

**Skills for Life**  
The national strategy for improving  
adult literacy and numeracy skills

**Focus on delivery to 2007**





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# Contents

## Focus on delivery to 2007

<b>Foreword</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>II. Focus on delivery</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>Summary</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>Boosting demand</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>The challenge</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>Ensuring capacity</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>Meeting the challenge</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>Monitoring, evaluation and research</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>I. Our priority groups</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>Raising standards</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>Unemployed people</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>Learner achievement</b>	<b>34</b>
◦ Jobseekers	11	<b>Innovation and development</b>	<b>39</b>
◦ Other benefit claimants	11	<b>Working together</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>Prisoners and those supervised in the community</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>Annexes</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>Employees</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>Annex A: Further information</b>	<b>43</b>
◦ Public sector employees	14	<b>Annex B: References</b>	<b>44</b>
◦ Low-skilled employees	16		
◦ Young adults	20		
<b>Other groups at risk of exclusion</b>	<b>21</b>		
◦ The homeless	22		
◦ Speakers of other languages	22		
◦ Parents	22		
◦ People living in disadvantaged communities	24		

# Skills for Life

## The national strategy for improving adult literacy and numeracy skills

### Focus on delivery to 2007

#### Foreword

by the Rt Hon Charles Clarke MP,  
Secretary of State for Education and Skills



When the Prime Minister first launched *Skills for Life* in March 2001, we set ourselves formidable targets for helping adults improve their literacy, language and numeracy skills.

We want 750,000 adults to improve their literacy, language and numeracy skills by 2004, and I am happy to say that we have already made good progress to achieve that goal: more than quarter of a million people have achieved national certificates.

What's more, I was able to announce in November 2002 that we are to invest record spending of £1.6 billion across Government over the next three years. This should enable 1.5 million adults to significantly improve their reading, writing and maths skills by 2007.

So far, so good. It might be tempting to become complacent.

But there are still millions of adults in this country who lack the reading and maths skills that we expect of the average 11-year-old. According to Sir Claus Moser's landmark report, *A Fresh Start*, one in five adults, if given the alphabetical index to the Yellow Pages, cannot locate the page reference for plumbers. And one in three adults in this country cannot calculate the area of a room that is 21 by 14 feet, even with the aid of a calculator.

Consider the wider impact that lacking such skills has on an adult's life. Having poor essential skills means having a lower income (on average £50,000 less over your working life) and being less employable. It is not surprising that this condition compounds the problems of poor health, crime and living in disadvantaged areas.

This revised version of *Skills for Life* sets out what we have already achieved and more importantly, what we still have to do by 2007 to make an impact on these problems.

It also sets out how *Skills for Life* is contributing to the new *Skills Strategy* that will be announced in July 2003.

We must build on the excellent work we have started to raise the standard of teaching provision and learning achievements. We can be proud of the foundations we have laid for a robust national learning and teaching framework.

We have produced new guidance to improve standards across the board in further education. In 2002 we launched *Success for All*, our strategy for transforming further education, which aims to build a more effective and responsive learning and skills sector and raise standards, supported by the largest ever investment programme in further education and training.

In addition to continuing to raise standards we have to enhance the status of vocational education and training as a high quality route to progression and achievement for young people.

In Britain today we face an increasingly demanding and fast-moving world of business.

So it is absolutely essential that education prepares learners for work. Four out of five jobs created now will require skill levels above A-level. Only one-third of Britons have these compared to three-quarters of Germans. It's not just the learner's personal success that hangs in the balance. What of the cost to British business? Poor literacy, language and numeracy skills are estimated to cost the country well in excess of £10 billion a year. That is why we are ensuring that all staff that need it in any business can get free training to improve their skills, with a new employer campaign to raise the profile of skills in the workplace.

We have begun to roll out National Tests in literacy and numeracy – new benchmarks in learner achievement. They are essential for learners' personal satisfaction and for improving their employability.

And with the rapid rate at which information technology is changing business, adults need more than ever to equip themselves with computer skills. In partnership with awarding bodies there are now versions of the on-screen national tests.

As ever, promotion will be crucial to our success. No qualification will get learners very far unless it is recognised by employers.

This document sets out our commitment to continue this good work. But we will not have an impact unless we can engage potential learners and provide learning opportunities in ways and places that meet their needs – be it at home, work or elsewhere.

We must continue to approach partnerships imaginatively. Only then can we reach learners and give them the support they need to enjoy happier futures.



# Summary

## The challenge

- 1 Dozens of times every day, each of us needs to read, write and use numbers. Whether we are reading a newspaper or the instructions on a medicine bottle, using a bus or train timetable, or working out whether we can afford to buy something, not being able to understand written words or numbers could make our day a source of worry and stress. Millions of people have to cope with these very difficulties. The ground-breaking report, *A Fresh Start*, published in March 1999, following the review chaired by Sir Claus Moser, identified up to 7 million adults in England who cannot read or write at the level we would expect of an 11-year-old. Even more have trouble with numbers.
- 2 Of course, people with these poor literacy, language and numeracy skills get by, usually by relying on others for help or by avoiding situations where they need to read, write or calculate. But, because they lack literacy, language and numeracy skills, they and their families may well be excluded from advantages that others take for granted. Or they may be in low-paid or short-term jobs or suffer lengthy periods of unemployment. Even after taking into account all other factors that influence earnings, people with inadequate literacy skills earn on average 11% less than their better skilled colleagues, whilst people with inadequate numeracy skills earn on average 6% to 7% less<sup>1</sup>. This means that you could be £50,000 worse off over your working life if you have poor literacy, language and numeracy skills<sup>2</sup>.
- 3 As well as losing out financially, people with literacy, language and numeracy skills deficiencies may have low self-confidence and low motivation. Their children are more likely to struggle at school. And they are more prone to health problems and to suffer social exclusion. New technology is significantly increasing the need to read, write and use numbers confidently and effectively. Before long, those who cannot use a computer and access the internet may be as disadvantaged as those who are now unable to write or add up, and information technology skills are as fundamental as literacy, language or numeracy skills.
- 4 The effect of poor literacy, language and numeracy skills on individuals is severe. But there is a cost to society that is just as great. Employers, in particular, cannot compete in an increasingly global, knowledge-based economy without a workforce able to add real value at every level. One in five employers reports a significant gap in their workers' skills. And over a third of those companies with a literacy, language or numeracy skills gap say that they have lost business or orders to competitors because of it. Combining the effect of lower incomes, reduced productivity, poorer health and the cost of consequential benefits and welfare services, some have estimated the cost to the country of poor literacy, language and numeracy skills to be as high as £10 billion a year<sup>3</sup>.

## Meeting the challenge – delivering *Skills for Life*

- 5 Tackling this skills problem is one of the Government's key priorities. Our goal is to reduce the number of adults in England with literacy, language and numeracy difficulties to the levels of our main international competitors – that is from one in five adults to one in ten or better. We aim to help 750,000 adults achieve national certificates by 2004, and to help 1.5 million achieve the same by 2007.
- 6 We should not stop there. The aim of any civilised society, as *A Fresh Start* recognised, must be the virtual elimination of poor literacy, language and numeracy. Only bold and imaginative policies, engaging those who can make a real difference in the workplace and communities, can change this cultural inheritance.

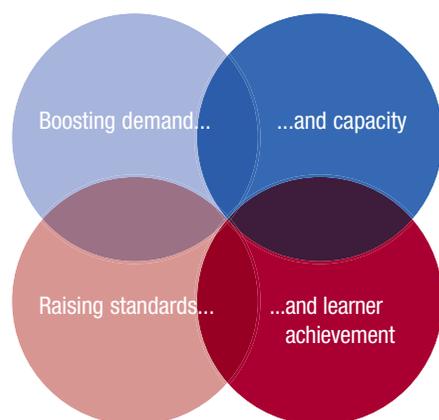
We need, for example, to work with employers to ensure that enhanced skills help improve business performance. The Government's white paper "21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills: Realising our Potential" published in July 2003 confirmed *Skills for Life* as providing the foundation for skills development. It announced that ICT would be included within *Skills For Life* as the third basic skill and confirmed that literacy and numeracy skills are to be embedded in the definition of full level 2 qualifications.

The Skills Strategy puts forward an agenda for working in partnership with employers. The aim is to ensure that the skills we develop are valuable to young people and adults and valued by employers.

The key themes within the strategy are:

  - Putting employers needs centre stage and creating a more 'demand-led' system;
  - Helping employers use skills to achieve more ambitious, longer-term business success;
  - Motivating and supporting learners - making it easier for those adults who most need extra skills by offering a new entitlement to learning;
  - Enabling colleges and training providers to be more responsive to employers' and learners' needs by reviewing the framework for planning, funding and monitoring provision; and
- 7 Joint Government action in a new Skills Alliance, linking up the work of key Government departments involved with economic and Skills issues.
- 7 *Skills for Life* builds upon the success of the daily literacy and mathematics lessons that have transformed the quality of teaching in primary schools and the new strategies for Key Stage 3. It also links with broader government policies, such as the commitment to Neighbourhood Renewal, to tackle the problems faced by deprived communities, and the findings of the Adult Financial Literacy Advisory Group, which identified how people can improve their skills when managing their personal finances. Our goal to improve young people's literacy and numeracy skills is also central to the new *Opportunity and Excellence* 14-19 strategy.
- 8 We must be clear about how to tackle the skills problem. All those involved in literacy, language and numeracy skills

teaching are working towards a common goal in four key areas:



### **Boosting demand**

- 9 Boosting demand for learning through effective promotion and engaging Government agencies and employers to identify and address the literacy, language and numeracy needs of their clients and employees.

### **Ensuring capacity**

- 10 Increasing the capacity of provision by securing sufficient funding and co-ordinating planning and delivery to meet learners' needs.

### **Raising standards**

- 11 Improving the quality of teaching in literacy, numeracy and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) provision through the national teaching, learning and assessment infrastructure.

### **Learner achievement**

- 12 Increasing learner achievement through the national teaching, learning and assessment infrastructure, the numbers of young people and adults succeeding in national qualifications and reducing barriers to learning. It is not enough just to help them

reach levels of functional literacy, language and numeracy. Our strategy aims to improve their skills up to and including Level 2 of the National Qualifications Framework, whether they choose to follow programmes leading to qualifications in literacy or numeracy or key skills.

- 13 These measures represent a huge challenge to all those working with people who could improve their literacy, language and numeracy skills. Our strategy requires nothing less than a cultural transformation among adults and a radical improvement in the quality of the training and support delivered to them. So our strategy depends upon the successful implementation of *Success for All*, which is set to reform all post-16 learning. None of this can be achieved by one agency alone, nor just by Government. We can only succeed in tackling this problem through shared goals.

# Our priority groups

- 14 Identifying the one in five adults with poor literacy, language and numeracy skills, and bringing them back into learning, is vital. We know from existing research that literacy, language and numeracy difficulties are more common among certain groups. To impact on skills needs, we must continue to get help to these groups first.
- 15 At least a third of unemployed people, for example, have literacy skills at no more than Level 1 – the level we expect of an 11-year-old. And over a third of people with poor literacy, language and numeracy skills are in receipt of social security benefits (excluding pensions and child benefit), compared with less than one in ten of those with better developed skills<sup>4</sup>. Research also shows that those working in low-skilled occupations have much poorer literacy, language and numeracy ability. These shortcomings are also closely associated with other factors including homelessness or living in disadvantaged communities.
- 16 Our strategy addresses these groups as a matter of urgency, particularly:
- Unemployed people and benefit claimants
  - Prisoners and those supervised in the community
  - Employees – public sector, low-skilled, young adults
  - Other groups at risk of exclusion, including speakers of other languages and those in disadvantaged communities.
- 17 For those groups in regular receipt of state support, such as jobseekers and benefit claimants, as well as for those detained in penal institutions, the Government is acting quickly to identify literacy, language and numeracy skills needs and to remedy them. Through its various agencies, the Government has direct contact with people in these groups and is using that opportunity to encourage them to develop their literacy, language and numeracy skills.
- 18 We are also addressing the skills gap in the workforce more widely. Of the 7 million adults in England with literacy, language and numeracy needs, we estimate that up to half have jobs. Many are in low-skilled or short-term employment. We must increase their earnings potential by giving them the skills they need to participate in a global, knowledge-based economy. Our strategy engages with employers, trade unions and others to ensure that all those in low-skilled work are given the opportunities they need to improve their skills.
- 19 Furthermore, an Adult Basic Skills Needs Survey, that will provide insights by region and by priority group area, is due to be published in the autumn of 2003. It will help us to identify where our resources should be going.

## Figure 1: Literacy, language and numeracy skills strategy

Our strategy targets those in key priority groups with literacy, language and numeracy needs:

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Those with literacy, language and numeracy needs in regular contact with government and its agencies, comprising around:

- 250,000 unemployed people
- 1.5 million other benefit claimants
- 300,000 prisoners and those supervised in the community

Around 200,000 public sector employees with literacy, language and numeracy needs in:

- Central government
- Local government
- Armed Forces
- National Health Service

Approximately 1.5 million low-skilled people in employment with literacy, language and numeracy needs, particularly:

- Those in occupations and sectors with low average literacy, language and numeracy rates
- Young people in employment

Other groups at high risk of exclusion due to poor literacy, language and numeracy skills, including:

- Around 60,000 homeless people with literacy, language and numeracy needs
- Up to 1 million refugees, asylum seekers and others who do not speak English as their first language
- Parents with poor skills, including around 250,000 lone parents with no qualifications
- Around 1.7 million adults with literacy, language and numeracy needs who live in disadvantaged communities

Learners' needs are identified, addressed and monitored by government agencies and partners, including:

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- Jobcentre Plus
- Benefits Agency
- Health services
- Community and voluntary organisations
- Prison Service
- Probation Service

- Public sector employers

- Employers
- Trade unions
- National training organisations
- Small Business Service
- Connexions Service
- Jobcentre Plus programmes
- Social Services
- Sector Skills Councils

- Local Authorities
- Residents' Associations
- Learning partnerships
- Local Learning and Skills Councils
- Voluntary and community organisations
- Religious bodies
- Health services
- Refugee Council and similar bodies
- Age Concern and similar charities
- Football clubs
- Libraries
- Information, Advice and Guidance Partnerships

Free training is being provided through:

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- Dedicated provision e.g. family literacy programmes for parents
- Full-time courses, including intensive 'booster' courses
- Part-time courses
- Self-study, 'mentored' learning and *learndirect*

By 2004, our strategy will improve the literacy, language and numeracy skills of 750,000 adults in England, comprising approximately:

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- 130,000 jobseekers
- 40,000 other benefit claimants
- 40,000 prisoners and others supervised in the community
- 10,000 public sector employees
- 50,000 adults in low-skilled jobs
- 110,000 young people
- 210,000 general literacy and numeracy skills learners including those on *learndirect* courses
- 50,000 refugees and speakers of other languages
- 60,000 parents
- 50,000 people who live in disadvantaged communities

By 2007, our strategy will improve the literacy, language and numeracy skills of 1.5 million adults in England, comprising approximately:

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- 220,000 jobseekers
- 100,000 other benefit claimants
- 80,000 prisoners and others supervised in the community
- 20,000 public sector employees
- 150,000 adults in low-skilled jobs
- 170,000 young people
- 420,000 general literacy and numeracy skills learners including those on *learndirect* courses
- 100,000 refugees and speakers of other languages
- 120,000 parents
- 150,000 people who live in disadvantaged communities

## Charlotte Brady



*Top skills scorer Charlotte (left)  
with tutor Lindy*

Just over a year ago Charlotte, 18, from Leamington Spa, was unemployed, unable to read or write and lacked self-confidence.

That has now all changed for the better, thanks to Charlotte enrolling on a Basic Skills course with Rathbone training providers.

On the course Charlotte discovered the joy of reading, quickly finding part-time employment as a housekeeper in a nearby Care Home, whilst still meeting with Basic Skills training adviser Lindy Thomas every Thursday afternoon.

To celebrate her achievement Charlotte was chosen as a national Rathbone learner of the month in 2002, winning a dream tour to Old Trafford to walk on the pitch and visit the Manchester United changing rooms, including the locker of her hero David Beckham.

Said Lindy: “Charlotte came to Rathbone with the opinion that she was stupid, but she has now found her own place to live, learnt valuable budgeting skills, and has a real thirst for reading out-loud, as well as enjoying learning how to use a computer.”

“She has been working extremely hard with her reading and is now able to create her own CV and it is great to see she is now nearing the completion of the first few stages of her NVQ Level 1.”

Charlotte will now attend the 2002 Rathbone Learner of the Year awards, hoping to scoop the national title.

## Unemployed people and benefit claimants

### ◦ Jobseekers

- 20 There are over 800,000 registered unemployed people in England, down from 1.3 million in 1997. Around 250,000 of these have been unemployed for over six months. We estimate that at least 30% of all unemployed people have literacy, language and/or numeracy needs, which in part prevent them from improving their employability and finding secure work.
- 21 Jobcentre Plus is screening all clients on Jobseeker's Allowance for literacy, language and numeracy skills needs at 6 months' unemployment, and all those on voluntary New Deals when they join the New Deal caseload. Jobcentre Plus ran six pilots on alternative interventions, including testing the use of financial incentives and sanctions. A full evaluation of the pilots will report in the summer of 2003. Based on early findings from the pilots, Jobcentre Plus has appointed skills co-ordinators in all of their districts and intends to introduce further improvements from 2004.

22 Additionally, Jobcentre Plus is working with providers, employers and the Learning and Skills Council, to encourage its clients to continue their learning when they move into work. As around half of all jobs are not open to anyone with literacy, language and numeracy below Level 1 we must aim to create the opportunity for people to remain in learning until they have acquired these skills.

23 Other measures are in place to help unemployed people gain the literacy, language and numeracy skills they need. For example people claiming Jobseeker's Allowance are allowed to study part-time for up to 16 'guided learning hours' a week.

### ◦ Other benefit claimants

24 Around 3.5 million adults are in receipt of other working-age benefits (excluding child benefit and pensions). Approximately 40% of these are estimated to have literacy, language and numeracy difficulties. Jobcentre Plus advisers are well placed to

identify people with literacy, language and numeracy needs as part of their work with benefit customers, and to offer them appropriate advice and guidance on where to get help. Promotional information, advice and sample materials are available in all Jobcentre Plus offices. Furthermore, Jobcentre Plus is introducing measures in 2004 to give more access to learning support for customers in receipt of other working-age benefits.

25 We expect that around 12,000 customers will have improved their literacy, language and numeracy skills through directly contracted Jobcentre Plus provision by 2004, and around 62,000 will have improved these skills by 2007. In total some 200,000 people will have been trained through Jobcentre Plus provision by 2007. Large numbers of Jobcentre Plus customers on both Jobseeker's Allowance and other working-age benefits are also using Learning and Skills Council provision to improve these skills.

26 Lone parents are a key target group among benefit claimants. Of 900,000 lone parents claiming Income Support, around 240,000 have no qualifications. Around a third of lone parents with children aged between 6 and 15 have poor literacy skills and almost 40% have poor numeracy skills. So we have extended the New Deal for Lone Parents to all lone parents who are required to meet personal advisers as a condition of receiving benefit. Where personal advisers consider that the lone parent has literacy, language or numeracy needs, they advise that the parent should take an assessment to determine the nature of their need and how it could be tackled.

27 Screening for literacy, language and numeracy needs was extended to people on the New Deal for Partners in April 2001 and to those on the New Deal for Disabled People since July 2001. Of the 180,000 partners of Jobseeker's Allowance claimants who are eligible each year for the New Deal, we estimate that 40% have no qualifications. Thus all those on the New

Deal for Young People identified as having literacy, language and numeracy needs are being offered diagnostic assessment and referred to suitable provision.

28 At the same time we are making sure that all people claiming disability benefit have equal access to opportunities to acquire literacy, language and numeracy skills. Learners with disabilities and/or learning difficulties (LDD) – around 8.5 million people in Britain – are a diverse group with a wide range of abilities and needs. People with disabilities and/or learning difficulties are more than twice as likely to be unqualified or unemployed as their peers. To ensure these learners are educated to the same standard as the able, we have provided teachers with guidance and diagnostic assessment tools (see paragraphs 101, 114, 118). Our learning and teaching infrastructure continues to provide mainstream learning opportunities for these learners (see *Focus on delivery – Raising standards, Learner achievement*).

29 We are working with the Basic Skills Agency, the Learning and Skills Development Agency, and the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education to ensure that all providers of literacy, language and numeracy programmes for people with LDD are given guidance. The Special Educational Needs and Disability Bill has increased the likely take-up of places by these students. And we are running LDD pilots to ensure that all learning providers have the funding they need for relevant materials and equipment.

### **Prisoners and those supervised in the community**

30 In any one year, around 130,000 people are or have been in prison, with a further 200,000 supervised by the National Probation Service in the community. Around 50% of these individuals have poor reading skills, 65% have poor numeracy skills, and a staggering 80% of prisoners have writing skills below Level 1. This is a serious obstacle to the rehabilitation of ex-offenders. Prisoners who get a worthwhile

# Barry Ball

Dyslexic Barry, who works for Warwickshire County Council as a motor vehicle tester, is now able to complete all his MOT certificate paperwork, thanks to a series of adult learning courses at Bedworth College.

Said Barry, “I left school with no qualifications, because at the time dyslexia was not recognised as a specific learning difficulty, and this meant I had extremely low self-confidence.

“When my son was diagnosed with dyslexia I was asked if I would like to be assessed too, and once I discovered I had the same problem, I was asked to attend a ten-week course run by the Dyslexia Institute.

“From then on I have enjoyed every minute of my learning, which has included completing literacy and numeracy at Level 2, and I am now halfway through my GCSE Maths course at Bedworth College.

“My employers have been extremely understanding and supportive, and since entering the world of adult learning I have been on additional training courses to become a first-aid officer and a fire warden.”

Added his tutor at Bedworth College, Jenny Marshall, “Barry’s development has been amazing, considering when he first joined us he had difficulty reading, writing and applying numbers to everyday situations.”

**“My employers have been extremely understanding and supportive.”**



*Barry gets to grips with geometry*

job after release are less likely to re-offend. They are also less likely to be regarded – or regard themselves – as on the margins of society.

- 31 So what are we doing about it? The partnership of the Department for Education and Skills and the Prison Service is working with all key partners to improve prisoners' skills in custody and on release – so that more of them can find work and build a life away from crime. To the end of January 2003, over 32,000 prisoners had gained accredited national qualifications from Entry Level to Level 2 (113% of the initial Public Service Agreement target!) and the Prison Service aims for a target of 36,000 qualifications for 2003-04. Funding for prison education has been transferred from the Home Office to the Department for Education and Skills, and subsequent targets are to be jointly agreed.

32 The National Probation Service has also developed a strategy to tackle similar needs among those it supervises in the community. Targets have been set for 12,000 offenders to achieve qualifications in 2003-04. In addition, the Youth Justice Board has launched a Basic Skills Toolkit for use by Youth Offending Teams.

33 From 2004 we will offer an integrated service to ex-offenders from the Prison Service, National Probation Service and Jobcentre Plus, in partnership with the Home Office Prisoners Learning Support Unit, the National Probation Directorate and Youth Justice Board. This will be funded by the Learning and Skills Council. Ministers have this year agreed to make skills assessment a condition of licence for offenders.

## Employees

### ◦ Public sector employees

34 Like all employers, the Government has a responsibility to address the literacy, language and numeracy skills of its own employees. According to the Trades Union Congress a possible 1.3 million workers in the public sector have literacy, language and numeracy needs. So the Government is taking this responsibility very seriously indeed.

35 Central and local Government bodies are committed to supporting and developing their staff. Many already have Investors in People status. Each public sector employer will take firm action to address the literacy, language and numeracy needs of the staff it employs.

36 The Adult Basic Skills Strategy Unit is working with the Central Government National Training Organisation to ensure that Government departments embed literacy, language and numeracy skills

# Government employees



*Michele takes a learner stationed in Kosovo through his literacy skills*

Michele Blain is the Basic Skills Tutor at the Army Education Centre in Tidworth Garrison, Wiltshire. When soldiers from the Garrison are deployed (to Kosovo, Afghanistan and Northern Ireland for instance), she provides specific literacy and numeracy support.

Sound literacy and numeracy skills are essential for coping with the demands of modern soldiering, and vital for moving up the ranks. So the British Army is committed to establishing a system of basic skills provision that meets the needs of Army personnel, wherever they are stationed in the UK or overseas. The principles of this service are that it should be continuous, consistent and convenient.

Specialist civilian Basic Skills Tutors are deployed across the Army to deliver and co-ordinate this local basic skills service provision, using both in-house facilities and external specialist services.

This is especially challenging when supporting learners deployed overseas to distant and isolated locations. Learner Jonathan Larkin, for example, currently serving with the King's Royal Hussars (KRH) in Northern Ireland, is benefiting from the distance learning Michele has organised. "Over here I'm continuing with my English course. This is really good because I can do as little or as much as I want and fit it around my patrols and guard duties. I send my work back to Michele in Tidworth and she lets me know how I've done. My squadron are also helping me to go the Army Education Centre in Lisburn to see the tutor there. I'm hoping to get my GCSEs in the end."

within their staff development plans, and all will have action plans in place by July 2003.

37 The Department for Education and Skills is working to ensure that all its employees can access literacy and numeracy provision through professional development training by April 2003. We intend that every central Government department should be able to make the same claim by 2004. The Ministry of Defence is screening all recruits for literacy, language and numeracy skills needs across the armed forces and has recruited a specialist teacher to each of its learning centres.

38 Similarly, staff in both lead and support roles are being made aware of skills needs in the National Health Service. By April 2003, literacy, language and numeracy skills will be in the NHS Implementation Plan. The Service is also drawing up a plan for assessing the scale of need among its existing employees. The action plan will ensure that NHS

employers work with local education providers to address the literacy, language and numeracy needs of NHS employees.

39 Local Government accounts for two million of the five million employees in the public sector. The National Support Project for Basic Skills in Local Government aims to raise awareness within local government and to assist local authorities in developing literacy, language and numeracy support. Good practice is already evident: Barking and Dagenham local education authorities are eighteen months in to a successful five-year programme of training and accreditation for council staff and others. It is providing more literacy, language and numeracy teaching in the community.

40 As a result of these activities, we estimate that around 20,000 public sector employees will have improved their literacy, language and numeracy skills by 2007.

#### ◦ Low skilled employees

41 The needs are real. Productivity per hour worked is around 20% lower in Britain than in Germany, and our poorer literacy, language and numeracy skills account for a third of that shortfall. In the distribution and consumer services sector, for example, where one in four adults work, 25% of employers report needs in literacy, language and numeracy. A lack of these skills can often trap people into low-skilled, poorly-paid jobs – two thirds of those with literacy skills at Level 1 or below earn less than £9,000 a year. This group includes around a third of plant and machine operators.

42 32,913 organisations recognised as Investors in People by liP (UK) already understand the benefits and are committed to developing staff in order to increase productivity. We are collaborating with liP (UK) to include literacy, language and numeracy skills in the assessment criteria for liP so that employers' achievements can

# Wayne Healy

London taxi driver Wayne started an Entry Level 3 Literacy course in London last September and plans to take a National Test later this year.

“The course is brilliant, it’s helping me with my English grammar but it’s also something to do. It’s totally separate from the job that I do and it gives me a purpose. I’m experiencing the benefits of what I’m doing in my everyday life: it has helped me with map reading. What’s more my vocabulary is improving, I’m thinking more about what I’m saying and I’m making a note of new words I come across from reading and listening to the radio.”



*Wayne does it his way*

be recognised through the standard. We will continue to ensure that businesses are working towards the Investors standard. We are also raising awareness of the need for skills provision among liP (UK) advisers and assessors.

43 However, some firms fail to address their employees' lack of literacy, language and numeracy skills. One survey found that around 94% of companies in the North West said that reading and writing skills were important in manual tasks, yet only 61% of them saw a need to train their workers in these skills. The changing occupational structure is likely to intensify the demand for many essential skills. Changing skills needs in the economy reinforce these conclusions. No longer can businesses compete solely on the basis of low cost and low added value. Faced with a global, knowledge-based economy, businesses must invest in their employees' skills to offer added-value services for new markets.

44 So improving the literacy, language and numeracy skills of all people in work is critical. To manage it, we must continue to encourage industry representatives, unions, the Learning and Skills Council, the Small Business Service, and the Sector Skills Councils to help. By 2004 we will have helped over 50,000 adults in work to improve these skills, and over 150,000 by 2007. By 2004 all existing Sector Skills Councils will have a plan within their training programmes to help low skilled workers with these needs.

45 To get there we have been developing literacy, language and numeracy policies for employers that build on examples of good practice, widely promoted and put in place through partner organisations. The Government has funded a series of Employer Training Pilots running since September 2002, engaging employers with financial incentives and free training courses to up-skill their workforce. Each pilot comprises partners including further education colleges, Regional Development

Agencies, trade unions, Learning and Skills Councils and other provider groups, ensuring the pilots are as far reaching as possible. A further six or seven pilots will be operational from September 2003.

46 There is also a support network in place to assist employers in identifying literacy, language and numeracy skills needs among their staff and providing information and advice on local training opportunities. 2003 also sees the start of the *Employer Engagement Strategy*. Through the promotional campaign we will reach employers via: Employer Champions who have supported their own employees to improve their skills; a national advertising campaign; a national telephone advice line run by *learnirect*, local Learning and Skills Council workplace advisers and other initiatives described here.

47 Businesses must know that they can rely on the providers they work with to respond to their needs and improve the skills of their employees. The quality assurance

# Lesley Elliott

Lesley has been working in Human Resources for many years and knew she was phobic about maths, but only determined to do something about it when she started a course for a Certificate in Personnel Practice and realised that to get ahead, she would have to do something about her numerical evaluation – something she is always putting other people through.

She volunteered to trial a numeracy core curriculum programme she had been developing with Fast Forward (a training organisation who have a contract with the Employer Training Pilot). Having completed two one-day sessions she is now learning alongside other colleagues from across the business on a 7-week numeracy programme. Recently she took the Level 1 test which she feels was a great achievement as “I panic when I see numbers”.

Doing the course is increasing her confidence with numbers. Learning with other colleagues to improve their numeracy has helped to engage other employees to sign up.



*Lesley Elliott: from phobic to champion*

provided by inspection bodies and Learning and Skills Council funding will help all literacy, language and numeracy providers to reach high standards.

- 48 We must enable all companies, whatever their size, to benefit from tailor-made literacy, language and numeracy courses for their employees. Online practice tests and learning materials are helping all businesses do this in the longer term.
- 49 As important as employers in reaching those with poor skills are trade unions, and their union learning representatives. They have already shown how effective they are: over 5,000 learners are currently involved in trade union provision through the Union Learning Fund, which will continue to be one of our priorities for support.
- 50 Sector Skills Councils also have a key role, and literacy, language and numeracy skills should be a key component of their workforce development plans. Sectors have been working with the Basic Skills

Agency to map occupational standards to our skills standards, when developing materials to support training. We know that learners respond best when the subject of study is clearly relevant to their day-to-day work. So we will develop a set of work related vocational learning materials to support learners at work.

- 51 After extensive promotion, trial and consultation we have produced and distributed 5000 copies of an Employer Toolkit, bringing together the excellent provision developed by employers, trade unions and National Training Organisations so that we can help employers introduce literacy, language and numeracy training at work. Encouragingly, many employers said they would use it again.
  - **Young adults**
- 52 Other measures will be introduced to support those young people with poor literacy, language and numeracy skills in the workplace. 27% of 16-year-olds who leave

school each year are below Level 1 in both Maths and English. 22% of these young people do not go on to training or work after they leave school. Through our new *Opportunities for Excellence* strategy we are determined to bring these young people, who are often the most marginalised in society, back into learning. Connexions personal advisers identify many of those 16-year-olds with poor literacy, language and numeracy skills, and give them access to local training and support. But others who work with the young, including local authority social services, voluntary organisations, and young offender institutions, are also offered Personal Adviser training so they can better identify those who need help. Planning how these groups will work together, representatives from partner organisations that support young people are actively involved in agreeing local strategies.

- 53 The Connexions Service also steps in to help young people with Maths and English below Level 2, particularly those who are in

jobs without training. Personal advisers track the progress of these young people and intervene, with their employers, to help them improve their literacy, language and numeracy skills. Their work, supported by promotional activity, focuses on those sectors and occupations where there is a great need to improve these skills. These include: manufacturing, construction and the wholesale or retail industrial sectors, craft occupations (such as plumbers and carpenters) and caring occupations (such as childcare and residential care workers). Personal advisers encourage all those who are 16 or 17 years old to take up their statutory right to time off for study or training.

- 54 In the long term, we aim to give *all* young people (14-19) who leave school with literacy, language and numeracy needs – whether they enter work or not – the chance to improve their skills. So we must continue to help the Connexions Service and employers to identify and support young people's literacy, language and numeracy needs.

To ensure success, we must also motivate young people themselves to learn via high-quality support leading to real opportunities.

- 55 Those young people who are not ready for the Key Skills requirements of the Foundation Modern Apprenticeship are having their literacy, language and numeracy skills at Pre-Entry Level and Level 1 addressed first, as a priority, by colleges and other providers. We are also encouraging young people to take Key Skills qualifications. The national framework includes communication, application of number and information technology skills, at the level appropriate to their abilities. In 2003 we are undertaking a pilot to explore the potential for helping learners to progress from Pre-Entry Level learning into other courses undertaken full or part-time, and developing pre-vocational provision. We will change our policy so that more providers can choose which programme and certification is most appropriate for the trainee.

## Other groups at risk of exclusion

- 56 Many of those in the priority groups already listed, such as jobseekers, are at high risk of social exclusion. But other groups including homeless people, refugees and asylum seekers, and those who do not speak English as a first language must also be able to obtain high-quality advice and support in addressing their literacy, language and numeracy needs.
- 57 Other groups at risk – including drug or alcohol abusers, travelling families, older adults in the community as well as in residential care homes – are usually reached by many thousands of organisations and individuals in the voluntary and community sector.
- 58 To help adults with poor skills overcome inhibitions we target them where they feel most comfortable. Many of the projects run through the Adult and Community Learning Fund have shown how literacy, language

and numeracy skills teaching can be successfully combined with other voluntary and community services used by adults.

59 We strive to make sure that more organisations can benefit from this kind of approach. The National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE) and the National Association of Councils for Voluntary Service are developing awareness of literacy, language and numeracy skills within the local voluntary and community sector. Learners are involved in the design and delivery of programmes in order to increase their commitment and motivation.

- **The homeless**

60 Around 100,000 people are registered as homeless each year. Many of these have literacy, language and numeracy needs that are contributing to their difficulty in finding a place to stay and a place to work. We work with charities and other community and voluntary organisations to ensure that

homeless people can have their needs identified. Above all, they need flexible learning opportunities which are sensitive to their circumstances.

61 We must continue to give refugees and asylum seekers the best possible start to their new life in the United Kingdom. Once their application to remain has been successful, they need to receive our support and advice. Only then can they feel integrated in the local community and play a full part in the economic life of the country.

- **Speakers of other languages**

62 Up to 1 million people in England do not speak English as their first language. Potential learners range from those who may lack literacy, language and numeracy skills in their first language to those who are already highly educated. The English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) components of the teaching and learning infrastructure are now in place to address

the needs of these learners and ensure they have equal access to the high quality provision they need (see *Raising standards and Learner achievement*).

- **Parents**

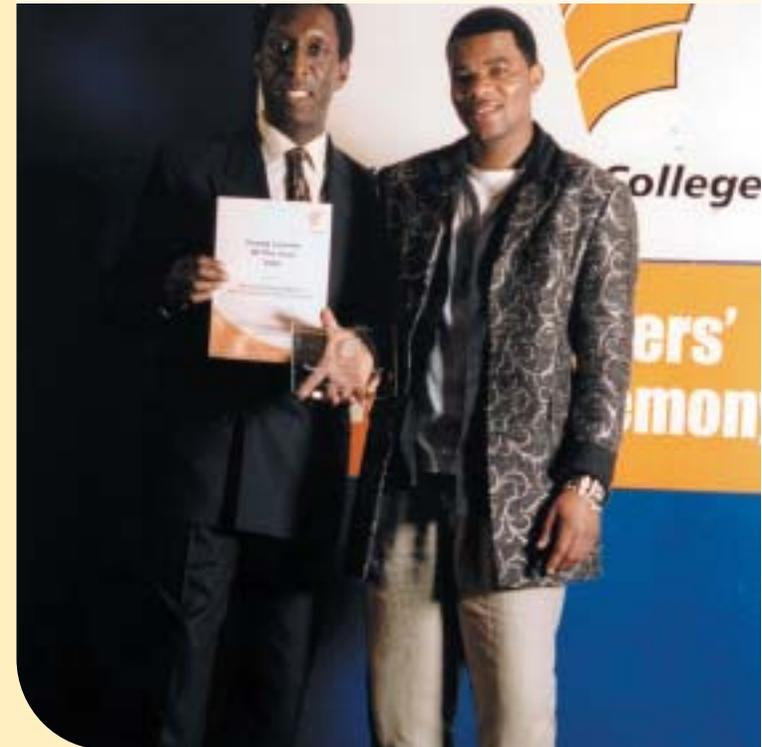
63 Most parents take a keen interest in the education of their children. But poor literacy, language and numeracy skills often run in the family – parents with poor literacy, language and numeracy skills are more likely to have children with similar problems. A 1993 study found that 60% of children in the lowest reading attainment group at age 10 had parents with poor literacy skills<sup>5</sup>. We are working to break this generational cycle of under-achievement. We engage parents and other primary carers to address their literacy, language and numeracy needs. And we work with them to support literacy, language and numeracy activities with their children.

# Rodney Kizomba Martins

Rodney is an eighteen-year-old student who shows total commitment to his studies. He arrived in the UK only two years ago on his own after his parents were killed in Angola. Understandably, he found it very difficult to understand people. He has made a great effort to adapt to new surroundings, completing an ESOL Level 2 course.

His next step was to take up a place on a Music Technology Foundation course at South Thames College. Having succeeded, Rodney progressed to the National Diploma at Level 3. He is constantly looking for ways to develop his musical and technological skills.

As Rodney says, “I’m learning things I didn’t know about the composition of R&B and Hip hop. I’m also working on African sounds and rhythms in a contemporary setting. I now hope to study music production at university.”



*Rodney (right) receives his Young Learner of the Year award from Godfrey Allen, Chair of governors at South Thames College*

64 In schools we are building the relationships of trust and support these parents and carers need to get into learning. In many cases, they are encouraged to learn for the sake of their children. We promote the benefits of reading and writing, and encourage parents and children to join the workshops and short courses provided by family literacy, language and numeracy programmes. Our new extended schools policy ties into these activities. It uses those schools that provide extended services such as community sports programmes and on-site key health and youth professionals, to refer pupils and their families to wider provision.

65 But schools can do more than just promote the advantages of adult literacy, language and numeracy. We know that children do much better at school if they are encouraged, and there is a positive attitude to learning at home. Through the *Step in to Learning*, *Sure Start* and *Skills for Families* programmes, we are training those working with children to spot the

literacy, language and numeracy skills needs of parents and carers. We have given guidance to all Early Years Development and Childcare Partnerships in England. Moreover, all nursery staff, playgroups and after-school clubs are offered training on identifying such gaps in adults' skills.

66 *Sure Start*, our early years programme to tackle child poverty and social exclusion, offers access to literacy, language and numeracy courses, with childcare or crèche support. The programme makes full use of the advantages of unthreatening locations where parents and carers already visit or collect their children.

67 Family learning is a vital means of improving adult literacy, language and numeracy. But it also fosters greater involvement between children, their parents and their communities at all levels. The Learning and Skills Council has a remit to support family learning in the community by building the capacity for local support. It

uses the availability and success of family learning as one of its criteria in assessing the adult learning plans of local education authorities.

68 Through these initiatives, particularly the *Skills for Families* Project, we expect that at least 60,000 parents will have improved their literacy, language and numeracy skills by 2004, and 120,000 will have improved these skills by 2007.

- **People who live in disadvantaged communities**

69 People with literacy and numeracy difficulties and – to a lesser extent – poor English language skills are geographically spread across the country. Ours is therefore a national strategy, recognising that potential learners may live in rural areas as well as in inner-city estates. We also know that people with poor literacy, language and numeracy are concentrated in deprived areas. There are around 1.7 million adults with literacy deficiencies living in the 10%

most deprived communities. Our strategy must therefore drive forward clearly targeted, local measures to tackle poor literacy, language and numeracy skills in these communities.

70 What is more, we are delivering other local initiatives to address literacy, language and numeracy skills needs. The *Step in to Learning* programme, for example, is training nursery staff in the 900 new Neighbourhood Nurseries, which are located in the most deprived areas in England. By 2004, there will be 524 *Sure Start* programmes to support children and their parents on courses in deprived areas. 430 programmes are already up and running. And UK Online centres are able to put people in touch with appropriate provision.

71 Other local arms of government are also involved in the drive to improve adult literacy, language and numeracy skills. Regional Development Agencies have proposed regional and economic targets with sub-regional variations, for reducing the percentage of the adult population in each region with poor skills.

72 Information, Advice and Guidance Partnerships also work with the voluntary and community sector in disadvantaged communities, training staff to identify clients with poor skills and to refer them to the most appropriate provision.

73 We estimate that these measures for people at risk of exclusion will enable around 50,000 people to improve their literacy, language and numeracy skills by 2004, and 150,000 by 2007.

74 We will only continue to attract our priority groups back into learning and help them achieve with sustained commitment, by funding and planning effectively to **boost demand, ensure capacity** and to **raise standards** of teaching and **learner achievement**. Outlined below is the progress we have made in these areas, and the work we still have to do.

# Focus on delivery

## Boosting demand

75 The Adult Basic Skills Strategy Unit is co-ordinating a national promotional campaign, working closely with the Learning and Skills Council and *learndirect*. The Get On campaign has already successfully boosted the demand for literacy, numeracy and language skills among learners. The gremlins featured in the campaign are encouraging thousands of adults to overcome their fears and Get On: an encouraging 80% public recognition has been recorded. Without them many of the one million or so adults who have taken the brave step of tackling their problems might never have done so. Since its launch in August 2001, over 150,000 adults have phoned *learndirect* to 'get rid of their gremlins' – the National Helpline for information about learning programmes (0800 100 900).



76 This is thanks largely to sustained national and local marketing (including a national television and radio presence) via local Learning and Skills Councils, local authorities and hundreds of providers that have already adopted gremlins. Employer Skills Champions are boosting interest up and down England. We must continue to raise awareness and support across Government and among all those who come into contact with potential learners. This enables a wealth of organisations to identify and appropriately address literacy, language and numeracy needs among their clients.

77 To change the national learning culture fundamentally, we must keep promoting joined-up working among these groups contributing to the delivery of *Skills for Life*. This will be achieved through carefully planned research and marketing activities involving a range of organisations and delivery partners. As part of our agenda for mainstreaming, the Learning and Skills Council and partners will lead all promotional activity by 2005.

- 78 We continue to provide advice and materials, including case studies, for partners' campaigns while ensuring countrywide consistency for the branding, targeting, and key messages. Our *Update* newsletter is distributed to literacy, language and numeracy practitioners, and we regularly promote *Skills for Life* at conferences and events throughout the country. Online support for this activity is provided by the ReadWritePlus website ([www.dfes.gov.uk/readwriteplus](http://www.dfes.gov.uk/readwriteplus)). Services include up-to-date news, promotional materials and publications.
- 79 Finally, our campaign targets the wider public: the encouragement of family, friends and work colleagues is one of the most powerful influences on adults going back into learning.

### Ensuring capacity

- Reaching the target
- 80 In the period up to July 2002, around 1.5 million learners had enrolled on more than 2 million literacy, language and numeracy skills courses. To date, over 300,000 learners have achieved national certificates – good progress towards meeting our target agreed in the 2002 Spending Review of 1.5 million adults achieving national certification by 2007.
- 81 To reach the target, we plan to provide over 2 million flexible learning opportunities over the next three years, so that adults can improve their skills in a way that suits their circumstances. All literacy, language and numeracy education will continue to be provided free of charge to the learner.

- Funding and the Learning and Skills Council

- 82 Success depends on well co-ordinated provision backed by reliable and consistent funding. So our funding methodology has changed to better support learners in this way. At a national level the Learning and Skills Council has a central responsibility for planning, funding and co-ordinating *Skills for Life*. At a local level the Council will set and monitor local targets, and ensure that sufficient funding is allocated to providers. It will build on the best of existing provision in developing flexible learning opportunities, to increase capacity for the future. Growth of provision will be fully funded to enable us to increase and broaden our impact in key contexts including further education colleges, the workplace and the voluntary sector. The Adult Basic Skills Strategy Unit's role is to provide guidance and support, and to monitor activities – assisted by a regional field force.

- 83 The Unit and LSC will continue to work with national and local agencies with a critical input. These include: local authorities, Jobcentre Plus, the Connexions Service, employers, unions, further education colleges, adult learning centres, *learnirect*, business links, Regional Development Agencies, voluntary bodies and private training providers.
- 84 Other organisations with important roles to play include: the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education, the Learning and Skills Development Agency, Regional Development Agencies and the Basic Skills Agency. The Basic Skills Agency (BSA), with its remit to innovate, develop and disseminate best practice, continues to support our agenda of raising standards. Currently the BSA is working to address adult financial literacy needs. It is helping adults complete simple yet essential daily tasks such as form filling and reading bank statements.

◦ **Funding across government**

- 85 The Government is supporting the expansion of training provision and improvements in quality with significant additional funding. In the Spending Review 2002, a further £1.6 billion of funding was announced for adult literacy and numeracy provision across Government to 2006. This includes the parts of government that do not have education and training as part of their core business.
- 86 The Offenders' Learning and Skills Unit, and the Department for Work and Pensions both have plans in place, enabling them to contribute towards the *Skills for Life* target. Other departments including the Department for Health, the Department of Culture, Media and Sport, and Ministry of Defence, are all contributing towards the implementation of *Skills for Life* (see *Our Priority Groups – Public sector employees*). The Prison Service, the National Health Service, JobcentrePlus, the Probation Service, Public Libraries, the Police, the

Courts, local authority services, and even the Driving and Vehicle Licensing Agency, all come into contact with people who need to improve their literacy, language and numeracy skills. Put simply, everyone that works with the public should be able to support and encourage people with skills needs to go back into learning.

- 87 Eventually, we hope that all public services will be championing the *Skills for Life* strategy. Involving every one of these partners in taking forward a common, national strategy is a challenge: but it is one that we must accomplish.

**Monitoring, evaluation and research**

- 88 It is clearly vital to continue to plan, fund and deliver literacy, language and numeracy provision. These efforts must all contribute towards our Public Service Agreement targets so that we can qualify and quantify our achievements.

- 89 Progress is continuously and rigorously monitored by the Adult Basic Skills Strategy Unit, against the projected target of 1.5 million improving their literacy, language and numeracy skills by 2007 and the interim target of 750,000. Quarterly updates are provided for Ministers to keep track of our progress.
- 90 And in case obstacles to delivery do arise, programme management procedure includes ongoing risk assessment to ensure we achieve our objectives.
- 91 To help us analyse potential hurdles for delivery and identify opportunities for improving literacy, language and numeracy skills, the Unit is undertaking an Adult Basic Skills Needs Survey, to be published in summer 2003. And the Unit continues to complete economic analyses to allow us to adapt our delivery of *Skills for Life* as and when we must.

- 92 We could not succeed without the help of the Learning and Skills Council, the Basic Skills Agency, Jobcentre Plus, the Prison Service and other key partners and providers who report regularly on delivery. And by 2004 all awarding bodies will have agreed a common protocol for recording and reporting on literacy, language and numeracy achievements, to be fully implemented by 2007.
- 93 Working together to monitor and evaluate progress, we are able accurately to assess the scale of need. Consequently we can set realistic and achievable targets that we may be confident of achieving.

### **Raising standards**

- **New qualifications framework for teachers**
- 94 Those who teach literacy, language and numeracy skills to adults are among the most dedicated and passionate of all teachers, but for too long they have been on the margins of the teaching profession.

For the first time, we have taken steps to change that by ensuring they have the same access and opportunities as those who teach other disciplines. We are setting teachers clear expectations for literacy, language and numeracy teaching. Since September 2002, all new teachers in the post-16 sector who wish to specialise in teaching adult literacy and numeracy – in any context – are required to gain qualifications that meet the Further Education National Training Organisation (FENTO) subject specifications for literacy, numeracy and from September 2003, for ESOL (see Figure 2).

- 95 These qualifications for specialist teachers of literacy, numeracy and ESOL will be underpinned by parallel qualifications for those who provide specialist learning support and learner support.

- **Teacher training**

96 Over 15,000 teachers have been trained so far in the literacy and numeracy core curricula and a further 5,000 ESOL teachers have been introduced to the ESOL curriculum. We are also recruiting, training and retraining people from black, minority and ethnic groups as teachers, including refugees and asylum seekers. This helps us to address their specific needs. 2000 teachers have already attended training in the Pre-Entry Curriculum Framework and *Access for All* guidance (see paragraph 102). From 2003 we are rolling out core curriculum training to be incorporated into vocational staff training programmes and providing training for Jobcentre Plus providers.

- **Professional development**

97 To secure the consistent and high quality provision that will make this training a success, the Learning and Skills Council has taken responsibility for the funding

and delivery of all teacher training and continuing professional development. By 2005 the emerging qualifications framework for teachers will need to be mainstreamed as part of the Quality Improvement Framework for *Skills for Life*.

98 Building on the existing training programmes, the new professional development programme, developed in partnership with the Learning and Skills Council, will deliver nationally accredited training to teachers. The programme ensures that teachers in all further education contexts have a sound knowledge of the practicalities of literacy, language and numeracy. Literacy components include spelling, comprehension and composition. Numeracy components include estimation, addition and multiplication. This modularised programme will enable existing literacy, language and numeracy teachers to gain Level 4 qualifications.

99 We anticipate that 15,000 teachers will have made use of the programme by 2004, and this number will rise to 25,000 by 2007. Yet we are aiming higher still: by 2007, all those leading or supporting learning should have demonstrated their subject skills at the appropriate level through the national continuing professional development programme.

100 To reach all those with literacy, language and numeracy needs we must train all those in contact with them to recognise and support their learning. We are working across Government to ensure that frontline staff are trained to identify and support those with literacy, language and numeracy needs as appropriate to the context in which they work. The Link Up project is redefining the volunteer role by training recruits to support adult learners in their own communities. 6,000 adult learner supporters will have been trained and achieved the Level 2 certificate by 2004. Moreover, to use aspects of the training and development programme across other

# Val Boulding

Val is the administrative worker at the Sheffield Link Up project office. She is currently a student, volunteer and a worker!

Made redundant from her job in the private sector about two years ago, Val lacked confidence and realised that her maths would let her down. She had always found maths difficult, had no paper qualifications and had not taken any further training since leaving school.

So Val enrolled on a course at the community training resource centre to study Information and Communications Technology. Next she started some voluntary work at the community centre and then secured a job at the Manor Training Centre as the administrative worker. Her interest in volunteering led her to take part in the Link Up training programme as well: not only did she enrol on the 1st Unit, but also encouraged her daughter (who has A levels, is working and unsure what route to take) to enrol as well.

As a result, Val says: “I feel more confident about my own skills and my ability to support others.” Both Val and her daughter feel able to recognise and signpost people who present themselves with poor skills. What is more, Val now wants to go on to Unit 2 and from there progress to become a tutor.



*Val (left) links up to learning*

contexts we aim to train 3000 frontline staff by mid-2004. Workplace brokerage training guidance is being offered to Union Learning Representatives and Connexions advisers are to be trained this year. By 2004, 1,800 nursery managers and early years staff (through the *Step in to Learning* programme), 1000 staff employed by Jobcentre Plus providers, and by 2007, 10% of Health and Social Care staff attending the NHS University will have been trained to help adults improve their literacy, language and numeracy skills.

- **Materials**

101 The Adult Basic Skills Strategy Unit has commissioned the production of learning materials for literacy, numeracy and ESOL, referenced to the national standards and relevant curriculum documents. They include paper-based and CD-ROM based learner resources, audio material and teachers' guides. And to make sure these materials lead learners to achieve, the Planning Learning and Reporting Achievement (PLRA) project has developed draft guidance to

**Figure 2: National qualifications framework for teachers and those who support teaching and learning**

	Literacy	Numeracy	ESOL
<b>Teachers/Subject Specialists</b>	Level 4 Certificate for Adult Literacy Subject Specialists	Level 4 Certificate for Adult Numeracy Subject Specialists	Level 4 Certificate for Adult ESOL Subject Specialists
<b>Subject Support</b>	Level 3 Certificate for Adult Literacy Subject Support	Level 3 Certificate for Adult Numeracy Subject Support	Level 3 Certificate for Adult ESOL Subject Support
<b>Adult Learner Support</b>	Level 2 Certificate for Adult Learner Support		

**Figure 3: Responsibilities of teachers and those who support teaching and learning**

<b>Level 4 Certificate</b>	Leading awareness raising and teaching, Individual Learning Plans (ILPs), diagnostic assessment, teaching, support of assistants (subject and learner support)
<b>Level 3 Certificate</b>	Awareness, screening and contribution to initial assessment, contribution to ILPs, contribution to teaching
<b>Level 2 Certificate</b>	Awareness, screening, signposting, (referral)

support teachers and learners in the processes of planning learning, recording progress and reporting achievements in ESOL, literacy and numeracy. A consortium led by the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education has produced a national Pre-Entry Curriculum Framework, targeting teachers of those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD). *Access for All* guidance provides the tools needed by these teachers. By 2007 we aim to have made learning materials available to teachers for the fullest range of possible settings. This will include, by 2004, guidance for family provision, helping teachers to break the cycle of low achievement in families with poor skills.

102 The materials are being made widely available in a range of formats and easily customised by teaching providers and supporters and individual learners. New subject standards for teaching literacy and numeracy in specialist contexts have been developed. And contextualised learning materials are being developed and will be

available for use during 2003/04 in vocational and community settings. They will be linked to work-related learning programmes. These include the Employer Toolkit, and Move On test support toolkit. These packs guide teachers to help employees to brush up on their reading, writing and maths skills to get ahead at work and gain a nationally recognised qualification. From 2003 we are rolling out core curriculum training to be incorporated into vocational staff training programmes. To take advantage of flexible online opportunities, all training materials are to be made available online. An ESOL resources pack for teachers who are themselves refugee and asylum seekers (produced in partnership with the Basic Skills Agency) will also be published later this year.

103 Our vision is that, by 2005, a comprehensive range of core learning materials will be available to teachers to support access to the *Skills for Life* learning infrastructure for the full range of learners across a wide range of settings.

#### ◦ Quality assurance and inspection

104 We must see to it that the high standards we are setting are delivered on the ground. So we are making sure that all providers of literacy, numeracy and ESOL programmes meet standards set out by the *Common Inspection Framework*. We expect all providers of literacy, language and numeracy programmes to have an action plan in place. It should set out how they will recruit adult learners, screen and diagnose their needs and evaluate their progress towards relevant qualifications. To recognise and reward excellence and innovation we are developing a national award scheme available in 2003.

105 The inspection process and the Learning and Skills Council performance reviews ensure the quality of these developments. First and foremost, we have ensured that the remit for the Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) and the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) includes a clear focus on the *Skills for Life* strategy. All providers of

adult literacy, language and numeracy provision funded by the Council fall within the general arrangements for inspection by Ofsted and ALI. The guides produced by ALI and Ofsted and our publication *Success in Adult Literacy, Numeracy and ESOL Provision: a guide to support the Common Inspection Framework* aim to help inspectors and staff to evaluate the standards. This year we are also developing context specific guides. Targeted contexts are: further education, adult and community learning, e-learning, work-based training providers and prisons. They help providers make sure they are in good shape when the inspectors call.

106 A training module on securing learner achievement in literacy, language and numeracy is included in all teacher training materials and programmes developed to support *Success for All*, our strategy for transforming further education. Similarly, all teacher training materials and programmes developed for *Skills for Life* are to include

a specific module on learner achievement informed by *Success for All*.

107 Ultimately, the learner has to be at the centre of our strategy for raising standards. Our success is measured by what learners achieve (see *Learner achievement*).

### **Learner achievement**

- **National Standards for Adult Literacy and Numeracy**

108 We expect all learners to have access to high quality learning opportunities appropriate to their aspirations and circumstances. High quality provision is essential if we are to motivate learners to continue their learning and to achieve. The availability of high quality provision, irrespective of context or setting, underpins the Government's entire literacy, language and numeracy skills strategy.

109 Since September 2002, all literacy, numeracy and ESOL learning programmes have had to be based on the National Standards for Adult Literacy and Numeracy to attract Learning and Skills Council funding. The relevant core curriculum for each skill helps teachers make sure that they are interpreting the national standards appropriately for learners.

110 The standards are fixed benchmarks against which skill levels can be assessed. They detail what is expected in literacy (in each of the skills of reading, writing, speaking and listening) and in numeracy (in each of the skills of interpreting, calculating and communicating mathematical information) at Entry Level, Level 1 and Level 2 (see Figures 4 and 5, on page 36). Although adults and young people often have a wider range of skills overall, these literacy, language and numeracy standards are broadly equivalent to the attainment expected of seven-year-olds, 11-year-olds and GCSE grades A\*-C

respectively and are aligned with NVQ Levels and Key Skills at Levels 1 and 2 (see paragraph 55).

111 By 2004 all the key elements of the learning infrastructure for literacy, numeracy and ESOL from Pre-Entry level to Level 2 will be available or in development, including screening, initial assessment, diagnostic assessment, learning materials, tests and qualifications.

112 Learners should be encouraged to commit to their own learning. We expect all providers to draw up an Individual Learning Plan (ILP) with each learner which sets out the learning aims, the learning goals and the smaller 'steps' that the learner will take in order to achieve their goals. Learners can also expect to have a teacher who gives regular, positive, recorded feedback, and who is able to use a full range of teaching approaches, from group work, to one-to-one and online learning.

113 Learners can expect to be supported effectively by learning support staff to help them maintain their motivation to learn. Through the Link Up project we are exploring ways of recruiting and training individuals to support adult learners in their community at work and in learning environments. We are setting up events for volunteers to exchange information and best practice. And finally, learners must have opportunities to plan their progression out of literacy, language and numeracy programmes into other learning, training or employment opportunities. We expect that these features should become part of every literacy, language and numeracy learning programme. These programmes should give students the opportunity to take national qualifications at the appropriate level. We know from evaluation of our early pathfinders that learners achieve more and gain greater satisfaction when they have: initial and diagnostic assessment, an ILP, programmes tailored to their needs, a national certificate and employment opportunities.

#### ◦ Curricula

114 We have now published parallel national core curricula for literacy, numeracy and ESOL, as well as a national Pre-Entry Curriculum Framework and *Access for All*. The curriculum documents aim to support teachers and ensure consistency and continuity for learners. We have published interactive CD-ROMs integrating the literacy and numeracy curricula with *Access for All*. By April 2003, CD-ROM versions of the Adult ESOL Core Curriculum and the Pre-Entry Curriculum Framework will also be available. During 2003 we will also publish an interactive web-based programme that links the national standards and literacy and numeracy curricula to 162 different occupational standards. It will ensure that workplace learning is both meaningful and motivational.

- Screening, initial assessment and diagnostic assessment

115 People who have difficulty with literacy or numeracy are often reluctant to admit that they have a problem. They may avoid situations where their weaknesses can be exposed. We are working to ensure that effective mechanisms to assess skills levels are available in a wide variety of non-threatening settings. Colleges, adult education institutions and Jobcentres are already able to spot the signs of poor literacy, language and numeracy.

116 We are promoting the use of consistent terminology to describe screening, initial assessment and diagnostic assessment processes. We are trialling different ways of screening to find out which are the most effective for different settings. These will be available during 2003. Guidance on best practice is being made available to all organisations that come into contact with adults with literacy, language and numeracy needs.

## Figure 4: The National Standards for Adult Literacy, with examples and school equivalents

National Standard	At this level, adults are able, for example, to:	National Curriculum level
<b>Entry 1</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• read and obtain information from common signs and symbols</li> </ul>	Level 1 (age 5)
<b>Entry 2</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• use punctuation correctly, including capital letters, full stops and question marks</li> </ul>	Level 2 (age 7)
<b>Entry 3</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• organise writing in short paragraphs</li> </ul>	Level 3 (age 9)
<b>Level 1</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• identify the main points and specific detail in texts</li> </ul>	Level 4 (age 11)
<b>Level 2</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• read and understand a range of texts of varying complexity accurately and independently</li> </ul>	GCSE A*-C (age 16)

## Figure 5: The National Standards for Adult Numeracy, with examples and school equivalents

National Standard	At this level, adults are able, for example, to:	National Curriculum level
<b>Entry 1</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• recognise and name common shapes such as rectangles, circles and cubes.</li> </ul>	Level 1 (age 5)
<b>Entry 2</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• read and understand information in simple diagrams and charts</li> </ul>	Level 2 (age 7)
<b>Entry 3</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• add or subtract using three-digit numbers</li> </ul>	Level 3 (age 9)
<b>Level 1</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• recognise and use fractions, decimals and percentages</li> </ul>	Level 4 (age 11)
<b>Level 2</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• find the mean, median and mode and use them as appropriate to compare two sets of data</li> </ul>	GCSE A*-C (age 16)

- 117 Initial assessment tools assess skills levels against the new standards and help advisers place learners on an appropriate learning programme. Literacy and numeracy assessment materials are already available. By January 2004, we aim to publish ESOL-specific screening and initial assessment materials.
- 118 By April 2003, we will have published a range of diagnostic assessment materials. These include paper-based and CD ROM-based tools for literacy, numeracy and ESOL from Pre-Entry to level 2, and diagnostic materials to identify dyslexia, based on principles outlined in *Access for All*.
- National Qualifications
- 119 New qualifications at Entry Level have now been approved and are available for learners who are not yet ready for the National Tests at Levels 1 and 2.
- 120 National Literacy and Numeracy Tests at Levels 1 and 2 have been developed by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority. Since September 2001, many learners embarking on a literacy or numeracy programme leading to Level 1 or Level 2 now work towards the National Test. For teachers familiar with other qualifications such as City and Guilds Wordpower and Numberpower, this signals a major change, especially at Levels 1 and 2 where all awarding bodies have worked together to offer a single national qualification for each skill level. This change has been introduced to ensure that no qualifications are perceived as more difficult or more valuable than others. Closely linked to the national standards and curriculum, they provide a clear and reliable measure of a person's achievement. Tests leading to National Certificates in Literacy and Numeracy at Level 1 and 2 are available through many awarding bodies. National ESOL qualifications will be available in 2004.
- 121 Each Test consists of 40 multiple choice questions set in everyday contexts. They are machine marked to enable learners to achieve their results quickly. Early and detailed feedback is also available to help learners improve. Moreover, immediate feedback will be available via on-screen tests in development that will help learners to develop essential ICT skills. Two awarding bodies, Edexcel and City and Guilds have successfully piloted on-screen tests through *learn*direct centres. There is now a planned roll-out designed to extend the availability of on-screen tests to around a hundred *learn*direct and other centres by April 2003.
- 122 The plans for a high quality National Test rollout will only be realised if we continue to involve 'grass roots' organisations – the partners that are in close touch with the target groups.
- 123 We are encouraging employers to specify in their job advertisements which level of literacy, language and numeracy they require and to offer on-site testing facilities. This

## Mary Davies



*Mary receives her award from the Prime Minister*

Just over a year after launching *Skills for Life*, we returned to 10 Downing Street – with some 75 other visitors, including directors and chairs of our key partner organisations, ministerial representatives from across Whitehall and chief executives of major businesses – for an anniversary breakfast with the Prime Minister on 14 March 2002.

Guests also included learner Mary Davies, among the first to pass the National Tests in literacy and numeracy.

Learning English has become her passion. Since attending last year's anniversary breakfast she has completed GCSE English, passing with a Grade A. Last summer, Mary also achieved a Grade A in Foundation Maths and is currently halfway through studying for a Maths GCSE. Although she finds mathematics more challenging than her English studies, Mary is determined to pass GCSE Maths this year so that she can embark on an English A-Level course from September 2003, with a view to starting an English degree in 2004-05. Mary is able to balance her studies and a full-time job in Liverpool, by working four-day shifts.

motivates individuals to take the Tests and achieve the related qualifications. 60% of Learning and Skills Council-funded further education providers will be registered as national assessment centres and we aim for 80% to provide national tests by 2005.

- 124 In the long term, we aim for the teaching and learning infrastructure we are developing to secure test pass rates of at least 75% for Adult Literacy and Numeracy at Levels 1 and 2.

## Innovation and development

### ◦ Pathfinders

- 125 Literacy and numeracy Pathfinders were piloted in ten areas in 2001 to test out the core teaching and learning infrastructure. The curricula were enthusiastically received by practitioners and, of the near 2000 learners who were the first to sit the National Tests, over 90% responded

favourably to the experience. This enabled the national roll-out of the *Skills for Life* infrastructure to be undertaken confidently.

- 126 Building on this success, eleven ESOL Pathfinders are now up and running to ensure that the needs of the full range of ESOL learners are addressed. Activities include intensive training, ESOL delivered through ICT, vocationally linked programmes and flexible delivery to meet varying needs.

### ◦ What works – research into practice and the National Research and Development Centre

- 127 There are still gaps in our knowledge about what motivates adults to learn and what helps them to improve their literacy, language and numeracy skills. So we are investigating best practice from around the world and testing out a range of new ideas and approaches.

- 128 In January 2001 we held an international conference for some of the world's leading experts in literacy, language and numeracy skills to share their knowledge and experience. Our strategy was found to be comprehensive and consistent with efforts elsewhere. It is also evident that our pathfinder projects make a real contribution to our international colleagues' understanding of these issues. In addition, we have set up a working group with the Governments of Denmark, Ireland and Portugal to look at literacy, language and numeracy skills within the context of the European Union.

- 129 Our strategy must be supported by a more continuous programme of research to make sure that implementation and future development are based firmly on evidence. The Adult Basic Skills Needs Survey of literacy, language and numeracy will help us understand the problem we have to tackle in more detail (see paragraph 19).

130 In March 2002, we established the National Research and Development Centre for Adult Literacy and Numeracy (NRDC) to lead and co-ordinate this work. Its main function is to conduct research into pedagogical practice, drawing from relevant international experience and developments at home. Among countries of the English-speaking world, we aim to lead the way in tackling literacy, language and numeracy problems, and we want to exploit any best practice we have identified in overseas education markets.

131 By identifying best practice, the NRDC develops and delivers teacher training and professional development. This is based on quantitative and qualitative evidence of different approaches to learning. It builds upon the work of the Basic Skills Agency. Their work informed, and continues to inform, the development of the national teaching and learning standards and core curricula. Most importantly, its work helps us to evaluate and improve our national strategy continuously. Recent projects include research into teaching ESOL and

supporting young offenders. Throughout 2003, the NRDC is leading conferences on international literacy, language and numeracy research and development to assess good practice from around the world.

- Information and Communications Technology (ICT)

132 Our strategy is designed to give those who need to improve their literacy, language and numeracy skills a flexible and interactive learning experience that will motivate them to achieve. Individuals must be able to learn at a time and place that suits their needs and circumstances. Many people are more prepared to admit lacking technological skills than other skills. 50% of adults with poor literacy, language and numeracy say they would try to improve their literacy, language and numeracy skills if it involved learning on a computer<sup>6</sup>. This is encouraging news, as computer and internet skills are vital for success at work and in most areas of daily life.

133 A national baseline survey of ICT skills levels across the adult population is to report in 2003 with recommendations for the future, alongside an analysis into the current Learning and Skills Council funding for ICT skills development. Activity includes investigating the effectiveness of new technologies to deliver literacy, language, numeracy and ICT learning, developing an e-learning teaching support curriculum and the potential for e-assessment of *Skills for Life*. Online facilities, for example, can create more opportunities for home learning. We are working with employers and educational organisations, including further education colleges, Ufi/*learndirect*, UK Online and work-based organisations to explore ways of using ICT in our strategy.

# Get IT on board

The Knowsley IT Bus is a mobile Information and Communications Technology (ICT) programme, developed by the partnership of Knowsley MBC Department of Leisure and Community Services and Knowsley Community College. It is driven round areas that were previously hard to reach to stimulate take-up of learning within the community. Flexible, local access to 'first step' ICT taster sessions, skills courses and training in ICT are provided. Staff are also on hand to signpost learners to further provision.

Since the bus took to the road in January 2003, 43 adult students have enrolled on 3-week taster sessions and 14 adults on 12-week accredited courses in basic computing, e-mail and the internet. The bus has also visited small businesses to promote learning within the workplace.

James Mitchell, 76, is a retired Telecommunications Manager who currently works as a volunteer manager for the Unemployed Resource Centre in Liverpool. Before getting on board he had no knowledge of computers and wanted to learn how to use email and the internet. Seeing as the bus was conveniently on his doorstep, he seized the opportunity to improve his skills. James commented that "the bus provides an excellent service to local people who have no access to computers and are nervous about learning. It has opened my eyes to lots of opportunities!"

James is now getting ICT skills on board through a 12-week accredited course on the bus.



*James: "You're never too old to start"*

# Working together

134 To this end, the media will accelerate the development of a learning culture, by promoting literacy, language and numeracy skills to mass audiences. The Adult Basic Skills Strategy Unit will continue to work with broadcasters, including the BBC, Channel 4 and independent local radio stations, to promote *Skills for Life*.

135 We have already achieved many of our targets for improving adult skills throughout the country. But there is much to be done before we can help 1.5 million adults achieve national certificates in literacy and/or numeracy and many millions more to improve their lives. We in Government, our many partners and adult learners themselves must all work together to turn good intentions into lasting results.

# Annex A

## Further information

Further details about some of the relevant Government programmes can be found on the following websites:

Adult Basic Skills Strategy Unit, DfES  
[www.dfes.gov.uk/readwriteplus](http://www.dfes.gov.uk/readwriteplus)

Adult and Community Learning Fund  
[www.lifelonglearning.co.uk/aclf](http://www.lifelonglearning.co.uk/aclf)

Adult financial literacy  
[www.dfes.gov.uk/adflag](http://www.dfes.gov.uk/adflag)

Adult Learning Inspectorate  
[www.ali.gov.uk](http://www.ali.gov.uk)

The Basic Skills Agency  
[www.basic-skills.co.uk](http://www.basic-skills.co.uk)

Connexions Service  
[www.connexions.gov.uk](http://www.connexions.gov.uk)

Department for Work and Pensions  
[www.dwp.gov.uk](http://www.dwp.gov.uk)

Jobcentre Plus  
[www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk](http://www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk)

Key skills  
[www.dfes.gov.uk/key](http://www.dfes.gov.uk/key)

Learndirect  
[www.learndirect.co.uk](http://www.learndirect.co.uk)

Learning and Skills Council  
[www.lsc.gov.uk](http://www.lsc.gov.uk)

Learning and Skills Development Agency  
[www.lsda.org.uk](http://www.lsda.org.uk)

National Grid for Learning  
[www.ngfl.gov.uk](http://www.ngfl.gov.uk)

National Institute of Adult Continuing Education  
[www.niace.org.uk](http://www.niace.org.uk)

National Research and Development Centre  
[www.nrdc.org.uk](http://www.nrdc.org.uk)

New Deal  
[www.newdeal.gov.uk](http://www.newdeal.gov.uk)

Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted)  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

Qualifications and Curriculum Authority  
[www.qca.org.uk](http://www.qca.org.uk)

Sector Skills Development Agency  
[www.ssda.org.uk](http://www.ssda.org.uk)

Sure Start  
[www.surestart.gov.uk](http://www.surestart.gov.uk)

University for Industry  
[www.ufild.gov.uk](http://www.ufild.gov.uk)

UK Online  
[www.ukonline.gov.uk](http://www.ukonline.gov.uk)

# Annex B

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The national strategy for improving adult literacy and numeracy skills

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