

Building on strengths – Skills for Life Improvement Programme 2007–08

■ Richard Goss, Assistant
Director – Skills for Life
Improvement Programme

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Launching on 28 September

Providers interested in
benefiting from the programme
can find out more details on the
programme website and fill in
an application form online.

Visit www.sflip.org.uk/07-08

The Quality Improvement Agency (QIA) is funding a second year of the Skills for Life Improvement Programme, and has invited CfBT Education Trust to continue to lead a consortium of national organisations to manage the programme.

The key aim of the Improvement Programme is to improve teaching, learning and achievement in literacy, language and numeracy. Learners who have Skills for Life needs are enrolled on a wide range of learning programmes; improving their literacy, language and numeracy skills will lead to improved success rates in all areas of learning.

Evaluation findings

QIA commissioned York Consulting to evaluate the 2006–07 Programme. They found that more than 5000 people gave high ratings to the training they experienced through the programme. York also found that managers and teaching staff highly value working in groups with staff from other providers, to develop better practice under the guidance of one of the Programme’s Development Advisers. The groups usually comprise representatives of five to eight providers from the same broad learning setting, for example offender learning, Entry to Employment (E2E), Adult and Community Learning (ACL) or Train to Gain.

Following York’s recommendations, the Improvement Programme will continue to support groups of providers, using specialist expertise.

York also reported that although teaching and management staff from all learning settings highly rate the expertise of the consortium’s consultants and Development Advisers, there was a need for greater simplification of the offer.

In 2007–08 the Improvement Programme will focus on the professionalisation of the Skills for Life workforce and on supporting

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quality improvement in teaching, learning and achievement. In this last respect, the Improvement Programme will scale up the provision, inviting senior managers in colleges and providers to take an active role in the implementation of improvements throughout their organisation, rather than being confined to a particular department or area.

Professionalisation of the workforce

QIA shares the Government’s ambition for a fully qualified Skills for Life workforce. In 2006–07, the Improvement Programme supported this ambition through a grant programme. Teacher education institutes were offered grants to develop courses to meet more closely the needs of teaching staff and their employers, particularly those working in the challenging areas of offender learning, work-based learning, E2E and ACL. Many institutes formed new or stronger links with voluntary and private sector providers in their area, and the Improvement Programme supported many hundreds of teaching staff to become qualified.

Continued overleaf...

In 2007–08, the Improvement Programme will help 1,400 literacy, numeracy and ESOL teaching staff onto courses leading to full subject-specific training qualifications. In addition there is a comprehensive range of activities to support teacher educators and mentors in extending their expertise and responding to new requirements resulting from current teacher education reforms.

Improving the quality of teaching, learning and achievement

In 2007–08, the Improvement Programme will focus on these themes:

- **Assessment** (led by LSN). This theme includes effective approaches to assessing learners' Skills for Life needs when they start their course, as well as assessing their progress throughout.
- **Developing a whole organisation approach** to Skills for Life (led by CfBT). This includes the use of tried and tested tools and processes for supporting change, including the popular and effective 'organisational healthcheck'. Development Advisers will work with individual providers and with groups to support improvement in all aspects of Skills for Life throughout the organisation and raise standards in teaching, learning and achievement.
- **Embedding Skills for Life** learning in vocational contexts (led by LSN). Research from the National Research Development Centre (NRDC) has shown the powerful impact of effective embedding of Skills for Life on attendance, retention, and progression. Development Advisers support providers to embed Skills for Life effectively, so learners can make effective progress in their vocational studies.

- **Improving the teaching, learning and achievement** of learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The Improvement Programme offers a package of support to help organisations to develop more inclusive learning approaches. Teaching staff will be offered a broad range of support, from Learning for Living to the blended learning programme Supporting Dyslexic Learners.
- **Speaking and listening** Training for practitioners from all settings will be available on developing speaking and listening skills through reflection on practice and creating new approaches and materials for different learning contexts.

New models of delivery

The Skills for Life learning environment has changed perhaps more than any other in the past few years. Increasingly flexible forms of teaching and learning are needed. The Improvement Programme will help develop robust, but flexible models of Skills for Life delivery.

Opportunities for all

The Improvement Programme is for all providers in all learning settings, whether large or small, national or local, and however they were graded in their last inspection.

The evidence from last year's programme has been that providers have taken advantage of the wide range of support available and those who committed staff time and resource gained significant benefits at both an individual and an organisational level.

Skills for Life Improvement Programme 2007–08: launch 28 September

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