

This briefing paper is aimed at vocational teachers and Subject Learning Coaches, to support them in their work with disabled learners.

The intention is for the paper to act as a signpost. It does not go into detail but rather offers websites/resources practitioners can access to inform their thinking.

The Government spotlight on “skills”:

“there are currently 4.6 million people of working age without qualifications, of whom 2.2 million are inactive and 280,000 are unemployed”¹

The government is committed to upskilling people in order to ensure the future prosperity of Great Britain. They want to see more people move from benefits to work and they want more people to have a level 2 qualification. A new Education and Skills Bill is intended to raise the participation age in education and training for young people. There will also be an entitlement for those aged 19-25 for a first full level 3 qualification (2 A Levels).

The government’s goal is for a;

“further education system that provides specialist vocational excellence in key area of teaching and learning, both at a national level through National Skills Academies, at regional and local levels”

In a speech to the CBI Annual Conference (November, 2007), the Primeminister said;

“In the old days when incapacity benefit was introduced the focus was on disabilities preventing work. Today in the interests of claimants and in the economy the focus must be on their capabilities and the opportunities for new skills for work”.

The intended consequences of government’s “skill” policy are for more people, including those with disabilities, to access learning in order to gain qualifications. The impact of this for vocational teachers will be more and different learners.

What about learners with disabilities?

“Learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities accessing the FE system represent a vibrant and diverse element of our learning community”²

In 2005/06 there were 641,000 learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities across the further education system. A person has a learning difficulty and/or disability;

“if he has significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of persons of his age or has a disability that either prevents or hinders him from making use of facilities of a kind generally provided by institutions providing post-16 education or training.”

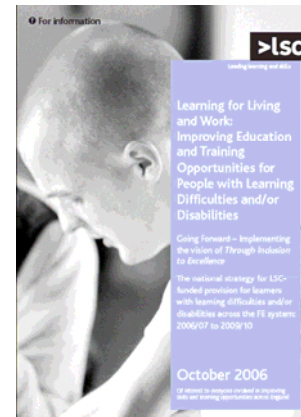
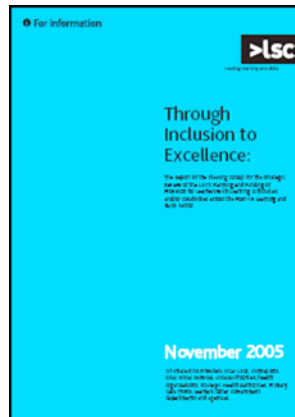
Paragraphs 43 – 71 of *Through Inclusion to Learning* (LSC, 2005)³ and Appendix B of *Progression through Partnership*⁴ (HM Government, 2007) offer overviews in relation to **policy** and **legislation** that have had major impact on the lives of people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

¹ DIUS & DWP (2007) Opportunity, Employment and Progression: making skills work

² LSC (2006) Learning for Living and Work, LSC, Coventry

³ LSC (2005) Through Inclusion to Excellence. Available to download from the LSC website www.lsc.gov.uk

⁴ DIUS, DH, DWP (2007) Progression through Partnership available to download from www.dfes.gov.uk/publications/progressionthroughpartnership



Current Learning and Skills Council (LSC) policy for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is set out in *Learning for Living and Work* (LSC, 2006)⁵. Each LSC region has published an implementation plan that sets out how they will implement Learning for Living in their region. These are available to download from regional LSC websites.

The LSC also has a strategy for learners with mental health difficulties – ‘*Improving services to people with mental health difficulties*’ which is available to download from the LSC website – <http://readingroom.lsc.gov.uk/lsc/2006/learningopportunities/promotion/nat-improvingservicesforpeoplewithmentalhealthdifficulties-ps-aug2006.pdf>

Working within the Social Model of Disability:

Broadly speaking there are two models of disability – the medical model and the social model. The medical model places the "problems" related to disability with the disabled person. The social model places the responsibility on society and how it responds to disabled peoples' needs. The Social Model asserts that it is society that disables people as a result of inaccessible buildings, poor attitudes and "excluding" policies and procedures. Within education the social model of disability is espoused.

Providers and their staff should promote an inclusive approach to their work with learners, that is;

*"to avoid a viewpoint which locates the difficulty or deficit with the student and focus instead on the capacity of the educational institute to understand and respond to the individual learners requirement"*⁶

Where to go for support:

Some teachers worry when they discover they have or will be having a disabled learner in their class. They worry they will fail the learner in some way. It might be that the teacher feels unequipped to effectively support the learner. However with a little background research and time to work with some colleague's, staff can begin to see that their fears are unfounded.

Within organisations: There are normally named people within organisations to approach for support. They have a range of titles, for example Inclusive Learning Manager or Learning Support Manager. Try and identify who this person is in your organisation and use them as a source of information, advice and guidance. Teachers may also have access to continuing professional development in this area for example, attending a course on "Disability Awareness".

⁵ available to download from LSC website www.lsc.gov.uk

⁶ FEFC (1996) Inclusive Learning, FEFC, Coventry

Outside of organisations: The internet can offer lots of support. For example, typing in “Supporting visually impaired learners” to an internet search engine can yield lots of information, advice and guidance. In addition there are many voluntary and community sector organisations where people can get supporting leaflets and additional information on various disabling conditions. For example:

www.nas.org.uk - a website for the National Autistic Society

www.mind.org.uk - a broad range of information about a wide variety of mental health conditions

www.dyslexiaaction.org.uk; www.bdadyslexia.org.uk; www.adult-dyslexia.org - these sites contain material about dyslexia including information on assessment and learning.

www.basic-skills.co.uk - information about literacy, language and numeracy qualifications available to people who are looking to gain the skills they need for employment.

Within the classroom: Your learner is the expert on their impairment. They know what works for them. Ask them how they would like to be supported. Having put the support in place remember to ask the learner how the support is working for them.

Legislation:

Legislation such as the Learning and Skills Act of 2000 (which placed a statutory responsibility on the LSC to provide for disabled learners up to the age of 25), the Disability Discrimination Act Part 4 (2002) and the Disability Equality Duty (2005) (which placed a duty to promote disability equality) have firmly enshrined the rights of disabled learners in post 16 education.

As mentioned previously paragraphs 43 -71 of *Through Inclusion to Excellence* (LSC, 2005) offer an overview of legislation in relation to disability.

Embedding literacy, language and numeracy:

The government’s *Skills for Life* strategy has meant a focus on people improving their literacy, language and numeracy skills. This can often be done by “embedding”.

“Embedded teaching and learning combines the development of literacy, language and numeracy with vocational and other skills. The skills acquired provide learners with the confidence, competence and motivation necessary for them to succeed in qualifications, in life and at work.”

Vocational teachers are not literacy, language and numeracy teachers. They need support if “embedding” is to be successful. Most providers have a dedicated Skills for Life team. There needs to be “joined up” working between vocational staff and Skills for Life staff.

The National Research and Development Centre for Adult Literacy and Numeracy (www.nrdc.org.uk) is dedicated to conducting research and development projects to improve literacy, numeracy, language and related skills and knowledge. The website contains many useful reports for vocational teachers.

For example, “*You wouldn’t expect a maths teacher to teach plastering...*” By Casey et al (2006).

http://www.nrdc.org.uk/publications_details.asp?ID=73

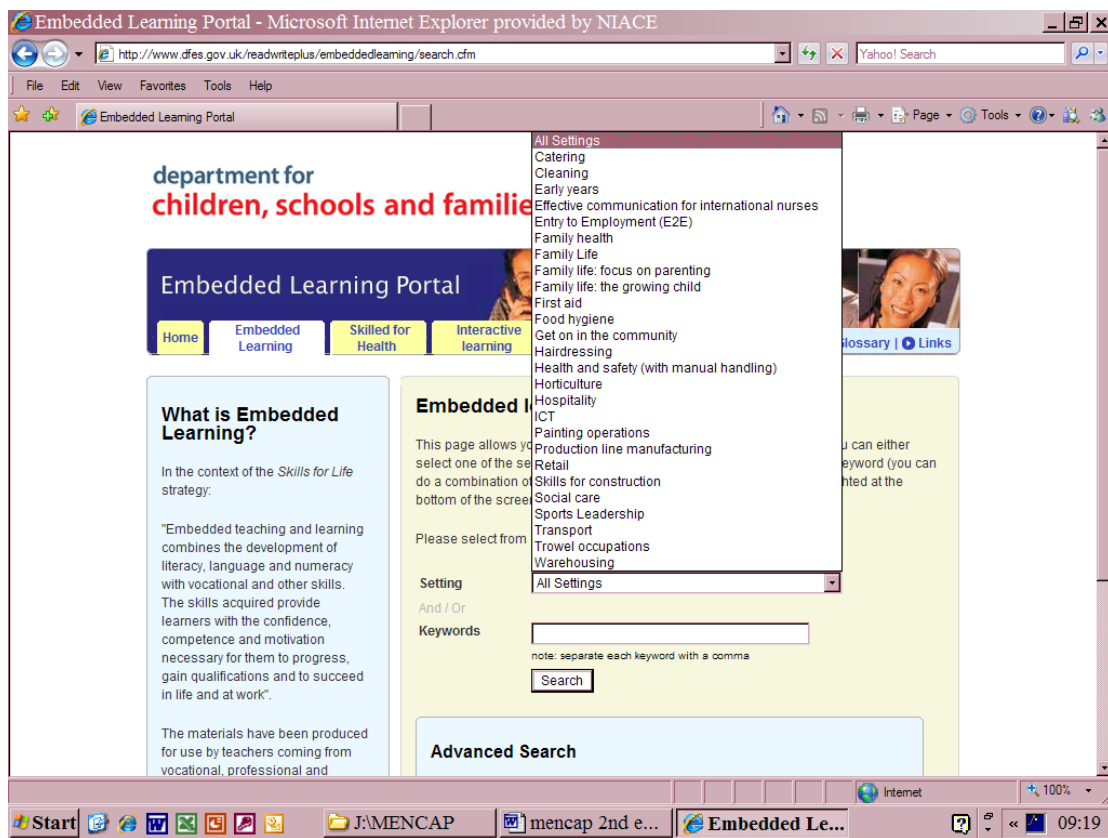
There is also a case study of embedding literacy, language and numeracy within a discrete horticulture class for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

http://www.nrdc.org.uk/uploads/documents/doc_2960.pdf

Web based support for “embedding”

There is a vast range of materials to support staff with embedding Skills for Life in a range of subject areas. The print screen below shows the range of subject areas available. All the materials can be downloaded. Log on to:

<http://www.dfes.gov.uk/readwriteplus/embeddedlearning/search.cfm>



Teachers can refine their search by typing in “learning difficulties and/or disabilities”
www.dfes.gov.uk/readwriteplus - a comprehensive website on all aspects of Skills for Life

Foundation Learning:

Foundation Learning Tier (FLT):

The FLT is a programme of work, jointly developed by LSC and Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA), to develop a more focused and strategic approach to entry level (including what was previously referred to as pre entry level) and level 1 for learners aged 14 and over in order to raise participation, achievement and progression amongst learners at these levels. The FLT is being developed because there is a significant amount of provision at Entry Level and Level 1 that fails to lead to any progression and tends to trap learners in a revolving door of engagement and recurring achievement. Please remember – the FLT is the name for the programme of work – there will be no FLT learners, no FLT curriculum or no FLT qualifications.

Within the FLT there will be Progression Pathways. These are validated combinations of units and qualifications from the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) that support learners to level 2 and beyond, or to meaningful destinations such as employment and/or independent living.

Within a Progression Pathway there will be 3 curriculum areas;

- **Vocational and subject based learning**
- **Functional Skills**
- **Personal and social development**

A wrap round of information, advice and guidance, effective initial assessment, comprehensive ongoing review and provider collaboration will support Progression Pathways.

There are currently 4 priority pathways being talked about 14-16 Entry-level Pathway; Full level 2; Pre apprenticeship and Independent Living/ Supported Employment. The independent living / supported employment pathway is targeted at learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and appropriate for both 16 to 18 year olds and 19 to 25 year old learners. However that is not to say disabled learners will not access the other pathways.

Trial sites are due to start work soon on piloting Progression Pathways. It is hoped that the FLT will be fully implemented in 2010.

For updates visit the QCA or LSC website

www.qca.org.uk or www.lsc.gov.uk.

Resources:

New Rights to Learn (FREE); A tutor guide to teaching adults after the Disability Discrimination Act Part 4. A book to support teachers who do not consider themselves as experts when it comes to supporting disabled learners in their classrooms.

Available to download from:

<http://www.niace.org.uk/research/HDE/Documents/NRTL.pdf>

Moving into Work: Supporting people with learning difficulties to make the transition from vocational education and training into employment. (FREE); This pack contains a set of six information sheets, aimed at key players who need to be involved in the process of supporting people with learning difficulties in the transition from vocational education and training to employment. There are briefing sheets for people with learning difficulties, parents and carers, employers, Practitioners in the FE systems, Managers and co-ordinators of vocational training and courses and Information, Advice and Guidance services.

Copies of the information sheets can be downloaded from:

<http://www.niace.org.uk/research/HDE/Documents/Parents.pdf>

<http://www.niace.org.uk/research/HDE/Documents/Practitioners.pdf>

<http://www.niace.org.uk/research/HDE/Documents/Employers.pdf>

<http://www.niace.org.uk/research/HDE/Documents/Learners.pdf>

<http://www.niace.org.uk/research/HDE/Documents/Managers.pdf>

<http://www.niace.org.uk/research/HDE/Documents/Connexions.pdf>

Skills for Working (FREE); This guidance offers ideas and suggestions on how to help those supporting learning literacy, language and numeracy in a vocational context. It provides advice for working with both with learners and with employers; in voluntary and work experience placement as well as paid employment. It also contains useful DVD footage for staff training and development purposes.

Ref; SFW available from Prolog Telephone: 0845 60 222 60

QIA Quality Information Pack (FREE); Developing employability with learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (July 2007) This quality pack concentrates on employability for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. It sets out the main issues being tackled by some of the best practitioners and managers in the country, and offers practical guidance to colleges developing new employability opportunities for their learners.

Further information is available by emailing Susan_Ohalloran@aoc.co.uk

Making the Jump (COSTED); A guide to supporting adults with learning difficulties to make the jump from education to employment. Research has shown that many adults with learning difficulties fail to make the jump from attending vocational courses in further or adult education into employment.

Making the jump - transition to work is a staff resource pack containing guidelines and examples of good practice where adults with learning difficulties are effectively supported in their transition from education to employment. It includes sections on how to plan a relevant course; funding a course; working with staff from other organisations; and contains an overview of relevant current government policy affecting employment and people with learning difficulties.

Available from www.niace.org.uk

There are numerous resources on supporting learning for people with mental health difficulties;

'Learning Journeys' a handbook for tutors and managers in adult education working with people with mental health difficulties' – Joy Mather and Sue Atkinson, NIACE (2003)

'Learning and skills for people experiencing mental health difficulties' James K, NIACE (2005) – download from <http://www.niace.org.uk/mentalhealth/downloads.htm>

'Mental health and post-16 education – Dutton, Y, NIACE (2005) downloadable from <http://www.niace.org.uk/mentalhealth/downloads.htm>

Websites:

The QIA Excellence Gateway; The online service for post-16 learning and skills providers and the new home for Learning and Skills Web and Excalibur. Here you will find examples of good practice, self-improvement, suppliers of improvement services plus materials to support teaching and learning. Members need to register and sign in.

www.QIA.org.uk and click on the tab for Excellence Gateway

The Disability Rights Commission; On 1st October 2007 the Disability Rights Commission closed and its work was incorporated into the new Equality and Human Rights Commission. The new commission brings together the work of the three previous equality commissions and also takes on responsibility for the other aspects of equality: age, sexual orientation and religion or belief, as well as human rights.

www.equalityhumanrights.com

Training:

The Quality Improvement Programme:

QIA funds programmes and provides services designed to raise the quality of education and training in the further education system. Their website offers a comprehensive guide to the services and training they offer. Some of the training is aimed at teachers who work with disabled learners.

www.qia.org.uk

Learning for Work - Employability and Adults with Disabilities (FREE)

Learning and Skills Council, Regional Events, January - March 2008

A series of regional events chaired by Peter Little OBE. Each event will highlight the work of regional LSCs on increasing economic participation through sustainable employment for disabled learners. This is a key priority work area in the Learning and Skills Council's strategy to improve education and training opportunities for people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

The events will :

- provide an update on national developments, including the Government's Strategy "Progression through Partnership" on the role of further education and training in supporting disabled people to achieve fulfilling lives;
- consider implications of DWP formal consultations on future of its provision to disabled people
- review progress on the priority area 'increasing economic participation through sustainable employment' for disabled learners during 2006-2007 at national and regional levels
- explore further "supported employment model", an LSC requirement by 2010
- consider specific employability issues for learners with mental health difficulties

The conferences will be run by NIACE. Dates to be confirmed