

NW LSC Skills for Life case studies

Developing successful sector responsive
models through partnership



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Foreword

Since the Move On programme's inception in 2003, the Learning and Skills Council in the North West has worked in partnership to explore how the programme's positive approach to Skills for Life promotion, engagement and training can best be applied in workplace settings. This has led to the development of wider partnership activity that has resulted in Skills for Life being successfully positioned within workforce development in a number of sector organisations.

Various models of delivery have been developed and piloted; these have encouraged some employers to take 'a toe in the water' approach to Skills for Life. The partnership working underpinning the pilot activity has also given education and training providers the opportunity to find out about employer-specific business objectives and priorities, the day-to-day issues and challenges in implementing training, and the variety of learners who might benefit from Skills for Life development. It has provided a platform on which partners can build further development activity, including the exploration of a learner offer broad enough to address the often wide-ranging needs of specific organisations.

The case studies that follow highlight the great variety of organisations that have worked successfully in partnership across the North West to introduce Skills for Life development opportunities effectively in often complex and challenging contexts. Though the settings are diverse, one outcome is common to all – employees have achieved Skills for Life qualifications, thereby enhancing both their own and their organisation's development.



Kirsty Evans
Director
Support for Business, Train to Gain

Move On Carefully

A Move On input at a care sector conference in Cumbria in 2005 organised by the Care Sector Alliance Cumbria kick-started partnership working which has since engaged stakeholders across the North West and nationally in successful development activity, positioning Skills for Life at the heart of workforce development. Eighteen employer organisations attending the conference expressed an interest in utilising the positive Move On approach to develop Skills for Life training opportunities for their staff. Lesley Gill, Workforce Development Officer with Care Sector Alliance Cumbria, and Julie Mooney, Move On adviser, saw the opportunity to take a strategic approach to SfL development by brokering partnership activity between employers and providers with the support of the Learning and Skills Council and the Sector Skills Council, Skills for Care.



Lesley Gill Workforce Development Officer, Care Sector Alliance Cumbria

'The key factor leading to our initial involvement was that social care had become much more regulated over recent years and this challenged many employers who had to ensure that their staff achieved NVQ qualifications. Additionally, many social care workers had historically entered the sector with low levels of academic achievements and therefore they could struggle to complete the necessary NVQ work.'

Lesley Gill, Workforce Development Officer, Care Sector Alliance Cumbria

The Move On Carefully project helped to address the sector's skills challenges by providing the platform for the development of sector-specific programmes that were responsive to employer and employee needs, and also incorporated the opportunity for participants to gain National Certificates in Literacy or Numeracy. Following successful piloting in Cumbria they have been disseminated across the NW and nationally through Move On and Skills for Care regional networks. North West regional dissemination supported by Skills for Care in 2008 engaged a total of 65 care sector organisations and 32 education and training providers.

During the past five years, through employer-led collaborative working, the following programmes have been produced:

- Effective Communication Skills for Working in Care 2006
- Effective Communication and Confidence for NVQs in 2006
- Effective Communication and Language for Working in Care – for ESOL learners in 2007
- Move On Carefully Numeracy 2008.



Partnership event celebrating Move On Carefully participation and achievement

'The benefit to me, as an employer, of the partnership approach taken in the Move On

Carefully project, was being able to contribute in creating the learning materials that I knew would be relevant and easily understood by my carers. As a result of the courses I have a number of carers who are more confident, with improved self esteem and willing now to take on further learning like NVQs. What is more, these successful carers are now encouraging their colleagues to also do the courses and to seek promotions within the company, which ultimately impacts favourably on retention figures and costs.'

Diane Smilie, manager, Cumbria View Care Services

Benefits of the partnership activity, particularly in terms of building sustainable working relationships, have also been acknowledged by education and training providers:

'Move On Carefully has been a very successful project for Cumbria Adult Education. It has enabled us to embed skills and provide meaningful and relevant training to care staff throughout Cumbria. In particular, we have developed a very successful working partnership with Cumbria Care (Cumbria County Council). We are able to respond positively to all of their Skills for Life training requirements, and deliver flexibly. The Training and Development Officers within Cumbria Care have successfully recruited many staff onto our Skills for Life programmes and now offer all new staff the opportunity to undertake a literacy and numeracy skills check.'

Victoria Emmett, Skills for Life manager, Cumbria Adult Education Service

The Skills for Care NW Move On Carefully dissemination events incorporated employer/provider working together sessions providing opportunities for discussion on how the approach, materials and delivery models could be adapted to suit the needs of the diverse range of care sector organisations.

Special Needs Care in partnership with Move On Cheshire County Council

'I am a Registered Manager for a privately owned company which provides housing and care support to users with a learning disability. The company employs a diverse range of staff. I first found out about 'Move On Carefully' when I attended a Skills for Care dissemination event in August 2008. I saw it as a great opportunity to bring the team together, to enhance their existing skills and to be able to offer them a certificate for their learning. Following the event I was put in touch with a tutor who came to discuss the training with me. At the visit the tutor highlighted the advantages of the programme and gave me hints on how best to sell the idea to the staff team. As a new staff team just coming together they were keen to be a part of this experience. Every step of the way the tutor was approachable and supportive. I particularly liked the way in which the materials were tailored to utilise our own documentation and the tutor quite confidently related social care issues to the examples and case studies, this I feel, made it a more useful experience'

Since 2005 the success of the Move On Carefully partnership activity has been reflected in achievement of the following awards:

- 2005 Cumbria County Council Award for Joint Working/Partnership (awarded to Care Sector Alliance Cumbria)
- A 2007 Cumbria County Council Excellence award for Equality & Diversity (Move On Carefully partners)
- A 2008 National Training Award (Move On Carefully partners)
- 2008 Skills for Care Accolade for Most effective Partnership for Workforce Development (Care Sector Alliance Cumbria)

'Move On Carefully activity has not only provided a platform for realising the Care Sector Alliance's strategic aims of working successfully together and with others to maximise training and development opportunities, but has created a good practice model for partnership working that has benefited stakeholders committed to upskilling staff across the care sector.'

Lesley Gill, Care Sector Alliance Cumbria, Workforce Development Officer

Move On in the NHS

The commitment to Skills for Life development by the health sector is reflected in the growing number of Trusts across the country signing the Skills Pledge. It is widely acknowledged by stakeholders that the key to success in reaching the objectives underpinning the Skills Pledge is reliant on effective partnership working. In the North West a strong platform for ongoing skills development has been created through regional Move On in the NHS project activity, which has been harnessing the skills and expertise of a variety of individuals and partner organisations since 2005.

Initial activity involved relevant stakeholders working together to address the Skills for Life challenges presented to NHS staff through the introduction of the Agenda for Change, and the Knowledge and Skills Framework. Collaborative working involved Move On advisers, NHS lead brokers, Cheshire and Merseyside Strategic Health Authority, Greater Manchester Strategic Health Authority, Greater Manchester Health Centre of Vocational Excellence (CoVE), the Learning and Skills Council, Skills for Health, eleven local education and training providers, twelve local NHS Trusts, Unison and Unionlearn.

Partners worked together to develop and pilot delivery of themed training programmes, incorporating the opportunity to develop skills in a relevant health context and to achieve the National Certificates in Adult Literacy or Numeracy.

Programmes included:

- Effective Communication Skills for Working in the NHS
- Effective Communication Skills for Customer Service
- Move On Maths in the NHS
- Move On Communication Skills for Leaders
- Communication Skills for Applying Equality and Diversity
- Communication Skills for participating in a Personal Development Plan/KSF Review
- Communication Skills for KSF Portfolio Building.

Successful piloting and evaluation by all partners was followed by regional and national rollout and dissemination supported by the Move On programme, NHS North West, Skills Academy for Health North West and Skills for Health. Feedback indicates high rates of retention and achievement for learners on the programmes.



MONHS partners celebrating pilot activity achievement at event held at Warrington Ruby League Club Halliwell Jones stadium

Through further localised partnership activity the programmes have also been adapted to suit the needs of different cohorts within different organisations. An example of this is the development of an e-learning model at Wirral Met College in 2008.

Barbara Hawksett, Curriculum Leader: Skills for Life and Work at Wirral Metropolitan College, who was closely involved with the development of the Effective Communication Skills for Working in the NHS programme, has since successfully adapted the programme in partnership with Clatterbridge Hospital for Trust-wide access via a VLE with e-tutor support.

Barbara acknowledges the benefits that have resulted from involvement with MONHS activity.

'We have had increased networking opportunities and gained a better understanding of the NHS work environment and demands on employees which has informed our responsiveness in terms of models of delivery and programme content. This has strengthened our working relationships and credibility with the sector. Internal partnerships within college have also developed between departments as expertise has been drawn on to develop the NHS e-learning pathway and further adaptation of the model has been explored to suit the needs of other Skills for Life learners.'



Barbara Hawksett Curriculum Leader Skills for Life and Work, Wirral Met College

A Move On in the NHS steering group has met regularly since activity commenced in 2005. Members of the group are: NHS North West, Skills Academy for Health NW, Unite, Move On, unionlearn, Skills for Health and the Learning and Skills council. The group is chaired by Gaye Jackson, Head of CPD and Education Partnerships, NHS North West, and its remit has been to build on lessons learnt through the initial activity and identify and develop opportunities across the region to further skills development within the health sector. This has included supporting organisations working towards a Skills for Life Whole Organisation approach. In 2008 the MONHS steering group was positioned as a Skills for Life subgroup of the NW Joint Investment Framework operational group.

In 2009, the JIF group funded focused partnership activity between Move On and six trusts. Through wide-ranging activity aimed at increasing Skills for Life achievement, good practice models have emerged that have been incorporated into a sustainability plan for regional dissemination.

Increasing numbers of learners have engaged in Skills for Life development and achieved qualifications as a result of Move On in the NHS collaborative activity; but equally important has been the ongoing and extended partnership working that continues to support and inform change and skills development in the NW.



Gaye Jackson Head of CPD and Education Partnerships NHS North West

'A key benefit of the Move On NHS activity has been the opportunity for continued collaborative thinking and responsiveness to a fast-moving skills agenda through robust, open and transparent, trusting relationships with partners.'

Gaye Jackson Head of CPD and Education Partnerships NHS North West

Move On Merseyside Taxis

Since 2006 a number of partner organisations have been working together to embed Skills for Life, incorporating a Move On/Get On At Work approach, into the professional development training offer available to taxi drivers across Merseyside. Partners include Merseytravel/Merseylearn, Move On, Merseyside Transport Provider Network, Unionlearn, GoSkills, TGWU (Unite) and the LSC.

Building on the successful introduction of the VRQ BTEC Level 2 Award in Transporting Passengers by Taxi and Private Hire in 2005, a working group including representatives from Merseylearn, Knowsley Community College and Move On developed a new programme, which was piloted in spring 2007. The aim was to produce a programme that would complement and enhance the existing training offer by responding to some of the issues and barriers that had emerged in relation to take-up. These included some resistance from drivers to undergoing training because of potential cost, including income lost while off the road, and a fear factor of learning because many drivers had not undergone any form of learning since school. A blended delivery model with Skills for Life embedded was developed, with a mixture of face-to-face and independent learning. The programme was successfully promoted by Merseylearn's Transport Learner Support worker whose many years' experience as a taxi driver had real credibility with the drivers he targeted for the pilot activity. The pilot programme was well received by the 30 drivers taking part. There was 100% retention and 100% achievement of the VRQ. Twenty-four drivers also took up the offer of entering for a Certificate in Adult Literacy as a value added qualification, with an 80% achievement rate.

The outcomes and lessons learnt from the pilot project were built on by the partners, and further development activity lead to the successful incorporation of the Skills for Life embedded VRQ delivery model into a route to full NVQ Level 2 achievement. Hundreds of taxi drivers have now benefited from training delivered through the Merseyside Transport Training Provider Network organisations and have achieved vocational and Skills for Life qualifications.

'Merseytravel's mission is to promote integrated transport to improve the quality of life on Merseyside. As taxis are an important part of integrated transport and as part of the Integrated Transport Forum that Merseytravel hosts, the decision was taken in 2005 to set up a taxi subgroup involving representatives from the taxi industry. These included taxi firm owners, licensing officers, Liverpool John Lennon Airport and trade representatives. The overwhelming priority identified by this group was the need for a quality structured training programme for taxi drivers. We have subsequently achieved our aim by seeking out and drawing on the expertise and support of partner organisations including training providers, trade representatives and union learning reps, LSC, GoSkills and Move On.'



Liz Chandler, Head of Learning and Transformation Merseytravel

Liz Chandler, Head of Learning and Transformation Merseytravel

Union learning representatives have played an important role in the partnership activity. As experienced taxi drivers they have successfully engaged drivers and supported them through their learning.

'Taxi drivers have never really featured on anyone's agenda when it comes to developing the skills of workers – which is really surprising considering the fact that only 11% of taxi drivers have above a Level 2 qualification. So we were absolutely delighted to be working with Merseytravel, GoSkills, the LSC, Move On and various providers to begin the journey to develop standards and skills of taxi drivers. Setting up a team of union learning reps, training, supporting and involving them, has been an experience for all of us, and we have all learnt so much.'

Ann McCall, TGWU Regional Education Organiser

Key to the success of the taxi project was the appointment of a ULR as a Transport Learner Support worker, funded by the Union Learning Fund to help drive forward the initiative through ULR and broader stakeholder networking and partnership activity.



Tony Norbury, Transport Learner Support worker and Lyndsey Deakin Skills for Life tutor Merseylearn

'Working in partnership with professional organisations such as Unionlearn, GoSkills Merseylearn/Merseytravel, Move On and training providers, I was introduced to the sector enablers I needed to work with if the objectives were to be achieved. It was also a great personal learning journey. My determination to succeed, confidence and communication skills grew with every meeting I attended. I undertook a trades union learner representative course with the TGWU, going on to become a union learning representative. I achieved the VRQ qualification myself, which helped me understand the learning and

development agenda and what the other drivers would need to do if I successfully engaged them into learning. I also achieved a Level 2 Literacy qualification and became an A1 assessor for the NVQ Level 2 Road Passenger Transport, driving vehicles.'

Tony Norbury, Transport Learner Support worker, Merseylearn

It has been acknowledged by training providers that the opportunity for them to learn about the sector has been a key factor in the success and continued uptake of the training offer.

'Developing the taxi training programme through a collaborative partnership meant that industry-relevant skills and experience were incorporated into the development of the learning materials. This has increased the credibility of the programme for taxi drivers who had long been a neglected sector as far as training was concerned. Relevant stakeholders outside Merseyside have acknowledged the success and potential of the project activity and Knowsley Community College and Merseytravel have been acting in a consultative capacity for other organisations wishing to enhance taxi training.'

Vicki Deakin, Director, Employer Response, Knowsley Community College

Feedback and evaluation from the partners involved in the taxi project highlights the benefits of collaboration in achieving organisational objectives whilst pursuing a shared outcome.

'In taking the partnership working forward the key was to identify common goals and overlaps. The results demonstrate how by working together far more can be achieved than by working on an individual basis.'

Liz Chandler, Head of Learning and Transformation, Merseytravel

Move On Bus Sector

Merseytravel is acknowledged within the North West and nationally as an organisation that is fully committed to the learning agenda. Having signed the Skills Pledge themselves they are actively encouraging and supporting their suppliers to do the same. The organisation is proactive in seeking out relevant partnerships to provide support necessary to implement their workforce development plans.

'We are committed to providing good-quality training and development opportunities that are responsive to the needs of our workforce. We recognise that to reach that goal we need to draw on the experience and expertise of partners and believe that that has been the key to our success to date. We saw the issues arising from the introduction of mandatory continuing and professional development for bus drivers, particularly in relation to the drivers' confidence and readiness to take on the associated training, as an opportunity to once again develop a bespoke training offer through collaborative working. We had already incorporated the Move On approach successfully to enhance training developed for the taxi sector and felt confident that it would work equally well for the bus sector.'

Liz Chandler Head of Learning and Transformation Merseytravel

From September 2008, following an EU directive, mandatory training in the form of the Certificate in Professional Competence affected all drivers of buses and coaches. In 2009 a partnership approach including LSC, Move On, GoSkills, Merseytravel, local bus companies and the Merseyside Transport Training Provider Network has resulted in the development of a 'First step to the Certificate of Professional Competence and NVQ communication skills' programme, aimed at building the confidence and skills of drivers before they take part in the CPC training, as well as providing the opportunity for them to gain an additional qualification in the form of the Adult Literacy Certificate.

'The team at Merseytravel shared the concerns of the bus and coach employers who are contracted to Merseytravel's supported bus service that low levels of confidence for some individuals would be a barrier to employees starting a professional development learning journey. The Merseyside transport training provider network has pulled together education and training providers across the area to jointly discuss and develop training for the sector, share valuable experience and agree quality standards, one of which has been to incorporate Skills for Life development opportunities in all training offers. We are proud that, in conjunction with Move On, our collaborative working has produced the First step to CPC programme and associated promotional materials to support bus sector employees across our region.'



Tony Norbury with members of Merseyside Transport Training Provider Network

Tony Norbury Transport Learner Support worker and-Chair of Merseyside Transport Training Provider Network operational group

Piloting of the programme commenced in August 2009 through partnership arrangements between Hugh Baird College and Maghull Coaches:

'As a tutor I'm delighted that I will be able to use the programme materials that have been produced through the partnership activity. I feel confident that they will enable

us to deliver good quality and relevant training which will build the confidence and skills of bus drivers and help them to progress on their route to professional development’.

Skills for Life tutor Hugh Baird College



Tutor with bus drivers engaged in programme pilot activity



Ann Meek manager, Maghull Coaches with employee

‘My main motivation in getting involved with this project was to have an opportunity to discuss with the partners involved training that would meet both my employees’ and my company’s needs. It’s been good to be able to share issues and ideas in relation to the training content and delivery and to meet people face to face.’

Ann Meek Maghull Coaches

Further pilot activity is scheduled for early autumn 2009, with partnership arrangements in place between Knowsley Community College and A1A Travel, and Warrington Business School and Huyton Travel Ltd.

Research conducted by GoSkills into Skills for Life in the context of the transport sector was incorporated in their *Routes to Success* report, published in November 2008. It highlighted that:

- 64% of companies in the passenger transport sector believe that productivity is hindered by staff members who do not have basic skills
- 51% of sector employers believe that ‘training is required to improve numeracy, literacy, basic IT and communications skills for some staff in my organisation’
- 59% agree that ‘there are barriers to progressing further for employees who do not have basic skills’
- 65% of companies foresee the needs for basic skills in the workforce increasing in the next 5 to 10 years.



Anita Duffy Goskills Regional Manager NW

‘GoSkills recent research highlights the vital contribution of literacy, numeracy and communications skills in the passenger transport sector. These skills are important: the impact of skills gaps and deficiencies in delivering effective transport operations and high quality customer service are concerning. We need to take action, and the partnership working delivered through this project, supported by the LSC and facilitated by Move On and Merseytravel, has enabled this work to happen, helping us to address a key sector issue.’

Anita Duffy Goskills Regional Manager NW

Move On Laundry

One of the main aims in establishing a North West Laundry and Dry Cleaning Consortium was to create a platform to explore and develop a more structured approach to training for the sector. Membership of the consortium includes Liverpool Community College (consortium lead), Blackburn College, TTE Training Ltd, LTC (Laundry Technology Centre) and Skillfast-UK. Some of the issues to be addressed were a low incidence of training activity overall, the fact that take up focused on Guild of Launderers and Cleaners awards, which lie outside of the national qualifications framework, and a lack of mechanisms and processes on which to build a training structure. From the start, evaluation of consortium activity has been fed back to Skillfast-UK, the sector skills council for laundry and dry cleaning, to inform and shape similar development activity nationally. During 2009 the consortium have been involved in a NW LSC Skills for Life Sector Responsiveness Project working in partnership with the LSC, Move On and Skillfast-UK.

'Working with Skillfast-UK as a consortium of providers in the North West, we were asked to evaluate a partnership approach within the laundry and dry cleaning sector, develop employer relationships and develop, deliver and evaluate relevant programmes and delivery models. We had been promoting the national benchmark of Level 2 qualifications but it became clear that for some employees in the sector this was too far too fast. Involvement in the sector responsiveness project has supported us to work collaboratively to develop a L1 First Step to NVQ Communication Skills programme to build the confidence and skills needed by laundry staff to progress on to NVQ and further professional development opportunities. Involvement has also led to the strengthening of internal networks, and partner-to-partner networks have developed further. Importantly, employers have felt that their needs and those of their employees have been heard.'



Della Thomas, Business Development Manager at Liverpool Community College and chair of the North West Laundry and Dry Cleaning Consortium

Della Thomas, Business Development Manager at Liverpool Community College and chair of the North West Laundry and Dry Cleaning Consortium

The working group for programme development included NVQ in Laundry and Dry Cleaning tutor/assessors from Liverpool Community College and Blackburn College, and Skills for Life specialist staff. The involvement of the vocational staff was crucial as they were able to highlight and share specific skills gaps issues evident from NVQ delivery which informed the development of the Level 1 First Step programme. Piloting of the programme is due to commence in autumn 2009.



Liverpool Community College project working group with MO adviser

'Through the project, the Skills for Life's team's working relationships with the college's business development teams and the vocational training teams has strengthened and we have also benefited from the experience of other providers in the consortium. Gaining an insight into the particular issues of the sector and building relationships prior to development and delivery of training increases our credibility with the sector and gives us the confidence to achieve our goal which is to build the skills of laundry staff in a relevant, meaningful context and encourage progression.'

Amanda Scarborough, Skills for Life tutor, Liverpool Community College

As a sector skills council, Skillfast-UK actively encourages all parts of the skills supply-chain to work together because they believe, in the end, that all stakeholders want the customer to be happy, and success in up-skilling the workforce depends on there being no breaks in the chain. They recognise that the development and application of common quality standards helps to build employer confidence and trust. Skillfast-UK acknowledges that, from an employer's point of view, the skills landscape is very complicated. With the involvement of many agencies and organisations it can be difficult to work out where to go for help. The partnership working reflected in this project has been endorsed by Skillfast-UK because the approach to employers is streamlined and more effective, avoiding unnecessary duplication.

'In terms of qualifications, Skillfast-UK's work is mainly right at the start of the cycle, at the planning and development end. However, as a partner in this initiative, we were able to learn valuable lessons about how qualification delivery works, which we could feed back into our planning processes. Without partnership working, there would be no feedback loop, and we wouldn't be able to learn about what works.'

*'From Skillfast-UK's point of view, partnership working is the **only** way to ensure that things work on the ground.'*



Helen Hewitt Skills Manager Skillfast-UK

Helen Hewitt Skillfast-UK

North West Learning and Skills Council and Move On would like to thank all organisations and individuals who contributed to the success of the Skills for Life sector projects.

