

## Ep.5: From adult to higher education: how should it work?

### What role can adult education play in helping more people to access higher education?

To find out, we're speaking to two people who have experienced adult education themselves and continue to champion its benefits through their careers. The Rt Hon. the Lord Blunkett is a former Secretary of State for Education who has taken on some of the most challenging roles in politics.

While Emma Beal is Principal and Chief Executive of Northern College, the only adult residential college in the North of England.

Join us for a reminder of the multiple benefits of adult education, the importance of breaking down barriers to higher education, and how we can unite these sectors to create a powerful common purpose.

#### About Emma Beal

Emma Beal is Principal and Chief Executive of Northern College, the only adult residential college in the North of England.

Northern College has a distinguished history of providing life changing opportunities to hundreds of adult learners every year many of whom have not fulfilled their potential previously. Based in Barnsley, the College attracts students from South Yorkshire, West Yorkshire and further afield.

Emma has more than 22 years' experience of leading, managing and delivering provision across a broad spectrum of educational areas within South Yorkshire. Emma's experience, knowledge and skills include developing new curriculum, quality improvement and partnerships. Her previous roles include being Assistant Principal for Curriculum, Quality and Market Development at Northern College and Assistant Director for Lifelong Learning at Sheffield City Council.

#### About The Rt Hon. the Lord Blunkett

Lord Blunkett has served in public life for over 40 years. From Leader of England's fourth largest city to Home Secretary at the time of 9/11 he has taken on some of the most challenging roles in politics. Few senior politicians have experienced quite so many ups and downs, and none have

achieved high office having been blind since birth.

Growing up in poverty, David's circumstances were made even tougher when at the age of twelve he lost his father in a work accident. Rejecting the dismissal of many, and with the help of evening classes and day release from work, he entered the University of Sheffield and went on to become the youngest ever councillor in the city.

After leading Sheffield City Council (described by a local Tory as 'The People's Republic of South Yorkshire'), David entered Parliament and held shadow portfolios in health, education and employment. Then as Labour Party Chair he became a key player in the development of New Labour.

After the 1997 Labour landslide David was appointed Secretary of State for Education and Employment covering education and skills from early years, schooling, post-sixteen skills and apprenticeships, higher education and equal opportunities. As Home Secretary during one of the most tumultuous periods in recent history he oversaw one of the most controversial departments with responsibility for counter terrorism, immigration and justice. He also served as Secretary of State for Work and Pensions where his responsibilities covered retirement income, welfare benefits, the development of Job Centre Plus and work programmes.

David stepped down as an MP after an impressive 28 years. After leaving the Commons, he not only continued his public service in the Lords, but was also appointed Professor of Politics in Practice at the University of Sheffield and Chair of the board of the University of Law.

As well as giving an insider's take on the political landscape, David talks with authority on managing change, social responsibility and the benefits of diversity alongside his own lessons in overcoming adversity. He is also an entertaining and surprisingly revealing after dinner speaker, with a fund of anecdotes about Labour's years in power and life in Westminster.

David maintains a wide range of policy interests including social mobility, cybersecurity, and education. He has roles with a number of charities and as a board member of the National Citizens Service Trust, he has had a long standing interest in citizenship education and the wellbeing of young people.

A regular writer and commentator in the media, David has published *The Blunkett Tapes* (sub-titled *My Life in the Bear Pit*) and appeared on *Mastermind* – where he chose Harry Potter as his specialist subject.

## Transcript

### Joe Mcloughlin 0:01

Hello, and welcome to series three of Let's Go Further, a podcast from the Skills and Education Group that challenges the way we think about skills and education. I'm your host, Joe Mcloughlin. And in this series, we're discussing adult education and asking is it as relevant today as it was more than 100 years ago when it was first established?

In this episode, we're reflecting on the role adult education plays in accessing higher education. And joining me are Emma Beal and the Rt Hon. the Lord Blunkett of Brightside and Hillsborough. Emma is the principal of Northern College, the only adult residential college in the north. And Lord Blunkett is a notable former Secretary of State education reformer and disability rights campaigner.

### Joe Mcloughlin 0:49

Can I begin by asking you both about the connections across your lives and careers to adult education? Starting with yourself, Emma.

### Emma Beal 0:50

Thank you, Joe. Absolutely. So my mum returned to learning when I was a teenager. She studied an Access to HE programme, and then moved on into nursing where she finished her career. So I saw firsthand as a teenager, myself, what that career change opportunity was, and how impactful it was in our lives. And equally, how much hard work went into that. Personally, I then actually fell into teaching and FE starting out my career in student support, but I started teaching GCSE evening classes to adults and then moved out to teaching adults in the community. So adult education has been part of my career. And since I started and part of my portfolio as a leader and manager for over 10 years now.

### Joe Mcloughlin 1:36

And how about yourself, David?

### The Rt Hon. the Lord Blunkett 1:38

Well, at 16 I didn't have any qualifications. I was at a school, a residential school for blind children. and Believe it or not, there was a grammar school for boys in the country. This particular school didn't believe that we needed to do external academic qualifications. So long story short, went down to the local technical college, this was in Shropshire, started to do what was then O levels, managed to by some miracle to pass two in the first year at night school, built from there, came back to Sheffield, got a job, they gave me their release, I carried on with the qualifications in the evening. So I

got three A levels, as well as the National Certificate in Business Studies. And that took regrettably, six years. So I was 22 by the time I got to the University of Sheffield, where I took a degree in Political Theory institutions, and I wanted to teach so I went and did a PGCE, which was one of the four colleges it's now part of Huddersfield University, which provided post 16 graduate certificates in education. And I started to teach in college, your technology.

### **Joe Mcloughlin 2:50**

Listening to you both there, it sounds like you've both got some great experience and some great grounding in the sector. Emma thinking about your role at the moment. Could you tell us about Northern College because it's an almost unique place, isn't it?

### **Emma Beal 3:03**

It is Joe, it's a privilege to be part of the team at Northern College, for many reasons, not taking away from the fact that it happens to be a very beautiful and historic campus. But more than that, it's a wonderful learning community. So Northern is an adult campus, which means that everything that we do is set up for our adult learners. So it's our default. It's not an add on for us that we embrace the experiences our adults bring to us as a college. Everyone at Northern understands what a big decision it is to return to learning as an adult. And we work hard every day, both practically and emotionally with our students to make sure that they can fulfil that potential and make sure that that decision that they've made to return to learning really gives them what they're looking for from that. We are a residential college. And that means that our students can take time away from their other commitments to focus on their developments to focus on building their professional networks, we take all the lifestyle troubles that come with being an adult, and we put those to one side from us, for our students during their studies with us. We really are focused on being a learning community with them.

### **The Rt Hon. the Lord Blunkett 4:12**

I was just going to say that's full on part time in there, you do part-time residential as well, don't you, Emma?

### **Emma Beal 4:17**

Absolutely, David. So students can stay with us, their commitment could be as little as two days and we'll give them, you know, a really solid piece of learning in two days. So as long as coming to us to study something like a level three counselling and diploma where they might be coming to us for a number of days a week, over a period of six to nine months. So there is an

opportunity for students across a range of levels and a range of commitments. We are a community learning provider as well as an adult education and HE provider, which means that students of all academic levels are studying alongside each other at college and that's really important to us.

#### **The Rt Hon. the Lord Blunkett 4:58**

And Joe I was involved. As a member of Sheffield City Council, I was a counsellor when we helped to set up the Northern College way back, and to sustain it through difficult times. And in fact, I was at the Northern College celebrating the excellence there just a month ago. So it's very close to my heart.

#### **Joe Mcloughlin 5:18**

That's wonderful. So thinking about the kind of range of provision you've got there Emma, and the kind of quality of provision as David's just mentioned, what sort of university level offer do you have? And how are you looking to grow that over the coming years.

#### **Emma Beal 5:31**

So our provision focuses on teacher education and health and social care, and levels four to seven and that's a partnership between ourselves a long standing partnership with the University of Huddersfield and a newer partnership with Sheffield, Hallam University, and we're very grateful to both of those organisations for the support they give us, because there's a small college partnership is really vital to our ability to offer to our students. In terms of that provision, you know, why do students come to Northern for that HE provision? Well, it's about that environment. It's an environment that's geared towards them as adults. And it's a small and personalised approach that we're able to offer them that's different to the opportunities and the experience that they would get on main site campuses.

#### **The Rt Hon. the Lord Blunkett 6:18**

And I think it's important to say that there's only Fircroft in Birmingham and the Northern College in South Yorkshire that are providing this variety of option and choice. I was speaking at a conference in what used to be the Ruskin college. It's now part of Exeter college, but it's run by the University of West London; it's incorporated into it. And I was reflecting on how sad it is that the funding regimes and the way in which education has changed have diminished the amount of choice that's available. So hanging on to those parts of the system that offer something different, I think, is really important, not least because from 2012, the number of part-time students

in higher education generally and in the build-up to higher education dropped dramatically as the funding changes were put in place in terms of loans and what have you. And we still have that massive challenge today because those links are disappearing. And the Lifelong Learning entitlement means nothing if people can't actually access the right courses at the right time.

### **Joe Mcloughlin 7:33**

And so just to clarify a little bit, David, the suggestion then all your session is that funding changes have meant that adult learners, in particular, are being pushed out or ostracized from taking up higher education opportunities?

### **The Rt Hon. the Lord Blunkett 7:48**

Well, adult learning has dropped dramatically in further education. And it's dropped in the more traditional sense of community adult education learning as well. The statistics are very stark; I was able to produce them for the Learning and Skills paper that I put together with others for Kier Starmer a year ago. And the truth is, we're underinvesting in every possible area of life. And this is about education for life as well as education for jobs. This is about a transformation in the life chances, the mental health well-being, the self-confidence, and aspiration of adults who may or may not have lost out completely the first time round. So a variety of provision, whether it's based in the community with the WEA or linked to universities who sometimes still have what we used to call extramural provision, where they're reaching out and offering courses that are not simply based on degree on the foundation courses, which sadly, the government has cut the funding back to £5700 a year; it was £9250. And they've chopped it. There seems to be an obsession with pushing people down tramlines, rather than saying, "Look, each of us is individuals, we learn at different paces at different times of our life, we mature differently, and we learn differently. Let's try and make the funding and resource available. And of course, therefore the provision that allows us to engage with microcredits with a modular approach with a lifelong learning passport. So that there's a variety of options rather than here it is, take it or leave it."

### **Joe Mcloughlin 9:43**

Why do you think it is that adult learners are kind of routinely, in sort of so often ostracized and kind of pushed out as a strategic priority? Is it just that there's a kind of subconscious feeling of, well, you're an adult now, you know you're grown, you've had your chance to be educated, kind of why is it? What is it that we're missing, do you think?

**Joe Mcloughlin 10:04**

Two or three things. Firstly, there is an obsession, understandably, with schools. When I published the learning skills paper, the thing that was picked out by national newspapers was not the challenge of artificial intelligence and robotics, the need for progression within work to be able to accept and embrace rapid change throughout life. It was on schools and the things we were saying about the change in the curriculum. So there's an obsession there. Secondly, I don't think, and this is true from the Chancellor's recent statement, as well as his March budget, there's an understanding at government level that it doesn't matter what infrastructure you invest in if you don't have the people skills, if you don't have the wherewithal for people to both take immediate jobs but also to adapt in jobs that will never deliver on the major challenges of climate change or housing, or even as Emma is dealing with the massive challenges of an ageing population and social care, which again, seems to have gone off the agenda.

**Emma Beal 11:10**

I would absolutely agree with David and adding to that, you know, we question why is it that adult education gets missed out from policy? And I think it's because there aren't enough adults who've been through the system who have that lived experience in the decision-making process. And I think that matters. I think further education, as we know, has been forgotten for a while, and there's been a lot of positive energy around that, but it is absolutely focused on 16 to 19. And time and time again, policies focused on in the sector on 16 to 19. And adults are, and remain an afterthought; I often think that we seem to be in a policy position where we are positioning skills against the kind of broader dynamic of the benefits that come from learning. You know, it does not need to be a separate entity; the development of skills and the development of things like resilience go hand in hand, yet we seem to, you know, market the product as two separate choices that need to be made, rather than as one policy direction. If we develop the whole person, then of course, the skills for work will come along with that; they don't need to be two separate conversations.

**The Rt Hon. the Lord Blunkett 12:24**

I had a weekend in Florence recently. And I was reminded of the renaissance because culture, progress in terms of art and science, and humanities all went together. And you know, we've now got to think in that way, whereas we do think in tramlines.



**Joe Mcloughlin 12:43**

Thinking about what you were saying there, Emma, and kind of trying to think a little bit more positively and a bit more optimistically. Yes, we acknowledge that the adults are kind of being pushed out. Yes, we acknowledge that certain pathways and skills are being kind of funneled into tramlines, as David has said. What is it then, do you think, further education offers and colleges can take advantage of in delivering kind of higher education, what where are the opportunities as you see them.

**Emma Beal 13:09**

So for us, the opportunities are about local flexibility, aligned to devolution. There's a real opportunity to understand what is needed locally and to respond to that, to be fleet of foot in that response. As a smaller organization, we can often respond quite quickly, whereas for larger organizations, that can take a longer time to respond. I think there's something about local flexibility and response. It's important for us, in the adult space specifically, to acknowledge where our adults are on the journey, for example, digital skills. If we think about the difference in digital skills capabilities of an 18-year-old versus someone in their 40s and 50s, we absolutely know that their ability to engage and their knowledge around digital learning is going to be different. We need to support them to be able to develop those skills, but we can't expect them to be at the same starting point. So working through an adult space, we can work on those skills and really focus on that to begin with. That's really important for us. We saw significantly through the pandemic that it was adults from a lower skill base that really were pushed out of the system and remained pushed out of the system to a large extent. So we can focus on that in the college sector very successfully. And we do. I think, again, there's an opportunity in the college sector in terms of the student in the round. So we have students coming to us still who have got a real journey to go on. They're not level three ready yet, let alone HE ready. So there is the work to do to build that pipeline and to show our students that there is a journey that they can go on – the development of English skills, Maths skills are still really important skills for us to pick up but not things that adults necessarily just want to sit down and take a functional skills qualification in the same way as we might require our 16 to 19-year-olds to.

**Joe Mcloughlin 15:18**

So would you say then, Emma, that's a key strength of the college sector is that it's not just about dropping somebody in a random institution and having them get a degree? It's about that you can take people from the local community, bring them along up through level one, two, three, and then onto higher D level?





**Joe Mcloughlin 15:36**

Absolutely, we can go on a journey with adults that may take a number of years. And we can tailor that journey along the way. And hopefully, with modular learning, if we can get that policy working in this country, then there's a real opportunity to continue to allow adults to pick up learning at the times that are appropriate for them, rather than expecting them to fit into a very structured approach that the HE sector rightly because it's picking up large numbers, and has to manage. So it's flexibility for me that matters most from a college sector.

**The Rt Hon. the Lord Blunkett 16:15**

Just picking up on Emma's earlier point, we need to have a pipeline of people with experience making their way into the policy arena. I obviously never dreamt when I was doing the evening classes that I would be the Secretary of State for Education, Employment. But when I got there, it was absolutely clear that very few people, even in the department, and particularly in the treasury, had the first idea about adults and further education. And having taught in further education as well as been educated there, I was able to say, "Look, we've got to give some emphasis to this whole area that has been grossly neglected, I think. I was probably the only secretary of state from Allen Wilkins, and immediately after the war that had actually ever experienced going through further education. And I saw alongside it the role of adult learning, which had been fundamental to transforming the life chances of people in earlier generations including work with the trade union movement. So we've got to see this as a continuum all the way through from transformation in what we deliver in schools, through further and adult learning into higher education, where people will be returning; they'll be coming back in droves because longevity means we'll be working longer into our 70s in the future. I'm obviously an example of one who's still doing that today. I'm teaching in higher education now. As well as being in the House of Lords and doing other things. And it's keeping me alive. And I think that if we want a society that is healthy and is free of dementia as far as we can, reducing the impetus of dementia, mental health, depression, and isolation, it's education that's going to make that possible.

**Joe Mcloughlin 17:19**

So recognizing all that then David, in the longer term, we want a wider variety of backgrounds and histories in the policymaking process. That's absolutely clear. But in the shorter term, when we don't have those voices, we don't have those people. What arguments would you make to convince current policymakers of this investment now or put another way, what would have convinced you when you were in office?

**The Rt Hon. the Lord Blunkett 18:37**

I think a combined voice of those, as Emma has described into different sectors instead of the division. We have the unification of adult, further, and higher education. I was recently in the Newcastle college group where they have a degree-awarding status but they have students from the very earliest level onwards; they're almost like a former Polytechnic. And I think it will be horses for courses. Some will be partnerships as the northern colleges with Huddersfield and now with Sheffield, Hallam University. Some will be based in the community, and adult learning will be crucial in terms of education as for the second language and all the things that allow you the tools to be able to access more formal learning. And we'll do that by convincing people that it's not just economically right, for productivity, for potential for growth, for filling the vacancies that would otherwise have been filled from people coming in on work visas from elsewhere. But it's absolutely crucial for the social and mental health well-being of the community as well.

**Joe Mcloughlin 19:54**

So just picking up on that point about the sort of social and community health well-being and I want to think a little bit now about the learners that we work with and how we work with them. Even if we make all of these positive changes, there's kind of larger investments better organized, working in collaboration, all those things. What barriers do adult learners in HE still face? And then I suppose how can we best challenge them and counteract them? Emma, I would like to begin with you.

**Emma Beal 20:24**

I mean, the barriers are often practical barriers of adults making decisions to potentially move out of the workforce or may well not already be in the workforce in order to take this learning up. Therefore, we need a system that supports that. So, you know, it's interesting to see what will happen with the Lifelong Learning entitlement. We need to understand this concept of loans and what that means for adults, and whether or not there are too many barriers within that for individuals. So I think there's a question about financial support. And, you know, if we are really focused on social justice, and this is a social justice issue, and I know that's been picked up by other conversations in this series, if we are about leveling this playing field, then we need to think about how we support people financially practically to be able to engage in learning, particularly if that's about higher-level skills because that work takes time. It's not something that can necessarily just be done really quickly. So I think there are absolutely practical things that are about things like benefits and childcare that we

have to really focus on. For all, there is a significant issue around mental health and mental health needs within the adult population, the support that we give to adults to be able to engage in learning when they are experiencing and have experienced poor mental health themselves. So that would be something else in terms of dovetailing services that I think there's still a significant amount of space in policy terms to really understand the interplay between mental health services and education and how those two things can work better together, linked to the social prescribing agenda, Northern College sees more than 50% of its student population declaring a mental health need, it's a real issue. And what that means is that those learning journeys can be fragmented for individuals. But that doesn't mean that they don't make that progress, it just might not be in the timeframe that they might have initially set out on. And that's really important for us. And then I guess the link to that would be a focus on careers education that's driven for adults. So we are very fortunate in northern, our careers offer is an adult focus one as all of our offers are, and that is really important because adults need, you know, really tangible information and advice linked to what it is that their aspirations are, and their achievements are as well.

**Joe Mcloughlin 23:01**

So as a sweeping generalization, then would you say that the stakes are higher for adult learners than younger learners?

**Emma Beal 23:08**

Absolutely. I mean, you know, I can, I can go back to personal circumstance, you know, I don't think I understood as a teenager, the massive decision that my mother had taken as a single parent to move to studying an Access to HE course and moving into nursing to work in the evenings in a pub. With two teenagers at home, it's a huge decision that you make as an adult, and it's a decision you're making that you're not going to reap the rewards of for a number of years, if you're starting at something like Access to HE or as a lot of our students start actually pre-access because they haven't left school with the GCSEs that, you know, the equivalent of Level Two that wasn't accessible to them at the time doesn't mean they're not capable of it. It just means circumstances didn't allow. So, you know, this is a journey that can, for some people, be four and five years in the making. And that's a significant commitment for the adults and for their family.

**Joe Mcloughlin 23:59**

And just responding to what Emma said there, David, how can we help take the pressure off?

**The Rt Hon. the Lord Blunkett 24:04**

Well, firstly, we can use new technology much more effectively. We can build it into the learning programs. I'm not in favor of pure online learning. But I think, with the use of microcredits and people being able to build their learning journey, and the face-to-face, crucial face-to-face learning that builds teamwork and gets people to be able to learn together, I think a combination of that thinking through how we teach how older adults learn, and possibly having, which I'm very keen on, individual learning accounts where the employer when somebody's got a job and the government, central London to devolve level and the individual put something into the pot and build up an entitlement which they can draw down on together with the information and advice and guidance that Emma has quite rightly highlighted, we can make it easier. We can't take away all the barriers. But we can make a great deal easier than it is at the moment. And with auto enrollment for learning, i.e, the individual learning account like the pension would require require an employer to put a small amount into the pot, we could see this as a tripartite approach because everybody gains; we gain as a society. So the government nationally and we locally gain; the individual obviously gains because they're on a new trajectory and a new pathway for their future life. And employers gained enormously, so why not put it together.

**Joe Mcloughlin 25:40**

So guests in previous episodes have said that the kind of that challenge of putting it together, the idea of pitching adult education as something that has economic social cultural benefits has been a really hard sell in a way that appeals to education leaders, learners, policymakers, just with one eye on an election next year and recognizing some of the things that you've been talking about over the last 20 minutes or so, how do you think we'd make that case more strongly to an incoming government, kind of what would be the, I suppose what would be the elevator pitch almost, or the kind of the clear sell

**Emma Beal 26:15**

To me, you know, it's about letting students tell their own stories. I think that they can articulate this clearly in a matter of minutes in a way that we clearly aren't able to break through. So, you know, I would always encourage that we just push push push on student stories in this area. And if you get a chance to have a look on our website, we've got some short snippets on there that I think really help. We need to get people out and about into these institutions, into colleges like mine into adult and community settings speaking to the individuals that we're talking about here so that they can tell their individual stories. I think it's much more powerful than any amount of document writing we can do.

**The Rt Hon. the Lord Blunkett 26:59**

And my take from the level of government and policymakers is to persuade my party that if the incoming Education Secretary, the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, the Secretary of State for DCMS, where they have oversight of digital, if we could get them to work together, and including the Department of Health, and what that would mean in terms of investment and prescribing education, rather than prescribing drugs, get them all to see that they've actually got common purpose here. That combination would be very powerful in dealing with the Treasury. And I've been doing my best and will continue to say, if I had my time again, I'd have tried to create a critical mass within the cabinet, all of whom understood as Tony Blair did, that it should be education, education, education

**Joe Mcloughlin 27:56**

so you wouldn't be tempted in the event of a Labour win David to return in some capacity.

**The Rt Hon. the Lord Blunkett 28:01**

I'm afraid I'm not going to do a David Cameron. I am happy to support and help and back the younger generation who are coming through. They're learning from what we got wrong as well as what we got right. And I'll continue trying to have a little bit of time to do the things that I'd like to do, rather than what someone else wants me to do.

**Joe Mcloughlin 28:24**

You forgive me for asking. So finally, then, I just wanted to ask as one of the few specially designated adult residential colleges, is there anything a future government could do to help protect the status of adult learning? And Emma, we'll begin with yourself. And we'll end with David.

**Emma Beal 28:43**

I mean, I think David just summed it up really nicely, didn't he? You know, this is about understanding what adult learning does in the round rather than seeing it in a siloed position. So, you know, anything we can do to get departments working together, understanding the broader benefits of adult learning, rather than just seeing this on a kind of money-in, money-out perspective is really important. Understanding that adult education is about social justice, I think is fundamentally important. And that actually, we won't move the country forward from a skills perspective unless we bring the adults with us who are not already qualified to level three and above, and when I look to the region that I am, I work within, that's a significant proportion of adults. So we have got a lot of work to do there to bring that cohort of people and their families with them. I think as well, making it

really clear to people that these are the parents and grandparents of the next generation and, therefore, they are influencing the educational attainment of the young people coming through into the system. And, therefore, if we don't do the work with our older adults, then our impact on the children and young people coming through is to the detriment as well. So I would urge them to think about it in the round and to focus on that work around levelling the playing field. I guess I would then say, you know, there's a really clear steer from me that adults shouldn't be the afterthought in Further Education Policy. And that is something that concerns me at the moment that we are driving a line around 16 to 19, which, you know, I'm not suggesting isn't a productive line; however, to then add adult education onto the back of that policy alone is ill-advised. So I think there needs to be a really clear focus around that particular. And then lastly, I guess, not to pitch the skills for work against the skills for self-improvement, they're not separate things, they are, in fact, the same, and an encouragement to not, you know, to not see them as independent areas of development.

#### **The Rt Hon. the Lord Blunkett 30:35**

I would remind everyone that we preach to other countries that if you educate the mother, you educate the child. And we talk about that with international development. And, of course, it's true. So why wouldn't it be true here, in the most, well, everywhere, as well as the most disadvantaged areas? And secondly, why wouldn't we want to invest in our own well-being? Why wouldn't we want to see this as the primary task? It's our intelligence, it's our health, it's our community dynamism, it's our well-being as social beings. So let's get the advice in there, let's get the provision in there. And finally, where a provider, where a former provision doesn't fit the system or the funding arrangements, let's change the system and the funding arrangements, rather than ruling out the opportunity for learners. Get it right means getting it flexible.

#### **Joe Mcloughlin 31:39**

Thank you to my guests, Emma Beale and Lord Blunkett, and to you for listening. We hope you enjoyed the conversation and that it's got you thinking about adult education, its potential to change lives, and in turn, the opportunities for us to make it work better for individuals and society. If you have a question for us or a comment on what you've heard, please join in the conversation on social media and remember to subscribe wherever you receive your podcasts to access earlier and forthcoming episodes of "Let's Go Further."