

i For information

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Leading learning and skills

Learning and Skills Council
East of England

Updated Skills for Life Regional Strategy

for the East of England
2007-2010

August 2007

Skills for Life in the East of England

There are adults and young people in the region with literacy, language and numeracy needs that prevent them from getting jobs, progressing at work, helping their children learn and being active in their local communities.

The focus of Skills for Life (SfL) is broad covering literacy, numeracy and ESOL provision for adults ranging from pre-entry to level 2.

We are committed to reducing the number of adults and young people in the region with skills gaps and skills needs and increasing the number with Skills for Life qualifications in literacy, numeracy and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL).

Since the national strategy was launched in 2001 significant progress has been made towards the target in the East of England, but we still have a long way to go. We intend to work together to secure excellence for all and ensure that the millions of adults who have previously missed out on learning opportunities receive the help they need to realise their full potential.

What learners can expect

All learners in the East of England are entitled to:

- Access to initial and diagnostic assessment
- An individual learning plan (ILP) setting out learning aims, goals and the smaller steps that the learner will take in order to achieve their goals
- Flexible programmes to meet their individual learning needs
- Teachers who give regular, constructive and recorded feedback and who are able to use a range of teaching approaches
- Opportunities to take recognised national qualifications at the appropriate level
- Guidance to help plan progression into other learning, training and employment opportunities.

What Skills for Life provision will offer

All Skills for Life programmes in the region should seek to:

- Offer a positive learning experience for learners
- Extend the reach of Skills for Life to new audiences
- Provide support to learners to improve completion and achievement rates across a range of programmes
- Boost the confidence of learners to take up progression opportunities
- Increase the number of individuals accessing and achieving national qualifications
- Increase the achievement and completion rates of all learners on all types of programmes
- Promote links and support new routes to other learning and employment opportunities.

Skills for Life

National Strategy

Skills for Life, the national strategy for improving adult literacy and numeracy skills, was launched in 2001 and aims to improve the basic skills of 2.25 million adults between 2001 and 2010, with a milestone of 1.5 million in 2007.

Between 2001 and October 2006, 1.6 million learners achieved at least one qualification that counted towards the target and 4.7 million learners have taken up 10.4 million learning opportunities.¹

As detailed in the Leitch Report, stretching objectives for 2020 include: '95 percent of adults to have functional literacy and numeracy (basic skills)... to achieve a total of 7.4 million adult attainments over the period.'^{2 3}

1 Statistics as detailed in the LSC Single Statement of Priorities

2 Leitch Review of Skills final report, December 2006 - page 14, para 35

3 Where functional literacy is defined as Level 1 and functional numeracy is defined as Entry Level 3.

Skills for Life East of England

Regional Strategy

Since 2001, 424,587 Skills for Life learners have taken up 817,178 learning opportunities resulting in 141,755⁴ people gaining qualifications that count towards the target in the East of England. By July 2006 we had achieved 92%⁵ of the 2007 milestone for the PSA target to improve basic skills.

We are confident we will achieve the 2007 milestone but the challenge remains significant. We will be setting steep trajectories for adults to improve their literacy language and numeracy skills in line with the national aspirations to meet Leitch's objective and regional need, within the available resources.

We will continue to charge all providers to drive up the numbers of people enrolled on Skills for Life courses, and the numbers who take the accredited test at the end of the course, offering learners the national, transferable qualifications that are needed for life, work and progression to a first full level 2 and above.

We have developed excellent working relationships with a number of Sector Skills Councils (SSC's). Sector Skills Agreements, alongside the National Employer Survey, are helping us to develop a sharper understanding of the needs of employers than ever before.

We will continue to support providers to encourage increased participation and achievement through capacity building, improved standards of provision and flexible delivery.

As a result of the LSC restructure, we will work with partners to look at mapping existing groups and networks and to reduce these in number. In so doing we hope to reduce duplication of activity and simplify and improve communication routes.

The following key areas form the framework of the regional strategy to improve the literacy, language and numeracy skills of adults in the East of England.

Even though good progress is being made towards the 2010 target, we have to ensure that we are addressing the skills needs of those most at risk and the priority groups highlighted in the original National Sfl Strategy documents. This can only be done by drawing together key partners to develop a programme of action to address Skills for Life in the East of England.

The level of need in the region

Information from the Skills for Life Survey - Impact and Needs (DfES October 2003) - suggests that there are some 400,000 adults in the region with some skills needs or gaps and estimates that half those with needs are in employment.

Evidence also suggests that those who lack such basic skills will find their employment options narrowing as changes in the labour market reduce the availability of unskilled or semi-skilled work.

4 Statistics taken from LSC data as at March 2007 - up to and including 2005/06 data

5 Three year target for 2004/05 to 2006/07 is 84,885 learner achievements

1. Priority Groups

1.1 Literacy, language (ESOL) and numeracy provision will be targeted to the areas of greatest need in the region.

1.2 The region will continue to support the following priority groups:

- Unemployed people and benefit claimants - to increase their ability to gain employment
- Offenders in custody and under probation service in the community
- Employees - in particular those in low skilled work
- Other groups at risk of exclusion

1.3 From 2007/08, free ESOL tuition will only be available to priority groups.⁶ While we remain committed to providing support for ESOL learners, we must ensure that public funds are focused on those who are most in need of help.

1.4 The LSC will continue to work with regional partners to ensure enhanced accessibility for employees within key priority sectors

2. Scale and scope of Skills for Life provision in the East of England

2.1 Targets will be agreed with providers for Skills for Life achievements which count to the regional PSA target. Providers will regularly report on progress against these to the LSC.

2.2 Providers planning programmes will consider the profile of learners, the needs of employers and a range of models of delivery to provide all potential learners with access to high quality literacy, numeracy and ESOL programmes leading to qualifications.

2.3 Providers will deliver literacy, language and numeracy teaching using teaching models most appropriate to meet learner need - as discrete courses, within key skills and embedded within other programmes. Sfl should be a common theme throughout all LSC provision.

2.4 Where necessary more providers will be engaged to deliver literacy, numeracy and ESOL in the workplace and in the voluntary sector. Where the needs of particular groups are not being met the LSC will undertake customer-centred tendering to address any gaps.

2.5 Provision will be planned to meet these needs with an expectation that an overall 80:20 balance in the mix of provision is sought. (80 percent of all enrolments onto nationally approved qualifications).

From 2007/08 providers will be able to continue to offer:

- non-approved provision at pre-entry level
- either approved or non-approved provision at entry level (80:20)

but only

- approved qualifications in literacy, language and numeracy at NQF levels 1 and 2.⁷

6 Full details are available in the Funding Guidance for FE 2007/08 and in Managing the Balance & Mix of Provision 2007/08 available on the LSC website.

7 From 2007/08 only nationally approved Certificates in Adult Literacy, Numeracy and ESOL Sfl at Levels 1 and 2 will be eligible for funding as basic skills provision

3. Encouraging Participation

3.1 The LSC and its partners will ensure that all members of their organisations are aware of the strategy and their role within it and seek to take a Whole Organisation Approach to SfL.

3.2 We will continue to influence activity of our key stakeholders and partners to widen participation in SfL programmes.

3.3 We will continue to support the delivery of frontline worker training with and for staff in our partner organisations (including the Voluntary and Community Sector and Offender Learning and Skills Service) which will be linked to recognised qualifications where possible. These individuals will signpost others to gateways into learning.

3.4 Given the numbers of adults in the region with skills gaps and needs at levels 1 and 2, greater use will be made of a range of approaches such as the Move On and Move Up approaches, workplace SfL, embedding of SfL into vocational programmes and Train to Gain provision.

4. Building Capacity and CPD

4.1 The LSC will work with the professional bodies supporting SfL Continuing Professional Development (CPD) to promote a central and coherent programme of CPD.

4.2 The LSC will work with key partners (such as LLUK, NRDC, ACER) to assist providers to increase the number of full time specialist teachers trained to the new qualifications.

4.3 The LSC will support the creation of a Maths Centre for the East of England to support capacity building and to improve the quality and range of maths provision and teaching.

4.4 The LSC will continue to support and encourage SfL training and CPD for vocational tutors to promote increased delivery of contextualised and embedded SfL programmes.

4.5 Providers will use management information to help plan to meet needs and to offer a significant increase in provision leading to qualifications. This will mean changing the mix between 'other provision' and provision leading to qualifications (see also 2.5)

4.6 All providers in the region will continue to be encouraged to adopt the Whole Organisation Approach.

4.7 All providers will have policies on the recruitment, training and continuing professional development of the Skills for Life workforce.

4.8 The LSC will use its data to underpin an approach to the planning and funding of provision which builds upon success and quality rather than historical reputation.

5. Skills for the Workplace

5.1 The LSC will work with its partners to stimulate employer and employee demand for SfL learning. It will increase the volume of training in the region through the use of mainstream funding, the European Social Fund and by encouraging employers to contribute more fully to the cost of training.

5.2 Sector based Skills for Life resources and promotional materials will continue to be designed for the workplace and frontline training programmes will be developed for brokers and others in regular contact with employers to stimulate demand for literacy, numeracy and ESOL training.

5.3 We will continue to collaborate with the Sector Skills councils to enhance the embedding of literacy, language and numeracy within sector focussed programmes of learning.

5.4 The LSC will expand the delivery of the 'Train to Gain' programme to develop Skills for Life as a stepping stone into work related skills to Level 2 and higher level skills.

5.5 The LSC will also focus on increased delivery of work based Skills for Life and Train to Gain style activity through FE funding.

5.6 The LSC will work in partnership with Jobcentre Plus, prisons, the probation service and youth offending services to develop flexible Skills for Life learning programmes to remove barriers for individuals who are currently unemployed or underemployed and who wish to develop their skills and secure sustainable employment.

5.7 The LSC will support the provision of ESOL for Work qualifications - shorter, more job focussed, practical approaches to English language skills for people studying English language mainly for work.

6. Raising Standards

6.1 The LSC will support providers to access quality improvement programmes including the QIA Skills for Life Quality Improvement programme.

6.2 The LSC will encourage providers to offer more provision leading to approved qualifications⁸ which offer learners the national, transferable skills needed for life, work and progression to a first full level 2 and higher qualifications.

6.3 The LSC will track providers rigorously to encourage them to progress SfL learners into mainstream, qualification-bearing programmes.

6.4 The LSC expect each LSC funded organisation will have a quality improvement plan which sets challenging improvement targets to continue to develop the quality of SfL provision - improving retention and achievement, progression and teacher qualifications.

6.5 Providers will be expected to take action where underperformance is identified within SfL provision.

6.6 The LSC will facilitate the sharing of good practice between partners across the region.

8 From 07/08 non-approved learning aims at Levels 1 and 2 will no longer be eligible for funding as basic skills - For full details see the Funding Guidance for FE 2007/08 and the Balance & Mix of Provision 2007/08

7. Increasing Learner Achievement

7.1 Each learner should have a full initial and diagnostic assessment to ensure that they are enrolled onto the most appropriate learning aim and an Individual Learning Plan (ILP) detailing their milestone achievements.

7.2 All learners should be offered and have access to national test qualifications or approved Entry Level qualifications in literacy, numeracy and ESOL and have opportunities to plan progression into other training, learning and employment.

7.3 Providers will be encouraged to offer literacy, numeracy and ESOL qualifications and tests on site, on screen and on demand.

7.4 All providers should adopt the Move On / Move Up approach to SfL and other recommended models of delivery.

7.5 The LSC expect providers to strive to improve the ratio of enrolments to achievements within SfL.

8. Research and Innovation

8.1 The region will participate in national pilots, contribute to national research and disseminate findings from national and local development projects to all planners and providers.

8.2 The LSC will work with providers to facilitate more regular data collection. This data can be analysed to inform any hot spots, gaps in provision etc. and findings disseminated to key partners.

8.3 The LSC will work with sector skills councils to obtain more data on skills needs and gaps in specific sectors to assist in planning to address the needs of employees and employers.

Glossary of working definitions

SKILLS FOR LIFE: The skills of literacy, language and numeracy essential for learning, life and work.

Skills for Life Improvement Programme www.sflip.org.uk

This is a new programme. It builds on previous initiatives to help deliver the Skills for Life Strategy in the future. It is an innovative programme designed to support creative change in a wide range of self-improving organisations.

The programme sets a high priority on developing the skills and confidence of the workforce. It provides opportunities for unqualified and part-qualified staff in all learning settings to gain qualified status quickly. It also stimulates new thinking and enhances staff skills through continuing professional development on a range of issues.

There will be a strong focus on quality improvement with expert consultancy support for the use of tried and tested quality improvement tools and techniques, with essential links to Quality Networks.

Development Advisers will offer practical help and guidance to refresh and strengthen teaching and learning practice in literacy, language and numeracy from pre-entry to level 2, including provision for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

Whole Organisation Approach to Skills for Life www.woasfl.org

This project began in summer 2004. It aims to explore how best to develop a whole organisation approach to delivering Skills for Life by positioning literacy, language, and numeracy centrally within an organisation's strategy and planning agenda. This includes not only developing good delivery practice but also innovative approaches to leadership and management in order to ensure that the learners' needs are met.

The project complements and draws upon other Skills for Life initiatives and is currently working with 34 pathfinder organisations across a number of sectors including further education and specialist colleges, work based training providers, voluntary and community organisations, the prison and probation service, schools, large employers, and primary care trusts.

Move On Up www.move-on.org.uk

The Move On project was established in July 2003 to broaden the range of Skills for Life learners taking a national certificate in adult literacy and numeracy at Level 1 and 2, to diversify the learning menu, and to promote the value of the Skills for Life national qualifications.

The new Move On Up project is designed to support the embedding and mainstreaming of Move On and to further develop and embed the Get On at work approach in the workplace, including stimulating progression on to further qualifications.

Move On Up will also activate and support Test the Town / Test the Company approach to promoting and recruiting learners and supporting them to achieve qualifications, building to a country wide campaign.

Move On Up will explore appropriate development and dissemination of the Move On Model for Entry 3 learners.

Train to Gain www.traintogain.gov.uk

Train to Gain is the name of the demand led skills service introduced across England during 2006 and is the successor to the Employer Training Pilots (ETP) which came to an end in March 2006.

Train to Gain will be at the very heart of the implementation of the Skills Strategy over the coming years and it will build on the achievements of the pilots. Like ETP it will offer employers free training for employees to achieve their first full Level 2 qualification and where necessary employees will also receive embedded skills for life provision in that qualification. Employees are eligible for this level 2 provision if they do not already have academic or vocational qualifications equivalent to level 2 (e.g. 5 GCSEs at grade A-C or NVQ level 2).

From September 2007 stand alone Skills for Life provision can also be offered through Train to Gain.

Embedded Teaching and Learning

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 progress, gain qualifications and to succeed in life and work.

Recent NRDC research shows that any degree of collaboration has a dramatic impact on retention and achievement in both the Skills for Life and the vocational element of an individual's learning.

For more information visit the NRDC website.

OLASS - Offenders' Learning and Skills Service

The aim of the new Offenders' Learning and Skills Service (OLASS) is to promote the concept of an Offenders' Learning Journey, i.e. continuation of learning and skills for an individual when they move between establishments, or from custody to community or vice versa. It also aims to increase the quality and quantity of learning and skills to offenders, so that they receive a comparable standard of education to that which any other citizen would expect.

43% of prisoners have numeracy levels below level 1 and 37% have reading skills below level 1. This can make it difficult for them to find and stay in work on release. Poor communication can also undermine family relationships, which are often the greatest incentive to leading a life away from crime.

All offenders - both in custody and the community - are part of the Government's Skills for Life Strategy and make an important contribution to national targets for improving adult literacy and numeracy.

Useful documents / links

Addendum to Funding Guidance for Further Education in 2007/08 (August 07)

http://readingroom.lsc.gov.uk/lsc/national/Addendum_to_funding_guidance_for_further_education_v1_0708.pdf

Funding Guidance for Further Education in 2007/08 (March 2007)

<http://www.lsc.gov.uk/publications/recommended/Funding-Guidance-for-Further-Education-in-200708.htm>

A Framework for Managing the Balance and Mix of Provision (2007/08) (February 2007)

http://readingroom.lsc.gov.uk/lsc/National/A_Framework_for_Managing_the_Balance_and_Mix_of_Provision_200708_23Feb2007.pdf

Leitch Review of Skills - Prosperity for all in the global economy - world class skills - Final Report (December 2006)

http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/independent_reviews/leitch_review/review_leitch_index.cfm/

Annual Statement of Priorities (October 2006)

<http://www.lsc.gov.uk/Aboutus/LSCStrategy/AnnualStatementofPriorities/>

The Skills for Life survey - A national needs and impact survey of literacy, numeracy and ICT skills (2003)

<http://www.dfes.gov.uk/research/data/uploadfiles/RB490.pdf>

Useful websites

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

Adult Basic Skills Strategy Unit, DfES - www.dfes.gov.uk/readwriteplus

Adult and Community Learning Fund - www.lifelonglearning.co.uk/acf

The Basic Skills Agency - www.basic-skills.co.uk

Jobcentre Plus - www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk

Key skills - www.dfes.gov.uk/key

Learndirect - www.learndirect.co.uk

Learning and Skills Development Agency - www.lsda.org.uk

National Institute of Adult Continuing Education - www.niace.org.uk

National Research and Development Centre - www.nrdc.org.uk

Qualifications and Curriculum Authority - www.qca.org.uk

Sector Skills Development Agency - www.ssda.org.uk

University for Industry - www.ufild.gov.uk

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