Making it work

A practical guide to effective delivery of
Skills for Life in workplace learning

**Skills for Life Support for World Class Skills:
Effective Practice Projects**

LSIS
LEARNING
AND SKILLS
IMPROVEMENT
SERVICE

The Skills for Life Support for World Class Skills is delivered on behalf of the Learning and Skills Improvement Service by CfBT Education Trust and partners:

- CfBT Education Trust
- LLU+ London South Bank University
- LSN
- The National Institute of Adult Continuing Education
- National Research and Development Centre for Adult Literacy and Numeracy

Design: Chapman Design

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Introduction

Background

This guide is the outcome of development work undertaken in 2009 by 38 colleges and training providers who were delivering Skills for Life provision to employers through Train to Gain.

The providers were all participants in the Effective Practice Project (EPP), one strand of a programme called Skills for Life Support for World Class Skills managed on behalf of the Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS) by CfBT in partnership with LLU+, LSN, NIACE and NRDC. The project's aim was to support providers to explore and then share effective ways of delivering an aspect of their Skills for Life provision by giving them consultancy support, opportunities for peer working and small development grants.

Learning in and for the workplace is potentially of enormous value and benefit to employees and employers, but, as a recent Ofsted report[1] has recognised, it takes a great deal of skill and expertise to do it really well. So we are very grateful to the 38 providers who so generously contributed their time and effort to helping us identify what makes for effectiveness in this type of provision.

Audience and how to read the guide

The guide is written for managers, trainers, teachers, and teacher educators, and is organised into five sections which reflect the processes a training organisation has to work through to deliver learning in the workplace. All the processes need to be underpinned by a whole organisation approach to employer responsiveness and to the role of Skills for Life within that responsiveness; they cannot be undertaken piecemeal.

Each section of the guide can be accessed and read separately, although we would suggest you look at them all, even briefly. Within each section you will find links, indicated in **orange**, to materials which you can download and adapt for your own use. If you are not reading this publication online, you will need to go to http://wcs.excellencegateway.org.uk/sfl or www.excellencegateway.org.uk/255255 to view these materials. We hope that you find this guide grounded in the reality of actual practice and a useful resource for developing your own provision.

A word about language

This guide uses both the phrase Skills for Life, or more often literacy, language and numeracy (LLN), to describe the particular skills of English (literacy), English (ESOL) and mathematics, (numeracy). Skills for Life and LLN are the current most familiar terms but with the advent of functional skills, English and mathematics will become more frequently used descriptions and will certainly be more familiar to most employers and their employees than the phrase Skills for Life.

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1 Ofsted (2008) *The impact of Train to Gain on skills in employment.* London: Ofsted, reference no. 070250. www.ofsted.gov.uk/content/download/7980/80847/

Section 1
Employer engagement

This section of the guide is about ways in which to engage employers in training. It is in two parts:

Introduction

Providers who were part of the Effective Practice Project (EPP) worked to develop innovative, effective and financially viable approaches to engaging employers in literacy, language and numeracy (LLN) training. These approaches have helped them to address some of the barriers that training organisations have faced in engaging employers and employees in LLN. These barriers include:

- The limited impact of brokers in some areas.
- Employers' lack of familiarity or understanding of the implications of a workforce with low literacy or numeracy skills.
- A reluctance to participate from employees.
- Challenges in adapting traditional education approaches and jargon.
- Concerns over committing to and sustaining a high risk and challenging area of work.

Many of the EPP providers have already achieved the Training Quality Standard (TQS)[1] which is an assessment framework and certification process designed to recognise and celebrate the best organisations delivering training and development solutions to employers. Preparation for assessment against this 'quality mark' has enabled providers to better understand and respond to employer need and hence improve their engagement approaches. A key outcome of undertaking the assessment process has been the recognition of the need for a Skills for Life expert to be a core member of the team responsible for engaging employers. Without such expertise being available to the marketing team, providers struggle to market LLN effectively.

Providers in the project used one or more of the following approaches, which are detailed further in Part 1:

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1 Further information about TQS can be found at: www.trainingqualitystandard.co.uk/GeneralinformationontheStandard20

- E-marketing
- Innovative journeys and spaces – taking engagement out physically to the employer and their employees
- Using intermediaries
- Supporting employers who have made the Skills Pledge[2]
- Promoting whole organisation approaches to LLN with employers.

After describing these approaches, we identify some of the critical success factors and the dos and don'ts for effectively engaging employers and employees in LLN training.

1. Effective approaches

1.1 Developing e-marketing

A major challenge in marketing LLN training is that it is often marginalised or excluded from the main marketing thrust of an organisation seeking to work with employers. It can become the 'add on', the unmentionable, the one no one feels confident to talk about. There are however many good resources available that can help you make the business case to employers, see for example The Skills for Life in the South West website which has a downloadable tool kit to help you make the business case.[3]

One way to make sure that LLN training is not marginalised is to undertake a review of your whole marketing operation from an LLN perspective. Increasingly, web-based communication is key to effective marketing and e-marketing can give providers and Skills Brokers new approaches to engaging employers and employees, radically changing the way LLN is promoted and 'sold'.

EPP providers suggest undertaking a review of your current marketing approaches and from this developing an e-marketing plan to include:

Website, media and marketing material redesign
- Look afresh at your own website ... how attractive is it to employers, how jargon-free is the language, how clear the communication? Content, imagery and layout need to promote 'one clear message' to positively sell the benefits to employers and employees by positioning LLN as an integral part of the whole offer.
- Once this message is agreed, an effective suite of e-marketing tools can then carry this message through all material including web pages, email flyers and newsletters, promotional videos, handbooks and course information. It is then much easier to integrate promotion of LLN in personal contact when meetings are arranged with employers and employees.

Search engine optimisation by internet specialists
- This places your organisation at the top of the list when potential employers and employees do internet searches e.g. 'Skills for Life in Liverpool'.

Purchase of specific mailing lists and contact names to improve effectiveness of initial contact through direct email
- This enables you to target specific industry sectors and organisations and reduces the

2 http://inourhands.lsc.gov.uk/employers-pledge.html
3 www.sfl-sw.org.uk/content.php?pageid=50

pressure of 'cold calling'. You will find many companies on the internet who provide these types of list by searching for 'direct mailing lists'.

The expertise for such developments usually does not exist within training organisations and needs to be bought in from external sources. There are many excellent resources to support general marketing to employers available on the World Class Skills site of the Excellence Gateway (http://wcs.excellencegateway.org.uk).

Case study: Mercia Partnership

Mercia Partnership was looking to create a new approach to marketing in order to engage new employers and to increase the number of employees undertaking LLN qualifications. Rather than concentrating on one specific campaign, they utilised an e-marketing development plan as an opportunity to change their entire business approach.

With the help of specialists, they undertook a complete overhaul of website content, brand image and marketing material, with bespoke materials designed for specific business sectors. This has resulted in a faster and more dynamic approach allowing more clients to go to the company directly. Any initial email contact or marketing material now includes Skills for Life information, raising the awareness of this additional support.

After undertaking this new approach, Mercia Partnership experienced a five-fold increase in learners signed up to workplace LLN provision (from 51 to 250).

Employer feedback includes:

'The approach from Mercia has promoted "learning for life" within our organisation. The process from start to finish has given individuals a lift, which has in turn enhanced their ability to take on new tasks.'

'The information introduced us to areas of training that were previously unknown to us … it has great impact on the business. It has raised confidence amongst the staff.'

Case study: Blackburn College

Blackburn College created **an animated video film** that contained key messages to engage employers and employees in Skills for Life. Their aim was to create a product that would look appropriate alongside commercially developed advertising. They packaged the animation in a DVD case designed for its appeal to employers and third-sector organisations. They wanted the film to be accessible from the college website, attached to the websites of other partner organisations and distributed as an email attachment, in order to provide a branding of their e-learning provision to the local and regional business community.

The process of designing the video involved the college team in refining and clarifying their message and approach. After receiving positive feedback at a staff meeting, the

animation is now going to be used to form the basis of a much more commercially-minded and professional approach to selling courses in a marketplace of employers. Further options for display are now being explored including shopping-mall TV channels, gyms and college TV monitors.

1.2 Innovative journeys and spaces

Many employees have little idea at first about what might be involved in doing a Skills for Life course or studying numeracy. They may have negative associations with such subjects from school. Nothing helps to overcome these barriers more effectively than meeting face-to-face with people able to explain what it all means. Taking your message out innovatively to employers and employees can be a very effective way to increase understanding and overcome fears.

Approaches explored to promote LLN training during the project included:

- Taking a Skills for Life promotional bus to employer premises and industrial estates.
- Taking groups of volunteers and/or paid staff on coach visits as an opportunity for LLN awareness raising.

Case study: Stockton Riverside College

Stockton Riverside College's Skills for Life bus with its banner entitled 'Your journey to success starts here' successfully engaged a range of new employers and learners as a result of their visits out to pre-planned venues. Two events were held at Tetley Tea as part of national Adult Learners Week, which culminated in the GMB Union and Tetley Tea making the Skills Pledge on the Skills for Life bus.

Dan Gow, GMB Learning Organiser said:

> **'Adult Learners Week at Tetley was excellent with more staff coming forward for course information than we ever expected. The Learning Bus really enticed staff to come and have a look at what was on offer.'**

A new Skills for Life learner who enrolled at one of the bus events said:

> **'The staff are very friendly and approachable and are full of lots of helpful hints regarding the next steps I could take to further my career.'**

This approach of taking the message out can help you to:

- Establish and strengthen contacts with local employers, voluntary sector organisations and community networks to promote your offer.
- Demonstrate your commitment to flexibility in delivering LLN and make attending a course more attractive and more accessible.
- Offer employers, employees and/or volunteers access to an informal setting and raise awareness in non-traditional ways, helping to overcome any stigma that might be associated with LLN.
- Provide a venue to deliver learning as well as promote it, overcoming the issue of available space at the employer's premises, especially for small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and on industrial estates.
- Allow you to promote the benefits of LLN training for the workplace, employability and personal life.
- Give people a safe and enjoyable environment in which to engage personally with individuals and encourage them to open up.

If you wish to use this approach you need to consider some of the following marketing activities to aid your initial employer engagement strategy.[4]

- Plan thoroughly for how you will operate each engagement visit – staffing, timing, taster sessions, materials, resources, etc. The Move On website at www.move-on.org.uk has lots of information you can use.
- Identify and contact potential employers within your targeted area and offer to provide a variety of events to raise awareness and engage employees using telephone, email, leaflets, posters and letters.
- Develop promotional materials which feature forthcoming activities to distribute to employers prior to visits out – these could be leaflets or posters.
- Contact your local radio station/newspaper and ask for their support and a feature slot to raise awareness of your events.
- Record and celebrate successes in order to motivate and engage further learning and engagement opportunities.

This approach can be expensive in terms of buying or hiring, refurbishing, maintaining and staffing bus or coach facilities. However, both organisations adopting this approach found that the pros outweighed the cons in terms of engaging with employers and employees. At Rotherham College of Arts and Technology 85 potential learners were engaged through this approach, with over half interested in LLN. Stockton Riverside College signed up 148 learners for LLN provision (either on-site or in the workplace) through nine bus events.

Case study: Rotherham College of Arts and Technology

Rotherham College of Arts and Technology wanted to find new ways to engage the voluntary sector in training and did this by offering groups of volunteers opportunities to visit other organisations and experience different types of voluntary work. They arranged a series of visits, hiring coaches for the travel, and used the visits as an extended and informal opportunity to raise awareness of the range and level of Skills for Life needed to

4 For further examples see: http://wcs.excellencegateway.org.uk/webfm_send/190

participate successfully. Their tutors had plenty of time to talk to the volunteers about how training might be of use to them.

Visits included:

- Chester Zoo – looking at fund-raising activities/events, selling merchandise and raffle tickets to raise funds.
- Cap House Colliery Mining Museum – exploring how a local mine has been turned into a museum as part of a regeneration project.

A representative from Home-Start Rotherham reported:

'We felt that the day went very well. Everyone benefitted from getting away from their usual work/home environment and could concentrate fully on themselves and the information given without interruptions. Because of this they had enough time to ask questions and discuss with others within the group. We had arranged this awareness-raising activity to coincide with our quarterly Volunteer Support Meetings and it proved extremely successful as an unprecedented number of our volunteers attended, as well as staff.'

One participant wrote:

'I am 44 years old. I don't know what qualifications I have from school and I have been a stay-at-home mum for 14 years. I am now looking to better myself for future employment and Skills for Life is definitely what I need.'

Another approach to taking the marketing message out has been to use existing students who are in employment to relay a message to their employers about the possibility of training for their business. This can be a useful way to get in contact with very small businesses who might be unaware of such opportunities. Redbridge College used this approach successfully.

Case study: Redbridge College

Redbridge College have developed an effective approach, using a newly-created database to engage English for speakers of other langages (ESOL) employees working for SMEs in the local area. Starting with their own ESOL students in college who are in employment, they have identified around 40 employers who are appropriate to target for ESOL training in the workplace.

A **database** of employers has been created using contacts within the college, including those from vocational colleagues. Additional contacts have been drawn from the recently formed college business forum, and from local ethnic minority business associations and networks. Internet research was used to check the accuracy of details and the college has taken care to ensure that marketing is targeted at the correct person in the workplace.

Staff training, together with the development of **guidelines** for research, cold-calling and initial engagement has supported the development of an effective approach to making contact with hard-to-reach employers.

1.3 Using intermediaries

Finding the right people to carry your message about the value of LLN learning is key to a successful engagement strategy. People who are in an intermediary position between you and the potential employers or employees can be vitally important to you as they will often have existing positive relationships and influence with the employers and employees you wish to approach.

Intermediaries can include:

- External Skills Brokers (e.g. Business Link; Regional Development Agencies)
- Internal Skills Brokers within your organisation (often known as Business Development Officers)
- Your own vocational assessors
- Union Learning Representatives – often in place in larger organisations
- Sector Skills Councils
- Workplace supervisors and managers
- Human Resources and training staff
- Voluntary sector 'umbrella' organisations e.g. Voluntary Action Centres
- Media e.g. newspapers, radio stations
- Community role models e.g. local MPs, learner case studies.

Many intermediaries will have experience or knowledge which supports the positive links between vocational training, LLN training, business benefits, personal development and transferable workplace skills. They can therefore help you in making the business case and getting buy-in from employers and employees. In addition, intermediaries are likely to have wider relationships which can help you to maximise your impact in an organisation. For example:

- In large organisations they will know staff in other departments/sites whom you can approach.
- They may be part of a local, regional or national network which can extend your reach.
- In smaller organisations they can help you to target your approach to the individual manager.

Intermediaries have saved EPP providers valuable time in:

- Understanding a business and its culture
- Identifying 'decision makers' in organisations
- Tailoring the engagement approach to specific sectors, individuals and organisations
- Establishing positive relationships with employers and employees
- Working with management teams to ensure the release of staff
- Supporting, organising and promoting marketing/awareness/celebration events
- Identifying business issues which LLN training can help to overcome (e.g. high wastage, high staff turnover etc)
- Predicting production peaks and troughs and thereby identifying opportunities for training to take place
- Identifying ways to complement and add value to existing in-house training.

Providers who have been successful in engaging large numbers of LLN learners have found that the most useful ally of all in delivering in large workplaces has been the Union Learning Representative.

Case study: Stockton Riverside College

Valuable support from a Union Learning Representative helped Stockton Riverside College to organise on-site engagement events at Tetley Tea. She ran a series of planning meetings, undertook lots of internal promotion activities and played a key role on the day.

> **'The bus visit was a massive event for us. I didn't realise we had as many people that would be interested in Skills for Life literacy and numeracy, or that so many people wanted to refresh and update their skills. The fun factor and laughs we had on the bus were exceptional, but the college staff's professionalism when handling questions and letting people know it was alright to be at a certain level and their explanations were exactly what we needed. We now have a workforce looking forward to learning which is what we wanted. I would recommend this approach to any company looking for help with Skills for Life learning.'**
>
> Elaine Preston, Union Learning Representative at Tetley Tea

The initial events have resulted in discussions taking place with the GMB Northern Region to develop a partnership agreement, with the college and the union working together effectively to promote and deliver learning opportunities in the North East.

> **'It is a pleasure to work with our partners from Unite and GMB to increase the emphasis on learning and skills for our staff. This initiative perfectly complements the work that Tetley is doing to offer NVQ Levels 2 and 3 training opportunities to all of our employees.'**
>
> Steve Eastham, Tetley UK Operations Director

1.4 A whole organisation approach to LLN

Another key way of overcoming the lack of understanding or awareness of what LLN training is actually about is to help it to be understood at all levels of a company or business. This is known as a whole organisation approach, and providers who have developed such an approach to LLN within their own training organisations have realised that this also needs to be promoted to the employers they work with.

For example, large providers like colleges have learnt valuable lessons from offering training to their own contracted cleaning, catering and security staff that can be shared with the employers with whom they work. There are resources available on the Excellence Gateway[5] that will support you to introduce this approach (also see other links listed in the final part of this section for further information).

EPP providers who have worked to embed a whole organisation approach in a particular employer's company or organisation have used a framework in which all sections of the company are helped to take proactive steps to support LLN skills and training amongst their staff. These steps have included:

- Creating senior management awareness, understanding and commitment – including establishing priorities and setting examples for other staff to follow by actively engaging in training themselves (for example, Norfolk County Council senior managers all took the literacy test themselves).
- Effective communication of skills and training priorities 'top down and bottom up' – to overcome the barrier of 'what has this got to do with me?'.
- All parties understanding how improved LLN skills can enhance their job roles and lead to business, personal and social benefits.
- All parties acknowledging, identifying, promoting, supporting and participating in training at all levels of the organisation – including supervisors, team leaders, 'shop floor' and support staff.
- Shared responsibility and contribution to time needed for training ('work release').

In this way, providers have found that promotion of the whole organisation approach with employers can maximise engagement approaches and can be used to:

- Widen the 'pool' of eligible employees leading to better use of resources, perhaps through group delivery and/or a higher caseload at an individual employer's premises.
- Help to overcome the potential stigma of employees improving their LLN skills.
- Gain maximum impact of improved LLN skills on the business.

Case study: Newcastle College

Newcastle College worked with two local primary schools to develop a whole organisation approach to Skills for Life. Developing these skills was seen as an important precursor to NVQs for teaching assistants and maintenance staff. In particular they wanted to focus on numeracy as this is often the subject seen as least necessary by employers. In order to help make the business case, the college arranged for a numeracy teaching specialist to carry out a Numeracy Organisation and Training Needs Analysis. After this analysis, numeracy skills checks were carried out with a target group of employees, and a tailored model of delivery was promoted and designed.

The initial aim had been to engage employees in numeracy training first, to be followed by literacy. However the college staff rapidly identified that employees felt more confident about their literacy skills. 'Selling' numeracy first proved to be a turn off, but once employees found out that courses in the workplace were centred on their individual needs they began to relax, overcome their barriers and enjoy learning as a whole. As a result they became less defensive and more willing to recognise and address their specific numeracy needs.

The joint focus on both numeracy and literacy from the start eventually reaped rewards for all parties and proved that it is worth persevering with the Skills for Life message and tailoring your approach directly to the needs of the employer. Numeracy skills in the workplace were greatly improved – with a 60 per cent increase in numeracy uptake and a 13 per cent increase in numeracy success rates during the project.

The head teacher of one of the schools was initially dubious about the benefits of the programme, because she was worried about the impact of staff having time off for training during working hours. However she became so convinced of the training's beneficial impact that she is now actively promoting this provision across other schools in the area.

One employee reported:

> **'I gained from all of it, but the first step was the hardest. I felt that the tutor was very supportive and this helped me make the start.'**

More information about the course and its impact on the trainees is contained in **interviews** conducted by Newcastle College staff.

1.5 Building on the Skills Pledge

Targeting and supporting employers who have made the Skills Pledge can also increase the effectiveness of your engagement approach and maximise the impact of the whole organisation approach in the employer organisation.

The Skills Pledge[6] is a voluntary, public commitment made by an organisation to invest in the skills of its workforce. It is open to organisations of all sizes, from all sectors, with a workforce in England in the private, public and voluntary sectors.

By making the Skills Pledge, an organisation commits to:

- Actively encourage and support employees to gain the skills and qualifications that will meet the needs of the business and will support their future employability.
- Further support employees to acquire basic literacy and numeracy skills and work towards their first full Level 2 qualification.
- Demonstrably raise employees' skills and competencies to improve their organisational performance through investing in economically valuable training and development.

As a result of supporting a whole organisation approach and building on the Skills Pledge:

- Newcastle College had a 60 per cent increase in participation in workplace numeracy and a 13 per cent increase in numeracy success rates.
- Norfolk Adult Education Service achieved a greatly enhanced profile for Skills for Life across Norfolk County Council and greater cooperation between internal council departments and themselves.
- West Nottinghamshire College saw a higher level of effectiveness in addressing the ESOL needs of employees.

Case study: Norfolk Adult Education Service

Norfolk Adult Education Service worked closely with Norfolk County Council to develop a whole organisation approach. They wanted to increase awareness and understanding of Skills for Life issues and to develop and communicate a strong business case for investing in training that would address the impact of low levels of staff literacy and numeracy on the council's performance.

To increase senior level engagement and raise awareness about Skills for Life within the Skills Pledge, they gained the support of the Chief Officers' Group, who took the National Test together and published their feedback. These feedback comments have formed the basis for further communication with staff, and have started a dialogue with managers and staff about the need to improve LLN in the workplace. Seeing that senior staff are committed and concerned has provided strong backing for the plan they are now working on together.

6 For information on the Skills Pledge see: http://inourhands.lsc.gov.uk/employers-pledge.html

Case study: First Group and West Nottinghamshire College

First Group, a large UK public transport company, and West Nottinghamshire College have developed over a number of years a strong working relationship which has produced a culture of willingness to share information for the benefit of employees.

Many First Group employees whose first language is not English have been referred to the West Nottinghamshire College Skills for Life team to undertake an ESOL assessment to ensure they can carry out their duties effectively. Whilst doing skills checks with the staff, it became apparent that there were varying levels of understanding of Health and Safety responsibilities and procedures. This seemed to be due to staff's variable levels of speaking and listening skills and the internal trainers' lack of experience about how to take account of this when delivering Health and Safety briefing sessions.

Once this problem had been identified, First Group and West Nottinghamshire College decided to work together to develop effective Health and Safety **training sessions** as part of a whole organisation approach to ESOL within First Group, in order to better meet the ESOL needs of their workforce. Union Learning Representatives have reported a clear acknowledgement by First Group that they now want to engage with staff at all levels within the company by having an inclusive delivery model for in-house induction and training where all staff are catered for, whatever their English language level.

2. Critical success factors for engaging employers

The EPP providers use a wide range of strategies and approaches for engaging with employers. They have recognised that a high level of confidence and skill is needed in order to promote LLN to employers, to secure repeat business and to achieve sustainability.

They have identified some of the factors critical to success in this area, as follows.

Infrastructure and systems
- An informed commitment from senior management to supporting workplace provision.
- A centrally-managed comprehensive database or customer relationship management (CRM) system. This will record all employer contact and support proactive feedback mechanisms for continuous quality improvement and sustainability. For an example see: http://wcs.excellencegateway.org.uk/webfm_send/11
- Flexible staffing structures, built from qualified and experienced staff, to enable quick response to employer need.
- All staff understanding their role and responsibilities in working together to promote and support LLN.
- Effective internal communication between LLN staff, business development teams, vocational departments and external Skills Brokers.
- Standardised procedures, guidelines, checklists, etc. for making initial and ongoing contact with employers.
- LLN embedded within organisational and training needs analysis procedures.

Quality marketing materials
- LLN information is embedded into websites, flyers, posters, newsletters, etc. and clearly demonstrate the relevance of LLN to the workplace.
- Case studies/exemplars of flexible, customised and/or embedded workplace provision are provided.

Referral, skills check and initial assessment processes
- Clear referral and response systems which set up effective links between all parties.
- Development and/or identification of 'workplace appropriate' LLN skills check and initial assessment tools and realistic methods to deliver them with individual employers/ employees (see Section 2 of this guide for detailed information about assessment).

Sector awareness
- Sector knowledge informs the targeting of appropriate employers and backs up the business case and delivery model, based on an awareness of:
  - Occupations where large numbers of low-skilled workers are employed
  - Issues affecting the uptake of training in the sector
  - Skills gaps that limit progress towards sector targets for achievement of vocational qualifications
  - Bottom line, recruitment and other challenges that are affecting sector development
  - Impact of migrant workers and speakers of other languages
  - Skills shortages and levels of unemployment in specific industries.[7]

Understand your funding
- Work out the costs of your core activity and differing delivery models to ensure financial effectiveness and sustainability.
- From the outset offer only realistic and feasible delivery models with employers to ensure expectations can be met.
- Be aware of additional costs such as staff travel time, laptops, mobile internet.

See Section 3 of this guide for further detailed information on costing and http://wcs.excellencegateway.org.uk/webfm_send/68

Staff development and continuous professional development (CPD)
- LLN awareness raising, training and CPD for all provider staff to enable an effective response to the workplace context.
- Identification (and/or recruitment) of specialist workplace and/or LLN staff with good 'all round' skills to enable them to build an effective rapport with employers and to respond to the differences, challenges and rewards of workplace delivery.
- Recognition that not all staff will be willing or able to transfer their skills to the workplace environment.

See Section 5 of this guide for further detailed information on professional development for workplace learning.

The most important thing EPP providers identified regarding successful and ongoing employer engagement was the individual staff members themselves. It is often the staff members who secure repeat business with employers and it was recognised that good workplace practitioners of all types are hard to find and very difficult to replicate.

7 See: www.sscalliance.org/SSCs/LinkstoSSCs.aspx

HINTS AND TIPS FOR ENGAGING EMPLOYERS

DO

- Have a supportive, adaptable, flexible approach which can be tailored in response to specific employers and contexts.
- Promote the flexibility of the delivery model that will appeal to employer, employees and delivery staff. Build a tailored business case which promotes business benefits.
- Ensure all frontline engagement staff have an understanding of the whole offer including LLN and can offer differing models.
- Research your company before cold-calling using the internet, local knowledge etc. Build a profile and establish the likelihood of LLN need in their organisation.
- Make links to any existing/ongoing training with the employer in any continued engagement activity – make sure the person contacting the employer knows what is happening.
- Build on lessons learnt in any existing provision and use it to inform ongoing development and secure repeat business.
- Ensure your organisation understands the impact and benefit of LLN skills development and supports you in a whole organisation approach in their employer contact.
- Consider and develop the personal skills and qualities of tutors, assessors and business development staff. They must be able to establish an instant rapport with the employer, read and interpret the individual's needs and adapt their approach appropriately.

DON'T

- Use blanket approaches to engagement, assessment and training.
- Use education jargon.
- Impose Skills for Life in workplace training programmes without getting the buy-in from employees and managers. Be realistic in terms of the number of employers who will willingly engage in Skills for Life.
- Waste time on calling businesses that are unlikely to engage or employ people with LLN needs.
- Lose contact with the employer and staff once your training programme has been delivered.
- Expect it all to be successful instantly.
- Underestimate the negative influence of a well meaning but damaging 'lone voice' which may confuse employers and learners.
- Use inexperienced staff who are not trained in, or used to, the workplace culture.
- Rely just on traditional strategies to market LLN.

Useful links for further information

Move On – Get On At Work: www.move-on.org.uk/goaw.php?scid=195&pid=186

Get On At Work Employer Responsiveness – a provider solution:
www.move-on.org.uk/downloadsFile/downloads2508/GOAW_provider_pack_induction.doc

Train to Gain Skills for Life Provider Guide: www.move-on.org.uk/ttg/

Promoting Skills for Life in the workplace: www.move-on.org.uk/goaw.php?scid=185

Get On At Work – case studies: www.move-on.org.uk/goaw.php?scid=184

Get On At Work – training pack Module 1 Selling the case for 'Get on at work' approach:
www.move-on.org.uk/downloadsresults.asp?id=103

Move On iRoute – for intermediaries to help support promotion of English and mathematics
training opportunities: www.move-on.org.uk/intermed_welcome.asp

Skillstories films – Short video clips to be used in presentations e.g. to employers:
www.skillstories.org/about/skillstories-film/

Employer case studies – Business in the Community website:
www.bitc.org.uk/resources/case_studies/index.html

Employer case studies – Train to Gain: www.traintogain.gov.uk/casestudies/

National Audit Office – Progress in Improving Adult Literacy and Numeracy:
www.nao.org.uk/pn/07-08/0708482.htm. See Appendix 5 pp. 46–7 Engaging employers –
Good Practice and the Business Benefits

The Network for workplace language, literacy and numeracy: www.thenetwork.co.uk/.
See The Toolkit: Section B – Market and promote.

World Class Skills programme: www.excellencegateway.org.uk/wcs

Employer Responsiveness Resource Pack: Module 1 – Working with employers as customers:
http://wcs.excellence.qia.org.uk/resources

Sector Skills Councils: www.sscalliance.org/SSCs/LinkstoSSCs.aspx

Whole organisation approach – further details and support for working with employers to
develop a whole organisation approach to LLN in their organisation can be found at:
www.unionlearn.org.uk/files/publications/documents/72.pdf and
www.move-on.org.uk/links.asp?strCategory=Sector%20Skills%20Councils

The Learning and Skills Improvement Service's World Class Skills Programme (WCS) provides
a range of products and services that meet the needs of individual providers as they seek to
improve the responsiveness and quality of their offer to employers. To access the WCS website
go to: http://wcs.excellencegateway.org.uk. On the site there is a diverse range of information
in this area including sales and marketing, Customer Relationship Management (CRM) and
the Employer Responsiveness Framework (ERF).

Section 2

Developing and implementing effective assessment and ILP processes for workplace learning

This section of the guide is about assessment and is in three parts:

Part 1: Defining what we mean by the term 'assessment processes' 18
Part 2: The four-stage assessment process 19
Part 3: Identifying the impact of effective assessment and individual learning plan (ILP) processes 33

Introduction

It is vital for effective workplace learning to have a good initial assessment process that then leads to learning programmes that support the development of skills in the workplace. Treating the assessment process as a test or purely as an audit requirement can be very damaging to an individual's confidence or motivation to engage in skills training, whereas a positive assessment experience can impact powerfully on their attitudes and so on the reputation of the providing organisation.

'Staff have used the learning goals to focus on using English more at work. Some of the Entry 1 students are now starting to write simple notes on the guests' needs, which is very encouraging. They are also starting to speak more to the guests.'

Sandra Salazaar, Servite Housing
Employer working with Ealing, Hammersmith and West London College

'We have had excellent feedback from learners, employers, the awarding body and partners, 90 per cent plus take up of literacy/numeracy programmes by learners and employers and we remain confident that our excellent retention and achievement rates (currently 96 per cent) will continue to generate repeat and new business, future partnership arrangements and secure further funding.'

Paul Kelly, Director, J and K Training

1. Defining what we mean by the term 'assessment processes'

What do we mean by initial assessment, and where do skills checks, diagnostic, formative and summative assessment fit into the picture? Effective assessment processes should happen throughout learning, using the right type of assessment for the right purpose at the right time.
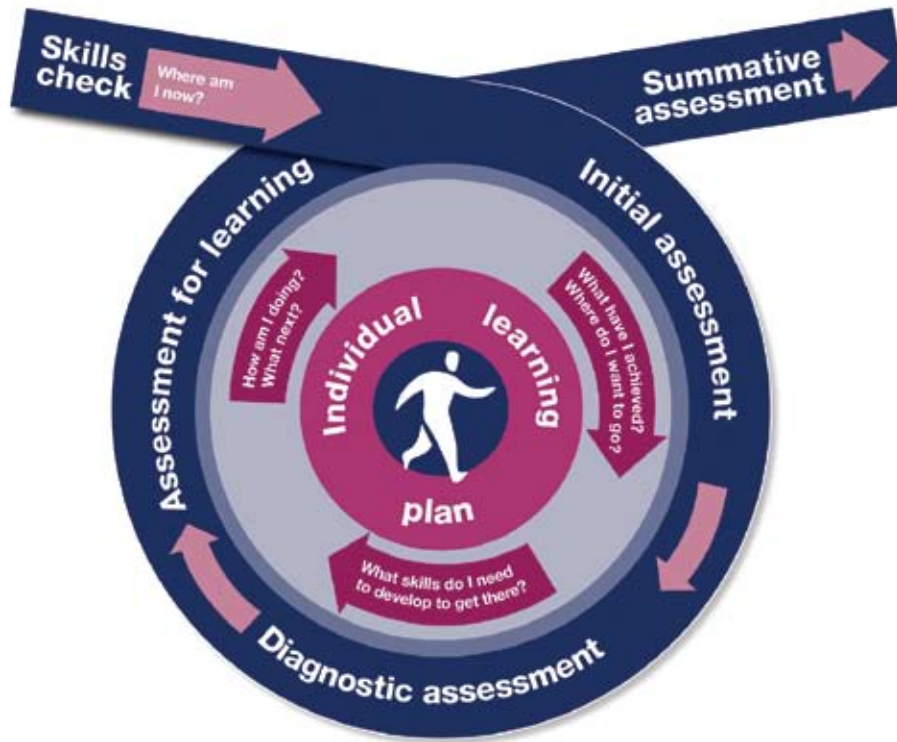
Figure 1: The assessment cycle

Skills check – a short process that helps identify whether someone would benefit from improving their literacy, language and numeracy (LLN) skills.

Initial assessment – helps identify a learner's level of skills against national standards.

Diagnostic assessment – helps to identify a learner's specific learning strengths and needs and determines learning targets and appropriate teaching and learning strategies to achieve them.

Formative assessment or assessment *for* learning – provides ongoing feedback which helps teachers and learners to adapt teaching and learning strategies to improve performance.

Summative assessment or assessment *of* learning – takes place at the end of a learning programme and may be a test or a qualification or a completed ILP.

2. The four-stage assessment process

There are particular challenges to be faced when implementing assessment processes in workplace provision. The hurdles to be overcome include:

- Selling the importance of initial assessment to employers and employees who may be unfamiliar with the concept.
- Persuading employers of the return on investment, showing that the benefits of a more tailored training programme outweigh the costs involved in releasing staff for a thorough assessment of needs.
- Involving employers in the initial negotiations so that they are involved in ensuring that the skills assessed are pertinent to their business performance.
- Allaying employee fears about the purpose of assessment and the implications of the identification of any skills gaps on job security and progression.
- Carrying out assessment in conditions that are not always conducive to effective practice, for example, restricted time available or lack of appropriate accommodation for providing individual feedback.
- Developing the skills of workplace assessors and trainers, both vocational and Skills for Life, to promote and deliver an effective assessment process in a business context. (See pages 25–6 below for more information about what skills are required.)

This section provides examples of how Effective Practice Project (EPP) providers have met these challenges by focusing on the following four stages of the assessment process.

Agreeing methods, tools and approaches

⬇

Carrying out assessment

⬇

Using assessment to inform learning

⬇

Monitoring and reviewing progress and supporting achievement and progression
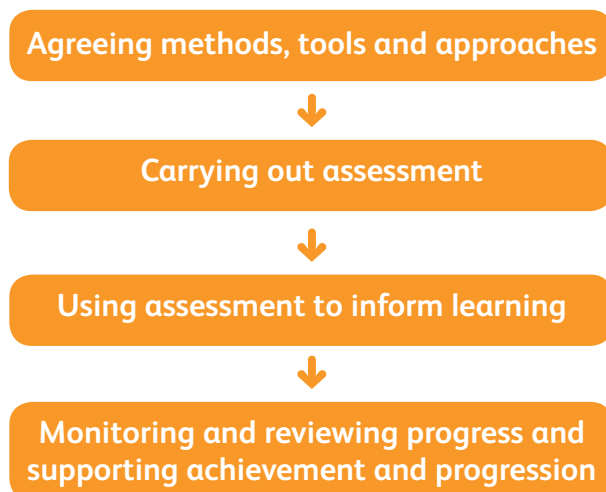
It is crucial that providers have all stages in place and that each feeds into the next in a cohesive learner and employer-focused process.

Case study: Brockenhurst College

Brockenhurst College wanted to develop a more strategic cross-college approach to delivering literacy and numeracy in Train to Gain because they identified that:

- Some members of staff had little understanding of the assessment process.
- The college was using a variety of assessment tools across different learner groups.
- The Skills for Life team was working in different ways with each of the different curriculum areas.

The college was aware that it needed a holistic process that 'glued' everything together and clarified systems and processes for everyone. After reviewing and analysing their provision, the Skills for Life and Business Development teams developed a flow chart covering all aspects of their employer training. This was disseminated to all staff via a **continuous profession development (CPD) session.**

As a result of this process there is now a consistent understanding across Skills for Life, NVQ and frontline staff about:

- What Skills for Life are and why they are important.
- The assessment process and associated roles and responsibilities.

And as a result:

- The profile of Skills for Life has been raised amongst middle and first tier managers.
- There are improved working relationships between managers and staff at different levels.
- Members of staff are better equipped to advise on Skills for Life learning opportunities, with learners receiving clear guidance on the most appropriate method of learning.
- Learners have individualised programmes informed by the outcomes of initial and diagnostic assessment.

2.1 Stage 1 – Agreeing methods, tools and approaches for initial and diagnostic assessment

Choosing the right methods, tools and approaches to initial and diagnostic assessment in workplace training involves striking a balance between addressing the practical issues and meeting the desired outcomes of the learner, employer and provider.
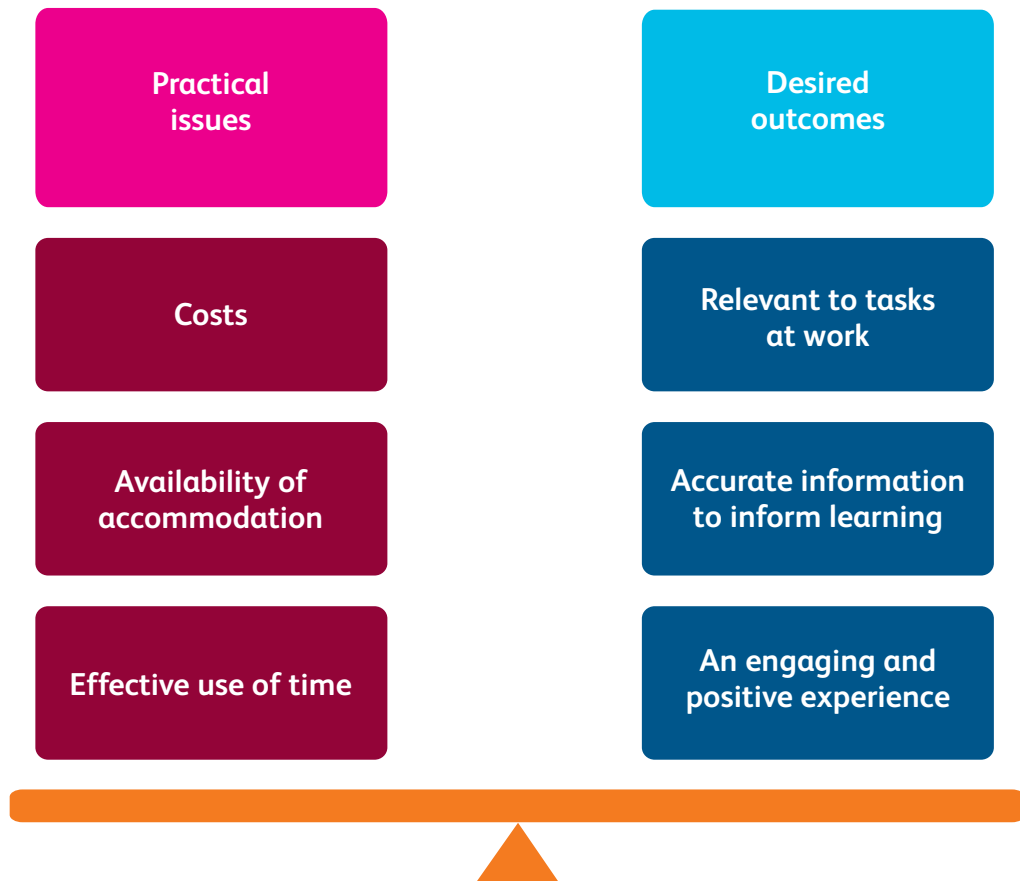
Figure 2: Finding a balance

In the initial stages of working with an employer, EPP providers explored and negotiated the desired outcomes of the proposed training in a business context.

Case study: Ealing, Hammersmith and West London College

Ealing, Hammersmith and West London College decided to revise their assessment process and developed an **employer engagement learner journey**. The process now includes greater involvement of the employee's line manager or training manager to ensure that the training focuses on work performance outcomes.

They also developed **sample learning targets** relating to the occupational areas where most of their training was taking place – Retail, Hotel and Catering, and Healthcare. These are now used in the initial meetings with workplace training managers to give an idea of possible training content and to highlight its relevance to the workplace and NVQ progression routes.

Agreement about the training objectives with an employer leads to discussion around the information that needs to be gathered about individuals' strengths and skills, and agreement about the most appropriate approaches to initial and diagnostic assessment.

It is important at this stage to discuss when and where the initial assessments will take place, again balancing the need to accommodate employer and employee needs with the need for the right time and setting to deliver a quality assessment.

In J and K Training Ltd's initial negotiations with the general manager of a hotel, it was agreed that a hotel bedroom would be allocated to assessors for the purpose of carrying out initial and diagnostic assessment. This meant that the assessment could fit in with the employees' shifts and the employees would not be under pressure to go off-site at a specific time for a prearranged appointment. This arrangement provided J and K with a private room where they could carry out assessments in a sensitive and professional manner. This flexibility was greatly appreciated by the hotel manager:

> **'The programme has been welcomed far beyond my initial expectations. All staff that have undertaken the programme to date believe it has increased their confidence in reading, writing and number skills. The programme has been successful due to the flexibility in hours and time, which includes evening and weekends.'**
>
> Paul Grantley, St James Hotel
> Employer working with J and K Training Ltd

Which tools and methods?

Initial and diagnostic assessment should involve a range of methods and approaches that reflect the workplace context. Figure 3 indicates the range of techniques that can be used to develop a holistic picture of learner and employer (business) needs.
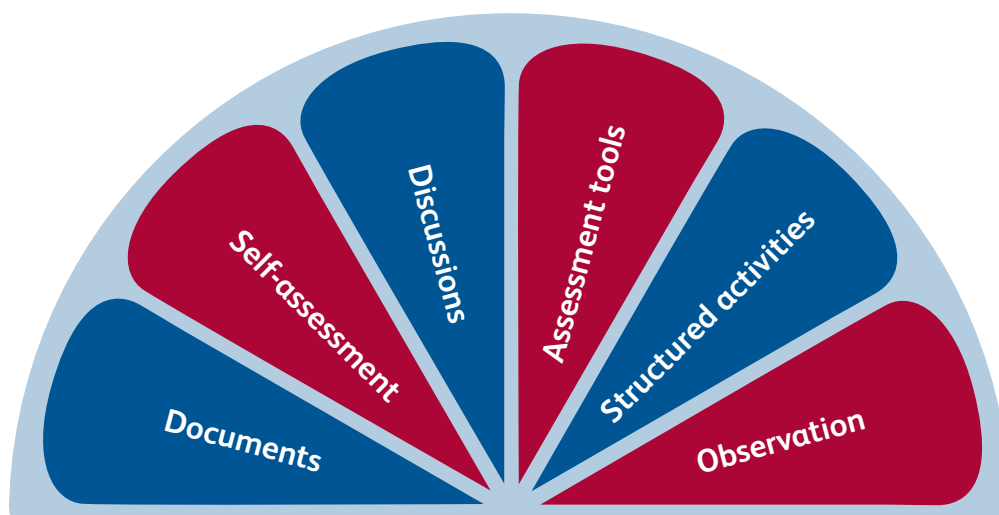
Figure 3: Range of assessment tools and methods
Adapted from The initial assessment toolkit (Key Skills Support Programme, 2007)

Assessment tools

These play an important role in objective initial and diagnostic assessment of LLN skills. The Learning and Skills Council (LSC) does not prescribe the use of particular tools.[1] However, they do stress that in choosing your assessment tool, you should ask:

1 See Factsheet 13: Initial assessment for Skills for Life including delivery in Train to Gain

http://readingroom.lsc.gov.uk/lsc/National/nat-factsheet13sflinitialassessmentfors4lincludingdeliveryinttgfinal-jul09.doc

- Does it assess from Entry 1 to Level 2?
- Is it nationally recognised?
- Does it give reliable results?
- Is it appropriate for the workplace context?
- Is it easy to mark?
- Is it available on paper/on CD/online?
- How long does it take?

Effective practice providers use tools that assess skills within a work context so that employers and employees can see the relevance of the process. Free initial and diagnostic tools that follow these quality principles can be accessed at: www.excellencegateway.org.uk/toolslibrary.

Where you have adequate access to IT equipment, there are advantages to using IT-based assessment:

- Most assessments adapt the level of questions to how well the learner answers, reducing the number of questions that are too hard or too easy.
- They can be quicker to complete.
- Marking is automatic and the learner has instant feedback.
- Many learners (though not all) enjoy using IT.
- Learners are not given a test paper or form to complete which may have negative associations.
- Some systems allow assessment outcomes to be stored or collated automatically.

From 'A positive start: a guide to initial assessment in Train to Gain in the North West'.[2]

Self-assessment
This approach enables you to involve learners by taking their views into account and making the most of this knowledge to personalise their learning. Workplace checklists that identify the specific LLN skills required in a vocational sector, NVQ, specific workplace or job role can be used as a self-assessment tool. The Move On programme has developed a range of checklists through the Get On At Work initiative: www.move-on.org.uk/getonatwork.asp.

The extract below has been taken from a 'Workplace Skills for Life for Care checklist'.

Which of these skills and tasks are relevant to your job? Which ones are you confident with? Which ones would you like to improve?

	Relevant	Confident	Like to improve
Fill in an accident or incident report form effectively			
Shop for residents and give change correctly			
Read and understand a health and safety notice or the home guidelines on confidentiality			
Report clearly to colleagues at handover time			

2 http://www.move-on.org.uk/downloadsFile/downloads2383/TTG % 20Initial % 20Assessment % 20Guide.pdf

Discussions and interviews

These provide an opportunity for you and the learner to get to know each other and for you to find out about the learner's skills needs in relation to their job role. It is useful to have a record of these. As part of their initial and diagnostic assessment procedures, J and K Training Ltd developed an **information, advice and guidance (IAG) registration form** to capture this kind of discussion on potential learning needs in relation to job role and career goals.

Documents

During initial discussions with the employer, you may be able to identify existing documents that will support your assessment of learner needs and avoid the need to manufacture assessment activities. Such documents might include timesheets, handover notes or letters/emails to customers.

Observation

Observing the learner at work will provide you with useful background information and enable you to identify how you can tailor the learning to their job role. This understanding will also help you to encourage the learner to apply the skills being developed in the training to their work tasks. Although very resource intensive, shadowing in the workplace is an excellent learning experience for LLN staff.

Structured group or individual activities

These allow learners to apply specific skills. A free-writing task, for example, gives a rounded picture of how someone actually writes. Such a task also helps to put learners at the centre of the assessment process because they can write about themselves, their learning goals or their work situation.

2.2 Stage 2 – Carrying out assessment: how you do it?

How assessment is carried out has a more important critical impact on learners than what tools and approaches you select.

Initial assessment of LLN is often introduced, explained and/or carried out by NVQ assessors in the workplace. It is important then, for such assessors to be trained to understand the LLN assessment process and how these skills underpin the NVQ learning. They need to be sensitive to learners' possible anxieties and should also be able to interpret and explain the outcomes of assessment in both LLN and workplace terms.

The LSC's guidelines on initial assessment[3] state that actually carrying out the initial assessment should be undertaken by staff who have an awareness of the LLN core curricula and an understanding of the impact on individuals of low LLN skills. In particular, they should be able to:

- Understand the whole assessment process
- Present it to learners in a positive and constructive way so that they can see its relevance to their work
- Use a variety of approaches appropriate to the workplace
- Use LLN initial assessment tools effectively
- Interpret assessment results appropriately and give professional feedback to learners and employers
- Refer learners for further expert assessment where appropriate.

3 http://readingroom.lsc.gov.uk/lsc/National/nat-factsheet13sflinitialassessmentfors4lincludingdeliveryinttgfinal-jul09.doc.

Following on from the initial assessment stage, the LSC guidelines confirm that diagnostic assessment should always be carried out by appropriately qualified staff in a full teacher role. They need to be able to make decisions about which aspects of a learner's LLN require more in-depth assessment, and be able to use assessment outcomes to:

- Plan individual and group learning
- Monitor progress
- Use LLN diagnostic assessment tools creatively and flexibly.

Developing staff skills in assessment through CPD
EPP providers analysed the specific development needs of all the staff involved in the assessment process. A key aspect of the training which resulted from this needs analysis was bringing together different teams/individuals to ensure a common understanding of their various roles and responsibilities, the stages of the assessment process and how each stage feeds into the next.

Much of the in-house training delivered by the EPP providers focused on the vocational and employer engagement teams, typically by:

- Giving them the opportunity to experience the initial assessment process for themselves by completing an assessment task.
- Asking them to reflect on the process and, where appropriate, on their own development needs.

The effects of the training led to increased confidence and skills about the assessment process as a whole, particularly around:

- The purpose of literacy and numeracy assessment in the workplace.
- The impact of weak LLN skills on productivity and learner confidence.

At Sussex Downs College, the **Move-On I-Route** was used to reinforce the positive language approach when talking to learners about initial assessment. The I-Route consists of a series of online, interactive activities suitable for employers, IAG staff, assessors, vocational and literacy and numeracy teachers, aimed at promoting the development of literacy and numeracy skills in a positive way.

Staff who attended the training left with a real desire and enthusiasm to promote LLN alongside the NVQ. The number of Skills for Life referrals from the assessors increased dramatically following the training.

> **'I had not realised how hard some of our NVQ paperwork may be for learners to read.'**
>
> Fran Ludford, NVQ assessor

> **'Now I understand that literacy and numeracy qualifications are not just for those who cannot read or write.'**
>
> Kerry West, NVQ assessor

At Brockenhurst College, the Skills for Life in the workplace team offered a two-day training course to their frontline staff, NVQ assessors and marketing team, leading to a Level 2 qualification in literacy, numeracy and ICT awareness. Key members of the teams then worked together to produce a marketing flyer to incorporate LLN into **workplace training promotional material.**

The EPP providers also identified training needs for the Skills for Life staff. Ealing, Hammersmith and West London College focused on developing staff skills to develop employer-specific learning targets.

> **'We reviewed a sample of our existing ILP targets in terms of how SMART[4] they are and their relevance to the workplace. The results of this showed us that targets were often not specific enough and not measurable or relevant to the workplace. This was in part due to the tutors' laudable desire for the learner to write their own ILP targets. We realised that the tutors needed guidance on what was expected and would, in turn, need to guide the learners. There were some targets which were SMART but still generic, with the focus on sub skills needed to achieve the externally accredited qualification. From student reviews, feedback and discussions with our existing employers we prepared a bank of exemplar targets in the key occupational sectors.**
>
> **Teachers now have greater buy-in to the ILP process as they can see the relevance for their learners, rather than it being simply more paperwork to fill in. It is also helping them to deliver a more tailored course rather than focusing only on the generic milestones.'**
>
> Neil Sarkar, Ealing, Hammersmith and West London College

The Manchester College decided to introduce a specific assessment of reading skills, Wordchains,[5] alongside a more general literacy assessment tool. They designed training for the Skills for Life workplace tutors to:

- Administer, mark and communicate the results back to the learners.
- Equip them with **strategies to support/develop individual learner's reading skills** in response to the results of the assessment.

Initially, staff were unsure of the need for further initial assessment and thought that 'there wouldn't be enough time to make a difference'. However, the feedback from the training showed that the tutors felt that the results of the additional assessment would enable them to identify more quickly where to start with individual learners to develop their reading skills.

2.3 Stage 3 – using assessment to inform learning

Once the appropriate methods, tools and approaches have been selected and the assessment of need has been carried out, it is crucial that you use the outcomes of assessment effectively and creatively to inform the teaching and learning that will take place.

EPP providers used assessment outcomes to inform negotiations with the employer and the learner to identify a model of delivery and programme of training that:

4 See page 28 for an explanation of SMART targets
5 http://shop.gl-assessment.co.uk/home.php?cat=379

- Addresses the employees' identified needs
- Meets the needs of the business
- Is a viable business proposition for both the employer and the provider.

Employer
- **Will these skills produce a more effective workforce?**
- **What return on my investment can I expect?**
- **Will the smooth running of the business be affected?**

Learner
- **What is the relevance of these skills to my job and career aspirations?**
- **Can I achieve this?**

Provider
- **Do we have the capacity to deliver?**
- **Can we meet the employer and learner requirements within cost?**

Decision to proceed

Figure 4: Reaching a learning agreement

J and K Training Ltd uses assessment outcomes to put together an offer of customised training for employers. They then meet with the employer to discuss the results of the assessment, focusing on the skills strengths as well as the development needs of the cohort rather than the skills deficits of individuals. This approach helps reassure employees who may be concerned about the implications of poorer assessment results on their job security and progression.

In order to be engaged in training, a learner must be able to see the relevance of the learning to their job role and career aspirations. It is therefore essential that you use the outcomes of assessment to negotiate a meaningful ILP with the learner that reflects the skills required to do their job more effectively.

As well as a learner's current skills levels and long-term goals, ILPs should include short-term learning targets that are SMART:

- **S**pecific: Do the targets say exactly what it is the learner wants to be able to do?
- **M**easurable: Have you identified with the learner how they will know when they have achieved the target? What will they be able to do?
- **A**chievable: Can they be achieved in the time the learner has been given?
- **R**ealistic: Are the targets things that the learner can realistically do something about?
- **T**ime bound: Have you agreed dates for achieving the targets and monitoring progress towards them?

With EPP providers, employers and/or the learner's workplace supervisor play a key role in supporting the learner to apply the skills they are developing in the training to their workplace.

Ealing, Hammersmith and West London College ensures that copies of ILP targets are signed by the training manager or line manager, providing them with the opportunity to amend the targets if necessary. J and K Training Ltd ensures that, where possible, the employer signs the **ILP** alongside the trainer and learner as evidence of their buy-in.

During the Skills for Life Improvement Programme 2008/09, many training providers focused on developing robust **ILPs** that actively involved both the learner and the employer, such as that produced by NCT Ltd, a training provider in the North East.

Individual learning plans should contain explicit activities for the learner to develop skills in the context of their job role and opportunities to put them into practice by applying them in the workplace.

J and K Training Ltd devise occupationally relevant learning targets:

- MSS1/L2.2[6] – To calculate using time e.g. cooking time of a piece of meat according to weight.
- MSS1/L2.2 – To measure and record time e.g. the down time of a machine.

They then negotiate with the learner ways in which they could apply the targets in the workplace such as cooking meals within the care home or recording the dates and times of incidents in the incident log.

Ealing, Hammersmith and West London College made their targets 'SMARTer' through the introduction of a revised format for **ILP targets**. They then produced a bank of exemplar sector specific targets using this format for Healthcare, Retail and Hospitality as a guide for their workplace teachers. See the examples below.

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6 These 'measures, shape and space' (MSS) skills references are taken from the adult numeracy core curriculum. Go to www.excellencegateway.org.uk/pdf/NumeracyProgressionoverview1.pdf for more information.

Task I want to get better at and why	What I will do and when I will do it	How will I check I have improved? How will I apply this skill?
I want to be able to show I'm interested in what the customer says.	I will work with my teacher on making a list of key phrases and questions which show that I am interested in what people say. I will practise in pairs in class and at home.	I will talk to a customer and show that I'm interested in what he/she says. I will ask my manager to watch me on one occasion and get feedback.
I want to get better at giving my point of view during a meeting.	I will make a list of phrases I can use to give opinions and points of view.	I will speak more at meetings and give my view and ask my manager for feedback.
I want to be able to find the information I need in the staff handbook.	I will practise reading the contents page of the staff handbook and look up the information I need to find. I will practise finding information with my workmates.	I will arrange to meet with a more experienced member of staff and they will ask me where to find some information in the staff handbook and I will show them.

Learners are encouraged to play an active role in defining their learning targets and in identifying how they will practise and apply the skills they are developing. The following is an example of a learning target defined by a learner, guided by the tutor.

Task I want to get better at and why	What I will do and when I will do it	How will I check I have improved? How will I apply this skill?
I want to be able to speak confidently to my line manager.	I will make a list of the kinds of topics I need to discuss with my line manager, and my teacher will help me with words and grammar for me to role play in class.	I will ask my manager to give me feedback on how I have improved by the end of the course.

The learner is responsible for applying the skills in the workplace and managing their own learning by self-assessing their progress in the workplace, with the support of their supervisor and colleagues.

Success is

Learner
- A qualification
- More confidence at work
- More opportunities to progress at work

Provider
- High achievement and retention rates
- Satisfied employer and employees
- Repeat business

Employer
- A better skilled workforce
- A more motivated workforce
- Enhanced business performance

2.4 Stage 4 – Monitoring and reviewing progress and supporting achievement and progression

How do you define success?
Successful workplace training will mean different things for you, your learners and the employers you work with.

To maximise success, it is vital that everyone involved has a clear understanding of the objectives of the training and their role in reviewing and supporting progress towards achieving those objectives. It is important that your workplace offer includes:

- Regular monitoring and review of learner progress
- Support to achieve qualifications
- Exit reviews to identify how the training could have been improved and any further training needs, and
- That the employer and learners are fully involved in all of these processes.

Regular monitoring and review of progress
All workplace training delivered by Ealing, Hammersmith and West London College includes two on-course assessments where learners' progress against their targets is assessed by the learner, teacher and the employer's training manager or learner's line manager. Following the review, targets will be amended where necessary. The ILP has been designed to capture learner's reflections on their progress and in particular on any improvements in their work performance. See the following.

Task I want to get better at and why	What I will do and when I will do it	How will I check I have improved? How will I apply this skill?
I want to be able to make presentations at work.	I will learn to plan with my teacher's support and give a presentation to my classmates.	I will give a presentation at work and get feedback from my colleagues. **ILP feedback** *'I am stronger in confidence. I have learnt to think about my writing and presentation skills.'* Shelley Goff, East London Foundation Trust
Writing reports at work.	I will learn about the format and language of reports using work examples to show my teacher, and I will write at least two reports by the end of the course.	Get feedback on my reports in class and start writing at work, with feedback from my line manager. **ILP feedback** *' … and I have started to write reports at work.'* Alice Forbang, East London Foundation Trust

To find out more about good practice in carrying out learner reviews and assessment for learning go to Assessment and Learning Guidance Booklet 5: Assessment for Learning at: http://sflip.excellencegateway.org.uk/assessment/assessmentguidance.aspx.

Support to achieve qualifications
It is vital that learners are supported to prepare for LLN qualifications as well as helping them develop skills for work. This may be in the form of information about online test preparation materials such as The Learner Route on the Move On website (www.move-on.org.uk) or the opportunity to attend drop-in test preparation workshops at a convenient time. Learners must also have the opportunity to take assessments at a time and place that is convenient to both the learner and the employer. For example, J and K Training negotiate the most appropriate time and place for the test to be taken with the employee and the employer. The test can be taken on site, at their head office, or premises can be hired by the company if no other suitable option can be found.

Exit reviews – measuring your success (qualitatively and quantitatively)
Exit reviews with employers and learners provide the opportunity to:

- Reflect on whether the training objectives have been met
- Reflect on how the training could have been improved
- Explore any further training needs
- Seek feedback on the service you are providing.

The following flowchart is an extract from J and K Training's 'Engagement and Training Cycle', showing how they include the collection and analysis of learner and employer feedback in their quality cycle.

| Deliver/review flexible individualised training programme | → | Evaluations by learner and employer as to content, delivery of and effectiveness of programme | → | Provider evaluates, reflects and responds to programme evaluations |
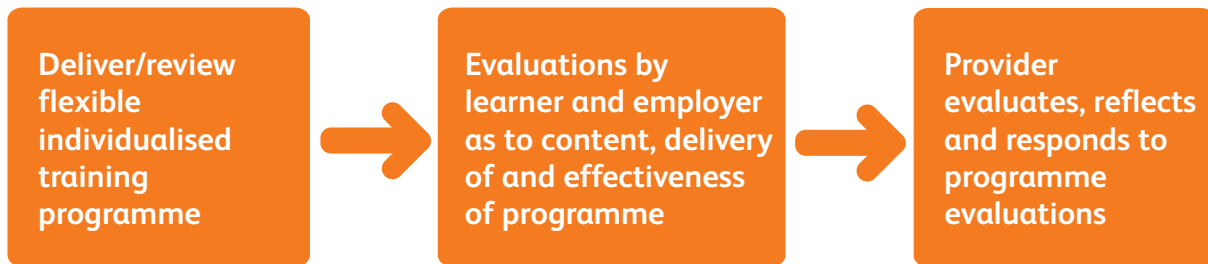
They have also designed a **learner exit review form** to capture their learners' reflections and feedback. Examples of questions and responses include:

Q: Have you been able to apply any of the new skills you have gained in the workplace?

A: Yes, I think it has helped me quite a lot as I work in an accounts office and deal with VAT and other maths techniques. I believe it has improved my technique and speed in working things out.

A: It has made me more aware of how I speak to people and given me more confidence in my widened vocabulary. I have also discovered that I quite like a challenge when it comes to working things out.

Q: What are your future plans (for training) and is there anything we can help you with?

A: I would like to learn more about computers. Maybe also acquiring more maths skills. I am also open-minded about what courses are out there for me.

A: I am interested in starting the NVQ Level 3 in Business Admin and then going onto an accounts course.

They also capture employer feedback via an **employer training feedback form**, which asks questions such as:

- Do you think that your organisation benefited from this employee training?
- How have your employees applied any of the new skills learnt into their working environment?
- Do you think the service could be improved?
- Are there any other training programmes you would like to discuss with us?

To measure your own success you need systems in place to capture achievement data. Being able to draw on a mixture of qualitative and quantitative information will strengthen your own self-assessment.

Sussex Downs College identified the need to improve their monitoring of Skills for Life learners' progress and achievement as they had learners enrolled on Train to Gain programmes who were going past their end dates without having taken a Skills for Life test. They designed and trialled a central system that Skills for Life teachers and NVQ assessors had access to which captured learners' start dates and planned end dates. Data was captured from the ILP paperwork that the

Skills for Life teachers completed with their learners. The trial was a success as staff were better equipped to monitor each individual's progress, achievement rates increased and there was accurate management information system (MIS) data to draw upon for reporting purposes.

3. Identifying the impact of effective assessment and ILP processes

Ultimately, the success of workplace training will be decided by its impact on learners, employers and providers. The providers whose work has featured in this section have reported the following impact of their effective practice:

- **Increased staff confidence and skills to promote and deliver workplace assessment**, leading to:
  - Increased employer and learner engagement
  - Increased referral rates to Skills for Life learning.

After establishing Skills for Life training for NVQ assessors, Sussex Downs College has seen a significant increase in Skills for life referrals. For example, the Retail Department, from only three referrals in the year prior to the training, referred 57 learners in the nine months following the training.

- **Increased staff confidence and skills to use assessment outcomes to design training programmes** that accommodate the practicalities of delivery in the workplace and focus on developing skills for the workplace, leading to:
  - High learner achievement rates.

Sussex Downs College's Skills for Life achievement in Train to Gain is now 100 per cent in both Care and Retail, up from 87 per cent and 92 per cent.

- **High levels of employer satisfaction**, leading to repeat business:

> **'Since the English language courses began, we have seen a marked improvement in our staff's confidence. Their ability to speak and use English has improved significantly to the point where we are now able to advertise in English, something we haven't done much of in the past 20 years. Our company is keen to diversify its customer base … and our staff's ability to speak and write in English is the driving force behind this change.'**
>
> Ian Vallely, HIS Europe Ltd/ViaJapanHolidays
> Employer working with Ealing, Hammersmith and West London College

- **High levels of learner satisfaction** leading to high rates of progression to further learning.

Between January and July 2009, 112 learners successfully completed their Skills for Life training with J and K Training. Eighty-four (75 per cent) of these learners have continued in training, working either towards an additional qualification in literacy or numeracy or towards a second, higher qualification in literacy or numeracy.

HINTS AND TIPS FOR EFFECTIVE PRACTICE IN ASSESSMENT AND ILP PROCESSES

Use the list below to identify any actions you may need to take to improve assessment and ILP processes in your workplace provision.

Criteria: Does your organisation …	Yes	No	Action
Have a robust MIS in place to record data e.g. referrals, start/end dates, retention and achievement information?			
Use/choose a range of approaches to initial and diagnostic assessment?			
Agree the most appropriate approaches, tools and methods with the learners and employers you work with?			
Have a strategic approach to developing the skills and knowledge necessary to build staff confidence to carry out assessment?			
Involve all staff when providing training, to ensure consistency of approach?			
Build from existing good practice?			
Use assessment outcomes to inform negotiations with the learner and employer regarding what the training will look like?			
Develop ILPs containing workplace-specific SMART targets that engage the learner and employer?			
Ensure that SMART targets provide opportunities for learners to develop skills and apply them in the workplace?			
Use diagnostic assessment outcomes to inform learning activities on the ILP?			
Identify what 'success' will look like with the learner and employer before training begins and regularly review progress against these measures of success?			
Adapt your review method to meet the needs of the learner and employer (e.g. remote review)?			
Support test achievement through structured test preparation opportunities?			
Provide flexible opportunities for learners to take a national test?			
Identify opportunities for progression with learners and employers during an exit review?			

Useful links for further information

The Good Practice guidance in Skills Checks and Initial Assessment:
www.excellencegateway.org.uk/page.aspx?o=162089

The Assessment and Learning Guidance Booklets:
http://sflip.excellencegateway.org.uk/resources/assessmentguidance.aspx

LSC Factsheet 13: Initial Assessment for Skills for Life Including Delivery in Train to Gain:
http://readingroom.lsc.gov.uk/lsc/National/nat-factsheet13sflinitialassessmentfors4lincluding
deliveryinttgfinal-jul09.doc

Tools Library: www.excellencegateway.org.uk/toolslibrary

The Learning and Skills Improvement Service's World Class Skills Programme (WCS) provides
a range of products and services that meet the needs of individual providers as they seek to
improve the responsiveness and quality of their offer to employers. To access the WCS website
go to: http://wcs.excellencegateway.org.uk

Section 3

Flexible ways of delivering learning

This section is about how to design and deliver effective models of employer-responsive and learner-centred literacy, language and numeracy (LLN) provision. It is in five parts:

Introduction

The key word for developing an effective response to employers' needs has to be flexibility. Each employer has distinctive reasons for wanting employees to have LLN training and all will want them to access this training with the minimum of disruption to their working lives. What this means in practice is that providers need to be able to respond by having a variety of different ways in which to deliver the training.

Providers in the Effective Practice Project (EPP) found that there are three aspects to designing a delivery model that is sufficiently flexible to meet employers' and employees' needs. They are the answers to the learners' question: how, when and where can I study?

How can I study?

When can I study?

Learners' needs

Where can I study?

Starting points

The table below gives examples of the kinds of needs employees were expressing and shows some of the flexible ways in which providers met these needs.

Learner situation	Learner needs	Flexible delivery solutions
Three voluntary helpers at a primary school needed Level 2 English and mathematics to enrol on a course for teaching assistants.	• All were parents with childcare commitments. • All lived a long distance from the provider. • There was no free room at the school on a regular weekly basis. • They had access to computers at home.	Hopwood Hall College's solution was to offer a combination of face-to-face and distance learning: • First group session for induction and assessment delivered at Hopwood. • Three group sessions delivered in volunteers' workplace – the primary school. • E-learning in between the face-to-face sessions, using existing online resources e.g. Move On. • Regular phone/e-mail support from the tutor.
A security worker at the National Exhibition Centre (NEC) in Birmingham wanted to obtain Level 2 English to assist promotion.	• She had childcare responsibilities. • She worked variable 12-hour shifts, often six days a week, both day and night.	South Birmingham College's solution was to offer a drop-in workshop at the NEC: • Open to all employees of the NEC and other companies based there. • Run by the NEC management, Unite and the college consortium. • Open 17 hours a week. • Staff trained to deliver mathematics and English.
Bus drivers with East London Bus Group who wanted to take LLN qualifications prior to NVQ.	• Employees are based at eight garages north and south of the Thames. • Drivers on variable shift patterns. • Lack of free meeting space at garages.	M2 Training's solution was to use a bus as a mobile learning centre: • Tutors able to teach English and mathematics staffed the bus when needed. • The bus with its resources moved to garages to coincide with beginning and end of shifts.

1. Aspects of flexibility – answering the three questions

1.1 How can I study?

Providers delivered LLN training in a variety of ways that included:

- A stand-alone LLN course
- In advance of (but leading to) other workplace training such as NVQs
- Concurrently with other workplace training such as NVQs
- Embedded within other training such as NVQs.

They taught employees LLN in the workplace in the following ways:

- One-to-one and/or in a group
- Using drop-in sessions or timed whole group classes
- Face-to-face and/or at a distance
- Using e-learning and/or using paper-based resources.

They combined these delivery methods in many differing ways to ensure that their provision was flexible enough to be effective for all the different employers with whom they worked.

Why use e-learning?
Most providers found that, when teaching in the workplace, it was helpful to include some form of delivery using e-learning that could be accessed by the learners anytime, anywhere. There are several reasons for this:

- Employers find it difficult to release groups of staff at the same time.
- Employees may not have time outside of work to attend face-to-face provision regularly and prefer to choose their own times for working online.
- Providers find it uneconomic to deliver face-to-face provision to small groups in different workplaces.

Most providers already use e-technology in the classroom but it is the development of e-resources to teach LLN at a distance that is more challenging, especially if they want to develop a model that uses resources contextualised to a particular sector. This combination of some element of distance learning with face-to-face group and one-to-one delivery is termed 'blended learning'.

Three examples of effective models of blended LLN learning
Longden Ltd designed its blended learning model from scratch, building on their extensive knowledge of the needs of the primary school sector. Their model was written to deliver literacy and numeracy at Levels 1 and 2 to primary school teaching assistants and lunchtime supervisors, and has been trialled with 65 school workers across 11 schools. The model was flexible enough to be offered more intensively with full-day group sessions to two estate agents who needed Level 2 numeracy skills for their new management roles, and was used again for a course for Fleet Services staff (mechanics, administrators and managers) working at the West Midlands Police.

Longden's blended numeracy model has four components:

- Intensive group-taught numeracy learning sessions, offered over a series of half days, and

organised to fit in with the workers' availability. A different topic such as data handling was introduced at each session, with teaching focusing on skills that learners' diagnostic assessments showed were areas of concern.

- 'Take Aways' – a memory stick with 30 short online practice activities to revise and extend work done in the intensive sessions. These could be completed at any time and place and some are self-marking. The activities that were provided on a memory stick had been downloaded from national websites such as www.move-on.org.uk and www.bbc.co.uk/skillswise.
- One-to-one teaching in response to an individual's performance on practice tests and formative assessment activities, delivered face-to-face, via e-mail and phone.
- An optional half-day 'team challenge' activity, delivered either face-to-face or online, to encourage the development of team-building skills and collaborative learning.

Cheshire County Council offer a variety of blended models of delivery that have been developed in response to the differing needs of their workplace learners.

- For one group of employees who could be released for two hours a week over a ten-week period in their workplace, a range of e-technology was used both in the class and to offer individuals extra skills practice at home in between classes.
- When delivering to individual council or care workers who cannot attend a regular class, they offer a blended model that includes substantial distance learning via web-based materials and webcasts on the council's website, supplemented by occasional face-to-face coaching and support.

The exact amount of face-to-face delivery is negotiated with the learners and the tutor supplies ongoing support by email and phone in between face-to-face sessions.

Wirral Metropolitan College developed a mainly online blended course for their local NHS trust, as learners found it extremely difficult to attend face-to-face sessions. Their NHS model consisted of an initial lengthy face-to-face induction and assessment session for the whole group followed by nine modules taught entirely online. Most of the group took the test at the same time. One learner said: 'I wouldn't have physically had time any other way than online. I work, do overtime and am a single parent with three kids'.

How do providers design their blended models?
Providers recommend developing blended LLN learning from a position of strength. It is much more difficult to develop a blended model if the employer, sector, situation and materials are all new.

- Start with an employer you already have a relationship with. When Cheshire County Council started developing blended materials for council care assistants they already had a history of partnership working with the council.
- Start with a sector where you have experience of delivering NVQs. Longden Ltd had already delivered Level 2/3 training for school teaching assistants/lunchtime supervisors before they started developing a blended numeracy route for them.
- Start with courses where you have already embedded LLN materials. The national materials for embedded learning are freely available to providers as a starting point.[1] These include embedded resources for specific vocational areas, such as Catering or Cleaning, Hairdressing or Horticulture, as well as those suitable for across areas, such as Entry to Employment (E2E) or Health and Safety. See Section 4 for details of other existing resources that can be adapted. Wirral Metropolitan College were part of the North West consortium

1 See http://rwp.qia.oxi.net/embeddedlearning/search.cfm

which wrote embedded LLN materials for the NHS which enabled them to start developing their online blended provision from their existing paper-based literacy module (see Move On in the NHSCMS).[2]

When starting to design your blended learning model, it is important to consider what parts of the curriculum are best delivered face-to-face and where technology can best be used, either with a group or at a distance. There are critical choices to be made about the proportion of each within the programmes you offer.

Start with the workplace learners
- How competent and confident are these learners at using a computer?
  There is little point designing a blended model using web-based resources for employees who do not own a computer or do not have access to one at work. Even if they do have access, are they able to download your resources, send emails, attach documents to send to their tutor, contribute to a message board discussion and use a blog? Where IT access is lacking or where these skills would need to be taught from scratch, there is still a need for models of delivery which rely solely on paper-based resources.

- How often can the employees meet face-to-face and for how long?
  You will need to consult with both the employer and employees, and possibly union representatives, before you plan the make-up of your course, so that you are clear as to whether staff will be released in work time and when and for how long.

Consider the curriculum
- How much of the curriculum can be taught using e-learning?
  You need a curriculum expert to advise on any areas that are difficult to teach if employees are using web-based resources independently outside class.

- Developing speaking and listening skills may be best done face-to-face in a group, unless learners have webcams and you can organise synchronous group work at a distance or offer film podcasts for asynchronous learning.

- Similarly, discussing 3-D shapes in numeracy may be easier face-to-face, though you could consider uploading a short film clip of a teacher's explanation to your website.

Examine each part of a blended model
The providers designed courses with varied numbers of face-to-face sessions and different numbers of e-learning activities for delivering the remaining parts of the course at a distance. Their decisions depended on what and who was being taught but within their flexible models all providers offered some one-to-one support and teaching face-to-face and/or online or via the telephone.

Hopwood Hall College provided four group sessions in total, the first two for induction, initial assessment and negotiating ILPs. There were two more group-taught sessions and the remainder of their Level 1 numeracy course was delivered through distance learning. Wirral Metropolitan College only had one group session for induction, assessment and briefing on the IT issues, followed by nine modules taught online and uploaded weekly. Providers recommend using the questions on the next page to inform your decision making about the suitable proportions of each part of your blended model.

2 www.move-on.org.uk/sitesearch.asp?search=nhs&submit=Search

Questions to help you devise your blended learning model

Can I offer tests on demand?
How will I offer tests?
- online or on screen?
- on paper?

What test practice do learners need?

Induction should be face-to-face, ideally with a group but one-to-one if necessary.

Providers recommend double staffing by:
- curriculum teacher
- expert to advise on technology use.

How much time do I plan for briefing, learner interviews and initial assessment?

Which assessment tools – electronic or paper?

Will diagnostic assessment be done later?
- by individuals online?

What virtual learning communities can be supported technically?

How will tutors encourage and monitor their use?

Test

Induction: interview, initial assessment, IT briefing

Virtual community: message board, learner forum, wiki, blog, podcast

Face-to-face taught group and/or one-to-one sessions

Individuals learning from web-based resources at a

Which activities benefit from the power of using information and learning technology (ILT)?

How many activities do I need?

Which websites will it be useful to link to?

Can I create film or audio clips?

What applications/software will help?

Do I upload resources all at once or weekly?

How can I monitor use?

How do I give tutorial support and formative assessment feedback?

Are there suitable national embedded resources at: http://rwp.qia.oxi.net/embeddedlearning/ that I can use or adapt?

How do I interleave group sessions with individualised e-learning at a distance?

How do I plan face-to-face group sessions to include picking up on individuals' distance learning?

Which e-resources are for learning in class, which for at a distance?

How many group sessions can learners attend?

Which LLN skills are better taught in group/face-to-face?

How do I maximise opportunities for peer interaction and collaborative learning while the group is together?

1.2 When can I study?

The second question to ask about flexible delivery is when can learning take place to meet the needs of employees and the employer?

The EPP providers knew that timing is a critical issue in working with employers. You need to be able to:

- Respond rapidly to a request for provision
- Agree quickly where and how learning can be delivered
- Be flexible about the timing when learning is available, whether it is during the day or at night, on weekdays or weekends.

Some learners may need to study at a different pace to that of their colleagues and models need to be able to accommodate this, either by offering workshop style one-to-one support which enables the learner to prepare to take the test when they are ready, or by offering supplementary learning opportunities (often online) where they are learning as part of a whole group.

Such flexibilities clearly present staffing and funding challenges but many of the providers did find it feasible and economic to offer learning at flexible times. For instance, Southampton College was able to timetable suitable staff to run workshops for the Royal Mail, with the timing determined by shift patterns so that employees could drop into the workshops before or after shifts. As shift patterns changed, so did the workshop hours and workshops often ran late at night or early in the morning.

Similar flexibility was shown by Cheshire County Council. They offer a range of course delivery patterns to accommodate learners' pace of learning and also offer individuals places on a second course if they require more time to achieve and prefer group learning. They also run a workshop at the county council offices in the middle of the day where employees can have face-to-face support weekly, fortnightly or monthly.

Case study: Royal Mail, Southampton

The Royal Mail in Southampton wanted Southampton City College to provide courses for Level 1 and 2 qualifications in numeracy, literacy and ICT. They have 450 staff on site who work shifts covering 24 hours. After reviewing their needs with the employees, the Union Learning Representative and the management, the college decided to provide a workshop located within the sorting office.

The workshop is open from 12.15 to 15.15 daily, which covers the main shift changeover. This has proved very popular with the employees who can access it before or after work. They can attend at any time during this session and stay for as long as they need, and there is an active enrolment policy to encourage new recruits at all times.

Learners work to their own individual learning plans (ILPs), negotiated with the tutor and supported during the session, often covering more than one discipline. They are able to contact the tutor by email and/or text in between face-to-face sessions if they need support and are also encouraged to contact each other.

'None of us could come here if it wasn't done with this flexibility. We can't get out to a class at a given time. Work here isn't like that.'

Learner, Southampton Royal Mail Sorting Office

1.3. Where can I study?

When working with employed learners, the third important question is to decide where the learning is to take place.

You will usually consider delivering the learning at the workplace as the preferred choice for example for those working on long shifts. However other options need to be thought about, particularly where there are small numbers of learners at a particular site. Providers have used such places as motorway service stations (hiring their training rooms), a hired room in a pub, a trade union base or a local centre convenient to learners' bus routes or homes.

The questions you need to ask include:

- What are the facilities available in the workplace (space, privacy, suitable tables/chairs, internet access, photocopier)?
- What are the individual needs of employees that need considering (childcare, safety in travelling if evening/night, disabled access etc.)?
- What would the employees who will attend prefer (privacy may be an issue and an off-site venue preferred)?

When working with a local bakery, Northern College found it best to offer numeracy group sessions in a staffroom at the bakery, taking resources with them. NHS staff in the Wirral have a learning centre at the hospital so they are able to go there to study for short periods, though not necessarily at the same time as each other. These staff preferred to do most of their work at home (via their computers). However, as M2 Training found, there may not always be a suitable space in the workplace. In their case the bus drivers worked from eight different depots so a mobile learning classroom was a sensible way forward, albeit one that needed careful costing to make sure it was sustainable financially.

Case study: M2 Training and East London Bus Group

M2 Training agreed to set up a learning centre with East London Bus Group. The initial idea was to set up a training facility in the Rainham depot, either in an existing classroom or a Portakabin, but after a number of meetings it was decided to set up a mobile classroom in a training bus, loaned by East London Bus Group and fitted out with eight computers and workspaces.

The newly kitted-out bus, the I-Bus, tours the eight garages in the group providing a learning centre for one or two weeks at a time. It is able to 'plug in' to the garage's electric supply and broadband access. This has proved to be popular with learners and financially sustainable.

Workshop provision that serves a number of employers may also be set up – perhaps in a shopping centre or a rural community hall or within a business park with employees from several companies 'dropping in' to work at different times each week. An example of this is the **Learning centre at the National Exhibition Centre** run by the NEC, Unite and South Birmingham College.

2. Designing e-learning provision for a blended model

The aspect of flexible learning that most providers are least familiar with is the distance learning element of a blended model. The following parts of this section therefore focus on what providers learnt about this topic.

Developing e-learning is time-consuming and can appear to be expensive. However, it does not always need to be: it depends on what e-learning you incorporate.

For example, if you want to give learners some extra activities on which to practice their individual skills, you can collect them onto a memory stick. Northern College and Longden Ltd both find this a cost effective and convenient way of offering learners individual consolidation practice. The stick gives links to specific parts of national websites such as BBC Skillswise or Move On and/or provides copies of their own e-resources customised for the needs of the individual learner. South Nottingham College used memory sticks to give learners easy access to embedded numeracy materials to support the mathematics requirements of a course for Medical Counter Assistants.

Longden Ltd is exploring the use of mobile phone technology. For example, they send mobile phone messages at lunchtime to encourage primary school lunchtime supervisors to try numeracy games/activities with the children in the playground, reinforcing their own learning in group sessions.

2.1 Create a course structure

Once you have decided exactly what you want to be delivered electronically, you need to decide how your e-activities are to be structured so that they make sense to the learners and form a coherent whole.

Using e-workbooks (electronic workbooks that the learner can complete on screen or after printing) can be a cheap and effective way of structuring your course activities when you cannot place resources on a website. You group learning activities into coherent modules just as you would when devising paper-based resources, giving each e-book a different title and front page image to distinguish one from another. Sheffield College wrote three Entry level e-books for Hull providers who had no common website on which to host them, so they were shared on memory sticks.

Most providers have a web application often known as a Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) that is used to create online learning sites. If you are putting your resources onto a VLE you still need to create a suitable overall structure. Wirral Metropolitan College grouped their online numeracy activities into nine modules based on mathematics topics such as: 'Metric Measurement' and 'Handling Numbers', with their first session titled 'Overview, setting priorities and getting started'. Resources were uploaded to the website weekly as the sequence of learning was felt to be important.

Sheffield College used **A Day in the Life of a Health Care Assistant** to structure their online numeracy support materials for this specific NHS group. They believe this will work well as a structure for other workplace LLN resources.

2.2 Features of the VLE used by providers

EPP providers emphasise the importance of ensuring web-based resources are organised so learners (and staff) can use them easily. Navigation needs to be clear and visual, especially for learners with pre-Level 2 reading skills.

The providers recommend not limiting your web-based resources only to text, but to also try to include video and sound recordings. Cheshire County Council showed that making video clips does not need to be expensive or very complex. With technical support from the Cheshire County Council Information and Learning Technology (ILT) Development Officer, in relatively few hours they have made several **four-minute video clips** of their tutors introducing topics.

Providers suggest you offer a message board, learner forum, maybe a wiki (a web page everyone in the group can create together) or blog. These ways of communicating between learners can offer some replacement for the social engagement that learners get from face-to-face interaction and can be used to encourage collaborative learning online. However most learners need a great deal of encouragement before they will engage in this way. The tutor's role is to nurture engagement and check everyone is involved.

One way is to have a regular time when the tutor is always online for a 'meeting'. Wirral Metropolitan College found that taking everyone's photo, including the tutor's, at induction and posting these next to message board contributions helped personalise interaction.

Example of tutor using a message board to communicate with learners

Programme journal

by Dawn Wilkinson – Wednesday, 25 February 2009, 03:11 PM

Don't forget to update your programme journal on a regular basis – probably best if at the end of each topic/module.

Edit | Delete | Reply

Tutors often found they needed to support individuals through personal emails as well as via message boards. With some, a telephone call was more effective. A good recommendation was to ask your ILT expert to set up an electronic learner tracking system, to track learners' use of resources as well as their progress. The Wirral Metropolitan College numeracy teacher could track learners' **diagnostic assessments results** and generate reports on her learners' engagement with specific activities. This capacity to see what resources learners had accessed proved invaluable when teaching LLN at a distance.

Social networking sites can also be used successfully to help engagement with employees. Facebook groups, videos on YouTube and Twitter reminders can all be a part of the e-resources deployed in blended learning provision. Some LLN teachers at the Sheffield College have their own webpages to host their specific LLN course activities/resources, including podcasts and YouTube videos.

We asked providers what they had needed to be successful with their VLEs. These were their suggestions.

Question	Providers' responses
1. What capabilities are essential for effective web-based delivery using a VLE?	VLE or ILT gateway must be able to: • Be organised into sections – with areas for staff and for learners to see/not see • Monitor learner use: when/how long logged on • Track learner progress during activities • Link to the internet and existing website resources • Host photo/video capability • Create a community of learners who can contribute via a forum, message board, blog, wiki, etc.
2. What technical support will you need?	• Trained person with knowledge of functions of VLE • Technical support person; must be able to train others
3. What existing products do you and your learners find most useful on VLE?	• www.bbc.co.uk/skillswise • www.move-on.org.uk
4. How can web-based resources help in the flexible delivery of LLN in the workplace?	• Upload course materials for absent learners • Upload extra resources to provide more practice • Provide an online course for distance e-learning (supplemented by face-to-face teaching)
5. What course design issues need considering before uploading a web-based course?	• Specific parts of the curriculum to be covered • Suitable context and structure for course (e.g. e-books) • How to signpost course elements to users • What IT skills users require and how to train for them in the course induction process • Style of resource: layout, colour, readability level
6. What components are probably better delivered face-to-face?	• Induction including IT briefing • Initial assessment and agreeing targets for ILP • Collaborative learning
7. What skills do you need to write web-based resources?	• Person with technical expertise related to e-learning • Curriculum expert skilled in creating e-activities • Designer experienced in writing for Entry/Level1 learners
8. What are the essential don'ts?	• Don't upload a series of unconnected worksheets • Don't assume too high ILT skills levels in learners • Don't upload a paper-based course without changing instructions and modifying activities
9. How should you monitor the quality of staff teaching a blended learning course?	• Devise specific paperwork, criteria and processes for observation of teaching • Observe online teaching; review marking and tutor support via e-mails and message board discussions
10. Can you recommend any useful sources of reading/information for blended delivery?	• The Move On Up E-tutor Guide: http://www.move-on.org.uk/downloadsFile/downloads1596/E-tutor_guide_Jan08.pdf • Wirral Metropolitan College used Becta's 'Quality principles for digital learning resources' as a planning tool: http://industry.becta.org.uk/display.cfm?resID=16839 • Ofsted's 'Virtual learning environments: an evaluation of their development in a sample of educational settings': www.ofsted.gov.uk reference no: 070251

3. Training staff in the development and delivery of e-learning

(See also Section 5 of this guide on professional development for workplace learning for further information.)

All the providers delivering effective flexible models gave careful consideration to the skills and knowledge needed by the staff working on their programmes. The challenge for many of them was creating a staff team with the experience and skills:

- To develop resources using e-technology
- To teach effectively using these blended learning resources.

Training staff to deliver e-technology resources effectively is more straightforward. Providers used a range of e-training for staff such as NIACE's 'e-guide training'.[3] Some were also involved in Learning and Skills Network's MoLeNET (Mobile learning network) or other e-development projects, so had experienced staff to draw upon. Wirral Metropolitan College found Sheffield College's LeTTOL (Learning to Teach On-Line) course valuable for training staff to develop their mainly online model.[4]

Blackburn College decided to send staff on a Lancaster University e-learning course. This led to their developing a radical new approach to their own workplace LLN courses. The Skills for Life Manager, Peter Shukie, said: 'We reflected on the experiences of learners … and attempted to match approaches to learning and resources and apply these to the different stages of the e-learning model'. They have produced a **VLE booklet** to describe how they intend to structure their blended workplace learning.

Sheffield College has an ambitious ILT strategy which includes a comprehensive tiered **training programme** for all their employees, both teaching and non-teaching staff. It is specific to the college's ILT Gateway, which they think vital, and customised for different curriculum teams, including LLN staff.

Sheffield College has also designed an **e-technology assessment tool**, based on the Becta model for working towards e-maturity. They assess staff's starting level in ILT skills, so that they can deliver the most appropriate continuous professional development (CPD).

Developing web-based blended resources requires additional skills and experience to delivering e-technology. The providers recommend identifying a team of staff that includes individuals with:

- Workplace experience
- A strong understanding of learners and learning within LLN
- Experience of developing web-based resources, preferably for Entry and Level 1/2 learners
- Design experience in developing web-based learning materials.

Finding staff with this range of expertise within your organisation may be difficult and investment will be needed over several years to train a team to produce a professional-looking blended resource. However, if you are interested, **Sheffield College** and **Wirral Metropolitan College** have produced guidance on the process they use to develop and

3 http://archive.niace.org.uk/Conferences/TrainingCourses/eguides.htm
4 www.sheffcol.ac.uk/index.cfm?ParentID=dd22687d-39f7-412e-9a00-c9bb33e12b45

design web-based resources. If this is a new venture, managers will certainly need training to understand the rationale behind online learning and to support them putting into place the required processes. Wirral Metropolitan College has recorded its team's detailed **action planning** when first working on developing blended resources and Sheffield College have shared the **tracking documents** they used on LeTTOL, their Learning to Teach On-line course.

4. Funding flexible learning

If you are planning on developing flexible delivery either through running drop-in workshops or devising a blended programme, both set-up and ongoing costs need to be carefully assessed.

As part of the Learning and Skills Improvement Service's Models of Flexible Delivery project a series of templates were devised to allow providers to make accurate estimates of the costs and benefits of offering flexible delivery.[5]

Using these, South Birmingham College have produced a **series of spreadsheets** detailing the costs associated with funding two different drop-in workshops for the Fire Service and at Pilkington.

Case study: Flexibility with funding streams

Northern College were working with a group of employees from Burberry and had successfully delivered a literacy course in their workplace. Unfortunately the workers were all made redundant following Burberry's decision to relocate their operations. Northern College consulted with the employees and it was agreed to offer them an IT progression learning programme, as this was seen to be of more immediate help in gaining new employment. The course changed its content, place of delivery and funding stream, but for the employee group, it was a seamless transition.

5. Evaluating and improving flexible delivery models

Just as the quality cycle allows for reflection and improvement in teaching and learning, models of delivery also need to be evaluated as part of an ongoing process.

The providers recommend that you reflect each time your flexible model is delivered:

- Did you meet your workplace learners' individual and collective needs (think about timings, pace of delivery, location and delivery methods)?
- Did you meet the employer's requirements (nurture an ongoing dialogue with the employer and union)?
- Were the proportions of time spent learning face-to-face and learning at a distance appropriate for this group and affordable (think about achievement data and income generated against costs occurred)?
- Do you need to change/develop any additional resources such as e-activities (collate learner and staff feedback and think about how far learning was active)?

5 These guidance templates can be downloaded from: http://sflip.excellencegateway.org.uk/resources/modelsofflexibledelivery.aspx

Providers use a variety of reflective approaches to inform their decision making. Northern College use structured learner and teacher focus groups to inform change. You can download the **learner focus group activities** their manager used with Burberry learners, and read the findings and changes made.

Cheshire County Council have weekly team meetings where models of delivery are debated along with curriculum issues. Three of their LLN staff were **interviewed** about this for this project.

Many providers have steering groups or partnership committees to steer development and improvement. They recommend that meetings are used to reflect on the appropriateness of delivery models, as well as to fine tune such things as rooms and timings.

HINTS AND TIPS FOR FLEXIBLE LEARNING

This section of the guide has aimed to give you some ideas about how LLN can be delivered flexibly to different groups of employees. It has recommended that you think about *how* you deliver learning, *when* learning can take place and *where* it should be delivered. The providers have given examples of how blended learning courses can be designed and developed, and provided models of flexibly-timed drop-in workshops.

The following list of dos and don'ts come from the experience of the providers we have worked with.

- Do use a whole organisation approach to ensure that the right managers and staff are working together as a multi-roled, multi-skilled team – traditional management hierarchies and departmental bunkers do not work for this type of delivery.
- Don't underestimate the time needed in meetings and for liaison with employers and unions: build on the support of Union Learning Representatives and other intermediaries wherever possible to help design appropriate programmes.
- Do make sure that you have the expertise to cost the various models and to assess your financial budget sheet overall so that you can balance out over time those models that are financial winners against those that are not.
- Do make sure your menu of models can include learning for the IT-phobic as well as for the IT-literate (staff as well as learners). Learners IT skills and access will be highly variable.
- If you are using e-learning, do give plenty of time for face-to-face induction to ensure learners are comfortable with this way of learning. The higher the level of need, the greater the support required.
- Don't leave it too long between contacting learners: have regular scheduled reviews and contact times.
- Don't underestimate the amount of time needed to develop and deliver online provision: plan realistically.

> **'I would say that to run flexible provision successfully you have to have management commitment, Unionlearn on your side and really good, flexible, multi-skilled staff. But I love this way of working. The more the better!'**
> Jill Amphlett, Skills for Life Coordinator, Southampton College

> **'Being a full-time working mum, blended and e-learning fitted in with my needs. Whenever you've got five minutes to yourself, you can just nip upstairs, put the computer on – the kids will leave me be … I enjoy doing the activities. It's not like a proper course really. I find the website really easy to use. I think some people don't realise how much there is to language. It's a fun way of doing it and it fits perfectly with my lifestyle … Without this blended course I probably wouldn't have done it.'**
> NHS employee on Cheshire County Council course

Useful links for further information

Developing Models of Flexible Delivery of Skills for Life provision:
http://sflip.excellencegateway.org.uk/resources/modelsofflexibledelivery.aspx

Staff Development Learning Centre (SDELC) for e-learning: www.sdelc.co.uk/Default.aspx

Move On E-Tutor Guide: A practical guide for Skills for Life practitioners and managers to explore ways of incorporating e-learning into their Skills for Life offer:
www.move-on.org.uk/goaw.php?scid=195&pid=186

Becta's 'Quality principles for digital learning resources as a planning tool':
http://partners.becta.org.uk/index.php?section=rh&catcode=_re_rc_ic_03&rid=13923

NIACE e-guides training programme:
http://archive.niace.org.uk/Conferences/TrainingCourses/eguides.htm

LSN Mobile Learning Network: www.molenet.org.uk/

Sheffield College LeTTOL:
www.sheffcol.ac.uk/index.cfm?ParentID=dd22687d-39f7-412e-9a00-c9bb33e12b45

The Association of Learning Providers e-learning website: http://alp.qia.oxi.net

LSN e-learning and technology CPD site: www.learningtechnologies.ac.uk

E-guides – training programme NIACE website: www.niace.org.uk/eguides

Materials for Embedded Learning: http://rwp.qia.oxi.net/embeddedlearning/

Innovate – e-networking site for work-based learning providers: http://jiscrscwbl.ning.com

Moodle: http://moodle.org

NIACE online learning activities: http://moodle.niace.org.uk/moodle

The Learning and Skills Improvement Service's World Class Skills Programme (WCS) provides a range of products and services that meet the needs of individual providers as they seek to improve the responsiveness and quality of their offer to employers. To access the WCS website go to: http://wcs.excellencegateway.org.uk

Section 4

Developing teaching and learning approaches and resources to reflect the employer context

This section of the guide is about developing teaching and learning approaches and resources for workplace learning of literacy, language and numeracy (LLN). It is in six parts, each describing a stage in the development process:

Introduction

The training providers who were part of the Effective Practice Project (EPP) developed resources that made LLN learning meaningful to the learner by relating them to their work. To achieve this, providers developed holistic practices, where LLN specialists, employers, vocational trainers and assessors worked together to develop embedded learning resources and approaches for workplace delivery. This form of collaborative working often required a change in culture and attitude by whole teams. This, in turn, made it essential to have strong and purposeful leadership.

All of the organisations that developed embedded LLN resources and approaches for the workplace followed step-by-step processes to achieve their final outcomes. The providers shared their processes as the project progressed and, despite having a range of different starting points, they took very similar development journeys.

It is hoped that taking you through each of the stages in the process will prove useful when developing your own workplace provision. Please also read Section 3 of this guide which describes how providers created online resources to support distance and blended learning.

The process for developing LLN teaching and learning resources and approaches for workplace learning

This shared process can be seen in the diagram below. The cycle reflects the fact that, although there is a starting point for the work, developing resources and approaches is ongoing.
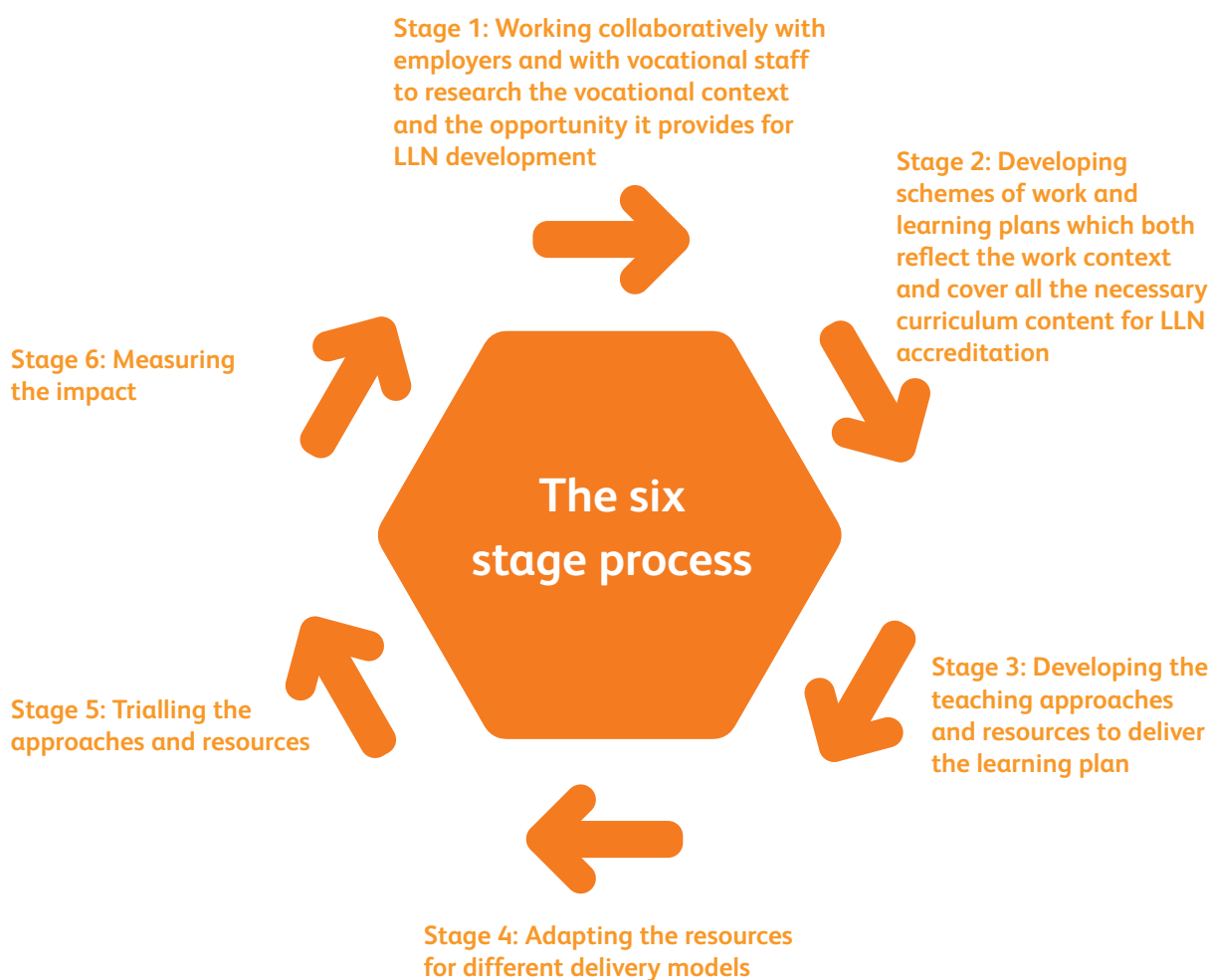
Stage 1: Working collaboratively with employers and with vocational staff to research the vocational context and the opportunity it provides for LLN development

Stage 2: Developing schemes of work and learning plans which both reflect the work context and cover all the necessary curriculum content for LLN accreditation

Stage 6: Measuring the impact

The six stage process

Stage 3: Developing the teaching approaches and resources to deliver the learning plan

Stage 5: Trialling the approaches and resources

Stage 4: Adapting the resources for different delivery models

Figure 1: The six-stage process

1. Working collaboratively with employers and specialist staff to research the vocational context

Employers and their employees need to see the relevance to their working lives of the LLN skills they are developing. For LLN staff to be able to embed the learning in this way, it is important to work collaboratively with a range of people with different skill sets. Providers on the programme found working together can be a mutually rewarding learning process. For example, NVQ assessors can learn about learners' LLN needs and Skills for Life tutors can learn how to work with employers and employees. This collaborative approach thus results in increased knowledge and understanding between all staff which will have a longer-lasting impact than developments carried out in isolation.

1.1 Who can be collaborators for vocational resource development?

Employers
Oldham College works with a local NHS Trust and the Skills for Life Manager attends the Educational Development Practitioners (EDP) meeting. This is a meeting of the Trust's clinical staff who also have responsibility for staff educational development. At one EDP meeting, the low pass rate for intravenous therapy training was identified and the college representative suggested that this might be due to the difficulties trainees might be having with the numeracy content of the training. This was taken up and investigated with trainees and resulted in the development of a specialist intravenous therapy numeracy course.

Other workplace specialists
Derby College liaised with Union Learning Representatives who worked for Derby Council and who provided approximately 40 texts relating to work that they could use as a basis for their resource development for the local council.

Newcastle City Council's Skills for Life service liaised with a number of different vocational specialists to identify vocational and NVQ topics that their teaching assistant learners might struggle with at work or during their training. These vocational specialists included school teachers, NVQ coordinators and assessors, and the local authority's primary school literacy and numeracy consultants. Together they identified many issues relating specifically to numeracy.

Vocational trainers
At Total People Ltd, the Skills for Life Manager worked closely with the Health and Social Care Manager after they identified that not enough learners from this sector were signing up to Train to Gain Skills for Life courses. The two managers co-facilitated team meetings so that their teams could collaboratively identify common workplace difficulties and develop LLN resources and approaches for health and social care learners.

Learners
Learners at GTG Services were asked what they liked and disliked about the numeracy course they attended in the centre. At the beginning of each session, they wrote their ideas about the topics they had studied the previous week on wallcharts. The development team then used these ideas to develop contextualised resources and approaches for their new numeracy and construction course.

These examples indicate some of the varieties of ways in which the providers worked with a range of collaborators to develop their learning resources. Derby College worked directly with employers to use documents and equipment ('realia') from vocational training programmes or the workplace when developing activities and resources. Union Learning Representatives and the personnel manager provided the development team at Derby College with a wide range of documents including incident reports, policy documents, union notices and leaflets about credit unions, all of which were used to make the learning have more relevance.

Oldham College obtained copies of the materials that were used to deliver the intravenous therapy training and a sample summative assessment. These materials formed the basis of the **numeracy calculations booklet** that the college produced to help trainees on the course to develop and practice the required numeracy skills.

'In order to ensure that the materials were really relevant, they were developed by one of our numeracy tutors who had a strong scientific background. It was felt that this was important to ensure that the materials had a suitable medical academic register.'

Neil Carruthers, Assistant Director
Skills for Life, Oldham College

An additional benefit of using materials embedded into support for workplace training was that it helped the college promote LLN courses to the NHS Trust and to the hospital employees.

However although involving employers in the process of producing resources can be very productive, it is a challenging one. Oldham College had some difficulty getting the employer to work with their vocational tutor to develop and review materials because of the employer representative's time constraints. In the future, the team at the college will build in more time for the development of resources so that they can ensure employer involvement.

They give the following advice for collaborating with employers in the development of resources:

- The timescale and lead time in the development of materials is likely to be far longer than you initially estimated. A lead time of 12 months is realistic.
- The project development team need to have more than one named contact from each organisation so that you are able to communicate and keep things moving when staff are not on compatible shift patterns if they are not desk based.
- If multiple contacts are identified, all need to be kept fully aware of any developments.
- The project development team needs to include both technical expertise from the employer and also Skills for Life specialist with a suitable vocational background or suitably transferable skills.
- It is important to build links with other employers in the same vocational area with whom the materials can also be used; this will avoid unnecessary duplication of materials.

2. Developing schemes of work and learning plans

Effective learning programmes need to be carefully planned so that learners can develop their skills over time, apply what they have learnt to their work and also be prepared for their assessments. There can sometimes be a difficult balance to be struck between the desire to link the work to the vocational context and the need to cover the full syllabus in a short amount of time. This can particularly be the case in numeracy, where few work contexts cover all the content of the Level 1 or 2 national numeracy tests. It is therefore vital that you develop a learning plan or scheme of work that ensures coverage of all the necessary LLN

topics. It also has to be able to take account of the very varied ways in which the programme might be delivered.

For example, Northern College developed a scheme of work for bakery learners which has no preferred order so that: 'learners can dive in at different points' (numeracy teacher, Northern College). Learners following this course have individual schedule sheets identifying their routes through their **numeracy programme**.

GTG Services identified a series of 10 numeracy 'hot topics' as the basis of their numeracy programme. Following diagnostic assessments, learners are guided to choose which of the 10 topics they need to work on. In some cases, learners choose to study topics even if they are shown to be strengths in their assessments. This 'pick and mix' approach ensures that learners have the freedom to attend only those sessions they need to or, if they wish, they can do all the sessions to improve their confidence.

> **'You only need to go to the classes that you need – you can choose to go to others as a refresher. I wish I hadn't guessed some of the initial assessment answers now because I think I needed most of the classes … I have gone to them all because they've been really helpful.'**
>
> Learner, GTG Services

> **'The pick and mix approach fits in well with learners' working patterns and allows us as assessors to tailor the learning programme to the individual.'**
>
> Plastering assessor, GTG Services

Total People Ltd's Skills for Life team began their planning process by writing a checklist of effective practice for developing workplace literacy and numeracy resources. They used this list, shown below, as a guide throughout their development work to make sure that they developed a range of resources and approaches to meet learners' different needs and learning styles.

Train to Gain Resource Development

Checklist for effective practice in developing resources:

- Start with a topic that learners struggle with at work.
- Active – hands-on, question-based, participatory, blended approaches.
- Relevant – in context and realistic for the job role.
- Learners able to analyse and correct their own errors.
- Must include rules, prompts and best practice examples.
- Covers all learning styles (available in paper and ICT as far as possible).
- Fun, engaging and readable.
- Ends by enabling learners to apply skills in their work.
- Resources to be clearly labelled by vocational subject.

> **'I like anything that is hands-on learning, I don't like being talked at – I'd rather be involved in something or complete an activity.'**
>
> Learner, Total People Ltd

Once you have outlined the main LLN learning aims and the overall learning plan, you need to begin to develop the sessions/activities that will be delivered.

Newcastle City Council's Skills for Life Service identified a process for developing LLN resources that begins with NVQ assessment criteria, so that learners can develop skills they need for both work and training and use the outcomes of their LLN work in their NVQ portfolio.

Figure 2: Newcastle City Council's process for developing LLN activities

1. Collaborate to choose the vocational assessment method/criteria – for example, this from the NVQ 2/3 in 'Supporting Teaching and Learning':
    Example of vocational criteria: Briefly describe your school's policy on reporting and recording accidents and medical emergencies.
2. Identify underpinning LLN required to successfully complete the assessment. In the above example, this includes: reading strategies such as skimming, selecting main points from different texts; note taking; summarising for a purpose; writing in complete sentences; using grammar and punctuation accurately; and proofreading.
3. Choose the workplace/training context (e.g. NVQ knowledge).
4. Develop an activity/resource such as the **learner tasks** that Newcastle City Council's Skills for Life Service developed using the above NVQ assessment criteria as a starting point.
5. Use the LLN work for NVQ/workplace tasks (the policy summary produced as a result of the above activities can be used as evidence for the NVQ portfolio).
6. Many further examples of this approach to embedding LLN learning into vocational qualifications can be found on the Embedded Learning portal at:
    http://rwp.qia.oxi.net/embeddedlearning/

3. Developing the teaching approaches and resources needed to deliver the plan

One of the messages from the EPP providers was to research and use what's known and already exists. There is a wealth of information and guidance available about effective methods of LLN teaching and learning.

For example:
- Thinking Through Mathematics: www.ncetm.org.uk/resources/3445
- NRDC Guides to Effective Practice in reading, writing, numeracy, ESOL and ICT: www.nrdc.org.uk/publications.asp
- Skills for Life Improvement Programme Films of Effective Practice: http://sflip.excellencegateway.org.uk/news/filmsofeffectivepractice.aspx

It is important to make sure you do not lose sight of this effective practice when developing LLN approaches and resources for workplace learning. For example, approaches and resources should be developed that wherever possible can support active and collaborative learning. They should also engage learners with a range of learning preferences and experiences.

GTG Services used ideas taken from the Thinking through Mathematics project as a basis for their numeracy course. At Northern College a Subject Learning Coach for mathematics also used approaches from the Thinking through Mathematics project as the basis for their new numeracy course for bakery workers. This has helped learners overcome many of their fears about mathematics.

> **'They come in with certain expectations: school maths, sums, textbooks, failure. You need to have a change of culture as soon as they start, so you hear them say after an hour, "I didn't know it was going to be like this. It's a laugh, isn't it?"'**
>
> Numeracy teacher, Northern College

Derby College developed a **self-study pack for learners** to use between the literacy sessions. The NRDC practitioner guide for developing reading skills identified that learners who spent more time studying between sessions made better progress.[1] As the NRDC guide points out, self-study is not about worksheets and Derby College has developed activities that require the learner to examine texts that they are coming into contact with in their everyday life and to discuss their ideas about the texts with other learners.

Once you have selected the teaching and learning methods to use in LLN delivery, you will need to identify and/or develop your resources. There are many effective materials freely available to support workplace LLN teaching and learning. See the useful links for further information at the end of this section for suggestions.

Resources and activities should be developed through close collaboration between LLN tutors and vocational experts.

1 Burton, M. (2007) Reading, London/Leicester: NRDC/NIACE. www.nrdc.org.uk/publications_details.asp?ID=113

'Skills for Life delivery in the workplace works best where the expertise of the vocational and Skills for Life staff are both utilised to develop an approach that reflects both contexts. Although this is initially time consuming, it is time well spent.'
Anna Ellis, Skills for Life Manager, Newcastle City Council Skills for Life Service

At Selby College, the project team decided to adapt resources on **healthcare legislation** used by NVQ assessors to deliver the NVQ Level 2 in Care. The development team, who worked within a strict **time frame**, consisted of two Skills for Life tutors who provided the expertise needed to redesign the materials to make them accessible to learners with LLN needs. The third member of the team was a care assessor who ensured that nothing of importance, from a vocational point of view, was removed from the materials.

Resources and activities linked to workplace tasks can be very effective in helping learners link LLN development to their job roles and gain confidence at work. However, given the nature of the non-contextualised final test, perhaps not all LLN resources and activities need to be contextualised to workplace topics. Runshaw College for example, ensured that resources for **developing spelling skills** included a mixture of both vocational words and everyday words that often cause difficulty.

3.1 Reflecting and transferring learning

When delivering LLN, it is important that the learners are able to recognise where LLN is used in work. This also supports the development of transferable skills. GTG Services highlighted the need for learners to be trained to reflect about their learning in this way and built in an activity at the beginning of each session where learners could recap on what they had learnt in the previous session and how they had used this in their work.

Newcastle City Council's Skills for Life Service also identified the importance of reflection and the team developed kinaesthetic **evaluation and reflection cards** that are used with learners at the end of each session. The cards actively involve the learner by asking them to reflect and evaluate the usefulness of activities. Learners decide if the activities have developed their skills and if they were relevant to their work or training. Learners also feedback on how activities should be changed when necessary.

4. Adapting resources for different delivery models

Teaching at the employer's premises or other venues distant from a main base means that teachers cannot rely on working in well-equipped teaching spaces with such luxuries as whiteboards, internet access and paper-based resources easily to hand. The realities of providing training in the employer's premises means that resources need to be highly portable. Even having a lockable cupboard for storage is a luxury in many places where learning is taking place.

Northern College was keen to develop resources to support their flexible delivery model. As this involved the tutor using public transport to get to a variety of different workplaces, they developed a portable 'kit box' which contains the essential resources required by the active learning approach they were using. This includes:

- National Diagnostic Assessment materials, chunked into topics
- Cards structured to specific learning goals
- Mini whiteboards
- Calculators
- Dice, counters, playing cards.

If there are two or more learners in the session, they collaborate using the resources as part of group activities. In this way, 'learners learn from each other and can talk about maths' (Numeracy teacher, Northern College). If there is only one learner, the teacher uses the resources to work one-to-one.

GTG Services also developed a set of portable resources, adapted from their classroom-based numeracy course. Learning at GTG Services takes place in a range of diverse settings, ranging from construction sites to learners' living rooms, so the teachers and assessors need everything on hand to enable them to deliver good quality active learning sessions. GTG Services works mostly with construction learners and so they used real toolboxes to transport their resources.

As well as the need to make learning materials portable, they also need to be adaptable to being delivered one-to-one or to groups of learners, and at a distance (see Section 3 on flexible ways of delivering learning). Runshaw College adapted resources so that they can be delivered either one-to-one, with a group of learners or via independent learning. The team developed delivery guidance notes so that teachers know how to use the resources in these different contexts.

Similarly, Total People Ltd identified the wide range of delivery approaches that a single resource can be used for. They have uploaded **card activities** onto their virtual learning environment (VLE) so that staff and learners can download and construct activities that work well in classroom contexts.

4.1 Using technology to support independent learning

The intravenous therapy numeracy course developed by Oldham College is a self-study pack that is available on the college website for learners to download. To further support learners who learn better through demonstrations and explanations, the college developed short podcasts (downloadable video and audio files) that demonstrate numeracy approaches.

Wirral Metropolitan College developed an online numeracy course from a paper-based course and, to make sure this process can be transferred across the organisation, they developed advice for **converting paper-based materials to online materials.** The resulting numeracy courses have been very popular with learners who can self-access at any time, and the advice about how to transfer materials in this way has contributed to Wirral's very strategic approach to developing resources for the workplace.

5. Trialling approaches and resources

5.1 What difference has it made?

Resources and approaches that are developed should be trialled with learners to make sure that they are effective and that they help learners meet their learning aims. Take feedback from a variety of stakeholders including NVQ assessors, employers, Union Learning Representatives as well as learners.

> **'Listen to all stakeholders: this includes employers, learners and teachers. Gather as much information and experience from as many different stakeholders as possible. Be prepared to listen to things you don't want to hear and make adjustments you don't want to make.'**
> James Danes, Learning Director, Skills for Life, Derby College

Most of the providers working on the EPP noted improvements in teaching and learning as a direct result of the newly developed approaches and resources. Providers captured their learners' views through feedback sessions. Feedback from Newcastle City Council employees studying Teaching Assistant NVQs and embedded literacy courses can be seen below:

> **'The resources were helpful because we use them in our work.'**

> **'This will help me with my confidence working with children.'**

> **'Reading and discussing the text brought the policy to the forefront of my mind and highlighted issues which I had taken for granted.'**

> **'The activity helped me with my NVQ and my reading, spelling and handwriting.'**

> **'It was great – we could bounce ideas off each other [while] expanding our knowledge.'**

5.2 Take action on feedback from learners

Selby College had feedback from both NVQ assessors and learners that the size of the original pack was intimidating for learners. Following this feedback they split the original resource they had developed on legislation for health and social care workers into smaller booklets so that learners could focus on individual pieces of legislation.

6. Measuring the impact

It is vital that you monitor the impact that new resources and approaches have on learners, your organisation and the employers that you work with. Providers on the project used different criteria and questionnaires with their learners, staff and employers to measure improvement. The following checklist is based on the impact measures they used. You may find it useful for monitoring the impact of the work you do. It is not necessary to find evidence for all of the indicators below but the more impact you can identify, the more convinced other people will become of the value of your work.

Impact measure	Strategy for measuring (national/local)	Baseline and/ or benchmark	Final data
Improved employee/learner satisfaction.			
Increase in the retention and achievement in a timely manner of Skills for Life qualifications.			
Progression to next level of or alternate Skills for Life qualifications e.g. completed literacy and progressing to numeracy.			
Feedback from NVQ assessors. Improved quality of work produced for NVQs reflected in, for example, internal and external verifier reports.			
Increase in the retention and achievement in a timely manner of vocational qualifications.			
Progression to other vocational qualifications.			
Observation of teaching and learning grades good or better.			
Learners' progression at work i.e. being given more responsibilities or being promoted.			
Improved employer satisfaction due to employees being able to carry out tasks at work competently and confidently.			
Improved self-assessment/inspection grades.			
Increase in the number of learners taking Skills for Life qualifications.			
Increase in the number of learners taking vocational qualifications.			

HINTS AND TIPS FOR DEVELOPING EFFECTIVE APPROACHES AND RESOURCES FOR WORKPLACE LEARNING

Stage 1: Working collaboratively
- Build a development team with both vocational/occupational and LLN expertise.
- Consult with a wide range of workplace and vocational specialists to identify priorities for LLN development.
- Use the development of resources as another opportunity to engage employers and vocational staff. Ask workplace specialists to help you find vocational realia as a basis for developing activities.
- Allow enough time as this is not a quick process.

Stage 2: Developing schemes of work and learning plans
- Develop a learning plan or scheme of work that includes all the necessary underpinning LLN topics the learner needs for assessment.
- Embed LLN learning wherever you can within the vocational learning plan.

Stage 3: Developing teaching approaches and resources
- Identify and build on known good practice in teaching and learning methods.
- Develop a variety of teaching methods and ensure learning can be active and fun.
- Review and use existing materials – there is a lot out there if you know where to look.
- Build in opportunities for learners to reflect and make links between LLN development and their work.

Stage 4: Adapting resources for different delivery models
- Make your resources portable so they can be taken to a range of workplace settings.
- Turn paper-based resources into online resources that learners can self-access.

Stage 5: Trialling approaches and resources
- Trial developed approaches/resources and be prepared to change things based on feedback from all stakeholders (including learners, assessors, teachers and employers).
- Feed learner and staff comments into future development.

Stage 6: Measuring impact
- Check if you have made a difference – measure improvement and impact using simple tolls and systems.

Remember that successful approaches and resources take time and money to develop, so it's important to share the processes and skills you develop in producing them. Other members of your organisation can then learn from and use this good practice to develop their own resources.

Useful links for further information

The Excellence Gateway has links to other websites to access resources:
www.excellencegateway.org.uk/page.aspx?o=skillsforliferesources

The Embedded Learning portal has interactive resources that learners can use
online and embedded Skills for Life resources for a wide range of vocational contexts:
http://rwp.qia.oxi.net/embeddedlearning/

The generic literacy, numeracy and ESOL resources can be adapted for
vocational contexts. The materials can be accessed at:
http://tlp.excellencegateway.org.uk/teachingandlearning/downloads/index_lsis.html

BBC Skillswise has resources for literacy and numeracy. There are
factsheets, worksheets and interactive games. There are also resources for
vocational areas such as Care and Hairdressing: http://www.bbc.co.uk/skillswise

Maths4Life – teaching resources are available to download from:
www.ncetm.org.uk/resources/8848

The interactive Skills for Life curriculum which suggests strategies for developing
resources: www.excellencegateway.org.uk/page.aspx?o=sflcurriculum

Move On has developed a range of literacy and numeracy resources from
Entry level 3 and above (you will need to register on the website to access these):

- Get On At Work Training Pack: www.move-on.org.uk/goaw.php?scid=186
- Get On At Work Employer Responsiveness – a provider solution:
  www.move-on.org.uk/downloadsFile/downloads2508/GOAW_provider_pack_induction.doc
- Numeracy resources: www.move-on.org.uk/numeracy_resources.asp
- Vocational resources: www.move-on.org.uk/goaw.php?scid=196&pid=186
- The Teacher Route (for teachers and those organising teaching and learning):
  www.move-on.org.uk/mu_teacher.asp

The Teaching and Learning Programme has developed a range of vocational teaching and
learning resources that promote active learning. Many of these materials can be used to
support the development of literacy and numeracy skills:
http://tlp.excellencegateway.org.uk/teachingandlearning/downloads/index_lsis.html

The Talent website has a range of resources that can be downloaded:
www.talent.ac.uk/content.asp?CategoryID=1831

The Learning and Skills Improvement Service's World Class Skills Programme (WCS) provides
a range of products and services that meet the needs of individual providers as they seek to
improve the responsiveness and quality of their offer to employers. To access the WCS website
go to: http://wcs.excellencegateway.org.uk

Section 5

Professional development for workplace learning

This section of the guide shares providers' findings about six key aspects of professional development:

Introduction

The providers in the Effective Practice Project (EPP) who were developing their teacher training and professional development provision recognised that there are many and various needs for training for those involved with supporting or delivering learning in the workplace.

A wide range of professional courses exist, all with different purposes. These include courses to:

- Prepare would-be teachers or assessors by improving their literacy, language and numeracy (LLN) skills
- Develop LLN awareness in assessors or vocational teachers
- Provide strategies for assessors or vocational teachers providing LLN support
- Guide vocational and LLN teachers to embed LLN
- Provide full qualifications for LLN specialists who are teaching in the workplace.

The courses may be accredited, and may lead to full qualification and Qualified Teacher Learning and Skills Status (QTLS), and may be subject specific (for those wishing to teach literacy, numeracy or English for speakers of other languages (ESOL)) or generic. They range from courses at Level 2 to those at Level 7 (postgraduate). We describe them in this section, but also look at other sections of the guide which describe professional development activities for specific purposes (assessment in Section 2, distance teaching and learning in Section 3).

1. The qualifications regulations

According to The Further Education Teachers' Qualifications (England) Regulations, 2007.[1] all new teachers employed in a full teaching role on or after 1 September 2001 are required to hold or be working towards 'appropriate teaching qualifications' and have QTLS. Appropriate teaching qualifications consist of a Diploma in Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector (DTLLS) and, for literacy, numeracy and ESOL teachers, also include a subject-specific qualification which may have been integrated into the DTLLS or taken in addition to it.

The first step on the road to full qualification is the Preparing to Teach in the Lifelong Learning Sector (PTLLS) award, and the regulations also say that no one should teach in the sector unless they obtain this award in their first year of teaching.

However in workplace training, the roles of an NVQ assessor and of a teacher are often blurred, with assessors sometimes 'supporting' and sometimes 'teaching' in addition to assessing, and so it is not always clear what the best training and qualifications are for them.

Lifelong Learning UK (LLUK) is the sector skills council responsible for standards and qualifications in the lifelong learning sector. As LLUK identifies:

> **'The role of the assessor varies: if all they do is assess, then the reforms and regulations don't apply to them. However, if your assessors carry out any teaching then the reforms apply. Assessors who teach should therefore be considered 'teachers' and the reforms apply to them in the same way.'[2]**

It is important to look carefully at the daily responsibilities of your assessors. Do they assess only, or assess and train in the vocational area, or assess and train in the vocational area and also teach literacy, numeracy or ESOL? The Skills for Life Support for World Class Skills project has produced an information sheet for providers to think through the roles and responsibilities of their assessors: 'Professional Development for Assessors: supporting/developing learners' literacy, numeracy or ESOL skills'.[3] This can help you to identify what role is being asked of assessors and therefore what training or qualification they are required to have. There is also a guide for providers on planning for staff development that will ensure staff are qualified to teach and support literacy, numeracy and ESOL available on the same website.[4]

As a result of the teaching responsibilities identified in a lot of assessor roles, many workplace learning providers are requiring all their staff to take the PTLLS. However, providers need to be clear that PTLLS is part of a teaching qualification and forms only the first step for those in the full teaching and associate teaching roles. It does not in itself provide a full teaching qualification. They should also note that, according to LLUK:

> **'All teachers of literacy, numeracy and ESOL are deemed to be undertaking a full teaching role.'[5]**

1 www.opsi.gov.uk/si/si2007/uksi_20072264_en_1
2 www.lluk.org/documents/fewr_guidance_for_wbl_providers_220408.pdf
3 Available from http://sflip.excellencegateway.org.uk/workforcedevelopment/pdp.aspx
4 http://sflip.excellencegateway.org.uk/PDF/Professional_Development_Planning_for_Building_Staff_Teams.pdf
5 www.lluk.org/3054.htm

In many organisations, assessors play a role in the initial assessment process for LLN, including being responsible for administering it and in some cases for interpreting it. The Learning and Skills Council (LSC) has made clear the knowledge and skills expected of those doing assessment and these are identified in Section 2 of this guide which should be read in conjunction with this section.

2. Providing acurate and targeted information

Given the current complexities in workplace training about who needs to be trained and what training is most appropriate, good information and guidance is critical. There are a number of different audiences for this information.

Figure 1: Who needs information about teacher education qualifications?

2.1 Tailoring the information you provide

The information you provide needs to be tailored to the requirements of the different groups of people who need it and to the realities and options available in the local area. For example, making the business case to employers of trainers will be different to explaining to someone interested in becoming a teacher how they go about it. So, if you are producing leaflets or web pages, consider producing a different version for each of the different target groups you want to reach, as it is unlikely that you can speak to all the different groups in one communication.

What you produce needs to take account of what they are likely to want to know, what they need to know and what they already know. It should deal with likely areas of misinformation and provide clarity in relation to the current regulations in the sector. It is likely to be most effective if it is embedded in a process of information, advice and guidance (IAG) which enables people and organisations to seek further clarity, discuss and weigh up options and opportunities and move towards decisions.

Case study: North East Centres for Excellence in Teacher Training

Providers in the North East of England had identified a shortage of qualified numeracy teachers trained in workplace delivery. As part of a regional strategy to address this, three Centres for Excellence in Teacher Training (CETTs) in the North East (Success North CETT, the CETT for Inclusive Learning and SUNCETT) came together to build capacity in numeracy teaching in workplace learning.

First, they did research, funded by a Regional Numeracy Development Grant from the Skills for Life Improvement Programme, to investigate what would encourage more people to become qualified in teaching numeracy to adults. Then as part of the EPP, and in order to increase the number of teachers employed by workplace learning providers enrolling on numeracy teacher education programmes, they produced leaflets for three different audiences:

- For training provider managers to promote the business case for employing numeracy trainers on their staff
- For existing staff, to overcome misunderstandings around the levels of numeracy required to start the course
- For those currently not involved who might be interested in training to teach adults numeracy.

Input was also provided from the North East Teacher Educator Network (NETEN). In their leaflets they included information about courses that provided routes to more formal qualifications such as Step Up to Level 3 (a personal numeracy skills programme) being run in the North East region.

As a first stage, they produced a draft set of leaflets which they then sent out to organisations, including workplace learning providers, for feedback before producing the final versions. The **leaflets** are available electronically on the North East Training and Development section of www.skillsforlifenetwork.com and in hard copy are used as part of regional IAG processes.

Case Study: West Yorkshire Learning Partners

West Yorkshire Learning Providers (WYLP) is a large network of learning providers in Yorkshire and the Humber who offer work-based learning and support the delivery of Train to Gain and apprenticeships.

The consortium has very few qualified LLN tutors and therefore most demand for Skills for Life training has been referred elsewhere or not addressed appropriately. In the interests of growing capacity to teach LLN, WYLP decided to produce two booklets to:

- Help promote understanding and raise awareness of Skills for Life and
- Give information on how to become qualified to teach LLN.

They drew on the considerable information that already exists on these subjects, but made it a more manageable size and customised it for a workplace learning audience. The booklets will be available to download from their website along with other information on resources and marketing documents at: www.wylp.org.uk

The following guidelines draw on the experiences of the organisations in the case studies above.

2.2 Guidelines for producing good information about training for workplace staff

Don't underestimate the importance of good design for conveying messages
- Decide how you will convey the messages: written text? images? leaflet? video? web page?
- Consider how your images and written text can work together to convey messages.
- Work closely with your designer.

Design the written text, images, video, etc.
- Gather information from trusted sources, for example: www.lluk.org
- Allow enough time to find suitable and relevant images and gain the necessary permissions to use them (from the photographer, people in the images and the owner of the photograph). The Train to Gain marketing website has an image bank you can use in marketing.[6]
- Avoid being too wordy – will busy people read all of it?
- Check readability: NIACE have produced 'readability' resources.[7]
- Consider how you can build in a facility to update, adapt and make revisions so it remains current.
- Get your content critically reviewed, for example by LLUK's Skills for Life experts – the qualifications framework is complex and it is easy to make mistakes.

Work in conjunction with the target audience to ensure fitness for purpose
- Research the messages in conjunction with the target audience.
- Test out the messages (text and visuals) with the target audience by building in a trial period; obtain feedback and revise.
- Include information about personal LLN courses that will enable people to upgrade their skills and become ready to apply for a teacher education course, for example, Level 3

6 www.traintogain.gov.uk/toolsandresources/Marketing_Information/
7 http://shop.niace.org.uk/readability.html

courses in personal numeracy skills.
- Consider ways of monitoring use and effectiveness.
- You can monitor who has downloaded webpages and leaflets if users have to register to access the website.
- Invite feedback from users about the accuracy and effectiveness of your information.

3. Developing the right course for the right people

As we said in the introduction, there are many different requirements for professional development within work-based learning. It is crucial to be clear about your target group, why they want training and what kind of training they need. Then you can choose the right course or customise an existing course to meet those needs. Don't be afraid of adapting the course to meet the needs and context of your target group, though you obviously have to work within the boundaries of the accreditation and National Occupational Standards, as Oxford and Cherwell College did.

> **'The scheme of work for the generic PTLLS course was remodelled to suit the needs of the NVQ assessors. This meant refocusing the entire course towards the support delivery for literacy and numeracy teaching, and building in more delivery of practical teaching skills via loop input[8] and by including more hands-on practical sessions: "mini micro teaches".'**
> Programme Manager, Adult Essential Skills and Oxford Women's Training
> Oxford and Cherwell Valley College

As part of the EPP, organisations ran several different kinds of courses, and these are described below.

3.1 Awareness raising courses

You may wish to raise the awareness of NVQ assessors to the LLN needs of their learners. For example, York College ran a course at Level 2 aimed at assessors so that they can be more conscious of the LLN needs of their learners. The Skills for Life Workplace Development Tutor reported that:

> **'The tutors and assessors on this course fully appreciate that they do not have the full range of skills or necessary qualifications required to deliver LLN but that they can help provide very vital LLN signposting in the workplace.'**

She felt that an informal introductory session to their course made the assessors feel valued and made them 'course ready'.

Alternatively, you might want to work with vocational teachers to raise their awareness of LLN. Some colleges in the EPP ran generic PTLLS courses with additional LLN content, aimed at raising the awareness of vocational assessors and unqualified vocational teachers to LLN issues in workplace learning. From these courses, some of the teachers expressed an interest in going on to specialise in one of the LLN subjects, while some assessors decided to train as a teacher and take on a full teaching role.

8 Loop input describes the process where the teacher educator models the methodology the trainees are required to use.
See www.developingteachers.com/tips/pasttips32.htm

Case study: Uxbridge College

Uxbridge College ran a customised PTLLS course for NVQ assessors, teachers and trainers focusing on the English language needs of the learners. The course embedded ESOL awareness and included ESOL content and microteaching (short teaching sessions given to their peers) which catered to ESOL learners' needs. The trainees filled in a pre- and post-course questionnaire, which demonstrated the increase in trainees' level of awareness as a result of the course.
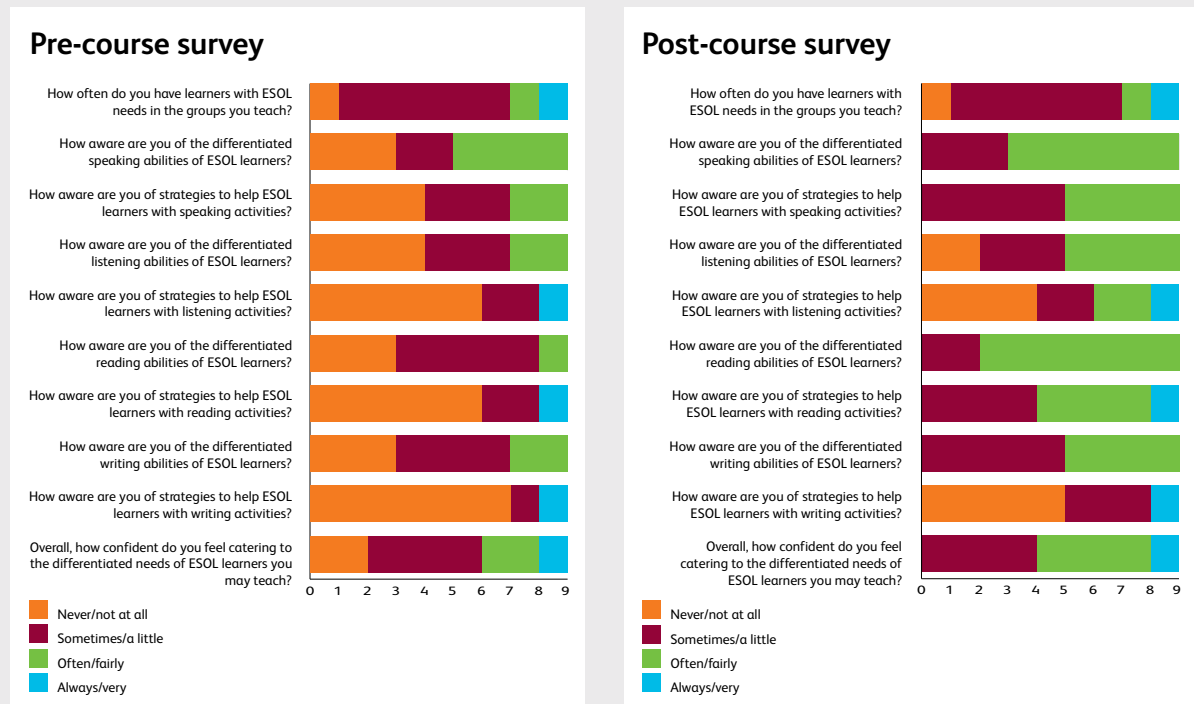

Figure 2: Course questionnaire analyses

A particularly successful feature of this course was the opportunity that participants had to carry out structured observations of two ESOL lessons and discuss their findings. See the extract from an Uxbridge College **trainee's learning journal** showing what he had learnt from his observation.

> 'I found the observations of ESOL lessons both enjoyable and useful. I can see how using my pitch, tone of voice, choosing appropriate vocabulary and using gestures can help ESOL learners understand me more easily.'

> 'One of the biggest barriers to learning (for students with ESOL needs) … can be a lower level of literacy. I can help students in this position by producing extra handouts with a variety of exercises such as labelling diagrams, matching words to definitions and gap-filling to check their learning and help them achieve.'

3.2 Teacher education for LLN specialists delivering learning in the workplace

Alternatively, you may wish to run specific teacher education courses for LLN teachers, but customised to workplace learning and teaching. You can do this in a number of ways:

- Pay attention to specific methodologies that are more appropriate for workplace learning, for example individual and very small group work.
- Concentrate on embedding the LLN in workplace tasks and use work-related resources.
- Consider flexible models of delivery, as workplace teachers often find it difficult to get release for face-to-face teacher education courses.

Case study: University of Wolverhampton – a flexible response

The University of Wolverhampton has several teacher education courses for the post-compulsory education sector including the three Skills for Life areas of literacy, numeracy and ESOL.

The post-compulsory education team has been considering the needs of teachers from training providers for some while, so the team decided to look at developing a specific, blended version of their Cert. Ed. DTLLS. This would give access to those whose work commitments would not allow regular weekly attendance at a face-to-face course. It would also mirror good practice in blended delivery for their future learners (see Section 3 of this guide).

They produced a targeted advertisement specifically for Train to Gain providers and teachers, which was distributed throughout the Midlands. This offered a range of options including an introductory Level 2 Skills for Life awareness raising course, a bridging module for numeracy skills and, the main feature, a DTLLS (Cert. Ed.) for literacy and numeracy which was designed for a blended delivery model (i.e. with a significant amount of online distance learning).

The following issues and ideas informed the development of a more blended Cert. Ed. DTLLS:

- A structured template for a webfolio, which could be personalised and which 'mirrored' the paper portfolio version of the course.
- The opportunity for the trainee to have ongoing online dialogue with the tutor/assessor and peers.
- 24/7 anytime/anywhere accessibility ensuring that students have more control and space for development at *their own* time and pace – ideal for work-based learning.
- Mentoring for key university staff in the move to e-mentoring/e-moderating.

The teacher educator explained:

> **'There is room within the model proposed for individual negotiation and development – one size does not fit all and it would be naive to engage with any technology innovation that ignored individual needs – this is an online learning space/classroom that requires active engagement on both sides. Past experience has taught us that staff and students need gentle encouragement and specific guidelines; it is vital to consider the netiquette of the online space paralleling the ground rules of a face-to-face classroom.'**

3.3 Preparation for teaching courses

Some potential trainee teachers may not have the required level of numeracy or English skills to meet the entry requirements for subject-specific courses.[9] Where you find this is the case, you may need to run Level 3 numeracy or English courses before or alongside teacher education courses. Some teacher education providers are using blended models of support for developing trainees' existing LLN skills (as at The University of Wolverhampton – see case study above). For assessors and non-specialist teachers who may need to develop their English and mathematics to Level 2, the Move On website has practice tests and information about 'Move On with your Learners' courses.[10]

3.4 Courses for practitioners providing LLN support

The national occupational standards for learning supporters are still in development. These will define the roles of those who support learning and will hopefully lead to qualifications for learning supporters.[11]

4. Effective teacher education methodologies

Providers on the EPP piloted a variety of methodologies with workplace assessors and teachers on their professional development courses. The following suggestions come from the ideas that worked for them.

4.1 Incorporate study skills and personal LLN development into your courses

Following an initial assessment of trainees' personal LLN skills, you will want to build relevant study skills and/or personal LLN development into your course. For example, Oxford and Cherwell Valley College made explicit links between each part of the course and the assignments that trainees had to produce. Trainees were encouraged to make use of assignment writing slots that were timetabled into the course. Sessions on relevant study skills and personal LLN work to support their assignment work were included in the course content, for example, finding what you are looking for in a book, using references and quoting. Raising awareness of LLN in this way can encourage trainees to further develop their personal LLN skills, as York College and Oxford and Cherwell Valley College both discovered.

9 http://www.lluk.org/documents/new_entry_guidance.pdf
10 www.move-on.org.uk
11 www.lluk.org/3042.htm

HINTS AND TIPS ON RUNNING A PTLLS COURSE FOR ASSESSORS

- Do build in study skills to make the theory assignment manageable.
- Do build in as much support as possible for assessors.
- Do be aware that some assessors may have had very little formal academic training.
- Do book a computer room for the end of the day and encourage them to write their assignments as they go along.
- Do find out about and acknowledge the value of the work that they do as assessors.
- Do focus on their role as assessors and link it to the teaching role as much as possible.
- Do include as many practical sessions as possible for assessors so they can practise classroom skills.
- Do let them see the National LLN Curricula.[12]
- Do include lots of time for supporting them with session planning.
- Don't make the course too theoretical or academic.
- Don't patronise them and do treat their skills with respect.

From Oxford and Cherwell College

4.2 Model the methodologies that you expect trainees to use with their own learners

An explicit feature of the PTLLS course at Oxford and Cherwell College was the modelling and discussion of teaching methodology. In Uxbridge College, trainees observed ESOL classes and were directed to features of pedagogy that support learners who are learning an additional language. These features were then discussed and tried out in the trainees' own microteaching sessions.

> **'It made me look at how I do it … I haven't made it as interesting as I could have done … it made me think about how I deliver and how to start … I just plough in usually' [talking about work with learners].**

> **'What I've got is that not everybody can be taught by just giving information … it's been brilliant for this … lots of ideas for activities.'**

4.3 Adapt course content and resources to reflect a workplace context

Find out about the work-based learning contexts of your trainees and ensure that the course content and the analysis of learner needs are relevant to their work contexts. If, as a teacher educator, you feel you have limited experience of work-based learning, try to liaise with colleagues who have more experience during at least the preparation stage of the course.

4.4 Integrate theory and practice

An important element of teacher education is the integration of theory and practice. This involves recognising, right from the start, the underpinning theory of teaching and learning practices, and using this type of awareness and knowledge to evaluate and select between practices.

12 www.excellencegateway.org.uk/sflcurriculum

Incorporate mini microteaching slots from the beginning of a PTLLS course

Case study: Oxford and Cherwell Valley College

Oxford and Cherwell Valley College supplemented their PTLLS microteaching assignment with short (mini) microteaching and tutor feedback early in the course, to support the integration of theory and practice.

For example, one of these short micros was on giving an interactive presentation. The teacher trainer gave an interactive presentation on issues of equality and diversity and ways to promote inclusion. This provided both course content and a model of an interactive presentation. The trainees then identified and discussed the features of an interactive presentation and used a wireless keyboard to input them so they could be seen on the screen, with each person inputting one feature. This also provided trainees with an idea for integrating technology in their work with learners. Trainees then discussed when they might use an interactive presentation in their work. Working in pairs, trainees prepared a presentation on a piece of legislation/code of practice relevant to their area of work, such as Data Protection, Health and Safety etc. Each pair gave their interactive presentation to the group. The trainer then elicited self-evaluations from each pair and peer evaluation from the rest of the group, and fed in and drew out key points.

In addition the teacher educator said that trainees were given the opportunity to discuss and improve their idea for their assessed microteaching with support. The educator described how one participant who was aiming to avoid 'just telling', had in fact designed an activity which was mainly 'telling', but when, in discussion with the teacher educator, she realised this, she wanted to change it. Trainees reported that they liked the practical mini microteaching slots because they felt they informed their own practice.

> **'I'm getting ideas … before I tried to make things easy because I wanted people to succeed, whereas now I think I'm giving them too much and can create passive learning, maybe I'm not drawing them out enough so they can do more. I felt bad about this realisation at first, was I underestimating them?'**
>
> Trainee on the course

Integrate thinking skills into your programmes
New College Nottingham developed and piloted a series of **booklets** with ideas of how to develop learners' thinking skills and trained staff to use them with learners.

> **'Learners were achieving their qualifications but this didn't necessarily equate to the amount of thinking/learning that the learners were engaged in. The staff development team identified the need for personal learning and thinking skills to be explicit at all levels of teacher/assessor training. This also fitted in with concern that Assess-Train-Assess had become Assess-Assess-Assess.'**
>
> Kath West, Skills for Life Enterprise Manager, New College Nottingham

Raise awareness through observations

Observations of literacy, numeracy and ESOL classes and videos of LLN teaching and learning can help to raise awareness. The Skills for Life Improvement Programme has made three films of effective practice: one on embedded numeracy, one on literacy and one on ESOL, which can be used for observation and to raise awareness of LLN issues.[13]

ActionAid's Reflect approach

Try out some of the tools from ActionAid's Reflect approach.[14, 15] Reflect is an approach to adult literacy and social change that includes many very useful ideas and tools for making learning active.

4.5 Use blended learning and flexible attendance models to suit busy workplace teachers

Case study: University of Wolverhampton – developing blended learning

The University of Wolverhampton developed blended learning materials for trainees working in work-based learning within the institution's existing virtual learning environment (VLE) using an e-portfolio system called PebblePad.[16]

They created two **learner webfolios**: one for trainees' assessed work and one for course content, both of which take account of work-based learning. They use relevant links with the aim of providing input and promoting engagement with the subject matter in a way that is relevant to people working in work-based learning. They plan to use a blog (an electronic journal which can be accessed by others and can be used interactively) as a key element of interactivity and involvement from the trainees and teacher educators. The teacher educator who led this development emphasised the importance of recognising how e-processes, for example the webfolio, provide teaching and learning possibilities, which should be explored and evaluated. For example, the interactive blog provides possibilities for dialogue as part of reflection and development of teaching and learning. They also noted that because the trainees have different ways of using the blog, the possibilities are customised by and with the individual.

13 http://sflip.excellencegateway.org.uk/news/filmsofeffectivepractice.aspx

14 www.reflect-action.org/

15 www.lsbu.ac.uk/lluplus/docs/Reports/ReflectforESOL.pdf (an evaluation of the Reflect ESOL pilot project for working with ESOL learners).

16 www.pebblepad.co.uk

DOS AND DON'TS FOR BLENDED LEARNING IN TEACHER TRAINING

Do
- Have a staff development approach that supports team teaching and mentoring so that new practices and pedagogies are shared.
- Provide opportunities for students and staff to practise the technology skills.
- Be aware that some users will require extra support – but it's worth it.
- Have a sounding board for ideas/development – e.g. group blog.
- Readjust when things do not go as planned.
- Try to use material produced as widely as possible.
- Celebrate the successes – students talk about feeling very proud of the portfolios they have created and use it as evidence of reflection for their Professional Formation.[17]

Don't think that
- The technology is the solution.
- Blending saves time – thoughtful fusion must start from curriculum redesign.
- You can leave things until the last minute.
- Students can work in isolation for too long.
- All students and staff will have the skills, attributes and inclination to make the most of this innovative negotiated approach.

5. Links between LLN and vocational subjects

In order for NVQ assessors and vocational trainers to be able to effectively support LLN within their vocational area, they need to have good links with a fully-qualified specialist in language, literacy or numeracy and clear lines of demarcation. Two providers found effective ways of doing this. After professional development courses, both South Leicestershire and York Colleges followed up the courses with further support in the shape of networks or resources.

5.1 Further professional support: networks of teachers and assessors

At the request of participants on their Assessor Awareness course, South Leicestershire College formed a network made up of NVQ assessors, functional skills leaders (vocational specialists who have trained to at least Level 3 in LLN), specific learning difficulties specialists (e.g. dyslexia, Asperger's syndrome) and literacy, language or numeracy specialist tutors. The college recommends that the LLN specialist tutors are the same tutors who deliver the additional LLN sessions on their PTLLS courses. Further to this the assessors requested that an LLN specialist should attend all assessor team meetings to offer support and guidance. The college Curriculum Manager for Foundation Studies believes that:

> **'It is vital that the assessing team have a good support network and resources to best serve the learners.'**

17 www.itslifejimbutnotasweknowit.org.uk/files/IfL-professional-formation-overview.pdf

5.2 Have a key link person

York College found that one critical success factor was to identify a key link person to liaise between the literacy, numeracy or ESOL specialist and the vocational department/specific workplace. This link person proved crucial in generating interest within her department/workplace and ensuring the participants were ready for the course they took. An experienced workplace provider of LLN, the Skills for Life Workplace Development Tutor, reported that:

'Finding key people to work within any workplace is paramount; maintaining that professional relationship is just as important. Links often help stem problems before they arise, allow for free flow of communication and ideas, promote a general "feel good" atmosphere and develop trust – immensely important when problems do arise.'

6. Moving on

6.1 Progression for individuals

Professional development can have unexpected impact and unanticipated consequences. Several assessors who took courses developed as part of the EPP found they wanted to progress to teaching qualifications even when that was not the original intention of the course. Equally, vocational teachers who took PTLLS courses which included LLN awareness expressed an interest in following an LLN subject-specialist route to full qualification and becoming literacy, ESOL or numeracy teachers.

6.2 Development process for organisations

We found a pattern in the development of new models: those organisations who were trying out new ways of working had started with a small trial and were intending to extend the model more widely.

'The model produced from this project will be carried forward, almost in its entirety, and used across the college with other vocational departments.'
York College

'The manager of teacher training intends to see how the Personal Learning and Thinking Skills booklets can be incorporated into each course. The intention is to use them widely.'
New College Nottingham

The Skills for Life Support Programme (previously the Skills for Life Improvement Programme or SfLIP) offers considerable training and support to organisations for professional development planning. For the latest information on continuous professional development (CPD) available, see the SfLIP website and for support with professional development see Skills for Life Professional Development Planning – Resources to support the work of Skills for Life professional development planners at: http://sflip.excellencegateway.org.uk/pdp.aspx.

HINTS AND TIPS FOR RUNNING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT COURSES FOR WORKPLACE TEACHERS

Before
- Do provide targeted and accurate information embedded into an IAG process.
- Where the staff come from one workplace or vocational department, identify a link person to discuss trainees' needs and generate interest in the course.
- Provide an awareness raising session on LLN prior to the course to create 'course readiness'.
- Ask trainees to complete a questionnaire to capture their awareness of LLN before they start the course.

During
- Incorporate study skills/personal LLN development into the course as relevant.
- Model the methodologies you expect trainees to use with their own learners.
- Adapt the course content and resources to reflect a workplace context.
- Integrate theory and practice.
- Incorporate mini microteaching slots from the beginning of a PTLLS course, before trainees do the assessed microteaching.
- Incorporate thinking skills into your programmes.
- Provide opportunities for trainees to observe LLN teaching.
- Use blended learning and flexible attendance models as appropriate.

After
- Ask trainees to complete another questionnaire to capture their awareness of LLN after their course and discuss with trainees how their awareness has changed.
- Build networks of assessors, vocational workplace teachers and LLN specialists.
- Provide access to LLN teaching and learning resources.
- Support trainees in relation to progression routes, for example, to DTLLS courses, personal LLN development.

Useful links for further information

For information on national requirements and updates on research and projects, see the LLUK National Reference Point – Skills for Life: www.lluk.org/skills-for-life.htm or phone the LLUK helpline: 020 7936 5798.

Qualifications regulations
Guidance for work-based learning providers: reforms to the training and qualifications of teachers, tutors, trainers and instructors:
www.lluk.org/documents/fewr_guidance_for_wbl_providers_220408.pdf

Guide to the Further Education Teachers' Qualifications (England) Regulations 2007:
www.dius.gov.uk/~/media/publications/G/guide_to_FE_teachers_regs_2264 gives useful clarification of the regulations.

LLUK is carrying out research and development into the roles and responsibilities of learning support practitioners. For more information see: www.lluk.org/3042.htm

Information and guidance
Train to Gain website: www.traintogain.gov.uk/Helping_Your_Business
Skills for Life South West website pages on Train to Gain:
www.sfl-sw.org.uk/content.php?pageid=49

Marketing resources
Learning and Skills Council Campaign Resources Site: http://87.106.8.72/LSC/

For further reading on visual images and design issue see Strenglin, M. and Iedema, R. (2001) 'How to analyse visual images: a guide for TESOL teachers'. In A. Burns and C. Coffin, *Analysing English in a Global Context*. Milton Keynes: Open University Press.

Skills for Life Professional Development Planning
Extensive resources to support the work of Skills for Life professional development planners, including specifically for Train to Gain: http://sflip.excellencegateway.org.uk/pdp.aspx

Professional Development Planning for Building Staff Teams: A guide for providers on planning for staff development that will ensure staff are qualified to teach and support literacy, numeracy and ESOL:
http://sflip.excellencegateway.org.uk/PDF/Professional_Development_Planning_for_Building_Staff_Teams.pdf

Talent
The Talent website offers impartial advice on Initial Teacher Training (ITT) and CPD for new and existing teachers and their employers, working in a range of teaching and learning contexts within the lifelong learning sector: www.talent.ac.uk

The Learning and Skills Improvement Service's World Class Skills Programme (WCS) provides a range of products and services that meet the needs of individual providers as they seek to improve the responsiveness and quality of their offer to employers:
http://wcs.excellencegateway.org.uk