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## **Adult Learning and Skills**

Investing in the first steps

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Department for  
**Innovation,  
Universities &  
Skills**

## Foreword

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“I was pleased and proud in the summer to be able to launch *World Class Skills*, the Government’s response to the Leitch Review of Skills. It described how our future prosperity depends on building a nation where people are given the opportunity to improve their skills and lead fulfilled lives. I now want to set out more detail on how, with our partners, we can accomplish our ambitions to deliver economic prosperity, social justice and stronger communities. This document is being published alongside the Learning and Skills Council’s Statement of Priorities and grant letter.

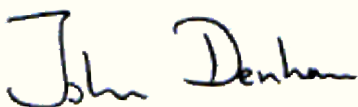
“It is vital that all groups in society are able to benefit from our reforms. Just as every child matters, so does every adult. We will not achieve strong communities and world class skills unless we can engage those who have lost out and help them progress through learning to sustainable employment. That is the key reason why pre-Level 2 learning and progression is a high priority for my Department. And that is why we are investing £1.5 billion each year for this work. This is the biggest ever Government investment in these essential skills and it is therefore crucial that we make it work for our learners, especially those who are most disadvantaged and excluded. Our joint working with the Department for Work and Pensions and Jobcentre Plus will be essential to help us achieve this.

“I want to counter the myth that the Government is only interested in Level 2 and Level 3 qualifications. I firmly believe that with the imaginative, creative and flexible use of this investment, we can both meet the immediate needs of adult learners and ensure their progression into higher level qualifications and sustainable employment.

***“pre-Level 2 learning and progression is a high priority for my Department”***

“Indeed, only by doing so can we be sure of meeting our Skills for Life and Full Level 2 targets. This publication explains how we are committed to sustaining a wide range of activities which meets the needs of all learners, enabling them to progress and gain work. I want to re-emphasise how learning contributes to stronger communities and social justice, and addresses wider concerns like health, child poverty and crime prevention. And I want to demonstrate how greater flexibility in progression and innovation in delivery will help us meet those goals.

“I’ve seen a lot of creative, inspiring adult education and I recognise the commitment and dedication of the people who make it happen. I ask everyone involved in adult learning, whatever your role, to help shape our proposals and bring them to life. Your views and your actions are crucial if we are to realise our ambitions and create a culture of learning. I look forward to witnessing the impact adult learning – whether for work or for self-fulfilment – can have on people who missed out in the past.”



John Denham, Secretary of State for Innovation, Universities & Skills

***“we are investing  
£1.5 billion each year”***

## Adult learning: a vision for the future

The recent funding settlement announced in the Comprehensive Spending Review represents the biggest ever Government investment in skills. Of the yearly total of over £3 billion invested in adult skills participation, £1.5 billion will be invested each year in pre-Level 2 learning and progression to help those who are workless learn, progress and get a job. This will also help those who are alienated from our society raise their aspirations, be part of our community and help make sure we do not waste the talents of those who – for whatever reason – have missed out on skills and qualifications earlier in life.

Through *World Class Skills*, the Government has set the agenda: to prioritise the programmes and qualifications to transform people's lives and make our communities healthier and better off. We want to foster a culture of learning. Our ambition for 2020 is:

- 95% of adults should have functional literacy and numeracy skills
- over 90% of adults should be qualified to at least Level 2
- 68% of the adult population should be qualified to Level 3
- over 40% of adults should be qualified to Level 4 and above
- to deliver our share of a UK ambition for 500,000 apprenticeships per year.

These targets are critically important in our journey towards greater social justice, a strong economy and high employment. But they are not just numbers – each individual who improves their skills and progresses represents a personal triumph and a changed life. They will also play a fundamental part in improving community and social cohesion.

The employment rate for those with no qualifications has fallen steadily from 57.6% in spring 1992 to 48.8% in spring 2007. Around 11 million people of working age have either no qualifications or qualifications below Level 2. Around 4.5 million have no qualifications, of which 300,000 are unemployed and 2 million are inactive. Supporting these people to gain skills and jobs is therefore a key Government priority in tackling worklessness and seeking to meet our aspiration of an 80% employment rate.

All adults should have the opportunity to fulfil their potential – as workers, as individuals and as members of their family and local community. But many of the people who most need help face significant barriers and will need extra support to improve their skills and secure sustainable employment. So we need to be smarter, more innovative and more creative in how we engage and support our learners. We need radical solutions that exploit the potential of technology to engage adults and deliver learning. We want to harness the

knowledge and expertise that already exists in communities and look further at the role of volunteering. But above all, we want to ensure the system has enough flexibility to meet the individual needs of learners and to enable them to progress and, ultimately, gain sustainable

employment. On the following pages you can find out more about how we are investing our funds and working with the Learning and Skills Council, Jobcentre Plus and other partners to remove barriers and support learners in taking the first steps to improve their skills.

### **“Ben”**

Ben, aged 45, had been unemployed for three years. With no formal qualifications, he was at a loss how to get back into the labour market.

Ben’s first contact was through a nextstep adviser at Peckham Jobcentre Plus. Mark Shaw, Ethnic Minorities Outreach Worker, said: “I met Ben for an interview which helped draw out his skills and identify possible job goals. We agreed on finding out more about Ben becoming a security guard or door supervisor, looking at what qualifications Ben could obtain to secure employment and how he could finance his studies.”

Ben enrolled at Southwark College – as a local resident, he was able to get a free course – and gained a City & Guilds Level 2 National Certificate in Door Supervision. In addition, Ben needed to get a Security Industry Authority (SIA) badge.

Ben got discretionary funding from his Jobcentre Plus adviser and also managed to find a job, which meant he could part-fund the SIA badge himself. He then studied for the Construction Skills Certification Scheme and for food and hygiene certificates, which helped him get immediate employment in catering.

Six months later, Ben had finished his studies and got a job with a security company.

### **Liam Jones**

Liam has Asperger’s syndrome. He has overcome huge difficulties with social skills to get training, find a job and lead an independent life.

After leaving school, Liam couldn’t get a job. He got work experience with one company, but was bullied by colleagues. Training in life skills helped him build his confidence and regain his courage and he started another work placement at Stoke-on-Trent City Council. There he was given a mentor, leading to his first employment contract as a post room assistant.

Since starting a Life Skills programme at MORE Training, Liam has gained NVQ Level 1 and 2 in Business Administration, CLAIT Levels 1 and 2 and ASDAN Level 1. Liam is now living independently of his parents and has moved into his own home with his sister.

“I feel people have accepted me as an individual now and that the difficulties I need to overcome are the same as everyone else’s,” Liam says. “I’m particularly proud that I defied the experts who said I would never be able to hold down any type of job or live independently, because I’m doing both.”

## Targeting hard-to-reach learners

People who lack skills and qualifications are more likely to be disadvantaged and socially excluded. Some 30% of the UK working age population don't have qualifications equivalent to five GCSEs at grades A\*–C.

Supporting this group is not an option but a necessity. Helping them gain skills – which for many will help them move into work – will benefit not just individuals, but their children, families and communities. And we should deliver learning with this in mind. We know Level 2 qualifications provide a sound platform for employability and progression. People at Level 2 or higher are half as likely to be unemployed as those below Level 2. They are usually more confident and ready to undertake more learning – and their employers are more likely to invest in their training. The best help we can offer the most disadvantaged is the opportunity to get the skills they need to support sustainable employment and social inclusion.

The challenge is clear – but helping everyone to attain basic skills and progress to higher skills takes time, hard work and significant funds and will involve close working with our partners including employers, the Learning and Skills Council and Jobcentre Plus. Many adults may feel uncomfortable going to the local college and might learn better in the community – for example, ex-offenders, people for whom English isn't a first language, those with learning difficulties or disabilities and those with mental ill health.

There is no 'one size fits all' approach. So we are using the flexibility of the system to develop a better, more personalised offer. Some programmes are qualification-focused and employment-oriented. Others are more informal and designed to attract those who are reluctant to engage in learning – and provide a potential starting point for progression.

- **The Foundation Learning Tier (FLT)** will create ladders for progression that help people get started by recognising learning at entry level that moves people on to achieve at Level 1. Because this can act as a springboard to further learning at Level 2 and beyond, we plan to invest over £850 million during the next three years. (Over time, and as resources allow, the LSC will concentrate public funds on programmes that align with these ladders of progression. The new entitlement for 19–25-year-olds will be extended to those programmes so there is a complete entitlement to progression up to Level 3 for 19–25-year-olds.
- **Skills for Life** offers free adult literacy and numeracy courses. We are investing over £600 million each year over the next three years to provide over 1 million functional literacy and numeracy achievements, giving adults the basic skills they need for life, work and progression.
- **ESOL** courses provide essential language skills for the workplace and help people integrate and progress. We want to build on our recent reforms and target ESOL funding in a more effective way.

- **Family Literacy, Language and Numeracy (FLLN)** is worth £25 million per year and enables parents and children to learn together to improve their basic skills, breaking the cycle of underachievement and enabling parents to gain qualifications and move on to other learning.
  - **Learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LLDD)** should receive high-quality provision and support to meet their needs and enable them to work wherever possible. This is an absolute entitlement up to age 25. In 2005/06 the further education (FE) system supported over 550,000 LLDD learners and we will continue to strive for more sustainable and seamless provision and services.
  - **Offender learning:** we want to reduce re-offending by getting people better skills and employment. We will ensure our work with offenders sits within the mainstream services and programmes we deliver to the rest of the community, to provide better value and ensure offenders have a route to further learning and employment.
  - **Personal and Community Development Learning** is usually non-vocational, informal learning and tends not to lead to qualifications – it covers a wide range, including engaging people who are reluctant to learn, and encouraging them to progress and achieve.
  - **Neighbourhood learning** will provide £20 million per year and aims to encourage the participation of people living in deprived communities and those in minority groups, with a particular emphasis on giving skills for jobs.
  - **Train to Gain** helps businesses become more productive by making sure their employees have the right skills to do the best job – and this is being extended to reach out to those without work who need training to get a specific job. In addition, the 18,000 Union Learning Reps are encouraging working people back into learning.
  - **A truly integrated employment and skills service** will target the most disadvantaged in the labour market, including those on Incapacity Benefit, lone parents and long-term unemployed people. We will work with Jobcentre Plus to ensure services offer appropriate, flexible, seamless and relevant help geared to the needs of the individual. A new universal adult careers service, building on the merged information and advice services of learndirect and nextstep providers, will provide more targeted help and promote personal advancement.
- Because we believe it is so crucial to engage the most disadvantaged groups and enable them to progress, personal and community development learning and family and neighbourhood learning will be maintained under the Adult Safeguarded Learning budget at £210 million each year from 2008 to 2011.

This package demonstrates how our annual £1.5 billion investment is divided into a variety of funding streams. However, when it comes to delivering learning, the maximum benefit is likely to be achieved when the funding is used to meet the needs of individual learners. The particular way in which ESOL, Skills for Life or the FLT are delivered is likely to determine whether the individual learner gains maximum benefit and is likely to progress. The best

advice, initial assessment and personalisation of the offer will be essential to enable success. The delivery of initial learning in a work-related environment may encourage progression to work-related qualifications. The same learning in a different setting may not. In tackling these issues, we are entrusting the FE system with a huge responsibility to make the most of this investment and ensure that it leads to progression and employment.

### **Reaching out through informal learning, volunteering and technology**

Adult learning for those worst off in our society often begins with informal learning. These groups are the most likely to benefit from learning and the least likely to seek it. Informal adult learning can cut through the barriers (both perceived and real) that stop people from learning and progressing. Enabling someone to develop the skills to get a sustainable job is the best anti-poverty strategy we can offer.

Traditional college-based courses aren't always suitable for all learners. So our offer will increasingly include learning at home, e.g. through digital TV, podcasts and the internet, offering greater flexibility and personalisation. This type of learning can benefit people hugely, even if it does not lead to progression.

Voluntary organisations are also well placed to reach out to disadvantaged communities. We plan to create volunteer schemes that will help re-engage adults and support them when they are back in learning. We have commissioned the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE) to investigate this area, and Train to Gain will be available to the voluntary sector. People who volunteer their time as Union Learning Reps are encouraging thousands of adults back into learning and we need to encourage this wherever possible.

Later this year, we will consult further on informal learning. We will look at how it is publicly funded to improve social cohesion and progression, focus on disadvantage and engage new learners.



## Helping learners progress to Level 2 and beyond

It's not enough to get learners started in learning. We need to help them into sustainable employment and to progress in work, learning and life. This is the only way we can justify spending £1.5 billion in this area each year.

Learning progression for adults can seem untidy compared to that of young people, so we need to be innovative and flexible to ensure that learning and progression fit appropriately with people's lives. All those involved – whether tutors, Union Learning Reps or support staff – should be able to use their knowledge and experience to give learners the best advice on the progression pathways and opportunities that are available to them, and which are most likely to meet their individual needs. We are introducing a range of measures to make progression simpler.

### Building the foundations for effective learning, achievement and progression

Learners need to be able to see how much they have achieved and what they need to do next. We will create flexible learning routes that start at foundation learning – learning at Entry Level and Level 1. By giving relevance and credence to informal learning, even the most difficult to reach adults can be encouraged to engage, for example through sports activities, hobbies or creative interests. They can later focus on more employer-relevant activities and work towards recognised and valued qualifications.

The LSC and the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority are working with education providers to create progression pathways that can combine recognised qualifications in ways to suit the needs of different learners and provide them with skills which employers value. We need to create a 'common currency' of learning which ensures that learning, both formal and informal, can be recognised, valued and can form a basis for the next step.

### Tracking and supporting learning progression

At present, many adults don't get enough help on what to do next. This can prevent them from fully benefiting from their learning. We will ensure that the new adult careers and advancement service is well publicised, so individuals and those helping them know where to seek professional advice.

We also need new ways to measure and monitor learners' individual progression. With more effective record-keeping across different education providers, advice to learners can be better targeted.

To meet this need, we are working with our partners to support an innovative system of learner tracking. The Learner Registration Service will give learners unique learning numbers and a personal learning record, so they can monitor their progress effectively and easily take their learning record with them throughout life.

### Asher Walton

Asher Walton didn't do well at school and left with poor GCSEs. In her early 20s, she was in hospital giving birth when there were complications.

Asher explains: "To distract me from my panic, the midwife started to tell me about the work she did and how the body and the baby work. I was fascinated! When I got home, I rang the local university to ask about their midwifery course." But Asher needed five GCSEs to enrol on the course. "I was in tears when I found out. My maths and English were poor."

After acting as a birthing partner for her sister years later, Asher decided it was time to look into her options. She found out about a local course and sat her literacy diagnostic test. She sat the real thing soon after and got the equivalent of a GCSE B grade. She also passed her numeracy test.

Asher has now started a three-year midwifery course and is well on the way to becoming a midwife. "I'm just so glad that, although I did badly at school, I've been given a chance to catch up later. I'm making my dream come true."

### Embedding literacy, language and numeracy across training

We know the positive benefits of making learning relevant to a person's life and work. And we know that good basic skills enhance the ability to learn effectively. Many adults with poor skills are resistant to basic skills training, but they may be more willing to address these needs when literacy or numeracy skills are 'embedded' within the course of their choice. This helps them immediately see the practical benefits and will enable them to progress on to further learning.

Our goal is to embed the teaching of literacy, language and numeracy skills within other training wherever possible. Research by the National Research and Development Centre shows that embedding can deliver higher success rates and make the experience more rewarding for learners.

### Working towards sustainable employment

In *World Class Skills*, we made it clear that economic success must come hand in hand with greater social justice. The Government's goal is sustainable employment and progression in work and learning. We will incentivise better cross-departmental working with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). Common objectives, and shared credit when our customers do better in the labour market, are the best way of integrating the work of our delivery partners, the LSC and Jobcentre Plus.

In *World Class Skills* and the Green Paper *In Work, Better Off*, the Government set out an ambitious programme to better target help at those disadvantaged in the labour market. We have set aside old divisions between 'work first' or 'skills first' by looking at the system through customers' eyes. Through the Flexible New Deal, skills accounts and a new adult careers service, we will create an employment and skills service that people want to use because it is simple to access and provides the right help when and where people need it. The new integrated service, in which Jobcentre Plus will have a critically important role, will offer practical help such as job searches, CV preparation and interview skills, and advice on practical issues like childcare and how to ask employers for help with training. These will be available alongside access to basic skills provision.

The clearest current example of this approach is Local Employment Partnerships. These start with the demand side of our strong labour market – vigorous employer recruitment and the active support of unemployed people to appreciate that they are better off in work – and build the supply-side service around this. Jobcentre Plus, the LSC, RDAs, local authorities and the Skills for Business Network will work together to obtain the commitment of employers to open up jobs to those disadvantaged in the labour market. Together, we will design the skills and support package needed to help individuals prepare to take up and progress in these opportunities.

### Where next?

In this short document, we have painted a picture of adult learning that is focused on the learner, not the education provider; a system that is flexible enough to deliver learning that is right for the individual, but which is unrelenting in its focus on empowering progress to work, better jobs and further qualifications.

The measures we have outlined aim to bring people who lack marketable skills into learning, with the ultimate goal of progression, inclusion and sustainable employment.

This Department is commissioning further work to map the skills activities being carried out across Government, our partners, our providers and the third sector. Our aim is to ensure that every contributing factor in our drive to raise skills – from the National Lottery and social enterprise to our work with football clubs and libraries – is clearly seen as part of the learning and skills story.

Our annual investment of £1.5 billion needs to be spent in the most effective way. As partners in adult education and skills provision, we can work together to deliver the flexible, effective learning and training that can make such a difference to the lives, the families and the futures of our people.

To find out more about the work of the Department for Innovation, Universities & Skills and to download this document, visit:

**[www.dius.gov.uk](http://www.dius.gov.uk)**

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