



Foreword

Richard Goss, head of learning and skills, CfBT Education Trust

As the LSIS Skills for Life Improvement Programme (SfLIP) draws to a close after three years, it is timely to take stock of the Programme's achievements.

The Improvement Programme is central to the skills agenda adopted following the Leitch report. It aimed to improve teaching, learning and achievement throughout the learning and skills sector, by focusing on Skills for Life learning, which is so fundamental to learning in all parts of the sector.

The Programme has responded to different priorities over the three years. It has always prioritised offender learning, work based learning, voluntary sector providers and community learning, and, particularly in the first year, learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. More recently, it has given strong emphasis to employability.

Building on the strengths

Building on the strengths of the Skills for Life Quality Initiative and the Whole Organisation Approach Pathfinders, the SfLIP made best use of the people, systems and materials to help implement the Government's Skills for Life strategy. In the same way that Skills for Life is embedded within other learning, SfLIP made real and practical links into other major development programmes, including

World Class Skills (formerly the Train to Gain Support Programme), the Improvement Adviser Service, the Move On Programme, and the Teaching and Learning Change Programme.

The Programme's development advisers supported 2,400 providers on their own premises, with consultancy advice, practical support and staff development programmes. Over 34,000 managers, teaching, training and other staff attended SfLIP professional development sessions. Providers from every part of the sector became engaged in the Programme, from small voluntary sector providers in Cornwall and Northumberland to offender learning providers in Cumbria and Kent. It helped hundreds of providers to develop and share good practice.

In independent surveys, LSIS and its forerunner QIA have consistently found that the SfLIP is their most recognised national improvement programme, and highly valued by providers.

So much for the numbers...

The key questions are:

- Has it made a difference?
- Have teaching and learning improved?
- Do learners now achieve more than learners did three years ago?

Continued overleaf...

'The Improvement Programme has benefited our organisation by setting a strategy, changing delivery models, looking at methods of embedding and raising awareness with employers.'

Lisa Ford, managing director,
T & L Training Ltd

Providers are best placed to answer these questions, and in our regular survey we asked them. The answer to all questions was a resounding yes. There was a huge response to our survey. Ninety per cent of providers said that the Improvement Programme had helped improve quality and management. Eighty-five per cent said it had improved teaching and learning. Some consider the big question to be ‘has it helped improve learners’ achievements?’ Fifty per cent of providers thought it too early to tell, as the survey came out before all their results were collated. However 85 per cent of the others said that SflIP had raised learners’ achievements. We are currently conducting a follow-up survey of impact this year and plan to report this in the next issue of *Update*.

I was asked recently about the factors that led to this success. It may be useful to draw on the finding of the independent evaluator, York Consulting Ltd that pinpointed them well:

- The clarity between LSIS and CfBT Education Trust as the contracting partner;
- the excellent working partnership between CfBT and its national partners, LSN, NIACE, NRDC and LLU+;
- the combination of professional and project management expertise at CfBT;
- and, perhaps most significant of all, the careful selection, briefing and deployment of the development advisers.

Providers praised development advisers for their Skills for Life expertise, their deep understanding of the learning context – offender learning or Train to Gain for instance – and their ability to help providers to devise and drive forward improvement plans.

Off to a strong start

The first year of the Programme offered a series of participative events

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for over 1,200 providers and 8,000 teaching and support staff and their managers, leaders, Skills for Life and vocational practitioners, and regional stakeholders across the country. Representatives from organisations involved in the Programme had the opportunity to share and transfer good practice emerging from the development activities they are involved in and explore tried and tested methods of self-improvement.

Feedback from providers showed that they valued the expertise of the development advisers, their applied approach, and their ability to stimulate learning.

‘Without this programme we would not be where we are today or have embedded Skills for Life into our organisation, or changed practice.’

Training Plus Merseyside

‘The programme has been incredibly effective in helping us to start the process of looking at Skills for Life as a whole organisation and embedding this throughout what we do.’

Keeping I.T. Simple Training

Year 2 – building on a great start

Six hundred and sixty organisations from across the richly diverse sector participated in the Improvement Programme in 2007–08, many of them in more than one strand of activity, resulting in 1,000 provider engagements altogether. They included offender learning, voluntary organisations, teacher education institutions and independent learning providers newly contracted by the Learning and Skills Council. Nearly all the further education (FE) colleges focused on improving their off-campus provision, especially Train to Gain, other work-based learning and Entry to Employment.

With an underlying theme of improving numeracy teaching and learning, the focus for the second year was workforce development, whole organisation approach and embedding Skills for Life, working with people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and speaking and listening.

To support the reforms in initial teacher training in the Learning and

Skills sector introduced in 2007, the Improvement Programme:

- supported many more teachers towards full qualifications;
- enabled new Diplomas to start across the regions, focusing on integrated and numeracy programmes;
- broadened the scope of Train the Teacher Trainer opportunities; and
- extended the training and accreditation of specialist mentors.

In a survey of the professional development planning (PDP) activity undertaken at the end of 2007–08, 96 per cent of providers found the support either extremely useful or useful, while 84 per cent reported that their staff had progressed on to training programmes after the PDP activity.

'I have found that this programme has been of enormous benefit and has helped our provision at a difficult time. The training has been invaluable – well organised and the content was excellent and just what I needed. The support from advisers and other staff was always helpful, tactful and useful. Thanks!' Manager, Croydon Adult Learning and Training

Year 3 – a focus on numeracy

The third year of the Improvement Programme saw the delivery model being further adapted to deliver maximum impact and thus has continued to deliver strong results for the 607 providers who were accepted on the Programme.

Support for providers consisted of five elements tailored to the provider's needs and stage of development of a whole organisation approach:

- Initial consultancy visit
- Ongoing consultancy support
- Peer working groups
- In-house continuing professional development (CPD) training
- Final consultancy visit.



Providers share an exercise at a workshop

2008–09 satisfaction survey

An impact survey for the third year is currently under way; however, in the interim satisfaction survey conducted in early 2009 over 96 per cent of the providers judged the support to be satisfactory or better in every respect, with ninety-two per cent judging this to be good or excellent. The greatest levels of satisfaction were with the knowledge and support provided by development advisers (DAs).

'The one to one consultancy meetings provided a valuable opportunity to analyse the effectiveness of our provision, identify areas for improvement and work towards selected goals with a supportive and knowledgeable guide.' Joanne Mackinnon, key skills programme manager, London College of Beauty Therapy

Skills for Life resources

Over the past three years, more than 400 resources have been placed on the website for download (<http://sflip.excellencegateway.org.uk/resources.aspx>) many of which are also available in printed format. Resources like the dissemination booklets, assessment guidance booklets, Films of Effective Practice DVD and book, and updated Raising

Standards Guides were produced, along with numerous other resources that all aim to make the lives of Skills for Life practitioners and learners easier. Other resources and tools such as the Tools Library (www.excellencegateway.org.uk/toolslibrary) have also been very effective in delivering the Programme.

Future developments

The final year of the Skills for Life Improvement Programme will draw to an end in August, but Skills for Life support will continue through a new programme, the Skills for Life Support Programme (SfLSP). To register your interest in the new programme please send your name, organisation, telephone and email details to sflenquiries@cfbt.com.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the management and staff of LSIS for their guidance and foresight, our consortium partners for their teamwork, and DAs and providers for their passion and drive to improve the Skills for Life standards in England.

'The Skills for Life Improvement Programme has been instrumental in shaping and supporting Derby College's Whole Organisation Strategy for Skills for Life, which helped us to achieve Grade 1 at Inspection.' Vice principal for Skills for Life at Derby College

Implementing the numeracy challenge

Caryn Loftus, lead development adviser, Skills for Life Improvement Programme

‘I hated maths at school, I was rubbish at it – but now I’m learning lots and really enjoying it.’

Clare Froud, a numeracy tutor at HMP Low Newton¹, has built up a formidable reputation amongst prisoners for interesting classes. From two joint literacy and numeracy sessions a week 18 months ago, there are now five sessions of numeracy and a waiting list, with 125 per cent of numeracy achievement targets being met last year. This has been achieved through adopting the approaches used by the *Thinking Through Maths* (<http://www.ncetm.org.uk/resources/5845>) materials and adapting them to work with very mixed groups of women, some of whom will only be able to attend for a few lessons because of the prison regime.

How you can use this

Take Clare’s ideas and make them your own. This is what Clare has done with the ideas in the *Thinking Through Maths* materials produced by the Maths for Life project, ideas that she has come across through attending network meetings organised by the National Centre for Excellence in Teaching Mathematics (NCETM) and searching the internet. Add to the ideas a belief that, as maths is integrated into everything you do, it is really important to become enthused yourself and pass on the enthusiasm to learners in whichever context you work.

‘While the impact of low literacy and low numeracy is substantial, low numeracy has the greater negative effect, even when it is combined with competent literacy.’ Does Numeracy Matter More? NRDC, 2006

How it works

At HMP Low Newton, new prisoners undergo a two-week induction programme in which they are

assessed and signposted to literacy or numeracy support where appropriate, or to a vocational area. The information, advice and guidance team provides an important service at this point. Such is the power of word of mouth. It gets rid of the idea that maths is about sitting in a room doing trigonometry and Pythagoras.

‘Only one in five offenders with very low levels of basic skills had enrolled on a course that would help them. This represents a major lost opportunity to help a sector of the population with substantial literacy and numeracy needs.’

Skills for Life: Progressing in Adult Literacy and Numeracy, A report by the House of Commons Public Accounts Committee, 2008

While they are at HMP Low Newton, over 40 per cent of those assessed as below Level 2 numeracy are receiving support in discrete numeracy classes or in vocational areas or self-study. Through the Skills for Life Improvement Programme, further work on embedding is taking place as there is still a long way to go in meeting 100 per cent of the need.

The women are aged 18 to 70, from all sorts of backgrounds, and although the majority left school early, they have managed to get by.

Initial assessments place most of them at Entry 2/Entry 3. Interestingly, Clare says the younger women, aged 18–21, who have gone through the school system recently, do have the basic numeracy skills.

Lessons are for two or two-and-a-half hours a week, with no break due to prison restrictions. This means that classes have to be interesting and interactive to keep learners motivated. Working in a prison brings added difficulties when it comes to using the approaches recommended in the *Maths for Life* materials. For example, Clare often does not know who will turn up in her class or how long they

¹ HMP Low Newton is a closed, female prison and young offender institution. It holds a small number of juveniles and life-sentenced prisoners. Low Newton serves the courts in the catchment area from the Scottish Borders to North Yorkshire across to North Cumbria. It has a capacity of 336.



Numeracy teaching approaches in practice



Entry 2, and has now blossomed, passing Entry 3 and then Level 1 within six months. She is applying to move to an open prison before release and is determined to pass her Level 2 before then.

Clare says, *'It is amazing to see the change. She has picked up most things really quickly. It must be because of the change in teaching practice. It is wonderful to see the pleasure when handing over a certificate to someone who has never had one before. I love it.'*

Here are some of the activities and ideas that Clare has used.

Getting to know the learners

Clare spends time when first meeting a learner to find out why she wants to learn maths. Is it just a better option than the kitchen, or does she have a particular aim in mind? Then Clare can try to make the learning individual to the learner. This approach works in turning around those who have been sent to numeracy because they can't be in another class for security reasons.

'There are so many fun, interesting activities available.'

Start and end of sessions

- A bank of maths puzzles is available for when the learners come into the class or have finished work early, e.g. sudokus and word searches.
- Basic and Key Skills Builder booklets on subtraction (<http://www.bksb.co.uk/2009/products.aspx>), fractions and handling data are used to help meet the demand for homework. The women spend a lot of time in their cells.

Number

- Clare has made great use of the jigsaw software available through the *Maths for Life* materials. She has found the program easy to use and consequently has created a lot of different matching activities related to number. These have proved useful for ESOL learners and those with very low literacy levels. Although the learners cannot have scissors to cut up the jigsaws, they

'I've never had a certificate for anything before and now I have a numeracy certificate!!!'

are likely to be there. Many standard measuring resources are unavailable in prisons. There are no scissors, 'sticky stuff', outside activities, outings to cafés or shops or access to the internet. However, this hasn't daunted Clare.

As the only numeracy teacher in the prison, Clare had valued attending a Skills for Life Improvement Programme good practice group in 2006/07, where a development adviser and the regional coordinator for NCETM shared the experience of trialling the draft *Maths for Life* materials. Following the good practice group, Clare has attended the NCETM regional network meetings whenever her work commitment has allowed. Clare is now using her expertise to help support the vocational teachers within the prison to look at embedding numeracy within their delivery as part of the prison's involvement in the current round of the Skills for Life Improvement Programme.

There are many examples of the difference that Clare's approach has made to inmates. One has recently been entered for a CoLaS award.² She came in not very confident, at

² CoLaS: Celebration of Learning and Skills Awards in the North East of England

‘Being in prison has given me the opportunity to learn so much.’

get a lot of pleasure from putting the jigsaws together and then sticking them on posters for the wall. They feel very proud to see their work on display.

- A cupboard full of traditional games provides opportunities to work on number bonds and to build up the softer skills at the same time. Within a women’s prison high priority is given to the development of the softer skills.
- As a lot of time is spent watching television programmes, much is made of links to popular programmes and personalities. So Clare has produced a worksheet using the body mass index for well-known celebrities and then the women have to work out their own.
- Clare wouldn’t be without her ‘fraction burger’ – a tactile, layered model of a burger, with each layer composed of different fractions. It is great for equivalent fractions as it provides a physical representation. Similar resources are widely available.

Measure, shape and space

- Many of the women have children, so Clare asks them to design activities to send to their children at home.
- Dominoes are a great way to practise converting between 12-hour and 24-hour time, or between different weights.
- Nets for shapes prove popular for making boxes for the women to keep things in.
- Shopping catalogues are used to provide differentiated activities as the women are able to order some goods. Clare always tries to tailor activities to real-life situations, whether it is in the discrete numeracy class or the budgeting and money management class.

Handling data

- Although the women cannot gather data on the weather by observing it, they have watched the national weather forecast over a period of time and then monitored

the weather where they come from. This has provided data for GCSE coursework.

Making links

- Food is always popular and sorting sweets has provided links to many numeracy skills. Clare is very keen to put together a session using packs of jelly, ‘*Jelly is fabulous!*’ How much numeracy can you link to jelly? Ideas welcome.
- Remember the shopping catalogues? Not only is work done related to handling money but also working out the postage on items ordered, as weights or box sizes are given.

Preparing for assessment

- For those women who do not want to attend numeracy sessions, Clare provides sample tests and activity sheets for them to work on in their cells. They can then sit the adult numeracy test when they are ready.
- Clare uses an interactive whiteboard with the practice tests on the Move On CD-ROM (<http://sflip.excellencegateway.org.uk/resources/skillsforliferesources.aspx>). As a group, those preparing for the test have to agree an answer for each question. This enables the group to learn from one another as each has different strengths and weaknesses. Often they can explain to their peers better than Clare can – particularly as they are able to draw on quite different examples to those that Clare would choose!
- Some of the matching activities within the *Maths for Life* materials have proved useful in exploring the language used in maths and are very valuable for preparing for the literacy needed in the tests.

Final words from Clare

Clare says that she tries to remember that it is not just the learner who needs to put in the effort, and that she needs to come out of her comfort zone to help learners achieve. She is

‘I didn’t see the point of learning maths before, but now I do.’

As part of the workforce development strand activity through the SfLIP, LLU+ at London South Bank University have designed and delivered a series of innovative regional numeracy pedagogy workshops around the country.

The delivery model consists of two linked training days for the same group of practitioners, with opportunity to practise and review new skills and resources in the period between Day 1 and Day 2. The focus of Day 1 is pre-planned in consultation with key regional stakeholders, but also includes the facility for participants to identify individual priorities for Day 2. Day 2 allowed individuals and groups to work together on areas of common interest, as well as receive specialist input and information from the team of numeracy specialists.

Oversubscribed in three regions

This combination of a fixed menu and choice of *à la carte* has proved to be the most palatable, judging by the enthusiastic participation in both Days 1 and 2. All the events held to date have recruited fully – and been oversubscribed in at least three regions, indicating the degree of interest and need for support for practitioners.

The process of regional consultation included the offer of a menu of topics to select from or to identify other regional priorities. This affected take-up in a variety of ways. One particular region's focus was numeracy teaching and learning support for Train to Gain providers. In others, the outcome was a choice of the most popular topic as the Day 1 focus. In one region, the offer was used to develop the team of numeracy staff in one organisation.

The initial needs analysis consultation suggested that *Number and its application* was the curriculum area that proved most challenging for many practitioners. The responsive menu for Day 1 included teaching and learning ideas, practical

Differentiation in action in CPD – SfLIP Regional programme of numeracy pedagogy workshops

Noyona Chanda, director, LLU+ at London South Bank University

suggestions, resources and information on the following:

- Number
- Fractions, decimals and percentages
- Ratio, scale and proportion

Interest in further collaborative working

Each regional event required careful planning and preparation of resources and activities to involve participants in collaborative and explorative learning, to allow opportunity for personal skills development and to share ideas and information with other practitioners within the region. This opportunity to connect with others was repeatedly reported as a positive outcome, with exchange of email contact and an interest in further collaborative

‘Each regional event required careful planning and preparation of resources and activities to involve participants in collaborative and explorative learning’

working. For many participants, the isolation of working as a numeracy practitioner in particular settings



Personal skills development and the sharing of ideas and information was high on the agenda at the regional workshops



The workshops were over-subscribed in three regions

(e.g. prison / small training provider) was broken through during this regional opportunity to work with others.

The resources and activities shared were trialled by practitioners with their learners, and reports in Day 2 suggest that practitioners have reflected on their use of resources and activities and modified them for their particular setting.

For the numeracy team involved, planning how best to respond to requests for Day 2 topics was a learning journey in itself. The team analysed and grouped the requests (for list of examples see below), researched websites and information, brainstormed effective practice strategies and resources, created activities and resources, and then planned the Day 2 sessions to make best use of time and to maximise coverage of priority topics. Participants appreciated the detailed and carefully planned response to individual requests, all packaged into a differentiated session plan, with follow-up facility.

The ways in which different needs were addressed included:

- a carousel approach (i.e. up to 10 different activities which could be

accessed in any order and which addressed some of the 'how to teach' and requests for ideas);

- information handouts where appropriate;
- Top Tips and a list of suggestions;
- modelling of strategies, resources and activities by the trainers;
- collaborative problem-solving;
- follow-up emails;
- follow-up CDs of activities;
- specialist resources (e.g. numeracy pack for offender learning settings);
- opportunity for peer learning and support through organisation of groups in different ways; and
- materials or activity creation.

High retention rate in Day 2

To date, 17 out of a total of 22 sessions have been delivered (including two additional series in regions with high demand) and a total attendance of over 320. A key indicator of success has been the high retention rate in Day 2. The profile of participant groups has varied from region to region, but has generally reached all sectors, as well as straddling the range of

experience from inexperienced to very experienced, from unqualified to fully-qualified. The majority of participants have been numeracy or Skills for Life teachers, although some regions have had mixed groups of numeracy specialists, as well as vocational teachers.

The following are examples from the list of Day 2 priorities, as requested by participants:

- Resources/materials/activity suggestions
- Software/website resources and strategies
- How to teach a range of skills (relevant to core curriculum and vocational areas) – this is the longest list!
- ESOL and numeracy
- Information about functional skills assessment
- Addressing specific learning needs

For more information about any aspect of the regional events, contact Jackie Ashton at LLU+ London South Bank University by email j.ashton@lsbu.ac.uk

‘The profile of participant groups has varied from region to region, but has generally reached all sectors as well as straddling the range of experience from inexperienced to very experienced, from unqualified to fully-qualified.’

‘Skills for Life is the most important area for the future of GTG. All assessors have bought into the need for the development of our learners’ literacy and numeracy skills, and this ethos is fully supported by our general manager,’ says Stuart Brown, development manager at GTG.

GTG is a not-for-profit national private training provider based in Sheffield, working in the plastering and drylining sector. It delivers a wide range of NVQs to 300 learners and provides literacy and numeracy skills development contextualised to their NVQ programmes (Entry Level, L1, L2).

The company has accessed support from the LSIS Skills for Life Improvement Programme (SfLIP) since December 2007 to develop a whole organisation approach to embedding literacy, language and numeracy (LLN). Its continuing professional development (CPD) and consultancy support have been focused on developing flexible workshop provision. This includes embedded approaches and resources to support the development of numeracy. There has also been an emphasis on ensuring that all assessors give consistent, positive messages on Skills for Life, as a means of engaging learners and employers.

Examples of activities that GTG has undertaken that support the adoption of a whole organisation approach include:

- training assessors to identify the reasons for supporting employees with LLN needs, recognise daily instances of LLN activity, identify positive messages to use when dealing with employers and identify ways of overcoming barriers to engagement;
- training assessors to administer and give feedback on the Tools Library Initial Assessment (<http://www.excellencegateway.org.uk/toolslibrary>);

Promoting and encouraging Skills for Life in the construction industry

Sam Egan, development adviser, Skills for Life, LSN; and Stuart Brown, development manager, GTG Services Ltd



Dryliner Ty receiving his certificate from Stuart Brown, Development Manager at GTG Services

- having a section of their website solely dedicated to Skills for Life¹; and
- Skills for Life specialists producing a range of contextualised teaching and learning resources for assessors to use during their 1:1 delivery.

Engaging construction workers in Skills for Life learning

Many employers in the construction industry see Skills for Life training as ‘down-time’ within the industry and feel that their employees’ needs extend no further than the training necessary to achieve the NVQ.

With this in mind, GTG’s NVQ assessors decided to target those self-employed construction workers already studying for their NVQ. During the first visit with a learner the assessor will talk through what is offered, the flexibility of their Skills

for Life programme and the fact that there is no cost to the learner. The assessor will also guarantee that the learner will experience a personalised programme, explaining the benefits of gaining a Skills for Life qualification in the current economic climate. They will also begin to build trust and rapport with the learner to increase confidence in Skills for Life.

‘It was my assessor’s enthusiasm about these extra qualifications that ultimately persuaded me to do it.’ Ty – who achieved Level 2 literacy and numeracy

¹ www.gtgservices.co.uk



Plasterer Paul, GTG's first Skills for Life achiever, receiving his certificate from Stuart Brown, Development Manager at GTG Services

Using this approach, almost all of the NVQ assessors regularly sign learners up to take Skills for Life qualifications.

A flexible, embedded approach

Initial and diagnostic assessment

The LSIS Excellence Gateway Tools Library Workplace Initial Assessment² (IA) is administered and results fed back by assessors (who have all been trained by Skills for Life specialists) during the first visit. GTG uses this IA tool because both the learners and assessors find the tool is user friendly and gives accurate results.

It is carried out on site on a one-to-one basis – either using the paper-based materials, or completed online using a laptop.

An online or paper-based version of the BKSB diagnostic assessment is administered by the Skills for Life specialist to those learners that express an interest in the Skills for Life qualification. Identified areas for development are then built into personalised lesson plans and schemes of work.

Delivery model/programme design

One-to-one literacy and numeracy skills are improved by using resources

which have been developed in the vocational context of the learners' main programme.

Assessors use naturally occurring opportunities within the NVQ to develop literacy and numeracy skills.

A range of dedicated Skills for Life websites and teaching and learning resources are used to prepare learners for the national tests. Once the learners have taken their diagnostic assessment, they are provided with a range of resources to support their needs.

Skills for Life delivery, and the national tests can be undertaken at a location and time suitable for each candidate.

Assessors are prepared to be extremely flexible in carrying out the one-to-one sessions.

A contextualised numeracy workshop is in the process of being rolled out at GTG's premises – this is a drop-in workshop for learners unable to commit to visits during the working week.

GTG had exceeded its Skills for Life targets by January 2009 and is on target to double them. Out of 80 starts, they currently have 28 literacy and numeracy achievements, and this is expected to rise rapidly. So how have they made it work for them?

Part of GTG's success is due to the organisation's attitude towards Skills for Life and effectiveness of its delivery team. The team is made up of six full-time NVQ assessors (and some studying their PTTLS and DTLSS) and one literacy and numeracy Skills for Life specialist. The team is small and contained, which makes communication easy.

Staff feel confident to experiment with ideas which leads to the dissemination of good practice.

Learner feedback confirms that the flexibility of GTG's delivery meets the needs of the learners. Ty Wood, one of GTG's successful learners, says, 'The assessor was available at flexible times, including evenings,' and 'help and support has made it accessible.'

What do the learners think?

Paul has been a plasterer for the past 20 years. He started his NVQ so that he could get a CSCS³ card. During his NVQ visits his assessor talked to him about the benefits of Skills for Life. Following completion of diagnostic assessments, learning material and a mock test, Paul passed his online test for numeracy, becoming GTG's first Skills for Life achiever, and has signed up for a further higher qualification.

Ty is a dryliner who signed up to do his NVQ with GTG and heard that he also had the option to take some Skills for Life qualifications. 'It was my assessor's enthusiasm about these extra qualifications that ultimately persuaded me to do it.' Ty completed both literacy and numeracy Level 2 qualifications in two months!

Improving their LLN skills them gain their NVQs. It also helped them be more effective in the workplace.

² Links to the Standard, Cleaning Industry, Transport Services, Skills for Health and Retail sectors can also be found here: <http://www.excellencegateway.org.uk/toolslibrary>

³ Construction Skills Certification Scheme – CSCS cards are increasingly demanded as proof of occupational competence by contractors, and public and private clients

Volunteers helping ease the WOA workload at City Lit

Annabel Steward, Skills for Life development manager, City Lit

In order to cater for their growing number of learners, City Lit has developed a volunteer programme since working with their Peer Working Group and has been able successfully to train 20 volunteers to support learners in Skills for Life classes. Five of the volunteers are City Lit staff and one of them is the principal, who is volunteering in a numeracy class. The training content, delivery and organisational arrangements for volunteering have been shared with the Peer Working Group.

City Lit – located in Covent Garden – was established in 1919 by the London County Council with an original brief to stimulate demand for evening study amongst office workers, mainly in the arts and humanities. This is still part of its mission, though its provision has been broadened extensively and now includes a number of specialist areas such as literacy, numeracy and ESOL, speech therapy, sign language and lip-reading.

In 2005 City Lit moved to new purpose-designed premises in Covent Garden, making it the largest adult education centre in Europe, with 58 classrooms.

City Lit attracts learners from across London, and some from further afield. In recent years, it has developed a growing programme of community outreach courses to meet the needs of under-represented groups of adults in local neighbourhoods. In 2007/08 more than 25,000 learners took up almost 47,000 places, choosing from 3,500 courses. The organisation has 1,000 staff.

Challenges facing City Lit

City Lit has a history of providing liberal adult education. The development of Skills for Life provision is more recent. The challenge is to

continue to change the culture of the organisation in order to embrace a whole organisation approach (WOA) to Skills for Life. While progress has been made in the development of an effective Skills for Life department and in outreach initiatives, there remains much work to do in embedding Skills for Life into other curriculum areas.

City Lit is involved in the Skills for Life Improvement Programme (SfLIP) in order to focus on the development of a whole organisation approach. The organisation has the following strategic objectives:

- to put in place a strategy to develop a WOA to Skills for Life;
- to ensure that in all observations of teaching and learning, judgements are made about the effective embedding of Skills for Life;
- to establish a process for measuring the effectiveness of literacy, language and numeracy support;
- to develop a range of appropriate initial and diagnostic assessment procedures to identify the Skills for Life needs of learners on discrete and other programmes; and
- to give learners access to online testing facilities for the national tests in literacy and numeracy.

What has happened so far?

A vision for the WOA is in progress. Statements reflecting the proposed direction of the organisation have been presented to the Senior Management Team (SMT).

Senior Managers have approved the statements and the SfLIP Action Plan. Training has been delivered to the SMT on embedding literacy, language and numeracy in the curriculum. A room has been allocated for September 2009 as the new Skills for Life test centre.

Learners are now given information about the LLN requirements of courses through course outlines. Work has begun to include an LLN check within accredited course screening processes.

Initial and diagnostic assessment materials and recording tools are being standardised within Skills for Life areas.

Planning for bridging courses has begun.

Benefits and impact so far

Senior management is very supportive of the programme and will continue to be highly involved.

City Lit hosted the first Peer Working Group event and played a full part in taking the networking aspects of the session forward. Providers are now aiming to establish a working partnership for the new academic year which will allow Skills for Life delivery to be a shared process.

Staff at City Lit involved in Skills for Life have been able to attend both Peer Working and CPD training events with effective results in taking the strategy forward.

Work undertaken on course outlines and contextualised screening tools has been received positively by staff at City Lit.

‘Sometimes we make assumptions about what people can do. If you bring out a rule you can find it upsets people in that particular exercise. It’s just understanding that you can’t make assumptions and if you aren’t going to put a skills statement* on your outline then you need to teach people that particular skill and not assume they can measure effectively.’ Kate Wilson, Visual Arts tutor, Best Practice Day

[*Ed – A skills statement is a statement outlining the English and/or maths skills required by a learner so that he or she can successfully engage with the course.]

City Lit recognises the importance of creating skills statements and effective contextualised screening tools, which:

1. identify if a learner has the necessary English or maths skills required within the context of a course; and
2. determine how best to bridge skills gaps, e.g. through referral to Learning Support, discrete Skills for Life courses or alternative preparatory provision.

A project has been launched to focus on the development of further contextualised screening tools which include a LLN check.

This is crucial to achieving a whole-college approach to Skills for Life – ensuring inclusive practice by providing support and access to learning for those with Skills for Life needs.

Progress to date

Phase 1:

- 20 courses were selected – 10 accredited and 10 non-accredited.
- 20 participants attended training to create skills statements and develop contextualised screening tools.
- 20 skills statements and 10 contextualised screening tools have been developed.

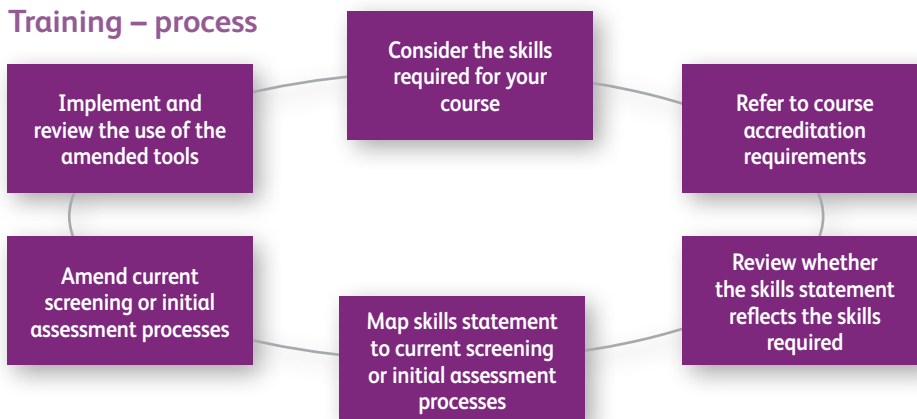
Phase 2:

- 20 courses were selected – 10 accredited and 10 non-accredited.
- 20 participants attended training to create skills statements, review course outlines and develop contextualised screening tools.
- 20 skills statements and course outlines were written.
- 10 contextualised screening tools were developed.

December 2008 Best Practice Day –

- Participants from phases 1 and 2 shared the process of creating skills statements with their teams.
- 170 skills statements were created.
- It was agreed that all course

Training – process



outlines would include a skills statement by June 2009.

Phase 3:

- 1) Revisit 10 contextualised screening tools developed during phases 1 and 2

Workshops will be offered to participants from phases 1 and 2 and two contextualised screening tools per faculty will be revisited.

- 2) Develop 10 new contextualised screening tools for accredited courses.

Faculties will select two 'new' accredited courses

Staff representing these courses will undertake training to identify the English and maths skills needed for the course and develop contextualised screening tools that reflect these skills.

Training will cover:

- a) The purpose of screening and an English and maths check
- b) Types of screening available – nationally and through phases 1 and 2
- c) How to create learning materials linked to the English and maths skills needed for entry onto a specific course
- d) Making initial judgements on free writing and offering skills-based feedback
- e) Exploring referral options – when to refer to Learning Support, Skills for Life or alternative provision.

Tailored support will be offered to help staff develop and implement the contextualised screening tools after the workshops and training.

Feedback from staff and learners will be sought throughout the process.

Quality-assure course outlines

A Course Outlines Group will begin to 'spot check' course outlines, including skills statements – starting with those developed during phase 1.

Future plans

Collecting data from these activities will be vital in identifying bridging courses, measuring the demand for support, highlighting opportunities for embedding LLN skills within learning plans and schemes of work and planning adjustments to curriculum design.

The Skills for Life strategy to be implemented through an operational action plan will be finalised.

April 09

- Phase 3 launched at Manager's Briefing.
- Heads of Faculty select participants.

May 09

- Workshops held – 27 or 28 May.
- Training held – 3 and 4 June.

June – September 09

- Participants review their tools.
- Trainers continue to work with participants.

September 09

- Moderation and quality assurance of screening conducted – to monitor demand for support and alternative provision and ensure tools are effective.
- Staff and learners surveyed to measure impact.
- New participants identified for next phase.

Learning from friends in the north: training teachers at Newcastle College

Helen Sunderland, assistant director, LLU+

Newcastle College is the only initial teacher education provider in the North East that runs integrated language, literacy and numeracy initial teacher education (ITE). Sheran Johnson, executive manager of Success North, the centre for excellence in teacher training based at the college, explains why she feels it is important to do so:

'The integrated approach allows us to fully develop subject specialist knowledge at the same time as developing the candidates' teaching skills, bridging 'the theory to practice gap' that so often causes a stumbling block for trainees. Trainees progress far more rapidly, gaining confidence in their teaching, which in turn generates vast improvements in the quality of their lessons.'

'It was nice to talk to my colleagues who also teach ESOL. It was interesting to see the difference between teaching literacy to ESOL and non-ESOL students' – Newcastle College trainee

This article will look at what this means for course organisation, how teaching practice is managed, and the college's successful approach to mentoring.

A successful approach

On Newcastle College ITE courses, all of the units of study have a Skills for Life context. This has been happening for some time in ESOL, as they have run the Cambridge ESOL teacher education courses for over 30 years. A Creative Routes grant from the Skills for Life Improvement Programme enabled them to extend this approach to numeracy and literacy.

The first cohort was very small. It started with only six fully integrated numeracy trainees, but the college believed that this small start was necessary in order to get the course off the ground.

The risk paid off, and numbers have increased dramatically, thanks to a marketing strategy and increased targeting (for example to work-based learning providers), with successful trainees also spreading the word. In the second year of the course there were 25 literacy and numeracy trainees, this year 36, and next year they are expecting over 50.

How the course works

Course organisation for the Skills for Life ITE courses has been changed quite significantly from the generic DTLLS courses. While the generic courses run in much the same order as the units of assessment, the college has adapted the literacy, ESOL and numeracy courses to enable the subject knowledge to run right through all the units. College staff have tried to keep the course modular, but have found that the trainees need to run the 'optional' units (which are, in fact, not optional for literacy, ESOL or numeracy) over a much longer period of time.

Supporting applicants

There is very little drop-out. As an example, only one person has left the numeracy course this year. Sheran puts this down to an extremely rigorous application process. Adapting the LSIS exemplar entry assessments for initial literacy, ESOL and numeracy teacher training (<http://sflip.excellencegateway.org.uk/workforcedevelopment/pdp.aspx>), the college now conducts group interviews, assesses team work, and expands on the challenges of teacher training so that trainees are well prepared. Trainees who do not meet the current entry requirements are offered support to progress.

For example, the college has just started a Step Up to Level 3 numeracy course in collaboration with SUNCETT, Stockton College and the CETTIL, funded by the LSC. Together they have written the programme and validated it through OCN. At Newcastle College alone, 47 students started after Easter. The teachers will assess them and offer a variety of pathways, blended for those who just need a top-up, and using a more hands-on approach for those who need more support. The course will include information about teaching and will involve trainees,

'The integrated approach allows us to fully develop subject specialist knowledge at the same time as developing the candidates' teaching skills, bridging 'the theory-to-practice gap...'



Sheran Johnson, executive manager of Success North

three of whom will support the teaching.

Finding and supporting placements

The college takes on a mixture of existing teachers and pre-service trainees and finds placements for the new applicants. Diane Thurston, the CETT manager, vets placements and monitors them closely throughout the course. The trainees work in several different contexts – for example, FE colleges, adult and community learning, work-based training, prisons, and probation – and the course content reflects this range. The ITE team is constantly updating its placements. Currently the team is keen to set up placements in classes for 16 to 18 year olds, as the team feels that new teachers are not getting enough training in this area. Next year the Foundation Learning Tier will be run across five subject areas in the college and the ITE team would like trainees to be involved in these courses.

Mentors

Trainees are supported in their placements by mentors, who in turn are supported on a very well received mentor programme. The mentors all attend a preparatory course at the college, with the option of completing

a 15-credit module at Level 5. This has proved tremendously successful, with their popular mentor pack now in its fifth edition. Mentors are found in partner organisations and right across the college, and the teacher trainer goes round to each school and talks about what is required.

The college may also set up classes specifically for ITE trainees, for example the teaching group class which is used in the CELTA (first part of the ESOL DTLLS). In literacy and numeracy the college does not use training groups as yet, although this is under consideration. Instead, the college often pairs trainees up in a placement, so that one teacher supports the other while they are teaching and this has worked well for both planning and reflection. This approach has also worked well in prisons, where second year trainees mentor first years.

Looking forward

Success North is now looking forward to building capacity within the work-based learning sector. The organisation currently has a grant from LSIS, through its Skills for Life Support for World Class Skills Effective Practice Project, to encourage workforce development within this sector. Currently it looks as if Success North is living up to its name!

‘... the college often pairs trainees up in a placement, so that one teacher supports the other while they are teaching and this has worked well for both planning and reflection.’

Commitment to the Skills for Life Improvement Programme paying dividends for Michaeljohn

Simon Stuart, Operations Director, Michaeljohn Training School

Michaeljohn Training School (MJTS) is a work-based learning provider established in 1983, offering apprenticeship and advanced apprenticeship frameworks to approximately 250 learners each year in the occupational area of hairdressing. All learners are employed in salons across Greater Manchester, receiving training either in the workplace and training school or exclusively in the workplace. Training and assessment takes place both 'on' and 'off' the job for learners with diverse achievement at entry, in the main requiring support in literacy, numeracy or both (approximately 70 per cent of our learners have a single need, with over 50 per cent requiring support in both aspects).

Since 2004, MJTS directors and managers have embraced the concept of Skills for Life on the platform of a whole organisation approach. We recognised the importance of ensuring that skills supported lifelong chances of career and economic well-being for learners. We sought to ensure development

was progressive, forming the bedrock of how the organisation was to deliver programmes through progression and continuous improvement. Our main focus was to map literacy, language and numeracy into the delivery of sessions and continuing professional development planning for the delivery staff. As a result the success rate of MJTS' programme increased by 23 per cent, with the development of embedding literacy, language and numeracy being considered one of the main influential indicators of success. Through retention, engagement and motivation, achievement became increasingly stabilised. Many of our apprentices aspire to our Advanced Apprenticeship programme with a success rate into the mid 70s. All have achieved the minimum Key Skill Level 2 grade.

Concerted improvement of staff induction and training development

Since our initial success of building a platform for embedding Skills for Life into the programme, a strategy for Skills for Life was devised at senior level. The aspects of the strategy were intertwined within all the strategic plans of the company, to ensure continuous improvement of our annual priorities and also develop a whole organisation approach to maintaining Skills for Life as a company focus.

From 2007 MJTS decided to increase the focus on Skills for Life by participating on the LSIS Skills for Life Improvement Programme (SfLIP) with support in two areas:

- The Whole Organisation Approach to improving learner success rates, and

- Embedding Literacy, Language and Numeracy

The two programmes were to run concurrently, underpinning the commitment to a whole organisation approach for managers and senior managers, and a programme of embedded literacy, language and numeracy for delivery and all other staff.

The health check (<http://www.sflip.org.uk/pdf/2007%20Healthcheck.pdf>) conducted at the start of the programme identified the Skills for Life training for directors and managers to ensure shared involvement of the company as well as relevant training and development for other programmes. This resulted in the revision of the staff induction process and a new six-week induction plan for new staff as well as analysis of current staff to ensure Skills for Life is embraced and all trainers, assessors and other staff are adequately equipped to deliver and continuously develop their own skills. All delivery staff have a target to achieve a Level 3 Skills for Life qualification as a minimum. Further training and development of all delivery staff on embedding literacy, language and numeracy was undertaken to break down barriers of delivery with staff to support learners.

The value of the SfLIP support led to continuous development within the strategic plans set for 2007 to 2010, continuing within the procedures and policies of previous years, with significant improvements in associated areas.

The embedding literacy, language and numeracy support brought further development in how we used initial assessment and diagnostic results. Results were analysed to inform and influence how the



Colour wheel demonstration, using imagery to support communication skills



The continuous working presence of literacy, language and numeracy embedded in the course increases the usefulness and confidence of utilising literacy, language and numeracy as a life skill for all learners.

embedding of literacy, language and numeracy could be planned for learner groups as well as the individual learner. Our analysis identified that over 70 per cent of learners requiring support had key needs in writing, punctuation and grammar as well as the use of calculators and formulae division and multiplication. This was delivered through three strands, focusing on the specific skills needs of each year group, one-to-one support for the individual and the achievement of the key skill qualification.

Since 2007, all learners who have achieved apprenticeship and advanced apprenticeships have also achieved key skills qualifications. Over the past three years, learners with LLN needs of support have achieved slightly above or slightly below learners without identified support needs – a fluctuation of 3 per cent either side.

Looking ahead

For the future, MJTS continues to keep a strong focus on our commitment towards Skills for Life as we include literacy, language and numeracy in partnership working with local schools' English and maths departments. Through our strategic annual planning of CPD we aspire towards regular staff training and continued learning, to inspire confidence for staff and learners. Through the 'Skills for Life' strategy, we continue to look for development and continuous improvement in our delivery of literacy, language and numeracy skills.

'Even though I came to Michaeljohn with good grades (10 A-Cs), I found the support for literacy and numeracy helped me to make sense of how I used the skills in the workplace and to achieve my Level 2 and Level 3 qualifications over 18 months. The skills I needed did not always come easily to me, so I did need the assessors to point me in the right direction, which they did. I'm confident in my skills and have even got better at searching for resources and help.'*

Michael Craig, former MJTS apprentice and advanced apprentice

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With further support from LSIS programmes in 2009 we anticipate that we can continue to develop Skills for Life and work towards embedding Functional Skills while further developing the ethos of Skills for Life with Every Child Matters (ECM) and safeguarding. We are confident that Skills for Life will ultimately underpin the effectiveness in meeting our objectives within ECM and in safeguarding our learners for their futures.