

Skills for Life and Work:

The journey from policy through practice to progress and promise for all

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Services for life

PREAMBLE

The British Government's ambition for the *Skills for Life* strategy is, on the face of it, very straightforward. It is a strategy founded on a desire to secure **social justice** and **employability** for every citizen living, learning and working in England.

Through its **investment** in, and **implementation** of, the *Skills for Life* strategy the Government has demonstrated its commitment to securing these twin goals of social justice and employability.

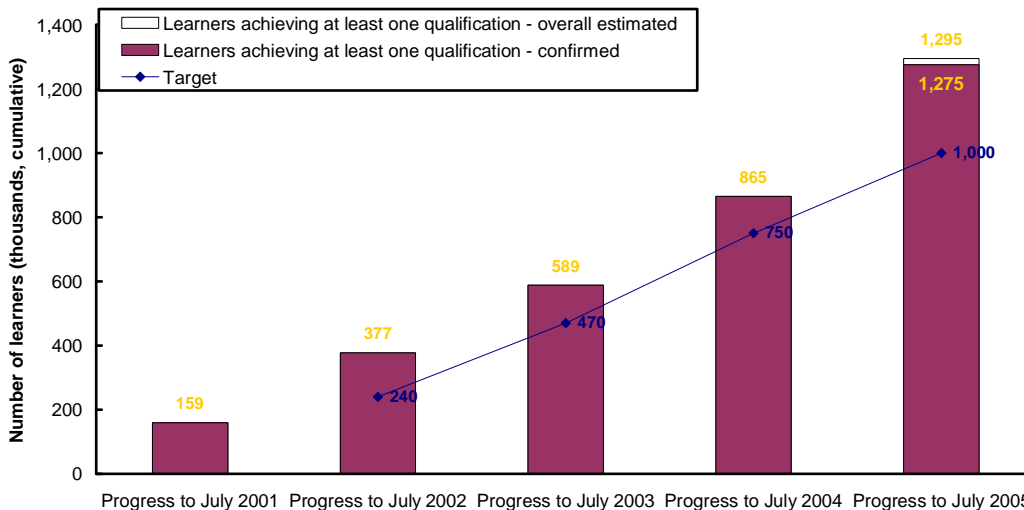
Through its determination to demonstrably secure these goals the government has set itself demanding **targets**, within clear **timelines** and with specific **milestones**.

The achievement of these goals is measured by a Public Service Agreement Target and is owned by the **Department for Education and Skills**. This department is held accountable for these targets by **Her Majesty's Treasury** and progress on them is monitored by the **Prime Minister's Delivery Unit**.

More precisely, these targets have been designed to increase the number of adults with the skills required for employability and progression to higher levels of training through **improving** the **basic skill levels** of **2.25 million adults** between the launch of *Skills for Life* in 2001 and 2010, with milestones of 0.75 million in 2004 and 1.5 million in 2007.

The target is a very focused one and relates to the number of different adults who achieve a **qualification** that counts towards it. Each learner will count only once when they achieve their first qualification.

Figure 1: Number of learners achieving at least one counting Skills for Life qualification 2001-05



- An estimated 1,295 thousand learners had achieved at least one counting qualification between April 2001 to July 2005, which exceeds the 2005 milestone of 1 million.
- The number of achievements has been gradually increasing year on year with an estimated 430 thousand in the latest year 2004-05.

I have opened this presentation with such stark data because I wanted from the outset to demonstrate two important factors and pose one important question that are central to the *Skills for Life* strategy:

The first factor is that, in essence, *Skills for Life* is a politically driven strategy, at once, altruistic in its intention, centralist in its implementation and ruthless in its determination to secure irreversible change.

The second factor is that, set against its own challenging targets, *Skills for Life* has been to date, and continues to be, a measurable and tangible success as the number of individuals in learning, achieving qualifications and progressing in work and training is enormous.

The key question, and one that we will explore during this presentation, is why, given such massive support and such obvious success, is the value and validity of the strategy still a cause for national debate?

INTRODUCTION

***Skills for Life* as a political imperative**

Skills for Life: the national strategy for improving adult literacy, language and numeracy skills was launched in March 2001 by the Prime Minister. It aimed to help create a society in which adults have the literacy, language and numeracy skills they need to find and keep work and participate fully in society, thereby increasing the economic performance and social cohesion of the country.

A survey of the English and mathematics skills of young people and adults in England in 2001 suggested that millions of those of working age had problems with the basics of English and mathematics. The figures contained in the survey spoke for themselves:

- in England:
 - 5.2 million individuals aged 16 to 65 years had literacy levels below Level 1 (those skills expected of an average 13-year-old); and
 - 6.8 million individuals aged 16 to 65 years had numeracy skills below Entry Level 3 (those skills expected of an average 11-year-old) 15 million individuals had skills below, Level 1.

To reinforce the negative impact on England's economic performance officials at the Treasury had estimated that poor levels of literacy and numeracy were likely to have cost the country as much as £10 billion a year in lost revenue from taxes, lower productivity, and the increased burden on the welfare state. In addition, estimates showed that an individual with good literacy and numeracy skills could earn £50,000 more over a working life than someone with poorer skills.

In the foreword to the published strategy, David Blunkett, then Secretary of State for Education and Employment, highlighted the government's concern thus:

'These people and their children risk being cut off from the advantages of the world increasingly linked through information technology. A fair and prosperous society cannot be built on such insecure foundations.'

Skills for Life was also launched by a government that believed that it had already addressed the lower levels of literacy and numeracy and general underachievement in schools through the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies. Blunkett went on:

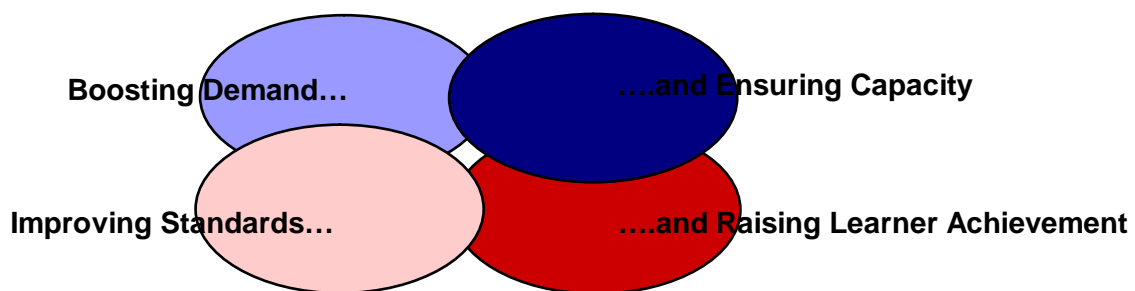
We are tackling underachievement in schools. Today children are reading and writing and using numbers better than at any time in the past. Adults must be able to make the same progress. Despite strong roots stretching back to the mutual learning of the 19th-century standards of literacy and numeracy provision had been too poor for too long... And that is why we are investing more every year on addressing this issue. Across government we will be spending £1.5 billion over the next three years on enabling those with poor literacy, and numeracy abilities to acquire the skills they need.

The strategy then went on to set out carefully and clearly how the government would lead the way. It described:

- the priority groups who would benefit from these new opportunities:
 - unemployed people and benefit claimants
 - prisoners, and those supervised in the community
 - public sector employees
 - low skilled people in employment
 - other groups at risk of exclusion, including parents and those living in disadvantaged communities.
- How the learning and skills sector would deliver higher standards by:
 - **boosting demand** for learning and ensuring the engagement across government agencies and other employers to help change the country's culture of learning
 - **ensuring capacity** of provision of the skills supply chain so that the planning and funding of literacy and numeracy provision was effective and well coordinated
 - **improving the standards** and quality of literacy and numeracy provision by developing the teaching workforce and ensuring it was well-trained and motivated
 - **raising learner achievement** through the new national learning infrastructure and reducing barriers to learning.

The diagram below has become the key image used to define and communicate the interdependencies and relationships between the strategy's four central pillars.

Figure 2: The four key pillars of the Skills for Life Strategy designed to ensure delivery



In order that the government's ambitions for the Strategy were delivered responsibility for planning and coordinating the implementation of the strategy was done in-house. The Adult Basic Skills Strategy Unit, later to become the *Skills for Life* Strategy Unit, was created within the Department for Education and Skills to lead this national strategy and was given a remit to work across all government departments. (See Annex 2 for the key interdependencies).

I would just like the pause here to take stock of what I have laid out thus far. If you accept that the Government is at the centre of any policy change, in respect of *Skills for Life* it can be said that:

- **The Centre** has recognised the general skills deficiencies in the working age population.
- **The Centre** has developed a detailed strategy to address these general skills deficiencies in the working age population.
- **The Centre** has taken responsibility for managing and overseeing the delivery of improving the general skills deficiencies in the working age population.

Against such a background it is interesting to consider, with hindsight, the importance of the final paragraph of the strategy document entitled, 'Working Together.' After setting out in 144 paragraphs what was going to be done by whom, with whom and to whom, the 145th described the ambitions for partnership thus:

The measures that we have set out in the strategy will mark a radical step forward in improving this country's literacy and numeracy skills levels. We in government, our many partners and adult learners themselves must all work together to turn this strategy from a statement of our aims to a record of our achievements, so that our successes at the end of the 21st century will see our work as a major milestone on the road to the creation of a true lifelong learning society.

Partnership is built over time, on trust and focuses on mutual aims, ambitions and outcomes. From the outset, the *Skills for Life* strategy has relied on partnership and has depended upon the goodwill, the honesty and the integrity of its partners to deliver the ambition and the vision set out above.

Unfortunately, at least in part and by some, the strategy has not been given the time necessary to build sustainable partnerships and embed meaningful approaches to teaching and learning across the full range of audiences constituencies, contexts and settings that comprise the learning and skills landscape in England. As a consequence, alongside the many successes associated with the *Skills for Life* strategy, challenge and criticism from various quarters have continued unabated.

Skills for Life under the media spotlight

It is worth pausing here and exploring the role of the media in the roll out of the *Skills for Life* strategy.

In the lead up to Labour's successful 1997 election. Tony Blair MP, at that time leader of the Opposition made a now famous speech where he said that his government would have only three priorities. These priorities would be 'Education, Education, Education.'

From that moment on education received and continues to receive unprecedented media attention. In England education stories are no longer only found languishing on the Education pages of the 'serious press' or in professional journals: education stories are now front page news – *Skills for Life* has been no exception. Indeed you might say because of its many successes and its high public profile, the strategy has been subject to even greater scrutiny than might be expected of an adult skills story



The strategy recognised from the outset the power of the media and commissioned its own promotional campaign: 'Get On'. 'Get On' focused on general awareness raising among the adult population as well as encouraging those who needed to improve their skills to recognise their skills gaps and 'get rid of their gremlins'. The Gremlins Campaign was designed to remove the stigma associated with low levels of literacy, language and numeracy skills and to motivate adults to 'not get by, but get on.'

The campaign has used a free phone line and provided advice and information designed to encourage adults back in to learning. After its launch on television and in the press the campaign polarised the learning and skills communities. It was described by some as 'insulting and demeaning' and by others as 'empowering, innovative and refreshing'. If there has been opposition and uncertainty among some partners and stakeholders there has been no such reticence among adult learners – nearly half a million adults have sought the free packs from the help line and others have simply turned up at their local colleges, adult education centres and libraries seeking to join 'one of the Gremlin classes'.



The campaign even found its way in to the common culture with comedians using it in their acts. On the eve of the Iraq War one even dressed up as a Saddam Hussein Gremlin and suggested he was the gremlin we needed to rid ourselves of most. For those of us driving forward the strategy this was not a cause for levity rather it was confirmation, another means of demonstrating that the campaign was working – we were entering the public consciousness and securing the irreversible change necessary.

Other elements of the media also picked up on the theme and there have been story lines in television ‘soaps’ as well as more in-depth programmes and discussions on prime time television and radio. In reality *Skills for Life* has become news worthy and every week there is some reference to skills needs and the government’s attempts to address them.

Of course not all of the ‘news’ has been positive but if ‘success’ is to be measured in column inches the role of the media in raising the issues and challenging the approach of the strategy has been immeasurable. Without this high profile it is unlikely that the BBC’s current year long initiative entitled ‘RAW’ , that is a ‘reading and writing campaign for adults’ would not have been possible and the strategy may by now have become just another passing initiative.

Achieving a public profile through good communications and marketing is important but sustainability and irreversible change can only happen if what you are profiling has a receptive audience and if what you have to offer is valuable and valued. I would like now look at taking the policy into practice, and most especially look in detail at **what works, why it works and why** this has made some partners uncomfortable.

POLICY INTO PRACTICE

***Skills for Life* as an engine for change**

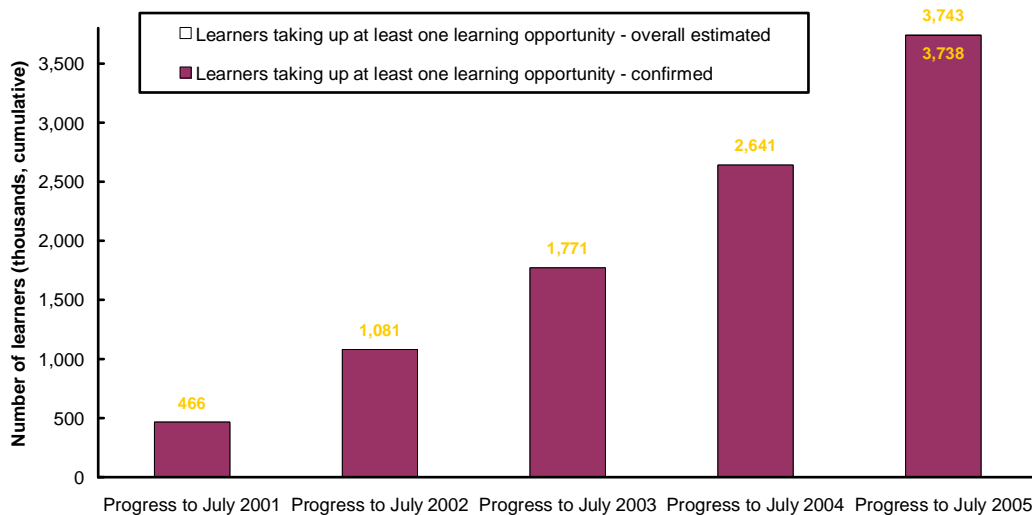
Between 2001 and 2004 the priority was to develop, test out and implement a new teaching and learning infrastructure. This infrastructure was designed to be available across all learning contexts and settings, irrespective of the audience or constituency. The intention here was to create equality of opportunity and access in order to address the inequalities experienced by previous learners.

The infrastructure comprised national standards, core curricula, national qualifications and a new teacher qualifications framework. *Skills for Life* set out to sweep away the old and discredited and replace them with what was described as a much more relevant, reliable and rigorous approach to developing literacy and numeracy. As a consequence, many established teachers of literacy and numeracy felt challenged, threatened, and undermined.

In reality, the new teaching and learning framework was developed from those elements of teaching and learning and assessment that provided much of the infrastructure and support for basic skills learners before the launch of the strategy. This desire to replace the old with the new, and the rhetoric associated with its launch and presentation did much to alienate and isolate key members of the existing teaching workforce.

It is a measure of their total commitment and dedication that the majority of the teachers set aside their frustrations and grasped the opportunities that the strategy offered in terms of greater funding for provision, new materials for learning and training programmes for themselves. And grasp it they did, as the graph on the growth in number of learners below demonstrates:

Figure 3: Learners taking up at least one Skills for Life course 2001-05



This is the total number of people who have begun at least one Skills for Life course, those that count and those that do not count towards the target:

- Over 3.7 million learners had started a skill for life learning opportunity up to July 2005.
- The number of learners has gradually been increasing year on year with over 1.1 million in 2004-05.

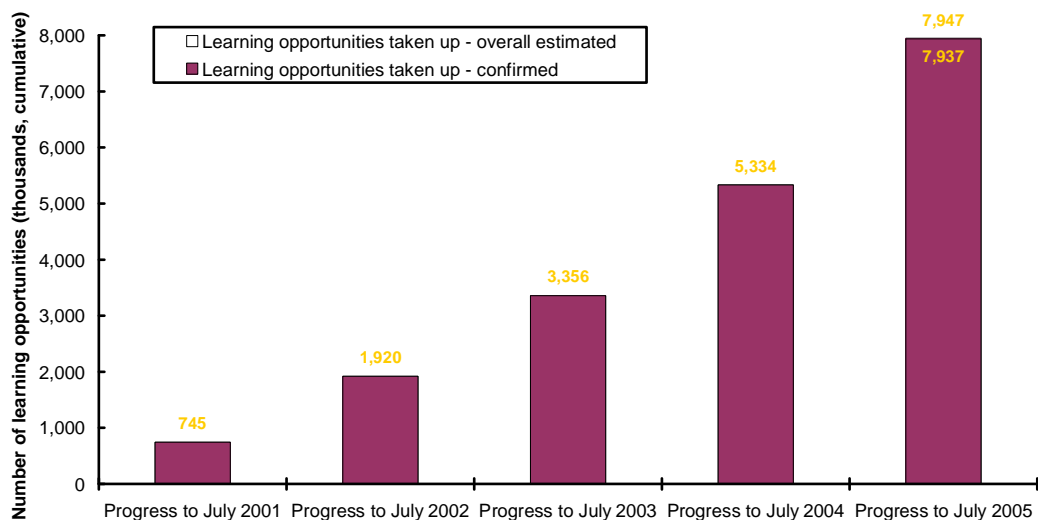
Before the launch of the strategy it was estimated that each year around 250,000 learners were in receipt of literacy and learning support. As a result of the strategy, and the additional resources made available, learning providers were encouraged and enabled to expand and widen their provision. Initially, the majority of the provision was through discrete literacy, language and numeracy programmes mainly in traditional settings such as further education colleges and mainly with traditional learners. The majority of learners in the early stages came from the 16 to 19 age group.

Under normal circumstances, encouraging young people into learning would have been welcomed but such has been the tensions around the *Skills for Life* strategy that several commentators and critics have continued to suggest that this group should not be seen as priority learners and that their inclusion has only been to massage the figures and progress towards targets. As someone who was on the inside at the time you could say that it is in my own interests to argue against any criticism. Whilst this in itself is true it is also true to say that the strategy always intended to be an inclusive one and that young people, as well as older learners, were central to the strategy's precepts.

Another dimension of the many learning opportunities created was the number of learners who **chose to undertake more than one learning programme**. Once again, some commentators and critics have suggested that these multiple enrolments are a reflection of wasted, rather than genuinely grasped opportunities by learners. A key element of the *Skills for Life* strategy has always been to encourage learners, not just to engage in learning, but to stay in learning, benefit from their achievements and progress to higher levels. One of the elements that makes *Skills for Life* different from previous basic skills initiatives is the importance attached to encouraging learners to move on, move over or move up and benefit from their learning.

It should be clear by now, but it is worth drawing your attention to it, that for the first time in England at least, we were collecting, analysing and publishing data on learners and learning in the context of literacy, language and numeracy. As the graph below shows, however you cut the data; the strategy has succeeded in bringing more learners into more learning, into a wide variety of different learning contexts, across parts of the country.

Figure 4: Number of Skills for Life learning opportunities started 2001-05



- Over 7.9 million Skills for Life learning opportunities were started between 2001 and 2005.
- The number has been gradually increasing year on year with over 2.6 million in 2004-05.

The key questions, then, must be what was the learner's learning experience? More specifically: What was the programme quality like? Who delivered the programme? What, if any, tangible outcomes were secured and what progression opportunities were on offer?

Skills for Life as a living, learning and working experience

As a major government policy, the *Skills for Life* strategy is subject to scrutiny by the National Audit Office (NAO). In December 2004 the NAO published its first evaluation of the strategy. It described its findings thus:

The department has set about implementing the Skills for Life strategy in a pragmatic way. It concentrated first of all on raising the standards of learning, increasing the quantity of provision and encouraging people to take up the learning since many of the people taking up learning had difficulties with education in the past. The department wanted to secure sufficient good-quality learning early on, so that once attracted to learn a learner's experience as an adult would be a good one. Some of the improvements will take time to have their full impact.

One year on, in December 2005 the Public Accounts Committee (PAC), a cross-party committee of members of Parliament, whose role it is to monitor government's response to National Audit Office reports, concluded:

So far, 2.4 million people have participated in learning and the first milestone of 750,000 adults achieving qualifications in literacy or numeracy by July 2004 was achieved. All the elements that support good-quality learning were either non-existent or underdeveloped before 2001, whereas the learning is now underpinned by national standards and curricula. Learners are thus able to demonstrate clear achievement against rigorous benchmarks that are meaningful to them and employers.

However, at the same time, in the annual report of the Chief Inspector of the Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI), in the section which focused on programmes looking at 'Preparation for work', the chief inspector wrote:

While an ALI survey report on Skills for Life among adults at work pointed to some real successes in raising self-esteem, mutual respect among work colleague and more fulfilling parenting, as well as improving career prospects, this essential outreach to the people with the most pressing needs is in its early days. It is not yet a decisive righting of wrongness, which was foreseen in 1999 by the Moser Report and subsequently by the Prime Minister. It is not yet the engine of world-class skills at work

which the Confederation of British industry (CBI), among others has called for. There is much more awareness of national shortcomings in literacy and numeracy, but particularly so far as the latter is concerned, not yet the scale of practical improvement, which is needed if the situation is to improve dramatically.

These three quotes from three influential government agencies serve to demonstrate at least at a strategic level the scale of the challenge. On the one hand, there is a recognition that genuine progress has been made but there is much still to do and on the other, are concerns that such progress that has been made is still inadequate, inconsequential, immaterial or irrelevant. The Adult Learning Inspectorate has from the outset of the strategy been one of its sternest critics. The strategy's failure, in its view, to making an early impact in workplace learning remains a source of challenge and disagreement. In reality an analysis of its comments highlight that the key issue is solely about the quality of delivery and its impact on the learner's learning experience.

The *Skills for Life* teaching workforce

Perhaps the greatest challenge the *Skills for Life* strategy faces has been, and continues to be, the direct consequence of its own success. The massive expansion of learning opportunities, learning programmes, and thereby learners in the learning and skills system, has placed an enormous pressure on those responsible for delivering the service, those in the front line: the teachers, the trainers and the tutors.

Before the launch of the *Skills for Life* strategy there was no central requirement for teachers of literacy, language or numeracy to be qualified in the way that there were requirements for teachers of other subjects. The strategy's commitment to raising the quality of learning by raising the quality of those who lead the learning resulted in the development and introduction of new qualifications for all new teachers, trainers and tutors. Whilst there were some existing professionals who resisted these new opportunities, in general they have been welcomed and supported by the vast majority.

This disconnect between the growth in the number of teachers needed to deliver the programmes to learners and the number of training programme available to teachers to enable them to update their skills has created the most challenging issues in respect of the quality of delivery. The outcome has been, at least in the short-term, many learners being taught by teachers with little or no prior experience of adult learning and little or no opportunity to access training programmes. As a consequence, instead of the quality of the learning experience increasing in accordance with investment, opportunity, and the roll-out of the teaching and learning infrastructure, in many areas the Inspectorate has identified disappointing and occasionally deteriorating levels of teacher performance.

It is important also to note the high levels of investment made in teacher training and the range of innovative approaches designed to engage, encourage and enable teachers to access that training. For example, between 2002 and 2006 over £50 million of new money was invested in the *Skills for Life Quality Initiative*, whose sole purpose has been to provide continuing professional development for teachers, trainers and tutors delivering literacy, language and numeracy programmes across all contexts and settings. These resources are in addition to mainstream programmes of professional development provided for their staff by institutions themselves as well as university programmes of teacher training.

So, on one level, the strategy can claim that it recognised the scale of the challenge and the potential for problems arising from such massive expansion of provision but in reality that recognition is immaterial if the outcome has been a negative one for some learners. Even at this point in the roll-out of the strategy there is no concrete data available on the number of individuals teaching literacy, language and numeracy in the post-16 sector. Whilst this in itself may be surprising this lack of data is not unique in the further education sector because of the variety of contexts and settings where learning takes place and

the nature of the teaching workforce which tends to be part-time, on short-term contract and generally engaged in portfolio working across a range of providers.

A further conclusion of the Public Accounts Committee in December 2005 highlights the ongoing concern:

The quality of learning is still too low and a more skilled teaching workforce is the key to improvement. Adult literacy and numeracy teachers were previously neglected and under trained. But there is no data on the numbers of practising teachers who are not qualified. Teaching qualifications for new teachers and continued professional education for existing teachers were introduced in 2002. The department intends that all teachers should be qualified by 2010. The Learning and Skills Council should assess the extent of non qualification among practising teachers and set a date by which all the providers in receipt of public funds use only qualified teachers.

In its response to this Public Accounts Committee (PAC) conclusion the Department for Education and Skills confirmed that it is currently undertaking a survey (2006) to ascertain the proportions of qualified to non-qualified staff currently practising and that this will be followed by a similar survey in 2009, which will demonstrate progress made towards the 2010 target.

Skills for Life, learning and work

Initially, the majority of learning took place in discrete programmes funded by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) which were designed to improve literacy, language and numeracy through a generic approach. However, as the strategy has matured and sought to extend its reach, it has gradually explored other contexts and settings and other sources of financial resources and sponsorship. This exploration of other routes recognised that many young people and adults with lower levels of skills would not engage in generic learning. It was also a recognition that often skills acquisition is more meaningful and motivational to the learner, if it is in a context, that is valued by and valuable to the learner.

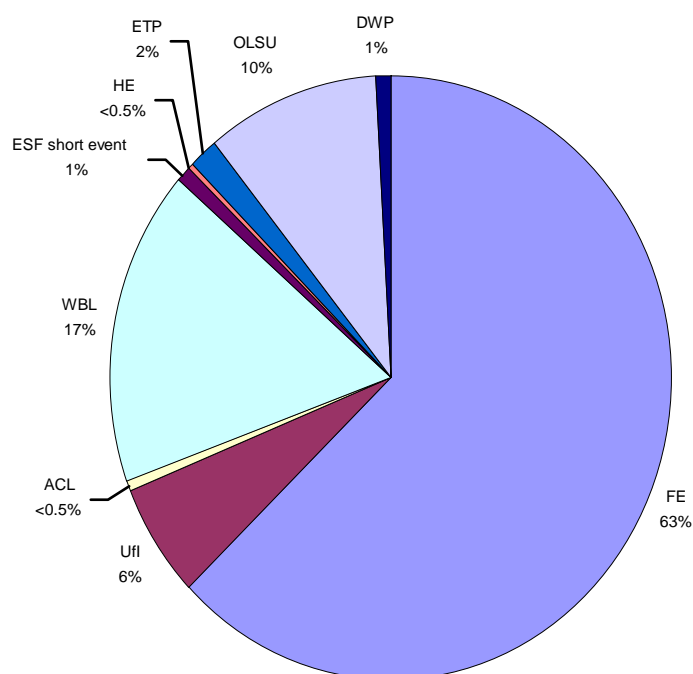
As a consequence, a wide variety of contexts and settings now offer learners the opportunity to develop their literacy, language and numeracy skills. The context and settings also were identified as a means of accessing different elements of the priority groups identified earlier, for example through:

- Further Education (FE) – within General and Sixth Form Colleges alongside academic and vocational programmes.
- University for Industry (UFI) – within its **learnirect** brand which provides free ICT-mediated learning programmes
- Adult and Community Learning (ACL) - delivered through Local Authorities which has traditionally provided sessional day time and evening programmes
- Work Based learning (WBL) - delivered by independent learning providers including apprenticeships usually delivered in the workplace
- European Social fund (ESF) - funded by the European Union these short outreach programmes designed to widen participation in learning and targeted at non-traditional learners
- Higher Education (HE) – programmes for undergraduates with specific skills gaps
- Employer Training Pilot (ETP) (now Train2Gain) – sponsored by Her Majesty's Treasury this initiative is designed to improve the workplace skills of the existing workforce

All the above learning routes were funded by the Learning and Skills Council. However, in addition there are other routes of learning that access other funding sources:

- Offenders' Learning and Skills Unit (OLSU) funded via the Home Office
- Department for Work and Pensions and Job-centre Plus (DWP/JC+) - training for unemployed adults seeking work

Figure 5: Achievements that count towards the target by route of learning 2004-05



Only data for 2004-05 is available in the detailed breakdown described here.

- 63% of learners achieved through the FE college route.
- The main routes were Work Based Learning and the Offender's Learning and Skills Unit which accounted for 17% and 10% respectively.

As can be seen from this chart the number of contexts and settings where learning takes place is wide and becoming wider. This is not without its challenges and its pressure on quality - for the more diverse the settings, the more diverse the educational backgrounds and experiences of the delivery workforce and therefore the greater the potential for inconsistencies in quality.

At this point in time, in my view, this element remains the greatest challenge for the *Skills for Life* strategy. The pressure is increasing to extend the reach, increase the contexts and settings of delivery, widen participation and address the needs of those who are most vulnerable, possess the lowest level of skills and have had the least positive experience of formal education. Whilst this must clearly be the direction of travel, experience of the implementation of the strategy to date cautions against such a rapid extension of provision because all of the evidence from the Inspectorate suggests that quality can be undermined by the search for increased quantity.

It is not only the learning context, or the route to learning, that has a major impact on the *Skills for Life* strategy, it is also the type of learner, their age, their ethnicity, their gender and the level of skill, as well as the specific skill which they are seeking to develop. I want to spend time now exploring these three areas because they have had a major impact on the policy practice and potential of the strategy, as well as the pressures placed on it.

Skills for Life learners

One of the most interesting outcomes of all of the many evaluations and surveys that have taken place in respect of *Skills for Life* has been the response of learners. Whether the focus has been quality of the teaching, the nature of their learning experience, the relevance of the assessment process or their commitment to further learning, the outcomes have always been encouraging and positive even when their teachers have challenged practices.

In a climate where the currency of the phrase 'demand-led' is now more important than 'supply driven' and where the customer and their views are seen as more important than that of the provider it would be easy to see *Skills for Life* as an unqualified success.

It may be pertinent to this point, to remind you of my key question posed at the start of this presentation:

Why, given such massive support and such obvious success, is the value and validity of the strategy still a cause for national debate?

There is a real disconnect in some quarters between the experience of the learners, the experience of the learning process as interpreted by their teachers and the quality of the teaching and learning process as reported by the Inspectorate. There is no easy answer nor explanation for these realities. Suffice to say that they exist and continue to set the climate in which the strategy is implemented.

If I may descend to the level of anecdote for the a moment I believe a comment made to me by a senior colleague working in the field of adult education in 2001 in respect of the new national qualifications is enlightening here. He said *'The worst thing about these new national tests is that I know adult learners will like them, will use them and will achieve through them'*.

My view has always been that at whatever level learners find themselves, once they recognise the value of learning and their need for it they want to engage, they want to improve, they want to succeed, they want to achieve, and they want to progress irrespective of the barriers that are in their way. My concern with, and my experience of the attitudes of many of my professional colleagues is that they believed and continue to believe that they had the right to determine how best that energy and enthusiasm might be harnessed. My own approach as teacher, developer, policymaker and strategist, has always been that you can create the framework, the infrastructure or the climbing frame but it is the individual, not you who chooses their approach or route. The role of others in this journey is to encourage, enable and support, not to prescribe and never to judge.

I have not, and will not, spend time here explaining the levels of the of the *Skills for Life* standards, learning programmes or qualifications. It is important and sufficient for you to understand that the strategy covers the full range of learners from those with no abilities (Entry Level) in English or mathematics up to those without upper secondary level skills (Level 2). In this context, then, we are talking about young people and adults who have left compulsory secondary education, without developing the skills expected and achieved by the majority of their peers.

Given this range of learners, with such a diverse profile, there is a danger that those responsible for organising and managing the learning of specific skills forget that they are dealing with adults with wider adult capabilities and experiences. Adult learners are not like children, they are not 'green-field sites'. An adult may be lacking in written communication skills, but that doesn't mean they are lacking in common sense or judgement or the ability to communicate effectively in other ways. It is a great mistake to ignore an adult's strengths as we seek to address their weaknesses. An adult with Entry Level Literacy skills is not an Entry Level Adult. I am sure that you know all of this!

In this context, the *Skills for Life* strategy has been designed to provide access and flexibility so that learners' needs are met at a pace, in a form, in a place and at a time that maximises engagement and

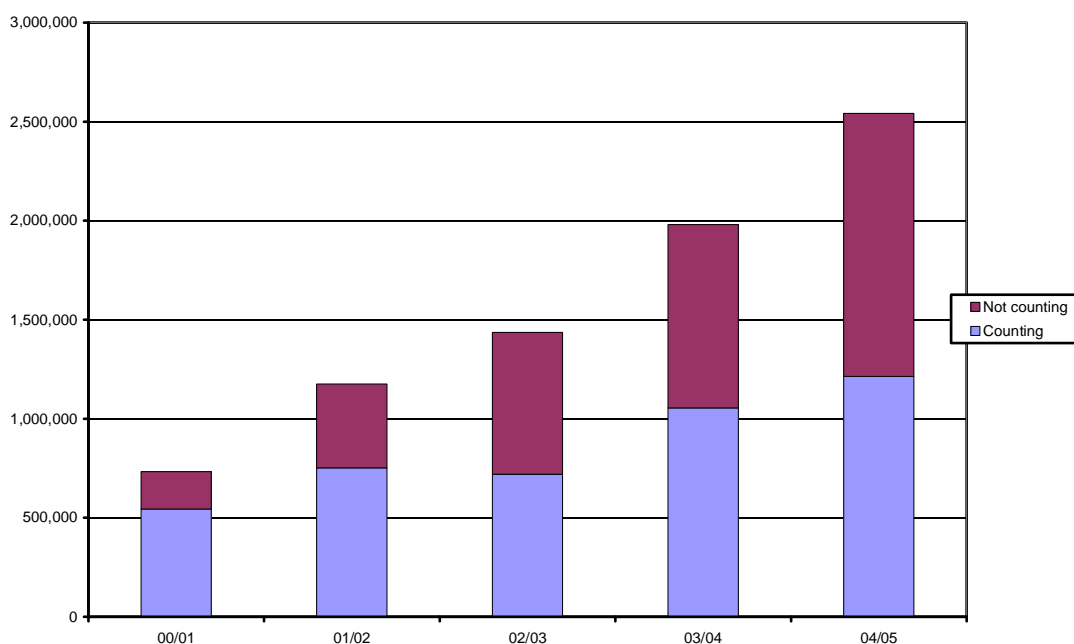
opportunity. Equally, it is important to recognise the research evidence that confirms that most of the young people and adults who have failed to develop these skills are leading challenging and demanding lives. Any programme or strategy that fails to recognise this is also doomed to fail.

My thesis here is that this is the reason why there has been almost universal support for the strategy from learners. Learners recognise that the strategy has been designed to meet their expectations and needs, not those of institutions and organisations. In a real sense, their learning has come from the margins to the mainstream.

That said, this approach means that within the strategy there is a wide range of provision, to a wide range of learners, at a wide range of starting points with a wide range of learning journeys ahead of them. Clearly, this is also a challenge for those responsible for devising and delivering programmes of learning and securing progression. Given the complexity resulting from this range of expectations and starting points, and given the diversity of starting points and skill levels it should not be surprising that, for some, the success of the strategy has been measured by its ability to deliver its Public Service Agreement target.

It is worth noting here that not all learning, whilst meaningful to the individual learner, counts towards the target. In fact, one of the most controversial elements of the strategy, not least because of the scale of investment, has been the amount of provision that has not counted towards the target. The chart below provides a breakdown of the relationship between the learning opportunities that count and those that don't count.

Figure 6: Skills for Life learning opportunities differentiated by whether they count towards the target or not



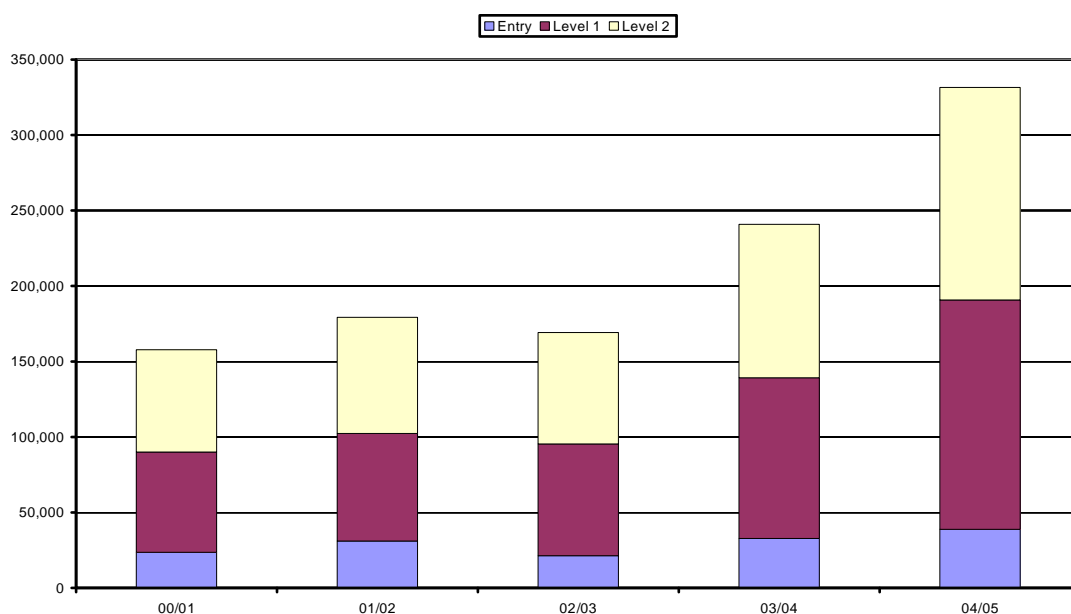
- Overall 55% of courses begun have been those that count towards the Skills for Life target.
- However in the latest year 2004-05, 52% of courses were not counting towards the target.

This information is very helpful in that it undermines the arguments of those who suggest that by introducing a target the Skills for Life strategy had ignored those with the lowest level of skills, and therefore those least likely to achieve a qualification. It also raises the question of access to assessment. In other words, is everyone entitled to secure a qualification being given the opportunity through their learning programme? As we will see later the data suggests that many learners, especially those on language programmes and those following entry-level literacy and numeracy programmes, are

the ones least likely to be accessing assessment. The argument here is a balance between equality of opportunity and fitness for purpose.

In that context, it is worth looking at the level of qualifications that have been achieved by learners since the launch of the strategy. The data suggests that there is still a shortage of provision at entry-level, that is preparing those learners with the lowest level of skills to access assessments that recognise their progress. Clearly, the learners who are the most vulnerable and have had the least level of education success should not be placed in a position where they will fail. It is for this reason that the qualifications and associated assessments at this level have been designed to reflect the learning context and the learning style, as well as the learner's capabilities. However, there remains a lack of confidence in, understanding of, or support for qualifications at this level by some teachers, tutors and trainers.

Figure 7: Achievements that count towards the target by level of qualification (excluding alternative route) 2000-01-2004-05



- *The proportion of achievements at the different levels of qualifications has stayed roughly constant throughout the period.*
- *There have been a similar proportion of qualifications at level 1 and 2 of between 40-45% of the total, with Entry level making up around 15%.*

This lack of engagement in securing meaningful and measurable progress for all learners, especially at Entry Level, resulted in one of the most controversial interventions in 2004 by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC). Because the Learning and Skills Council believed that many learners who could and should be accessing national assessment and qualifications were being denied access they introduced what has become known as the 80:20 rule. Put simply, this rule was designed to ensure that in any provider's programme at least 80% of provision would lead to national qualifications, irrespective of level and irrespective of whether those qualifications counted towards the target or not.

The law of 'Unforeseen Consequences' has resulted in many providers believing that they could no longer offer programmes for those learners who were not ready for national qualifications, and in some funding bodies refusing to provide funding for any programme that did not lead to a national qualification. In this context it would appear that communication skills are lacking at all levels of the learning and skills system. It has resulted in a special report from the National Research and Development Centre in an attempt to clear these communication channels and to restore equanimity to the system. In her introduction to the report, the Director, Ursula Howard, has set out to clarify the message:

Much has been said about the so-called 80:20 balance of provision and its relationship to the Skills for Life target, which starts with assessment at entry-level three. Let's remember that the 80% also includes

entry levels one and two where learners take nationally recognised qualifications. But we clearly need to offer even more help to those at most risk of social exclusion. This is what Skills for Life has always intended to do, but powerful economic arguments and the logic of targets sometimes obscure the government's social and emancipatory agendas.

Again just to draw you back to my key question: *why, given such massive support and such obvious success, is the value and validity of the strategy still a cause for national debate?*

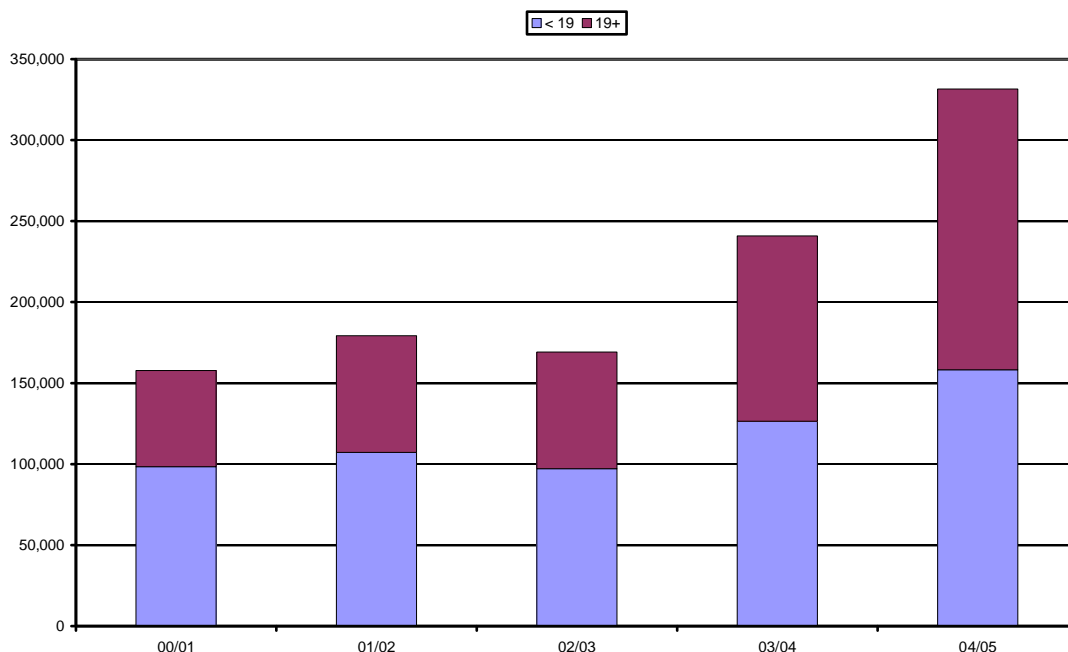
Notwithstanding the progress made, the opportunities created and the outcomes achieved, there are still many important and influential stakeholders who remain unconvinced of the altruism within the government or its commitment to improve the life chances of those most at risk of social exclusion.

Skills for Life - learner age and gender

I want to look in a little more detail now at those achievements that do count towards the target and the ages and gender of the learners securing them. As I pointed out earlier, at the outset the strategy targeted everyone beyond the age of compulsory schooling, that is 16 plus. However, this approach continues to be criticised and the achievements of the strategy measured and monitored in the context of 16 to 19 and 19 plus. When the strategy was launched there was much to do to engage adult learners and the accessible target was those learners in full-time education and training – the 16 to 19 cohort.

As the chart below shows, while there has been some increase in the numbers of 16 to 19 year olds whose achievements count towards the target, there has also been a massive growth in the adult domain. This development is taking place, because as I highlighted earlier, the number of contexts and settings in which learning and skills development is taking place has widened into those contexts such as family learning, the workplace and union learning where adults find the learning meaningful and are therefore motivated to participate, achieve and progress.

Figure 8: Achievements that count towards the qualification by age of learner 2000-01 to 2004-05



- Overall since 2000-01 54% of achievements have been by those aged under 19.
- However in 2004-5 there were actually more aged over 19 – 52% of the total.
- 55% of achievements counting towards the target have been achieved by females.

In addition to the age factor, the gender factor is also critical here. Recent research by Samantha Parsons and John Bynner for the National Research and Development Centre has highlighted the

importance and impact of skills deficiencies, particularly numeracy, on women. Parsons' and Bynner's conclusion in their report *'Does numeracy matter more?'* is very clear:

For women, while the impact of lower literacy and low numeracy skills is substantial, low numeracy has the greater negative effect, even when it is combined with competent literacy.

Changes in the nature of employment are at the heart of the problem of numeracy for women. Modern jobs of the kind that appeal to young women e.g., managing accounts or using ICT equipment for administration, demand numeracy skills.

Given these findings, the strategy's focus on and investment in family literacy and numeracy skills through programmes such as *Step into Learning* and *Skills for Families* was an essential and much-needed attempt to improve the skills of women. This research also ties into the work of Tom Sticht who has written extensively on the intergenerational impact of poor basic skills. His objective is to ensure that the skills deficiencies of the parents are not transferred automatically to the children. His 'life cycles' approach, which requires the skills of different generations to be addressed at the same time in order that family groups can improve their skills collectively, is understood by and addressed within the *Skills for Life* strategy.

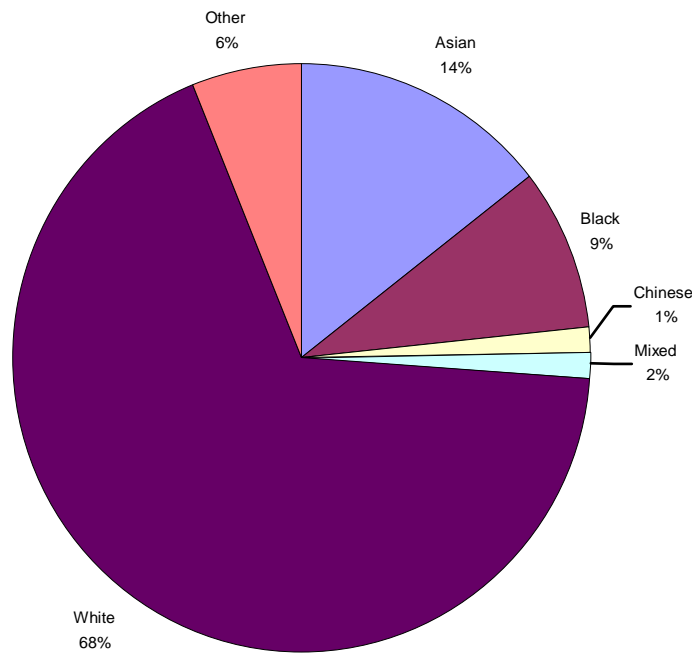
Skills for Life and English for speakers of other languages

When the strategy was launched the English-language needs of those people living in England for whom English was not the first language was addressed superficially. At that time, no one had a clear understanding of the scale of the need or of the demand. Since then, English-language provision has become one of the central themes and most contentious elements of government policy and as a consequence the strategy has become a key aspect of addressing wider policy dimensions such as citizenship, refugees and asylum seekers, employment mobility and social unrest.

The ability to communicate with your peers is clearly not just a skills issue, it is a human rights issue and what the *Skills for Life* strategy has done is to shine a torch on those aspects of social policy where years of ignorance, isolation, underachievement and a policy vacuum have created pockets of disadvantage in all of our major cities. It is here that the key aims of the strategy, social justice and employability, have the potential to make the most impact but also have the greatest distance to travel in terms of equality, opportunity and availability.

As I said earlier the scale of need was essentially unknown, and it was only after the launch of the strategy when the Government through the Learning and Skills Council began analysing its data that the growth in English-language provision was noticed and at the same time The National Institute for Adult and Continuing Education (NIACE) began highlighting the unmet demand for learning in major cities, especially London. The chart below reflects the scale of the problem as it highlights the diversity of the *Skills for Life* audience. The data also highlights the extent to which the ongoing pressures to ensure that the specific and specialised needs of ESOL learners is recognised and addressed.

Figure 9: Learners starting Skills for Life courses by ethnicity 2000-01 to 2004-05



- Of those of whom the ethnicity is known 68% of learners were white.
- The next largest proportions are 14% Asian and 9% Black.
- These proportions have been broadly consistent across the years.
- The 32% of Skills for Life learners from ethnic minority backgrounds compares to about 8% in the population at large.

In the circumstances, it is not surprising that even now, some five years after the launch of the strategy, ESOL provision continues to be a challenge. There continues to be unmet demand, the quality of provision is uneven, the achievements of those on provision remains limited and the expectations of, and pressures on, the strategy to address the skill needs of immigrant workers as well as first and second generation citizens remain high.

Skills for Life funding

Skills for Life has benefited not just from political determination and will but also from the enormous amounts of funding. The government supported the expansion of training provision and all necessary improvements in quality from the start. In 2000 £241 million was being spent on literacy and numeracy provision by the Department for Education and Employment. When the strategy was launched in 2001 the government identified £1.5 billion to implement the strategy over the first three years.

By 2002 the government's spending review reaffirmed this by committing at least £1.6 billion to deliver the strategy from 2003-04 to 2005-06. In reality, the government and its agents have made even more money available than was first planned as the wider benefits to policy, employment and individuals have become clear. The table below highlights the scale of investment. It is also worth noting once again, how the programmes that lead to national qualifications have provided a magnet to attract funding for all programmes even when they do not contribute towards the target.

Figure 10: Funding provided for Skills for Life courses by Level and whether they count towards the target 2002-03 to 2004-05 (millions £)

		2002-003	2003-04	Total
Counting Courses	Entry	£55.0	£102.2	£157.1
	Level 1	£83.5	£108.1	£191.6
	Level 2	£88.2	£99.3	£187.4
	Total	£226.6	£309.5	£536.1
Non-	Entry	£231.7	£259.4	£491.1

counting courses	Level 1	£61.6	£71.9	£133.6
	Level 2	£7.6	£11.3	£18.9
	Total	£300.9	£342.6	£643.5
Grand Total		£527.5	£652.1	£1,179.7

- Over the 2 years 2002-03 to 2003-04, a total of almost £1.2 billion has been used to fund Skills for Life courses. This equates to just under £400 per learning opportunity.
- 55% of funding has been on courses that do not count towards the target.
- However of these over three quarters were on entry level courses many of which act as stepping stones towards the counting courses.
- 70% of funding in 2003-04 was provided for those aged 19 and over despite accounting for under half the learners.
- Over 40% of funding in 2003-04 was provided for language study despite account for under a quarter of the learning.

Currently, my former colleagues at the Department for Education and Skills are in the middle of a comprehensive spending review. All the signs are that it is unlikely that this review will do anything different from previous spending reviews, which is to highlight the importance of improving adult literacy, language and numeracy and provide the resources necessary.

When the former Minister of Skills, John Healey, described the government's commitment to the *Skills for Life* strategy as 'a marathon, not a sprint' he signalled the extent of his personal as well as the government's commitment. In his new role within Her Majesty's Treasury he continues to demonstrate his personal, as well as the government's, commitment to the strategy.

SKILLS FOR LIFE – ACTION RESEARCH ENRICHING PRACTICE

Whilst the initial strategy documentation left it very late to highlight the importance of partnership, the implementation of the strategy sought to engage practitioners from the outset through action research or pathfinder projects. It is impossible to overestimate the importance of the pathfinder projects that have been a cornerstone of the strategy's implementation since 2001. These pathfinders have been used to ensure that every element of the delivery framework was viable and workable. Key approaches that have been trialled include:

- testing out the teaching and learning infrastructure
- exploring the needs of ESOL learners
- engaging the voluntary and community sectors
- highlighting the specific needs of offenders in custody and in the community
- identifying whole organisation approaches to the delivery and achievement of literacy, language and numeracy
- supporting the special requirements of learners with learning difficulties and disabilities
- addressing the intergenerational needs of parents and children through family learning.

One of the key contexts and settings for skills development is the workplace, and one of the greatest challenges for the strategy has been to enable learning to take place in a meaningful and supported way. This has meant persuading employers and employees of the relevance of developing and improving literacy, language and numeracy.

For the employer it is important in terms of improving the 'bottom line' and profitability of the business and for the employee it is important to safeguard their credibility with their peers and their security with

their employer. Key to implementing this development has been the Trade Union Congress (TUC). Trade Unions have played and continue to play an essential role in workplace learning. Such is their success that skills bargaining, that is: time off for learning, now plays almost as great a part as pay bargaining in the role of union representatives.

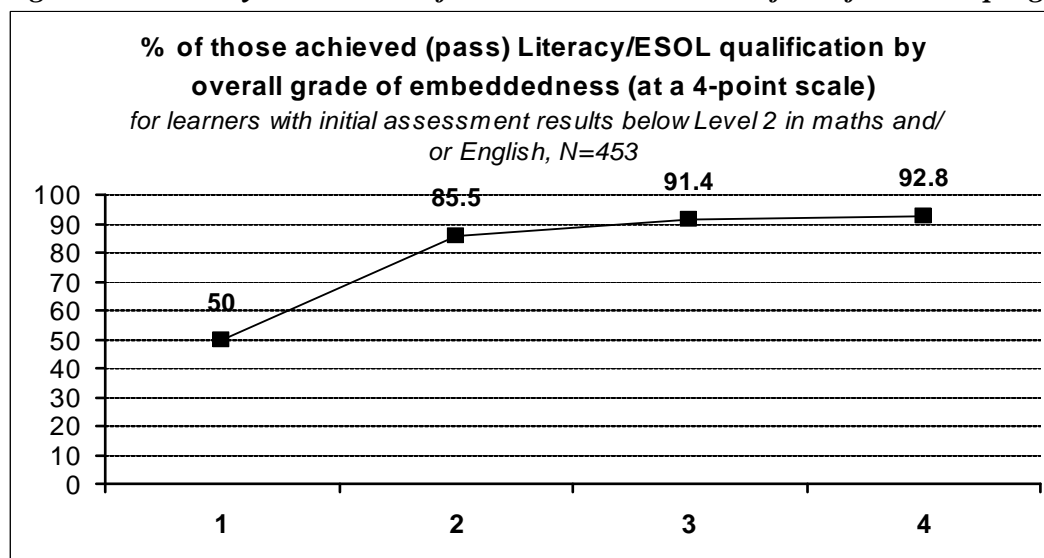
Union Learning Representatives (ULRs) now have statutory rights in England and *Skills for Life* is a key element of the union representatives' training programmes as well as in their offer to union members, non-union members and the local community. In 2005 the role of the TUC in education, learning and skills was recognised when the Chancellor of the Exchequer, provided the resources to establish a Union Academy. Only last month *unionlearn* was launched by the Chancellor. He made clear his commitment to *Skills for Life* by stating that 'in the 21st century every individual was important to the country, the economy and to the community irrespective of their skill level. The important thing was to recognise who they were, what they needed to learn and how to access the learning.' In his view the TUC has an important role to play.

One of the major deficiencies in England has been the lack of research information on adult literacy, language and numeracy. One of the commitments in the strategy was to address this shortage and as a consequence the National Research and Development Centre for Adult Literacy and Numeracy (NRDC) was established in 2002. A key requirement of the Centre has been to establish a research base that would inform development and practice as well as ensure that the strategy was refreshed and revitalised as a result of their work. Some four years later their superb evidence base is now informing pedagogy and practice.

The strategy has long been committed to embedded teaching and learning. The challenge has been to find an approach that is both manageable and authentic in a range of workplace contexts. The latest research from Helen Casey at the National Research and Development Centre suggests that a working model has been identified. Casey's work focuses on five workplace settings: business; construction; engineering; hair and beauty therapy; and health and social care.

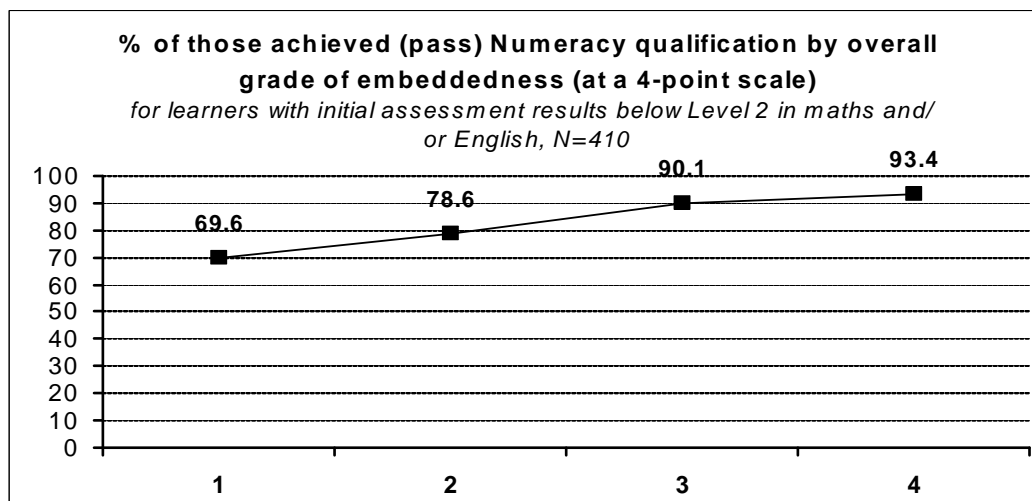
Using a balance of quantitative and qualitative methods the evidence shows a positive impact of embedding literacy, language and numeracy on vocational success rates as well as the literacy, language and numeracy success rates themselves. The outcomes appear to be equally positive for both literacy and numeracy. The determining factor appears to be that there needs to be a team approach to delivery. The team should comprise vocational specialists who recognise the importance of literacy, language and numeracy and *Skills for Life* specialists who are able to support delivery in a vocational context.

Figure 11: Literacy achievement for learners with a *Skills for Life* need at programme entry



$(\chi^2 (3, N=453) = 61.536, p = .000; V=.369)$

Figure 12: Numeracy achievement for learners with a Skills for Life need at programme entry



$(\chi^2 (3, N=410) = 25.956, p = .000; V=.252)$

These findings are critical for the ongoing development and expansion of the strategy but they are also essential for those responsible for developing the teaching and learning workforce. There is little point in having a methodology that is shown to be effective and successful if there is insufficient supply of suitably qualified and trained teachers with the capability to respond and meet this new demand. These findings are also very timely as the government is in the process through the Skills Strategy, of introducing workplace learning through the Train to Gain programme.

Train to Gain has been designed to encourage employers to provide access to their employees during work time to improve their literacy, language and numeracy and as well as their vocational skills. Financial incentives have been made available to sustain and support learners in relevant learning designed to eliminate skill shortages and address skills gaps in the current workforce.

SKILLS FOR LIFE - AN ONGOING GOVERNMENT PRIORITY

When *Skills for Life* was launched in 2001 it was really the first government strategy to address the learning and skills needs of those in learning beyond the age of compulsory schooling. Since that time the strategy has become an integral part of the Department for Education and Skills five-year strategy, and its aim to build a competitive economy and inclusive society. The general aim to improve adult literacy, language and numeracy is now interrelated with and interdependent on a range of key policies and the delivery target of other programmes designed to implement national priorities. Since 2001, these new policies include:

- **Success for All: reforming further education and training** - this strategy has been designed to transform and improve the planning, funding and quality of all post-16 learning, including adult literacy and numeracy
- **Skills Strategy, getting on in business, getting on at work** - this strategy has been designed to establish a partnership with employers and ensure that the stock of the current workforce has the opportunity to develop the skills needed to bridge the skills gap between the UK and its main economic competitors
- **Youth Matters** - this strategy has been designed to encourage teenagers, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds, to take advantage of the many opportunities available to them and avoid the downward spiral of anti-social behaviour, crime and drug-taking

- **Every Child Matters** - this strategy is designed to reduce the number of children who experience educational failure, suffer ill health, become pregnant as teenagers, are the victims of abuse and neglect or become involved in offending and anti-social behaviour. It has five key themes: being healthy; staying safe; enjoying and achieving; making a positive contribution; and economic well-being. It stresses the important role of parents and an informed and well-trained children's workforce.
- **14 to 19 Education and Skills** - this strategy is designed to transform secondary and post-secondary education so that all young people achieve and continue in learning at least to the age of 18. The emphasis on functional English, maths and ICT is designed to ensure that the flow of young people entering the workforce have the skills necessary to succeed and progress.
- **Further Education: raising skills, improving life chances** - this strategy is designed to build a labour force with skills to match the best in the world. The aim is to reform further education colleges and by introducing more choice for customers, tailoring services to meet individual needs, encouraging new innovative providers to enter the market and taking robust action to tackle poor quality, combined with more autonomy for excellent providers.

It is not just in the context of the policies of the Department of Education and Skills that the strategy is being expected to play an operational role in policy delivery. Most key government departments are looking to either the social justice or the employability elements to deliver irreversible change. Pre-eminent among these are with the:

- Her Majesty's Treasury – the driving force behind Train-to-Gain, and the key sponsor of the TUC's Union Academy, unionlearn, both initiatives designed to secure workplace learning and skills development
- Home Office – the focus on improving the English Language skills of immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers to aid effective integration of equal importance is the work on raising the skill levels of offenders and enabling them to secure meaningful employment as a means of reducing re-offending
- Ministry of Defence – where the Army uses the teaching and learning framework as a context for recruitment and promotion
- Department for Work and Pensions – where literacy, language and numeracy provision is a key offer for unemployed and workless adults seeking to re-enter the labour market
- Department for Media Culture and Sport – where the Library service and sports organisations are providing effective ways of extending the reach of the strategy as well as diversifying the use of public amenities and services
- Department for Communities and Local Government – the focus on regeneration and neighbourhood renewal has embraced the importance of improving the skill levels of adults and thereby empowering and mobilising communities
- Department of Health – through Skilled for Health is promoting health literacy and the importance of addressing the skills needs of those working in the National Health Service (NHS)
- Department for Environment, Food and Rural affairs – has a responsibility for ensuring equality of opportunity and access to learning and skills for those who live in rural communities.

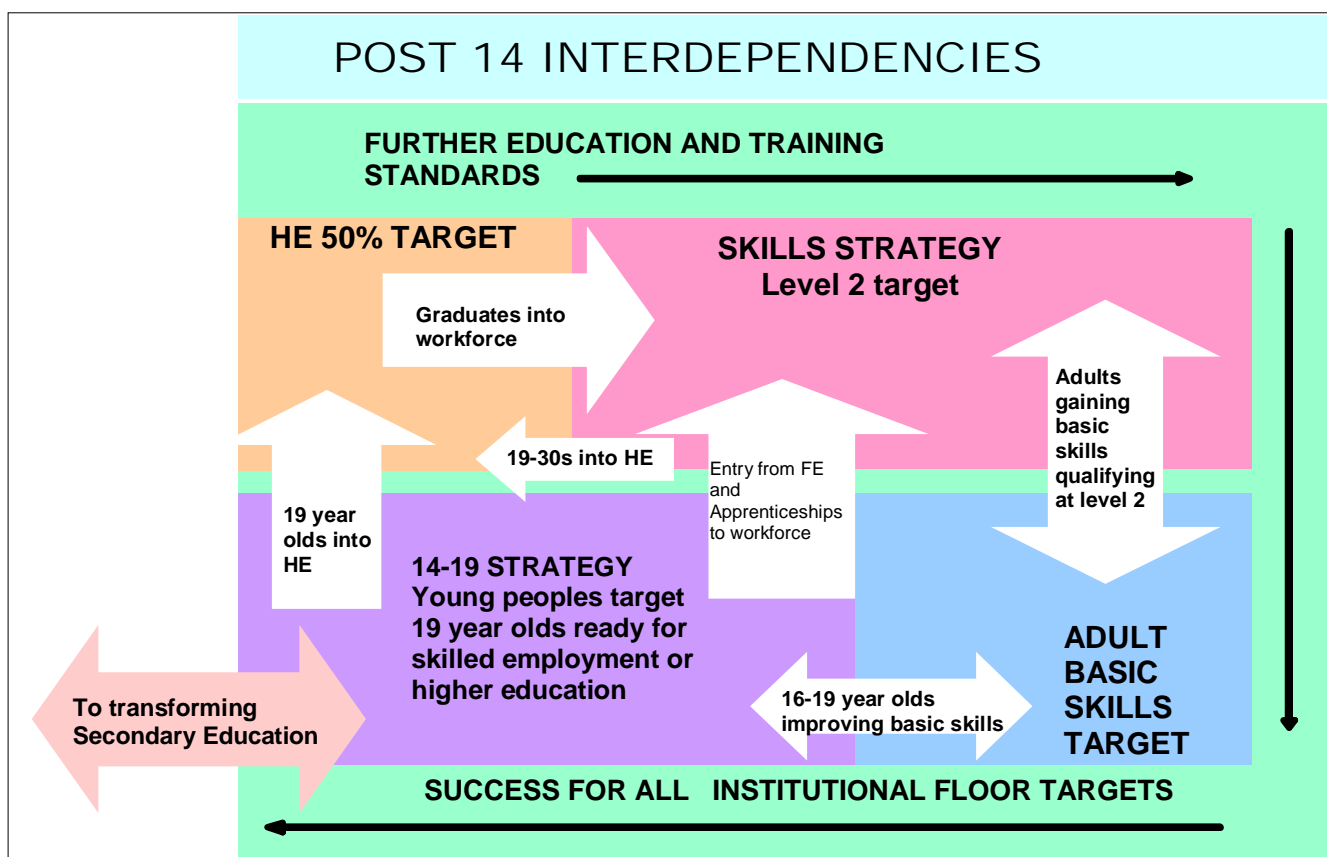
By embedding and integrating *Skills for Life* in the broader learning and skills landscape as well as across the full range of other policy imperatives the government has demonstrated its belief in, and commitment to, improving the literacy, language and numeracy skills of its citizens. However, the

pressures that are placed on, and the expectations that are made of, the strategy to address an ever widening set of policy priorities may take their toll on the distinctiveness of the strategy. The diagram below highlights how the Department for Education and skills has come to see *Skills for Life* as providing the platform or springboard for all learning and skills reform for post 14 learners.

As I highlighted above *Skills for Life* has now been embedded in a variety of learning programmes increasingly successfully in terms of learner motivation, learner persistence, learner achievement and learner progression. The evidence from the National Research and Development Centre is conclusive: embedding works. However, as we have seen, it only works if it is supported by those who fully understand the importance of those skills, how best to deliver and teach those skills, how best to engage and motivate the individual learners and most importantly, how to give the skills meaning and value in a context that is relevant to and valued by the learner.

Embedding that has been introduced as a means to an end, without understanding or sensitivity, as a way of saving money or by individuals with no commitment to values or validity will result in failure. I believe this to be as true in policy terms as it is demonstrably true in teaching and learning.

Figure 12: Skills for Life within the context of education policy and reform of the learning and skills sector



SKILLS FOR LIFE – IN CONCLUSION

Skills for Life set out to secure irreversible change in the learning in skills landscape and to enrich the lives and the opportunities available to those young people and adults who had benefited least and had most to gain from the education system. Everyone who has been involved in the *Skills for Life* strategy: policymakers; funders; developers; providers; teachers; and learners, has learned much during the last six years. The strategy, through its achievement, continues to provide a promise of access, opportunity and personal fulfilment to an ever increasing set of audiences and constituencies across a diverse range of non-traditional contexts and settings, especially for those with most to gain – individuals with the lowest skill levels and the least experience of meaningful and measurable educational success.

Whilst the strategy continues to have its critics who, despite the evidence to the contrary, continue to claim that it ignores those most at risk of social exclusion and focuses only on those programmes that lead to national qualifications, there is little sign of its stalling or failing to reach its 2007 milestone and thereafter its 2010 target. Certainly its reach is spreading, there is increasing understanding of its potential and there is a general recognition that it is a force for empowering those who have previously been disempowered.

However, I have one concern, one note of caution and this sits at the heart of the strategy itself and perversely has been the key reason why I believe that the strategy has been so successful to date.

Essentially *Skills for Life* has been a political imperative, a mission to ensure that every one has the opportunity to realise their potential, and as such it has benefited from sustained continuing support from the labour government.

I outlined this at the start of this paper in what I described as the first factor. If you remember, I said that *Skills for Life* was a politically driven strategy at once both altruistic in its intention, centralist in its implementation and ruthless in its determination to secure irreversible change.

If you reflect on the fact that what less than six years ago was a discrete 'initiative' designed to improve the literacy, language and numeracy skills of young people and adults and then track its role across all policies you may begin to understand my concern.

If you add to this the new broader political imperative, which is the streamlining of the civil service and the consequent downsizing of all government departments in order that greater focus can be given to strategy and greater empowerment and resource be given to front-line delivery you are then in possession of the central elements of my concern.

At a time when expectations are at their highest, when the momentum is at its greatest and when securing the aim of an irreversible change of culture is at its closest, at the heart of government those responsible for driving the strategy forward and securing its future are fewest in number.

I waxed lyrical earlier of the benefits of embedded learning as a means of securing skills development. When the above issue is raised the answer is also an embedded one: *Skills for Life* is now firmly embedded in the policy and practice of all government departments, its agencies, its partners and the key stakeholders.

It remains to be seen if in this context, embedding *Skills for Life* across all government policies and strategies and passing total responsibility to partners and stakeholders to drive, shape and deliver the strategy is a journey too far.

Certainly, if we are to learn from the lessons of practice, embedding can only be done effectively and successfully by committed and experienced professionals who have access to the resources and the political will necessary to argue the case, change the culture and lead the learning.

I believe that this is a truism, not just in the classroom, or in the workplace, or in the community but at the heart of government too.

I trust that the very same will and determination to make a difference to learners' lives that created and nurtured the strategy has not, in its general desire to improve and resource front-line delivery of services and skills, undermined the jewel in its social justice and employability crown – *the Skills for Life Strategy*.

Barry Brooks
Director for Lifelong Learning
Tribal Group
May 2006

APPENDIX 1: FURTHER INFORMATION

Government departments

DfES, England	Department for Education and Skills	www.dfes.gov.uk
SfLSU, England	The Skills for Life Strategy Unit is based in the DfES and has been operational since November 2000. The Unit is responsible for driving forward implementation of the national <i>Skills for Life</i> strategy and ensuring efforts to improve literacy, language and numeracy skills at national and local level are consistent and well co-ordinated.	www.dfes.gov.uk/readwriteplus
Offenders' Learning and Skills Unit England	This site is for those involved in delivering or planning offenders' education and training as well as for those who have an interest in current and planned provision.	www.dfes.gov.uk/offenderlearning/
DELLS, Wales	Department for Education, Lifelong Learning, and Skills	http://new.wales.gov.uk/about/departments/dells
Learning Connections, Scotland	Learning Connections is part of the Community Regeneration division, responsible for the Adult Literacies strategy in Scotland.	www.lc.communitiesscotland.gov.uk

Key publications

Adult Literacy Core Curriculum	The new curriculum, based on the national standards developed by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority.	www.dfes.gov.uk/curriculum_literacy
Adult Numeracy Core Curriculum	The new curriculum, based on the national standards developed by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority.	www.dfes.gov.uk/curriculum_numeracy
Adult ESOL Core Curriculum	The new curriculum, based on the national standards developed by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority.	www.dfes.gov.uk/curriculum_esol
Adult Pre-entry Curriculum	The new curriculum, based on the national standards developed by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority.	http://www.dfes.gov.uk/curriculum_pre-entry/
Embedded Learning Portal	<i>Skills for Life</i> Materials for Embedded Learning.	http://www.dfes.gov.uk/readwriteplus/embeddedlearning/
Raising Standards Guides	13 Contextual Guides to Support Success in Literacy, Numeracy and ESOL provision in a range of settings.	http://www.dfes.gov.uk/readwriteplus/raisingstandards/
Skills for Life: The national strategy for improving literacy and numeracy skills	This is the original <i>Skills for Life</i> strategy document, published in 2001.	http://www.dfes.gov.uk/readwriteplus/bank.cfm?section=211
Skills for Life: The national strategy for improving literacy and numeracy skills - Focus on delivery to 2007	This is the revised version of the original <i>Skills for Life</i> strategy document, and was published in 2003. It focuses on the achievements to date and the work needed to continue the building <i>Skills for Life</i> policy and practice.	http://www.dfes.gov.uk/readwriteplus/bank.cfm?section=533
Skills for Life Survey Data	This site contains all the data from the Skills for Life Survey. Adult skills need estimates for literacy, numeracy, ICT and ESOL across England.	www.dfes.gov.uk/readwriteplus_skillsforlifesurvey

Government programmes/initiatives

Adult and Community Learning Fund	The ACLF was launched by the Government in 1998 as part of its strategy to widen participation in learning and improve	www.lifelonglearning.co.uk/aclf
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	standards of basic skills. The Fund makes the important connection between learning and social regeneration.	
Connexions Service	Connexions is the government's support service for all young people aged 13 to 19 in England. It also provides support up to the age of 25 for young people who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities.	www.connexions.gov.uk
Get On	The advertising and promotion campaign featuring the well-known gremlin characters. The campaign is designed to raise demand for <i>Skills for Life</i> learning.	www.dfes.gov.uk/get-on/
learnirect	learnirect has been developed by Ufi with a remit from government to provide high quality post-16 learning, delivered innovatively through the use of new technologies, which reaches those with few or no skills and qualifications and who are unlikely to participate in traditional forms of learning.	www.learnirect.co.uk
Lifelong learning	LLUK is responsible for the professional development of all those working in work-based learning, higher education, further education, community learning and development.	www.lifelonglearning.co.uk
Learning Partnerships	Established throughout England to improve the planning and coherence of local post-16 learning. They are supporting action to widen participation in learning, increase attainment, improve standards and meet the skills challenge, and are contributing to the Government's social inclusion and regeneration agendas.	www.lifelonglearning.co.uk/lip/
Maths4Life	Maths4Life is a three year project which aims to stimulate a positive approach to teaching and learning in mathematics and numeracy in England, focusing on adults from Entry Level to Level 2.	www.maths4life.org
New Deal	New Deal is a Government programme that aims to give unemployed people the help and support they need to get into work.	www.newdeal.gov.uk
Skills for Life Quality Initiative	An initiative to develop local infrastructures to ensure future quality and sustainability. The focus is on professionalising the <i>Skills for Life</i> workforce and supporting organisations to move towards a whole organisation approach to <i>Skills for Life</i> .	www.sflqi.org.uk
Sure Start	Sure Start is the government programme to deliver the best start in life for every child. We bring together, early education, childcare, health and family support.	www.surestart.gov.uk
Whole Organisational Approach	The Whole Organisation Approach to <i>Skills for Life</i> is where literacy, language and numeracy provision is central to the whole organisation at all levels, ranging from strategic leadership and management to delivery practice. This includes embedding <i>Skills for Life</i> in teaching and learning programmes across a range of learning aims and goals and providing all learners with opportunities to progress and achieve qualifications	www.woasfl.org

Non-departmental public bodies and other organisations

Adult Learning Inspectorate	ALI is responsible for inspecting a range of post-16 learning activities. Details of scheduled inspections, individual provider reports and other publications are available from this site.	www.ali.gov.uk
Basic Skills Agency	The BSA is the national agency for basic skills in England and	www.basic-skills.co.uk

	Wales and is supported by the Government. A national ideas and innovation organisation, focusing on finding practice worth sharing and disseminating it effectively, with a particularly important role in Wales overseeing the implementation of the Basic Skills Strategy for Wales	
Learning and Skills Council	The LSC is responsible for funding and planning education and training for over 16-year-olds in England.	www.lsc.gov.uk
National Research and Development Centre	NRDC is a national centre established by the DfES and is dedicated to conducting research and development projects in the fields of adult literacy, numeracy and ESOL.	www.dfes.gov.uk/readwriteplus/Research
Qualifications and Curriculum Authority	QCA works with to maintain and develop the school curriculum and associated assessments, and to accredit and monitor qualifications in schools, colleges and at work.	www.qca.org.uk
Quality Improvement Agency	The QIA is a non-departmental public body with a government remit to accelerate improvement in the performance of the learning and skills sector, build the sector's capacity for self-improvement, help the sector respond to strategic reforms and lead the sector quality improvement strategy	www.qia.org.uk
Sector Skills Councils	Sector Skills Councils bring together employers, trade unions and professional bodies working with Government to develop the skills that UK business needs.	www.ssda.org.uk
unionlearn	TUC Education is responsible within unionlearn for offering high quality, accredited training for union members through a partnership with colleges and universities across the UK.	www.unionlearn.org.uk
University for Industry (Ufi)	Ufi is taking forward the Government's vision of a 'University for Industry', by stimulating and meeting demand for lifelong learning among businesses and individuals.	www.ufi.com

Appendix 2: SfL Interdependencies (extracted from the Skills for Life delivery plan 2004-10)

