

TRANSFORMING LIVES

further education: learning hope



Now is the time to use the power of government to restore fairness for further education

As all who work in colleges know, since 2009 further education has been subjected to cut after cut – and these cuts have gone far beyond anything endured by other sectors of education. In effect, these cuts have hurt the communities that colleges serve and have penalised college staff who work hard day in and day out to provide transformative teaching and learning experiences. According to a recent report by the Institute of Fiscal Studies (IFS), funding for teaching and learning in adult further education was chopped by 14% in real terms between 2010/11 and 2015/16. Whilst, the Adult Skills Budget funding, which covers all education for people older than 19, declined by 29% in cash terms in the same period. The cuts need to be viewed in a context in which further education continues to provide education for around 40% of young people leaving school ([IFS 2018](#)). They enrol in college, seeking a new and inspiring learning environment. They also often need nurturing and supporting to refresh their spoilt identities as learners as many feel themselves to be ‘not good enough’. It is the belief, commitment and passion of further education teachers that helps turn this situation around.

It is grossly unfair then, that these young people should receive less funding per head than their peers in V1th forms and schools.

Action and change is now needed if further education is to survive. Government needs to stop hiding behind the rhetoric of ‘excellence’ and ‘raising standards’, start viewing further education as a vital component in the nation’s educational offer and **PUT THE MONEY ON THE TABLE**.

Why

Further education provides a multitude of social benefits that have remained largely unmeasured – precisely because they can be hard to quantify. The [Transforming Lives](#) research project has provided evidence for important benefits that are often not reflected in traditional measures of success. It cuts across the grain of the current skills policy discourse, providing a picture of transformative teaching and learning taking root and flourishing in the sometimes-stony ground of further education.

Transformative teaching and learning also has a huge impact in adult education. Apart from the economic benefit for individuals gaining qualifications and entering employment or beginning a new career, the benefits of further education extend into mental health, social cohesion, and family learning and learning for young people excluded from mainstream schools (for example, [Adam's story](#), [Jacqui's story](#), [Nyomi's story](#) and [Guy's story](#)).

Adult Education has the power to transform lives, families and communities. It challenges [Intergenerational inequality](#). It builds stronger families and communities, healthy and dignified ageing, digital development and inclusion, employability and intergenerational flourishing and social mobility. It is no accident that GPs are increasingly opting for ‘social prescription’ and prescribing educational courses for people who feel isolated and whose well-being is suffering as a result. Further education is well placed to address some of the social challenges arising from an educational system that often seems too focused on education as a means to individual advancement rather

than as a public service whose function is to benefit all of society by helping people realise their potential.

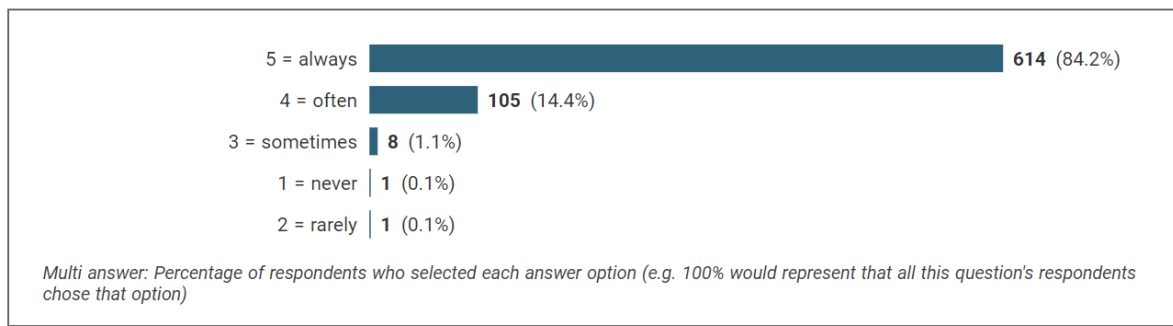
Our findings

Transformative FE pedagogies are based on authentic engagement and collaborations with learners and local communities. We have seen how they address and repair some of the damage done to learners in compulsory education. We have gathered evidence about how college teachers prepare learners for lives of critical inquiry, active civic engagement and agency as socially responsible members of their diverse communities, locally, nationally and globally.

A recent survey of teachers in further education as part of our research had almost 750 respondents working in nearly 150 different colleges and providers across the UK. What stands out about the data is the emphasis teachers put on valuing and respecting the learners. This awareness extends to knowing learners' background, the aim being to foster a real sense of belonging.

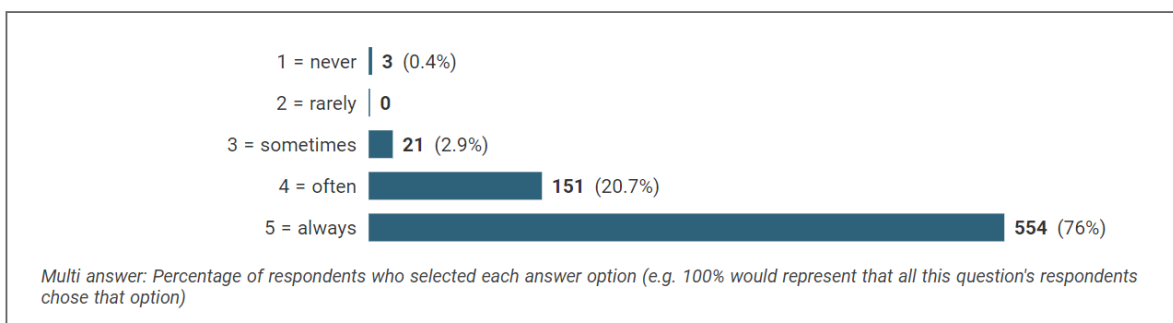
In the survey teachers indicated the extent to which they tried to:

Create a learning environment that fosters mutual respect.



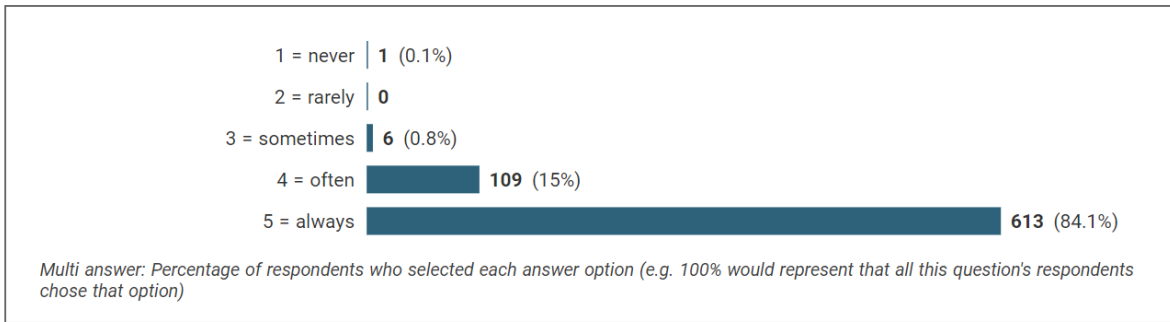
And how they sought to:

Encourage my students to feel a sense of belonging to the class.



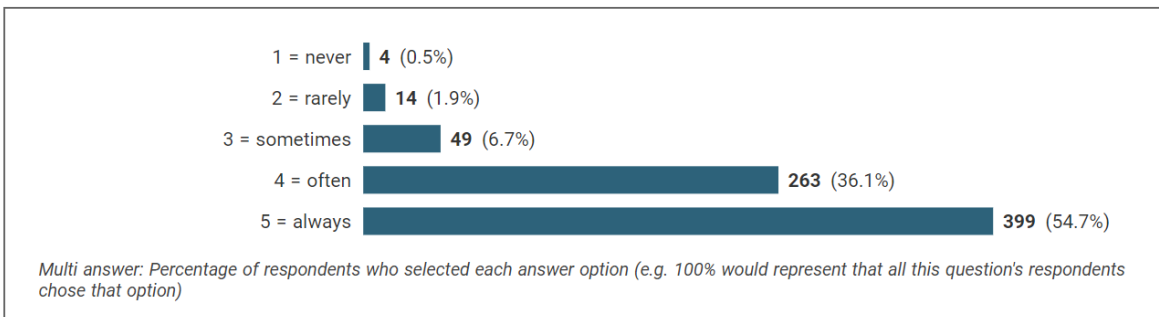
And:

Ensure that my students feel respected and valued.



There was also a strong emphasis on teachers helping students plan for the future.

Support students to plan their future.



The survey highlighted the many-layered role of teachers in further education and how their practice is framed by the need to address multiple issues as the foundation from which learning can take place.

What now?

The Love Our Colleges campaign is making the case for extra government funding to support fair pay and funding in further education. The campaign is supported by UCU, Unison, Unite, GMB, NEU, NUS, TUC, ASCL and the Association of Colleges. Fair funding for further education means equal funding.

*The discrepancy between the funding of students in further education and those in schools, Vith forms and universities is unjustifiable and unfair. This discrepancy discriminates against young people studying in further education and the teachers who teach them. This unfairness must be stopped **now**.*

[What can I do to support the campaign](#)

Trade unions, students and college leaders are coming together to call for better funding and fair pay for further education colleges.

We are calling on the government to:

1. Increase college funding to sustainable levels, including but not limited to:
 - Increasing the 16-19 funding rate by 5% a year for the next five years, and extending the pupil premium to cover post-16 students.

- Fully funding a National Retraining Scheme to support level 3 to 5 skills
- Introducing a lifetime learning entitlement to fund skills training for all adults who have not previously achieved a level 3 qualification.

And based on the [UCU FE Transforming lives and communities](#)

- Investment in the recruitment and retaining of Further Education teachers
- Increased opportunities for adults returning to learn or to retrain at sites in their communities
- Raising the level of funding for 14-16 students in colleges so it is equal to the funding schools receive.
- Introducing bursaries for Access to HE students and other adults who return to learn with a view to progressing to HE.

Final thoughts

Our findings are particularly interesting for commissioners of a range of services in cities and devolved administrations. With devolved budgets and outcome-based local commissioning arrangements, over the coming years we are likely to see changes to the way adult learning and further education works. This requires joined-up thinking across discipline areas, and a cohesive approach that challenges inequality and moves towards social justice is a necessity.

Now is the time to recognise these important contributions and to re-prioritise educational funding to reflect this new understanding.

Providing a platform for the voices of learners

Launch of student survey

The *UCU FE Transforming lives and communities* student survey is now launched. It provides a platform to focus on the often transformative experiences of learners. To share with learners please follow the link:

<https://bcu.onlinesurveys.ac.uk/further-education-transforms-student-survey>