

## **SKILLS FOR LIFE**

# **THE NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR IMPROVING ADULT LITERACY AND NUMERACY SKILLS**

**Foreword** by the Rt Hon David Blunkett MP, Secretary of State for Education and Employment

We live, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, in a society of challenge and opportunity. The growth of the knowledge economy and the spread of information technology are having a more profound and more rapid effect on our work and home lives than any other social change since the Industrial Revolution. They are changing what jobs we do and how we do them. And they are changing how we spend our time and how we communicate with our friends and family.

The prosperity of the nation and every one of us depends on how we meet these challenges and opportunities. Our tradition of educational achievement should hold us in good stead. Over the last century we created a school and further education system which offers opportunities to all. And we created one of the best higher education systems in the world.

These are real achievements. But they are not enough. Too many people were left by the wayside. In this century we must do more. A shocking 7 million adults in England cannot read and write at the level we would expect of an 11-year-old. Even more have problems with numbers. The cost to the country as a whole could be as high as £10 billion a year. The cost to people's personal lives is incalculable. People with low basic skills earn an average £50,000 less over their working lives, are more likely to have health problems, or to turn to crime. These people, and their children, risk being cut off from the advantages of a world increasingly linked through information and technology. A fair and prosperous society cannot be built on such insecure foundations.

We are tackling under-achievement in schools. Today children are reading, 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 nineteenth century, standards of literacy and numeracy provision have been too poor for too long. That is why, in 1998, we asked Sir Claus Moser to write his ground-breaking report, *A Fresh Start*, on literacy and numeracy in England. 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.

This comprehensive strategy for adult literacy and numeracy will deliver radical improvements in standards and achievements. We are investing in high quality training and support for teachers and in the tools they need to do their job – consistent national standards, a common core curriculum, relevant materials and new National Tests which will be the benchmark for all literacy and numeracy achievement. And we are investing in engaging and supporting learners themselves, so that together we can create a new climate for learning which can and will change lives – as shown by the learners described here. Doing this will require the concerted effort of all of us in government as well as of a wide range of champions across the public and the private sectors. And it also requires the effort and commitment of learners themselves.

Our mission is to give all adults in England the opportunity to acquire the skills for active participation in twenty-first-century society. Working together, we can succeed.

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## **Executive Summary**

Seven million people have poor literacy and numeracy skills, including around half a million or more who struggle with English because it is not their first language. This has disastrous consequences for the individuals concerned, weakens the country's ability to compete in the global economy and places a huge burden on society. People with poor literacy, numeracy and language skills tend to be on lower incomes or unemployed, and they are more prone to ill health and social exclusion.

*Skills for Life*, the Government's strategy for improving adult literacy and numeracy skills, sets out how we plan to tackle this problem. Our priority is to improve the skills of those groups where literacy and numeracy needs are greatest and where we can make most impact, particularly:

- Unemployed people and benefit claimants;
- prisoners and those supervised in the community;
- public sector employees;
- low-skilled people in employment; and
- other groups at risk of exclusion.

Our initial aim is that 750,000 adults will improve their literacy and numeracy by 2004, but in the longer term we want to make sure that England has one of the best adult literacy and numeracy rates in the world. And ultimately we want to eliminate the problem altogether. We are spending significant sums in support of our plans – £1.5 billion over the next three years.

These objectives will not be achieved by Government alone. The strategy is designed to ensure that every relevant organisation, at national and local level, can contribute by working to a common set of objectives and within a clear national framework.

A national promotional campaign will let people know what they can do to improve their skills and where they can go for help. And research projects in each part of the country will explore different ways of motivating learners, meeting their specific needs and helping them acquire new reading, writing and number skills as quickly as possible.

We are initiating radical improvements to the education and training system for those learning literacy and numeracy skills in order to raise standards and boost levels of achievement. New national standards, new materials and a common core curriculum leading to National Tests will make sure that the same approach to teaching and learning, based on the most effective practice, is adopted across the country. We are introducing new, more effective ways of assessing need and better teacher training and setting up a new research centre, and rigorous national inspections to monitor standards.

Every adult who is improving his or her literacy and numeracy skills will be given support. Education and training provision will be entirely free, no matter where it is or who provides it. Some will want to learn in a classroom, others at work and others at home. Some will want to combine literacy and numeracy with their other studies. New technology will give us wider options for learning. We will ensure that these are properly developed, tested and exploited so that as many potential learners as possible can benefit.

Inertia and fatalism – not least among low-skilled individuals – are our chief enemies. We must be bold and imaginative to overcome them. This strategy marks a decisive step in tackling the basic skills problem. But it will only succeed if all those who can make a difference join us to do so.

## I. Introduction

### **Our challenge**

1. Dozens of times every day, each of us needs to read, write and use numbers. Whether we are reading a newspaper or the instructions on a medicine bottle, using a bus or train timetable, or working out whether we can afford to buy something, not being able to understand written words or numbers could make our day a source of worry, uncertainty and stress. Millions of people have to cope with these very difficulties. The ground-breaking report, *A Fresh Start*,<sup>1</sup> published in March 1999 following the review chaired by Sir Claus Moser, identified up to 7 million adults in England who cannot read or write at the level we would expect of an 11-year-old. Even more have trouble with numbers.

2. Of course, people with these poor literacy and numeracy skills get by, usually by relying on others for help or by avoiding situations where they need to read, write or calculate. But, because they lack literacy and numeracy skills, they and their families may well exclude themselves from advantages that others take for granted. Or they may be in low-paid or short-term jobs or suffer lengthy periods of unemployment. People with inadequate literacy skills could earn up to 11% less than others, while people with inadequate numeracy skills earn on average 6% to 7% less, even after all other factors have been taken into account.<sup>2</sup> This means that you could be £50,000 worse off over your working life if you have poor literacy and numeracy skills, as well as spend an average of three fewer years in full-time employment by the time you are 37, compared with those whose skills are better.<sup>3</sup>

3. As well as losing out financially, people with literacy and numeracy skills deficiencies may suffer in other ways. Many have low self-confidence and low motivation. Their children are more likely to struggle at school. And they are more prone to health problems and to suffer social exclusion. New technology is significantly increasing the need to read, write and use numbers confidently and effectively. Before long, those who cannot use a computer and access the internet may be as disadvantaged as those who are now unable to write or add up, and information technology skills will be as basic a skill as literacy and numeracy.

4. The effect of reduced literacy and numeracy skills on individuals is severe. But there is a cost to society which is just as great. Employers, in particular, cannot compete in an increasingly global, knowledge-based economy without a workforce able to add real value at every level. One in five employers reports a significant gap in their workers' skills. And over a third of those companies with a literacy and numeracy skills gap say that they have lost business or orders to competitors because of it. Industry loses an estimated £4.8 billion a year because of poor literacy and numeracy skills.<sup>4</sup> Combining the effect of lower incomes, reduced productivity, poorer health and the cost of consequential benefits and welfare services, some have estimated the cost to the country of poor literacy and numeracy skills to be as high as £10 billion a year.<sup>5</sup>

5. Our challenge is to raise the standard of adult literacy and numeracy education so that we can address this need. Much provision has been ineffective at improving literacy and numeracy skills, with few learners achieving a satisfactory rate of progress. One recent study found that while a third of adults in literacy and numeracy skills education improve their skills,

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<sup>1</sup> DfEE, *Improving literacy and numeracy: A Fresh Start*, The report of a working group chaired by Sir Claus Moser, (1999)

<sup>2</sup> Dearden et al, *The Returns to Academic, Vocational and Literacy and Numeracy Skills in Britain (2000)*

<sup>3</sup> Bynner and Parsons, *It doesn't get any better* (1997)

<sup>4</sup> ALBSU (now the Basic Skills Agency), *Making it Happen: Improving the Basic Skills of the Workforce* (1993)

<sup>5</sup> Ernst and Young, *Literacy, Education and Training: Their Impact on the UK Economy* (1993)

half stay at the same level and for 20% of adult learners, their skills level declines.<sup>6</sup> This poor achievement rate is unacceptable. We must ensure that all adults improve their skills as a result of literacy and numeracy provision and that at least a third achieve the next level of attainment.

## **A New strategy**

6. A prosperous and fair society, in which all individuals have an opportunity to fulfil their potential, cannot be achieved with such large numbers of people needing to improve their literacy and numeracy skills. Tackling the basic skills problem is now one of the Government's key priorities. On 5 December 2000, the Secretary of State for Education and Employment called for partners throughout society – including agencies of government, employers and trade unions, education providers, the voluntary sector and many more – to engage their expertise, energy and commitment in this task.<sup>7</sup> Similar policies are being implemented in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Many have responded positively, and a summary of their responses is at Annex A. This new document builds on the earlier statement and reflects the comments received.

7. Our goal is to reduce the number of adults in England with literacy and numeracy difficulties to the levels of our main international competitors – that is from one in five adults to one in ten or better. We should not stop there. The aim of any civilised society, as the Moser Report recognised, must be the virtual elimination of poor literacy and numeracy. This will take time. Past initiatives to improve literacy and numeracy skills have produced limited progress and sometimes bred a culture of inertia and fatalism about the ability to make big improvements in this area. Only bold and imaginative policies, engaging those who can make a real difference in the workplace and communities, will change this cultural inheritance. We intend to build for long-term success by engaging potential learners through every possible means and by creating, for the first time, a thorough, high-quality literacy and numeracy skills learning infrastructure.

8. Our strategy will build on our literacy and numeracy success in schools. The daily literacy and mathematics lessons have transformed the quality of teaching in primary schools, with their emphasis on the methods that work best. Our strategy will also link with broader government policies, such as the commitment to Neighbourhood Renewal, to tackle the problems deprived communities face from crime, poor health, bad housing, poor educational standards and unemployment, and the findings of the Adult Financial Literacy Advisory Group, which identified how people can build literacy and numeracy skills by managing their personal finances.

9. At the heart of our adult literacy and numeracy strategy is the aim to raise the standard of all provision, to engage and motivate potential learners, and to ensure that all those involved in literacy and numeracy skills teaching are working towards a common goal.

10. We will raise standards by:

- Establishing robust national standards, screening and diagnostic assessment, a national core curriculum and new National Tests for literacy and numeracy, as well as by commissioning the new learning materials to support them.
- Enhancing the status of teachers by introducing professional qualifications for all literacy and numeracy teachers from September 2001. Improved inspection arrangements will provide a rigorous and robust quality framework for the teaching of literacy, numeracy and English as an additional language.

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<sup>6</sup> Brooks et al, *Progress in Adult Literacy: Do learners learn?* (2001)

<sup>7</sup> DfEE, *Skills for Life: the national strategy for improving adult literacy and numeracy skills* (2000)

11. We will engage potential learners by:

- Giving all adults who want to improve their literacy and numeracy skills an entitlement to free training in a format that reflects their individual needs and which is available when and where they need it.
- Establishing a clear route to qualifications that will help learners and their teachers understand what they have to do in order to make progress.
- Launching and sustaining a promotional strategy targeted both at those who could improve their literacy and numeracy skills and at those who can influence or support them.

12. And we will co-ordinate planning and delivery by:

- Setting realistic targets and increasing the funding available to achieve them so that all providers will receive funds for learners following a literacy or numeracy course.
- Giving help first to those who need it most by targeting key priority groups and making sure that the work of all parts of government is focused on common goals.
- Establishing regional pathfinder areas to test how our new learning infrastructure can best increase retention and achievement rates. A new literacy and numeracy skills centre of research will commission more analysis, including a baseline survey of need across the country.

13. These measures represent a huge challenge to all those working with people who could improve their literacy and numeracy skills. Our strategy requires nothing less than a cultural transformation among adults and a radical improvement in the quality of the training and support delivered to them. None of this can be achieved by one agency alone, nor just by government. We can only succeed in tackling this problem – which has been a burden to individuals and society for too long – through a shared mission to succeed.

## **II. Our Priority Groups**

14. Identifying the one in five adults with literacy and numeracy skills difficulties, and bringing them back into learning, is critical to our success so that we can target and provide resources to those most in need. We know from existing research that literacy and numeracy difficulties are more common among certain groups. At least a third of unemployed people, for example, have literacy skills at no more than Level 1 – the level we expect of an 11-year-old. And over a third of people with poor literacy and numeracy are in receipt of social security benefits (excluding pensions and child benefit), compared with less than one in ten of those with better skills.<sup>8</sup> Research also shows that those working in low-skilled occupations have much lower literacy and numeracy levels. Weak literacy and numeracy skills are also closely associated with other factors including homelessness or living in disadvantaged communities. Our strategy must address these groups as a matter of priority.

15. For those groups in regular receipt of state support, such as jobseekers and benefit claimants, as well as for those detained in penal institutions, the Government can act quickly to identify literacy and numeracy skills needs and to remedy them. Through its various agencies, the Government has direct contact with people in these groups and therefore a direct opportunity to encourage them to develop their literacy and numeracy skills. Our strategy aims systematically to screen the individuals in these groups to assess their basic skills requirements, and then to provide high-quality learning opportunities and the financial support they need to help them improve their literacy and numeracy skills. And just as we now regard it as a duty on government to take adult literacy and numeracy seriously, so we will impose duties on the relevant agencies – and in certain cases on the individuals themselves – to do so too.

16. As a responsible employer, the Government must also ensure that the two million plus workers employed in the public sector are given the opportunities they need to raise their skills levels. The public sector, particularly central and local government, must lead the way in policies to identify and address any literacy and numeracy shortfalls among their own staff.

17. We must also address the skills gap in the workforce more widely. Of the 7 million adults in England with literacy and numeracy needs, we estimate that 1 million are under 25 years old and 4 million more are aged between 26 and 55 years old. And up to half of the 7 million people are in jobs. Many are in low-skilled or short-term employment. We must increase these people's earnings potential, and the country's wealth and productivity, by giving them the literacy and numeracy skills they need to participate in a global, knowledge-based economy. Our strategy will therefore engage with employers, trade unions and others to ensure that all those in low-skilled work are given the opportunities they need to improve their skills levels.

18. We cannot ignore other groups with specific disadvantages and at risk of exclusion from mainstream society due to their lack of literacy and numeracy skills. These include homeless people, those with drug and alcohol problems, refugees and other non-native English speakers, and some who live in disadvantaged communities. Our strategy will therefore focus on the specific needs of these groups and ensure that our policies are able to address local concerns.

19. By targeting our efforts where needs are known to be high and particularly where we have good access to the individuals concerned, we will be able to allocate resources effectively and focus Government Departments and agencies on engaging key client groups. This will ensure that those who face the greatest disadvantage receive help soonest. We have set out how our strategy will work, and where we expect to see improvements in levels of literacy and numeracy skills, in figure 1.

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<sup>8</sup> Office for National Statistics, Adult Literacy in Britain (1997)

20. Our targeted approach will enable us to identify more people with literacy and numeracy difficulties and engage them in improving their skills. But for these people to stick with their learning and actually improve their skills, they need to remain well-motivated and find the learning relevant to their needs. It is therefore essential that they end up in the right kind of provision. Our strategy must therefore be flexible and recognise that each learner will have his or her own specific needs. We will ensure that all adult literacy and numeracy skills learners can access, on the basis of impartial information, advice and guidance, the high-quality provision that best suits their needs. This provision could be dedicated to the needs of that priority group, or involve existing full-time courses, part-time provision taking place at work or off-site, or self-study packages available online through **learnirect**.

## Figure 1: Literacy and Numeracy Skills Strategy.

### Our strategy will target those in key priority groups with literacy and numeracy needs:

Those with literacy and numeracy needs in regular contact with government and its agencies, comprising

- 280,000 unemployed people
- 1.5 million other benefit claimants
- Around 250,000 prisoners and people supervised in the community

Around 200,000 public sector employees with literacy and numeracy needs in

- Central government
- Local government
- Armed Forces
- National Health Service

Approximately 1.5 million low-skilled people in employment with literacy and numeracy needs, particularly

- Those in occupations and sectors with low average literacy and numeracy rates
- Young people in employment

Other groups at high risk of exclusion due to poor literacy and numeracy skills, including

- Around 60,000 homeless people with literacy and numeracy needs
- Up to 1 million refugees, successful asylum seekers and other speakers of English as an additional language
- Parents with poor basic skills, including the 250,000 lone parents with no qualifications
- Around 1.7 million adults with literacy and numeracy needs who live in disadvantaged communities

### Learners' needs will be identified, addressed and monitored by government agencies and partners, including:

- |  |   |  |  |
|--|---|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employment Service</li> <li>• Benefits Agency</li> <li>• Health services</li> <li>• Community and voluntary organisations</li> <li>• Prison Service</li> <li>• Probation Service</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public sector employers</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employers</li> <li>• Trade unions</li> <li>• National training organisations</li> <li>• Small Business Service</li> <li>• Connexions Service</li> <li>• Employment Service programmes</li> <li>• Social Services</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local Authorities</li> <li>• Residents' Associations</li> <li>• Learning partnerships</li> <li>• Local Learning and Skills Councils</li> <li>• Voluntary and community organisations</li> <li>• Religious bodies</li> <li>• Health services</li> <li>• Refugee Council and similar bodies</li> <li>• Age Concern and similar charities</li> <li>• Football clubs</li> <li>• Libraries</li> <li>• Information, Advice and Guidance Partnerships</li> </ul> |
|--|---|--|--|

### Free training will be provided through:

- Dedicated provision e.g. family literacy programmes for parents
- Full-time courses, including intensive 'booster' courses
- Part-time courses
- Self-study, 'mentored' learning and **learn**direct

### Our strategy will, by 2004, improve the literacy and numeracy skills of 750,000 adults in England, comprising:

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- 130,000 jobseekers
  - 40,000 other benefit claimants
  - 40,000 prisoners and others supervised in the community
  - 10,000 public sector employees
  - 50,000 adults in low-skilled jobs
  - 110,000 young people
  - 210,000 general basic skills learners including those on **learndirect**
  - 50,000 refugees and speakers of other languages
  - 60,000 parents
  - 50,000 people who live in disadvantaged communities

## Unemployed people and benefit claimants

- *Jobseekers*

21. There are around 870,000 registered unemployed people in England, down from 1.3 million in 1997. 290,000 of these have been unemployed for over six months. We estimate that at least 32% of all unemployed people have literacy, language and/or numeracy needs, which in part prevent them from improving their employability and finding secure work. Addressing the poor literacy and numeracy skills of unemployed people is essential if we are to build on the success of the New Deal and to reduce the numbers out of work even further.

22. The Employment Service is already implementing a number of measures to address this need. From April 2001, Employment Service personal advisers will screen, and where necessary offer assessment to, all those entering the New Deal for Young People and all those over 25 reaching six months' unemployment at their Restart interview.

23. We now propose to pilot an extension of this approach. Current screening relies on questioning by advisers, followed up by a longer assessment by those with literacy and numeracy skills expertise. In some areas we will be piloting a shorter ten-minute screening process – known as Fast Track – which has been developed by the Basic Skills Agency. We will be exploring international best practice to determine whether there are other, even shorter and more effective screening tools. We will also pilot screening and assessment at 13 weeks, as well as at the six-month stage, to determine whether earlier intervention can help us identify and address the literacy and numeracy skills needs of more unemployed people. And we will explore whether even earlier screening is practical. All those with literacy and numeracy skills below Level 1 will be referred to appropriate training programmes as quickly as possible.

24. For jobseekers, the biggest incentive to start learning again is likely to be a realisation that improving their literacy and numeracy skills leads to a better-paid job. Work by Tesco has shown how the incentive of a job can motivate people to complete literacy and numeracy training. And yet there is evidence that some unemployed adults still have a deep-seated reluctance to address their literacy and numeracy skills needs. We wish to tackle this head-on, by establishing pilots to test whether giving financial incentives to those with diagnosed literacy and numeracy skills needs – of a £10 a week top-up to those on a training allowance and £100 for the completion of a literacy or numeracy qualification – can help to keep people learning and improving their skills.

25. In two pilot areas, we propose to go further and introduce a requirement that those unemployed people with literacy and numeracy deficiencies must address their needs. If they fail to do so they risk losing benefits. We believe that the seriousness of the literacy and numeracy skills problem means that we must attempt radical solutions. We will provide advice, encouragement, courses and financial support to help unemployed people gain the skills they need to find and keep work. In turn, they have a responsibility to improve their employability and to take advantage of opportunities offered to them. Our proposed pilots will give us the information we need to determine how to develop a new national policy for improving the literacy and numeracy of jobseekers which takes account of both their rights and their responsibilities.

26. We are taking other measures to help unemployed people gain the literacy and numeracy skills they need. Those claiming Jobseeker's Allowance are allowed to study part-time for up to 16 'guided learning hours' a week. But additional literacy and numeracy needs cannot always be addressed alongside other study within these 16 hours. We will make arrangements to allow those who require literacy and numeracy support, alongside their existing vocational or other studies, to have the time spent on literacy and numeracy skills work discounted for the purposes of the 16-hour rule.

27. Additionally, the Employment Service will work with providers, employers and the Learning and Skills Council, to encourage its clients to continue their learning when they move into work. Unemployed people must find work, but we do not want them subsequently returning to unemployment, particularly as around half of all jobs are not open to anyone with below Level 1 literacy and numeracy. Our aim must be to create the opportunity for people to remain in literacy and numeracy learning until these skills are acquired, and we expect that, through the Employment Service and other programmes, around 130,000 jobseekers will have improved their literacy and numeracy skills by 2004.

- *Other benefit claimants*

28. In addition to those receiving Jobseeker's Allowance, a further 3.5 million adults are in receipt of other working-age benefits (excluding child benefit and pensions). At least 40% of these are estimated to have literacy and numeracy difficulties. Some will have more pressing personal and social problems that need to be tackled as a first priority, but for others, acquiring literacy and numeracy skills should be integral to their development. Benefits Agency staff are already well placed to identify people with literacy and numeracy needs as part of their work with benefit claimants, and to offer them appropriate advice and guidance on where to get help. From this autumn, promotional information, advice and sample materials will be available in all local benefits offices.

29. Lone parents are a key target group among benefit claimants. Of the 900,000 lone parents claiming Income Support, around 240,000 have no qualifications. We will be proactive in identifying their literacy and numeracy needs. Around a third of lone parents with children aged between 6 and 15 have poor literacy skills and almost 40% have poor numeracy skills. Starting in April 2001, screening for literacy and numeracy skills problems will be introduced for all lone parents who attend an interview as part of the New Deal for Lone Parents. We intend to extend this to all lone parents who are required to meet personal advisers as a condition of receiving benefit and are exploring the feasibility of doing so. Where personal advisers consider that the lone parent has literacy or numeracy needs, they will discuss this with the lone parent and advise that an assessment take place to determine the level of need and how this could best be addressed.

30. Screening for literacy and numeracy needs will be extended to people on the New Deal for Partners from April 2001 and to those on the New Deal for Disabled People from July 2001. Of the 180,000 partners of Jobseeker's Allowance claimants who are eligible each year for the New Deal, over 40% have no qualifications. Partners of other benefit claimants are likely to be in a similar position. These people must have equal access to literacy and numeracy support if they need it. And all those on the New Deal for Young People identified as having literacy and numeracy needs will be given a diagnostic assessment and referred to suitable provision. We will ensure that, as the Working Age Agency develops, it offers appropriate help to claimants, whether they are claiming Jobseeker's Allowance or other benefits. We will also support community and voluntary organisations in the development of estate-based learning programmes for those on benefits.

31. We must also make sure that all people claiming disability benefit have equal access to opportunities to acquire literacy and numeracy skills. Learners with disabilities and/or learning difficulties – around 8.5 million people in Britain – are a diverse group with a wide range of abilities and needs. People with disabilities and/or learning difficulties are more than twice as likely to be unqualified or unemployed as their peers. And for many, underachievement has led to low self-esteem or low confidence. The current Special Educational Needs and Disability Bill proposes to place increased responsibilities on providers of post-16 learning, including a requirement that they treat disabled students no less favourably, without justification, than students without a disability and that they make reasonable adjustments to ensure that in

accessing education, people who are disabled are not put at a substantial disadvantage to people who are not .

32. Our literacy and numeracy skills strategy must cover all these potential learners and provide mainstream opportunities to learn – especially through new technology – that are flexible enough for each individual's requirements. A range of measures will raise standards of literacy and numeracy provision for this group. These include a new pre-Entry Level curriculum, guidance for tutors on specialist diagnosis of learning needs, supporting materials in a variety of formats, a teacher training programme, and new approaches to literacy and numeracy learning.

33. We will work with the Basic Skills Agency, the Learning and Skills Development Agency, and the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education to ensure that all providers of literacy and numeracy tuition for people with disabilities and/or learning difficulties are provided with models of good practice. And we will work with the Learning and Skills Council to ensure that providers are fairly funded to support learners with appropriate materials and equipment. Post-16 institutions already make resources available to support disabled students with learning. The new duties under the Special Educational Needs and Disability Bill will lead to an increase in the likely take-up of places by students with learning difficulties and disabilities. We have already announced an additional £172 million in 2002-03 and 2003-04 to help providers make their premises and teaching provision more accessible to people with disabilities. The Adult Basic Skills Strategy Unit will also work closely with the Department of Health to ensure that the £3 billion a year currently spent on health and social care provision for adults with learning disabilities is used effectively, as will be set out in the forthcoming Government White Paper on learning disability services.

34. We estimate that at least 40,000 people claiming benefit will improve their literacy and numeracy skills by 2004 as a result of our measures.

### **Prisoners and those supervised in the community**

35. In any one year, 130,000 people are or have been in prison, with a further 200,000 supervised by the Probation Service in the community. Around 50% of these individuals have poor reading skills, 66% have poor numeracy skills, and a staggering 81% of prisoners have writing skills below Level 1. This is a serious obstacle to the rehabilitation of ex-offenders and to their search for employment once they leave prison. Prisoners who get a worthwhile job after release are less likely to re-offend. They are also less likely to be regarded – and regard themselves – as on the margins of society.

36. The new partnership between the Prison Service and the Department for Education and Employment, supported by a Prisoners Learning and Skills Unit, will work with all key partners to improve prisoners' learning and skills in custody and on release – so that more of them can find work and build a life away from crime. Improving literacy, numeracy and vocational skills is a key objective in achieving this aim. The Prison Service has already set an annual target for improved achievement rates: for 23,400 prisoners to achieve accredited national qualifications in 2001-02, rising to 36,200 in 2003-04. Approximately three quarters of these individuals will be working towards literacy and numeracy or Key Skills qualifications. From April 2001, funding for prison education will be transferred from the Home Office to the Department for Education and Employment, and subsequent targets will be agreed jointly, including targets for achievement at Entry Level as well as at Levels 1 and 2.

37. The Probation Service is developing its own literacy and numeracy skills strategy to tackle similar needs among those it supervises in the community. Targets have been set to reduce the number of these people with poor literacy and numeracy skills by 6,000 by 2002-03 and 12,000 by 2003-04. The Probation Service is already running pilot projects in seven areas

of the country to screen probationers, using the Fast Track tool, to determine the scale of need, and to examine different models of literacy and numeracy tuition. An interim evaluation report of these pilots will be available in September 2001. In addition, the Youth Justice Board has launched a Basic Skills Toolkit for use by Youth Offending Teams.

38. We are also creating a literacy and numeracy skills pathfinder project to develop and then disseminate best practice. Prisoners in pathfinder area prisons will, from September 2001, have access to tutors trained in the new literacy and numeracy standards, core curriculum and National Tests. We are also exploring whether the Prison Service can require all prisoners eligible for early release who have literacy and numeracy skills needs to attend literacy and numeracy classes as a condition of licence. We are determined to make a significant impact on the numbers of people in prison or supervised in the community with literacy and numeracy needs. Evidence from our prison pathfinder will help us determine how we can best tackle this need. We expect our strategy to enable at least 40,000 people in prison and those supervised in the community to have improved their literacy and numeracy skills by 2004.

### **Public sector employees**

39. The Government has an fundamental obligation to identify and improve the literacy and numeracy skills of its own employees. Of the 2 million plus people employed in the public sector, a proportion will have literacy and numeracy skills needs. A Government committed to improving the skills levels of the country must demonstrate that it is leading the way in identifying and tackling serious weaknesses. We are determined not to shirk this responsibility.

40. Central and local governmental bodies are fully committed to supporting and developing their staff. Many already have Investors in People status. Each public sector employer now needs to take firm action to address the literacy and numeracy needs of the staff it employs. Centrally, the heads of each government department have already made this commitment – literacy and numeracy will now form part of each department's training and development plans, and all staff requiring help with literacy and numeracy will be able to access it. And some public sector employers, such as the Inland Revenue, have committed to providing literacy and numeracy assessment and training for any new entrant who needs to improve these skills.

41. We propose to go further to develop and disseminate best practice. We have designed a suite of measures, to be piloted in the Department for Education and Employment, which will allow employers both to assess the scale of need within their own workforce and constructively to tackle the needs identified. The measures will build on existing structures such as **learnirect** centres and Investors in People status. The Department for Education and Employment will also be proactive in identifying those with needs among new and existing staff, in part by undertaking a sampling exercise to determine the scale of need. And it will give all its staff with literacy or numeracy difficulties at Level 1 or below an entitlement to time off for training. Both online and paper-based screening and assessment will be available for all staff. And line managers will be made aware how these can be used as part of their teams' training and development plans. Practice versions of the National Literacy and Numeracy Tests will also be available, and staff will be able to take the actual Tests in supervised conditions. All staff requiring support will be helped to develop an individual action plan and will be given in-house training or offered a course with a local training provider. The Department will work to ensure that it can justifiably claim that all its employees are literate and numerate or are in the process of becoming so.

42. We intend that every central government department should be able to make the same claim. The Ministry of Defence, for example, has set itself annual targets, as part of its literacy and numeracy action plan, for raising educational achievement among its 400,000 plus staff. Initial screening and subsequent diagnostic assessment in support of literacy and numeracy skills development is already available across the services, and action is being undertaken as a

result of the needs identified. In addition, the Ministry of Defence is committed to giving each employee the opportunity to reach a Level 2 qualification within three years of entry. The Ministry is also working closely with the Department for Education and Employment to develop models of best practice to ensure that literacy and numeracy assessment, training and support is available for every member of the defence community, whether based in this country or overseas.

43. The National Health Service is taking similar action. Its plan, published in July 2000, outlined its commitment to investing in training and development for staff who do not have a professional qualification. This commitment is already being implemented, with staff involved directly in the delivery of healthcare and others in support roles being made aware of literacy and numeracy skills needs. Basic skills learning is being promoted through National Health Service publications and events, and the Service is committed to providing opportunities to address any literacy and numeracy skills needs identified in individuals' Personal Development Plans. The National Health Service is also drawing up an action plan for assessing the scale of literacy and numeracy need among its existing employees. The action plan will ensure that NHS employers work with local education providers to address all literacy and numeracy needs that are identified.

44. We will also ensure that similar policies are developed locally. We are working with the Local Government Association to enable the literacy and numeracy skills needs of local government staff to be identified and supported. In addition, local authorities will support promotional activities to raise awareness of literacy and numeracy issues among their staff and will promote the take-up of pre-apprenticeship and Modern Apprenticeship programmes for all new employees aged under 25. And we will build upon existing best practice: in one example, led by the Basic Skills Agency and backed by the Local Government Association, several public sector organisations have run 60-hour intensive basic literacy and numeracy courses for their staff, with positive results. In another example, Barking and Dagenham local education authority are initiating a five-year programme of training and accreditation for council staff, volunteers and others to provide the necessary community capacity in teaching literacy and numeracy skills. Thurrock, Birmingham and North Tyneside are other examples of local authorities with a distinguished track record of addressing literacy and numeracy difficulties locally.

45. The Adult Basic Skills Strategy Unit will ensure that national and local best practice is shared and will facilitate joint working across government, working with the Central Government National Training Organisation which will promote the strategy within the civil service. The Unit will report directly to the Secretary of State for Education and Employment on the development and implementation of the Government's commitment to improving literacy and numeracy skills among public sector employees and will publish details of progress by summer 2001. The Unit will also explore what further measures might be taken, consistent with value for money, to ensure that non-civil service staff working under contract to departments are also able to improve their literacy and numeracy skills. We estimate that around 10,000 public sector employees, including staff in the armed forces and the National Health Service, will have improved their literacy and numeracy skills by 2004 as a result of our action.

### **Low-skilled people in employment**

46. Improving the literacy and numeracy skills of all people in work is critical. To do this, we must involve employer and industry representatives, unions, the Learning and Skills Council, the Small Business Service, national training organisations, and of course large and small businesses themselves, to produce literacy and numeracy policies that address business needs as well as those of the learners.

47. The needs are real. Productivity per hour worked is 20% lower in Britain than in

Germany, and our poorer literacy and numeracy skills account for a third of that shortfall. In the distribution and consumer services sector, for example, where one in four adults work, 25% of employers report needs in literacy and numeracy. And in construction, where 6% of adults work, over 40% of employers report evidence of poor skills. A lack of literacy and numeracy skills can often trap people into low-skilled, poorly-paid jobs – two thirds of those with literacy skills at Level 1 or below earn less than £9,000 a year. Around a third of plant and machine operators, for example, have literacy skills no higher than Level 1.

48. The 200,000 employers recognised as Investors in People already understand the benefits of a more skilled workforce in terms of increased outputs and staff motivation. Others support their employees in learning, either as part of their own training programmes or through more flexible working practices that allow learning off-site. We will continue to develop more ways to ensure that all businesses, and particularly smaller and medium-sized firms, are working towards the Investors standard.

49. But some firms fail to address their employees' lack of literacy and numeracy skills. One survey found that around 94% of companies in the north-west said that reading and writing skills were important in manual tasks, yet only 61% of them saw a need to train their workers in these skills.<sup>9</sup> A recent report<sup>10</sup> showed that the changing occupational structure is likely to intensify the demand for many generic skills including literacy and numeracy skills. Changing skills needs in the economy reinforce these conclusions. No longer can business compete solely on the basis of low cost and low added value. To face the challenges of a global, knowledge-based economy, businesses must increasingly invest in their employees' skills to produce higher added-value services for new markets.

50. We must therefore encourage as many employers as possible to make a firm commitment to positive action to address literacy and numeracy skills needs. We will do this by developing literacy and numeracy policies for employers that build on best practice, disseminating and implementing this widely through partner organisations. We will also ensure that Information, Advice and Guidance Partnerships can help employers identify literacy and numeracy skills needs among their staff and provide advice on appropriate skills training opportunities in the local area. We will also promote the use of clear language in companies' internal and external publications. And we will support our strategy by a targeted promotional and information campaign which can be used and adapted by employers themselves.

51. Central to our success will be to ensure that high-quality learning opportunities are available to all workers in need, and that all literacy and numeracy skills provision is free. Businesses must know that they can rely on the providers they work with to be responsive to their needs and increase the skills levels of their employees. The quality assurance provided by the Adult Learning Inspectorate, and the Learning and Skills Council funding that is linked to quality, will ensure that all literacy and numeracy providers reach high standards.

52. Literacy and numeracy provision must be integrated into companies' own human resources strategy. Our online practice tests and learning materials will in due course help all businesses do this. Literacy and numeracy strategy can be easier for larger firms which have the flexibility to encourage their employees to enter existing courses or to commission bespoke courses from local literacy and numeracy providers. Smaller companies often lack these advantages. We will therefore work with national training organisations to develop group training arrangements and other networks to help keep training costs down and to encourage larger companies to open up their own training facilities to local firms. These networks will build on the £2.5 million fund to promote Employer Learning Networks, aimed at small and medium-

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<sup>9</sup> Frank and Hamilton, *Not Just a Number: the role of basic skills programmes in the changing workplace* (1993)

<sup>10</sup> Institute of Employment Research, *Projections of Occupations and Qualifications* (2000)

sized organisations, and set up to help groups of employers to share resources, expertise and knowledge to develop the skills of their staff.

53. The Learning and Skills Council and the Basic Skills Agency will also support large, medium and small employers through creating more ‘brokers’ to facilitate a close and constructive relationship between employers and training providers, on the lines of the model currently being piloted. This uses former business people, who understand the needs of the private sector, to promote literacy and numeracy learning to companies and to help providers design bespoke training. We must enable all companies, whatever their size, to benefit from the equivalent of bespoke literacy and numeracy courses for their employees. Additionally, recognising that it can be difficult for small and medium-sized employers to release staff for training, a pilot in one of our pathfinder areas will examine whether replacement funding to cover the loss of staff for one day a week for 13 weeks would raise levels of achievement in literacy and numeracy skills for these businesses.

54. As important as employers in reaching those with literacy and numeracy needs are the trade unions, and their union learning representatives, who have already shown how effective they can be at motivating and persuading people to improve their skills. We will consult on how to give statutory backing to the network of union learning representatives to reinforce this role. Over 5,000 learners are currently involved in trade union provision through the Union Learning Fund, which has provided £2 million specifically to support the development of literacy and numeracy skills. For example, the Transport and General Workers Union is working with the management team at Heathrow Airport to develop learning coaches who are trained in basic skills awareness and can encourage staff, particularly those involved in security activities, onto basic skills programmes. UCATT union representatives in the construction industry are also being trained to promote basic skills and provide frontline advice and guidance as part of the industry’s drive to improve safety awareness. We have made an additional £6 million available to the Fund for specific literacy and numeracy skills activities.

55. National training organisations also have a key role, and literacy and numeracy skills should be a key feature of their workforce development plans. Over 30 of them are already working with the Basic Skills Agency to map occupational sector standards to the new basic skills standards, to develop materials to support appropriate training. Some, including the Science Technology and Mathematics Council, and the Polymers (Rubber and Plastics) NTO are engaging employers, Regional Development Authorities and others to identify and share existing best practice and take further action to address literacy and numeracy needs. Other partners, including the British Retail Consortium and the Confederation of British Industry’s Trade Association Forum are working with the Adult Basic Skills Strategy Unit and the Basic Skills Agency to produce materials targeted at part-time workers (particularly women) in the retail sector. And the Construction Industry Training Board is working with the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions to consider how to address adult literacy and numeracy through its activities.

56. We will bring together the best practice developed by employers, unions and national training organisations so that we can help employers help their employees gain literacy and numeracy skills. We will publish a ‘toolkit’ for employers to use in taking action. This will be promoted nationally, particularly for those in low-skilled occupations, for example through the Department for Trade and Industry’s “a great place to work” website, [www.greatplacetowork.gov.uk](http://www.greatplacetowork.gov.uk), by the Small Business Service, and by supplying firms with articles and case studies for use in their own newsletters and magazines. Employers with a successful record of addressing literacy and numeracy skills needs will be offered the chance to become ‘champions’, encouraging others to follow their example.

57. By working together, we can ensure that everyone benefits from the increased productivity and employability that improvements in literacy and numeracy skills brings. We

anticipate that our measures to promote the benefit of acquiring literacy and numeracy skills, and our support to employers will enable at least an additional 50,000 adults to improve their literacy and numeracy skills by 2004.

- *Young adults*

58. In addition, we must take special measures to support young people in the workplace with poor literacy and numeracy skills. Of the 580,000 or so 16-year-olds who leave school each year, around 150,000 are below Level 1 in both Maths and English. 22% of these young people do not go on to training or work after they leave school. We are determined to bring these young people, who are often the most marginalised or disadvantaged in society, back into learning. Connexions personal advisers will have a central role to play in identifying those 16-year-olds with literacy and numeracy skills needs, and giving them access to local training and support. But others who work with the young, including local authority social services, voluntary organisations, and young offender institutions, must also be more involved. We will ensure that frontline staff better understand the problems caused by weak literacy and numeracy skills among young people, and how they can provide help.

59. The Connexions Service will also have a key role with the 19% of the young people with Maths and English below Level 1 who find work when they leave school, particularly for the three quarters of them who are in jobs without training. Personal advisers will be able to track the progress of these young people and intervene, with their employers, to help them improve their literacy and numeracy skills. Their work, supported by our promotional and information activity, will be focused on those sectors and occupations where there is particular need – in the manufacturing, construction and the wholesale or retail industrial sectors, where many young people work, and among craft occupations (such as plumbers and carpenters) and caring occupations (such as childcare and residential care workers), where literacy and numeracy skills needs are disproportionately present among young men and young women respectively. Personal advisers will encourage all those who are 16 or 17 years old to take up their statutory right to time off for study or training.

60. We must enable the Connexions Service and employers to identify young people's literacy and numeracy needs. But we must also ensure that the young people themselves are motivated to learn by high-quality provision leading to real opportunities. Our training programmes for young people have been redesigned to do this by setting out clear progression routes from literacy and numeracy skills provision to higher level programmes such as Modern Apprenticeships. For the young people who need specialist support, we will provide literacy and numeracy training alongside the other work preparation programmes of the 'learning gateway'. Once they are at Level 1, they can progress further, for example through a foundation or Advanced Modern Apprenticeship programme or as part of a full-time course at college. Those young people who are not ready for the Key Skills requirements of the Foundation Modern Apprenticeship will have their basic literacy and numeracy skills addressed first, as a priority, by colleges and other providers. We will also ensure that literacy and numeracy education is integrated into all learning undertaken by this age group, whether apprenticeships, vocational and other courses undertaken full or part-time, as well as pre-vocational provision. We are also encouraging young people to take the new Key Skills qualification, which includes literacy and numeracy skills, at the level appropriate to their abilities.

61. Through the monitoring and supporting role of the Connexions Service, we aim to ensure that all young people who leave school with literacy and numeracy needs – whether they enter work or not – are able improve their skills. We expect that around 110,000 young people will have improved their literacy and numeracy skills by 2004 as a result of our action.

### **Other groups at risk of exclusion**

62. Many of those in the priority groups already listed, such as jobseekers, are at high risk of social exclusion. But other groups, including homeless people, refugees and asylum seekers, and others who do not speak English as a first language, must also be able to obtain high-quality advice and support in addressing their own literacy and numeracy needs.

63. Around 100,000 people were registered as homeless last year. Many of these will have literacy and numeracy needs that are contributing to their difficulty in finding a place to stay and a place to work. We will engage with charities and other community and voluntary organisations to ensure that all those registered as homeless can have their literacy and numeracy skills identified, and that they can be given flexible learning opportunities which are sensitive to their circumstances.

64. We must also make sure that refugees and successful asylum seekers can make the best possible start to their new life in the United Kingdom. Once their application to remain has been successful, they need to receive our support and advice so that they can be integrated into the local community and play a full part in the economic life of the country. We will therefore be liaising with the Home Office and voluntary organisations to ensure that all refugees and all those who are given exceptional leave to remain in the UK are offered screening and assessment for literacy and numeracy needs and, if required, referred to appropriate training.

65. There are between 450,000 and 1 million people in England who do not speak English as their first language. We will be taking specific action to address their language and literacy needs. Potential learners range from those who may lack basic literacy and numeracy in their first language to those who already have a high level of education. Some belong to settled communities, others are refugees or migrant workers. It is essential that the specific literacy and/or numeracy needs of these learners are not seen as secondary to the needs of English-speaking adults. We will therefore address these individuals' language needs in line with the recommendations in our report *Breaking the Language Barriers*, published in August 2000. A specialist curriculum for English as an additional language, based on the national literacy standards, and a programme of specific teacher training will be in place by autumn 2001. We will also work with faith-based organisations to provide literacy and numeracy screening, assessment and learning opportunities on or near their premises as appropriate.

66. Other groups at risk of exclusion – including drug or alcohol abusers, travelling families, older adults in the community as well as in residential care homes – are most regularly reached by many thousands of organisations and individuals in the voluntary and community sector. It is critical that we support their essential work as part of the literacy and numeracy skills strategy. One element of this support will be to train and develop the staff of community and voluntary organisations in identifying and supporting the literacy and numeracy skills needs of the people they work with.

67. Through the £3.5 million Voluntary Organisations Partnership Programme, organisations such as the Foyer Federation, the Prince's Trust, the Salvation Army, Nacro, the Refugee Council, Youth Clubs UK, Fairbridge Housing, Cranstoun Drug Services, Alcohol Concern and Groundwork UK are already doing this. By March 2002 they will have trained around 1,000 staff to gain recognised basic skills qualifications and a further 1,000 staff in the use of screening and diagnostic assessment tools, and will have delivered basic skills awareness training to around 10,000 volunteers. They plan to screen around 25,000 of their clients and give basic skills training to around 11,000. Some are using the latest Fast Track assessment tool and the new core curriculum, as well as their own mentoring schemes and resettlement courses. Many are also exploiting new technologies to help those they work with gain the skills they need.

68. Many of the projects run through the Adult and Community Learning Fund have shown

how literacy and numeracy skills tuition can be successfully combined with other activities and services provided by voluntary and community organisations in order to attract and motivate people who may otherwise be wary of learning. Examples include:

- The Big Issue project that links work as a vendor with participation in three learning modules *Learn to Earn*, *Learn to Live* and *Learn to Work*, beginning with an assessment of basic skills needs.
- Spitalfields City Farm – combining English language tuition with gardening and commercial horticulture activities for Bangladeshi women originating from rural areas.
- Fairbridge – developing literacy and numeracy skills among disaffected young men through football playing, coaching and theory.
- Manchester Foyer – combining literacy and numeracy skills support with driving test theory preparation, information technology and courses on independent living for foyer residents and local community members.

69. We will ensure, as part of our strategy, that more organisations can benefit from this kind of approach. The National Institute of Adult Continuing Education and the National Association of Councils for Voluntary Service are working to develop awareness of literacy and numeracy skills within the local voluntary and community sector, involving learners in the design and delivery of programmes in order to increase their commitment and motivation. We will support and look to extend this work and enable an estimated 50,000 of these adults at risk of social exclusion to improve their literacy and numeracy by 2004.

- *Parents*

70. Most parents of course have good literacy and numeracy skills and take a keen interest in the education of their children. But poor literacy and numeracy skills often run in the family – parents with poor literacy and numeracy skills are more likely to have children with similar difficulties. A 1993 study found that 60% of children in the lowest reading attainment group at age 10 had parents with low literacy scores.<sup>11</sup> In order to break this generational cycle of under-achievement, we must ensure that we are working with parents – as well as with grandparents and other primary carers – to support literacy and numeracy activities with their children.

71. Through schools, we have an excellent means of targeting those parents who do have literacy and numeracy skills needs, and encouraging them to learn for the sake of their children. We will therefore provide schools with information on literacy and numeracy in English and in other languages to make available at parents' evenings. And we will be promoting the benefits of reading and writing, and where adults can go to improve them, through magazines and journals aimed at new and existing parents.

72. But schools can do more than just promote the advantages of adult literacy and numeracy. We know that children do much better at school if they experience encouragement, and a positive attitude to learning at home. We will therefore ensure that those working with children can spot the literacy, language and numeracy skills needs of parents. This autumn, for example, we will issue literacy and numeracy skills guidance to all Early Years Development and Childcare Partnerships in England, and offer training on identifying parental literacy and numeracy needs to all childminders and heads of nurseries, playgroups and after-school clubs. And through Sure Start, our early years programme to tackle child poverty and social exclusion, we will offer access to literacy and numeracy training, with childcare and crèche support, at

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<sup>11</sup> *Parents and their Children*, Adult Literacy and Literacy and Numeracy Skills Unit (1993)

convenient and unthreatening locations where parents already visit or collect their children.

73. Literacy and numeracy skills provision will be available more widely for parents through an expansion of our Family Literacy and Numeracy Project, administered by the Basic Skills Agency. Starting in 1994, this programme now helps more than 50,000 parents a year support the language, literacy and numeracy development of their children. We estimate that around 75% of the parents involved to date have been parents with no or few qualifications who have young children in schools where there is underachievement or local social disadvantage. Around 95% of participating parents have taken a more active role in supporting their children as a result of developing their own skills. Schools have also reported an increase in parental involvement and support from course participants.

74. This year, around £17 million has been spent on family literacy and numeracy programmes, including the successful Keeping up with the Children initiative. We will sustain this level of support in 2001-02 and will continue to expand family learning opportunities from April 2002, when responsibility for this programme will pass to the Learning and Skills Council. Four new programmes are being piloted:

- short courses targeted at the most disadvantaged areas in England to help parents take the first steps towards addressing their literacy and numeracy needs;
- pioneer programmes to give voluntary organisations working with disadvantaged families the opportunity to run family literacy and numeracy courses;
- a 'Dads and Lads' initiative to encourage fathers and sons to learn together at places such as football clubs and information technology centres; and
- 'pacesetter' programmes to give families the opportunity to increase their literacy and numeracy skills through information technology.

75. Family learning is a vital means of improving adult literacy and numeracy. But it also fosters greater involvement between children, their parents and their communities at all levels. The Learning and Skills Council has a remit to support family learning by building capacity locally, and is using family learning as one of its criteria in assessing the adult learning plans of local education authorities.

76. In addition to working with schools, we will work with the National Health Service, the Probation Service and the courts to ensure the literacy and numeracy skills needs of the parents they encounter are identified. For example, we will look to train health visitors so that, as part of their work with new mothers, they can be aware of potential literacy and numeracy needs. Officers of the court will also be encouraged to help those before them address their literacy and numeracy skills needs.

77. Through these measures, and particularly through the expansion of Family Literacy and Numeracy programmes, we expect that at least 60,000 parents will have improved their literacy and numeracy skills by 2004.

- *People who live in disadvantaged communities*

78. People with literacy and numeracy difficulties are geographically spread across the country. Ours is therefore a national strategy, recognising that potential learners may live in rural areas as well as in inner-city estates. But we also know that people with poor literacy and numeracy are particularly concentrated in deprived areas. There are around 1.7 million adults with literacy deficiencies living in the 10% most deprived wards. Our national strategy must therefore include clearly targeted, area-based measures for tackling poor literacy and numeracy

skills among these communities.

79. We are undertaking a national survey of adult literacy and numeracy skills needs. These data, and the on-the-ground knowledge and expertise of local partners, will enable both the local Learning Partnership and the local Learning and Skills Council to develop a targeted action plan to deal with literacy and numeracy skills gaps and to ensure that education and training providers are aware of and have the capacity to address the identified needs. Local Learning and Skills Councils will be responsible for ensuring that the full range of provision – from full-time courses to **learnirect** centres – is accessible to the people living in these communities. The regional co-ordinators of the Adult Basic Skills Strategy Unit will also work with the local Learning and Skills Councils and others to ensure that other sources of regional and local funding, such as that granted to the Regional Development Agencies and local authorities as well as funding from Europe under the European Social Fund, that are used to improve literacy and numeracy skills as part of wider objectives, are effectively co-ordinated towards common goals.

80. The Department for Education and Employment will ensure that other local initiatives also address literacy and numeracy skills needs. The 900 new Neighbourhood Nurseries, for example, which are located in the 20% most deprived wards in England, will develop family literacy and numeracy programmes to help meet the skills needs of local parents. And the new UK Online centres will be able to put people in touch with appropriate literacy and numeracy provision if they need it.

81. Other local arms of government will also be involved in the drive to improve adult literacy and numeracy. Regional Development Agencies already produce Skills Action Plans which set out how the skills base in their regions can be improved. These plans will give priority to adult literacy and numeracy. Public libraries, as a preferred place of learning for many adults, also have a crucial role, particularly in support of those learning independently or online. We will also ensure that local authorities, local strategic partnerships, social workers, residents' associations, the Probation Service and others working in areas of disadvantage, including voluntary and community organisations and faith-based organisations such as churches and mosques, are aware of local literacy and numeracy skills needs and how they can best be addressed.

82. Information, Advice and Guidance Partnerships have a vital role in ensuring that, within their networks, there are services which meet the needs of people with poor literacy and numeracy skills. This means training those within the Partnerships to identify people with literacy and numeracy skills needs and, where appropriate, to refer them to a more specialist diagnosis of their needs or straight into learning. Information, Advice and Guidance Partnerships will work with the voluntary and community sector in disadvantaged communities and elsewhere to raise awareness of literacy and numeracy skills needs, and to ensure that their staff are properly trained to identify clients with poor skills and make referrals quickly to the most appropriate provision.

83. We estimate that these measures in areas of disadvantage will enable around 50,000 people to improve their literacy and numeracy skills by 2004.

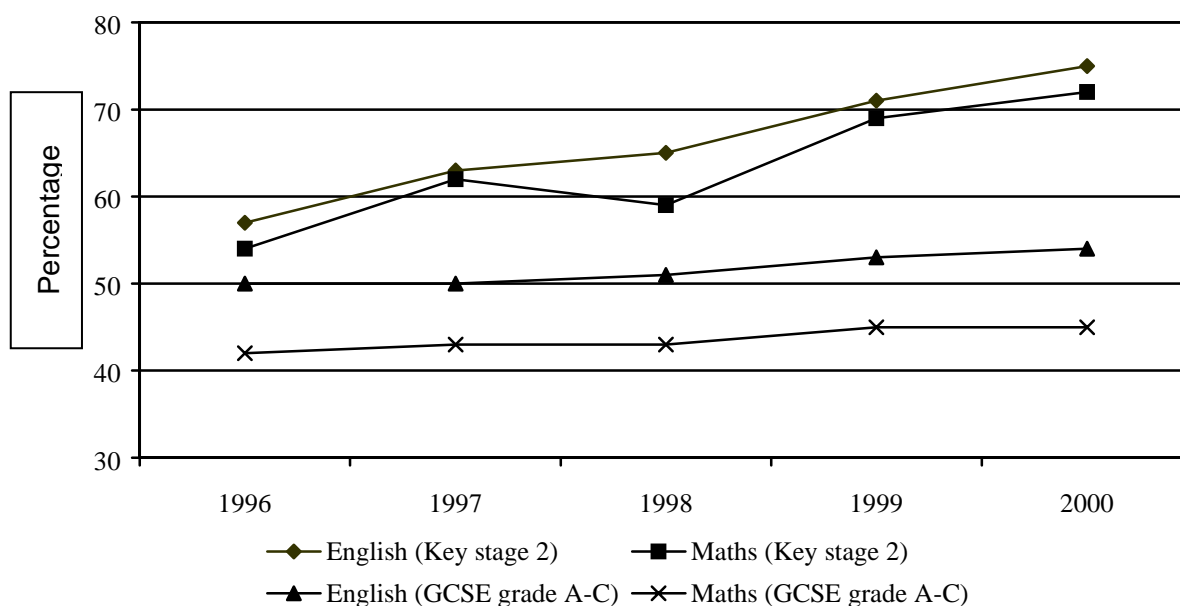
### III. Delivering Higher Standards

84. We will not succeed in attracting our priority groups back into learning and helping them achieve without sustained commitment. This strategy is evidence of the Government's absolute determination to bring about long-term improvements in literacy and numeracy skills. We will achieve this by funding and planning effectively to increase demand and improve supply, by meeting the needs of all potential and actual learners, and by raising the standard of literacy and numeracy teaching through the introduction of clear national standards, and a common core curriculum leading to new National Tests, supported by high-quality materials and teacher training and robust inspection arrangements.

#### Funding and planning

85. We are already meeting our targets to improve levels of literacy and numeracy in schools. The proportion of 11-year-olds achieving the level expected for their age has risen to 75% in English and 72% in Mathematics from 57% and 54% respectively in 1996. We have also increased the proportion of 16-year-olds achieving a GCSE grade A\*-C in English and Mathematics to 54% and 46% respectively from 50% and 42% in 1996.

Figure 2: Achievement of 11- and 16-year-olds in English and Mathematics, England, 1996 to 2000



86. Amongst adults, around 250,000 out of the 7 million people with literacy and numeracy skills deficiencies were on programmes of learning in 1998 – fewer than 4% of those in need. We set ourselves an initial target of doubling this number by 2002. We are well on the way to meeting that target, with an estimated 400,000 adults participating in literacy and numeracy skills courses in 2000-01.

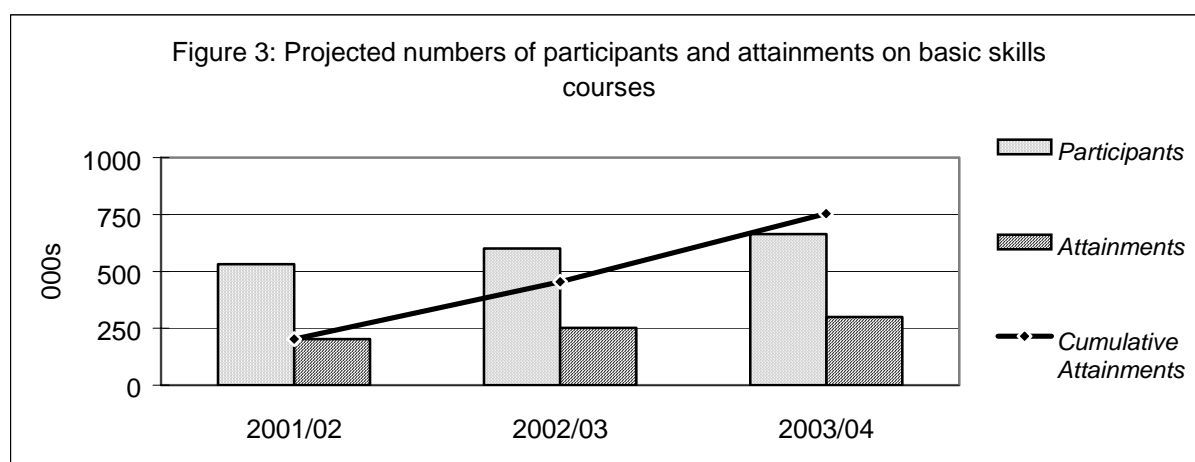
87. But it is not enough that people are on courses. They also need to improve their skills. So we have set ourselves an achievement target: *to reduce the overall number of adults who have difficulty with literacy or numeracy by 750,000 by 2004.*

88. In order to reach our target, we will provide training in literacy or numeracy or English as an additional language for all adults of working age who need it. Currently two fifths of learners are on literacy courses, a quarter on numeracy courses, and just over a third are learning

English as an additional language. Adults with literacy and/or numeracy deficiencies have wide-ranging levels of competence, from those with very poor skills, requiring intensive help from specialist teachers, to those who may only need to brush up their skills. About 6% of the adult working population has 'very low' literacy skills (below Entry Level) and a further 13% has 'low' literacy skills (below Level 1). So we expect that slightly over a quarter of the 750,000 people in our target will achieve Entry Level and that the remainder will progress to Level 1 or above.

89. Reaching our achievement target is likely to require an increase in the number of adults studying to improve their skills from the 2002 target of 500,000 to at least 650,000 by 2004. The number may even be higher, depending on how much progress we make in raising the present achievement rate. We are planning to provide a total of over 2 million flexible learning opportunities over the next three years, so that adults can improve their skills in a way, at a time and in a place to suit their circumstances, whether this means learning at home, at work, in the community, online, or through more traditional learning routes.

90. And in addition to the 750,000 people who will improve their literacy and numeracy skills as a result of government-funded provision, we estimate that the number of working age people with basic skills difficulties will decline by a further 200,000 by 2004 as young people with higher skills levels enter the workforce and replace those retiring. Moreover, some additional adults will take the National Test and achieve a Level 1 standard on their own, without recourse to government funds, reducing the number with skills needs still further.



91. The Government is supporting this expansion of training provision and improvements in quality with significant additional funding. In 2000-01, £241million is being spent on literacy and numeracy by the Department for Education and Employment. The funding available will increase by 27% in real terms to £313 million in 2001-02, by a further 14% in 2002-03 to £366 million and by at least a further 7% in real terms in 2003-04 to £403 million. This means that by 2003-04 we will allocate an additional £162 million each year to improving the country's literacy and numeracy compared with this year, a real terms increase of over 55%.

92. In addition, the Government's Welfare to Work budget will support literacy and numeracy learning for unemployed people with up to £650 million over the next three years. On top of this and money from sources such as the Adult and Community Learning Fund, and the significant European funding which is available, millions more each year will be invested in adult literacy and numeracy by other government and community programmes aimed at economic and social regeneration. For example, direct expenditure on prison education and library provision alone stands at almost £50 million currently, and is set to rise to at least £62 million by 2002-03. Most of this provides literacy and numeracy training. And the Probation Service spends an additional £4 million now, rising to £8 million in 2003-04, on addressing literacy and numeracy skills needs among its clients.

93. These resources are a substantial investment, and will give training providers the confidence to recruit new learners, secure in the knowledge that funding will be available. Providers are also guaranteed funding to help them assess the learning needs of literacy and numeracy students. Providers of literacy and numeracy training will also receive an extra 10% on their funding from the Learning and Skills Council for all learners on basic skills provision.

94. In addition, we will require the Learning and Skills Council to ensure that the bureaucracy required to access funding for literacy and numeracy provision is kept to a minimum. From 2002-03 all providers, including community and voluntary organisations, private training providers and employers can be funded directly by the Learning and Skills Council as well as through existing partnership and contracting arrangements with colleges and other adult institutions.

95. All literacy and numeracy skills education will continue to be provided free of charge to the learner, no matter who provides it, where it is provided, or in what form. This is central to our strategy and will be a theme of our promotional campaign.

96. In practice, however, learners often face additional costs such as registration fees, certification charges, charges for library membership or for the use of materials or equipment, which can act as a deterrent. Some learners also face incidental costs or inconveniences such as travel or childcare, which can be a major obstacle to participation, particularly among those on low incomes. All literacy and numeracy students are eligible for Individual Learning Accounts which will cover the costs of books, examination fees and similar costs. We will aim to provide a simple guide, for all literacy and numeracy skills learners, on the financial and other support they are entitled to, such as Individual Learning Accounts or money from access funds. We will also survey non-learners, learners and providers, as part of our on-going monitoring and evaluation, to find out the scale and impact of such difficulties and identify effective solutions to them. In our pathfinder areas, we will trial the use of financial and other incentives in a range of contexts to assess their effect on participation, learner motivation and achievement.

97. But it is not enough to pledge money. We must ensure that the planning and delivery of literacy and numeracy skills provision is co-ordinated between the different arms of government and is coherent across all national and local policies and provision. The Adult Basic Skills Strategy Unit, based in the Department for Education and Employment and supported by a regional field force, will perform this function, implementing and evaluating the overall strategy, overseeing developments at national and regional level and acting as a catalyst for others to initiate action.

98. A crucial role will also be played by the Learning and Skills Council, which will plan and fund the great majority of literacy and numeracy provision. The Council will monitor progress against the national targets and will establish its own basic skills targets on which it will report directly to ministers. At national level, the Council will build on the best of existing provision and develop new, attractive and flexible learning opportunities that will draw in people unused to learning. At local level, the Council will set and monitor local targets, and ensure that they are met by funding and co-ordinating high-quality provision to meet local skills needs and by removing obstacles to participation in literacy and numeracy skills education.

99. Ofsted and the Adult Learning Inspectorate will lead the inspection of all literacy and numeracy skills provision, producing an agreed handbook on the specific arrangements and quality criteria required for continued funding. Both inspectorates will report annually to ministers on the quality of literacy and numeracy skills provision, and from 2002/03 we will publish tables of the results of their inspections of adult literacy and numeracy providers.

100. The Basic Skills Agency, with its remit to innovate, develop and disseminate best practice, will remain at the centre of our literacy and numeracy strategy. In addition to its work with schools, the Agency will continue to raise standards among adult learners by ensuring that all those who work in the provision of literacy, language and numeracy are given high-quality support and professional advice.

101. But many other national and local agencies also have a critical input. Local authorities, The Employment Service, the Connexions Service, employers, unions, further education colleges, adult learning centres, **learnirect**, voluntary bodies and private training providers will all have a central role to play in delivery and support. Other organisations such as the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education, the Learning and Skills Development Agency and Regional Development Agencies will also have a critical role to play in supporting implementation of the strategy. Many of these have already commented positively on our proposals in *Skills for Life*.

102. As important are those parts of government which do not have education and training as part of their core business. We are working with the Financial Services Authority, for example, to address adult financial literacy needs and ensure that adults have the skills they need to take care of their financial future. In addition, the Prison Service, the National Health Service, the Benefits Agency, the Probation Service, Public Libraries, the Police, the Courts, local authority services and even the Driving and Vehicle Licensing Agency, all come into contact with people who need to improve their literacy and numeracy skills. Others who receive funds from government – from sports clubs to residents' associations – are also in daily contact with people who find reading, writing or calculating difficult. So too are those on the high street, including supermarkets and shopping centres, as well as smaller retailers and small traders. A crucial part of our strategy is to make sure that all those who work with the public are able to support and encourage people with poor literacy and numeracy skills back into learning.

103. Involving every one of these partners in taking forward a common, national improvement strategy is a tall order. But it is one that we must attempt, and accomplish, if we are going to make inroads into the numbers of people with literacy and numeracy difficulties.

### **Increasing demand**

104. Success will depend on engaging and stimulating demand among potential learners themselves. We will therefore launch a major publicity campaign later this year to promote the benefit of improved literacy and numeracy skills. Advertising will aim to motivate adults to take part in learning, and information will let potential learners know what they could do and where they could go, and how they can start learning at home. The campaign will be supported by the media and by **learnirect** who will work with us to produce promotional materials, stage events and develop an interactive website, all branded with the **read•write•plus** logo. Our advertising strategy will focus particularly on local media, especially radio and television, which are often the best means of reaching those who could improve their literacy and numeracy. We will also produce material in a range of languages in order to reach effectively those for whom English is a second language.

105. In addition to attracting adults back into learning again, we also want existing learners to remain motivated, to succeed in their learning and to move on to better things. We need to help providers, practitioners and others involved in delivering services to potential learners, to become aware of our strategy and to become committed to its success. These audiences will also include employers, trade unions, local government, schools and the host of voluntary and community groups who have good access to those with literacy and numeracy skills needs. Finally, we cannot underestimate the power of word of mouth to get adults back into learning. So our publicity campaign will also aim to encourage the wider public – family, friends and work colleagues – to be the biggest positive influence on changing the behaviour of those who may

need to improve their reading, writing and number skills.

106. The Adult Basic Skills Strategy Unit will co-ordinate the campaign nationally, working closely with the Learning and Skills Council and other organisations which have a central interest in driving forward the strategy and contributing to national targets. The Unit will provide advice and materials, including case studies, for partners' campaigns while ensuring that the overall targeting, branding and messages remain consistent across the country. There will be a single central referral point for enquiries and information about learning programmes. Plans are underway to merge **learnirect**'s telephone information line (0800 100 900) and the Basic Skills Agency Referral Service (0800 700 987).

### **Improving supply**

107. It is vital that the increased demand for literacy and numeracy skills provision is met by more and better quality supply. The quality improvements at the heart of our strategy, and the active planning role of the Learning and Skills Council, will deliver this over time. But we must make sure straight away that, having spent time and money motivating adults to acquire literacy and numeracy skills, we are able to give them training of a high standard which meets their needs.

108. We are therefore investing from March 2001 in nine literacy and numeracy skills pathfinder areas – Liverpool, Tyne and Wear, Leeds, Nottinghamshire, Birmingham, Cambridgeshire, the Isle of Thanet, Gloucestershire and East London. Each pathfinder area, with distinct social and economic characteristics, is located in a separate English region (see map). In these areas, we and our local partners will test and evaluate the literacy and numeracy skills learning infrastructure which we are putting in place. Our partners in these areas, which include learning partnerships, local councils and education authorities, colleges, and the Learning and Skills Council, will use the national standards, screening, core curriculum and the National Tests with their learners, and their teachers and volunteer mentors will undergo training and development programmes. They will implement our strategy in a range of contexts, including in the community and voluntary sector, adult institutions, further education colleges, family literacy projects, work-based learning, and **learnirect** learning centres. In one area we will also focus specifically on developing and implementing innovative technology and in another on self-study packages for literacy and numeracy, working with **learnirect** and others. The evidence we collect in these areas will enable other providers of literacy and numeracy training to benefit from best practice when the core curriculum and National Tests are available nationally from September 2001.

109. By September, we expect our pathfinder areas to be leading the way in implementing the new standards. We then intend to work with our partners in these areas to implement specific research projects on more innovative and radical ways of reaching adults with literacy and numeracy needs, as well as learners of English as an additional language, and helping them to achieve. As we set out in our 5 December statement, we will pilot the effect on take-up and achievement of giving financial incentives to individuals, their employers and to unemployed people. We will also pilot the effect of different intensities of provision – from training spread over months to more concentrated learning such as residential courses. And we will also explore in more detail how we can maximise the benefits of new technologies and e-learning in literacy and numeracy skills so we can help larger numbers of adults acquire literacy and numeracy skills in a way that is accessible, reliable and effective.

110. These research pilots will also involve working with unemployed people to ensure that we have explored every opportunity to help them increase their employability. These pilots, described above at paragraphs 24 and 25, will be operated by the Employment Service in six districts within the pathfinder areas from September. Another pilot will be implemented in prisons managed jointly by the Adult Basic Skills Strategy Unit, the Prison Education Service

and the Probation Service. The prison pilot will use the new national standards to enable all prisoners in need to improve their literacy and numeracy skills and increase their chances of successful reintegration into the community upon release. Details of this pilot are set out at paragraph 38.

### **Meeting Learners' Needs Through Technology**

111. Our literacy and numeracy skills strategy is designed to give those who need to improve their literacy and numeracy skills a flexible and high quality learning experience which will motivate them to achieve. Individuals must be able to learn at a time and place that suits their needs and circumstances. The range of learning programmes will therefore include full-time courses, intensive 'booster' courses of up to 60 hours, individually-tailored tuition, as well as learning opportunities which exploit new technologies. Learning will also be available in a wide range of informal settings, outside traditional classroom locations, including shopping malls, community centres, libraries and even pubs. The aim will be to place learning closer to people's homes, in a non-threatening environment that reinforces their confidence and helps to maintain their interest and motivation.

112. Many people are more prepared to admit lacking technological skills than other literacy and numeracy skills – 50% of adults with poor literacy and numeracy say they would be motivated to improve their literacy and numeracy skills if it involved learning on a computer.<sup>12</sup> For those adults put off by their past learning experiences, new technologies offer new, more flexible ways to learn. Modern technology also allows for the production of learning packages and assessment on a large scale, giving learners access to self-study packages and progress charts, and giving teachers access to a wide range of consistent high-quality materials. Ufi is developing self-study learning packages specifically designed for literacy and numeracy skills learners and multi-media packages for teachers. It is also establishing, with the Basic Skills Agency, a Distance Learning Advisers Network, to field enquiries from learners working at home or in learning centres, and to be a resource for tutors and mentors.

113. We will actively promote the use of new technology with literacy and numeracy learners to ensure that it can reduce their skills needs. Ufi, under the brand name **learndirect**, has opened up information and advice about training and learning opportunities to anyone who has access to a telephone, or to the web, and is raising the profile of online skills learning in the workplace, home and in learning centres. In addition to the network of **learndirect** centres, the Government has established UK Online centres and the National Grid for Learning, and has provided laptop computers to voluntary and community bodies to support their education work in the community. A core project in our pathfinder areas will investigate the effectiveness of using new technologies, including computers, digital television, mobile phone technology and other emerging technologies, as a motivator and a vehicle for delivering literacy and numeracy skills learning.

114. We will also be launching a website for all those involved in literacy and numeracy, including tutors, providers, professional bodies and of course the learners themselves. Materials, online help and 'chatrooms' at [www.dfes.gov.uk/readwriteplus](http://www.dfes.gov.uk/readwriteplus), linked to the online site of **learndirect**, will enable tutors and others to share ideas and get up-to-date information on the Government's literacy and numeracy skills strategy.

115. The media have a central role in developing a culture of learning, promoting literacy and numeracy skills to their mass audiences. The Adult Basic Skills Strategy Unit is working closely with the BBC, for example, on developing proposals for a new service offering online support for adults wanting to improve their literacy and numeracy skills and to work towards the new National Tests. The service is likely to include diagnosis of learning needs, learning materials,

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<sup>12</sup> The Basic Skills Agency, *Getting Better Basic Skills* (2000)

practical tips, practice questions and suggestions for next steps.

116. At the same time, we have not overlooked the fact that many homes are still without computer equipment or the latest in television technology and this is likely to be the case for low-income families for some time to come. We will therefore ensure that home study packages are available in attractive and motivating paper-based formats.

- *A learner focus*

117. Learners must be committed to their own learning, and we will expect all providers to ensure that each individual has an action plan which includes short- and long-term goals and states what the learner and the provider must do to meet them. Learners must also expect to have a tutor who gives regular positive documented feedback, and who is able to provide a full range of learning techniques, from interactive learning with groups, to one-to-one work and online learning. Learners should also expect to be supported effectively by volunteers to help them maintain their motivation to learn. And finally, learners must be able to see, and be given guidance on, the clear progression from their literacy and numeracy work to other learning opportunities at higher levels. All these features must become part of every literacy and numeracy learning programme. They will therefore become part of a minimum quality requirement on which funding for providers will depend and part of our regular monitoring and inspection procedure.

### **Raising standards**

118. Our targeted approach to priority groups will lead to real increases in the demand for learning by those whose literacy and numeracy skills need improvement. But each new learner must be given a high-quality learning experience that motivates him or her to keep on learning and to achieve. High-standard provision underpins our entire literacy and numeracy skills strategy. We are now creating, for the first time, a learning framework which will give us the tools we need to succeed.

- *Assessment of need*

119. People who have difficulty with literacy or numeracy are often reluctant to admit that they have a problem, or avoid situations where their weaknesses may be exposed. We must ensure that effective mechanisms to assess need are available in a wide variety of non-threatening settings. Colleges, adult education institutions and Job Centres are already able to spot the signs of literacy and numeracy needs. We will ensure that these 'screening' techniques are known by others – such as Connexions Service personal advisers, workers in information, advice and guidance services for adults, probation officers and community care workers such as health visitors – who work closely with people in our target groups. We are also intending to make screening tools available in a wide variety of locations, such as libraries and health centres and even for people in their own homes. We are trialling different ways of screening to find out which is the most effective in different circumstances. Guidance on best practice will be available for all organisations that come into contact with adults with literacy, language and numeracy needs.

120. Before people start on a learning programme, their precise needs must be correctly diagnosed. This will ensure that learners end up in the right provision and that teachers can structure programmes around individual needs. This requires a consistent approach reflecting the new standards and curriculum, and the requirements of the National Tests. The Adult Basic Skills Strategy Unit is therefore commissioning, in consultation with **learnirect**, the development of model diagnostic tools, for use online, as a CD-ROM and in paper-based form. These tools will help teachers and learners develop individual action plans with clear benchmarks of where they are starting from and how they can monitor their progress. Better

diagnostic assessment will aid the move towards better tailor-made training and clear 'bite-sized chunks' of learning.

121. We must also ensure that those adults who have dyslexia are identified and supported. Dyslexia impedes the usual acquisition of literacy and numeracy, whatever the learner's level of competence. Dyslexic people often face barriers to learning resulting from lack of appropriate assessment, poor school experiences or through lack of access to specialist expertise. All providers of adult literacy and numeracy training need to be aware of the particular requirements of those with dyslexia and their tutors should be competent in providing a multi-sensory approach to teaching and learning. The Adult Basic Skills Strategy Unit will work with partner agencies to ensure that appropriate assessment processes and materials for dyslexic learners are commissioned to complement the new core curriculum for literacy and numeracy. As part of its survey of literacy and numeracy levels in England, the Unit will also examine the literacy and numeracy skills needs of dyslexic adults. The Unit will also work with other bodies to meet the needs of those with other learning difficulties, including those with hearing or visual impairments.

- *National standards*

122. National standards of attainment for literacy and numeracy have not existed before. But we cannot have a national literacy and numeracy strategy without clear definitions of what a person at each level should be able to do and what they need to learn in order to move up to the next level. The Government has taken action, through the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, to establish a set of national standards which will provide the framework for all adult literacy and numeracy qualifications and programmes of study. The standards explain in detail what is expected in literacy (in each of the skills of reading, writing, speaking and listening) and in numeracy (in each of the skills of interpreting, calculating and communicating mathematical information) at Entry Level, Level 1 and Level 2. Although adults often have a wider range of skills overall, these literacy and numeracy standards are broadly equivalent to the attainment expected of seven-year-olds, 11-year-olds and GCSE grades A\*-C respectively and are aligned with NVQ Levels and Key Skills at Levels 1 and 2.

Figure 4: The National standards for literacy, with examples and school equivalents

<b>National Standard</b>	<b>At this level, adults will be able, for example, to:</b>	<b>School level equivalent</b>
<b>Entry 1</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• read and obtain information from common signs and symbols</li> </ul>	Level 1 (age 5)
<b>Entry 2</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• use punctuation correctly, including capital letters, full stops and question marks</li> </ul>	Level 2 (age 7)
<b>Entry 3</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• organise writing in short paragraphs</li> </ul>	Level 3 (age 9)
<b>Level 1</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• identify the main points and specific detail in texts</li> </ul>	Level 4 (age 11)
<b>Level 2</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• read and understand a range of texts of varying complexity accurately and independently</li> </ul>	GCSE A*-C (age 16)

Figure 5: The National standards for numeracy, with examples and school equivalents

<b>National Standard</b>	<b>At this level, adults will be able, for example, to:</b>	<b>School level equivalent</b>
<b>Entry 1</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• recognise and name common shapes such as rectangles, circles, cubes, etc.</li> </ul>	Level 1 (age 5)
<b>Entry 2</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• read and understand information in simple diagrams and charts</li> </ul>	Level 2 (age 7)
<b>Entry 3</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• add or subtract using three-digit numbers</li> </ul>	Level 3 (age 9)

Level 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>recognise and use fractions, decimals and percentages</li> <li>find the mean, median and mode and use them as appropriate to compare two sets of data</li> </ul>	Level 4 (age 11)
Level 2		GCSE A*-C (age 16)

123. The National standards will provide teachers and learners with clear goals in literacy and numeracy and a fixed benchmark against which skill levels can be assessed. This will give us better estimates of the scale of the problem and determine how much progress is being made. The standards are available at [www.qca.org.uk](http://www.qca.org.uk).

- *A National core curriculum for adult literacy and numeracy*

124. At present, teachers of literacy and numeracy skills decide for themselves what to cover in courses. Teachers' own judgement and creativity can be what makes the difference between a learner's success or failure. But teachers have lacked a common framework within which to work. We have therefore published a national core literacy and numeracy curriculum for adults, based on the new national standards, which sets out clearly the specific literacy and numeracy skills that need to be taught and learned at each Level. It will ensure consistency and continuity for the learner and will help teachers use focused teaching methods to meet the needs of individuals. Every teacher of literacy and numeracy in England will receive a free copy of the national standards and the national core curriculum. Additional copies will be circulated widely and will be available at [www.basic-skills.co.uk](http://www.basic-skills.co.uk). Parallel curricula are being developed for learners below Entry Level and for those who do not speak English as a first language.

- *New teaching materials*

125. For many years, teachers of adult literacy and numeracy skills have had to draw teaching materials from disparate sources. This is not only inefficient, it can lead to inconsistent quality. To ensure uniformly high standards, the Adult Basic Skills Strategy Unit, working with national training organisations and other relevant national bodies, will commission a bank of professionally-produced materials for use by teachers across the country. The materials will be widely available, online and on paper, and easily customised by teachers and individual learners. They will cover the main elements of the literacy and numeracy skills curriculum in a number of contexts linked to work-related learning programmes, leading to National Vocational Qualifications or other qualifications. Materials will also be produced which can be integrated into people's interests and hobbies so that teachers can successfully re-engage adults in learning. The first materials should be available in 2002.

126. These materials will allow teachers to make more cost-effective use of their lesson preparation time and enable them to avoid having to 'reinvent the wheel', without stifling their creativity. They will also allow a programme of individual learning to be put together for those learners who are able to work on their own. We will also develop materials for independent learners to be made available from community sources, such as schools, supermarkets, bookshops and football grounds. The materials can be used not only by specialist literacy and/or numeracy teachers, but by subject teachers who incorporate literacy and numeracy skills education into their vocational courses. The materials will be quality-assured and given the **read•write•plus** logo as a seal of approval.

- *The National Literacy Test and the National Numeracy Test*

127. New National Tests for literacy and numeracy at Levels 1 and 2 have been developed by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority. Based on a bank of 4,000 test items and linked closely to the national standards and curriculum, they provide a clear and reliable measure of a person's achievement. We are encouraging employers to specify in their job advertisements which Level of literacy and numeracy they require. This will motivate individuals to take the Tests and achieve the related qualifications.

128. Until September 2001, while the full bank of test items is still under development, access to qualifications through the National Tests will be limited to adults in pathfinder areas. The Tests will be available to all adult learners from September 2001 in a wide variety of accredited centres and at various times to suit the person taking it, in much the same way as the theoretical part of the driving test.

129. Test items will be objective questions with a single right answer. A selection of these will be assembled into a one-off individual test each time a test is required. In the longer term we expect the Tests to be available online to maximise their flexibility and availability with practice versions available. In all cases, people who take the Test will be strictly supervised to ensure that there are no opportunities for cheating. Those taking the Test will receive early feedback on their results. When the Tests are online the feedback will be almost immediate.

130. From September 2001 all new learners embarking on a literacy or numeracy programme leading to Level 1 or Level 2 will work towards the National Test. From September 2002, no adult qualifications for literacy and numeracy at Levels 1 and 2 other than those based on the National Tests will be awarded. At Entry Level and for the practical components of the Key Skills Qualifications at Levels 1 and 2, continuous assessment and portfolio work will remain the route for achievement.

- *A national research centre for adult literacy and numeracy*

131. There are still gaps in our knowledge about what will motivate large numbers of adults to take part in learning and what will help them to achieve rapid and significant improvements in their literacy and numeracy skills. We cannot afford to leave the methods we use to chance. We have therefore embarked on a programme of investigation designed to identify best practice from around the world and to test out a range of new ideas and approaches.

132. In January 2001 we held an international colloquium for some of the world's leading experts in literacy and numeracy skills to share their knowledge and experience. Our strategy was found to be comprehensive and consistent with efforts elsewhere. It is also evident that the projects in our pathfinder areas will make a real contribution to world understanding of these issues. In addition, we have set up a working group with the Governments of Denmark, Ireland and Portugal to look at literacy and numeracy skills within the context of the European Union. The report from this group is being submitted to the European Union summit meeting in Stockholm in March 2001.

133. Our strategy must be supported by a more continuous programme of research to ensure that its implementation and future development are based firmly on evidence. We are commissioning a baseline survey of literacy, language and numeracy need in England to determine in more detail the scale of the problem we have to tackle. We will establish a national research centre for adult literacy and numeracy to lead and co-ordinate this work. Its main function will be to conduct research into pedagogical practice, drawing from relevant international experience and developments at home. Among countries of the English-speaking world, we aim to lead the way in tackling literacy and numeracy problems, and we will want to exploit any knowledge and best practice we have learned in overseas education markets.

134. By identifying best practice and innovative research, the research centre will develop and deliver teacher training and professional development based on quantitative and qualitative evidence of the effectiveness of different approaches to learning, working with and building upon the work of the Basic Skills Agency. Its work will lead to the development of a qualifications structure for teachers of literacy, numeracy and English as an additional language, which will provide a clear career path for those who wish to specialise. And most importantly, its work will enable us continuously to evaluate and to improve our national strategy. We aim to complete the first stage of this evaluation in early 2002.

135. The centre will be based in an existing institution or a consortium of institutions and will be chosen through a competitive tendering process. We are aiming to announce the location of the centre this autumn so that it can be operational by early 2002. It will need to work closely with the Adult Basic Skills Strategy Unit and form a close partnership with the Basic Skills Agency.

- *Teachers*

136. The national literacy and numeracy strategy for schools has shown that good teachers are a pre-requisite for success. The same must become true of adult teachers of literacy, language and numeracy. Initial and in-service professional development for all these teachers will therefore ensure that they have a sound knowledge of the practicalities of literacy, such as teaching spelling, comprehension and the development of writing strategies, and numeracy, such as the latest strategies for estimation, addition and multiplication.

137. From September 2001 all further education teachers will work towards a teaching qualification that includes literacy and numeracy among its key elements. This will make it easier for teachers of vocational and other subjects to help people on their courses who have literacy and numeracy skills needs, rather than having to refer them to separate provision, as often happens now. Teachers specialising in literacy and numeracy skills will be expected to begin working towards new literacy and numeracy qualifications from September 2001. The Learning and Skills Council will encourage this training so that all teachers of literacy and numeracy are adequately trained to help their learners.

138. We will also put in place a programme of accredited continuous professional development for teachers of adult literacy and numeracy skills. The further education Standards Fund will double to £160 million in 2001-02, and the bulk of this increase will support the professional development of teachers. A specific Basic Skills Quality Initiative within the fund will support improvements in literacy, English language and numeracy teaching through professional development, as well as support for networks, dissemination of best practice, and the development of centres of excellence and innovation. Additionally, those who teach for more than six hours per week are already receiving intensive training on the new standards and curriculum, through a training programme developed and managed by the Basic Skills Agency. And we are covering the costs to their employers of releasing their teachers to make sure that they all can benefit from the training. The second phase of this programme will focus on the needs of learners who have disabilities and/or learning difficulties and those whose first language is not English. We are also looking at ways of providing parallel training for those teaching for fewer than six hours per week and for other support staff. The new research centre will design and help to deliver much of this activity.

139. There must be sufficient teaching capacity within the system to meet the expected growth in demand for literacy and numeracy courses. Addressing this must be a crucial element of our strategy. We have already allocated £80 million to ensuring that all post-16 teachers are trained. The Adult Basic Skills Strategy Unit will work with the Learning and Skills Council to develop a teacher supply plan to forecast future needs and assess the implications for teacher recruitment. This will build from the guidelines currently being prepared by the Association of Colleges and the Basic Skills Agency and will include an assessment of the extent to which literacy and numeracy skills teachers, the majority of whom are part-time, may be prepared to increase their hours or convert to full-time, and of the potential for teachers of other subjects, retired school-teachers, volunteers and public service workers to retrain. The new pay arrangements for further education colleges will include additional financial incentives for all high calibre teachers. We also expect to build up new arrangements for advanced teachers, including those who teach literacy, language and numeracy, which may allow colleges to pay teachers of proven worth enhanced salaries.

140. Up to 10,000 volunteers are currently engaged in activities to support adult literacy and

numeracy learning and in helping speakers of other languages acquire English language skills. Volunteers can never take the place of trained professional teachers, but evidence indicates that learners of literacy and numeracy make more progress if they receive additional support from volunteers or paid assistants. We need to find better ways of harnessing their commitment and enthusiasm in the classroom and the workplace, ensuring they can contribute in the most effective way possible. We will also explore ways of using volunteer helpers more creatively, particularly as 'learner buddies' or mentors outside the learning context. In part, we will do this by setting up events for volunteers to exchange information and best practice. In addition, we have allocated £3 million over three years from the Active Community Fund to a pilot, in 20 deprived communities, to develop the use of volunteer managers in recruiting and training 2,000 volunteers to support the learning process. We will look at ways of ensuring that volunteers are used effectively by making this a feature of quality assurance and inspection arrangements.

- *Quality assurance and inspection*

141. All providers of literacy and numeracy skills education must meet minimum quality criteria. The Basic Skills Agency's Quality Mark currently represents the best model of these minimum standards. But robust inspection arrangements are also critical. From April 2001, all providers of adult literacy and numeracy provision funded by the Learning and Skills Council will fall within the general arrangements for inspection by Ofsted and the Adult Learning Inspectorate.

142. It is important for providers regularly to assess their own performance. The Basic Skills Agency's Quality Mark already assesses some of them, but it will need to be strengthened to take account of the impact of this national strategy. The Adult Basic Skills Strategy Unit will therefore lead a review of the Quality Mark and inspection criteria by September 2001, in consultation with the Basic Skills Agency, the Adult Learning Inspectorate, Ofsted and the Learning and Skills Council, with a view to developing a new quality framework. This will be an opportunity to ensure that they reflect the new standards, curriculum, National Tests and other measures in our strategy.

143. There can be no room for providers who cannot meet the challenge of implementing the new quality framework. In particular, we will expect providers of literacy and numeracy training to have in place by September 2001 a literacy and numeracy action plan which sets out how they will recruit adult learners, screen them and diagnose their needs, monitor and evaluate learners' progress based on negotiated outcomes, and provide access to relevant qualifications which at Levels 1 and 2 are based on the National Test.

144. The Learning and Skills Council will use inspection information to reward those performing well, to invest selectively and to facilitate improvement where necessary. It will take firm action where providers fail to respond including, where necessary, ceasing funding of literacy and numeracy skills provision altogether, provided there are alternative providers nearby who could make up the shortfall in provision and offer a better service to learners. From 2002/03 we intend to publish the literacy and numeracy inspection information of all providers funded by the Learning and Skills Council, so that learners themselves can see who will give them the skills they need.

## **Working Together**

145. The measures that we have set out in this 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 successors, at the end of the twenty-first century, will see our work as a major milestone on the road to the creation of a true

lifelong learning society.

## Annex A: Further information

Further details about relevant Government agencies and programmes can be found on the following websites:

Adult and Community Learning Fund	<a href="http://www.lifelonglearning.co.uk/aclf">www.lifelonglearning.co.uk/aclf</a>
Adult financial literacy	<a href="http://www.dfes.gov.uk/adflag">www.dfes.gov.uk/adflag</a>
Connexions Service	<a href="http://www.connexions.gov.uk">www.connexions.gov.uk</a>
Employment Service	<a href="http://www.employmentservice.gov.uk">www.employmentservice.gov.uk</a>
Individual Learning Accounts	<a href="http://www.dfes.gov.uk/ila">www.dfes.gov.uk/ila</a>
Key Skills	<a href="http://www.dfes.gov.uk/key">www.dfes.gov.uk/key</a>
Learning and Skills Council	<a href="http://www.lsc.gov.uk">www.lsc.gov.uk</a>
Learning Partnerships	<a href="http://www.lifelonglearning.co.uk/lip">www.lifelonglearning.co.uk/lip</a>
National Grid for Learning	<a href="http://www.ngfl.gov.uk">www.ngfl.gov.uk</a>
National Training Organisations	<a href="http://www.dfes.gov.uk/nto">www.dfes.gov.uk/nto</a>
New Deal	<a href="http://www.newdeal.gov.uk">www.newdeal.gov.uk</a>
Sure Start	<a href="http://www.surestart.gov.uk">www.surestart.gov.uk</a>
Ufi	<a href="http://www.ufilttd.gov.uk">www.ufilttd.gov.uk</a>

## **Annex B: Summary of responses to *Skills for Life***

We received a total of 208 responses. Of these, 93% were generally positive and broadly supported the main proposals in the strategy.

*Do we have the priority groups right? Are there any groups of people with literacy and numeracy needs not included?*

Overall (89%) respondents felt that we are targeting the right priority groups, although it was pointed out that they overlap to some extent. Most realised why the groups had been prioritised in this way and could see how this linked with promotion and other forms of support through government services. It was also argued that the type of learning support available to people should be determined by their individual needs.

It was felt that people with specific learning difficulties including dyslexia, those in rural communities, part-time workers and older learners should also be included in the priority groups, and that we should do more to target drug-users, homeless people, speakers of English as an additional language, ex-offenders and travelling families.

*As we discuss methods and targeting of specific groups, are there key partners omitted who are likely to be key in engaging the specific groups?*

Respondents indicated that we also need to include local authorities, regeneration partnerships, local enterprise agencies, Regional Development Agencies, financial advisers and the Citizens Advice Bureaux.

*How do we best target our resources in deprived communities, bearing in mind the existing area-based initiatives and local partnerships?*

The need to target disadvantaged communities was seen as a priority. But we were told that we should not neglect rural communities nor deprived areas within richer wards.

We were urged to use existing local community structures and help them access funding easily and without excessive bureaucracy. Working with Local Education Authorities, schools, faith communities, the library service, health professionals and others would provide a 'multi-agency attack'. Our intention to map the quality, quantity and variety of literacy and numeracy provision in local communities was welcomed.

*How best can we tackle basic skills and poor financial literacy in developing programmes under the Adult and Community Learning Fund and taking forward recommendations of the Adult Financial Literacy Advisory Group?*

We were urged to produce toolkits and/or activity packs that are based on previously successful Adult and Community Learning Fund projects, and linked with life events (such as form-filling for benefits and tax, budgeting and retail issues). We need to work closely with community-based credit unions, libraries, small employers, residents' associations and the Citizens Advice Bureaux.

*How can we best extend family literacy and numeracy programmes and how can we motivate more parents to participate in them?*

We were encouraged to take the learning outside the school environment, and ensure that parents of secondary school children as well as grandparents and carers are also targeted. We should also develop learning opportunities outside of school hours and more innovative uses for new technologies.

Involving employers and initiating an annual family learning weekend were other ideas suggested.

*How best should the expansion of Sure Start provision be integrated with literacy and numeracy provision for adults?*

Overall there was a positive response to this suggestion. Early intervention was welcomed although it was recognised that Sure Start workers would need training in literacy and numeracy skills awareness.

*How can we make progress in securing a commitment from employees and their employers to tackle problems of literacy and numeracy, especially those based in small and medium-sized enterprises?*

Respondents thought that the TUC and employer organisations should promote positive messages of the benefits of a skilled workforce. But we should also recognise that those in low-skilled jobs often work in essential services and they should be respected. Literacy and numeracy skills were not just a ladder away from low-skilled jobs, but part of improving self-esteem and of playing a more active part in the community.

Investors in People was seen as a good way of increasing basic skills training, and the development of communal learning centres on industrial premises could encourage small business take-up.

*We are intending to pilot replacement funding to cover the loss of staff for one day a week for 13 weeks to attend literacy and numeracy training. Would this be welcomed by those involved?*

This was welcomed, but respondents thought 13 weeks a very short time-scale to improve literacy and numeracy skills. Other ideas mentioned included extending Individual Learning Accounts, as well as introducing other incentives such as tax-related benefits.

*There were a number of initiatives linked to Jobseeker's Allowance, views were welcomed.*

Unemployed people often needed intensive basic skills training. Quick and easy access to non-bureaucratic diagnosis was seen as essential. Incentives were thought a good idea and the relaxation of the 16-hour rule was welcomed.

*How can we further engage lone parents in successful basic skills learning?*

Flexibility was seen as the key here. We should consider the provision of free childcare and transport. We were warned of potential overlaps with other priority groups and some felt that lone parents should not be seen as separate from other parents. Respondents suggested that we use a variety of places for lone parents to learn, including health and community centres.

*How can we further develop our policy to address the basic skills needs of those who have English as an additional language and those adults with learning difficulties and/or disabilities?*

It was pointed out that these groups have related but different learning needs to other adults who need to improve their literacy and numeracy skills. It was important to ensure that separate provision is made available for these groups where appropriate.

*We would welcome thoughts on how we can fully use ICT to improve literacy and numeracy skills.*

There was a positive response to the increased role of information and communications technology, which would provide greater flexibility to learning. Literacy and numeracy teachers would need to be trained in the new technologies.

*Other points raised*

Respondents welcomed the standardisation and quality improvements, which we were implementing, and the support and training we were proposing to give teachers and volunteers. Some asked for further clarification of the role we were expecting of the media, and others noted the need for reassurance to providers about the new funding and planning arrangements.

*In conclusion*

The strategy as a whole was welcomed by those who responded. The priority groups were judged right overall, although some gaps were highlighted. Greater flexibility and clarity were requested in certain areas. The proposed partnership approach was seen as appropriate and was regarded as vital. Many organisations and individuals pledged their support and commitment to working with the Government to implement the national strategy.