





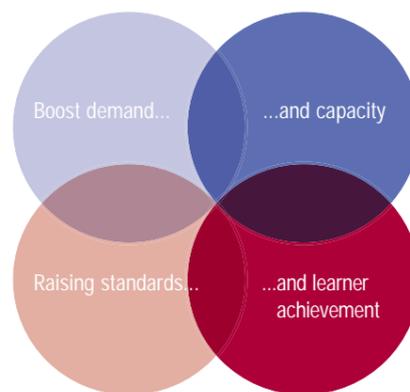
# What we've done... and what we've still got to do

## Introduction

Since the launch of *Skills for Life*, we have gained an even greater insight into the effect low levels of literacy and numeracy skills have on individuals and their families, and on the economy and society. For example, adults with poor literacy and numeracy skills could earn up to £50,000 less over their lifetime and are more likely to have health problems. They and their children risk being cut off from the advantages of a world increasingly linked through information and technology.

*Skills for Life* is not just an education-only strategy, nor is it just a Government response to address these needs. It is a partnership, and the responsibility of the whole of society. Government departments, the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) Jobcentre Plus, the Prison and Probation Services, external partners in the post-16 learning sector, businesses, the CBI, TUC and many others are working together to improve the literacy, language and numeracy skills of adults through:

- Boosting demand for learning via a high profile promotional campaign and by engaging all partners across Government and employers in identifying and addressing the literacy and numeracy needs of their clients and employees.
- Improving quality of teaching and learning in literacy, numeracy and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) provision and increasing learner achievement through the new national learning, teaching and assessment infrastructure and reducing barriers to learning.
- Increasing the capacity of provision by securing sufficient funding and co-ordinating planning and delivery to meet learners' needs.
- Constantly evaluating the implementation of the strategy so that we all can learn from and disseminate best practice and gather feedback from customers, partners and learners themselves.



Over the past two years, there has been much progress and some exciting developments – yet the scale of need remains significant. Over the following pages, this annual report highlights the achievements in implementing *Skills for Life* over the past twelve months, and outlines future plans to meet the challenges to encourage even more adults to improve their literacy, language and numeracy skills, realise their potential and contribute to the country's productivity and social cohesion.

## Reaching our target

**“ Our initial aim is that 750,000 adults will improve their literacy and numeracy skills by 2004, but in the longer term we want to make sure that England has one of the best adult literacy and numeracy rates in the world. And ultimately we want to eliminate the problem altogether.”**  
***Skills for Life, 2001.***

Over 300,000 adults improved their literacy and numeracy skills between April 2001 and July 2002. This is good progress towards reaching our interim target of helping 750,000 adults by 2004. The majority of these learners attended programmes funded by Government through the Learning and Skills Council. This includes 33,000 people who gained qualifications in prison learning programmes – with better skills providing them with more opportunities later in their lives. Programmes for Jobseekers helped 3,500 adults to achieve – Jobcentre Plus has been one of the key partners in persuading adults to re-enter learning.

In total, learning opportunities have been provided to almost 1.5 million learners. This is a tribute to the colleges and other providers who have responded so positively to the challenge and have increased the number of learners participating in literacy, language and numeracy skills learning over the past two years. Many of these adults are preparing to take the National Tests in literacy and numeracy, which will recognise

their achievements. We have made improvements to the test system so that learners will, in future, be able to take a test when they feel they are ready, and also to take it using a computer if they prefer.

There is much more that we need to do to reach people who speak English as a second language. Voluntary and community groups are assisting by sharing their knowledge of the needs of various disadvantaged groups.

We also need to impress upon businesses the cost of poor literacy, language and numeracy skills to the economy - as much as £10 billion a year. This is a waste of human resources and a barrier to economic growth.

*Skills for Life* as with the *Opportunity* and *Excellence* and *Success for All* strategies, puts teaching and learning at the heart of everything that is done. Success depends on the quality of learning experiences provided by teachers, backed by local promotion of learning and national advertising.



## Shaun Smethers

*The Picture of Dorian Gray* by Oscar Wilde is Shaun Smether's current reading material. Passing the National Test in Literacy at Level 2 last year has opened up a whole new world of books to him. Autobiographies are a particular favourite. Shaun also writes with confidence now, regularly producing essays of 700 – 1000 words. He is an inspiration to his teacher and fellow adult learners at Thanet College. They have witnessed Shaun's belief in his abilities grow over the past twelve months to the point where he is now ready to sit GCSE English.

## Our learners

### Where are they now?

Just over a year after launching *Skills for Life*, we returned to 10 Downing Street – with 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 nine learners, one from each of the English regions, who were among the first to pass the National Tests in literacy and numeracy, launched in September 2001. Since 14 March was also World Book Day, they each received a book of their choice, signed and presented to them by the Prime Minister.

In the twelve months since visiting Downing Street all nine learners have made considerable progress in their learning.

### Mary Davies

Learning English has become a passion for Mary Davies. 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 half-way 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.



## Changing the culture

“Success will depend on engaging and stimulating demand among potential learners themselves.”

*Skills for Life, 2001.*

The ‘Get On’ promotion campaign is now in its second year. Since the adverts featuring the Gremlins first hit television screens in September 2001, over 150,000 adults have called the learndirect advice line.

Potential learners who respond to the adverts are sent a free video pack – featuring people who have already improved their skills – to encourage them to take the next step into learning. This year, for the first time, viewers in households with digital television had a chance to watch part of the video and order a copy simply by pressing buttons on their remote control. Over 16,000 people ordered a copy of the video this way.

Other successful media used over the past twelve months includes posters on bill boards close to learning centres, adverts on the back of bus and train tickets and supermarket till receipts. The Gremlins have even featured on beer mats in pubs all over England.

The recognition rate of the Gremlin adverts by the public is now well over 80%. Recent research has shown that the majority of potential learners find the adverts funny, entertaining, ‘painfully true’ and difficult to ignore. Many providers are also acknowledging that the advertising is working, reflected in the increased use of Gremlin branding at local level.

Research has shown that around a third of all callers to the helpline take the next step and register on a course. This is very encouraging but we are now looking at ways of improving the conversion rate to learning.

People who have contacted learndirect can now be called back and offered more details about local learning opportunities – a friendly approach that should get more people onto courses.

Media coverage of literacy and numeracy issues has also been sustained through ongoing public relations activities. Celebrities such as Jamie Oliver and Dolly Parton have lent their support to the campaign and helped to keep ‘Get On’ in the spotlight. In 2002, the ‘Get On’ campaign also won an award from the International Public Relations Association.



# Working across Government



“ Through its various agencies, the Government has direct contact with people in our priority groups and therefore a direct opportunity to encourage them to develop their literacy and numeracy skills.”

**Skills for Life, 2001.**

In *Skills for Life*, we described those groups where needs are known to be high and where we can allocate resources effectively by focusing the efforts of government departments and agencies. The priority groups we identified were unemployed people and other benefit claimants, prisoners and those supervised in the community, public sector employees, low-skilled people in employment and other groups at risk of exclusion including homeless people, refugee and asylum seekers, and others who do not speak English as a first language.

A Cabinet Committee, chaired by Charles Clarke, the Secretary of State for Education and Skills, is ensuring that all parts of Government are contributing to the implementation of *Skills for Life*. A comprehensive package of spending review bids was presented to Treasury by the Secretary of State resulting in our key delivery partners gaining funding to support basic skills activity.

Government departments involved in the delivery of *Skills for Life* are carrying out the following activities:

- The Ministry of Defence has established comprehensive systems to increase the literacy and numeracy skills of its own employees, including the screening of its 30,000 annual entrants for literacy and numeracy needs. The Army has recruited a specialist teacher to each of its learning centres both here and overseas. Other Departments, and other bodies including the NHS, are making similar commitments for their own staff. The Department for Education and Skills is mainstreaming literacy and numeracy provision for its own staff and aims to be an exemplary employer in this area.
- The Department of Health along with the Department for Education and Skills are working jointly on a new project called *Skilled for Health*. The project aims to promote the concept of health literacy and build awareness of adult basic skills in the National Health Service (NHS). The project will design and generate a number of health related curricula programmes, supported by health related learning and assessment materials. The aim is that adults will gain a better understanding of their own health and how to make the best use of the NHS as well as improving their literacy, numeracy and language skills.
- The Department of Culture, Media and Sport are working to reach priority groups through libraries, museums and galleries. There are a number of pilots going ahead this year to build awareness of basic skills and *Skills for Life* among frontline staff and to test out how links can most effectively be made for referral and provision.
- The Prison Service has completed a basic skills Pathfinder pilot and has now implemented the new literacy and numeracy standards and curriculum in all prisons. The National Probation Directorate is publishing its literacy and numeracy strategy, and aims to further realign its own targets to reflect the approach in *Skills for Life*.
- The Department for Work and Pensions, through Jobcentre Plus is screening all clients on Jobseekers Allowance for basic 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 have appointed basic skills co-ordinators in all of their districts and intend to introduce further improvements next year.

All Departments have identified ways of developing *Skills for Life* over the coming years, and are also committed to improving the skills of their own staff.

## Working with Prisoners Learning and Skills Unit – Annie

Annie is a young woman of 17 who served one year of a two year Detention and Training Order (DTO). She was convicted of violent offences. She had no qualifications and was screened at Level 1 for basic skills. She was very resistant to education and had an extremely negative attitude towards staff, peers and herself. Consequently, she tended to be very aggressive. Her interaction with others was poor and her communication skills inadequate.

As a juvenile on a DTO, Annie was expected to attend education and, during the course of her sentence, made significant progress. She gained a range of qualifications including basic and key skills (Communication) at Levels 1 and 2 and various social and life skills units such as Cookery, Personal Development, Preparation for Work and Citizenship, up to Level 2 in some cases.

On her release, she succeeded in finding a job and is now working as a receptionist, where she is doing well.

## Tools to help employers

Over the next year, there will be much more activity aimed at employers to persuade business to take the issue of poor literacy, language and numeracy skills seriously, and offer all of their staff who need it free training. Business Links and learndirect will both be able to offer advice on what businesses should do, and advisers from the LSC will be on hand to visit workplaces to change the culture of learning at work. Union Learning Representatives are playing a key role.

The Employer Toolkit was launched in March 2002 to provide information and training resources to deliver literacy and numeracy training in the workplace. A CD-ROM version of the Toolkit has been available since October 2002. More than 4000 Toolkits were requested by both employers and training providers within the first six months of its launch. Research conducted in December 2002 to gauge the response to the Toolkit was positive – showing that four out five of recipients had used it.

The Department is working with the University for Industry (Ufi) to produce models of literacy, language and numeracy skills delivery for the rail and retail sector. The project will identify models of best practice in a range of organisations and develop computer and paper-based learning materials. These will then be used to create a generic toolkit and guide to raise the quality of delivery and increase achievement across all employment sectors.

The Department has commissioned a project to produce an on-line mapping programme which transfers 168 vocationally mapped standards from print to an interactive database. This can then be used as the basis for designing learning programmes and producing materials for both work-based and educational settings. The materials will be available from April 2003. Union Learning Representatives are playing a key role, and *Brushing up the Basics* – the report issued jointly by the CBI and the TUC last year - shows the way forward.



## Skills in context



The award-winning Context programme at Basingstoke College of Technology provides tailor-made learning for local companies.

As the area attracts increased investment, Basingstoke's employers have found that the solution to their skills needs is not to recruit additional staff, but to use the Context programme to upgrade the skills of the people they already employ.

Funded by the South East England Development Agency, the college works directly with local employers to identify the skills needs within each company and provides customised training for employees at their place of work. Companies release their employees during working hours and a programme lasts, on average, between 20 and 30 hours – delivered in one or two hour teaching sessions.

Information and Communication Technology packages are a key part of teaching: "Most people freely admit to not knowing how to use software, but few confess to reading problems," says Alan Gwyer, Development Manager at Basingstoke College.

The programme is a runaway success – 800 employees have been trained in 18 months and all courses include the chance for employees to progress to further study. As part of the package, Context aims to train three key staff at each company it works with to provide ongoing skills support to learners.

# Improving the supply chain

**DWP** Department for Work and Pensions



“It is vital that the increased demand for literacy and numeracy skills provision is met by more and better quality supply. The quality improvements at the heart of our strategy, and the active planning role of the Learning and Skills Council, will deliver this over time. But we must make sure straight away that, having spent time and money motivating adults to acquire literacy and numeracy skills, we are able to give them training of a high standard which meets their needs ”

*Skills for Life, 2001*

**1.5 million learners  
300,000 achievements**

If we are to continue to implement *Skills for Life* successfully, we must improve the supply and quality of literacy and numeracy provision so that the system can deliver learning opportunities for adults, where and when they are needed. All partners need to work together to achieve this, each adding its expertise to a co-ordinated overall approach.

The Learning Skills Council, the most important delivery partner of all, launched its delivery plan to achieve the 750,000 target on 28 January 2002, and refined it in February 2003. In turn all of the local LSCs have produced their own delivery plans, with a named basic skills contact in each office.

The LSC is responsible for the Standards Fund which enables organisations to more readily provide opportunities for staff training and development. To enable local Councils to make contributions to targets set out in a providers' development plan, the leadership and management of the fund has largely been devolved to local Councils. The LSC has clarified funding surrounding basic skills

provision and has launched research into offering basic skills through other programmes.

The Learning Skills Council is also responsible for the Basic Skills Quality Initiative which has given a structure and stimulus to the professional development of teachers of literacy, language and numeracy. Finally, last year, the LSC provided £15 million to go to local LSCs for capacity building and work with employers – great headway has been made at local level in building partnerships. We are also working with the LSC to ensure that the recommendations of the recent *Trust in FE* report to reduce bureaucracy are applied to *Skills for Life*.

# Funding

In the last year, a further £1.6 billion of funding was announced for adult literacy and numeracy provision across Government to 2006. It is important that these funds are available and that they are allocated efficiently to those delivering provision on the ground. To achieve this, the LSC is issuing funding guidance for providers which sets out the priority being given to improving adult literacy and numeracy skills.

We have published an Adult Literacy and Numeracy Funding Guide to help explain how the LSC funds literacy and numeracy provision, using a number of case studies to illustrate how the funding mechanism works. We have worked specifically with the Prisoners Learning and Skills Unit, Department for Work and Pensions and University for Industry (Ufi) so that they have delivery plans in place to show how they are contributing to the target.

All literacy, language and numeracy provision is free to the learner, and providers automatically have full fee remission. The national rate of funding for adult literacy and numeracy provision is weighted above other programmes to recognise the higher costs of delivery. In addition, in 2002 / 2003 all literacy and numeracy learning attracted a further funding uplift of at least 10% to recognise the costs of helping learners who often live in disadvantaged areas. Finally, in recognition of the priority of improving adult literacy and numeracy skills, the LSC has agreed to fund in full any growth in provision which means providers that bring more adults into learning will be able to claim more funding from the Council.



# Raising standards

“...each new learner must be given a high-quality learning experience that motivates him or her to keep on learning and to achieve. High-quality provision underpins our entire literacy and numeracy strategy.”

***Skills for Life, 2001.***

Our vision is that, by 2004, a robust learning infrastructure and a range of high quality learning materials will be in place to support teaching and learning across a wide range of settings.

National standards, core curricula for literacy, numeracy and ESOL, a national Pre-Entry Curriculum Framework and National Tests in literacy and numeracy have been successfully introduced nationally. Interactive CD-ROM versions of the literacy and numeracy curriculum documents have been developed, incorporating *Access for All* guidance to support teachers of adults with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

Updated and contextualised *Fast Track* screening materials for literacy and numeracy and a specialised screening tool for Family Literacy, Language and Numeracy are in development. New diagnostic assessment tools for literacy, numeracy, ESOL and dyslexia and new learning materials referenced to the national curricula will be available in April 2003. Over 6000 tutors

will have been trained to use the new materials by the end of March 2003. A project to develop contextualised learning materials will go out to tender in 2003.

A new project, *Skills for Families*, will improve the planning and delivery of Family Literacy, Language and Numeracy in nine local pilot projects and a dyslexia project is underway to identify the key elements of the different teaching and learning approaches used with dyslexic learners in literacy, numeracy and ESOL provision.

The *Planning Learning and Reporting Achievement* (PLRA) project and the *Developing Embedded Basic Skills* (DEBS) project are developing guidance and materials to support teachers and learners in these two important areas. Draft guidance will be published in April 2003 and we are looking forward to feedback from teachers, managers and national bodies.

The National Tests are a vital part of the learning infrastructure. A toolkit containing comprehensive guidance on all aspects of the National Tests will be available from April 2003. It will include a CD-ROM of practice tests and information about the *Move On* project, which has been developed to engage higher level literacy and numeracy learners and to promote the National Tests. The approach includes a 3 hour taster course followed up with a 30 hour short course to brush up learners' skills in preparation for the test.

To the credit of providers, contractors and teaching staff throughout the country, over 10,000 teachers have been trained to use the new learning infrastructure. 800 nursery staff will have completed literacy and numeracy courses by the end of March 2003.

The LSC has taken responsibility for mainstreaming training through the continuing professional development programme. There will also be a new *Skills for Life* Leadership and Management Programme that will eventually come under the umbrella of the new post-16 Leadership College. The National Research and Development Centre started work in 2002 to inform policy development and learner achievement in the future.

For the first time, all new teachers who wish to teach adult literacy or numeracy in the post-16 sector are now required to gain qualifications that meet the subject specifications. From September 2003, this will be extended to include teachers of English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL).

Robust inspection ensures the quality of these developments, irrespective of context or setting. To help providers raise the quality of their programmes, we have produced a guide to support the Common Inspection Framework, *Success in Adult Literacy, Numeracy and ESOL Provision* in partnership with the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) and the Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI). In return, Ofsted and ALI have helped us to communicate the need for continuous improvement by producing Good Practice Guides to aid those teaching literacy, language and numeracy programmes as well as those inspecting them.

This work to raise the standards of teaching and learning in literacy, language and numeracy, will play a key part in delivering the *Success for All* agenda.

# Pathfinders

In Spring 2001, ten Pathfinder partnerships (one in each of the nine Government regions and one through a consortium of seven prisons) were established to test core elements of the new teaching and learning infrastructure, pledged in *Skills for Life*, before they were rolled out nationally. The new curricula, intensive teacher training and the National Tests were particularly well received by practitioners and learners. This provided real confidence that the new teaching and learning infrastructure works to deliver the outcomes for which it was designed.

Perhaps the second most important outcome of the Pathfinders has been to reinforce the importance and effectiveness of partnership working at all levels: between policy makers and practitioners, between providers and their local communities and between teachers and learners.

In 2002, the Pathfinders continued to influence the development of *Skills for Life* with a range of action research activities looking at:

- Innovative pedagogic approaches, including intensive courses, residentials, highly structured programmes and delivery through ICT.
- Incentives, comprising fixed rate replacement costs for employers to release staff for literacy and numeracy training and financial incentives for literacy and numeracy learners linked to attendance and achievement.
- Working with other agencies to deliver literacy and numeracy screening and diagnosis in non-traditional learning contexts.

An overview of the first stage evaluation findings together with four illustrative guides on specific action research activities will be published. Several of the approaches piloted, particularly intensive courses (several prisons have moved exclusively to this mode of delivery for basic skills), residentials and use of ICT are already being more extensively used.

In addition initial responses from trainees on the activities have been very encouraging: 97% described their course as interesting, 81% were finding the work balance about right and 97% stated that they would recommend the course to a friend.

Pathfinder extension activities will continue this year, with the partnerships' good work being joined by ten, new ESOL Pathfinders.

# ESOL Pathfinders

*Skills for Life* recognised that at least a million people are held back because they lack sufficient language skills. If they are to have an equal chance of success in work, home and society they must have access to good quality English provision leading to nationally recognised qualifications.

In August 2000, the Department published *Breaking the Language Barriers*, which made a series of recommendations – many now implemented – including the development of an Adult ESOL Core Curriculum and an ongoing programme of training for teachers to deliver it.

Building on the success and lessons learned in the 2001 Literacy and Numeracy Pathfinders, the new ESOL Pathfinders are now running in ten areas and the Prison Service.

They are testing core teaching and learning materials and processes, together with a range of action research activities, in a variety of contexts and learning environments. They provide a view across a wide section of learners taking ESOL programmes. Evaluation will be central, with learners on courses asked about their motivation for attending and how they feel about their experiences. Six months later the learners will be followed up to determine what impact their learning may have had on their lives, at home at work and in society more generally.



