

Final Report

Evaluation of the Basic Skills and ESOL in Local Communities Projects

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April 2002

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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 One of the key tasks of the Learning and Skills Council (LSC), as set out in the remit letter from the Secretary of State, is to increase demand for learning by adults and to equalise opportunities through better access to learning. In particular, one of the targets to which the council is committed is the raising of the literacy and numeracy skills of 750,000 adults by 2004. If this target is to be met, it will be necessary to draw into learning many adults who currently have no contact with education providers and in many cases would not recognise formal learning opportunities as relevant to their lives.
- 1.2 In a recent paper on stimulating demand for learning and attracting new learners,¹ Ursula Howard (LSDA 2001) argues that 'Providers...need support and encouragement to be creative, imaginative risk-takers as well as rigorous on quality'. Funding for Basic Skills and ESOL in Local Communities projects, released by the LSC in 2001, provided former external institutions and FE colleges with just that. It enabled providers to put funding constraints on one side and to explore innovative ways to attract new basic skills and ESOL learners from 'hard to reach' groups.
- 1.3 In the same paper, Howard asks whether perhaps it is the providers of education and training that are 'hard to reach'? The 283 projects funded through the Basic Skills and ESOL in Local Communities Initiative provide ample evidence that, when institutions take time to learn about the needs and interests of their target audience and tailor learning opportunities to take account of these, it is possible to generate real enthusiasm for learning among adults for whom any type of formal learning has previously been remote, if not inaccessible.
- 1.4 This document is the report of the evaluation of the projects. The evaluation was undertaken for the LSC by the Learning and Skills Development Agency (LSDA) and the National Institute for Adult and Continuing Education (NIACE).
- 1.5 The quantity and quality of the information returned to the evaluators on these projects bears witness to the enthusiasm with which they were undertaken. It is an impossible task to present all the successes and the concerns recorded. This report has, however, attempted to ensure that the voices of managers and tutors, partners and learners have been represented. More detailed case studies and information on good practice will be the subject of a Good Practice Guide to be published separately.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 In May 2000, the Secretary of State announced a new basic skills funding package of £20.5m, £4m of which was to extend basic skills provision in the community. The Further Education Funding Council (FEFC)² was allocated £2m of this funding to extend outreach provision in local community settings through pilot projects.
- 2.2 The pilot projects were designed to address a recommendation of the final report of the LSC's External Institutions Review Group that:

'...in external institutions³...there should be an exploration of effective, focused outreach strategies, particularly where there is evidence of work with partners to stimulate demand and participation. This should be done by means of a programme of selective pilots and research.'

- 2.3 The pilot projects were to contribute to providers' capacity to develop effective learning opportunities in outreach settings and thus support the government's target of reducing the number of adults who have literacy or numeracy problems by 750,000 by 2004.
- 2.4 Early findings from the pilot projects informed the LSC's distribution of £10m for further projects to develop innovative approaches to community-based basic skills and ESOL during the summer of 2001. Both colleges and former external institutions were invited to bid to develop this provision. These are referred to throughout this report as the summer projects.
- 2.5 The LSDA was awarded the contract to undertake the evaluation and support of the pilot projects. The agency, in partnership with NIACE, was later awarded the contract to support and evaluate the summer projects. This report covers the evaluation of both rounds of projects. The results from the two evaluations have proved so similar it was felt unnecessary to separate the two. Where appropriate, figures for both the pilot projects and the summer projects have been presented.

3. THE AIMS OF THE EVALUATION

- 3.1 The FEFC, in commissioning the evaluation, required LSDA and NIACE:
 1. to support project management in the monitoring and evaluation of projects
 2. to highlight and disseminate good practice across and between projects with particular reference to innovative and effective ways of delivering basic skills and ESOL learning opportunities, recognising achievement and tracking and measuring progress within and beyond basic skills
 3. to analyse the data from projects to see whether and how they have encouraged adults with literacy and numeracy and ESOL needs to engage with basic skills provision
 4. to provide the FEFC with a view of the strategic issues which relate to all institutions within the learning and skills sector, with particular reference to developments relevant to adult basic skills and ESOL
 5. to analyse the opportunities for learners to contribute to the development and evaluation of the projects in which they have taken part.

4. SUMMARY OF THE MAIN FINDINGS OF THE EVALUATION

- 4.1 Over 230 institutions responded with enthusiasm to the opportunities and challenges presented by the initiative and were creative in exploring a range of innovative approaches to the delivery of basic skills in local communities.
- 4.2 Numerous examples of good practice have been recorded. These were shared at a dissemination conference on 14 November 2001 and will be included in the Good Practice Guide.

- 4.3 Over 12,500 learners were recruited: 2321 learners were recruited through the pilot projects against a target of 2558; 10,500⁴ learners were recruited through the summer projects against a target of 15,342. The great majority of these were new basic skills and ESOL learners.
- 4.4 Approximately half of the learners recruited have indicated an intention to move on to further basic skills or ESOL learning.
- 4.5 The projects were effective in building the capacity of education providers and their partners to provide basic skills and ESOL teaching in local communities.
- 4.6 Many projects met or exceeded their targets, but outreach work in the community involves the risk of failure or under-recruitment. A small number of projects failed and a significant percentage under-recruited from their initial target group. Several encountered unexpected setbacks.
- 4.7 Establishing new provision in community settings and attracting learners who have not previously accessed formal learning requires time. Careful research and planning are essential and it is important that partner organisations are involved at an early stage. The funding available for development was crucial to the success of projects. However, the tight timescale for the projects limited the groundwork that institutions were able to undertake.
- 4.8 Effective partnerships between providing institutions and local community organisations were a key factor in the success of projects.
- 4.9 Linking basic skills with practical activities and learning that has immediate interest or relevance to the target group proved an effective way to recruit new basic skills and ESOL learners.
- 4.10 The great majority of the learners who completed courses felt that they had made progress and were more confident in their learning skills. The emphasis of the projects was on engaging new learners, and for many, participation was itself an achievement. Confidence to learn, to acknowledge a need for literacy, numeracy or language support and to consider progression to further learning was recognised as a significant achievement by providers, partner organisations and learners. Although accreditation was not a requirement of funding, over 1100 learners achieved external accreditation in literacy, numeracy or ESOL.
- 4.11 The availability of funding to cover specific additional costs – for example, provision of childcare, help with transport, rent of premises – and the opportunity for providers to identify the actual additional costs of the work they planned to do were vital to the success of many projects.
- 4.12 The opportunity to fund additional staff time was seen as the most important use of additional funding in terms of the success of the projects.
- 4.13 The quality of teaching observed in the projects visited was variable. Most was good or satisfactory, but there was some poor teaching. This reflects the problem a number of projects experienced in securing appropriately qualified and experienced teachers, especially over the summer period.

- 4.14 Practice in terms of initial assessment of learners and the tracking of learner progress and achievement is patchy. It is taking time for practitioners to become familiar with and confident in the use of the national standards for adult literacy and numeracy and the new curricula for adult literacy and numeracy.

5. ISSUES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- 5.1 Establishing new provision in community settings is expensive in terms of time and energy and carries with it a risk of low take-up, particularly in the short term. Funding constraints and emphasis on performance indicators such as retention and achievement work to discourage institutions from taking risks.

The LSC should consider how incentives could be used to encourage institutions to take measured risks and explore imaginative opportunities to attract new and previously reluctant basic skills and ESOL learners.

- 5.2 Adequate development time for research and planning is vital to the setting up of effective community-based provision, especially where this is undertaken in partnership.

The LSC needs to take into account the time required to establish effective new provision in community settings and the cost of this development phase.

- 5.3 Many projects will be impossible to sustain without additional funding to cover specific additional costs.

Funding for specific additional costs such as additional staffing, child care, transport or premises costs needs to be available on an ongoing basis, where it can be clearly demonstrated that these measures can remove otherwise significant obstacles to participation in learning for priority target groups.

- 5.4 Working with local communities requires specific skills additional to those required to teach within a mainstream programme. Many projects flourished due to the experience, skill or training of an individual.

A module on Basic Skills and Community Development should be available as an option within the framework of new qualifications for teachers of adult literacy, numeracy and ESOL.

- 5.5 Although linking basic skills to other learning proved successful in recruiting adults and young people who were new to learning, the project visits raised concern that in some cases, opportunities for effective basic skills teaching were being lost. This approach to delivery was new to many providers. Not all learners were aware of the aims of the courses they attended or had made a choice to improve their literacy, numeracy or language skills. The evaluators question whether 'basic skills by stealth' is an appropriate or effective approach.

There is an urgent need for research into the delivery of basic skills linked to other learning and the development and dissemination of models of good practice.

- 5.6 Some of the projects that engaged learners from the most disaffected groups were cautious about introducing any form of initial assessment or formal recording of progress in literacy, numeracy or ESOL. Their aim was to change attitudes to learning through positive and enjoyable learning experiences and to enable adults and young people to identify their need for improved literacy, numeracy or language skills in their own time through the activities presented. Such courses share the aims of the short 3-hour and 6-hour courses introduced in 2000/01, but require a longer period of time for trust to be established and barriers to learning overcome. Courses of this kind that provide a stepping stone into learning will be needed if the priority groups identified in *Skills for Life*⁵ are to be engaged and the targets for the reduction of the number of adults with poor basic skills met

Courses in which the primary aim is to engage new learners and encourage progression to basic skills or ESOL programmes need to be included in the range of strategies that are eligible for funding.

- 5.7 Although many new learners do value the opportunity to gain accreditation, there are many others for whom this is not appropriate, at least in the short term. We believe it is important that learners' achievements in literacy, numeracy and ESOL, that are not nationally accredited, continue to be valued and that they should be taken into account when progress towards national and local targets for literacy and numeracy is evaluated. The national standards supported by the new curricula provide a framework within which such achievements can be recorded. However, providers are requesting clearer guidelines on what will be expected of them in terms of systems for recognising and recording learners' achievements and evidence of achievement for audit. It was also difficult to translate records of individual learners' achievements into meaningful data for a course or project.

Providers need further guidance on the recognition and recording of non-accredited achievement and on the evidence required for audit. Further thought needs to be given to ways in which records of individual learners' achievements can be translated into meaningful data at institutional, regional and national level.

- 5.8 Experience from this evaluation would suggest that the majority of asylum seekers are well motivated to attend language classes. The effects on the recruitment and retention of asylum seekers of the government's dispersal policy provide a real challenge for institutions. Project funding enabled institutions to address the demand for courses for asylum seekers and to provide the support they required to make access to classes possible.

Flexible funding should be made available to institutions to set up provision for asylum seekers and address any barriers that currently prevent them taking advantage of learning opportunities.

- 5.9 Fifty per cent of the learners who took part in the projects signalled an intention to take further courses in literacy, numeracy or ESOL and a further 32% planned to progress to other learning opportunities. The true outcomes of these projects cannot be measured by short-term achievements alone.

A follow-up study to research the learning pathways taken by learners over the year following the project, and beyond, should be undertaken.

6. THE INITIATIVE

6.1 The pilot projects

- 6.1.1 Forty-nine external institutions were awarded funding to run a total of 63 pilot projects. The projects estimated that they would involve 2558 new learners in basic skills and ESOL provision.
- 6.1.2 Projects were offered additional funding if they had indicated on their application that they could support further learners if additional funding was available. In many cases, institutions received double the funding they had applied for. Project funding varied from £2600 to over £189,000.
- 6.1.3 The pilot projects were originally planned to run from March to June 2001, but as a result of the additional funding this was extended to August 2001 and at a later date, certain institutions were given permission to continue project activity until the end of October 2001.
- 6.1.4 Two of the pilot projects failed to run. Both have, however, provided feedback on their experiences to inform this report.

6.2 The summer projects

- 6.2.1 The FEFC allocated £7.4m to 191 institutions to run a total of 220 projects. It was estimated that these projects would attract 15,342 new basic skills and ESOL learners. Many summer projects which felt confident they could support additional learners also received funding above the sum they had originally applied for. The summer projects were planned to run between May and August 2001, but were later informed that subject to certain criteria, they could continue their activities until the end of October 2001.
- 6.2.2 Eight projects failed to run and a further two misunderstood the funding guidelines and had planned activities in 2001/02.

6.3 The funding of projects

- 6.3.1 A unique feature of these projects was the opportunity to identify the extra costs involved in outreach provision. In addition to the unit funding, calculated for the number of learners the institutions agreed to target, institutions were invited to apply for funding to cover development costs, additional costs and evaluation costs.
- 6.3.2 Funding amounting to up to 10% of the total cost of the project could be applied for to cover development costs. This could include items such as set-up costs – for staff time, partnership meetings and staff development, for example.
- 6.3.3 Institutions were also invited to indicate the likely additional costs of running the proposed programme. These were listed on the application form as:
- premises
 - transport
 - materials
 - child or dependant care
 - any additional support; for example, a signer
 - language support; for example, bilingual support staff

- residential
- other.

6.3.4 Evaluation costs of up to 5% of the total request for funding were also offered.

7. THE EVALUATION

7.1 The aims of the evaluation

7.1.2 The FEFC, in commissioning the evaluation, required LSDA and NIACE to:

- (a) support project management in the monitoring and evaluation of projects
- (b) highlight and disseminate good practice across and between projects with particular reference to innovative and effective ways of delivering basic skills and ESOL learning opportunities, recognising achievement and tracking and measuring progress within and beyond basic skills
- (c) analyse the data from projects to see whether and how they have encouraged adults with literacy and numeracy and ESOL needs to engage with basic skills provision
- (d) provide the FEFC with a view of the strategic issues which relate to all institutions within the learning and skills sector, with particular reference to developments relevant to adult basic skills and ESOL
- (e) to analyse the opportunities for learners to contribute to the development and evaluation of the projects in which they have taken part.

7.2 Evaluation of the pilot projects

7.2.1 The LSDA was asked to undertake the evaluation of these projects within its core grant. However, the FEFC, on the advice of the Project Management Group, decided that additional funding should be made available for support of the projects. LSDA submitted a successful tender to provide this support, working closely with NIACE and the Basic Skills Agency. The activities supported through this additional funding not only enabled the LSDA to provide support for projects, but provided access to valuable qualitative information that has informed this report.

7.2.2 The evaluation of the pilot projects has drawn on evidence from:

- the final evaluation reports submitted by each project
- brief evaluation reports from partner organisations
- reports of 24 visits undertaken by a team of three project advisers, regional development officers for the Basic Skills Agency and the project manager
- reports on telephone interviews undertaken by project advisers with projects not visited
- contact with projects through seminars and summer workshops.

7.3 Evaluation of the summer projects

7.3.1 LSDA and NIACE in partnership were awarded the contract to undertake the support and evaluation of the summer projects. As with the pilot projects, the activities designed to support the projects also served to provide valuable feedback on the work being undertaken.

7.3.2 The evaluation of the summer projects has drawn on evidence from:

- the final evaluation reports submitted by each project
- learner evaluation forms
- reports from 18 visits undertaken by a team of six project advisers
- feedback from telephone contacts made with projects by project advisers
- contact with project staff at regional workshops
- a closed e-mail group.

7.3.3 Partner evaluation forms were received from some summer projects and case studies and learner evaluations from some pilot projects. These have, wherever possible, been taken into account in preparing this report.

7.4 The final evaluation reports from projects

7.4.1 A *pro forma* was provided for both the pilot projects and the summer projects. These were very similar in content. The *pro forma* for the pilot projects was made available as an electronic version. The *pro forma* for the summer projects was designed to be scanned for easier processing of the information and was only available as a hard copy. Copies of the forms are included in **appendix 2** and **appendix 4**.

7.4.2 The *pro forma* for the pilot projects included a one-page evaluation form for partner organisations (**appendix 3**) Forms were returned by 50 organisations.

7.4.3 The nature of the final evaluation report and the type of information required were addressed in the implementation seminar for both rounds of projects. This report has drawn evidence from reports from 45 institutions that ran pilot projects and 133 institutions that ran summer projects.

7.5 Learner evaluation

7.5.1 A simple learner evaluation form was devised and distributed to the summer projects: 776 forms were analysed for this report (see **appendix 5**). Some projects preferred to use their own evaluation forms and many submitted completed copies of these with their reports.

8. SUPPORT FOR THE PROJECTS

8.1 The project advisers and project visits

8.1.1 Visits to the pilot projects were selected to include a representative sample in terms of the size of projects, the target groups and geographical location.

8.1.2 For the summer projects, each project adviser was asked to undertake three visits within the region allocated to them. It was agreed that, where possible, these should cover:

- a large project
- a small project
- a project involving ESOL learners
- a project that was delivering basic skills or ESOL through other learning.

8.1.3 All the project advisers who undertook visits had experience in the delivery and management of basic skills including community-based provision.

8.1.4 A checklist for project visits was devised for the pilot projects. The same checklist was used for the visits to summer projects (see **appendix 1**). The checklist provided the framework for visit reports.

8.2 Telephone support

8.2.1 Project advisers undertook telephone interviews with the majority of the pilot projects that were not visited. The project visit checklist was used to provide a framework for these interviews although not all sections could be addressed. Brief reports were submitted on these interviews.

8.2.2 For the summer projects, the project advisers signalled their availability to provide support over the telephone or e-mail at the workshop for their region (see section 8.4 below). They also attempted to contact all projects to introduce themselves and discuss the progress of the work. Due to the timing of the projects and the fact that contact details for projects were not available to the LSDA and NIACE until mid-June 2001, it proved difficult to get in touch with staff for all the projects.

8.3 Implementation seminars

8.3.1 The LSC organised implementation seminars for both the pilot projects and the summer projects. The LSC also arranged a seminar for the pilot projects at which the Basic Skills Agency introduced the Fast Track assessment pack.

8.4 Regional workshops

8.4.1 In addition to visits and telephone support, LSDA and NIACE arranged six regional workshops in July 2001. These were planned to cater for coordinators of the summer projects, but as a result of advertising these to the e-mail group, a number of staff from pilot projects also applied to attend and were given places. The inclusion of staff from the pilot projects, which in most cases had been running longer than the summer projects, was valuable in enabling the experience of the earlier projects to be shared.

8.5 E-mail group

8.5.1 NIACE set up a closed e-mail group that included both pilot and summer projects. This ran from June to October 2001 and provided a valuable means by which project staff could communicate. It also provided a quick and easy means for the LSC, LSDA and NIACE to share information with projects. Not all projects participated actively. Some project staff were not able to access e-mail but for those who did use it, the group provided a forum for some lively debate. The group was closed at the end of October 2001, but members have been included in the ongoing NIACE Basic Skills e-mail group.

8.6 Good Practice Guide

8.6.1 In addition to the final report for the LSC, LSDA and NIACE will produce a guide to good practice in the delivery of community-based basic skills and ESOL. This will be based on the findings of the evaluation and, in addition to a dissemination event, will provide a means whereby good practice can be shared between the institutions that undertook projects and with other institutions that may wish to develop community-based provision.

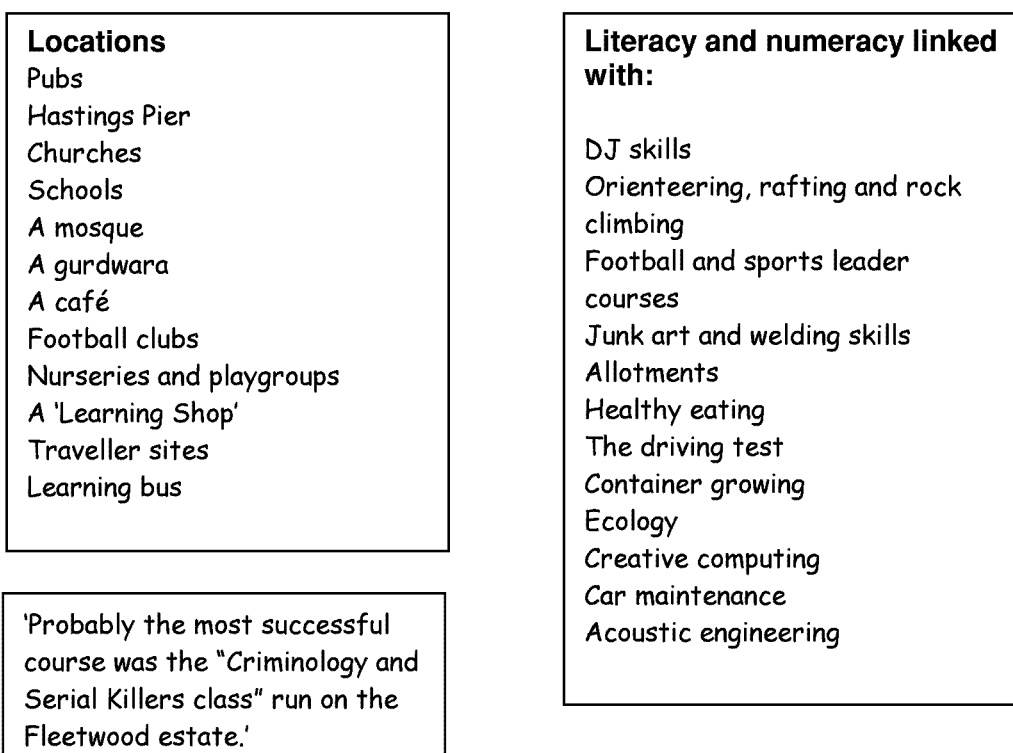
8.7 Dissemination event

8.7.1 A dissemination event was held on 14 November 2001. Project coordinators and staff, together with staff with responsibility for basic skills and ESOL within local LSCs were invited to attend. Workshop sessions were run by successful projects.

9. INNOVATION

- 9.1 The opportunities provided by the project funding were welcomed with enthusiasm. The project advisers felt that the initiative had 'taken the lid off something'. It opened the way for institutions to offer educational experiences to learners that they were not able to provide under recent funding regimes. Many staff enjoyed the opportunity to think in creative and innovative ways. One project adviser commented that she had been amazed at the lengths to which institutions had been prepared to go to attract new learners. Others commented on the energy, enthusiasm and commitment that some staff had given to the projects.
- 9.2 The enthusiasm noted by the project advisers was evident in the eagerness of participants in the workshops to talk about their projects and the efforts many projects have made to provide case studies, photographs, additional information and examples of paperwork alongside their final reports.
- 9.3 Figure 1 provides some examples of the innovative approaches attempted.

Figure 1 Examples of innovative approaches



Partners

Foyers
Family centres
A recording company
Outward Bound
Tenants' Associations
The Big Issue
Housing Departments
Hostels for the homeless
Wildlife Trust
Community organisations for ethnic minority groups
Local surgeries and health visitor teams
Rural community council
Social Services teams
Mental Health Associations
Traveller Education

ESOL linked with:

Community interpreting
DIY Changing rooms
Gardening
Dressmaking
Indian head massage
Men's hairdressing

Outings and visits

A zoo
Museums
A newspaper office
A local market
The seaside

'The project was initially conceived as being based around the 'Age of Empires' computer strategy game.'

- 9.4 It is worth noting that in cases where the activities undertaken reflected practice that is already successful elsewhere, these often represented a completely new venture for the institutions concerned; the projects thus enabled institutions to build their capacity for community-based learning.

'All of this work, was for us, extremely developmental.'

'The project was the first of its kind for the college.'

10. ENGAGING NEW BASIC SKILLS AND ESOL LEARNERS

10.1 Overall recruitment

- 10.1.1 Over 12,500 learners were enrolled by the institutions that returned forms in time for inclusion in this report: 2321 were enrolled on the pilot projects and 10,500⁶ on the summer projects.
- 10.1.2 The original target number of new learners provided by institutions for the pilot projects was 2558. The target for the summer projects was 15,342.
- 10.1.3 The failure to meet the target figures reflects the setbacks a number of projects experienced in getting projects underway. It also reflects the degree to which institutions underestimated the difficulty of recruiting the learners in

their target groups. The fact that the additional funding, though welcomed, was unexpected and the timescale for the projects short also served to make the targets unrealistic. Putting on additional courses over the summer period proved difficult for many institutions (see section 20.6).

10.2 Target groups

10.2.1 The groups most frequently targeted by the summer projects were:

- residents in disadvantaged areas (37% of target learners).
- new ESOL learners (18%)
- parents (16%).

10.2.2 The numbers of learners enrolled as a percentage of the targets indicate that recruitment of adults in disadvantaged areas proved more difficult than expected, while recruitment of new ESOL learners and asylum seekers and refugees exceeded targets. This reflects the high motivation among these groups recorded in the projects' reports. In some cases, institutions reported waiting lists, particularly for provision aimed at asylum seekers, which indicates a significant level of unmet demand.

10.2.3 Recruitment of adults with learning difficulties and disabilities also exceeded targets. A few projects that failed to recruit learners from their target groups adjusted their plans to cater for groups of learners with learning difficulties and disabilities who were pleased to take up the activities provided.

10.2.4 Figure 2 shows the numbers of learners enrolled from target groups.

	Summer	% total enrolled	Pilot	% total enrolled
Residents in disadvantaged areas	3498	31	760	25
New ESOL learners	2440	22	798	25
Parents	1554	14	319	10
Asylum seekers/refugees	1154	10	780	23
Learners with learning difficulties and disabilities	1000	9	96	3
Disadvantaged young people	487	4	64	2
Homeless	193	2	75	2
Other	988	9	347	11

- 82% of projects reported that 100% of learners were from their target group(s)
- 93% of projects reported that over 75% of learners were from their target group(s)
- 50% of projects reported that 100% of learners had not previously attended basic skills or ESOL provision
- 76% of projects reported that over 75% of learners had not previously attended basic skills or ESOL provision.⁸

10.3 Age and gender

- 10.3.1 More women than men were recruited: 64% women as opposed to 36% men in the summer projects; and 66% women as opposed to 34% men in the pilot projects.⁹ The number of projects targeting parents, most of whom were women, may contribute to the imbalance, but the figures reflect the pattern of recruitment in many mainstream courses. The gender imbalance among basic skills specialists at all levels must itself be a factor and will only be addressed by changes in the status and conditions of service for basic skills teachers.
- 10.3.2 Some projects deliberately set out to recruit men. A number targeted disaffected young men and it is of interest that of the men recruited, the highest percentage fell within the under-25 age group.

'The project attracted a high proportion of disaffected men under 25 (81% of learners). This profile is typical for the host organisation but unusual for our mainstream basic skills groups. It demonstrates that people whom we often consider to be uninterested in improving their basic skills *can* be worked with successfully if we go to them.'

- 10.3.3 Several courses aimed at fathers or men on disadvantaged estates experienced problems with recruitment. One of these attributed its success in recruiting a small number of new men to the enthusiasm of one male student who acted as a learning champion.
- 10.3.4 Overall, the ages of learners were well distributed. The highest numbers fell in the 26–35-year-old range, but other age groups were also well represented including the over 50s.

10.4 Ethnicity

- 10.4.1 Figure 3 provides a breakdown of learners by ethnic origin. Comparison with figures for learners at FEFC-funded colleges for 1999/2000 shows a significantly higher percentage of learners from ethnic minority groups – in particular, Indians, Pakistanis and those included under the category of 'Other Asian'.

Figure 3 Ethnicity of learners

% of all learners	Summer	Pilot	% of learners at FEFC-funded colleges 1999/2000
Bangladeshi	3.6	0.7	0.53
Black African	5.4	5.0	1.53
Black Caribbean	2.1	1.8	1.56
Black other	1.3	1.0	0.66
Chinese	1.3	1.3	0.50
Indian	6.5	8.0	1.96
Pakistani	9.0	8.5	1.80
Other Asian	6.7	4.3	0.97
White	53.0	53.0	76.49
Other	11.1	7.0	1.92
Unknown			12.08

10.5 The starting points of learners

10.5.1 Projects were asked to indicate the 'overall level' of learners at the start of the programme. These figures suggest that recruitment was targeted accurately at those with the greatest need for basic skills and ESOL support.

Figure 4 Learners' overall level at start of the programme

Percentage of learners	Summer	Pilot
Pre-entry	22	23.0
Entry 1	25	32.5
Entry 2	14	15.1
Entry 3	17	15.4
Level 1	16	9.5
Level 2	6	4.5

10.5.2 Of the learners who completed evaluation forms, 52% said they had not had any education or training since leaving school.

10.6 Problems with recruitment

10.6.1 Projects were invited by the FEFC to take a 'measured risk' and in some cases, despite considerable time and effort, projects failed to recruit sufficient numbers to run their courses. Institutions have, however, reported on what they have learnt from their experiences.

'We have learnt a great deal from this lack of success, the need to: offer an even more innovative learning programme to attract disenchanted learners; to research the wider interests of the likely participants; to allow greater time to generate enthusiasm before starting the actual programme and to clearly identify the other commitments partners and participants may have.'

10.6.2 There are many reasons why learners either do not take up opportunities or attend erratically that have no relation to the quality or appropriateness of the programmes on offer. One project had targeted an area only to discover that the residents were far more concerned about the fact that many of their homes were to be demolished than about attending courses. Teaching on a travellers' site had to be delayed for several weeks because the site was closed after a violent incident. There were particular problems in relation to the retention and attendance of asylum seekers who were frequently dispersed to other areas of the country part of the way through courses or called to attend interviews. It is important that such issues are understood by funding bodies and providers are not deterred from working in contexts that are likely to present risk of failure to recruit or complete planned courses.

'A few learners did show remarkable commitment to learning despite the many difficulties and traumas they were facing on a daily basis ...Learning is not therefore a top priority, even though the will may be there.' Project in hostel for homeless

10.6.3 Project advisers expressed concern that one or two projects were recruiting learners who already had access to provision either within their own service or with other providers. In some cases, this reflected the motivation of learners, in particular, asylum seekers, who were keen to obtain as much support as possible. Managing recruitment to ensure only new learners are enrolled may not in many cases be either possible or desirable.

10.7 Responding to known demand and stimulating demand

10.7.1 One project noted in its report that it had not been necessary to stimulate demand because the provider had been able to tap a demand that was already known. A number of projects were in this position. The project funding enabled them to address a need in the community of which they had previously been aware, but had been unable to address. Other projects used the opportunity to move into quite new territory. In these cases, considerable groundwork was needed and the likely response uncertain. Concern about class sizes and emphasis on retention and achievement work to discourage providers from taking risks. The project funding gave providers the opportunity to be less cautious. If the national targets for reducing the number of adults with literacy and numeracy needs are to be met, it will be necessary to ensure that there are incentives for providers to explore work with communities that present the greatest challenge in terms of participation.

10.8 The features of projects that helped to attract new learners

10.8.1 The final report form asked projects to list three features of their project that helped to attract new learners. Figure 5 lists the features that were mentioned most frequently. The features listed are elaborated in the case studies and echo the opinions of the project advisers.

Figure 5 The features of your project that helped attract new learners

The way in which the programme was delivered:

- community venues, local, accessible, familiar
- flexibility in courses and programmes to suit learners' needs
- the learner-centred approach of staff.

The nature of the programme offered:

- innovative programmes in which basic skills are linked with other learning
- practical activities, outdoor activities and trips
- access to ICT.

Partnerships with community organisations

The support offered:

- student support, bilingual support and progression opportunities
- travel costs for learners
- childcare provision.

Individuals:

- development workers and others who know the target community
- commitment, hard work, sensitivity, expertise of staff.

10.9 Venues

- 10.9.1 Venues that are local and easily accessible were seen by the great majority of projects as important and learner evaluation forms strongly endorsed this opinion. In many cases, using a venue that was familiar to the learners and 'safe' was important. Asian women attending ESOL classes appreciated venues where they were assured they would not be required to mix with men. In many cases, partner organisations provided accommodation.

'It was interesting to see how important it was for the women to have the project run in the community venue where they felt comfortable and in some cases had other family members on site involved in other activities.'

Project report

'Knowing I saw my husband in the same place as me has given me confidence and my good friend Helen doing this course. Knowing they are there has given me confidence.'

Learner's writing

- 10.9.2 Suitable venues can be hard to find. One project failed to run because problems in locating a suitable venue delayed the start, while another project was let down by a series of partner organisations before finding an appropriate base. While many projects used premises in the community free of charge or at reasonable rates, several commented on the high cost of hiring venues.

In order to secure venues it was necessary to pay location costs which had not previously been a factor. These costs ranged from £10 to £100 per hour and were a high expense...

When working with the voluntary sector it is not always possible to negotiate these costs as many organisations rely on this funding element to function on a day to day basis.'

Project report

- 10.9.3 Community venues are not always ideal as teaching venues. A number of learner evaluation forms commented on problems with venues, particularly in relation to the use of IT. Setting up IT equipment was often the job of the tutor or coordinator and caused headaches in a number of cases.

10.10 The nature of the programme offered

- 10.10.1 The great majority of the projects offering literacy or numeracy chose to link learning in these areas with subjects that they felt would appeal to their target audience. Figure 1 includes examples of the many courses that were offered. The degree to which the basic skills element of the courses was made explicit to the learners varied from project to project and from course to course within projects. In some projects, staff were wary of references to the skills of

reading, writing, numeracy, while other projects were 'upfront' about the aims of the courses.

'The fact that it allowed students to follow an interest or hobby made it feel less like 'being back at school'. It took away the fear of being patronised or made to feel stupid if literacy or numeracy skills needed improving.'

'Programmes had imaginative themes with "hidden" literacy, numeracy and ESOL.'

'Linking basic skills to the themes was even more popular and productive than we had anticipated. The themes ranged from gardening for Bangladeshi women to computing, health and leisure, and living in Manchester.'

'The emphasis on practical learning sessions within the local community is seen as removing barriers to learning previously experienced by these learner groups.'

'One of the strengths of this project was that both courses (focusing on the written driving test and located in a football club) successfully engaged socially excluded individuals. This included five participants who had been referred through New Deal but had never attended New Deal provision. ... Most were known to the Basic Skills Service as previously early drop-outs of basic skills classes.'

Project adviser's report

10.10.2 ESOL courses were more frequently offered in a direct fashion. No stigma is attached to the need to learn English for those for whom it is not their first language.

'Our ESOL classes are more successful in terms of recruiting than literacy and numeracy. We still detect a noticeable reticence to come forward on the part of those with literacy or numeracy needs.'

10.10.3 Guidance notes for the summer projects indicated that a minimum of 50% of the course time should be devoted to basic skills or ESOL. Project advisers who undertook visits were asked to estimate the percentage of time given to basic skills learning within the courses observed. Estimates varied from 0% to 100%. These figures reflect the tension many projects faced in relation to the priority they placed on participation or on learning in literacy, numeracy and ESOL. It also relates to the concern detailed in the following paragraph. Both issues are dealt with at greater length in sections 18 and 19.

10.10.4 Project advisers expressed considerable concern about both the quantity and the quality of basic skills learning within many of the integrated courses they observed. They concluded that there was an urgent need for models of good practice to be developed and shared in the integration of basic skills with other learning. Valuable discussions on this subject took place at some of the workshops for the summer projects.

10.10.5 The role of IT in the motivation of new learners is well known, and IT was used by many projects. In some cases, this was the main focus of the programme. In other cases, ICT was introduced as a tool within the course or as an additional element. Learners' evaluations placed this as the second most important factor that helped them decide to take the course.

10.10.6 Residentials formed part of a number of projects. In all cases, these were received with enthusiasm by learners.

10.10.7 Outings and visits were also popular, particularly in projects that involved parents and children (see Figure 1). In some cases, the planning of these provided a focus for basic skills development. Visits to enable learners to become familiar with institutions where they could access further educational opportunities were part of the progression planning in some projects. Visiting speakers also contributed to many courses providing expertise in a wide range of areas.

10.11 The role of partner organisations in recruitment and retention

'... (the partners) were vital to the word of mouth recruitment of the projects.'

Project adviser's report

10.11.1 Partner organisations played a significant role in the recruitment of learners in many projects. However, several reports highlighted the danger of assuming that because a partner had identified a number of clients with basic skills needs, these would come forward to join courses.

'...we had meetings with the community organisation who assured us that there would be plenty of interest in the courses. However...this did not prove to be correct. This highlighted the importance of ground work and marketing the target audience.'

10.12 The role of individual workers in recruitment and retention of learners

10.12.1 Individual members of staff both within provider institutions and partner organisations often played a key role in the recruitment and retention of learners. Individuals who work closely with a community, such as community development workers, are well placed to encourage those they work with to take up opportunities. A member of staff in a centre based on a local estate was instrumental in identifying and engaging the interest of a group of young men who joined a Junk Art project.

10.12.2 The ability to speak the languages of the target group and an understanding of cross-cultural issues can be vital to recruitment of some ESOL learners.

'The centre worker for the Family Learning group was most important for recruitment for this group, coming from Sylhet herself.'

10.12.3 A development worker at a local school was pivotal to the success of a project that attracted women from a local estate. In some cases, it was the

vision, drive and commitment of individual workers that was central to the success of projects.

10.13 Word of mouth

10.13.1 Considerable effort was put into marketing by projects. Some staged exciting and colourful events. A Foyer involved in one project devised a marketing plan to attract learners to courses. Many projects produced leaflets and posters to advertise their courses, but in very few cases were these seen as a significant factor in recruitment. Word of mouth was usually felt to be the most effective approach and this is borne out by the learner evaluations (see Figure 6). Where recruitment failed, over-reliance on paper-based advertising was often a factor.

10.13.2 In one project based in a hostel for homeless men, two male members of staff spent considerable time simply 'hanging around' in the hostel getting to know the men who stayed there. Development workers linked to another project attended Bingo sessions to get to know the local community and spent time knocking on doors to tell people about the project. Gaining the trust of potential learners and sharing information about opportunities by word of mouth takes time and costs money. The importance of funding for development activity is discussed further in section 16.

10.14 The learners' views on recruitment

10.14.1 Figure 6 summarises the responses to questions about recruitment on the learner evaluation form.¹⁰

Figure 6 Summary of feedback on recruitment from learner evaluation forms			
Q1 How did you find out about the course			
I read a poster or leaflet	25%	A friend told me	23%
Someone invited me	33%	Another way	27%
Q2 Please tick any of these if they helped you decide to take the course			
It is near my home	44%	My friends come here	30%
Using computers	44%	Improving my maths	14%
Improving my English	40%	Help with childcare	13%
It is a place I know	37%	Help with transport	8%
Improving my reading/writing	34%		

11 RESPONDING TO THE NEEDS OF LEARNERS

11.1 The application form for project funding asked institutions to explain how they would make their project responsive to learners' needs. At this early stage, the

responses often reflected the institutions' own assessment of what the learners' needs might be. The use of local and acceptable venues, course content adjusted to the needs and interests of the target group, and the provision of appropriate support were identified as important. Each of these is discussed in other sections of this report.

'This particular strand of the project focused on Belvedere which has a sizeable ethnic minority population, especially Punjabi-speaking families, many of whom work long hours in local factories. Having a limited command of English and often low levels of literacy they are unable to progress beyond the factory floor. Community workers had reported that they were often too tired to go out to English classes and having been in England for a long time without going to structured English classes, felt anxious and uncomfortable about making that crucial first step.

An evening class was set up in the local community centre - easily accessible and already familiar to the group - to offer a taster of language learning activities, an easy-pace mix of simple writing tasks and communication skills, with the aim of dispelling any fears about learning English.

Eight Punjabi-speaking adults attended the 2-hour class for 12 weeks. Having settled into the class routine they participated enthusiastically and started to make progress. Most of them are now eager for the class to resume.'

Case study

- 11.2 The final report form asked projects to indicate how they had consulted with their learners and to describe any ways in which they had changed their provision in response to learner feedback.
- 11.3 Of the choices provided, group discussion and individual interviews were used most frequently to consult learners. Forms were used by 50% of projects, but other methods reported by projects included:
- questionnaires
 - a student consultative group
 - feedback through key workers, outreach workers and staff of partner organisations
 - an open day
 - evaluation of learning materials with learners
 - ongoing verbal feedback and informal contact.
- 11.4 Evidence from visits would suggest that the last method listed above was an aspect of the great majority of successful projects, often in addition to other, more formal approaches. Partner evaluations made frequent reference to the responsiveness of staff from providing institutions. Projects' own evaluation reports often cited flexibility as a factor that contributed to success.
- 11.5 Projects reported a wide range of ways in which they had changed in response to learner feedback. These included changes to:
- the timing of courses; for example, the days and times
 - the delivery method; for example, flexibility of hours to provide a 'drop in' facility
 - course content; for example, the addition of differentiated provision

- support; for example, more interpreters and extension of bilingual support
- the programme – unpopular courses and centres were dropped
- the length of courses.

11.6 Reference was made to the need for future planning to take into account the feedback obtained from learners within the project.

11.7 Institutions were encouraged to involve learners in the evaluation of projects at the implementation seminars and a learner evaluation form was designed and distributed to the summer projects. References to the learners' responses are included throughout the report.

12. BUILDING CAPACITY FOR PROVISION OF BASIC SKILLS AND ESOL IN LOCAL COMMUNITIES

12.1 Many projects commented on the opportunity the projects provided to develop their understanding of community-based provision.

'The Basic Skills in Local Communities programme has been a great learning process in which we have gained the knowledge and experience to adapt our current methods and procedures to ensure future success.'

'The grant enabled us to unlock the potential of the centre by removing limiting factors such as the number of teaching classrooms and limited teaching staff as we could use rented premises and recruit more staff. The project (has enabled us) to expand our capacity.'

'This has been a useful project for the members of staff involved. The staff development aspect of this project should not be underestimated.'

'It was good to see risk being taken and evaluation planned with a view to using this model for similar courses in other communities.'

Project adviser's report

12.2 Figure 7 lists the ways in which projects helped institutions to build capacity. The slightly less enthusiastic responses from the pilot projects may reflect the fact that a higher percentage of former external institutions had previous experience of this type of activity.

Figure 7 Responses to the question: ‘Please indicate the ways in which the project has increased the capacity of your own institution and/or that of partner organisations for delivery of basic skills or ESOL learning opportunities in local communities?’

Percentage of projects selecting item	Summer	Pilot
New opportunities for promotion of basic skills and ESOL	89	84
Gained the confidence of the target community	82	77
New skills and experience	80	74
Better understanding of the target group(s)	84	82
Strengthening of existing partnerships	72	67
New partnerships	69	57
Staff training	40	46
Recruitment of specialist staff	33	36
Other	19	21

12.3 In addition to the choices above, institutions reported that:

- the project raised the profile of basic skills and ESOL in the college
- it embedded development work into the college curriculum
- it enabled the development of materials for specific target groups
- it provided valuable experience and insight into the concept and practice of student mentoring
- it developed awareness and the opportunity to develop outreach
- it increased awareness of basic skills and increased demand
- it helped us develop a framework for good practice in community learning.

12.4 Some projects chose to use part of the funding offered over and above the sum they applied for to build capacity through staff training. One institution took the opportunity to offer seven multilingual volunteer tutors, assistant tutors and classroom assistants a course leading to the Initial Certificate in Teaching Basic Skills – ESOL (City and Guilds 9281–2). This has ensured that they had the support they needed to run four further ESOL programmes in autumn 2001.

12.5 A project that focused on courses for community interpreters funded initial training for over 20 teachers and support workers who assisted learners with literacy, numeracy and language as well as portfolio development and IT. These staff were recruited from the local ethnic minority communities and in many cases, had themselves undertaken the community interpreters’ course.

13. WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP

13.1 The partners

13.1.1 Institutions worked with a very wide range of partners. Some of the more adventurous partnerships are listed in Figure 1. Forty per cent of projects worked with four or more partners. It was, however, the quality of the working relationship rather than the number of partners involved that influenced success.

13.1.2 Partnerships were cited frequently as one of the most important factors for the success of projects. Only a few institutions reported difficulties, often to do

with problems internal to the partner organisation or incompatible aims. Working in partnership can slow up the process of establishing provision; the number of meetings required was raised at the workshop sessions. There is also a need for both sides to get to know how the other works.

13.2 The roles played by partner organisations within projects

Figure 8 The roles played by partners in projects

Percentage of projects that selected item	Summer	Pilot
Assisted with publicity and recruitment	91	83
Provided accommodation	89	74
Involved in planning	87	72
Staff (paid or voluntary) involved in delivery	54	56
Member of steering or advisory group	50	47
Provided additional learner support	42	41
Other	15	26

13.2.1 Voluntary organisations involved in the National Voluntary Organisations Partnership Programme, managed by the Basic Skills Agency, argue strongly that their role in the delivery of basic skills should be seen to extend beyond that of recruitment. This echoes the views of the voluntary organisations that took part in the Voluntary and Community Basic Skills and ESOL Fund projects, managed and evaluated by NIACE. Although recruitment tops the list of the roles that partner organisations played in these projects, many were fully involved in all aspects of the projects' work.

13.2 The views of partner organisations

13.2.1 Evaluation forms were received from 50 partner organisations working with pilot projects and 24 partners of summer projects. Figure 9 summarises the responses on these evaluations.

13.2.2 The great majority of partner organisations that returned forms signalled a wish to continue making provision for basic skills or ESOL available to their clients or members. Some had firm plans to do so; others need to identify funding to support this. Many planned to continue their partnership with the providing institution. A few referred to obtaining training for their own staff to deliver basic skills. Even where projects had failed or recruited poorly, partners were keen to build on the work invested in development and learn lessons from the experience.

Figure 9. Summary of partner evaluation forms

Please describe the benefits you hoped to gain for your organisation and its members

The responses of partner organisations fell into the following categories. The categories are listed in order of the frequency of the responses.

1. Easy access to learning, particularly basic skills and ESOL, for their members.
2. Members are able to take up educational opportunities outside the organisation.

Figure 9 continued

3. The increased confidence and self-esteem of the members.
4. The engagement of their members in their own community and within the organisation.
5. The extension of the support provided to their members, including a broader range of skills for their staff and greater use of the centre.
6. (specific to projects working with parents and children, eg schools) Parents are able to support their children's learning.
7. Partnerships.

Has the project achieved the outcome you expected?

The great majority answered 'yes' to this question, some with considerable enthusiasm: 'it exceeded my expectations.'

Those responses that were qualified often expressed disappointment at the low numbers recruited, but recognised the value of the projects to those who did take part. There was also recognition that the work provided a basis for further activity in the future.

What helped to make the project a success?

Responses to this question can be summarised as follows. Responses are listed in order of their frequency.

1. The skills, quality, professionalism, dedication or hard work of the tutors.
2. The support made possible by additional funding including:
 - additional staffing, high staff:student ratios
 - free crèche provision
 - transport
 - time to set up the project.
3. The resources available, including access to laptops.
4. The use of a local, familiar venue.
5. The approach, the relationship of tutors with the learners.
6. The organisation of the provider, the coordination.
7. Working in partnership at individual and organisational levels.

'Given that our students have enduring mental health problems, both their commitment and their work rate exceeded my expectations as a mental health

13.4 Factors that influence the effectiveness of partnerships

- 13.4.1 Projects that were able to build on partnerships that had already been established were often more successful than those that needed to identify new partners.

'We realised that it takes a long time when starting from scratch and without a supporting local infrastructure (people and appropriate accommodation) on which to base the work.'

13.4.2 Project advisers suggested the following are necessary for effective partnership:

- sufficient time to establish partnerships and plan together
- both partners to be clear about their roles
- learners' goals are central
- both partners know what they will be getting out of the partnership
- both partners respect the ways of working of the other and are flexible.

14. LEARNERS' ACHIEVEMENTS AND PROGRESSION

14.1 Learners who achieved external accreditation in literacy, numeracy or ESOL

14.1.1 There was no requirement for projects to offer external accreditation, although it was expected that learners' goals and achievements would be recorded and mapped to the national standards for adult literacy and numeracy. A number of institutions did offer learners the opportunity to gain external accreditation (25% of pilot projects and a smaller percentage of summer projects). Some commented that they would have done so had the timescale been longer and others said that accreditation would be offered on courses to which learners planned to progress.

14.1.2 External accreditation offered included:

- units of Wordpower and Numberpower (City and Guilds)
- Pitmans English for Speakers of Other Languages examinations
- Open College Network units.

Figure 10 Numbers of learners who achieved external accreditation in literacy, numeracy or ESOL

	Summer	Pilot
Pre-entry level	185	0
Equivalent to Entry 1	236	135
Equivalent to Entry 2	70	23
Equivalent to Entry 3	133	52
Equivalent to Level 1	260	16
Equivalent to Level 2	36	1
Total	920	227

14.2 The achievements of learners in literacy, numeracy and ESOL that were not accredited

14.2.1 Projects were requested to provide the numbers of learners who had achieved targets covering the national standards at a particular level. They were also asked to provide the numbers of learners who had achieved targets 'within' a particular level. As many of the projects visited were either not using

the standards, or were in the process of introducing the use of these, the figures must in many cases be estimates and should be treated as such. (Although projects were requested to list learners under only one of these categories, the figures suggest that in many cases learners were included in both – see Figure 11.)

Figure 11 The number of learners who achieved targets covering the standards at a particular level. (The same learner may be entered for different skills.)

Summer projects only

	Pre-entry	Entry 1	Entry 2	Entry 3	Level 1	Level 2
Listening and Speaking	252	205	209	121	121	60
Reading	194	126	105	92	79	50
Writing	149	119	87	77	83	44
All three skills	239	349	158	148	127	72
Numeracy	23	50	82	68	45	40

The number of learners, not included in the above table, who achieved targets within a level but did not cover all the elements at that level. (The same learner may be included for different skills.)

	Pre-entry	Entry 1	Entry 2	Entry 3	Level 1	Level 2
Listening and Speaking	113	540	415	307	416	167
Reading	233	451	389	311	467	137
Writing	178	520	357	369	550	152
All three skills	229	475	470	453	447	186
Numeracy	79	209	160	203	287	118

14.2.2 This exercise demonstrates the potential of the national standards to provide a framework for summarising individual achievements, but also the pitfalls. While it is meaningful to describe an individual learner's achievements at different levels, reflecting a 'spiky profile', it is difficult to use such information to summarise achievements for a course or institution. The information in Figure 11 does not provide evidence of the 'distance travelled' by learners. With hindsight, it might have been more useful to have asked projects to report on the number of learners who had progressed from one level to another in one or more of the skills. However, experience from project visits suggests that many institutions would not have been able to provide accurate information in this format.

14.2.3 Visits to projects and projects' own reports indicated that familiarity with the national standards for adult literacy and numeracy and confidence to use these in setting learner goals was not as widespread as had been anticipated. However, staff in many institutions were still waiting to undertake the intensive training on the new curriculum and cited this as one reason for the delay in incorporating the standards into their planning or recording systems. Project advisers did report very positive feedback on the value of the new curricula where these were being used.

14.2.4 Initial assessment poses a challenge when learners are fragile or have been encouraged to enrol through the offer of other learning. Some projects made no attempt to screen or assess learners, possibly because they felt existing

assessment tools were inappropriate. A number argued that it would be inappropriate.

When engaging 'a reluctant and troubled client group...it would have been counterproductive to conduct diagnostic assessments.'

14.2.5 Other projects explored ways in which learners' starting points could be established in sensitive and unobtrusive ways. One project developed an assessment based on an ice-breaker. In many cases, starting points for learners were identified by the tutor through an initial interview or simply by observation during course activities. Models of good practice in initial assessment in short courses and outreach contexts need to be developed and disseminated. Some examples, taken from the projects, will be included in the Good Practice Guide.

'It was agreed that the programme would focus on the 'Top 10 Basic Skills in Housing'. Learners and tutors agreed individual learning plans for initially two weeks. This was then reviewed if the learner decided to continue...Tutors focused on the immediate skill requirements expressed by the learner and took this as a basis for initial assessment of level. We felt that too lengthy an assessment process could be off-putting, so tutors used the first piece of work produced by the learner as an assessment tool. They were then able to focus on the skill area requested and work towards individual curriculum targets...This 'small step' approach did provide motivation and confidence.'

14.2.6 The Fast Track assessment pack was introduced by Basic Skills Agency staff at a seminar for staff from pilot projects and in a less formal way at the workshops held for the summer projects. There was, however, little evidence from the visits or reports that this was widely used.

14.2.7 Practice in recording learner progress was patchy. Many projects used the systems and paperwork devised for mainstream programmes. Others felt these were unsuitable and devised simpler alternatives for the community courses.

One large pilot project enabled learners to access a menu of 'non-threatening, recreational courses that had a defined focus on extending basic skills'. Basic skills learners had access to one-to-one tutorial support in addition to the timetabled sessions, and paperwork was devised to enable learners to record their basic skills achievements across a range of learning experiences.

14.2.8 A small number of projects visited made no attempt to record individual learning.

14.2.9 Institutions are asking for clear guidelines relating to the recording of achievement for non-accredited learning. They need to know what is expected by inspectors and auditors and how information on achievement will be collected by the local LSCs. They also want clear guidelines for their management information system (MIS) managers.

- 14.2.10 The LSDA is currently developing a national methodology for recording achievement in non-accredited learning. LSDA is also completing work on good practice in the recognition of learning outcomes and achievement in non-accredited basic skills and ESOL. Further work is needed on appropriate practice in the context of short courses and courses designed primarily to attract new learners. This could build on the good practice identified in this evaluation. There will be a need for a programme of dissemination and development to share the results of this work.
- 14.2.11 Providers are keen that achievements in literacy, numeracy and ESOL that are not nationally accredited continue to be valued. It is hoped that evidence of these achievements can be taken into account when progress towards the targets for literacy and numeracy is evaluated. The national standards supported by the new curricula provide a framework, but agreement is needed as to how evidence of individual learners' achievements can be translated into meaningful data at institutional, regional and national levels.

'Achieving small steps towards a personal goal over time is exactly what our participants can manage.'

Partner evaluation

14.3 Other achievements

- 14.3.1 Projects were asked to record achievements other than achievements in basic skills (see Figure 12).

Figure 12 Other achievements

Number of learners	Summer	Pilot
External accreditation in skills other than basic skills and ESOL	606	2
Greater involvement in the community	2832	1028
Gained in confidence	6427	1588
Increased their participation in or involvement with their child's school	1317	358
Other	477	756

- 14.3.2 Providers were very alert to 'soft' outcomes and provided many examples of increased confidence and self-esteem in their case studies. Partners noted the impact of the projects on their clients' confidence and engagement with their organisation. Learners' evaluation forms also provide evidence of the impact of the courses on their confidence to learn.
- 14.3.3 Some projects attempted to capture changes in learners in novel ways. Photographs of learners at the start of the course and later in the course were used by one project. Changes in physical appearance and pictures that captured the learner actively participating in activities provided evidence of a change in attitude and confidence.

14.4 The learners' views

- 14.4.1 Two questions on the learner evaluation form related to learner progress and confidence. As a result of feedback from workshop delegates no reference was made explicitly to basic skills or ESOL.

Did you make progress? Yes a lot 66% Yes a little 33% No 1%

Did the course make you more confident in your learning skills? Yes 96% No 4%

14.5 Progression

14.5.1 The project reports indicate that over 50% of learners plan to progress to further basic skills or ESOL provision.¹¹ Eighty-five per cent of the learners who completed evaluation forms indicated that they planned to take another course soon. While these may be optimistic figures, they represent a very valuable outcome for the initiative.

'I found the course very helpful, good teachers, friendly atmosphere. I was very nervous and apprehensive coming in to join the course as this was the first time I had taken up a course since leaving school in 1986. I have more confidence and will be joining new courses in the near future.'

Learner evaluation

14.5.2 The great majority of projects (83% of summer projects) indicated that they plan to follow up learners after the course is completed. We would recommend that a study is set up to obtain information on learners' progress in at least a sample of the projects. Such a study would provide invaluable information on the impact of short community-based courses on new learners and their future learning pathways.

Figure 13 Progression

Percentage of all learners	Summer projects
Plan to take up further opportunities to improve their basic skills or ESOL	51.0
Plan to take up other learning opportunities	30.0
Have gained employment	2.5

15. QUALITY OF PROVISION AND QUALITY ASSURANCE

15.1 Project advisers were asked to comment on the quality of the teaching they observed and on the management of projects. In the majority of cases, the teaching was judged to be good or satisfactory, but there were cases of poor and inappropriate teaching. These were usually in institutions that had experienced difficulty recruiting staff, particularly over the summer period and had employed inexperienced and often untrained teachers to run courses. This reflects the general shortage of basic skills teachers.

15.2 Teaching in community settings can be more challenging than teaching on mainstream courses. Use of qualified and experienced staff was cited frequently in the reports as an important factor in the success of courses.

However, the same staff are required for core programmes in term time. If community-based work is to be extended, it will be vital to ensure that sufficient qualified and experienced staff are available to deliver it effectively. Working with local communities requires additional understanding and skills and there is a case for the development of an optional module as part of the new framework of qualifications that deals with the delivery of literacy, numeracy and ESOL in community settings. Equally, there will be a need for a range of qualifications suited to the roles that members of partner organisations may play in the delivery of basic skills or ESOL.

15.3 In almost all cases, the management of the projects was reported as good. However, the timing of projects over the summer period coincided with the period when full-time staff usually take annual leave and project coordinators were therefore not always available.

15.4 Most institutions extended their usual quality assurance (QA) systems to the community-based projects.

16. FUNDING

16.1 The significance of the additional funding

16.1 There was overwhelming evidence that the additional funding and the freedom for projects to identify how this needed to be spent was crucial to the success of the great majority of projects. It is not surprising that 99% of reports indicated that the funding received for development costs had contributed to the success of the project and 96% that funding for additional costs had done so. Of more significance are the numerous comments included in additional information, case studies, institutions' own reports and partner evaluations that elaborate on this response. Learner evaluation forms (see Figure 14) also testify to the importance of the various forms of support that learners received.

Figure 14 What was the single most important use of the additional funding for the success of your project?

% of all responses	Summer	Pilot
Additional staffing	35	36
Child or dependant care	29	16.5
Materials	16	16.5
Premises' cost	7	8
Other	5	7
Transport	4	10
Residential	2	1
Language support	2	5

16.2 Funding for development costs

16.2.1 One of the clearest messages coming out of the evaluation reports is the significance of the development stage of a project. Numerous references were made to this in additional information. In addition, the evaluation form for the pilot projects included a question about what institutions would change if they ran the project again. The great majority of responses to this question included reference to more time devoted to the development stage.

16.2.2 One coordinator, recognising the importance of the development stage, had invested money from another source to run a 24-hour residential to plan for the projects prior to confirmation of funding. It is significant that the projects run by this institution were some of the most innovative and successful that were seen in the course of the evaluation.

16.2.3 Many project leaders reported that the timescale for the projects put them under pressure to set up provision quickly and as a consequence, they had not gained full benefit from the development funding. Funding needs to take account of the time as well as the costs involved in setting up new provision. Reports made reference to the use of development funding for:

- research into target group(s)
- time for identifying and meeting with partner organisations
- time for planning courses and mapping courses to the standards
- time for subject specialists and basic skills teachers to plan together
- development of materials for courses
- time to sort out the logistics of working in new off-site premises
- recruitment and training of new staff
- training and awareness-raising for existing staff.

16.2.4 Several projects felt able to use the funding to start courses with very low numbers and allow several weeks for the numbers to build. Recommendation by word of mouth takes time. Funding constraints usually limit the degree to which providers are able to allow time for a course to become established and the trust of the community to grow.

*'It (the project) built up the confidence which this particular client group needs to feel about 'new' workers before they will access what is being offered.
...Attendance in itself was an achievement for some.'*

Partner evaluation

16.2.5 Other projects encountered unexpected setbacks. The sudden closure of the pub in which the course was planned to run sent one project back to the drawing board. In rural Cumbria, Foot and Mouth disease closed the area they planned to target. Staff invested very considerable amounts of time and energy to redirect their efforts and get projects up and running.

16.3 Funding for additional costs

16.3.1 The LSC in its corporate plan places a high priority on 'improved access and participation by groups under-represented in learning and training'. It makes specific reference to overcoming 'obstacles to learning by those with specific care and childcare responsibilities'. Whether this entails taking the provision to the learners by locating classes in local premises, providing childcare free of charge or contributing to transport costs there will be an additional cost to the provider. The Basic Skills in Local Communities projects provide ample evidence, in terms of increased participation, of the significance of measures to improve access.

16.3.2 Additional staffing tops the list as the most important use of additional funding. This was used in a wide variety of ways, for example:

- to provide a subject specialist alongside a basic skills teacher

- to enable groups to be kept small
- to provide individual tutorial time
- to allow for more planning time
- to employ mentors or classroom assistants to increase individual attention.

'...the crucial role that mentoring new learners played in bringing them into college when the project was completed. Project funding enabled a flexible approach to this way of supporting "nervous/vulnerable" learners.'

16.3.3 One group for whom support has been vital is asylum seekers. Without the payment of bus fares, those in receipt of vouchers would have been unable to access provision. Refreshments are also important where courses run for any length of time.

16.3.4 Transport was important in some rural projects, but staff sometimes overestimated this need. Personal transport is essential in rural areas and many learners had their own cars. Transport was also significant in some urban areas where mothers and young children needed to travel to reach a course.

16.3.5 Support of this kind is not only required for courses to engage new learners. One report explained that the mothers of young children would not be able to progress to courses on the main college site because the distance was too great and parents needed to be available when their children returned from school.

16.4 The timescale for community-based basic skills and ESOL

16.4.1 A recurring theme of the learner evaluation forms was a wish that the courses could have been longer or would continue. As with all short-term funding, there is a danger that motivation and enthusiasm for learning will be lost and the momentum built up by projects dissipated if funding is not available to maintain provision. Many providers have identified ways in which the work started under the project funding can continue, but others have expressed concern that specific costs crucial to the success of projects cannot be covered.

'I feel I need more classes. This was a short course, just when I started to make a progress it stopped.'

Learner evaluation

16.4.2 Successful courses often create demand for further courses. Expectations have been raised not only within individuals, but also within communities.

'Other members of the centre are now extremely curious and look likely to become learners for the first time.'

Partner evaluation

16.4.3 Section 20 reports on the feedback received from project managers on the value of short-term grants.

17. ASYLUM SEEKERS

- 17.1 Ten per cent of the learners recruited by the summer projects and 23% of those on the pilot projects were asylum seekers.
- 17.2 Institutions were already aware of the demand for provision for asylum seekers in their areas, although in some cases this was a potential rather than actual demand at the time of applying for the funds. In some places such as Liverpool, there was a huge unmet demand for ESOL provision from asylum seekers and two institutions in the city responded to this through project funding.

'We have a number of clients under emergency arrangements who could be dispersed to other parts of the country once fully accepted for support. FE providers have a problem with this as their funding can be affected. Having courses that can take people quickly and without funding restrictions was most helpful.'

Partner evaluation - refugee service

- 17.3 In many ways asylum seekers are not a 'hard to reach' group. They are well motivated to learn English, but have particular support needs that cannot be met within the current funding rules. Asylum seekers in receipt of vouchers cannot pay fares to travel to class. Many walk long distances, but mothers with young children are unable to do so. Projects used the additional funding available within these projects to pay bus fares to and from classes, or to locate classes close to the place where the asylum seekers were housed. When classes were at a distance from their lodgings or crossed meal times, projects also provided refreshments to encourage attendance. Childcare was vital for mothers of younger children.
- 17.4 Asylum seekers also have particular needs and concerns. They need help to adjust to the new situation in which they find themselves and projects developed courses designed to link language learning with information about life in England, how to access services, deal with immigration procedures, forms, etc. English was delivered through sessions about citizenship issues.
- 17.5 Asylum seekers experience greater barriers to access than most other learners. Supporting asylum seekers presented challenges for providers. The attendance of the target audience was unpredictable due to the National Assylum Support Service (NASS) dispersal system. In some cases, asylum seekers were moved out of the area; while in others, predicted numbers of new arrivals failed to materialise. Attendance was also erratic as individuals were required to attend interviews with immigration officials at short notice.

'Attendance in the first week was very good, but all were unsettled when a letter was issued to the residents saying that NASS had decided to stop using temporary accommodation in London as soon as practicable. The following day there were notices posted on the wall saying that a number of refugees, including a number attending our class, would be sent to Glasgow or Coventry. This had a dramatic effect on the attendance figures.'

Case study

- 17.6 Asylum seekers need provision that is more intensive than the ESOL provision at many institutions. Projects explored a wide range of approaches to provide both the flexibility and the intensity of provision required. One project ran special sessions for new learners in which their level of English was assessed and placement arranged in a suitable class. Where a place was not immediately available, learners could access interim help through a workshop. This prevented new learners from feeling disappointed and frustrated because of the need to wait for a place.
- 17.7 Experience from this evaluation would support the evidence of other research that the majority of asylum seekers are well motivated to attend language classes. If flexible funding was available to institutions to set up appropriate provision and to address the significant barriers to access that asylum seekers face, the question of compulsion might no longer be an issue.

18. ENGAGEMENT, PARTICIPATION AND LEARNING

- 18.1 Although implicit within the application form for project funding and the accompanying information, the aims of the funding initiative were not listed for providers. The emphasis on reaching new and 'hard to reach' learners was clear and institutions were inspired to explore new and often exciting ways in which they could achieve this. Information provided by the FEFC also made it clear that the projects were expected to be rigorous in delivering learning opportunities that would enable learners to achieve basic skills goals and that these should be mapped to the national standards.
- 18.2 Many of the most ambitious projects set out to recruit learners among sectors of the population that not only experience barriers to learning such as cost, transport or childcare, but are reluctant to see formal learning of any kind as relevant to their lives. These included, for example, disaffected unemployed young people, homeless people, and men on disadvantaged estates. The success of many projects in engaging learners from these groups is documented in sections 10.2 and 10.3 of this report. In seeking to attract such learners, institutions were understandably concerned that formal approaches to assessment would act as a deterrent and were cautious about the introduction of any explicit teaching of basic skills. The emphasis was placed on engaging the trust of the learners and providing a positive and enjoyable experience of learning. As a result of the activities offered, learners often identified their own basic skills needs and expressed interest in taking up further learning opportunities in literacy, numeracy or ESOL. Some form of advice and guidance regarding other educational opportunities was an element of all the projects visited. Project reports, case studies and learner evaluations testify to the success of projects in encouraging learners to progress. Many institutions plan to follow up the progress of their learners. In some cases, however – for example, where projects worked with very transitory groups – progression may be an aim, but will be much harder to track .
- 18.3 The courses described above share many of the aims of the short 3-hour and 6-hour courses introduced in 2000/01. However, they require a longer timescale for trust to develop and barriers to learning to be broken down. If the ambitious targets for adult literacy, numeracy and ESOL are to be met, there needs to be a place for such activities among the strategies that are eligible for funding.

19. LINKING BASIC SKILLS WITH OTHER LEARNING

19.1 The great majority of projects that offered literacy or numeracy chose to combine teaching of these with a subject that they calculated would be of immediate interest to the learners and encourage them to enrol. Some ESOL courses were also linked to ICT and other topics, but ESOL courses were much more likely to be presented straightforwardly as opportunities to improve language skills. Providers clearly felt that the stigma that was felt by many adults who have literacy needs is not shared by adults who need to improve their skills in English. Many ESOL courses were targeted at asylum seekers who are highly motivated to learn English.

19.2 Literacy, numeracy and ESOL were combined with other subjects in a wide variety of ways. The following list attempts to impose some categories on the range of models used.

1. Basic skills or language support provided through double staffing to enable learners to cope effectively with the activities relating to the subject of the course. A literacy, numeracy or ESOL teacher usually works alongside a subject specialist.
2. Basic skills or ESOL offered as part of a course, but sessions for literacy, numeracy or ESOL are separate from those on the subject of the course. Basic skills or ESOL teachers and subject teachers are usually employed to lead the separate sessions.
3. The literacy, numeracy and/or ESOL skills needed to undertake the course in the subject are identified and mapped to the national standards for adult literacy and numeracy. These skills are developed alongside the activities undertaken to develop the skills of ICT, dressmaking, helping your child etc. Courses are delivered by team teaching or by multi-skilled tutors.

19.3 Further variation arose from:

- the degree to which the literacy, numeracy or ESOL element of the course had been planned to ensure opportunities for learners to develop new skills as opposed to simply using or practising existing skills
- the degree to which individual needs for basic skills were assessed and individual targets addressed
- the degree to which the literacy, numeracy or ESOL content of the course is made explicit to learners.

19.4 Project visits identified much good practice and the project reports indicate that there are further projects that could contribute to the development of such models. The Good Practice Guide will provide examples.

19.5 Feedback from the projects indicates that effective courses require:

- careful planning to map the literacy, numeracy and language requirements of the subject content and activities to the national standards and/or the national curriculum for literacy, numeracy or ESOL; and the setting of clear targets for literacy, numeracy or language learning

- skilled basic skills or ESOL teachers to identify and build on the opportunities provided by the course to assess and develop learners' literacy, numeracy or language skills
- time for the basic skills or ESOL specialist to work with the subject specialist both before and during the course to plan the delivery and the integration of the two strands of learning. Alternatively, tutors who are multi-skilled and able to plan and teach both strands
- some identification of the learner's starting point and opportunity to review and record progress and achievement in literacy, numeracy or language skills.

19.6 In many cases, the publicity made it clear that the courses were designed to help learners with their basic skills in addition to offering learning in the subject of interest. However, in other cases providers and partners were anxious that this 'upfront' approach would deter learners and, to use words taken from their own reports, the basic skills element was 'hidden' or 'disguised'.

19.7 The preceding section describes some of the reasons for this approach and underlines the effectiveness of many courses in encouraging otherwise reluctant learners to participate in positive learning experiences. In many cases, learners were given the opportunity to identify their basic skills needs and to receive advice and guidance on further learning opportunities.

19.8 This approach to basic skills 'by stealth' raises some important questions.

1. How effectively can adults develop their skills in literacy, numeracy or language when the learning goals for these skills are not shared explicitly or owned by the learner?
2. How can enrolment for courses designed to deliver basic skills or ESOL in this way be managed to ensure that those enrolled do have need of this teaching?
3. If only some of those enrolled have basic skills or ESOL needs, how easy is it to address these without alienating those who do not?
4. Is this approach justifiable or is it simply dishonest?

19.9 One learner commented on his evaluation form: 'As the course advertised 'IT' training I expected it to be only IT but it included more English than IT.' However, it is only fair to add the further comment: 'Also, I thought the course was too short', suggesting that the writer had nevertheless found the course of value.

19.10 There were cases of learners expressing interest in a course, but declining to join because they did not want to be involved in the basic skills component.

19.11 Project advisers raised the issue of basic skills and ESOL linked to other learning at an early stage in the evaluation. They were concerned about both the quantity and quality of basic skills learning that was taking place in some courses they observed. They commented on 'lost opportunities' for effective integration of basic skills and ESOL into courses that focused on IT and other

subjects and identified an urgent need to develop and share models of good practice for this approach to delivery.

20. THE INSTITUTIONS' EVALUATION OF THE INITIATIVE

20.1 Projects were invited to provide feedback on the initiative, the support offered and the evaluation. The following sections summarise their responses.

20.1 The value of short-term grants

20.1.1 The majority of responses were positive, although many were qualified.

20.1.2 The positive responses included:

- opportunity to take risks
- opportunity to undertake something different
- opportunity to 'kick-start' a new piece of work
- opportunity to work outside the restrictions of the funding methodology
- a raised profile for basic skills and ESOL in the institution.

20.1.3 These positive responses were qualified by the following concerns:

- they cannot replace sustained funding
- sustaining the work is difficult because funding for additional costs is still needed
- there is danger of good work being lost
- they do not provide a sufficiently long lead-in time for planning, consultation, thinking and recruitment of staff
- they can be very time-consuming and stressful for staff.

20.1.4 Negative responses included:

- deadlines are usually unrealistic
- core funding is more beneficial
- timescales limited flexibility.

20.2 The application process

20.2.1 Many projects acknowledged the value of the application process. It helped institutions to focus on:

- setting achievable aims
- planning with partners
- developmental aspects of the project
- target groups.

' It made us really think about what we were offering and how this would match our learners' needs.'

20.2.2 The less enthusiastic comments dwelt on the need for a longer period in which to undertake research, think a project through and plan effectively.

20.3 The implementation seminars

20.3.1 Several reports commented that the implementation seminar for the pilot projects had been helpful. Comments on the implementation event for the summer projects were less positive. Those projects that chose to comment on the seminar felt it had been 'a wasted opportunity'. The size and layout of the venue made networking very difficult and the presentations were too general to be of use. Project staff would have welcomed more concrete information or advice on the delivery of the projects.

20.4 The visits

20.4.1 Where projects had received a visit, these were much appreciated and the feedback provided was seen to be helpful. The only complaints were that in some cases, the visits took place too late in the life of the project.

20.5 The regional workshops

20.5.1 Those who commented on the workshops generally found them useful and interesting, but there were many comments on the fact that they happened too late to have any impact on the work of the project(s). Invitations were sent out as soon as names and addresses for project leaders for the summer projects were released to the evaluators. The workshops were timed to take place with the shortest possible notice in order to fit at least some of them in before the end of term. They therefore coincided with a very busy end-of-term period and happened only just before the original end date for projects.

20.6 The timing of the projects

20.6.1 There were conflicting opinions on the timing of the projects. Some felt the summer was an ideal time, noting in particular:

- it is a time when nothing else is on and parents, in particular, welcomed activities
- it is a good time to prepare for September enrolment and encourage learners to move on.

20.6.2 Others argued that the summer was not a good time for projects of this kind. Problems related to:

- difficulties with recruitment
- difficulties with attendance
- school-age children at home making it more difficult for parents to attend courses and more expensive and difficult to provide childcare
- staff take holidays at this time
- partners and employers are also in the middle of the holiday period – staff may not be available and employers are reluctant to release staff.

20.6.3 The overall message was that the summer is not 'ideal'. This impression was reinforced by the number of projects that requested permission to extend their activities into September. It was also borne out by partner and learner evaluations.

20.7 Lessons for future funding of projects

1. Projects should be timed to run during normal term times and not be restricted to the summer period.
2. Notice of the availability of funding should be as long as possible to allow time to undertake research and to plan projects appropriately.
3. The overall length of projects should be sufficient to allow time for establishment of partnerships, recruitment and the consolidation of provision.
4. Contracts for delivery of support should be in place at the earliest possible date to ensure that institutions receive support and advice in the research and planning stages and at the early stages of delivery.
5. Contracts for evaluation should be in place as early as possible to ensure that evaluation tools and processes can be shared with providers at an early stage.
6. Application forms should request details of the person to whom information, invitations to training, evaluation forms etc should be sent.
7. Institutions should have clear information relating to funding and a contact name and number for queries relating to funding.

21. CONCLUSION

21.1 The funding allocated to the Basic Skills and ESOL in Local Communities projects has succeeded in:

- encouraging the exploration of imaginative and innovative approaches to the engagement of new basic skills learners from 'hard to reach' groups
- producing a body of information on good practice that will be shared and built on
- providing basic skills and ESOL for 12,500 adults, the majority of whom are new to learning
- encouraging over 6000 learners to consider further learning in literacy, numeracy or ESOL
- generating new and effective partnerships between basic skills providers and community organisations
- building the capacity for community-based basic skills and ESOL provision within provider institutions and partner organisations.

21.2 The target figures for new learners were set by the institutions themselves and proved over-optimistic. This may provide a valuable lesson in itself. There will be no easy answers to the question as to how the challenging targets for basic skills and ESOL are met. Evidence from this evaluation, however, suggests that adults who have previously had little or no contact with education or training post school are enthusiastic about learning when opportunities are presented that have relevance to their lives.

21.3 The projects funded through this initiative worked in a very wide variety of contexts and approached the challenges in very different ways. It is impossible

to do justice to all the lessons learned, but a summary of the essential ingredients for success would include:

- careful research of the needs, interests and concerns of local communities
- provision of learning opportunities that are responsive to these
- identification of barriers to access to learning and ways in which these can be overcome
- effective partnerships between learning and skills providers and local organisations that already have strong links with potential learners
- qualified and experienced staff
- a willingness to listen to the learners
- flexibility to respond to learner feedback and cope with unexpected problems
- careful planning of courses to ensure that clear targets for literacy, numeracy or language learning are identified
- approaches to the initial assessment of learners that are sensitive and unobtrusive, but provide a starting point for the individual and enable progress to be recognised and celebrated.

21.4 The project visits and case studies make it clear that enthusiasm, hard work and a willingness to persevere in the face of setbacks are also essential. They also provide plenty of evidence that enjoyment, fun, friendships and personal growth are part of the mix.

21.5 There are implications for providers and for the LSC in terms of the timescales required to establish effective provision of basic skills in local communities and the ongoing costs of overcoming barriers to participation. These have been addressed throughout the report and are spelled out in section 5 (Issues and recommendations).

21.6 The timescale for the projects was short and the constraints of short-term funding were often not compatible with the good practice identified above. The timing over the summer period also proved difficult for many projects. Sustainability is now the key question to be addressed.

21.7 It is too early to evaluate the full impact of these projects. As many of the providers and partners acknowledged in their reports, the projects were often just a start. They provided a start for the learners who had a positive experience of learning and gained the confidence to consider joining another course; a start for the partners who are keen to continue to provide learning opportunities for their members and clients; and a start for the providing institutions which have learned lessons about working in community settings that can be built on and transferred to new contexts.

21.8 This evaluation echoes many of the messages contained in the evaluations that LSDA and NIACE have undertaken of the non-schedule 2 projects. It should also be read alongside the reports of other recent initiatives which have explored community-based approaches to engage new basic skills and ESOL learners. These include: the Adult and Community Learning Fund; the Basic Skills Community Fund; the Voluntary and Community Basic Skills and ESOL Fund; and the National Voluntary Organisations Partnership Projects.¹²

NOTES

1. Howard, U. *Stimulating demand for learning: an ideas paper on attracting new learners*. LSDA, 2001.
2. The Further Education Funding Council was replaced by the Learning and Skills Council in April 2001.
3. External institutions were institutions that received funding from the FEFC indirectly through a college of further education that acted as a sponsor.
4. A few projects did not complete the Total box on page one of the final report form. In these cases, the total number of learners enrolled has been taken from the figures provided for target groups with some allowance made for overlapping categories.
5. DfES. *Skills for Life*. DfES, 2001.
6. See note 4.
7. The target groups overlap.
8. Figures from summer projects only.
9. Excludes one large project for asylum seekers for which figures were unavailable. Inclusion of this project would have increased the percentage of men.
10. Based on learner evaluations completed on the form provided.
11. Figure 13 includes figures for summer projects only. The questionnaire for the pilot projects only requested a percentage figure in response to these questions. Analysis of these suggests that the figures for the pilot projects were very similar to those for the summer projects.
12. Further information on the Adult and Community Learning Fund and the Basic Skills Community Fund can be found on the NIACE and Basic Skills Agency websites (www.niace.org.uk and www.basic-skills.co.uk). For an evaluation of the Basic Skills Community Fund, see Lavender P and Stevens J. *Reaching the other parts: report on the evaluation of the Basic Skills Community Fund*. Basic Skills Agency and NIACE, 2001. Information on the Voluntary and Community Basic Skills and ESOL Fund is given on the NIACE website. Information on the National Voluntary Organisations Partnership Programme can be found on the Basic Skills Agency website.

APPENDIX 1

Basic Skills and ESOL in Local Communities – Pilot Projects

CHECKLIST FOR VISIT REPORT

Please use the following headings and questions as a guide in writing your report. You may use an electronic version of this document as a pro forma.

It may not be possible to address all the questions for each project, especially when visits take place early in the life of a project.

Name of adviser

Name of institution leading the project

Title of project

(Please complete separate form for each project visited)

Name(s) of staff from project met on visit

(Please indicate job titles and the organisation they belong to)

1. GENERAL

1.1 Is the work being delivered in line with the proposal?

If no, please explain in what ways it is different and give reasons.

1.2 Is the work on schedule?

If no, please give reasons.

1.3 Is spending in line with the proposal?

If no, please give reasons.

2. LEARNERS

2.1 Do the learners come from the target group?

2.2 Are those recruited basic skills and/or ESOL learners?

2.3 Have targets for recruitment been met?

Please comment briefly on the:

2.4 Motivation of learners

2.5 Views of learners

2.6 Attendance of learners

3. TUITION

3.1 Please comment on the quality and appropriateness of the tuition you observed.

You may include:

- the pattern of delivery
- initial assessment
- course planning
- session planning
- teaching methods and approaches
- use of resources
- use of mentors, classroom helpers etc.

3.2 Are learning goals for basic skills or ESOL for individual students set against the national standards for adult literacy and numeracy?

Please comment on the way in which this is done and if appropriate, attach samples of paperwork. Was use made of the curricula for adult literacy, numeracy or ESOL or the pre-entry curriculum framework?

3.3 If basic skills and/or ESOL is integrated with other learning how effective is the integration?

What is the balance between basic skills or ESOL and other learning?

3.5 Please comment on the way learning is monitored and learners' achievements are recorded.

Include:

- monitoring of progress
- recording of progress and achievement
- evidence for achievement
- recognition of achievement
- use of national standards for literacy and numeracy and the curricula for literacy, numeracy and ESOL
- recording and evidence for outcomes such as confidence, participation etc.

Please attach examples of paperwork if appropriate.

3.6 Did you see evidence of learners' progress?

4. RESPONDING TO LEARNERS' NEEDS

4.1 How effective is the support offered to learners?

Include as appropriate:

- childcare
- transport
- advice and guidance
- tutorial support
- other.

4.2 Do the learners have a voice in the project? Has learner feedback been taken into account?

5. PARTNERSHIP

5.1 How effective is the partnership between the organisations involved in the project?

Does working in partnership add value to the project?

6. PROGRESSION

6.1 Is advice and guidance on further opportunities for learning available to learners?

6.2 Are systems in place to record the progression of learners?

7. MANAGEMENT OF THE PROJECT

7.1 Comment on the management, support and monitoring of the project.

8. Please add any further comments about the project.

Include:

- issues raised by the project
- comments on the extent to which the project is innovative and replicable
- brief case studies of individual students or groups that illustrate the effectiveness of the project or a particular aspect of the work of the project.

ACTION

Please use this sheet to record any action that was agreed as a result of the visit.

Action agreed	Person responsible	Timescale

***Please leave a copy with the project manager at the end of the visit.
A copy should also be attached to your visit report.***

APPENDIX 2

Basic Skills and ESOL in Local Communities – Pilot Projects

FINAL REPORT

Name of institution

Project leader

Address

Telephone number

email address

1. Engaging with the target audience

1.1 Target group(s)	<i>Please give the target number of learners for each group targeted by your project</i>	<i>Please give number of learners from each group enrolled on your project</i>
Homeless		
Disadvantaged young people		
Asylum seekers/refugees		
Parents		
New ESOL learners		
Residents in disadvantaged area		
Learners with learning difficulties and disabilities		
Other (please specify)		
Total		

1.2	
Percentage of all learners enrolled who came from target group(s)	
Percentage of all learners who had never previously attended basic skills or ESOL provision	
Percentage of all learners who completed the programme	

1.3 Age and gender of learners *Please insert numbers*

Gender	25 or under	26–35	36–50	Over 50
Women				
Men				

1.4 Ethnicity of the learners.

Ethnicity	No of learners	% of learners	Ethnicity	No of learners	% of learners
Bangladeshi			Indian		
Black African			Pakistani		
Black Caribbean			Other Asian		
Black other			White		
Chinese			Other		

1.5 Pattern of provision – hours per week

Please indicate how many learners in your project received tuition of each kind.

Insert numbers. Count each new learner once.

2 hours per week	3–4 hours per week	5–10 hours per week	11–15 hours per week	Over 15 hours per week

1.6 Total hours of tuition received by learners over the whole project

Please indicate the number of learners in your project in the appropriate column(s)

Under 10 hours	10–20 hours	21–30 hours	31–60 hours	Over 60 hours

1.7 Would you make changes to the pattern of delivery if you ran the project again?

Please circle **YES** **NO**

If YES please briefly explain how you would change this and why.

1.8 Please note up to three features of your project that helped to attract new learners

2. Responding to learners' needs

2.1 Please indicate how many learners received the support identified

Type of support offered	Please give the number of learners who received this support
<i>Childcare</i>	
<i>Transport or transport expenses</i>	
<i>Tutorial support</i>	
<i>Interpretation</i>	
<i>Additional or double staffing</i>	
<i>Other (please specify)</i>	

2.2 Please list any other forms of support you would offer if you repeated this project

--

2.3 How were learners consulted about their needs? (Please tick)

<i>Group discussion</i>		<i>Forms</i>	
<i>Individual interviews</i>		<i>Other (please give details)</i>	

2.4 Please describe any ways in which the project was changed in response to learner feedback

--

3. Working in partnership

3.1 How many partners did you work with? Please tick

1 partner	2 partners	3 partners	4 partners	More than 4

3.2 Please indicate the roles partners played in the project and the importance of these to the success of the project.

	Please tick all that applied to your project	Please indicate how important this was to the success of the project		
		<i>Very important</i>	<i>Quite important</i>	<i>Not important</i>
<i>Member of steering or advisory group</i>				
<i>Involved in planning</i>				
<i>Assisted with publicity and learner recruitment</i>				
<i>Provided accommodation</i>				
<i>Staff (paid or voluntary) involved in delivery</i>				
<i>Provided additional learner support</i>				
<i>Other (please specify)</i>				

4. Building capacity

4.1 Please indicate the ways in which the project has increased the capacity of your own institution and/or that of partner organisations for delivery of basic skills or ESOL learning opportunities in local communities. Please tick all that apply

<i>New skills and experience</i>		<i>Recruitment of specialist staff</i>	
<i>Better understanding of target group(s)</i>		<i>New opportunities for promotion of basic skills and ESOL provision</i>	
<i>New partnerships</i>		<i>Gained the confidence of the target community</i>	
<i>Strengthening of existing partnerships</i>		<i>Other (please specify)</i>	
<i>Staff training</i>			

5. Enabling learners to achieve in basic skills or ESOL

5.1 Please indicate on the table below the estimated levels of learners at the start of the programme. The levels provided in the table are taken from the national standards for adult literacy and numeracy.
(We appreciate that learners' profiles are often 'spiky', ie they are at different levels in different skills. For the purposes of this question please indicate the level that best describes the learners' overall level. Question 5.2 provides scope for more detail)

Level of learners at start of programme	Pre-entry	Entry 1	Entry 2	Entry 3	Level 1	Level 2
Number of learners						

5.2 Please provide details of the achievements of the learners in literacy, numeracy or ESOL that were **not externally accredited**.

Under 1, please indicate the number of students who achieved targets covering the standards at a particular level. The same student may be included for different skills.

Under 2, please provide numbers for learners not included under 1 who achieved targets within a level but did not cover all the elements at that level. The same learner may be included for different skills

Skill	1. Achieved completely						2. Achieved targets within					
	Pr	E1	E2	E3	L1	L2	Pr	E1	E2	E3	L1	L2
Listening and speaking												
Reading												
Writing												
All three skills												
Numeracy												

5.3 Number of learners who achieved external accreditation in literacy, numeracy or ESOL

Level of award	Number of learners achieving external accreditation at this level	% of all learners on project
Pre-entry Level		
Equivalent to Entry 1		
Equivalent to Entry 2		
Equivalent to Entry 3		
Equivalent to Level 1		
Equivalent to Level 2		

6. Other achievements

6.1	Please give number of learners	Please give the percentage of all learners
<i>Learners who achieved external accreditation in skills other than basic skills and ESOL</i>		
<i>Learners who have a greater involvement in their community</i>		
<i>Learners who have gained in confidence</i>		
<i>Learners who have increased their participation in, or involvement with, their child's school</i>		
<i>Other (please specify)</i>		

7. Progression

7.1	Number of learners	% all learners
<i>Learners who plan to take up further opportunities to improve their basic skills or ESOL.</i>		
<i>Learners who plan to take up other learning opportunities</i>		
<i>Learners who have gained employment.</i>		

7.2 Do you plan to track the progress of learners after the course project is completed?

YES NO

8. Expenditure

8.1 Did the funding you received for development costs contribute to the success of the project?

YES NO

8.2 Did the funding you received for additional costs contribute to the success of the project?

YES NO

8.3 If yes, please indicate the single most important use of the additional funding for the success of your project. Please tick one only

<i>Child or dependant care</i>	
<i>Transport</i>	
<i>Premises costs</i>	
<i>Language support</i>	
<i>Additional staffing</i>	
<i>Materials</i>	
<i>Residential</i>	
<i>Other (please specify)</i>	

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9. General

9.1 Has the project achieved the outcomes you planned for? *Please circle one*

Yes, to a great extent Yes, to some extent Not at all

9.2 Please list three things that helped to make the project a success

9.3 Explain briefly anything you would do differently if the project were to run again?

9.4 Please add any further information you believe would be relevant to the evaluation, including any features of your project that were of particular interest, or differences between the different strands of your project.

9.5 We would welcome your comments on:

- the support you received for the project
- the visits (where applicable)

- the implementation seminars
- the value of the application process
- the value of short-term grants for development work.

Signed by Head of Institution

Name

Title

Date

Please send the completed form to:

Tola Oluwa-Dahunsi

***Learning and Skills Development Agency, 3 Citadel Place, Tinworth Street,
London SE11 5EF***

to arrive no later than 21 September 2001

APPENDIX 3

Basic Skills and ESOL in Local Communities – Pilot Projects

EVALUATION BY PARTNER ORGANISATIONS

Name of Organisation

Name and title of person completing this form

- 1. Please describe briefly the benefits you hoped to gain for your organisation and its members.**

- 2. Has the project achieved the outcomes you expected?**

- 3. What helped to make the project a success?**

- 4. What would you do differently if the project were to run again?**

Signed

Date

**Basic Skills and ESOL in Local Communities
Summer Projects - Final Report**

Name of Institution:

Project leader:

Address:

Telephone:

E-mail address:

Section 1: Engaging with the target audience

Q1 Target group(s)

*Please give the target number of learners for each group **targeted** by your project*

*Please give the number of learners from each group **enrolled** on your project*

Homeless

Disadvantaged young people

Asylum seekers/refugees

Parents

New ESOL learners

Residents in disadvantaged areas

Learners with learning difficulties and disabilities

Other (please specify below)

Total



Q2 What was the:

percentage of all learners enrolled who came from target group(s)

percentage of all learners who had never previously attended basic skills or ESOL provision

percentage of all learners who completed the programme

Q3 Age and gender of the learners (please insert numbers)

	25 or under	26 - 35	36 - 50	Over 50
Women	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Men	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

Q4 Ethnicity of the learners

	No. of learners	% of learners		No. of learners	% of learners
Bangladeshi	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	Indian	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Black African	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	Pakistani	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Black Caribbean	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	Other Asian	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Black Other	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	White	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Chinese	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	Other	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

Q5 Pattern of provision - hours per week

Please indicate how many learners in your project received tuition of each kind.
(Insert numbers, counting each new learner only once)

2 hours per week	3 - 4 hours per week	5 - 10 hours per week	11 - 15 hours per week	Over 15 hours per week
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

Q6 Total hours of tuition received by learners over the whole project

Please indicate the numbers of learners in your project in the appropriate column(s).

Under 10 hours	10 - 20 hours	21 - 30 hours	31 - 60 hours	Over 60 hours
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

Q7 Please note up to 3 features of your project that helped to attract new learners



Section 2: Receipt of identified support

Q8 Type of support offered

Please give the number of learners who received this support

Please indicate how important this support was to the success of the project:

Very Important Quite Important Not Important

Childcare

Transport or transport expenses

Tutorial support

Interpretation

Additional or double staffing

Other (please also specify below)

Q9 How were learners consulted about their needs? (Please tick)

- Group discussion
- Individual interviews
- Forms
- Other (please also give details below)

Q10 Please describe any ways in which the project was changed in response to learner feedback



Section 3: Working in partnership

Q11 How many partners did you work with? (Please tick)

- 1 partner 2 partners 3 partners 4 partners More than 4

Q12 Please indicate the roles partners played in the project and the importance of these to the success of the project.

	<i>Please tick all that applied to your project</i>	<i>Please indicate how important this was to the success of the project</i>		
		Very Important	Quite Important	Not Important
Member of steering or advisory group	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Involved in planning	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Assisted with publicity and learner recruitment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Provided accommodation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Staff (paid or voluntary) involved in delivery	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Provided additional learner support	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (please also specify below)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Section 4: Building Capacity

Q13 Please indicate the ways in which the project has increased the capacity of your own institution and/or that of partner organisations for delivery of basic skills or ESOL learning opportunities in local communities. (Please tick all that apply)

- New skills and experience
- Better understanding of target group(s)
- New partnerships
- Strengthening of existing partnerships
- Staff training
- Recruitment of specialist staff
- New opportunities for promotion of basic skills and ESOL provision
- Gained the confidence of the target community
- Other (please also specify below)



Section 5: Enabling learners to achieve in basic skills or ESOL

Q14 Please indicate below the estimated levels of learners at the start of the programme, at each level. The levels provided in the table are taken from the national standards for adult literacy and numeracy.

(We appreciate that learners' profiles are often "spiky", i.e. they are at different levels in different skills. For the purpose of this question please indicate the level that best describes the learners' overall level. The next question provides scope for more detail)

Pre-entry	Entry 1	Entry 2	Entry 3	Level 1	Level 2

Q15 Please provide details of the achievements of the learners in literacy, numeracy or ESOL that were not externally accredited.

In Table A: Please indicate the number of students who achieved targets covering the standards at a particular level. The same student may be included for different skills.

In Table B: Please provide numbers for learners **not** included in Table A who achieved targets within a level but did not cover all the elements at that level. The same learner may be included for different skills.

Table A

	Achieved completely					
	Pre E	E1	E2	E3	L1	L2
Listening and speaking						
Reading						
Writing						
All 3 skills						
Numeracy						

Table B

	Achieved targets within a level					
	Pre E	E1	E2	E3	L1	L2
Listening and speaking						
Reading						
Writing						
All 3 skills						
Numeracy						



Q16 Numbers of learners who achieved external accreditation in literacy, numeracy or ESOL:

	<i>Number of learners achieving external accreditation at this level</i>	<i>Percentage of all learners on project</i>
Pre-entry level	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Equivalent to Entry 1	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Equivalent to Entry 2	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Equivalent to Entry 3	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Equivalent to Level 1	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Equivalent to Level 2	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

Section 6: Other achievements

Q17 Please provide details of achievements - learners who have:

	<i>Number of learners</i>	<i>Percentage of learners</i>
Achieved external accreditation in skills other than basic skills and ESOL	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
A greater involvement in their community	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Gained in confidence	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Increased their participation in, or involvement with, their child's school	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Other (<i>please also specify below</i>)	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

Section 7: Progression

Q18 Please give details of learners who:

	<i>Number of learners</i>	<i>Percentage of learners</i>
Plan to take up further opportunities to improve their basic skills or ESOL	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Plan to take up other learning opportunities	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Have gained employment	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

Q19 Do you plan to track the progress of learners after the course project is completed?

Yes No



Section 8: Expenditure

Q20 Did the funding you received for development costs contribute to the success of the project?

- Yes No

Q21 Did the funding you received for additional costs contribute to the success of the project?

- Yes No (*Please go to Section 9*)

Q22 What was the single most important use of the additional funding for the success of your project? (*Please tick one only*)

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Child or dependant care | <input type="checkbox"/> Transport |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Premises cost | <input type="checkbox"/> Language support |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Additional staffing | <input type="checkbox"/> Materials |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Residential | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (<i>please also specify below</i>) |

Section 9: General

Q23 Has the project achieved the outcomes you planned for?

- Yes, to a great extent Yes, to some extent Not at all

Q24 Please list three things that helped make the project a success:

Q25 Please explain briefly anything you would do differently if the project were to run again:



Q26 Please add any further information you believe would be relevant to the evaluation, including any features of your project that were of particular interest or differences between the strands of your project:

Q27 We would welcome your comments on:

- The support you received for the project
- The visits (where applicable)
- The implementation seminars
- The value of the application process
- The value of short term grants for development work

Signed by the Head of Institution

.....

Name.....

Title.....

Date.....

***Thank you for completing this form. Please return it, by 30 September 2001 to:
Tola Oluwa-Dahunsi, LSDA, FREEPOST (BS6745), LONDON, SE11 5BR***



LEARNER EVALUATION FORM

Your views count!



We would like to know what you thought about the course. Your answers are confidential - we don't ask for your name or course, so please help us by ticking the boxes that apply to you.

Q1 How did you find out about the course?

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> I read a poster or leaflet | <input type="checkbox"/> A friend told me |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Someone invited me | <input type="checkbox"/> Another way |

Q2 Please tick any of these if they helped you decide to take this course:

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> It is near my home | <input type="checkbox"/> It is a place I know | <input type="checkbox"/> My friends come here |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Help with childcare | <input type="checkbox"/> Help with transport | <input type="checkbox"/> Using computers |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Improving my English | <input type="checkbox"/> Improving my reading and writing | <input type="checkbox"/> Improving my maths |

Q3 Was the course what you expected?

- Yes No

Q4 Did you make progress?

- Yes, a lot Yes, a little No

Q5 Did the course make you more confident in your learning skills?

- Yes No

Q6 Have you had any training or more education since leaving school?

- Yes No

Q7 Do you plan to take another course soon?

- Yes No

Q8 If there are any comments you would like to make about the course, please write them here:

Thank you for completing the questionnaire. Please return it to your teacher.

