

**i** For information

**>lsc**

Leading learning and skills

# Manchester Literacy and Numeracy Review

Commissioned by the  
Learning & Skills Council  
Greater Manchester

## Final Report

Margaret Davey and Judith Summers, June 2007

## Contents

1. Introduction
2. The national policy background
3. The Manchester context
4. Post 19 literacy and numeracy provision in Manchester
5. Findings
6. Recommendations

## Appendices

1. The people involved
2. Models of teaching literacy and numeracy – some definitions
3. The LSC strategic context

# Manchester Literacy and Numeracy Review

“For us, learning is more than an end in itself. Our overriding concern is with its impact on productivity, employability and social cohesion. But these are not separate aims – we see them as interdependent. Education is the great equaliser, the cornerstone of employability, social justice and sustainable communities.”

Foreword to Raising our Game:  
Annual Statement of Priorities  
LSC, October 2006

# 1. Introduction

The review was commissioned in March 2007 by the LSC Greater Manchester, as a sequel to the reviews which considered further education in the City (July 2006) and the curriculum of the Manchester Adult Education Service (MAES) (November 2006).

A steering group, made up of representatives from the LSC, the Council, City College Manchester (CCM), Manchester College of Arts and Technology (MANCAT) and Manchester Enterprises, approved the purpose, specification and the outline plan for the project. The Steering Group was chaired by Peter Lavender, Deputy Director of the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE).

The detailed specification of the review may be found in Appendix 6.

Interim findings and possible recommendations were presented to the Steering Group in May 2007 and the draft final report was discussed in June.

In carrying out its work, the review team examined the available data from the LSC and providers, reviewed relevant plans and other literature and interviewed representatives from the LSC, Manchester City Council, providers, employers and other players (a list of the interviewees is at Appendix 1).

## Purpose of the review

The purpose of the review was to inform the strategy and planning processes for literacy and numeracy provision for adults aged 19 and over, in order to meet the needs of Manchester residents and the economic needs of the City.

Through the process of the review the team sought to:

- identify any gaps, duplication or provision that does not appear to be fit for purpose;
- identify and analyse progression within and from provision;
- identify and evaluate the impact on employability;
- determine the value of pre-entry level provision;
- comment on quality and value for money issues;
- identify the impact of literacy and numeracy provision on social cohesion;
- identify shortages or capability issues in literacy and numeracy provision.

## Scope

At the first meeting of the Steering Group it was confirmed that the focus of the review should be on literacy and numeracy provision for 19+ learners resident in the City. It was felt that the inclusion of English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) would raise a very different set of issues. The LSC confirmed that it was committed to reviewing ESOL separately at a later date.

## Recommendations

The recommendations are intended to improve:

- the relevance, purpose and coherence of literacy and numeracy skills provision in the City of Manchester;
- the collaboration of the main providers to deliver the skills agenda, the level 2 entitlement and programmes to reduce worklessness effectively;
- the progression of learners into higher level provision and into employment;
- the planning and design of provision to improve motivation and enhance employability;
- and to enable the LSC and its partners to design an action plan for implementation.

While the recommendations focus on employability and employment, it is understood that improving literacy and numeracy skills and hence improving life-chances have a much wider impact on people's self-esteem, health and well-being and on family and community cohesion. The emerging strategy for basic skills in the City will need to be informed by this understanding.

## 2. The national policy background

One of the main priorities for post-19 funding over the past decade has been to achieve challenging targets for Skills for Life, in order to address the comparatively low levels of literacy and numeracy in the adult population.

More recently, the UK's comparative lack of productivity, when compared with other Organisations for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries, has prompted a drive to increase the qualifications among adults, firstly with the notion of a full level 2 qualifications for all adults and now also a level 3 for 19 – 25 year olds.

The situation in Manchester is exacerbated by the fact that the Greater Manchester sub-region as a whole generates a larger number of school leavers without level 2 than any other area in the country.

The Leitch report, published in December 2006, proposes significant changes to the way in which adult skills should be funded, managed and influenced, with a shift to the notion of 'demand-led' mechanisms approved by employers. Whilst Government has only just responded formally to Leitch, it is clear that planning for literacy and numeracy provision must take account of the need to raise employers' awareness and to use Train to Gain to improve skill levels in the workforce. The new national Skills Pledge, through which employers commit to supporting all their employees to develop literacy and numeracy skills and work towards a full level 2 qualification, is intended to support this.

### 2.2 The role of the LSC

The LSC was established under the Learning and Skills Act 2000 to take over the work of the Further Education Funding Council and the Training and Enterprise Councils.

The LSC is responsible for planning and funding high quality education and training for young people and adults to world class standards. Its vision is that by 2010 they will have knowledge and skills matching the best in the world and will be part of a truly competitive workforce.

The LSC is also responsible for funding the part of adult learning known as Adult Community Learning (ACL). This is separate from the Further Education (FE) funding stream for recognised national qualifications and from provision under the Skills for Life banner, which includes literacy, numeracy and ESOL. The expectation is that a high proportion (80%) of Skills for Life provision will lead to National Qualification Framework (NQF) qualifications directly contributing to the LSC's targets or enabling progression to them.

The ACL element is 'protected' at the current level of funding, under the safeguard for so-called Personal and Community Development Learning, agreed by the government in 2004. It also includes an element of First Steps provision, which must have defined progression routes and will thus, potentially, contribute to the LSC's targets. This has implications for planning ACL provision, in particular how it will contribute to improving literacy and numeracy levels.

The Government's priorities are expressed in its annual grant letter to the LSC and these are subsequently interpreted in the LSC's own Statement of Priorities. The priorities for 07/08 were published in the LSC's Annual Statement of priorities, Raising our Game, in October 2006. The priorities for 19+ adults that will directly impact on this Review can be summarised as follows:

- A 'rebalancing' of £51.5m from adult learning to further full level 2 and Train to Gain provision.
- An expectation that 16% of the adult FE budget will be spent on full level 2 provision (a minimum of 10% in 07/08).
- An expectation that 80% of Skills for Life provision will lead to nationally approved qualifications at entry level 3 or levels 1 or 2.

## 3. The Manchester context

### 3.1 The City of Manchester

As far as the resident and working population is concerned, Manchester is a city of contrasts. The population, as measured at the last census (2001) was 392,819. This figure is, however, generally agreed to be an under-estimate and the most recent mid-year estimate in 2007 is 437,000 and growing.

The City lies at the heart of Greater Manchester, sharing its borders with Bury, Rochdale, Oldham, Tameside, Stockport, Trafford and Salford. It is the regional centre for finance, commerce, retail, culture and leisure and home to a major international airport and to one of the largest student populations in Europe.

Manchester currently generates about a quarter of the North West's wealth and is the largest and fastest-growing employment area in the region. It is transforming itself from an industrial city dependent on manufacturing: the last decade has seen the growth of an increasingly strong service sector and impressive urban regeneration.

The City is now attracting growth in the knowledge-based economy and is one of the top ten European cities for business location. In the last three years, Manchester has secured over £2 billion of private investment and around 25,000 new jobs.

It is recognised that, although Manchester's economy is booming, its citizens are not benefiting equally as a result. In a densely-populated urban area comprising 32 wards, there are marked differences in terms of income, economic activity rates and skills levels. The economic success of the city is in sharp contrast to surrounding communities which experience some of the highest concentrations of crime, poor health and poor housing in the country.

With 27 of its 32 wards among the most deprived 10% nationally, Manchester is ranked as the second most deprived local authority district in England (after Liverpool) in the 2004 indices of deprivation. In total, over 40% of Manchester's residents were not in employment according to the 2001 census, compared with a national rate of 25%.

However, unemployment rates underestimate the disengagement of many from the labour market: of a total of 60,000 receiving 'workless' benefits, almost 40,000 were on Incapacity Benefit (IB) in May 2006 and nearly 12,500 were lone parents receiving Income Support (IS), compared to just over 11,000 on Job Seekers Allowance (JSA).

The 2003 Skills for Life Survey commissioned by the DfES revealed that in qualification terms 17% of the city's population were at entry level. This is the highest rate of all the Greater Manchester authorities. The City Strategy refers to one third of Manchester residents of working age lacking basic qualifications to level 1, with 50% or more lacking 'good basic skills' in the key target areas. There are significant implications for individuals accessing employment and social exclusion.

There are important implications for further education and adult learning organisations in terms of their responses to the scenario described here, in particular their approaches to the planning and delivery of literacy and numeracy provision. Manchester faces a significant mismatch between the qualification levels of both school-leavers and the adult population, and the demands of its expanding economy for both basic levels of employability and skills at level 3 and above.

### 3.2 Greater Manchester City Strategy

The Greater Manchester City Strategy Business Plan, submitted to the Department of Work and Pensions in March 2007, identifies the 58 priority wards which have the highest level of worklessness. Of these, 24 are in the City. The key groups identified as experiencing barriers to work are black and minority ethnic groups, people over 50, people with no qualifications and ex-offenders. The primary aim of the City Strategy is to reduce dependency on invalidity and other benefits and to 'simplify and streamline the workless client's journey from welfare to workforce development'.

It identifies the structural barriers as follows:

- The individuals who most need help are not the ones who access it.
- Programmes are not flexible enough to allow local solutions to local problems or according to individual client need.
- Local agencies fail to join up their provision, either as a requirement of the funding or through weak contract management, causing unnecessary duplication or complexity.
- Insufficient support is provided to overcome the non-employment and training-related barriers that clients face.
- Commissioning and contract management take place in an uncoordinated manner within specific funding streams with differing degrees of awareness of the bigger picture.

The Strategy contains three linked areas for action:

- Improved engagement of workless residents;
- Co-ordinated delivery of employment support and training services; and
- Supporting employers to recruit workless residents and retain people in work.

The Strategy aims to address some very challenging targets including getting 15,001 people into employment over the next three years across Greater Manchester.

### 3.3 Manchester City Strategy Operational Plan (draft, 2007)

The Manchester (local authority) City strategy has equally ambitious targets: to reduce the number of IB claimants by 5,100, JSA claimants by 3,900 and lone parents receiving income support by 3,500. Lack of appropriate skills is considered the most significant barrier to accessing employment and the Operational Plan defines the two key challenges as being to:

- increase significantly the volume and the accessibility of basic skills provision in the City, whilst ensuring more effective arrangements to link first steps learning to employment and to progression to further education and training;
- improve the relevance of learning to the jobs that are available in the City by planning the curriculum at a district level to reflect the requirements of employers and the work aspirations of local people.

### 3.4 Skills Board

The Skills Board is a City Council initiative, set up to co-ordinate the use of public sector funding for skills development and training. It will undertake research into future skills needs and advise the planning and funding agencies on the appropriate skills and vocational training relating to the requirements of employers, particularly new employers in the City. Members of the Skills Board include representatives from the City Council, the LSC, Manchester Enterprises, Manchester Knowledge Capital, further education colleges, sixth form colleges, higher education institutions, Jobcentre Plus, North West Development Agency, New East Manchester and Manchester Chamber of Commerce.

## 4. Post 19 Literacy and Numeracy provision in Manchester

### 4.1 Quality of information

The review team found serious limitations in the data available:

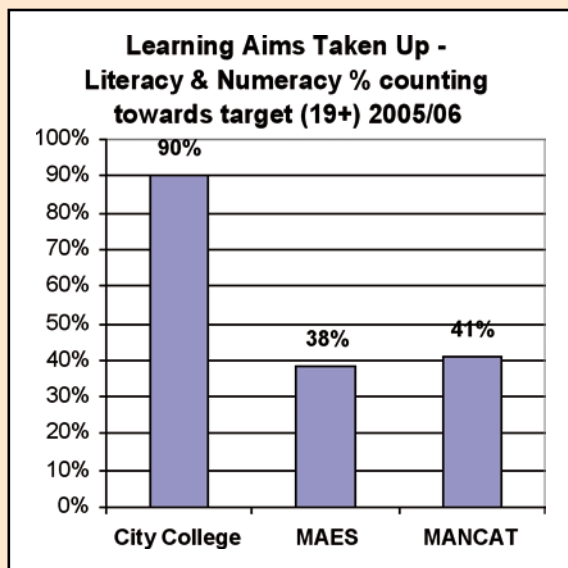
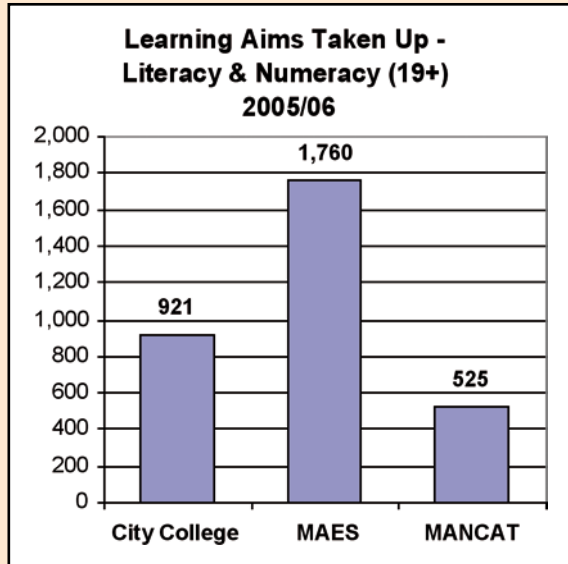
- Data held by the LSC is based on learning aims. Figures for numbers of residents are available by ward but these cannot readily be linked to topic, level of learning or length of programme. Information on the impact of Train to Gain is at an early stage.
- By contrast, the providers are able to give numbers of learners. However there is no clear and consistent information about numbers, distribution or attainment of those learning through community groups. Information about outcomes for Ufl courses was not available. In the case of Jobcentre Plus, figures are held for Manchester, Salford and Trafford together and reporting arrangements mean that positive outcomes are under-reported.
- Other than anecdotal evidence, there is a dearth of information on progress between providers, or into employment.
- The LSC has information on its total Skills for Life spend but this is not available in a form which would enable cost comparisons between the providers that it funds (such as guided learning hours). The limitations of learner information from other providers mean that comparisons are not possible.
- With reference to quality, Ofsted/Ali inspection grades are quoted where these are known. However, external quality judgements are not available for all provision. The East Manchester Skills for Life Project was externally evaluated by NIACE.
- There is a gap in the understanding regarding need and demand. Currently the increase in the numbers gaining qualifications are measured, however it is still unclear how many residents there are who lack basic skills qualifications. Key issue do we know the local market.

For these reasons it has not been possible to produce a sound calculation of volume, particularly in respect of provision through the voluntary and community sector, or to produce quantitative evidence on progression, or to comment on value for money. The information in 4.2 and 4.3 below does however give a picture of the relative scale and the target groups.

### 4.2 The main providers

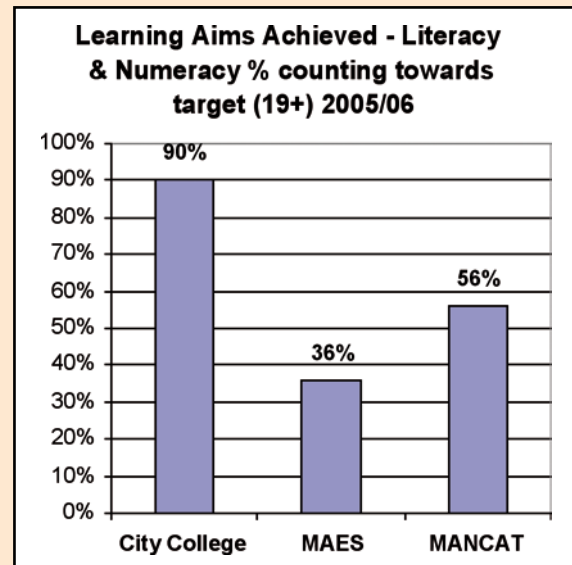
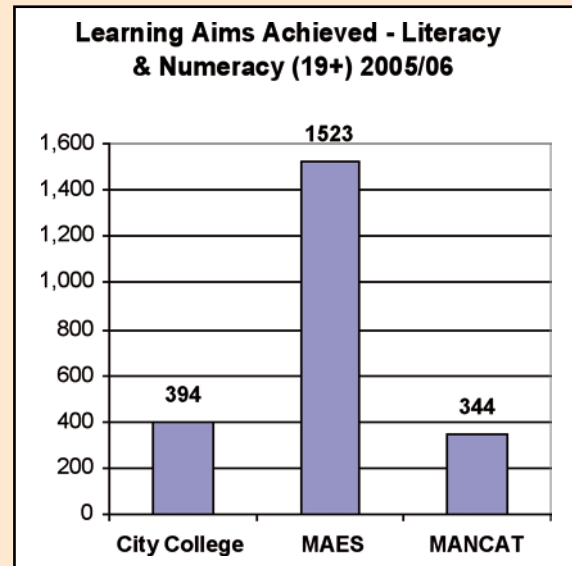
- The main delivery of post-19 literacy and numeracy provision in the City is by: City College and MANCAT, the two FE colleges, and MAES, the adult education service. All three deliver high volumes of provision (see charts below). Both the FE Review (July 06) and the MAES Curriculum Review (November 06) reported that there was little in the way of joint planning between the three institutions and that the distribution of programmes was mainly the legacy of history.
- MANCAT delivers literacy, numeracy by embedding it in mainstream programmes, with additional learner support where needed, for example, dyslexia testing and support (see the Case Studies in Appendix 4 for a fuller description). There is no discrete provision at the college. MANCAT seeks to prioritise recruiting from the most deprived areas. Its target groups are those adults who are training with the aim of seeking employment, or are in employment and upgrading their skills. MANCAT's provision was graded 1 by Ofsted in January 2007.
- City College's development of literacy and numeracy has prioritised vocational programmes, within which some progress has been made in embedding literacy and numeracy, starting with Entry level programmes. However the college recently re-introduced a programme of discrete provision, in response to a perceived lack of capacity elsewhere, and to provide a basis for progression to vocational programmes. This is delivered through the skills centre on each site, and is available at all levels, but with the majority of learners at levels 1 and 2. Many of the learners are in the 20-24 age cohort. Some are seeking work, some in work, and it is expected that learners would not stay in the discrete programme for more than two years. The College's Prince's Trust volunteer programme embeds literacy and numeracy skills in an intensive course (see the Case Studies in Appendix 4). Inspection grades in 2004 were 3 for literacy and numeracy and 1 for the Prince's Trust programme.

Figure 1: Volumes – main providers 1



Note: the charts above show the comparative volumes of "learning aims" taken up with the three main providers. However, an individual learner can pursue several learning aims over a year, so this figure does not reflect the number of learners nor does it indicate the amount of time spent in taught sessions.

Figure 2: Volumes of literacy and numeracy provision – main providers



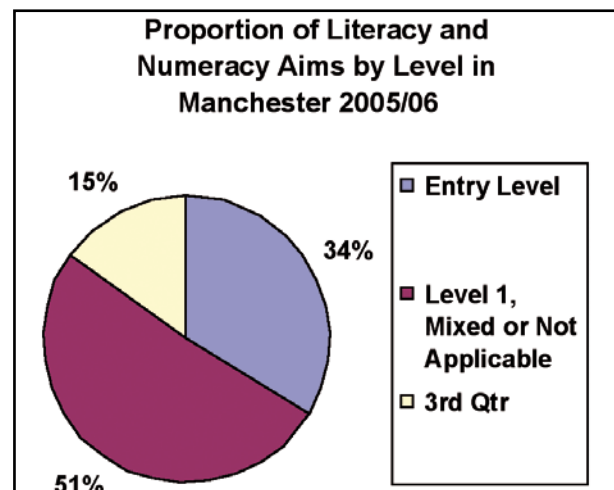
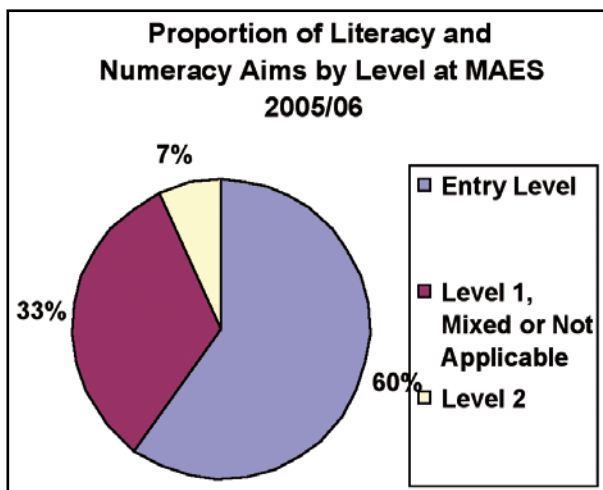
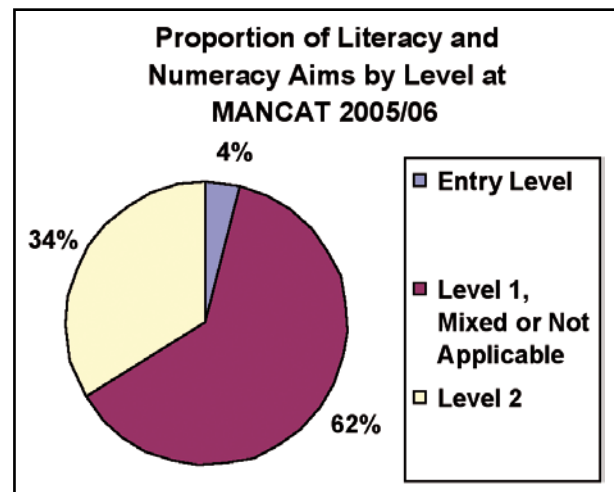
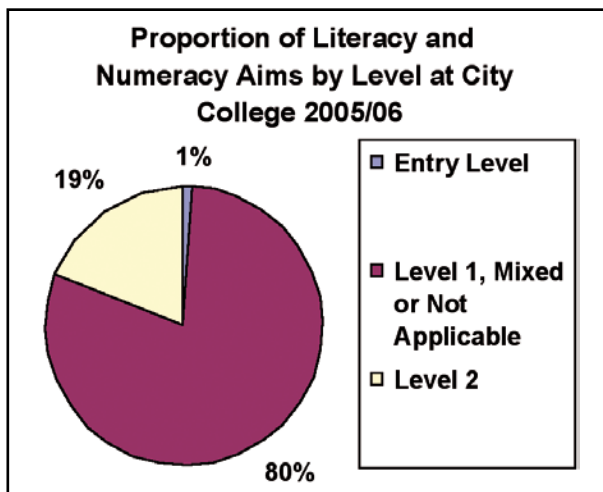
Note: these charts only reflect "learning aims" achieved and of these the percentage at each institution which leads towards the LSC target. They do not indicate the overall number of learners nor the amount of teaching they have had in order to succeed in their goals in 05/06.

- MAES delivers a high volume of discrete provision, with the precise make-up of the programme being decided at district ('zone') level. The split of work across the different levels leaves MAES in the distinctive position of mainly concentrating on provision below level 2 and entry level specialism, although it is shifting the balance towards work contributing to national targets. This focus was endorsed by the MAES Curriculum Review (November 2006) and is demonstrated in the chart below, which shows the proportions of learners in different levels across the main providers.
- There is some evidence that learners may stay for some time in MAES provision, albeit progressing through the levels. Family literacy and numeracy is organised separately but included in the MAES figures. Embedded provision exists on a small scale and steps are being taken to develop it. There is a

very small amount of workplace provision. MAES also manages the Neighbourhood Learning in Deprived Communities Fund (see 4.3 below) and other project work. The MAES Curriculum Review acknowledged the strengths the Service has in this area, particularly as far as engaging hard to reach learners is concerned, and recommended that it should continue to focus in this direction. However, learners choosing MAES provision may not necessarily have employment as a goal, at least in the short term. Inspection grades in March 2005 were 3 for literacy and numeracy and 2 for family learning literacy and numeracy and wider family learning.

Note: the charts below indicate the different proportions of "learning aims" at each level in the three main providers. Learning aims do not match the overall numbers of learners, nor do they reveal the amount of teaching that takes places at the different levels.

**Figure 3: Levels of provision – main providers**



### 4.3 Other providers and agencies

#### Other LSC funded provision

In 2005/6, 7,853 learners aged 19+ took up literacy and numeracy provision in Greater Manchester through private and employer-related training providers, and of these 7,159 achieved at least one learning aim. Disaggregated figures are not available for the City of Manchester and the numbers include repeat learners. Of the various providers Manchester Enterprises Ltd (Greater Manchester) was the largest, with 6,771 learners in that year, though the majority of these were Ufl learners, channelled through the company as the 'hub' at the time.

#### University for Industry

In 2006/7, Ufl had a total of 1,380 skills for life learners in Manchester. Of these 129 took initial assessment; a further 786 took a literacy course and 551 a numeracy course. In comparison the 2005/6 total was 3,812. The reduction followed a re-tendering process aimed at quality, links with the 'hardest to engage communities' and giving priority to qualification outcomes enabling achievement of level 2 and employability. There were however concerns about sufficiency of provision in Wythenshawe. Ufl contractors include MANCAT, and community and private training organisations.

#### Jobcentre Plus (JCP)

JCP commissions literacy and numeracy provision for New Deal customers, ie those aged 18-24 who have been on Job-seeker's Allowance (JSA) for more than six months, and those aged 25+ who have been on JSA for more than 18 months. A new 'pathfinder' programme now being developed nationally will address the needs of those on JSA for less than 18 months. Figures for 2006/7 for Manchester, Salford and Trafford are that of a projected 5,070 New Deal customers, 656 received a full basic skills assessment and 349 started the 26 week basic skills and employability programme. (These figures include ESOL; disaggregated figures for literacy and numeracy and for locality are not readily available.) The provision is delivered by private contractors such as Action for Employment and Standguide. Customers who are not 'New Deal' are referred to learndirect or LSC funded providers.

Overall, JCP expects 33% of customers to have basic skills needs. In addition, JCP run an ESF funded, intensive 13 week 'First Rung Basic Skills' course open to all JCP customers and targeting those at entry level. This project may become part of core provision when ESF funding ends in 2007. To date 221 Manchester residents have participated. JCP's data collection arrangements mean that full figures for progression to further training or employment are not available but the programme is considered to be effective in helping clients to move on.

#### Offender Learning and Skills Service (OLASS)

City College Manchester is the contractor for OLASS for Greater Manchester, covering three prisons and community delivery through the district probation offices. Work Solutions provide learning and skills to offenders in the community as City College's partner. For reasons of confidentiality it is difficult to estimate the numbers of prisoners who are Manchester residents and receiving literacy and numeracy provision, but 30% of HMP Manchester inmates access education during their time in prison and nearly half of the provision consists of dedicated Skills for Life delivery. Literacy and numeracy are also embedded in vocational training. In 2005/6 inmates gained a total of 426 qualifications (in literacy, numeracy and ESOL, with 78% of these being at levels 1 and 2.) Provision based in Probation Offices emphasises Skills for Life through group delivery, 1:1 support and support within other provision. In 2005/6, 294 Skills for Life qualifications were gained by these learners.

City College also provides Skills for Life in Probation Approved Premises (hostels), of which there are seven in Greater Manchester, two being in the City. This led to 96 qualifications being awarded in 2005/6. From 2006 this, along with other interventions, has been funded through an ESF co-financed project for flexible learning and skills provision, to end in 2008. The project also builds capacity for staff in colleges, training providers, voluntary and community agencies and Information Advice and Guidance providers to work with offenders. The project will make recommendations on sustainable effective interventions for offenders and encourage community provision to include working with offenders in strategic planning.

### **Manchester Solutions**

Manchester Solutions is a not-for-profit training organisation set up by the Greater Manchester local authorities. Its contracted provision for adults includes Next Steps, Train to Gain including literacy and numeracy, work with unemployed adults, those on invalidity benefit (IB), offenders and ex-offenders.

Working with highly demanding learners is a particular strength. Manchester Solutions has 17 training centres across the sub-region, located in deprived wards. Numbers of those served will depend on current contracts: the 2006/7 total for all provision was 16,000. Learners are mainly at entry level 3 or below.

Literacy and numeracy is embedded in provision where the funding arrangements permit this.

### **Community-based provision**

**East Manchester Skills for Life Project** (2001-), within East Manchester New Deal for Communities, has served an estimated 1,000 beneficiaries to date.

In 2001-2006 the project was funded through the Single Regeneration Budget, New Deal for Communities, and the European Regional Development Fund, plus significant additional funding being raised through bids.

From 2006 the North West Development Agency has been a major funder. The project is due to end in 2010.

Working through a partnership of voluntary and community sector providers, the project offers a wide range of skills for life 'first contact' activity, focussing on those least readily engaged, as a basis for progression to mainstream provision or employment.

The project was evaluated by NIACE in 2006, with the conclusion that it had been 'extremely effective'. The quantity of provision and number of learners benefiting has increased during the life of the East Manchester strategy. The number of residents taking part in learning and achieving qualifications has greatly exceeded the targets set.

A particular strength was work carried out to engage and support some of the most vulnerable members of the East Manchester community who were least likely to participate in mainstream provision.

**Other community organisations:** it is difficult to quantify the number of organisations providing literacy and numeracy and the number of learners engaged as most work is funded as short-term projects (although some organisations may have accumulated considerable experience).

The Learning and Skills Employment Network (LSEN), part of the Community Network of voluntary and community organisations, supported by the Manchester Strategic Partnership, has 30-40 member organisations.

In 2006/7, MAES managed the allocation and monitoring of the Neighbourhood Learning in Deprived Communities fund for the LSC. In total nine community organisations were funded, with 347 learners involved in the first nine months, of whom 214 learners were in ESOL, literacy and numeracy provision.

Workers Educational Association North-West organises some skills for life provision, but for Manchester in the last year this has been predominantly ESOL, with a very small number of literacy and numeracy groups.

The WEA works in partnership with community organisations or trade unions, with individually designed courses.

#### 4.4 Capacity and continuous professional development

Specialist literacy and numeracy staff in the main providers, and others delivering skills for life under contract with LSC or JCP, are trained to the appropriate level 4 or 3 standards. As reported elsewhere in the country, the relatively high level of part-timers and the consequent 'casualisation' of the workforce are perceived as a barrier to effectiveness. This is mainly due to their inability to participate fully in continuing professional development which is critical to the changes in delivery which are expected.

The main providers have progressed at different rates in the business of training managers and vocational staff in literacy and numeracy awareness, and in training vocational staff to deliver embedded programmes. City College and MAES report that insufficient numbers of trained staff is a barrier to embedding provision.

No information is available on the numbers of trained delivery staff in the voluntary and community sector but interviewees report that there is almost certainly a shortage. Barriers to training may include access, funding, timescales and the appropriateness of the current qualifications structure for front-line staff working in particular contexts.

In principle JCP advisors receive literacy and numeracy awareness training and many trade union learning representatives also do so. There is considered to be a much wider need for such training amongst staff from a wide range of agencies which have 'first contact' with people in the community.

The following current sources of training and CPD have been identified:

- Skills for Life Improvement Programme: this offers both professional training leading to qualifications and short courses and networks to develop practice for skills for life tutors.
- The North West Skills for Life Professional Development Advice Service: an ESF funded project (2007/8) offers 'first rung awareness- raising' with referrals for further training to groups such as JCP advisors, trade union learning representatives, Train to Gain brokers and others. The project intends to extend its offer to community groups, working through intermediaries such as regeneration teams. It also offers trainer training for literacy and numeracy awareness and will make on-line training available.
- Manchester City Council is developing a training programme for front-line workers in the Council, the voluntary and community sector and other agencies, to enable them to understand their contribution to the City Strategy and refer residents appropriately.
- Manchester Solutions has been funded by the LSC to provide Skills for Life teaching qualifications in Greater Manchester (2006/7).
- The main providers have their own in-house programmes. MANCAT has developed training materials for staff across the college.

Previously the LSC funded a Greater Manchester project to support the Skills for Life Action Plan. Activities included delivering Unit 1 of FENTO Level 2 to Connexions, Next Step and JCP frontline staff; supporting learner costs for FENTO levels 2,3 and 4; the production of a teacher toolkit for providers; ESOL training; 'Effective SFL Classroom Management' modules; training embedding basic skills in the vocational curriculum; dyslexia training.

## 5. Findings

### 5.1 Organisational

Providers define their individual missions but there is no clearly articulated, shared understanding of how these complement one another and add up to a coherent response to the identified needs in Manchester.

An attempt by the LSC to develop a consortium approach to planning did not appear to have had any lasting impact, probably through lack of leadership at a strategic level. In the view of some, though, it was successful because it led to a number of shared projects funded by ESF, although these appear to have not been sustainable. It was felt that the LSC should have taken a more strategic overview of provision in order to determine a closer link with needs. Inevitably, because of self-interest, a group of providers, however well-intentioned, cannot take on this function. One stakeholder described the nature and location of the different types of provision as 'random'.

Work is at an early stage for the LSC, MAES, MANCAT and City College joint working group to map the adult curriculum offer in Manchester which would include literacy and numeracy.

Linkages between providers are very weak; they are still operating in silos, with no clear and effective progression pathways. There is no shared understanding of best practice in relation to designing and delivering literacy and numeracy programmes for specific target groups or for specific needs. Where provision is shared there is a lack of service level agreements or protocols for joint working, although some models are available (see case study in Appendix 4).

Attempts to pilot the tracking of learners beyond individual institutional provision are reported but no examples were found. However, the LSC is co-ordinating a mapping exercise which could form the basis of analysing progression in the future. Without information on progression between providers and into work it is not possible to judge the impact and effectiveness of provision.

As far as locations are concerned, there has been no systematic, City-wide approach to finding suitable accommodation that will bring provision nearer to those who need it. Where it occurs, there is considerable support, by learners and by managers, for the use of purpose-built, adult-friendly accommodation linked to primary schools and libraries, both of which are considered non-threatening and are very accessible.

### 5.2 Programme design

There are three main types of provision:

- i) embedded or integrated
- ii) contextualised and
- iii) discrete or freestanding

(see Appendix 2 for definitions of these terms).

There is some excellent good practice around which needs to be shared, in particular the approaches to embedding literacy and numeracy in vocational and other programmes and the use of employability modules, some of which are accredited and adapted for different interests. There are also examples of good practice in working with employers to tailor training to ensure access to specific employment opportunities. Information on good practice in community-based learning and using local intermediaries can be gained from voluntary and community sector delivery such as the East Manchester Skills for Life Project and Neighbourhood Learning in Deprived Communities.

However, providers do not have a common understanding and vocabulary for the different models of delivering literacy and numeracy and do not appear to be systematically sharing and incorporating the lessons from community-based work into their main programmes.

The discrete provision of literacy and numeracy is a historic programme which is not necessarily designed to respond to the needs of specific target groups or to match the objectives of the City Strategy, although it may serve employment-related aims, as in the case of Ufl courses. Insofar as this is reaching learners who do not intend in the short-term to seek work (for example, some older IB beneficiaries and parents in family learning programmes) a clearer understanding is needed of how the provision can be designed to raise aspirations and to help learners to progress.

There is also a need to use a wider range of delivery styles, such as short intensive courses, interest-group centred learning, residential programmes and innovative uses of technology.

Some planning of provision still relies on the 'menu' approach: 'this is what we can offer and when, please choose what you want from this list'. This is not necessarily apparent at senior management level but some middle managers are still concentrating on making the best use of available accommodation and staff.

Some providers are very conscious of the need to target deprived wards but this does not necessarily follow through into programme design or the optimum choice of locations. The levels of participation by ward (see chart below) are not analysed in order to re-direct provision to where it is most needed.

### 5.3 Capacity

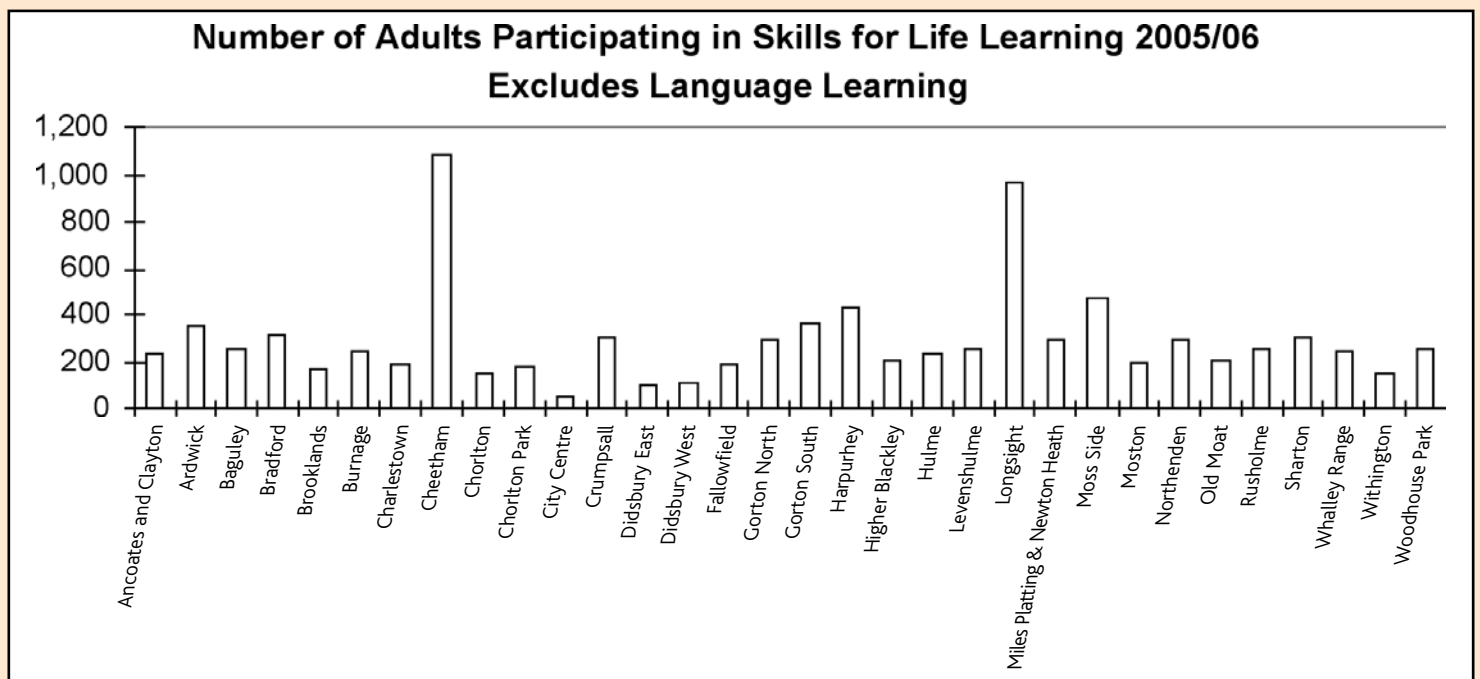
There is some excellent practice in setting standards for staff training across the whole organisation, particularly in the delivery of embedded literacy and numeracy and in the approaches to improving (and even accrediting) employability. This practice needs to be shared with other providers.

There is evidence that some staff delivering work-based vocational training may not be aware of how to address literacy and numeracy needs and therefore tend to avoid the issue. There is a considerable amount of work to do to ensure all staff are competent to identify and address these needs within their teaching area.

Elsewhere, the picture is mixed and capacity for some providers is a serious issue. The high volume of part-time staffing contributes to the picture of a service slow to professionalise. However, there is valuable potential to share training and resources to build capacity.

Front-line staff at all points of first contact (for example benefits staff, housing providers, schools, interest and advocacy-based voluntary and community groups) are not sufficiently trained to identify literacy and numeracy needs and make appropriate referrals.

**Figure 4: Participation Profile by Ward**



Note: the relatively high percentages of participation for Cheetham and Longsight can be explained by City College provision at HMP Manchester (400 learners) and at the Unpaid Work Unit for offenders on Enhanced Community Punishment Orders (700 learners) respectively.

## 5.4 Structural

Providers, sector skills councils, and the LSC, are not bringing the non-committed employers on board effectively because the former are not perceived to be using the right language and they are not selling the benefits to companies pro-actively enough. These employers are not the big names or the professional and public sector organisations who need little convincing, but those which have little tradition or experience of investing in training.

The LSC has been flexible in its approach to the proportion of work leading to the national test as far as providers are concerned. For example, whilst City College and MANCAT are within or near the percentages expected, MAES is consistently below target because of the nature of its target groups and their needs. These are hard to reach learners who may not have taken the decision to take up training for employment or progress to higher level study.

There is no baseline comparison possible between providers because measurements used vary between: learning aims, learners, enrolments, customers, all of which have different interpretations and values. In addition, the inputs, as well as the outputs vary greatly between the providers.

There is a perceived tension between the achievement of the LSC's Skills for Life targets and the contribution of literacy and numeracy to regeneration and the local economy because:

- a focus on the higher levels is considered to detract from the importance of first rung provision, particularly that offered through the voluntary and community sector, and to make this more difficult to fund;
- 'success' in moving into a job rather than completing a programme may be counted as a failure;
- whilst literacy and numeracy are considered essential, full skills for life qualifications are not perceived by employers as relevant to meeting workforce needs.

There is no systematic follow-up from JCP or providers (apart from some individual projects) to establish whether those moving into employment have gained the 'right' job or whether their progress is sustainable. Arrangements to deal with progress in learning through Train to Gain skills brokers are at an early stage and have yet to be evaluated.

There is no coherent system to support learners' transition between provision or from learning into work. Referral arrangements may be no more than giving contact details. However there are individual good practice examples of working with employers to enable learners to access employment and identify further learning needs.

Considerable importance is attached to the role of voluntary and community organisations in engaging creatively with 'new' learners on a basis of trust, but information is lacking on progression from first step provision to 'mainstream' learning. MAES in particular has a number of productive links, but the voluntary and community sector generally relies on short term funding – even for substantial long-term programmes such as that accessed through the East Manchester Skills for Life Project – and it is not well integrated into strategic development.

Some providers, including not-for-profit organisations, have particular strengths in working with the most challenging learners and their experience could usefully be more widely shared.

## 5.5 Impact

There is considerable anecdotal evidence of the impact of literacy and numeracy on social cohesion and some recent positive research evidence by the City's Diversity and Inclusion team on the impact of family learning on improved children's performance at school. However, family learning is not uniformly available across the City.

There is little evidence of progression between providers and of the impact of much of the provision on employability or the successful transition to work.

Employers have expressed concerns about the effectiveness of literacy and numeracy when needs are identified in work-based provision, particularly in relation to the achievement of NVQ Level 2. It is reported that in this situation teachers are keen to assist their students in the process of gaining the accreditation but are not always aware of the importance of ensuring their literacy and numeracy needs are addressed.

The feedback from initial advice and guidance interviews is not sufficiently used in quality improvement processes nor does it contribute to the future design of programmes.

## 6. Recommendations

### 6.1 Strategic

The Skills Board should take on a more active leadership role for literacy and numeracy and the Board and its members should be champions for Skills for Life provision. The Board should introduce a high level City Employability Strategy, by building on the current Manchester's City Strategies Operational Plan, which sets priorities and targets which will support the City Strategy as a whole and cohere with the strategies of its partners, and should advise on how the diverse funding streams should be directed to this end. This Strategy should have a high level of ownership at Board level.

The Board should therefore hold the LSC, other funders and providers to account as far as overall strategic planning, setting targets, delivery and impact are concerned and should monitor and evaluate progress against appropriate measures.

The Employability Strategy should take account of the proposals in the Greater Manchester City Strategy Business Plan for more flexible commissioning models and freedom to enable innovative programmes to be developed and brought into the mainstream.

The Employability Strategy should be based on an understanding of the critical importance of literacy and numeracy as far as preparation for work is concerned. It should include a clear view of the three models of delivery:

- i) discrete or freestanding  
(groups/workshops/self-study through Ufi);
- ii) contextualised; and
- iii) embedded.

(See Appendix 2 for definitions of these terms)

It should define how each contributes to economic and social purpose and the target groups for each, and should show what opportunities for progression should exist.

Over time there should be a move of resources to contextualised or embedded literacy and numeracy in order to reflect the need to link skills acquisition to vocational pathways and build on learners' motivation. The Skills Board should endorse this approach. It should seek to identify successful practice in engaging learners and ensure that the lessons inform its strategy and future commissioning.

Wherever possible, literacy and numeracy should be delivered in high-quality, accessible co-locations (eg libraries, schools, Sure Start Centres, joint delivery sites, workplace learning centres) in priority wards, and be part of the planning for capital infrastructure.

The remit of the three main providers needs to be confirmed and where necessary clarified. This should be done in terms of mission and client groups as well as curriculum and levels.

Similarly, the role of voluntary and community sector groups and their relationship with the main providers should be clarified, their potential contribution estimated and a funding strategy developed accordingly.

The LSC and key partners should manage the coordination of the work of providers and other agencies. To ensure the creation of pathways from literacy and numeracy to employment, to avoid confusion and duplication.

The City Council should include Family Learning in its development of extended schools as an important means of reaching economically inactive people in targeted areas. This should be linked to progression routes through the national tests to vocational programmes with embedded literacy and numeracy.

In this context the Council should also consider community use of accommodation in the Building Schools for the Future programme, recognising that the 'hard-to-reach' target groups will need provision available during the daytime and year round, and that primary schools are a popular venue.

A strategy to engage less committed employers needs to build on the effective promotional campaign that is being planned under the '100' theme and on the new national Skills Pledge.

In order to complete the full picture across Skills for Life in Manchester, the project should now continue with a separate review of ESOL, extending membership of the current Steering Group to include representatives of user groups and learners.

## 6.2 Organisational

The LSC should ensure that data is captured and analysed in a way that better explains relative volumes within provision and also delivers robust value for money comparisons. The notion of 'standard learner numbers' proposed in the LSC's Delivering Skills in a Demand-led System should be helpful in this respect.

In the light of the Government's recent response to the Leitch report (July 2007), the LSC and the City Council should review the value of collecting Manchester household data on a regular basis, to enable improvements to be measured.

The LSC should initiate an active and purposeful network of providers with a specific remit and workplan. The workplan should include action to support the Skills Board's Employability Strategy, and clear links should be established so that the Board is aware of progress and the network takes account of the strategic context.

Priorities are to:

- on a regular basis, map delivery of literacy and numeracy by all partners to show locations, volumes and levels against ward and super-output area profiles. This must build on the City Council's proposed analysis of the pockets of worklessness and those not in education, employment or training; (NEET)
- compile a shared directory of provision and information points and key staff, by building on the 14-19 work;
- plan city-wide staff development to fill gaps, including capacity-building for the voluntary and community sector, and to support the extension of embedded and contextualised provision, and share information, resources and best practice for continuing professional development;
- set protocols for partnership working, including a model memorandum of understanding between providers operating shared or co-located delivery and a model service-level agreement between providers and the voluntary and community sector, building on the 14-19 models;
- map progression routes to employment and further study between providers, evaluating the effectiveness of IAG, referral and support arrangements and trial direct links between particular courses. This should be a priority for development funding;
- prepare a set of principles and protocols about data-sharing that enables providers and stakeholders to plan more effectively and measure impact. Significant work has been done in the City for the 14-19, and is part of national work, this must be taken into account;
- put systems in place to enable learners to carry forward individual learning plans and evidence of achievement as they progress between providers. Again much can be learned from the City's 14-19 work on web portfolios.

Jobcentre Plus should be invited to work more closely with the LSC, Train to Gain skills brokers, and providers to ensure effective referral, progression routes and support for JCP customers moving into work and/or training (including the 'welfare to workforce development routeways' mentioned in the JCP / LSC Joint Delivery Plan).

### 6.3 Programme development

The LSC, JCPlus and the City Regeneration teams in their implementation of the City Strategy should work with the Chamber of Commerce and providers to plan pre-employment programmes and vocational training with embedded literacy and numeracy which lead to guaranteed job interviews / job starts and effective transition arrangements for those entering work, with continuing support in employment.

The LSC should work with the Skills Board to pilot a programme which engages employers in developing the basic skills level of existing employees to a point where they are able to benefit from training at levels 3 and 4.

The Learning and Skills Council, working with the Skills Board, should consider commissioning a collection of progression information, for example with a small ex-gratia payment for learners or a sample survey, to establish what movement into further training or employment has taken place and its suitability.

Following the Leitch recommendations, the Skills Board should make the case for an all-age guidance service in Manchester. It should also ensure that IAG information on learner needs and progression is systematically collected and shared between partners to extend and improve provision.

When the "Manchester Learning Brand" offer is launched, the Skills Board should ensure that the notion of Learner Entitlement is made explicit in the relevant publicity and literature. This should include access to IAG at each stage, a portable individual learning plan and opportunities for progression.

Programme planning should take account of the objectives relating to skills for life for employability in LSC North West's Strategic Implementation Plan for Provision for Learners with Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities and of the expected increase in demand from disabled people.

### 6.4 Capacity Building

In addition to ensuring that all staff that directly deliver literacy and numeracy provision or support vocational staff to deliver contextualised/embedded basic skills is trained to level 4, providers should set targets to ensure that all staff receive literacy and numeracy awareness training.

All staff delivering training related to employability or the workplace should be trained to deliver embedded literacy and numeracy and the implications of the learner entitlement should be included in the relevant staff development programmes.

Providers should work with City Council and the Learning and Skills Employment Network to raise awareness of training in the voluntary and community sector and identify and meet training needs.

The LSC should seek to ensure that the Skills for Life Quality Improvement Programme in the region has specific activities to respond to the needs for capacity building identified in this report and in the proposed City Employability Strategy.

Providers, the City Council and other agencies should use the experience and resources being developed through the North West Skills for Life Professional Development Advice Service project to train 'first contact' staff. Providers should ensure participation in the City Council's proposed training programme for all front-line public sector workers and contribute to the literacy and numeracy awareness and employability content in this programme. Training and updating of first contact and front-line staff should be regarded as an on-going rather than one-off requirement.

# Appendix 1: The people involved

## The Steering Group

This was set up by the LSC to oversee the project and members of the Group were:

- Peter Lavender (Chair)  
NIACE Deputy Director
- Barbara Forshaw  
MANCAT Deputy Principal
- Bill Grady  
City College Acting Principal
- Wayne Shand  
City Council Head of Economic and Urban Policy
- Debra Woodruff  
Economic Solutions Chief Executive
- Mike Emmerich  
Chief Executive Manchester Enterprises
- Tim Atkinson  
MAES Head of Service
- Karen Rigg  
GMCVO Training Development Manager

### In attendance:

- Sue Bain  
LSCGM Project Manager  
Manchester
- Jane Bracewell  
LSC Area Director GM South
- Leah Maltby  
LSC Regional Skills Development Manager
- Hooshang Rahmani  
LSCGM Partnership Director
- Margaret Davey  
Consultant
- Judith Summers  
Consultant

The project team consisted of Margaret Davey, an educational consultant with a background as a senior manager in adult learning and experience of working with local authorities and the FE sector, and Judith Summers, also highly experienced as a senior manager in further education and adult learning and a resident of Manchester.

## The interviews

Over the period of the project the following people generously gave their time to talk about issues related to literacy and numeracy provision in Manchester:

### MAES

- Pat Eyres  
Acting Head of MAES
- Linda Ross,  
Head of Teaching and Learning
- Sue Jepson  
Zone Manager and Acting Head of Basic Skills
- Karen Warren  
Curriculum Coordinator for Basic Skills
- Chris Brownhill  
Family Learning Manager
- Vic Brailey  
External Partnerships / Workforce Development Manager

### City College

- Bill Grady  
Acting Principal
- Paul Ricketts  
Vice Principal Teaching and Learning
- Janet Prescott  
Skills for Life Manager

### MANCAT

- Barbara Forshaw  
Deputy Principal
- Jack Carney  
Senior Vice Principal
- John Cannon  
Inclusive Learning Manager
- Marina Parha  
Assistant Principal
- Kabir Usman  
Assistant Principal

### **Manchester City Council**

- Wayne Shand  
Head of Economic and Urban Policy
- Lyndy Geddes  
Skills Policy Officer
- Mark Rainey  
Acting Regeneration Coordinator  
Wythenshawe Regeneration Team
- Heather Clark  
Principal Economic Regeneration Officer  
North Manchester Regeneration Team
- Liz Jacobs  
Skills for Life Coordinator  
New Deal for Communities, East Manchester

### **Learning and Skills Council**

- Hooshang Rahmani  
Partnership Director  
City of Manchester
- Sue Bain  
Project Manager LSCGM
- Leah Maltby  
Skills Development Manager
- Anne Gornell  
Skills Development Director
- Kirsty Evans  
Train to Gain Manager
- Graham McKendrick  
Skills Development Manager  
Skills for Employment
- Deborah Green  
Information Services LSC GM

### **Forum Learning, Wythenshawe**

- Hilary Peel  
Manager
- Liz Williams  
Airport Academy Coordinator

### **Manchester Enterprises**

- Cecil Edey  
Skills and Business Support  
Greater Manchester

### **Work Solutions**

- Alan Benvie  
Head of Services for Young People
- Andy Macdonald  
Head of Offender Services

### **Manchester Solutions**

- Carol Jamieson  
Head of IAG

### **Jobcentre Plus**

- Gail Holland  
Third Party Provision Manager
- Ita Kirrane  
ESF Contract Manager

### **University for Industry North West**

- Tina Rawson
- Janet Houghton

### **North West Skills for Life Professional Development Advice Service**

- Elaine McLellan  
Project Coordinator  
Tribal Group

### **Voluntary and private providers**

- Elaine Hutchings  
Skills for Life Coordinator  
WEA North West
- Sue Finn  
Standguide

### **Employers**

- James Frith  
Policy Manager for Employment Skills and Workplace  
Greater Manchester Chamber of Commerce
- Joanne Lynch  
HR and Safety Manager  
Thomas Storey Group
- Libby Milson  
Head of Group Management Development  
Manchester Airports Group

# Appendix 2: Models of teaching literacy and numeracy – some definitions

## Embedded

Also called integrated: learners improve their literacy and numeracy skills as an integral part of a wider programme of study. This will be planned, and delivered, by the tutor or with the support of literacy/numeracy tutors working as part of the course team. Learners may take literacy or numeracy qualifications/tests alongside the main qualification aim or recording of achievement.

## Contextualised

Learners follow a programme which is primarily intended to improve literacy and numeracy and is also delivered through a specific topic of interest or employment outcome – for example, preparing for the driving test, IT skills.

## Discrete

Also called freestanding: learners follow a literacy or numeracy course that does not form part of a wider programme.

# Appendix 3: The LSC strategic context

This appendix extracts material from LSC strategic documents which is relevant to the analysis and recommendations of this Review.

## 1. LSC North West Skills for Life Strategy 2007-2010

### Current position

- The region achieved 117% of the 2004-2007 PSA target by October 2006.
- In 2004-2006, 64% of S4L learners were aged 19+, but only 51% of those contributing to the PSA target were. Data for 2005/6 suggest that only 43% of S4L learners were following programmes counting directly to the PSA target, with a further 18% on first rung provision.

### Key objectives

- Ensure achievement of the PSA target for Skills for Life.
- Increase the contribution from adults to this target and ensure the curriculum being delivered is appropriate to the level of need.
- Influence the embedding of Skills for Life across North West employer engagement strategies.
- Support the on-going quality improvement of Skills for Life delivery in the North West.
- Increase the number of numeracy qualifications contributing to the Skills for Life PSA target.
- Meet the needs of those target groups identified in the Skills for Life Strategy.

### Items from Implementation Plan

- Establish baseline of provision to determine whether there is sufficient to meet needs. Monitor to 'produce a report identifying priority geographical areas'.
- Encourage the use or development of embedded Skills for Life teaching and learning materials to meet the needs of priority sectors.
- Ensure Train to Gain meets the Skills for Life needs of employers and employees by influencing the development of brokerage training.

- Offer on-going professional development opportunities to brokers and advisors (eg Next Step and TUC Learning Reps) to improve their understanding of current Skills for Life issues and signposting them to appropriate qualifications.
- Encourage more flexibility in delivery of employer-led Skills for Life programmes particularly the use of E-Learning.
- Work with Quality Improvement Agency to influence the Skills for Life Improvement Programme which will support North West Providers.
- Reviewing and agreeing a local and regional approach to showcasing and disseminating good practice.
- Supporting Skills for Life deliverers and voluntary organisations to meet the needs of the following target groups: offenders, families and young people.

## 2. LSC Regional Commissioning Plan – Supporting Information for Regional Plan 2007-08 (January 2007)

The plan reflects the above priorities, with an additional action:

- LSC regional and partnership teams to review balance and mix of provision being delivered.

### 3. LSC Greater Manchester Annual Plan 2007-08

#### Current position

- In 2005, 36% of Greater Manchester's working age population had not attained a Level 2 qualification (over 570,000 people).
- 53% of local residents have below-Level 1 numeracy and 13% have below-Level 1 literacy.
- 2005 National Employers Skills Survey found that across Greater Manchester there were around 35,400 vacancies; over two-fifths (around 15,300 vacancies) were described as being hard to fill. More than four out of five of these were Skill Shortage Vacancies. An analysis of the survey results by occupation reveals that the highest numbers of skill shortage vacancies (as a percentage of total vacancies) are for skilled trades (73%), associated professionals (55%) and professionals (50%).

#### Key action

The 'effective targeting of resources to contribute to the priorities within the City Strategy':

- commission programmes aimed at overcoming barriers to learning and employment for priority groups through the provision of one-to-one support and vocational learning;
- increase the proportion of skills for life provision which contributes directly or indirectly to our targets from 70% to 80%;
- increase the delivery of skills for life qualifications through: procuring an Employability Programme for Jobcentre Plus customers; increasing the number of those aged 19+ accessing Skills for Life target bearing programmes; increasing demand for numeracy provision.

### 4. Jobcentre Plus and Local LSC Joint Delivery Plan 2006-2007 (Greater Manchester)

- Protocols to identify roles of partners in referral and delivery.
- Map and develop provision.
- Identify other funding interventions.
- Review provider delivery expertise and capacity.
- Ensure JCP providers are integrated into local S4L networks.
- Ensure all appropriate S4L provision is reflected in the Train to Gain offer.
- Creating demand-led 'welfare to workforce development routeways' (with reference to the Greater Manchester Employer Coalition business plan).
- IAG Skills Coaching Service to work with JCP access inactive claimants.

## 5. Learners with Learning Difficulties and / or Disabilities

### **LSC North West Strategic Implementation Plan for Provision for Learners with Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities 2007-2010: Consultation Document January 07**

Providers' self assessment should focus on:

- learners at entry level and entry level 1, for whom progress to a level 2 or apprenticeship is inappropriate, to ensure that there is improved opportunity for work based learning with embedded Skills for Life;
- learners on work preparation programmes to ensure that focus is on learning in the workplace and supported employment programmes.

### **Price Waterhouse Cooper Review of Further Education Provision for Learners (16-25 Year Olds) with Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities in the North West (January 2007)**

This review predicts an increase in demand flowing from improved diagnosis, at both entry levels and above, and including disabilities such as dyslexia. There will therefore be an overlap between the Strategic Implementation Plan for LLDD and the development of a basic skills strategy which should be borne in mind in engagement strategies, programme development and design and employer links.



Learning and Skills Council  
Greater Manchester

Arndale House  
Arndale Centre  
Manchester M4 3AQ  
T 0845 019 4142  
E [grmanchesterinfo@lsc.gov.uk](mailto:grmanchesterinfo@lsc.gov.uk)  
[www.lsc.gov.uk](http://www.lsc.gov.uk)

If you would like a copy of this brochure  
in any other format, including large print  
please contact LSC Greater Manchester  
on 0161 261 0266

Extracts from this publication may be used for  
non-commercial educational or training purposes, on condition  
that the source is acknowledged and the findings are not  
misrepresented. This document is available in electronic form  
on the Learning and Skills Council website: [www.lsc.gov.uk](http://www.lsc.gov.uk)

Publication enquiries: 0870 900 6800

Publication reference: LSC-P-NWR-070011