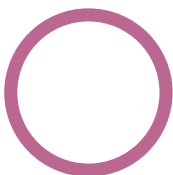




Work-based learning



Work-based learning

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About this booklet

If you work in a work-based learning provider this booklet is for you. It will help you look at ways to improve outcomes and success rates for your learners. It examines how improvements can be achieved by tackling skills gaps in English and maths across the whole provision. This 'whole organisation approach' involves all staff across the entire organisation and covers learners and teachers engaged in Skills for Life¹ programmes, Key Skills, and vocational learning. It is drawn from the findings of a three-year project that involved 35 pathfinder organisations across England. The project was initiated by the Department for Education and Skills and more recently managed by the Quality Improvement Agency (QIA).

The work-based learning providers in the project included:

- Rathbone Training
- Work Solutions.

The booklet has been pulled together to share pathfinder practice and the lessons learnt. An online resource, *Making it Work*, provides additional support to help you and your organisation develop a whole organisation approach to Skills for Life.

This booklet and the online resource set out to answer the following questions:

- **What do we mean by a whole organisational approach?**
Definitions and explanations related to the relevant learning context.
- **Why do it?**
The rationale and benefits of a whole organisation approach.
- **How do we make it happen?**
The ingredients of an effective whole organisation approach to Skills for Life.

This booklet, *Making the Case*, focuses on the work-based learning context and is one of a series of seven booklets that explore why a whole organisation approach to Skills for Life is important for different learning settings:

- work-based learning providers
- further education colleges
- voluntary and community organisations
- prisons and probation
- large employers
- schools
- other learning contexts.

This booklet makes the case for developing a whole organisation approach to Skills for Life within the work-based learning setting and explores the key elements and actions for your sector.

Making it Work is a web-based resource that focuses on how to implement a whole organisation approach. It contains links to follow-up materials that you can take, use and adapt to embed a whole organisation approach in your work.

1 Skills for Life is the government's strategy for improving adults' skills in literacy, language and numeracy (DfES, 2001, 2003). A whole organisation approach to delivering Skills for Life involves taking account of literacy, language and numeracy needs throughout an organisation. This concept is defined further on page 8.

What people say about a whole organisation approach

The following ‘snippets’ reflect the views of providers who were able to work to improve their strategies and approaches.

Higher achievement

- ‘Why did we get involved? A desire to drive up learner achievement.’
- In branches where the whole organisation approach has been implemented there is clear evidence from learners that Skills for Life outcomes are improving. Achievement rates soared – 200 learners achieved Skills for Life qualifications in 2003/4, but by 2005/6 this had increased to 1536!

Rathbone

Increased learner numbers

- Enrolment of existing permanent staff onto Skills for Life programmes increased by 128% from 2004/05 to 2005/06.
- Completion rates for learners on Skills for Life programmes improved threefold from 2004/05 to 2005/06.
- Overall enrolments on Learning Centre programmes have increased by 96% from 2004/05 to 2005/06.

Walkers Snack Foods

Improved success

- We saw success rates increased by 22% for one cohort of learners.

Contract manager

Workforce development

- The most important aspect making the Whole Organisation Approach work is ensuring all staff are involved and understand what they are trying to achieve and most importantly how learners will benefit.
- Providing on the ground practical support to staff to implement the strategy is also crucial – team teaching, coaching, observing and supporting staff as they deliver leads to greater understanding, better teaching and learning and better engagement with our learners.
- This process has increased staff confidence and has resulted in a better motivated team.

Rathbone

Quality improvement

- 70 per cent of lesson observations in 2006/07 were graded at 2 (good) or better. The current self assessment report (2006/07) has self-assessment grades of 2 or above.

Work Solutions

Enhanced employability

- ‘Skills for Life should be at the heart of everything we do, because at Rathbone we believe in equipping young people with appropriate literacy, numeracy and language skills which enhance their long term employment prospects and life chances.’

Rathbone

What do we mean by a whole organisation approach to Skills for Life?

National context

Skills for Life is the government's strategy for improving adults' skills in literacy, language (ESOL – English for speakers of other languages) and numeracy. Skills for Life provision includes a range of English and maths programmes for all post-16 learners, from Pre-entry to Level 2. Skills for Life support responds to the literacy, language and numeracy needs of individual learners across all curriculum areas.

Key Skills provision makes a vital contribution to the delivery of the Skills for Life strategy, particularly for young people. Key Skills are a range of essential skills that underpin success in education, employment, lifelong learning and personal development. Key Skills qualifications in Communication, Application of Number and Information Technology (IT) are available at levels 1–4. Also available at levels 1–4 are the Wider Key Skills units: Working with Others, Improving Own Learning and Performance, Problem-Solving.



The government is committed to improving the literacy and numeracy skills of 2.25 million people by 2010:

Poor literacy and numeracy can prevent people from taking an active part in the community. People who experience difficulties with these skills are less likely to vote, less likely to own their own home and more prone to health problems. Poor literacy and numeracy leads to low productivity, fewer training opportunities and greater health and safety risks at work. The cost to the individual, the taxpayer, business and the economy is enormous.

Skills for Life: The national strategy for improving adult literacy and numeracy skills. Delivering the vision 2001–2004, DfES 2004

In 2004 the government commissioned Lord Leitch to carry out an independent review of the UK's long-term skills needs. His report, *Prosperity for all in the global economy: World Class Skills*, published in 2006, reinforced the importance of raising standards of literacy and numeracy and has given us a new set of targets to be achieved by 2020: 95% of adults to have functional literacy and numeracy skills (i.e. Level 1 literacy and Entry 3 numeracy).

A definition of a whole organisation approach

To meet these challenging targets and make a real difference your organisation will need to be able to support all learners who have a need to develop their literacy, language and/or numeracy skills. You will need to look at the Skills for Life profile of all learners, potential learners and staff, throughout the whole organisation. By ensuring that you identify and respond effectively to the literacy, language and numeracy needs of all your learners you can increase the engagement, motivation, retention and achievement of learners.

A whole organisation approach to Skills for Life is . . .

‘. . . where literacy, language and numeracy provision is central to the organisation at all levels, ranging from strategic leadership and management to delivery of practice. This includes embedding Skills for Life in teaching and learning programmes across a range of learning aims and goals and providing all learners with opportunities to progress and achieve qualifications.

‘Embedded teaching and learning combines the development of literacy, language and numeracy skills with vocational and other skills. The skills acquired provide learners with the confidence, competence and motivation necessary for them to progress, gain qualifications, and succeed in life and at work.’²

Elements of a whole organisation approach

As part of the Whole Organisation Approach project, pathfinder organisations explored what needed to be improved in order to put Skills for Life at the heart of their work, and identified the essential elements of a whole organisation approach.

‘To meet the challenge of implementing this approach to Skills for Life in a planned, coordinated and sustainable way, the following elements within the organisation should make explicit reference to Skills for Life.

- The organisational strategy with clear objectives and targets
- Business and operational plans
- Policies and procedures which provide a clear direction
- The quality assurance framework
- Management information systems which disseminate accurate, timely and relevant data
- Clear information, advice and guidance processes including skills check, initial and diagnostic assessment
- Information from the guidance processes used to plan learning
- The human resource strategy and continuing professional development programme
- Curriculum offers
- Resources and facilities
- Promotion and recruitment procedures.’³

2 Definitions taken from the DfES Skills for Life Strategy Unit.

3 *Improving quality through a whole organisation approach to Skills for Life: A health check for providers of further education and training*, QIA 2007.

What will a whole organisation approach mean for you as a work-based learning provider?

The organisational strategy should be clear and have ‘buy in’ from all staff in your organisation. The management board, CEO and director of quality should support and drive the development of the whole organisation approach. Having a Skills for Life director with relevant experience has proved vital to Rathbone.

Business and operational plans should be established and communicated effectively across the whole organisation. The Skills for Life Health Check and Framework can be useful and consistent tools for your managers to use in planning at operational level.

Policies and procedures that are developed in consultation with staff and disseminated across your organisation

can really help support the whole organisation approach. Work-based learning pathfinders had success where learner entitlement to Skills for Life support was clearly communicated and systems were put in place to give staff access to shared, quality-assured schemes of work, lesson plans and teaching approaches to deliver that entitlement.

The quality assurance framework should make explicit reference to Skills for Life wherever appropriate. The framework will include rigorous systems for lesson observations, course reviews, assessment processes and individual learning plans, and Skills for Life quality criteria should be applied to each of these.



Management information systems

need to capture data on Skills for Life: learner needs, provision, achievement and progression. This data should be used by managers to help monitor progress with implementing the whole organisation approach. In addition, the data can inform staff training needs around Skills for Life and professional development planning.

Clear information, advice and guidance for both learners and staff are imperative. Staff giving initial information, advice and guidance need to understand fully your organisation's policies and procedures for Skills for Life, know the range of Skills for Life support that is available, and be trained in recognising Skills for Life needs and discussing them in a positive, sensitive way.

Teaching staff may be unfamiliar with Skills for Life and need clear guidance to support the embedding process. Information on the literacy and numeracy requirements of future job roles will help learners understand the importance of Skills for Life to their vocational programmes.

Human resource strategy and professional development planning

are crucial factors to get right. Managers need to ensure that staff have the right skills and knowledge for the role they have in relation to Skills for Life, and the right qualifications to conform to the government's regulations for teachers in the lifelong learning sector. All organisations should conduct an audit of staff qualifications and experience and draw up a professional development plan which includes Skills for Life. For



new appointments, job descriptions and person specifications need to explicitly reference the literacy and numeracy skills needed for the role.

Curriculum offers should be varied and reflect your learners' needs and aspirations. Where Skills for Life is embedded in programmes, learners need to see the value in this. Team teaching approaches that involve vocational specialists working closely with literacy, language and numeracy specialists on the planning and delivery of programmes can help truly embed Skills for Life and raise its profile with learners.

Resources and facilities should be high quality, motivating and accessible to all. All programmes should have vocationally relevant Skills for Life teaching and learning material, including IT-based resources. Having a bank of quality-assured teaching materials



available for all staff to access has proved to be effective in ensuring that the whole organisation approach moves forward at delivery level.

Promotion and recruitment

procedures should include reference to Skills for Life and those responsible for marketing should see it as integral to the work that they do. The value of literacy, language and numeracy development needs to be promoted particularly well to learners accessing work-based learning provision, as they are often those who have left formal education without qualifications and who have the greatest need to improve their skills.

Recommendations from the pathfinders

Summary of recommendations for work-based learning providers that want to implement a whole organisation approach:

- Establish a Skills for Life Steering Group with representation at all levels and disciplines.
- Ensure senior management commitment and identify a Skills for Life champion within the senior management team
- Ensure that Skills for Life is written into policies, procedures and plans. This process can be supported by using the Health Check, available on the *Making it Work* web site.
- Appraise current processes as they relate to Skills for Life by using the Framework, which can be customised for specific sectors. It is available on the *Making it Work* web site.
- Develop a communication strategy for the purpose of disseminating good practice in terms of Skills for Life throughout the organisation. This is particularly important where there are a number of sites within the organisation or where learning is delivered regionally.
- Produce SMART action plans to assign responsibilities for embedding SfL throughout the organisation and the curriculum areas. Examples of these are available on *Making it Work*.
- Carry out a training needs analysis in order to identify Skills for Life needs within the organisation and to inform the staff development plans, which should be designed to ensure capacity-building.

- Carry out staff and learner perception surveys to establish levels of understanding of and satisfaction with Skills for Life.
- Establish 'buddy systems' to enable Skills for Life specialists to work with vocational staff in order to truly embed Skills for Life into all parts of the curriculum. (Research carried out by NRDC demonstrates that this has a beneficial effect on learner achievement.)
- Establish measures of success in order to assess the effectiveness of the whole organisation approach to the Skills for Life strategy.
- Use the Resources Guide and Resources Menus, produced as part of the project and available on the *Making it Work* web site, to utilise and customise Materials for Embedded Learning which are available through QIA: rwp.qia.oxi.net/embeddedlearning.
- Build into lesson observations a specific requirement to identify the inclusion of Skills for Life into the teaching sessions and to assess its effective delivery.
- Develop effective data collection as a means of identifying areas that are improving and those that require attention in terms of Skills for Life delivery.
- Design SAR process and post-inspection plans that clearly identify the embedded nature of Skills for Life within the organisation.
- Ensure careful construction of ILPs and make effective use of the information collected for planning and teaching purposes.
- Ensure that lessons learnt in one particular region are cascaded country-wide and develop focus groups that facilitate the sharing of good practice.
- Raise awareness and understanding of Skills for Life with clients (e.g. employers).

Measures of success

The following measures of success have been noted by pathfinder organisations as most helpful and appropriate for the monitoring of Skills for Life provision:

- Monitoring referrals, starts and achievements; initial, diagnostic and summative assessment results and increased number of staff attending Skills for Life awareness raising sessions (evidenced by data collection documentation) and inspection grades.
- Monitor progress against targets set for Skills for Life learning hours; staff training for Skills for Life; learners achieving national accreditation; extension of workplace learning; commitment to quality improvement (evidenced through annual self-assessment report and data collection documentation).

Why do it?

Evidence from the project illustrates the benefits of taking a whole organisation approach:

- **Improved success rates in Skills for Life and vocational areas**
- **Wider participation**
- **High-quality learner experiences**
- **Improved retention**
- **More confident and competent staff**
- **Vocational teachers working in partnership with literacy and numeracy specialists**
- **Effective collaborative teaching teams.**



Improved success rates

When literacy, language and numeracy needs are effectively supported, learners are better able to meet the demands of vocational programmes. Evidence from the pathfinders tells us the impact of a whole organisation approach on success rates.

- 2003/04 – Key Skills achieved – 0
- 2004/05 – Key Skills achieved – 827
- 2005/06 – Key Skills achieved – 2258
- 2003/04 – Adult Literacy/ Numeracy – E1/2/3 and Level 1 achieved – 200
- 2004/05 – Adult Literacy/ Numeracy – E1/2/3 and Level 1 achieved – 523
- 2005/06 – Adult Literacy/ Numeracy – E1/2/3 and Level 1 achieved – 1536

Rathbone

The PC Servicing group – the pilot group for the embedding Essential Skills project – showed an encouraging 11% improvement in results over the previous year.

City of Bristol College

Wider participation

By providing effective support in response to individual need it is possible to widen participation so that learners from priority groups can experience the success that leads them to progress in life and at work.

‘We have succeeded in implementing “skills checks” and encouraging far more learners than before to improve their Skills for Life.’

‘People are actively contacting us now rather than us always having to go out to them.’

In 2004/05, 174 learners within centres were taking part in Skills for Life programmes. In 2005/06 there was an increase of 148% in Skills for Life learners in centres to 431.

‘Being involved in the WOA Pathfinder has had two main benefits for our service: it has provided a means of sharpening up the focus of our delivery on one of the government’s key post-16 learning priorities; and it has the potential to enable us to pick up learners with Skills for Life needs across all our different curriculum areas and sites of delivery, rather than through the silo of direct delivery, which is our current model.’

Cumbria Adult Education Service

High-quality learner experiences

Many learners in work-based provision lack confidence in their ability to learn but effective support for literacy, language and/or numeracy in vocational contexts motivates them to succeed.

James, a previously very disaffected learner unsuccessful at school, finished his first year having achieved the wider skills. He continued on the personal development course this time studying Basic Skills in literacy and numeracy and a level 1 Public Services qualification. James passed all his tests at level 1 and achieved a merit in Public Services. He said ‘I liked the way things were taught, it wasn’t like school. It was easier to understand because it was linked to other things.’

City of Bristol College



Improved retention

Effective identification of Skills for Life needs and learner-centred, contextualised support will have a positive impact on retention across the whole organisation. Learner persistence will, in turn, lead to better success rates.

Stoke on Trent College, ILR data for 16 to 18 learners		
	2004/05	2005/06
Retention rate (including continuing)	74%	81%
Retention rate (all completers)	65%	76%
Achievement rate (all completers)	69%	74%
Success rate	45%	56%



More confident and competent staff

Staff who have been trained to be aware of Skills for Life needs and developed to know how best to support those needs will be more confident in their work and more innovative in their approaches to teaching and learning.

Our centre managers attended Level 2 literacy, numeracy and awareness training alongside their staff teams to ensure they could drive the implementation of the embedded Skills for Life approach by leading by example.

Staff developed their own skills in literacy and numeracy and some achieved their Level 2 in these areas. The teaching and learning has improved in the centres as a result of this course.

Rathbone

‘Including Skills for Life staff in the induction process definitely makes all staff more aware, they feel part of the Skills for Life process.’

‘We are capturing learners who may not have come forward to progress with numeracy or literacy.’

As a result of a whole organisation approach, Skills for Life enrolments increased from 24% of total enrolments to 44% of total enrolments.

learnirect hub

Vocational teachers working in partnership

Findings from the embedding research published by the National Research and Development Centre share compelling evidence of the learning gains when vocational teachers and Skills for Life teachers work in partnership.

Team teaching promotes an inclusive environment. By working in close correlation, both I and the childcare tutor were able to assist each other in the task of 'teaching'; offering a better quality of support to all learners and develop a good practice relationship for other staff to follow.

Skills for Life team tutor, childcare course,
Rathbone Training

Both of the buddies are experienced and highly knowledgeable in their own field (travel and tourism, and Skills for Life respectively) meaning both had value that they could add to the planning of the 'buddying' sessions. The selection of the right members of staff for the initiative has been an important success factor.

Sheffield College

Effective collaborative teaching teams

A critical success factor for a whole organisation approach is that *all* staff should be involved: teachers, managers, administrators and support staff – everybody has a role in making sure every learner receives the right support.

It's good to talk!

Team Teaching has become the buzz word of the day and this method of delivery and support has been embraced to ensure the learning needs of all students are met in full.

E2E team tutor, Rathbone Training

The whole organisation approach can also support employers in meeting the demands of health and safety legislation and other statutory frameworks at work. Several areas of the organisation and its staff can benefit from these successes.

Walkers Snack Foods

Effective team working has been crucial to 'making it work'. [The Skills for Life teacher] enrolled on a Construction course to improve her knowledge of the literacy and numeracy requirements of the Construction classroom. [The Construction teacher and the Skills for Life teacher] meet each week to agree the vocational and Skills for Life priorities for the coming session. These then form the basis for joint planning of the session. The additional learning support assistant is a key member of the embedded team, working across all practical and theory sessions. His enthusiasm, empathy with the learners and sense of humour has made him an important motivator.

Otley College

How a whole organisation approach helps to deliver the World Class Skills Agenda

Becoming a world leader in skills

In *World Class Skills* the government has clearly stated its position on the need to improve the skills of the workforce in England. Challenging targets have been set:

- 95 per cent of adults to have functional literacy and numeracy – up from 85 per cent literacy and 79 per cent numeracy in 2005.
- More than 90 per cent of adults to have gained at least a Level 2 qualification (equivalent to 5 GCSEs at A*–C grade), up from 69 per cent in 2005.
- Deliver England's share of the UK ambition to have 500,000 people a year in Apprenticeships.
- 89 per cent of adults to be qualified to at least Level 1 literacy, and 81 per cent to be qualified to at least Entry 3 numeracy.
- 79 per cent of adults to be qualified to at least full Level 2.

Many of these targets will be achieved or supported through Skills for Life, either directly or indirectly. In addition the achievement of the targets for the higher-level skills will depend on the achievement of the above targets. A step change in how Skills for Life is perceived and organised in publicly funded organisations and amongst employers will do much to contribute to the realisation of the government's vision for social inclusion, community cohesion and a successful economy.

The next section presents three examples of work-based learning providers that have used the whole organisation approach to make or move towards achieving that step change. They present examples of specific projects that led to improvement in Skills for Life achievements.



Case studies

In this section you can read summaries of the project work of:

- Rathbone
- Work Solutions.

Full case studies from these and from the other pathfinder organisations can be downloaded from *Making it Work*.

The work on whole organisation approaches that was started with the pathfinder project has been further developed and has spread to other organisations as part of the Skills for Life Improvement Programme. You can read about this programme and access case studies showing how other organisations have used the Skills for Life Health Check and the Framework and worked on quality improvement on www.sflip.org.uk.

Rathbone: Embedding Skills for Life into apprenticeship and E2E programmes

Rathbone is one of the largest training organisations in the country, working with many learners who have not achieved a Level 2 qualification by the time they complete their secondary education. In February 2005, a survey of Skills for Life provision within Rathbone revealed the separation of Skills for Life from other provision and a lack of 'ownership' of it by some staff.

Action

With the survey in mind, an action plan was drawn up and team meetings were held to discuss the main objectives, and involved all staff at all levels. Over a period of two-and-a-half years, specialist consultants, including a newly appointed Skills for Life champion, helped Rathbone to embed Skills for Life across the organisation.

Vocational teams were established, each with a Skills for Life tutor, and a team teaching guide was produced by the national Skills for Life manager and distributed across the organisation. Throughout all E2E training sessions the E2E training adviser was supported by the Skills for Life tutor, who could lead the session delivery to reinforce literacy and numeracy skills, as appropriate. Team teachers discussed and developed lesson plans and resources, updating them where appropriate. Vocational staff also had opportunities to train through the Level 2 support qualification and core curriculum training.

Impact

The team teaching method has been embraced by tutors as the method which promotes an inclusive learning environment and ensures the needs of all learners are met. As a result of training and teaching together, staff gained confidence in teaching literacy and numeracy as well as developing their own skills.

Compared to no achievements in Key Skills qualifications in 2003/04, there were 827 Key Skills qualifications achieved in 2004/05.

Work Solutions: Reaching the 'hardest to reach'

Work Solutions delivers learning in a variety of situations across a number of locations in Greater Manchester. Their primary focus is to provide a structured pathway to employment for unemployed and economically inactive residents through an assortment of learning opportunities. Work Solutions operates in the most deprived wards of Greater Manchester, with a commitment never to turn anyone away, and seeking out those who are disadvantaged. Ten per cent of their staff are former clients.

Action

Towards the beginning of the Whole Organisation Approach Project, Work Solutions held a whole-staff development day, which enabled everyone to participate in the identification of priorities and the development of an action plan. This encouraged greater ownership of the plan and the approach. By addressing the priorities first, staff could see how the project could help them move forward and do their job better. Staff volunteered to be part of small working groups looking at a specific area of development.

A major strand of the project for Work Solutions was to improve the embedding of Skills for Life into the core E2E curriculum. Several further staff development events were held to disseminate and share findings from the working groups and to build tutor confidence in the delivery of the Skills for Life curriculum.

Impact

At the dissemination of feedback from the pathfinder project in February 2007, Work Solutions reported an increase in staff confidence and understanding of embedding Skills for Life within the organisation:

- 35 staff were trained
- 70% lesson observations in 2006/07 graded as grade 2 (good) or better.

Outreach workers are active in local neighbourhoods and use community languages to encourage residents to take up the services offered. In one ward, the premises has become a 'one stop shop' with everything there for the unemployed, from intensive support and job brokerage to Skills for Life/ESOL and Employability programmes.



Rathbone: Helping staff to engage in strategic development of Skills for Life WOA within their centres

In February 2005, a survey of Skills for Life provision within Rathbone revealed the separation of Skills for Life from other provision and a lack of ‘ownership’ of it by some staff. In December of that year, Jan Pennington, North West Faculties contract manager, agreed to trial the WOA Skills for Life Framework with Rathbone Centres in the North West. She recognised that ‘Skills for Life should be at the heart of everything we do.’

Action

Jan realised that there was very little useful data about Skills for Life available in individual training centres. She also knew that staff would need convincing of this new approach. Therefore Jan decided to use the Framework as a practical means of supporting centre managers to adopt a whole organisation approach to Skills for Life, so that they could drive forward the agenda in their individual centres. The Framework was used by staff to support self-assessment reviews and planning for future provision.

A one-day development session was planned for staff to introduce the Framework. Staff used copies of the Framework as a checklist, revisiting their centre’s development plans at each stage indicated. Electronic, interactive versions were also used. Staff refined their development plans for a further six weeks after the one-day event and used them as an indicator of strengths and weaknesses within their provision.

Impact

As a result of using the Framework, centre managers have now planned their Skills for Life provision much more effectively, with improved baseline information and Skills for Life improvement plans. This process helped managers to better understand how the whole organisation approach fits together and they are now more confident about Skills for Life issues in their centres. As a result of this, centre managers’ passion and enthusiasm for Skills for Life is having an impact on their vocational tutors, and learner achievements are increasing. Skills for Life achievements increased more than 10% in 2005/06 over 2004/05.

There was overwhelming support for the Skills for Life Framework as a tool for strategic planning:

‘The Framework has brought structure to each plan by identifying or confirming the areas our centre managers should be focusing on.’

‘We think the interactive version is brilliant!’



Embedding

The success of embedding

A key element of the whole organisation approach is embedded delivery of Skills for Life, where teaching and learning of literacy, language and numeracy takes place within the context of a vocational or other programme of learning. The three work-based learning case studies looked at above have in common a strong belief in embedded approaches to Skills for Life, and that belief is backed up by the National Research and Development Centre (NRDC).

NRDC's findings show the impact of embedding:

- Higher retention rates – up 16%
- Higher vocational success rates – up 15%
- Higher achievement of literacy/ language qualifications – up 43%
- Higher achievement of numeracy qualifications – up 23%.

Embedding LLN can help address motivation and engagement issues and offer significant improvements in achievement rates.

Five Years On: Research, development and changing practice, NRDC 2007

Active learning in teaching literacy, language and numeracy

Learners need to be able to **apply** their literacy, language and numeracy skills in all learning contexts but often they have only achieved surface level learning i.e. with little understanding.

If learners develop skills in English and maths only within separate Skills for Life

or Key Skills classes, without explicit links and references made to their vocational or other learning goals, there is a danger that those English and maths skills will remain superficial and the learner will not have mastery of them (i.e. they will not be able to apply them in a wide range of contexts). It is through applying a skill in different contexts, over a period of time, that it becomes deeply understood by a learner.

Teachers need to be able to engage learners in deeper level learning through the use of active approaches to learning within **embedded learning models**.

We learn by doing. Research shows that active learning is much better recalled, enjoyed and understood.

Geoff Petty 2004, www.geoffpetty.com/activelearning.html

The value of embedded programmes

NRDC researchers found that young adults on vocational courses can see the value of strong literacy, language and numeracy skills, but only where *relevance* and connections are clear and made explicit by staff. Skills for Life and Key Skills teaching must be linked to the demands of the vocational course and to future roles.

Embedded courses are much more than courses that combine vocational subjects with literacy, language and numeracy. Although they do this, they are also about

learning new identities and practices, learning how to be and act in new ways, becoming someone in the building trade, or a nurse in the NHS or a childcare worker. . . These new roles and identities have been shown to flourish in new contexts where learners work within programmes which integrate the development of literacy, language and numeracy in achieving vocational goals.

SfLQI Research Resource: Embedded Teaching and Learning

In summary, an embedded approach in work-based learning enables learners to solve problems and use transferable skills at a level that will be demanded of them in the workplace, in the community and at home.

Embedded learning within the whole organisation approach

What is the relationship between the whole organisation approach and embedding?

A whole organisation approach is needed to ensure that the embedding of literacy, language and numeracy in vocational learning takes place. Changes to policies and to the organisation's structure and management responsibilities will be needed before embedding can take place. In addition, resources must be agreed by the senior management team to allow for training of vocational staff and/or to fund time for vocational and Skills for Life staff to work together.

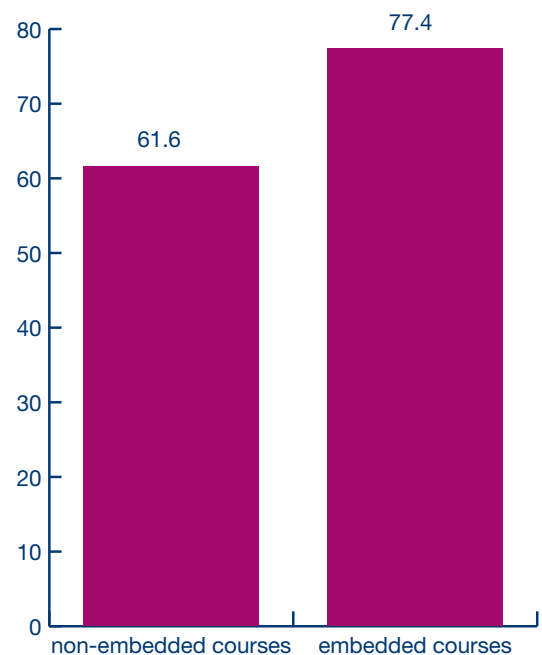
The NRDC research project explored

the impact of embedded approaches to literacy, language and numeracy on 79 vocational programmes and found the following benefits for learners.

Benefits of embedding

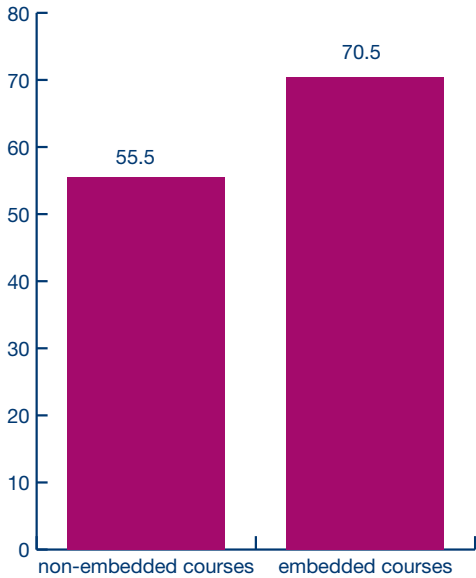
Higher retention and course success rates on embedded courses⁴

Learners on the embedded courses had better staying-on rates than those on non-embedded courses, and more positive attitudes to the value of LLN study. On the embedded courses, retention was 16 per cent higher.



⁴ The data and graphs in this section are taken from the NRDC 2006 research report, *You wouldn't expect a maths teacher to teach plastering....* The report can be downloaded from the NRDC web site.

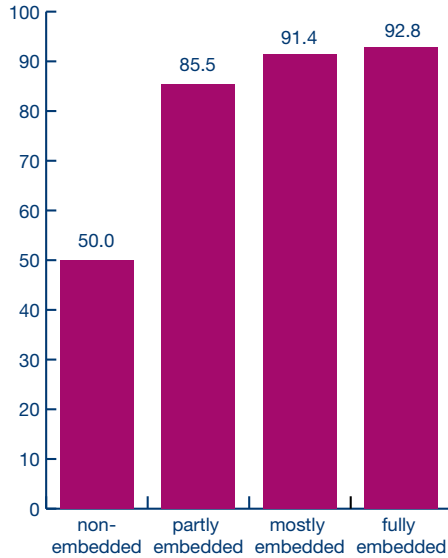
The embedded courses also had higher success rates than the non-embedded courses.



When these data are analysed by vocational level, the increase in success rates associated with embedding is particularly strong for vocational Level 2 courses, with a 26 per cent difference between fully embedded and non-embedded courses.

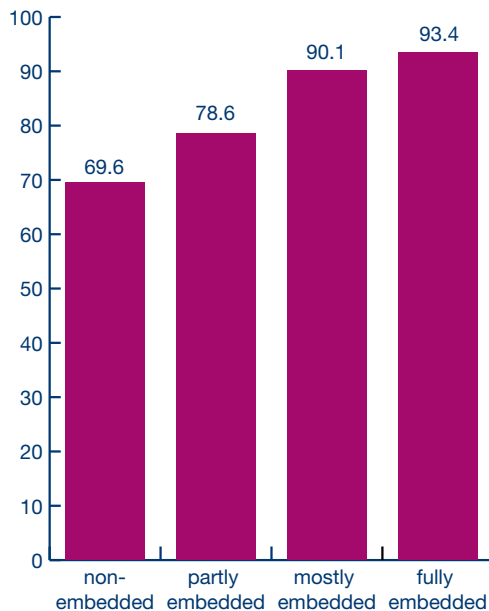
Increased learner achievement in literacy/ESOL qualifications

Of learners on the fully embedded courses, 93 per cent of those with an identified literacy need achieved a literacy/ESOL qualification, compared to only 50 per cent for those on non-embedded courses. On the fully embedded courses, 43 per cent more learners achieved literacy qualifications.



Increased learner achievement in numeracy qualifications

Of learners on the fully embedded courses, 93 per cent of those with an identified numeracy need achieved a numeracy/maths qualification, compared to 70 per cent for those on non-embedded courses. On the fully embedded courses, 23 per cent more learners achieved numeracy qualifications.



What is needed to make it happen?

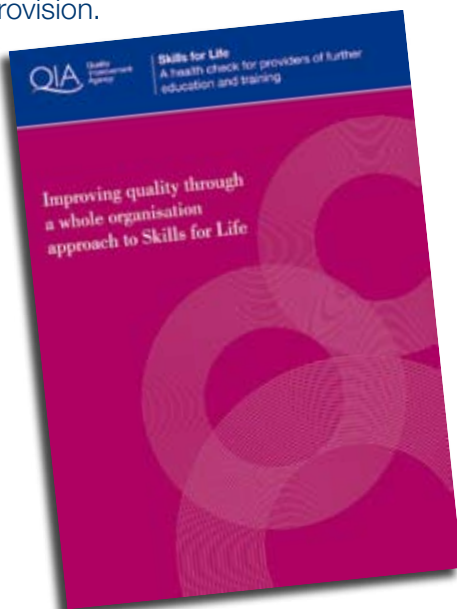
Whole organisation approach tools

As part of the Whole Organisation Approach project, two key tools were developed and piloted: the **Skills for Life Health Check** and the **Skills for Life Framework**. These tools will help you adopt and use a whole organisation approach in your work.

Health Check

A whole organisation approach to Skills for Life requires organisations to review their structures, policies, procedures and processes to ensure that Skills for Life needs are considered throughout. The findings from the review process can be used to inform a strategy for Skills for Life and lead to actions for improvement.

The Skills for Life Health Check is a straightforward quality improvement tool designed to support such a review. It can be used by all types of provider delivering Skills for Life teaching and learning, either directly or through sub-contracted provision.



There are nine sections in the document; each reflects one aspect of policy and practice in relation to Skills for Life, and includes a series of quality statements on specific aspects of provision that are essential to a whole organisation approach. The aspects are:

- organisational strategy
- business and operational plans
- policies and procedures
- quality improvement framework
- management information systems
- information, advice and guidance, marketing and learner recruitment
- human resources strategy and continuing professional development planning
- curriculum design and planning
- resources and facilities.

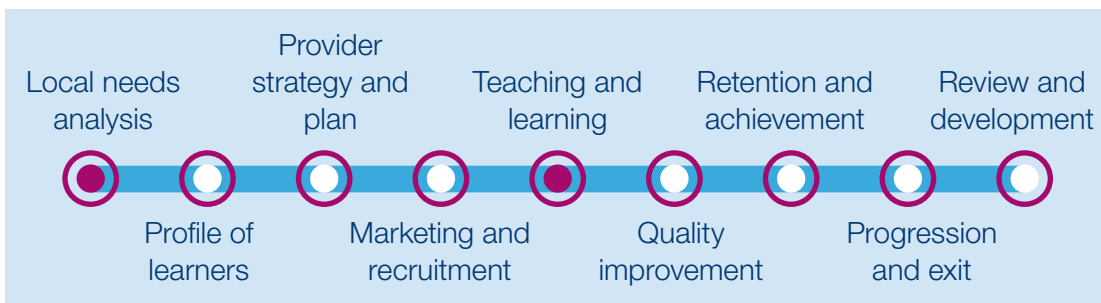
These are explored further below.

The full Health Check document is available to order from QIA Publications (code HEALTHCHECK1) or you can download it from the *Making it Work* web resource.

The Skills for Life Framework

A simple framework was developed to embed Skills for Life in the planning, management and delivery of learning. This framework aims to support what organisations are already doing and to

help them improve quality by giving an overview of the planning and delivery process, showing how the different key stages are all interrelated and helping to highlight areas for improvement.



The **Skills for Life Framework** likens the process of developing a whole organisation approach to a journey that starts with analysing local needs and finishes with learners ready to progress to further learning opportunities. Each stage of the journey is represented as a 'stop' on the line.

The Skills for Life Framework is used to structure the *Making it Work* site.

The Framework is a powerful and flexible graphic. Feedback from the piloting of the tool suggests that it is an effective way of engaging staff and learners in the process of implementing a whole organisation approach.

You can read about how the Framework was customised and used by Rathbone and by other pathfinder organisations on *Making it Work*.

Health Check priorities

While particular challenges arise in each sector, putting the priorities of the Health Check into action with appropriate strategies for the sector is likely to be helpful for any organisation.

Every organisation is different and has its own challenges, yet with flexibility and imagination the principles of a whole organisation approach can be applied to most.

Over the following pages we look at the nine sections of the Health Check, and some of the key priorities that arise from them. Challenges to establishing a whole organisation approach in a work-based learning setting are posed, with ideas and suggestions for overcoming them arising from the pathfinder project.

Organisational strategy

How will you gain support at all levels in your work-based learning provider for the Skills for Life strategy?

Following a survey of Skills for Life provision across their organisation, one work-based learning provider drew up an action plan and held team meetings to discuss the objectives. There was involvement of all staff at all levels, which encouraged ownership of the process.

Rathbone Training, apprenticeship and E2E programmes

How will you ensure that your whole organisation approach strategy is implemented across the organisation?

Appointing a regional Skills for Life champion was fundamental to the success of Rathbone. They ensured that the strategy was properly implemented by being 'hands on': working alongside staff, observing team teaching and offering support and encouragement.

How do you ensure that your strategy is based on a thorough analysis of the internal needs of learners and staff?

Completing a training needs analysis of all staff and agreeing staff development on an individual and/or centre basis allowed one work-based learning provider to move on in their strategy. Ensuring that centre managers also took the training was equally important.

Business and operational plans

How do you ensure that the operational plans present a coherent and consistent approach to delivering the strategy?

Rathbone Training used the Skills for Life Framework as a practical means of supporting managers to adopt the whole organisation approach; it was used for self-assessment reviews and planning for future provision. The Framework has certainly helped managers:

'The Framework has been extremely useful as a tool to further develop our centre-based Skills for Life Plans.'

'We think the interactive version is brilliant – when it links you to appropriate and relevant information.'

Creation of a Skills for Life working group that includes senior management, curriculum area managers, HR and MIS departments was found to be an effective way of focusing on Skills for Life and driving forward systems, processes and good practice. For one pathfinder organisation this enabled staff in these areas to be more directly and actively involved in the support of Skills for Life learners.

At one pathfinder organisation, the business implementation review incorporates Skills for Life into staff, learner and employer interviews.

How will you maximise external support to enable your operational plans to develop?

Rathbone Training worked with three key organisations to ensure that their business and operational plans were implemented. The project manager helped them to develop an operational plan with strategic objectives, updating policies and procedures, quality assurance and MIS, amongst others. LSDA helped with support for innovative teaching strategies to improve learning, achievement and progression. Finally, Tribal CTAD helped in the research and development of Skills for Life teaching and learning materials.

One pathfinder organisation implemented procedures and schemes of work that are used by all the essential skills tutors to produce lesson plans and delivery models. Standard audit procedures are followed.

At one pathfinder organisation, all initial and diagnostic assessment of learners is provided by the Basic and Key Skills Builder tool, which is used throughout the company.

Policies and procedures

How do you ensure that there are clear procedures for all staff to follow, to ensure that the implementation of the whole organisation approach is consistent throughout?

After it was agreed that a team teaching approach would be a key feature to embedded Skills for Life, a team teaching schedule was devised to cover all sites. The National Skills for Life manager produced a team teaching guide, which was distributed across the organisation. Schemes of work were also written for each area.

Rathbone Training

Quality improvement

How do you ensure that all curriculum areas and support services have systems in place to enable quality across the organisation?

One pathfinder organisation implemented procedures and schemes of work that are used by all essential skills tutors to produce lesson plans and delivery models. A quality monitor is in place for Skills for Life and there are company audit procedures.

Work Solutions has a system of sharing and assuring quality of key policies and work processes.

Some work-based learning providers use standardised pro-formas for including LLN opportunities within sessions.

How do you enable staff in all areas to take responsibility for the implementation of quality improvement procedures?

The pathfinder project with Work Solutions was the catalyst for an intensive audit of materials available, and a working group was established to explore methods of storing and sharing materials.

At Work Solutions, particular focus is being paid to quality control of materials, and procedures for the design and delivery of embedded materials have also been reviewed. A series of flow charts were designed to support tutors in the enhancement of the learner experience. Staff have time to develop resources and plan sessions together, so where QA processes emerged in relation to resources, they were seen as 'needed' by staff teams themselves rather than being imposed externally.

The involvement of a QA manager, working with staff teams (teachers and support assistants) to develop a set of quality criteria, is effective.

Management information systems

What internal data do you have that allows you to analyse the impact of the whole organisation approach to Skills for Life?

Increase in learner achievement in Skills for Life qualifications in Rathbone Training's the North West Centres:

Skills for Life achievements have increased by more than 10% in 2005/06 over 2004/05.

Of the eight NW centres delivering E2E, six were in the national top ten centres for Skills for Life achievement.

Rathbone's *National Self-Assessment Report on Skills for Life* states that the number of staff accessing training across the country has increased:

- 45 staff achieved Unit 1 of the Level 2 Learner Support Qualification
- 8 staff achieved a Level 3 qualification
- 19 staff have achieved a Level 4 qualification.

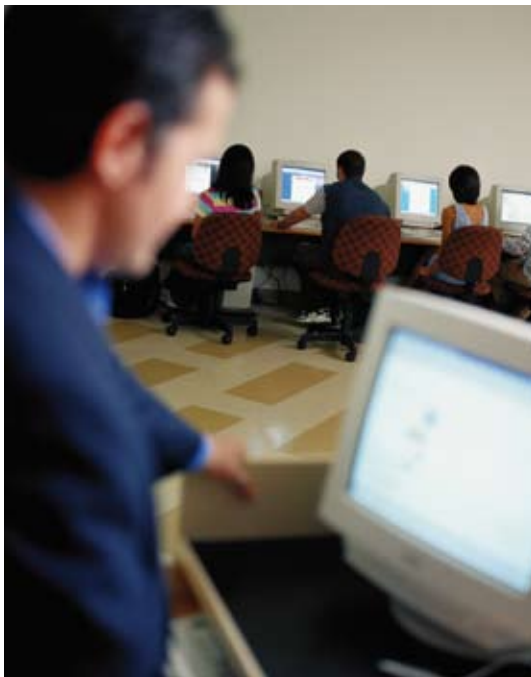
At Work Solutions, a fully embedded teaching and learning observation policy has been developed, with all delivery staff scheduled to be observed twice yearly. Monthly reports on this aspect of operations are provided to the senior management team. Current reports indicate over 80% observations graded at grade 2 (good) or better.

What do you do if you do not have MIS in place for the recovery of data associated with Skills for Life?

Some pathfinder projects needed to re-evaluate and establish more effective systems for monitoring quality, retention and achievement in Skills for Life. Data collection was identified as an area for development.

Rathbone Training's action plan 2006/07 included actions to review methods of data collection and to introduce a monthly MIS report that includes Skills for Life data. A form was developed for this purpose.

Another pathfinder organisation has introduced methods for tracking and monitoring starts, achievements and leavers within an established MIS.



Information, advice and guidance, marketing and learner recruitment

How do you promote Skills for Life as part of the offer to students?

At one pathfinder organisation, Skills for Life is marketed proactively within the general recruitment process of the company. Skills for Life is seen as high profile within the training programme offered to employers. The marketing team identifies the acquisition of literacy and numeracy skills as being fundamental in the achievement of the wider NVQ qualifications.

According to one of the work-based learning providers in the pathfinder project, embedded approaches to Skills for Life mean that their learners now see the relevance of literacy and numeracy to their wider programmes of study.

At Work Solutions, the majority of staff are involved in delivery roles and ten percent of staff are former clients of the organisation. At least 22 different languages are spoken by Work Solutions' staff, helping them to overcome barriers for those whose first language is not English. 28% of staff are from ethnic minority groups, with a balance of age ranges within the company. This, coupled with the organisation's work at the heart of the community, means that they are able to engage the hardest to reach learners.

Human resource strategy and continuing professional development

Have you got a range of CPD opportunities for staff in place in relation to their Skills for Life role?

At Rathbone Training, one of the objectives highlighted at the initial planning stage was to arrange core curriculum training days for all staff involved in the delivery of sessions. The training was delivered by Skills for Life tutors.

Another pathfinder organisation has prioritised the need to support tutors in the use of e-learning and ICT within the embedding process.

Work Solutions held several staff development events during the pathfinder project. These formed the basis of the staff development for all delivery staff across all of the organisation's programmes. The purpose of the events was to build tutor confidence in delivery of Skills for Life in the curriculum and to disseminate and share good practice from various working groups.

At Work Solutions, over 75% staff hold or are working towards formal teaching or training qualifications and/or advice and guidance at Levels 3 and 4. Appropriately qualified staff are key to the whole organisational approach.

How do you ensure that staff development and CPD are purposeful?

One work-based learning centre, in Oldham, completed the Level 2 Supporting Learners qualification as a team.

'Staff now have a working understanding of the core curriculum and can pitch learning at the level of the learners they have in their session; this has improved the learners' overall Skills for Life.'

Centre manager, Rathbone Training

At one work-based learning provider, centre managers as well as teachers undertook basic skills training, including a qualification. This sends out a clear message that both Skills for Life and staff development are important.

Curriculum design and delivery

How will you ensure that learners have the opportunity to learn and develop Skills for Life as an integral part of vocational programmes?

If they don't learn the way we teach, we must teach the way they learn!

In one work-based learning provider in the Black Country, a schedule was devised for apprenticeship learners so that they would come in for one day a week from their placements and train towards their technical certificate/NVQ and Key Skills. It was evident that to offer a fully supportive programme and to address differentiation, discrete provision would still be required for some individuals. To enable this to happen, a scheme of work was written for each area and mapped to the adult literacy and numeracy core curricula and Key Skills standards.

In another programme, a team of Early Years trainers were set the task of identifying opportunities to develop literacy skills within childcare training programmes using the Adult Literacy Core Curriculum as a mapping tool. New session plans were then drafted that highlighted opportunities to develop those literacy skills.

How will ‘expert’ staff be used to support the embedding of Skills for Life into vocational and other programmes?

On an NVQ childcare course, one of the childcare training advisers developed an assignment that covered not only one of the elements of the NVQ but also one of the units of the Technical Certificate.

In collaboration with the Skills for Life tutor, a dual teaching session was devised for the delivery of this assignment.

‘As a Skills for Life tutor, my role was to ensure that learners were able to gain the key skills at the required level and the childcare tutor ensured that the necessary standards for the units to be taught were covered.’

Top Tips:

- Always include Skills for Life tutors when mapping Basic Skills and Key Skills into the vocational curriculum.
- Always share expertise equally when planning sessions.

Rathbone Training, NVQ childcare team teachers

Resources and facilities

How do you ensure that teachers conform to good practice in Skills for Life teaching and embedding, in terms of their resources and approaches?

On an E2E programme, the Skills for Life tutor and the E2E tutor worked together to discuss each lesson and the resources to be used. Where appropriate, resources were improved or extended to offer differentiated activities in response to the varied abilities and individual learning styles of the learners.

Rathbone Training: E2E and childcare courses

Two pathfinder organisations have both created a 'toolkit' for staff to encourage and assist in the planning of embedded sessions. This includes session plans, awareness-raising activities and other materials. According to one organisation, their Skills for Life Toolkit has had a significant impact on raising both staff and learners' awareness of LLN skills and how they relate to the overall vocational programme.

suitable for the work they were doing and particularly enjoyed using computer-based and online resources. Some learners said that they found it difficult to study outside of the session times, although they understood that this would help them to progress.

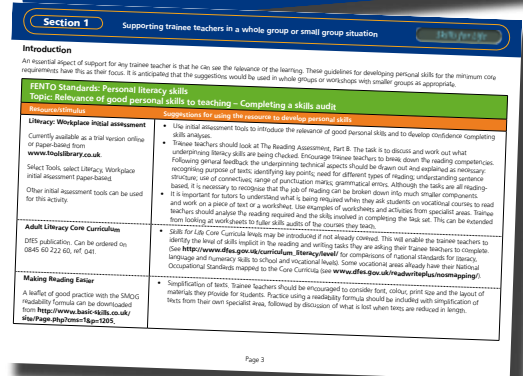
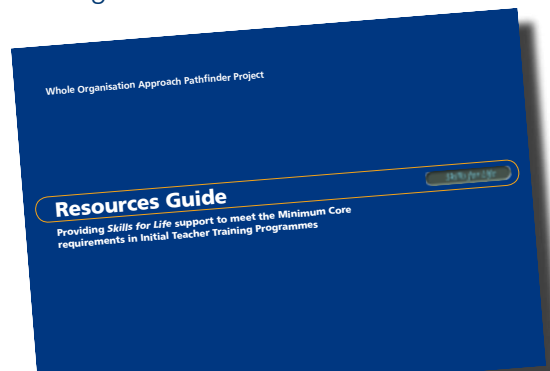
How do small organisations ensure that they can provide the best resources and facilities?

The formation of 'cluster groups' has been helpful in developing Skills for Life for some of the pathfinder organisations, including VC Train, who formed a cluster group with two other small, community-based organisations to jointly develop new ideas and approaches to embedding Skills for Life. This helped to support progress for organisations with limited staffing.

As part of the Whole Organisation Approach project, a **Resources Guide** and **Resources Menus** were produced, providing detailed, subject-specific support on effective use of teaching and learning resources, including the Materials for Embedded Learning which are available through the QIA. These guidance resources are available on *Making it Work*.

How do you ensure that the resources and facilities are suitable to the learners in your organisation?

One pathfinder organisation carried out a learner perception survey with learners who had achieved the Skills for Life qualification. Learners felt that the resources used on the programme were



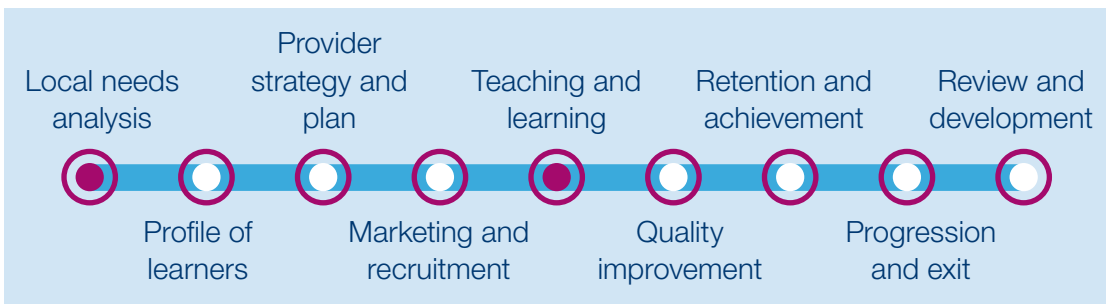
Getting started: what next?

The case for developing a whole organisation approach to Skills for Life is strong; the beneficial effect of embedding literacy, language and numeracy within delivery of vocational and other programmes is well-evidenced.

So what's next? The first step is to use the Health Check to audit your current position in relation to a whole organisation approach, and establish priorities for improvement. You can download the Health Check from *Making it Work*.

About *Making it Work*

Making it Work is a web-based resource that focuses on how to implement a whole organisation approach. It contains links to follow-up materials that organisations can take, use and adapt to embed a whole organisation approach in their work. *Making it Work* uses the Skills for Life Framework as the structure for looking at all the materials, tools and web links that can support you to implement a whole organisation approach. The Framework for work-based learning providers has nine main 'stops' on the journey line.



For each main 'stop' there is a 'branch line', listing the key elements for that stage in the process and the main resources and support available: sector specific case studies, relevant web links, key findings from the sector reports written at the end of the pathfinder project and much more. The evidence from the pathfinder project suggests that the Framework, the graphic description of the whole organisation approach process, is a useful tool for planning and implementing a whole organisation approach.

Making it Work forms part of the whole organisation approaches section on the QIA Excellence Gateway. Access *Making*

it Work from the left-hand menu at <http://excellence.qia.org.uk/WOA>.

'The key to taking your whole organisation approach to Skills for Life strategy forward begins with you:

- Your commitment
- Your leadership
- Planning
- Team work
- Imagination

'Most importantly, you and the whole staff team buying into the strategy.'

Rathbone

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