

### Third Sector paper for Education Ministerial meeting 5<sup>th</sup> February 2020

New Welsh Right to lifelong learning – ‘Fostering Community, Democracy and Dialogue’

1. ‘*The Centenary Commission on Adult Education*’, (2019) report at page 48, refers to the aims of the Welsh Government’s *Adult Learning in Wales, 2017* policy; and its commitment to “promoting adult education and lifelong learning...in the context of the ‘Progressive Agreement’ that formed the Government, which includes the right to lifelong learning” (page 49).
2. The *Well Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015* is seen by Government “as underpinning a long-term perspective, within which adult education and lifelong learning can be seen for the investment it is ..... and that plans for a new schools curriculum for Wales will aim to promote the principles of lifelong learning and an ethically informed citizenry” (page 49).
3. The Welsh section to the report, no specific reference is made to civic education as an important process of continuous education, lifelong, aimed at building civic competence, democracy, and equity in the interests of the individual, civil society and the rule of law; or that it builds community resilience and encourages self determination.
4. However, in the main report, clear reference is made to “facilitating citizens – of all backgrounds, identities and perspectives – to contribute to constructive and critical democratic discussion ...adult learning can strengthen citizenship and support communities and organisations in addressing the great issues of our time..(and with) today’s challenges of ‘fake news’ and misinformation, stoking prejudice and side taking this is as true as ever” (page 24).
5. Despite issue aspects raised at (4) above, enabling citizens to tackle fake news is central aspect. Finnish experience in helping citizens to deal with fake news can be found at <https://edition.cnn.com/interactive/2019/05/europe/finland-fake-news-intl/> This is designed to improving critical thinking, and this specific course is part of an 2014 anti-fake news initiative launched by Finland’s government – aimed at teaching residents, students, journalists and politicians how to counter false information designed to sow division.

**Question:** Recognising (i) a robust democracy requires action to combat the accelerating use of the Internet to promote ‘fake news’ and (ii) that access to lifelong information and learning is absolutely crucial for a healthy functioning democracy: would the Minister / Welsh Government (a) support a wider definition of adult learning required to support critical thinking across society; (b) consult the Third Sector on how they can be supported in ‘Fostering Community, Democracy and

Dialogue'; and (c) agree new funding is required to address today's challenges of recognising and assessing 'fake news' and misinformation?