁰¹

4.5.6 The impact of the Adult Learning Strategy:

The ambition to create new and increased positive pathways for community-based adult learners should have a positive impact on trans people. Evidence suggests that trans people have mainly negative experiences of education. Increased adult learning provision provides more opportunities for trans people to return to learning in a different environment. Trans people will also benefit from the expansion of community-based adult learning opportunities and creation of positive pathways for adult learners by providing additional opportunities to socialise, minimise isolation and loneliness and improve their mental wellbeing through participation in learning. In addition, increased access to accredited learning has the potential to positively impact on trans people by potentially providing opportunities to gain qualifications that may have missed out on gaining due to poor previous experiences.

The strategy's action to connect community-based adult learning to employment services could potentially lead to more meaningful employment and training opportunities for trans people who use CLD services and provide support to enter and progress in the workplace.

Trans people will also benefit from the expansion of community-based adult learning opportunities and the creation of positive pathways for adult learners by providing additional opportunities to socialise, minimise isolation and loneliness and improve their mental wellbeing through participation in learning.

The action to explore, define and remove barriers to learning has the potential to identify the unique barriers that trans people face in learning and to promote trans-inclusive policy in removing these barriers.

Increasing adult learning opportunities will inherently bring diverse people together, and this is likely, albeit indirectly, to promote good relations for those within and out-with the transgender community. The strategic action to collaborate with adult learners and equality groups to explore, define and remove barriers to learning has the potential for different groups to learn from each other, thus promoting understanding and good relations.

4.6 Sexual Orientation

¹⁰⁰ [LGBT in Britain Trans Report](#)

¹⁰¹ [Transgender Experiences in Scotland](#)

There are no national data sets for community based adult learners and so evidence is limited on how sexual orientation impacts on learners accessing CLD. There is some limited evidence from official statistics publications and grey literature about the wider context within which CLD operates. This primarily relates to the experiences of LGB people at school, college and university. There is some evidence around mental wellbeing and social isolation and loneliness.

What the evidence tells us:

4.6.1 Employment

- In 2018, people who identified as 'LGB and other (LGBO)' were twice as likely to be unemployed compared to those who identified as 'heterosexual'.¹⁰²
- Despite studies showing equal or better pay for LGB people¹⁰³, they continue to experience discrimination, harassment and abuse in the workplace and in education.¹⁰⁴ LGB employees are more than twice as likely to experience bullying at work than heterosexual employees, but many do not report this.¹⁰⁵

4.6.2 Education and Attainment

- 46% of LGBT young people who responded to a survey of LGBT young people rated their experience of school as “bad”.¹⁰⁶
- 25% of LGBT young people who responded to a survey of LGBT young people had experienced bullying at college and 14% had experienced bullying at university.¹⁰⁷
- 63% of LGBT young people who responded to a survey of LGBT young people who had experienced bullying said that it had negatively affected their educational attainment and reported negative impacts on their mental health and self-esteem.¹⁰⁸
- Data from 2015 showed that people who identified as ‘LGB and other (LGBO)’ were more likely to have further or higher education qualifications. 32 per cent had a degree level qualification compared to 30 per cent of heterosexual adults.¹⁰⁹

4.6.3 Mental Wellbeing

- LGB and trans populations experience a higher incidence of experience a greater incidence of poor mental health and LGB people are twice as likely to report symptoms of poor mental health than heterosexual adults.¹¹⁰

¹⁰² [Scottish Surveys Core Questions 2019](#)

¹⁰³ [Sexual Orientation in Scotland 2017 A Summary of the Evidence Base.](#)

¹⁰⁴ [Inclusion at Work: Perspectives on LGBT+ working lives](#)

¹⁰⁵ [Scotland's National Strategy for Economic Transformation Equality Position Statement](#)

¹⁰⁶ [Life in Scotland for LGBT Young People](#)

¹⁰⁷ [Life in Scotland for LGBT Young People](#)

¹⁰⁸ [Life in Scotland for LGBT Young People](#)

¹⁰⁹ [Sexual Orientation in Scotland 2017 A Summary of the Evidence Base](#)

¹¹⁰ [LGBTI Populations and Mental Health Inequality](#)

- Half of LGBT people who took part in Stonewall Scotland’s research reported that they had experienced depression. ¹¹¹
- In 2017, adults identifying as LGB & other scored lower in mental wellbeing than those identifying as heterosexual. ¹¹²

4.6.4 Social Isolation and Loneliness

- 33% of LGBT people surveyed in 2018 reported that they felt isolated. Those living in rural areas reported higher isolation (47%) compared to urban areas (23%).¹¹³ 46 % of LGBT people interviewed in rural communities said they felt isolated.¹¹⁴
- 41% of LGB people over 55 are more likely to live alone compared to 28% of heterosexual people and are less likely to see family members regularly. ¹¹⁵
- LGBT people are likely to encounter diminished support networks and high levels of isolation as they get older. ¹¹⁶

4.6.5 The impact of the Adult Learning Strategy:

The ambition to create new and increased positive pathways for community-based adult learners should have a positive impact on people who identify as LGBT. Evidence suggests that LGBT people have mainly negative experiences of education that affect their attainment. Increased adult learning provision provides more opportunities for LGBT people to return to learning and increased access to accredited learning provides an opportunity to gain qualifications that may have been missed out on due to negative experiences of education.

People who identify as LGBT will also benefit from the expansion of community-based adult learning opportunities and creation of positive pathways for adult learners by providing additional opportunities to socialise, minimise isolation and loneliness and improve their mental wellbeing through participation in learning. The strategy’s action to connect community-based adult learning to employment services could potentially lead to more meaningful employment and training opportunities for LGBT people who use CLD services and provide support to enter and progress in the workplace.

Increasing adult learning opportunities will inherently bring diverse people together, and this is likely, albeit indirectly, to promote good relations for those within and out-with the LGB community. The strategic action to collaborate with adult learners and equality groups to explore, define and remove barriers to learning has the potential for different groups to learn from each other, thus promoting understanding and good relations.

¹¹¹ [LGBT in Scotland Health Report.](#)

¹¹² [Scottish Surveys Core Questions 2017](#)

¹¹³ [LGBTI Populations and Mental Health Inequality](#)

¹¹⁴ [The Scottish LGBT Rural Equality Report](#)

¹¹⁵ [LGBTI Populations and Mental Health Inequality](#)

¹¹⁶ [A Fairer Scotland for Older People: framework for action](#)

4.7 Race

There are no national data sets for community based adult learners and therefore limited evidence on how community based adult learning can impact on people from different ethnic groups. However, there is a reliable evidence base about the wider context within which CLD operates, specifically in relation to access to education (including language learning) and employment. There is also some evidence around poverty, social isolation, mental wellbeing and digital inclusion. Relevant data is drawn from a range of official statistics publications, as well as anecdotal and qualitative evidence gathered from engagement with adult learners.

The available evidence suggests that the proportion of people from ethnic minority backgrounds entering Higher and Further education is increasing and the proportion of the minority ethnic population with no or low qualifications is decreasing. There is reliable – if outdated – census evidence around English language levels, and grey literature on barriers to language learning and accessing employment among refugee communities.

There is evidence that people from minority ethnic backgrounds are employed at a lower rate than the white population and are a most risk of child poverty. Grey literature further evidences the employment barriers faced by adults from ethnic minorities, as well as the disproportionate impact of the pandemic

An action in the Adult Learning Strategy is to develop consistent and coherent data measurement frameworks for CLD. This will involve collecting equalities data, which will better enable us to understand the experiences of learners from different ethnic minority backgrounds. Analysis of the 2022 census will provide further and up to date data on race and language.

What the evidence tells us:

4.7.1 Education and Attainment

- Over the past five years, the proportion of UK domiciled full-time first degree entrants to Scottish universities from a minority ethnic background has increased from 9.0% in 2014/15 to 11.0% in 2019/20.¹¹⁷
- In 2019/20, 7.4% of Scottish domiciled enrolments in full-time Further Education were from a minority ethnic background. This is an increase from 6.9% in 2018/19.¹¹⁸
- Ethnic minority learners (excluding white minorities) who we engaged with in the development of the strategy were more likely to tell us that they wanted to advance into a college course than white learners. Ethnic minority groups (excluding white minorities) were more likely to tell us that they wanted to progress into a job/employment than white learners
- The proportion with low or no qualifications is higher amongst the white population aged 16-64 (9.7 per cent) compared with the minority ethnic

¹¹⁷ [Higher education student statistics UK: 2019 to 2020](#)

¹¹⁸ [Report on Widening Access 2019/20](#)

population aged 16-64 (9.0 per cent). Over the past year the decrease in the proportion of the minority ethnic population aged 16-64 with low or no qualifications (down by 6.3 per cent) is higher than for the white population aged 16-64 (down by 1.7 per cent).¹¹⁹ Despite better attainment levels, evidence suggests that this does not result in better employment prospects.¹²⁰

- The most common response among white learners who we engaged with in the development of the strategy, when asked what they wanted to achieve in their learning, was work life/employability. The most popular response for ethnic minorities (excluding white minorities) was personal life.
- Compared with ethnic minority (excluding white minority) learners, a much higher proportion of white learners told us that they hoped their current learning would improve their mental wellbeing. In contrast, a much larger proportion of non-white people hoped learning would improve their social life/relationships and family life than white people.
- 2011 Census data showed that half of people in the 'White: Gypsy/Traveller' group had no qualifications (50 per cent). This was the highest proportion of ethnic groups and around double the rate in the population as a whole at that time.¹²¹

4.7.2 Language Learning

- 11,412 (0.2%) people aged 3 or over did 'not speak English at all' in the 2011 Census. 62,128 (1.2%) people aged 3 or over did 'not speak English well' in the 2011 Census.¹²²
- Research by refugee community researchers for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation found that the combination of low levels of support, poor housing, stigmatisation by the state and racism left refugees and asylum seekers with a range of mental health problems for which they received very limited support and also reduced their ability to develop their language skills thereby impacting upon their long-term integration potential.¹²³

4.7.3 Employment

- Over a fifth of UK minority ethnic workers who were furloughed were no longer working by September 2020, more than double the overall rate.¹²⁴
- People with multiple protected characteristics can face heightened barriers to employment. For example, 2019 data shows that a non-disabled white person is more than twice as likely to be in employment than a person with a disability from a minority ethnic group.¹²⁵
- The employment rate for people from minority ethnic groups in Scotland is consistently lower than the employment rate for white people. The

¹¹⁹ [National Indicator Performance \(accessed 14/4/22\)](#)

¹²⁰ [First year Progress Report 2018-19 Annex C Child Poverty In Minority Ethnic Families.](#)

¹²¹ [Analysis of Equality Results from the 2011 Census – Part 2](#)

¹²² [Scotland's Census 2011](#)

¹²³ [Empowering Birmingham's migrant and refugee community organisations](#)

¹²⁴ [If not now, when? - Social Renewal Advisory Board report: January 2021](#)

¹²⁵ [Fairer Scotland for disabled people - employment action plan: progress report - year 2](#)

employment rate for the minority ethnic population aged 16 to 64 was estimated at 65.1% during the period April 2020-March 2021¹²⁶, significantly lower than the rate for the white population (73.2%) – an employment rate gap of 8.2 percentage points. The minority ethnic employment gap is much larger for women than men. In Scotland, the minority ethnic employment gap was estimated at approximately 13.2 percentage points for women and at 2.2 percentage points for men (April 2020 - March 2021).¹²⁶

- Refugees can face a significant barrier in accessing employment which match their skills due to a lack of recognition of the qualifications and skills they have gained in their own country.¹²⁷ Other barriers can include a lack of understanding of the UK job market, including how to look for work, confidence and language skills.¹²⁸ These barriers also include racism and discrimination.¹²⁹

4.7.4 Mental Wellbeing

- Survey data (UK wide) shows disproportionate impacts of the pandemic on mental health, for Pakistani and Bangladeshi men in particular.¹³⁰
- Refugee and asylum seeking women can face particular challenges when integrating into new countries. Their previous experiences in their countries of origin, such as gender-based violence, can impact on their mental health.¹³¹
- People seeking safety on the basis of their LGBTI identify face particular challenges such as harassment and discrimination which impacts on their wellbeing.¹³²
- Unknown and new language used in Scotland to describe LGBTI identify can stop asylum seekers and refugees accessing support and advice.¹³³
- UK wide survey data indicated higher feelings of loneliness among people from ethnic minority backgrounds. 38% of adults from ethnic minority backgrounds in the UK agree that they often feel alone in comparison to 31% of UK adults. Future levels of loneliness are also more of a concern for people from ethnic minority backgrounds (41%) in comparison with those who aren't from a minority ethnic background (33%).¹³⁴
- Refugee and asylum seeking women can be particularly isolated for a number of reasons including a lack of confidence and no previous access to learning.¹³⁵

4.7.5 Social Isolation and Loneliness

¹²⁶ [Scotland's Labour Market: People, Places and Regions 2020/21](#)

¹²⁷ [Action plan on Integration and Inclusion 2021-2027](#)

¹²⁸ [New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy 2018 - 2022](#)

¹²⁹ [No Safe Refuge](#)

¹³⁰ [ETHNIC DIFFERENCES IN EFFECTS OF COVID-19: household and local context](#)

¹³¹ [Female refugees and asylum seekers: the issue of integration](#)

¹³² [No Safe Refuge](#)

¹³³ [New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy 2018 - 2022](#)

¹³⁴ [Life after lockdown: Tackling loneliness among those left behind](#)

¹³⁵ [New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy 2018 - 2022](#)

- UK wide survey data indicated higher feelings of loneliness among people from ethnic minority backgrounds. 38% of adults from ethnic minority backgrounds in the UK agree that they often feel alone in comparison to 31% of UK adults. Future levels of loneliness are also more of a concern for people from ethnic minority backgrounds (41%) in comparison with those who aren't from a minority ethnic background (33%).¹³⁶
- Refugee and asylum seeking women can be particularly isolated for a number of reasons including a lack of confidence and no previous access to learning.¹³⁷
- UK research conducted by UCL Institute of Education found that Black and Asian adults over the age of 65 years are almost twice as likely to report having no close friends compared to white and mixed or 'other' ethnicity adults of the same age.¹³⁸
- Minority ethnic families are most at risk of child poverty (38% of children in minority ethnic families were in relative poverty in 2017-20 compared to 24% of all children in Scotland) and families from some minority ethnic groups are more likely to have three or more children, putting them at higher risk of child poverty.¹³⁹

4.7.6 Poverty

- Minority ethnic workers are more likely to earn low incomes compared to the white population.¹⁴⁰
- 2011 Census data showed that Gypsy/Traveller communities were more likely to be from a one of the six family types most at risk of child poverty. Gypsy/Travellers are more likely to be in irregular work and economically inactive.^{141 142}

4.7.7 Digital Inclusion

- The UK Office for National Statistics showed that older minority ethnic groups use the internet the least. Recent internet users in 2019 from an Asian or Asian British background was 83.6% for people aged 55–64 years, 64.8% for people aged 65–74 years, and 29.9% for people older than 75 years. This is in comparison with recent internet users of White ethnicity; 93.5% for people aged 55–64 years, 83.8% for people aged 65–74 years, and 47.6% for people older than 75 years.¹⁴³
- Interviews with Gypsy and Traveller communities across the UK found that one in five participants had never used the internet and over half said that

¹³⁶ [Life after lockdown: Tackling loneliness among those left behind](#)

¹³⁷ [New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy 2018 - 2022](#)

¹³⁸ [Understanding the friendship networks of older Black and Minority Ethnic people living in the United Kingdom](#)

¹³⁹ [Poverty and Income Inequality in Scotland 2017-20 \(data.gov.scot\)](#)

¹⁴⁰ [If not now, when? - Social Renewal Advisory Board report: January 2021](#)

¹⁴¹ [Scotland's Census 2011](#)

¹⁴² [Best Start, Bright Futures Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan 2022-2026 Annex 7: Equality Impact Assessment](#)

¹⁴³ [Internet use - GOV.UK Ethnicity facts and figures](#)

they did not feel confident using digital technology. The research found that only 38% of Gypsy and Traveller participants interviewed, 33% if housed, had an internet connection compared to 86% of the general population.¹⁴⁴

4.7.8 The impact of the Adult Learning Strategy:

The strategy's action to connect community-based adult learning with employability services will be particularly beneficial to minority ethnic people, especially minority ethnic families who are most at risk of child poverty. These connections have the potential to provide routes into employability services from CLD provision which can provide targeted support to enable minority ethnic people to enter and progress in the workplace whilst recognising the barriers and cultural issues minority communities face. In addition, the action to evaluate the effectiveness of existing systems for Recognition of Prior Learning to ensure a coordinated national Recognised Prior Learning process has the potential to break down the barriers that refugees can face in accessing employment due to a lack of recognition of qualifications and skills gained overseas.

The strategy's ambition to create new and increased positive pathways in a number of areas will be beneficial for minority ethnic groups. This will allow for the development of skills and learning in a number of ways that benefit learners from such as communication skills, confidence building and developing relationships with others, and reflects the different motivations that our consultation suggested that ethnic minority learner (excluding white minorities) and white learners had in learning. Positive pathways includes English for Speakers of Other Languages and language learning and therefore potential for increased opportunities to develop language skills. The action to review the impact of *Welcoming Our Learners: Scotland's ESOL Strategy 2015-2020* has the potential to build on and develop outcomes for ESOL learners based on the findings of the review.

Minority ethnic groups will also benefit from the expansion of community-based adult learning opportunities and creation of positive pathways for adult learners by providing additional opportunities to socialise, minimise isolation and loneliness and improve their mental wellbeing through participation in learning.

The action to increase access to online learning opportunities has the potential to impact particularly on Gypsy/Traveller communities by increasing access to digital devices for adult learning and enabling people in these communities to develop essential digital skills through the creation of more digital learning opportunities. Also of particular benefit to Gypsy/ Traveller communities is the action to increase accredited learning opportunities, providing additional opportunities to gain qualifications for those with no or low qualifications.

Community based ESOL learning provides meaningful engagement for those learners who are trying to integrate into communities. An increase in adult learning opportunities will inherently bring diverse people together, and this is likely, albeit indirectly, to promote good relations.

¹⁴⁴ [Digital Exclusion in Gypsy and Traveller communities in the United Kingdom](#)

4.7.9 Religion or belief

There are no national data sets for community based adult learners and so evidence is limited on how religion or belief impacts on learners. There is very limited contextual evidence from official statistics about the experiences of Muslims which may be relevant to CLD delivery. There is reliable – if outdated – census evidence around religion and levels of qualifications. Analysis of the 2022 census will provide further and up to date data on religion and attainment of qualifications.

A key strategic action of the Adult Learning Strategy is to work with learners to explore, define and remove barriers to learning. The strategy will also focus on improving data collection on CLD, including on equalities. If this reveals specific barriers around religion or belief we may explore whether future research is needed in this area.

What the evidence tells us:

4.7.10 Education and Attainment

- Those who recorded their religion as ‘Church of Scotland’ in 2011’s Census were the most likely to have no qualifications (35 per cent) and those who recorded as ‘Hindu’ were the least likely (5 per cent). Hindus were the most likely to be highly qualified with (74 per cent having ‘Level 4 and above’ qualifications), while those who recorded as ‘Church of Scotland’ were the least likely (22 per cent).¹⁴⁵

4.7.11 Poverty

- In 2015-2020, relative poverty rates were considerably higher for Muslim adults (52%) compared to adults overall (18%). 15% of adults belonging to the Church of Scotland were in relative poverty compared to 19% of Roman Catholic adults.¹⁴⁶

4.7.12 Employment

- There is variation in employment rates by religion. Since 2004, the employment rate of Muslims in Scotland has been consistently lower than the employment rate for the population at large (58.1% vs 73.4% in 2020). Estimates are less precise for other religions due to small sample sizes. However, the data does suggest that the employment outcomes for those who are Jewish, Sikh or Buddhist in Scotland are less than the overall population.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁵ [Analysis of Equality Results from the 2011 Census – Part 2](#)

¹⁴⁶ [Poverty and Income Inequality in Scotland 2017-20 \(data.gov.scot\)](#)

¹⁴⁷ [Scotland’s Labour Market: People, Places and Regions – background tables and charts](#)

- In 2018 the highest employment rates were seen for those with no religious beliefs (75.3%) followed by Christians (74.1%, other religion (64.8%), Buddhists (60.8%), Hindus (54.8%) and Muslims (52.3 %).¹⁴⁸

4.7.13 Mental Wellbeing

- Roman Catholics and other groups reported higher mental wellbeing compared to adults with no religious belonging.¹⁴⁹
- Analysis of Higher Education statistics of UK student data in 2017/8 showed that there were considerable differences in degree attainment by religion or belief. 64.9% of Muslim students received a first or 2:1 in comparison to 76.3% overall.¹⁵⁰
- Research suggests that Sikh women face a number of barriers in seeking work. This includes low self-esteem, cultural and family barriers and language and literacy barriers.¹⁵¹

4.7.14 The impact of the Adult Learning Strategy:

Given the inclusive approach to the actions within the strategy, positive impacts may be possible to religious groups. Based on evidence, the action to connect community-based adult learning to employability services may have a positive impact in particular on Muslims and Sikh women who access adult learning. These connections have the potential to provide routes into employability services from CLD provision which can provide targeted support to enable entry into and progression in the workplace and the addressing of structural barriers.

5. Conclusion

The EQIA process did not identify indirect or direct discrimination through the policy intentions of the Adult Learning Strategy. It has shown that despite limited evidence for some protected characteristics specific to CLD, evidence for the wider context in which CLD operates shows that the impact of the Adult Learning Strategy will be positive across all many protected characteristics, in particular age, disability, sex, pregnancy and maternity, gender reassignment, sexual orientation and race. For religion and belief we have particularly limited data. We have found no evidence of negative consequences at this time, however, in line with best practice we will keep this under review as part of the monitoring of this EQIA.

Specific policy interventions for actions within the Adult Learning Strategy are yet to be developed. As these policies develop they will require their own EQIA to ensure that the specific barriers for each protected characteristic are fully considered. Once these policies are implemented, we will gain a better understanding of the difference each policy will make in reducing discrimination and enhancing opportunity.

¹⁴⁸ [Regional Employment Patterns in Scotland: Statistics from the Annual Population Survey 2018](#)

¹⁴⁹ [Scottish Surveys Core Questions 2017](#)

¹⁵⁰ [Research Insight: Religion and Belief in UK Higher Education](#)

¹⁵¹ [Sikh Women Speak: The Report The Voices Of Sikh Women In Scotland](#)

This EQIA analysis will be kept under regular review, with new data and evidence analysed as we improve data collection for CLD to monitor the impact of the Adult Learning Strategy on people with protected characteristics.

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