Birmingham and Solihull
Adult Basic Skills Review

Summary Report

Undertaken on behalf of Birmingham and Solihull Learning and Skills Council,
via Birmingham Core Skills Development Partnership

Core
Skills Development Partnership

Learning + Skills Council
Birmingham and Solihull

Preface

Skills for Life, the national strategy for improving adult literacy and numeracy, has signalled the Government's commitment to enabling all adults irrespective of their current abilities, previous educational experiences or geographical location to realise their potential.

The Adult Basic Skills Strategy Unit has been charged with the responsibility of co-ordinating the implementation of the strategy by providing the framework and infrastructure for key stakeholders to meet the needs of adults through funding, programmes of learning and quality assurance.

A major responsibility for each stakeholder must be to take the strategy and apply it in a meaningful and relevant way at regional and local levels. The Birmingham and Solihull Adult Basic Skills Review is an excellent example of how the national agenda can be applied to and be informed by local action.

This review builds upon the strong tradition of effective adult literacy, language and numeracy practice in Birmingham and Solihull. It provides a model of how a local Learning and Skills Council can analyse and investigate the strengths and weaknesses of skills provision in its area and sets out the challenges, issues and realities of skill deficiencies, gaps and shortages in a detailed and robust form.

Many of the findings are unsurprising, nor are the solutions revolutionary. However, for the first time there is transparency between need and action. The challenge for colleagues in Birmingham and Solihull is to build upon these findings. The challenge for the rest of us is to ensure that we take forward Skills for Life in our areas of responsibility based on equally robust data.

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Section 1: Context of the review

Adult basic skills is currently a national priority through the 'Skills for Life' adult basic skills strategy.

The strategy links across to the overall skills and employability agenda; the antipoverty and neighbourhood renewal agenda; the schools standards agenda; and the wider social inclusion agenda.

The national increased focus on adult basic skills is continued at regional, subregional and locality level through the variety of planning, funding, delivery and support organisations.

The past year has thus seen an acceleration in the amount of change underway. Adapting to the new speed of change has been described by a manager in one local organisation as 'like stepping into a fast-flowing river'. Planners and providers have had to manage the turbulence to maximum effect, in a geographical area that was already benefiting from a high degree of adult basic skills development activity and which is working at, as well as responding to, the national edge of strategy implementation.

This review has been commissioned in order to take stock in this time of rapid change; to focus on the specific themes of adult basic skills; and to highlight potential next steps. Although the review highlighted a large number of potential development points, the overall picture of adult basic skills in Birmingham and Solihull is very positive. Where developments are indicated this is not to detract from the good work being done. At the same time it is easy to 'talk up' the situation, gloss over real needs and miss opportunities for change and development.

Within the timescale of the review some of the earlier findings were already being acted on by the end of the review period i.e. it was not the kind of external review where actions await reported recommendations but was a reflexive, externally-moderated review that attempted to capture the patterns of change as they were happening and to chart out some future potential pathways.

This review of adult basic skills has therefore been both timely and necessary in order to get a more robust 'fix', in a shifting context, on what is currently happening, what is not happening and what needs to happen in order to significantly raise levels of adult basic skills across Birmingham and Solihull.

Section 2: Information, advice, guidance and promotion

Birmingham and Solihull information, advice and guidance network is large, with good community penetration and excellent links to target groups. Its size also reflects the complexity of the patterns of support organisations. Within this complexity, it is currently somewhat difficult for all advisers to provide reliable and appropriate information. The centrally-located Learning Shop

handles several thousand enquiries per year and maintains information from across the network. Currently around 4% of enquiries at the Learning Shop are from people wanting to improve their basic skills, with most being referred to adult education or colleges.

Information about basic skills provision still tends to focus on 1 or 2 types of provision, without taking the full range of basic skills support into account. There is a need for co-ordinated information on provision across providers in the same broad locality or targeting the same type of clients.

Information, advice and guidance workers may not be basic skills specialists but increasingly have a role in appropriately judging whether someone's basic skills levels are affecting their learning and work options. The distinctions are made between recognition of the possibility of low basic skills, appropriate screening (to identify and record the likelihood of a basic skills need), initial assessment (to identify skills levels) and diagnostic assessment (to explore the details of skills achieved and needed).

All information, advice and guidance workers may not be fully aware of basic skills issues, may not be familiar or comfortable with screening tools that currently exist, or may feel that current tools are inappropriate to their context. They do need to know where different types of support are available, and be proactive in making referrals. The level of turnover of staff means that there is a need for constant refreshing of awareness and understanding.

The whole area of adult basic skills advice continues to be over-influenced by an attitude to basic skills needs as something that needs to be 'hidden' and approached by stealth rather than made overt.

The network of community-based information points has a high level of potential to drive forward key priorities. This is not being maximised in terms of disseminating commonly-agreed key messages. This potential can be made more use of e.g. to have a concerted push on promoting NVQ2 level opportunities; or basic skills; or work with young people. Additional work can be done to include residents as community champions for learning, including basic skills messages.

The conceptual model usually relied upon for promotional campaigns is one that attempts to persuade (reluctant?) individuals to join identified provision. An alternative model recognises the 200,000+ adults who are already engaged with structural programmes of various kinds across the city, around 80,000 or more of whom could relatively easily raise their levels of basic skills, and to 'internally' promote the need to address these skills.

Section 3: Levels of Need

Since 1990 Opinion Research Business has been measuring adult numeracy and literacy skills levels across England and Wales. Birmingham Core Skills Development Partnership wanted to update their information about levels of

needs in Birmingham and Solihull, using a large local sample to more adequately reflect the changed population of Birmingham and Solihull, to capture basic skills levels in 2002, and to describe basic skills levels in terms of the new standards and skills descriptions.

This is one part of an ongoing attempt to establish data that is more reliable, more meaningful and more informative as a basis of planning decisions. The work is seen as a key step forward in the need to constantly refine data in order to get a better 'fix' on the variety and range of basic skills needs, as a basis for planning interventions. As such this work builds on the earlier Basic Skills Agency's excellent baselining work, complements Household Surveys and lays the basis for further work to get more segmented and sophisticated data.

It is currently being added to by other local surveys (e.g. of employers and employees). It forms part of ongoing information that can be set alongside any national surveys of need, as a way of getting ever-more robust triangulations of the rapidly shifting picture within Birmingham and Solihull.

Within the local Learning and Skills Council area, the percentages of adults 'currently able to achieve at each level' are as follows:

Level	As a % of adult population
Literacy Entry level 2	93%
Literacy Entry level 3	88%
Literacy Level 1	85%
Literacy Level 2	82%
Numeracy Entry level 2	91%
Numeracy Entry level 3	81%
Numeracy Level 1	63%
Numeracy Level 2	50%

The figures indicate that there is a small but significant group of adults with severe needs in both literacy and numeracy. Less than 5% of the adult population would fall into the category 'illiterate' or 'innumerate'. Yet the image of people who can barely read or write or use numbers still predominates in people's perception of 'basic skills' when, in fact, basic skills are defined as up to GCSE level. There are substantial groups of adults with needs at or below Entry 3 level who will need sustained learning in order to reach the higher skills levels. In literacy a further 20,000 need more focused interventions to lift them to Level 1; and beyond that yet another 20,000 who need to improve specific skills in order to move from Level 1 to Level 2. There are greater levels of need in numeracy, particularly at the higher levels.

The fall off in skills up the various levels holds up reasonably well for literacy, but falls off dramatically at the higher levels for numeracy.
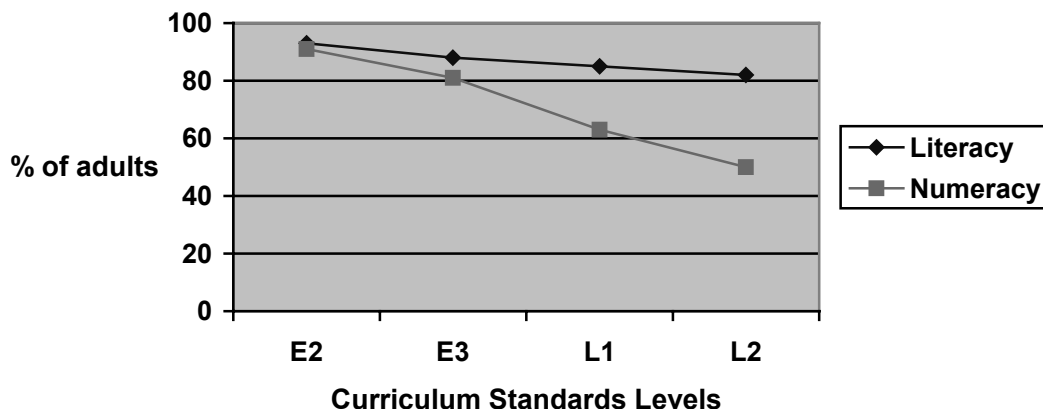
Particular wards were identified, in previous surveys, as having relatively much lower levels of skills in literacy and numeracy. After 5 years these same wards are still demonstrating relatively low skills levels. In some areas in Birmingham more than 21% of residents have below average literacy skills at Entry level. In similar areas in Solihull 12% of residents have below average skills at Entry Level.

(a) Levels Of Literacy Need

As described above, the measurement of literacy skills in Birmingham and Solihull produced the following overall achievement results:

Level	Achievement
Entry level 2	**93%**
Entry level 3	**88%**
Level 1	**85%**
Level 2	**82%**

Across the sub-region, of course, there are dramatic differences in the standards of literacy. Overall, as one would expect, standards in Solihull are better than those in Birmingham. However within the three high need wards identified in Solihull, standards are significantly lower.

Clearly within the high need wards in Birmingham there are still urgent problems that needs addressing despite the successful work done over the last five years.   One in four (26%) residents in these wards are below average at Level 2 Literacy and one in five (21%) have below average literacy skills at Entry level 3.

Profiling Literacy Needs – Sub-Region

	Birmingham			Solihull		
Level	Total	High need areas	Other areas	Total	High need areas	Other areas
Entry level 2	92%	87%	94%	97%	93%	98%
Entry level 3	86%	79%	88%	94%	88%	95%
Level 1	83%	76%	86%	92%	87%	93%
Level 2	80%	74%	82%	90%	83%	92%

There are significant differences in literacy needs by ethnicity.

Profiling Literacy Needs – Ethnicity

Level	White	Asian	African Caribbean	Other
Entry level 2	95%	87%	88%	89%
Entry level 3	90%	79%	81%	78%
Level 1	87%	75%	80%	80%
Level 2	85%	72%	73%	63%

As one would expect, there are significant differences between those that were educated in the UK and those that were not, and between those that predominantly speak English at home and those that do not.

There is also a strong correlation between the levels of literacy skills and those receiving benefits (other that those solely claiming universal child benefit).

Profiling Literacy Needs – Benefits Claimants

Level	Claimants	Non Claimants
Entry level 2	86%	96%
Entry level 3	78%	92%
Level 1	75%	89%
Level 2	72%	86%

(b) Levels Of Numeracy Need

Level	As a percentage
Entry level 2	**91%**
Entry level 3	**81%**
Level 1	**63%**
Level 2	**50%**

The geographically varied distribution of basic skills needs within Birmingham and Solihull is again evident when analysing how numeracy results differ between high need and other wards. Only one in three (36%) of those living in the high need wards in Birmingham are likely to have 'average or above' numeracy skills at Level 2, compared with 51% of those living in the other wards.

As the following table demonstrates, even in Solihull, in the least prosperous areas there are clear numeracy needs – only 41% succeeding at Level 2 in the high need wards.

Profiling Numeracy Needs – Sub-Region

Level	Birmingham			Solihull		
	Total	High need areas	Other areas	Total	High need areas	Other areas
Entry level 2	89%	81%	92%	97%	91%	99%
Entry level 3	79%	68%	83%	90%	75%	94%
Level 1	59%	49%	62%	78%	57%	84%
Level 2	47%	36%	51%	62%	41%	67%

Those that are working full and part-time are, as may be expected, higher than average in their numeracy skills, whilst those that are retired appear to perform better at the harder numeracy tasks. There are clearly numeracy gaps amongst the unemployed, with one in five not reaching Entry level 2.

The Measurement of Numeracy Skills – Working Status Differences

Level	Working status					
	Full time	Part time	Retired	Student*	Unemployed	Housewife
Entry level 2	96%	97%	93%	96%	80%	87%
Entry level 3	89%	86%	83%	87%	65%	71%
Level 1	72%	68%	60%	75%	45%	51%
Level 2	58%	53%	58%	63%	33%	35%

(* other than university students temporarily resident in the area)

When analysing the results by ethnicity, Asian and African Caribbean adults have lower skill levels in numeracy than the white population. But unlike literacy where African Caribbean adults had slightly higher skills than the Asian adults, in terms of numeracy skills they appear to have lower skills. Just over one in three (36%) African Caribbean adults have average or above numeracy skills at Level 2, compared with 43% of the Asian community and 53% in the white community.

Profiling Numeracy Needs - Ethnicity

Level	White	Asian	African Caribbean	Other
Entry level 2	93%	82%	87%	80%
Entry level 3	85%	67%	71%	62%
Level 1	67%	51%	48%	39%
Level 2	53%	40%	36%	21%

(c) <u>Levels And Spiky Profiles</u>

Learners can broadly be attributed to levels so long as it is remembered that their profile of skills in literacy and numeracy is likely to spread across various levels for different combinations of skills.

Numeracy skills are rather more uniform than literacy skills, but also more limited overall. Literacy skills are more diverse with respondents having a variety of gaps in their skills, whereas in numeracy many attain the basic levels but relatively few have higher level skills.

The survey data confirmed the prevalence of the 'spiky profile' of skills for individuals. This phenomenon has implications for how programmes are structured and delivered; demanding closer attention to specific skills, to 'top up/booster' activity, and to the way courses are described.

(d) <u>Implications for provision</u>
Finding solutions to these problems is made easier by an understanding of the learning aspirations of the population. The same survey of need also highlighted some of the possible routes to meeting these needs:
  ➢ 70% of the population were not at all interested in taking up courses as currently on offer. This may appear depressingly high – but is accompanied by a figure of 15% who would be very interested. This in itself is almost 5 times the number currently doing courses. There is an even higher (19-23%) interest amongst young residents to improve their numeracy and literacy skills.
  ➢ There is a problematic 10% of the whole sample who clearly recognise that they have basic skills needs but are 'not at all interested in improving those skills'.
  ➢ Practical difficulties (transport, child care, access etc) are minimal compared to issues of motivation.

- Although Asian and black communities, overall, have lower levels of basic skills they are also twice as likely to want to do something about it.
- Those living in the areas of highest need are also at least twice as likely to want to improve their skills.
- 80-85% of adults with basic skills needs, claim that access to nationally-recognised certification would be a strong motivational influence. This was just as likely for those living in the highest-need wards of Birmingham as for the highest-skill wards of Solihull.
- Asking people to self assess their levels of skills gave a way of checking this against their tested levels. Adults are realistic about the gaps in their numeracy skills but are more variable in their perception of literacy and language skills.

Meeting the needs of employers and employees
The survey of need highlighted the levels of literacy and numeracy amongst working adults. This was disaggregated by sector, by gender, by full time/part time working (and was able to be analysed by other factors such as ethnicity, age etc).

The data was able to tell a number of 'stories' that might inform targeting of work within sectors. For example, low skill workers in Health and Care have a disproportionate set of needs at Entry 2 literacy level. Whilst numeracy levels in Health and Care are well distributed across the levels for white employees, and are better than average for Asian employees, numeracy levels of AfroCaribbean employees in this sector are quite low.

The basic skills links to the wider Health and Care agenda are clear:
- Risk assessment is high on the agenda, as is Care Planning – both need increased levels of basic skills
- Recruitment to produce a more diverse workforce will require better language training and numeracy training in pre-employment training.

Such 'stories' are being collated with changing levels of skills needs within various sectors to produce a better picture of work related basic skills needs.

Section 4: Participation

Participation in LSC funded programmes
The recording of figures for participation have become more refined over the last six years:
- from: a loose definition of basic skills; multiple counting of learners as enrolments at different sessions and across sites within the same provider counting enrolments rather than learners; high percentages of 'not known' recordings for age/ethnicity/disability etc.

> ➢ to: a tighter definition of basic skills provision; single counting via individual learner records; much lower percentages of 'not knowns'; reduced possible double counting across initiatives and across providers.

The figures still:
- ~ historically have been presented by providing organisation. Data presented by Birmingham or Solihull postcode (whoever the provider organisation) creates a different picture
- ~ are viewed as data to be returned for contract purposes more than a rich wealth of information for early analysis by basic skills managers, then able to make in-year adjustments to patterns of provision (i.e. the data is seen by managers as being 'for others' rather than 'for us')
- ~ rely heavily on accurate data input, with providers still warning that their data 'probably isn't totally accurate', particularly for basic skills
- ~ report learners that fall within LSC categories; so that learners in a range of agencies; special projects; voluntary sector activity; outreach etc go unrecorded
- ~ are retrospective – being available as validated figures more than nine months after the end of courses and, as such, are not useful as the basis of forward planning. Although Birmingham and Solihull Learning and Skills Council are indicating that current software will give more 'real time' analysis is, this had, at the time of the review, yet to be demonstrated.

Even with these caveats, the data for Birmingham and Solihull represents the most reliable figure for a number of years, even if an underestimate (maybe by up to 10%) of the total number of people being taught basic skills to levels matching the new standards.

For the academic year 1999-2000, the adult basic skills data show a total of 12,234 individuals addressing their basic skills needs via FEFC/LSC funded provision.

Of these:
10%	were 16-19
15%	had a disability/learning difficulty
53%	were female
34%	were on ESOL courses
51%	were on literacy courses
15%	were on numeracy courses
36%	were white
5%	were Bangladeshi
20%	were Pakistani
10%	were Black Caribbean
59%	were aged 25-44
17%	were aged 45-60
11%	were 19-24

(where percentages in a category do not add up to 100%, this indicates large numbers of returns being 'other' of 'not known')

These 12,234 basic skills learners represented 16,206 enrolments i.e. an average of 1.3 enrolments per learner. Basic skills activity is spread across almost all provider organisations, but with a concentration of 65% of the learners within three organisations. The LSC-funded learners were spending an average of 5 hours per week on basic skills.

There was also no rational pattern to the qualification outcomes being pursued. Numeracy learners aimed for a narrow range of qualification aims. ESOL learners aimed for a very wide range of qualification aims.

Comparable data, validated by LSC, for 2000-2001 shows:
- A total of 17,099 basic skills learners on discrete courses, of whom:
    - 16% were 16 –19
    - 84% were 19+
    - 50% were on ESOL courses
    - 36% were on literacy courses
    - 14% were on numeracy courses
    - 38% were white
    - 3% were Bangladeshi
    - 13% were AfroCaribbean
    - 14% were Pakistani

(In addition a further 8,679 adults had additional support on other courses, some of which would have been basic skills support).

At the time of the review only unvalidated figures were available for 2001-2002. The indicative figures for actual enrolments in 2002-2003 suggest a further increase in basic skills numbers, with more basic skills learners still being recruited. The total is higher than the aspirational participation target for the year 2002-2003 and reflects well the drive for increased numbers in adult basic skills learning (particularly across colleges).

The growth in numbers of individuals in the area who are directly addressing their basic skills needs via established provision has increased since 1995/6.
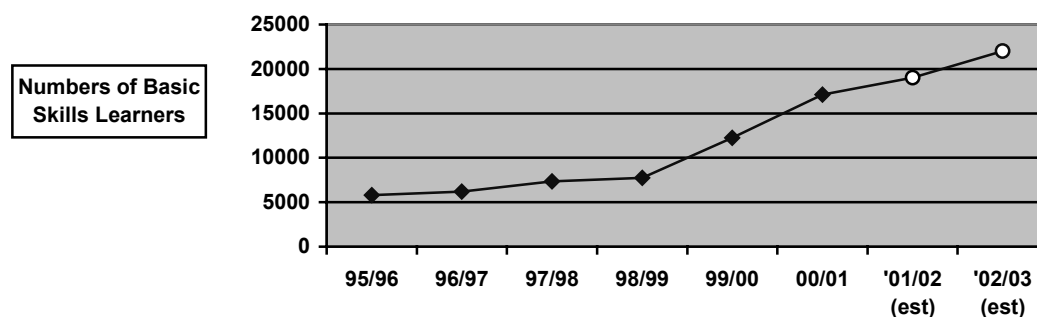
The Skills for Life Strategy anticipated that 8% of those in need would be in provision by 2002. Whilst there are clearly problems with pinning down a figure that adequately covers 'those in need', certainly one might expect that at least 12,000 individuals were in the main programmes of providers. The current delivery system is performing very well on participation expectations. Any larger step-changes in participation will require significant shifts of emphasis within the current system.

Participation in other programmes
The figures above represent learners captured via the former Individualised Student Record. Basic skills support on other programmes is not well recorded with the same degree of accuracy.

Surveys of the voluntary sector regularly show more than 80 voluntary organisations that 'offer basic skills and ESOL'. The numbers of adults these organisations work with is reported as being in excess of 4,000 basic skills/ESOL beneficiaries. Stripping out from these the ones that are LSC/JCP providers (i.e. their numbers are already counted elsewhere); or are not really adult basic skills as now understood – there are still around 1,000 adults being assisted with their basic skills in a variety of ways directly by voluntary sector organisations.

Across the sub-regional area there was other basic skills activity (in terms of real learners) within the growth from 1997 onwards of:
> increased numbers of adults on family literacy/numeracy courses, which now stands at almost 900 learners, and growing
> the much slower, but recently increasing, growth of learners addressing basic skills via learndirect.
> the numbers working to raise own basic skills levels via Probation Service in Birmingham and Solihull.
> the very recent activity through Jobcentre Plus programmes that is increasing the identification of basic skills needs amongst claimants and meeting these, predominately via the full time education and training option for more than 1,000 people.

The review looked at specific target groups that are priorities within the 'Skills for Life' national strategy and priorities within local business plans, including:
(a) Young people
Addressing the overall skill level of people aged 16-25 has been a national and local priority for some time. Within this, one thread has been to pay specific attention to raising the basic skills needs of young people, in order to underpin this drive for higher vocational qualifications and increased access to higher education. Alongside this has been a weaker drive to ensure that young people increasingly engage with social regeneration and renewal decision-making processes, and have the communication skills to be able to do this.

Whilst the Skills for Life is an adult basic skills strategy i.e. relating to people 16+, the aspirations for Birmingham and Solihull rely on lifting levels of core skills for young people pre 16 so that the flow of people with

low levels of basic skills is reduced from a figure of around 3,000 in 1999 to a figure of less than 200 by 2010. Work to raise literacy and numeracy standards at Key Stage 3, and GCSE English/Maths achievements at Key Stage 4 are being supplemented by:

> ➢ developments to increase the basic skills focus within the vocational contexts of a Pre Learning Gateway for 14-16 year olds;
> ➢ attempts to strengthen the core skills contribution to complementary and alternative curriculum options for 14-16 year olds
> ➢ supporting the development of a Student Apprenticeship programme for 14-16 year olds with basic skills at Entry 3/Level 1 and for whom a Modern Apprenticeship is a potential progression route
> ➢ providing a particular focus on young people known to Pupil Connect, to Drug Action Team; and to those responsible for Looked After Children

Increasing basic skills participation and achievement by young people is a specific strategic objective in the local LSC's Basic Skills Development Plan with actions covering:

i. incorporating basic skills into all provision targeting young people
ii. increased use of intensive basic skills provision to meet young people's needs
iii. increased uses of ICT to support basic skills development with young people
iv. building the capacity of existing and new organisations that have a role to bridge young people into provision, or to offer direct basic skills provision (by linking to established further education providers)
v. improving rates of identification, assessment and referral

Recent developments with young people have focused on specific intermediaries:

(i) <u>Connexions Service</u>
The local Connexions Service is providing a personal advisor for each young person between the ages of 13–19. For those with special needs the age range can be extended to 24/25. There will thus be large numbers of mentors to potentially assist in improving adult basic skills of young people, including young offenders, within the Birmingham and Solihull area.

Targets for the Connexions service locally include increasing the percentage of Year 11 progressing into further learning and to specifically strengthen the English language skills of a substantial number of young people in the 13-19 age group. Coupled with real improvements in discrete and embedded basic skills for 16+ learners, this should begin to substantially reduce the basic skills problem for young people.

(ii) <u>Foyers</u>

A number of the Foyers have received staff training and basic skills resources. In Birmingham, increasing numbers of foyer staff are being trained to undertake assessments, and to do basic skills support work. The nationally-funded Foyer Federation Training Project engaged young people with training that includes a basic skills element. Three foyers were linked to a Birmingham college in this project, targeting 50 young people with basic skills needs. The local LSC is using uplift funding to allow more focused work to take place, and is assuming that this will lead to basic skills outcomes.

(iii) <u>Youth Offending Service</u>

There are more than 1,000 young offenders and the bulk of these are at the key transition age of 15-17. A basic skills learning adviser has been attached to the Youth Offending Service to ensure that all young people known to the service have their basic skills needs met in structured ways. Learning Support Centres are being established at each of the Youth Offending Service centres for young people, with basic skills work being supplemented via a mobile bus facility.

(iv) <u>Other developments</u>

<u>Entry to Employment</u>

Initially a pilot programme (to August 2003), managed by the local LSC, this is designed as a stepping stone into Modern Apprenticeships for young people aged 16-129. A key learning objective for participants is the development of basic and/or key skills. The Basic Skills Pathfinder experience of delivering basic skills in intensive and focused packages is being built into this programme, as is the expectation that participants will be offered opportunities to enter for the new national accreditations. It is anticipated that 250 young people will be aiming for basic skills outcomes via the programme. Work is needed to strengthen the basic skills delivery capacity of the E2E provider base.

(b) <u>Probation Service work with offenders</u>

Of the estimated 2000+ people on probation orders in the area more than 50% have strong basic skills needs. Whilst some of these can move into mainstream provision after a short amount of preparatory work, others are very transient (reoffending before being securely linked to provision) or erratic (because of the linkages across to complex lifestyles).

The West Midlands Probation Service has responded well in developing an effective infrastructure in order to deliver more basic skills programmes. They have appointed a basic skills development officer and have a development agenda that includes:
- Using basic skills tutors with recognised national qualifications
- Using approved screening, assessment and individual learning plans.

- Direct provision of, and/or access to, nationally approved programmes of learning, using materials approved by Adult Basic Skills Strategy Unit and appropriate to the level of offender
- Providing advice and guidance on progression to other learning opportunities at higher levels within the community
- Ensuring that there is access to esol where this is needed
- Learning programmes flexibly constructed including group provision, intensive courses, individual programmes, as well as methods that exploit new technologies.
- Learning mentor support for those who would benefit, with mentors appropriately qualified, supervised and developed
- Access to nationally recognised qualification and accreditation
- Systems for effective monitoring

Given the high potential for attrition between screening at Probation Service Report stage and participation in learning programmes, appropriate assessment needs to take place as soon after referral as possible. Appropriateness of, and familiarity with, screening and diagnostic assessment tools is a continuing issue.

The Probation Service is keen to find ways in which basic skills teaching can be provided whilst an offender is attending other interventions, for example whilst undertaking a general offending behaviour programme, a drug programme or in a hostel.

The Probation Service has clusters of staff (Employment Liaison officers; hostel staff; Probation Service officers; volunteers etc) all of whom can have specific contributions to make in terms of supporting offenders to access basic skills provision. Delivery is a mix of inhouse and contracted in (from a variety of providers). Good use has been made, since 1998, of paraprofessionals in hostels (including specialist hostels such as one for men with mental health problems); use of ICT with basic skills software, including flexible use of laptops; customised basic skills provision; 1:1 and drop in work (with visiting teachers) in hostels/day centres. These activities were initially externally funded as development activities but have increasingly been funded by the Probation Service itself.

A substantial proportion of those currently worked with have been successful in the new national tests. This, combined with increased use of assessment tools, and an approach based on topping up spiky profiles etc, has led to more focus on the achievement of outcomes. In Birmingham and Solihull the Probation basic skills targets for 2002-2003 are 174 starts with 60 going to the test at any level. In 2003/4 achievement targets are 54 awards at entry level, 213 at level 1, and 53 at level 2.

In the period April to June 2002 the Probation Service locally had achieved 37 starts via hostels and 28 starts via field work (scaling up to 260 starts for the year). A Pre New Deal Programme has targeted those offenders (16+, but predominantly 25+) released into Birmingham from Birmingham Prison. This programme included provision based on assessment in the

context of guidance. Given the basic skills support infrastructure development within the Prison Service it is becoming more feasible for such adults to bring Individual Learning Plans with them on release and to more seamlessly continue their progress towards basic skills accreditations.

(c) <u>Parents</u>

Many of the individuals on basic skills programmes, or other programmes with basic skills support, will be parents. Addressing their needs as parents is not, however, the prime driver for this provision. Other programmes are targeted more specifically at parents (e.g. Help Your Child with Reading) but are not basic skills provision. The programmes that most directly address the basic skills needs of parents are the family literacy and numeracy programmes delivered, via LEAs, with funding that comes from the DfES partly via the Basic Skills Agency and partly via the Learning and Skills Council. These courses are not simply an attractive form of adult learning but have a double adult/child purpose.

The courses are targeted by LEAs on schools in disadvantaged areas, where key stage results are low, and where this activity will best fit into the wider support and challenge to schools which is the LEA's function. The involvement, with schools, of appropriate advisory input from the LEA is important.

In Birmingham and Solihull more than 85 substantial courses are delivered each year. Birmingham LEA delivers by far the largest programme nationally. The programmes are part of a wider Family Learning Strategy that has gained some national recognition – bringing together various policy agendas (school effectiveness; Skills for Life; Family support; social inclusion etc) into a coherent approach.

The model is 'schools driven' to the extent that the content derives directly from the participating pupils' current activity in terms of the National Literacy/Numeracy Frameworks. The school-led model has raised pupil standards throughout Key Stages 1 and 2. Work is currently being carried forward to work with large numbers of secondary schools in similar ways.

Ensuring accelerated basic skills impact for adults needs more attention. Whilst there are isolated examples of good practice, adult providers are weaker at recording such progress; and weak at sensitively driving towards basic skills recognised outcomes. Given the rapid expansion in volume an early emphasis was on getting the practice right. There is now an increased emphasis on recording the basic skills outcomes from these processes.

Work is beginning to unlock additional basic skills learners by strengthening the role of particular intermediaries in organisations working with substantial numbers of parents in 'high need' areas. The Birmingham Core Skills Development Partnership is one of the key partners in a national development through which managers of Neighbourhood

Nurseries are being trained in basic skills awareness. Similar links are being made with the range of Sure Start programmes in the area, and with the LEA's support to parents in a number of hostels.

All of this work involves complex negotiations of substantial courses across a range of partners and has recently been complicated by its inclusion with the framework for adult learning plans. The focus on dual school/adult outcomes cannot be efficiently delivered, at current volumes, on a year by year basis. Planning would be easier if shifted into the basis of 3 year indications of volume. The Core Skills Development Partnership has been asked to advise the DfES on potential ways forward.

(d) Public sector workers
The public sector workforce is one of the key target groups for the adult basic skills strategy. Within the two Local Authorities alone there are more than 10,000 workers who have basic skills gaps. Whilst this work had been identified as one priority within provider corporate plans, work had been done with less than 100 employees over a 2 year period. There is clearly scope for expansion of activity. Some agencies have responded well but others have yet to engage with the basic skills needs of their own employees. Public agencies in Birmingham and Solihull i.e. Connexions, Advantage West Midlands, Learning and Skills Council, Probation, police, city and borough councils, fire service, health service, Jobcentre Plus are all actively considering the basic skills needs of their workforce. Clearer links with the LSC and potential providers, and a clearer understanding of the scale of work to be expected (and funded) would help.

Birmingham and Solihull Learning and Skills Council has recently brought together the range of major public sector employers around a workforce agenda that includes post-employment skills training, which will include an element of addressing basic skills levels.

The Department of Health has included basic skills as a priority in its lifelong learning strategy, with early intervention planned by the NHS University, the local workforce confederation, and the LSC Health and Care Sector processes. Much of this work is helpfully recognising that addressing basic skills is an accelerant in escalating overall skills levels.

All of these processes will lead to a substantial increase in public sector basic skills activity in 2003.

(e) Unemployed people
It is estimated that at least 32% of all unemployed people have basic skills needs and that these, in part, prevent them from improving their prospects of finding and keeping work.

A key priority for Jobcentre Plus is to improve the literacy and numeracy skill levels of people whose need is greatest. Their focus includes unemployed people and benefit claimants, and other groups who are at

risk of exclusion including the homeless, and refugees and asylum seekers.

Even where there is a national requirement to screen clients for basic skills needs at the six months point of the process, in Birmingham and Solihull screening is done from day one. This has the potential advantage of earlier identification of need (and therefore earlier meeting of those needs). The disadvantage is that the screening is done not by New Deal Advisers but by new claims advisers, restart advisers or intervention workers i.e. brings the need for more awareness training with a wider range of staff.

New targets of 90% screening of clients form part of the Jobcentre Plus Business Delivery Plan to support and improve performance. Locally the rate of screening has risen from around 80% to 97.4%, making it one of the best performing districts. The number going on to actively address their basic skills needs remains quite low however. The low numbers referred has a consequence for contractors financially being unable to maintain contracts. Progress is being made to improve the take up rate.

During the past year Jobcentre Plus District Office has worked with Birmingham and Solihull LSC on improving their processes re basic skills as one of their agreed priorities. This has involved basic skills practitioners' network, Basic Skills Provider Forums and EQUAL basic skills sub-groups being established with a remit of researching and mapping existing basic skills provision and potential levels of learners need and to clearly identify the issues regarding basic skills and language development in New Deal and Work based Learning for Adults.

The majority of people attending some New Deal basic skills courses have learning difficulties. This raises the question as to whether Jobcentre Plus advisers and providers have an accurate understanding of what basic skills are and that basic skills needs stretch far beyond the lower levels of skills.

If providers are only getting referrals of learners with very low levels of English skills, there are real difficulties for them in getting to positive outcomes within the contract time period. If this is combined with low numbers being referred, then contractors may not be able to run contracts effectively.

Jobcentre Plus are issuing new contracts for workbased training. As a result of reviewing their provision, more attention is being given to the basic skills components of these contracts.

(f) Voluntary sector
Activities to build capacity in the voluntary sector have now been underway for several years. This sprang from the need to involve the voluntary sector in vocational training. The local Learning and Skills

Council works closely with Birmingham Voluntary Service Council and voluntary organisations.

In addition Birmingham Voluntary Service Council runs three service development groups: Human Resources (audit, Training Needs Analysis etc); management in the black voluntary sector; and secondments intersector. There are also three topic groups with a focus on health/social care; housing; education & training. The Human Resources development group and the three topic groups have more potential to push the basic skills agenda forward.

A range of voluntary organisations (including some well established ones) are concerned with structured basic skills delivery; and local community and voluntary agencies are additionally often well placed to identify basic skills problems and work with individuals in an informal way. In this context the review commissioned a piece of work to identify the levels of engagement of voluntary and community sector organisations with basic skills signposting and delivery, and also their capacity to bridge learners between informal and formal learning.

More than 100 organisations in Birmingham (often with a sectoral focus that includes: social housing, homeless, disability, mental health, young people, and ethnic minorities) are currently engaged with basic skills activity in some way. Capacity-building support has been available to enable these organisations to improve the support and delivery of basic skills, to enable learners to move into mainstream learning and to support organisations to work towards quality standards where appropriate.

There has been a recent drive on building the strengths of the voluntary sector to address basic skills by focusing on:
- increasing the engagement with people who have a basic skills need.
- making better best use of intermediary organisations.
- providing training for intermediaries and mentors so that they are able to advise and refer effectively
- raising the standards of the voluntary sector so that it is more able to provide basic skills training itself
- clearer linking of voluntary projects with other providers

Support has been available through the use of a consistent menu of activities, through the development of a training ladder and through the deployment of a small number of voluntary sector basic skills advisers. This work has been of high quality, with an emphasis on meeting the specific organisational needs. This work has, to an extent, mirrored the Basic Skills Quality Initiative available to substantial providers, although the voluntary sector has not had direct access to financial support for quality improvement in basic skills delivery.

The basic skills adviser is an important key to the success of this activity. This person works as an intermediary understanding both the needs of the

organisation and needs of funders who maybe providing the training and development revenue.   The development of the learning adviser function is critical to the increased involvement of the voluntary sector in the delivery of the basic skills agenda.

Existing providers (colleges etc) have undertaken this role in relatively uncoordinated ways, but this has often been from the basis of the voluntary organisation being subcontracted or being seen as a source of learners. In some cases there has not been an appreciation of the skills within the voluntary organisation. This is particularly acute in those cases where the voluntary sector has felt 'used' by mainstream providers looking to boost their student numbers.

In addition to its role as a broker or 'unlocker' of basic skills needs because of its close relationship with target client groups, the voluntary sector also has a role in its capacity as a major employer and as a route into basic skills work with key officers and participants in community and renewal processes. It is now recognised as an employment sector and work is starting to structurally address the training needs of the sector (including their basic skills needs).

(g) Issues specific to Esol
Second language speakers are found in large numbers in adult and further education provision with a very large proportion being placed on general ESOL provision without clear progression routes. The result is that ESOL learners in many ways are, and remain, an isolated community or learners. Esol provision remains an area that will benefit from wider clarification, particularly given that some learners are anticipating multiple outcomes from their learning.

Participation on Jobcentre Plus-funded programmes and Learning and Skills Council-funded Modern Apprenticeship is low. This is also identified as an area needing attention by the 16-19-wide area inspection report.

The questionnaires and provider visits undertaken as part of this current review, show that Modern Apprenticeships and Jobcentre Plus training providers offer literacy and numeracy but generally did not offer language support. Providers gave a number of reasons for this. These included (a) that they did not accept the client group because they could not be expected to achieve in time and (b) that they felt unable to take the client group because they did not have the skills to deal with the different learning needs required by this group.

Providers and advisers too often perceive second language speakers as people who have little English; and do not consider people with an intermediate or advanced amount of fluency as fitting in this target group. If all provision remains at the lower (e.g. Entry) levels, there are implications not only for learner progression and provider expectations, but also for the capacity of the system to offer sufficient movement 'up a level' and contribute to local and national targets.

In addition to the group with substantial language needs there are many 2nd/3rd generation second language speakers who have mother-tongue influence. The needs of these learners were often not being picked up even though they are found in large numbers across Birmingham & Solihull training and education. Providers welcomed the proposed local LSC project to look at mother-tongue influence.

(h) <u>Adults with learning difficulties and disabilities</u>
Access to basic skills can be expanded by opening up a fuller range of opportunities for this client group, and creating specific provision tailored to the needs of groups of adults with particular disabilities.

Discrete basic skills provision was seen as unmotivating to many in this particular target group. Most organisations reported the need to integrate basic skills into other provision. This was often into Independent Living Skills and work related provision, but there is an increasing desire to provide basic skills within more specialist and innovative courses such as Photography, Computer Skills, Office Skills, etc.

(i) <u>Low skill workers</u>
It has been almost impossible to record, or even estimate, the number of adults addressing their basic skills needs via employers' own training and support. Where the work is contracted on to a provider, or where the employer is funded as a work based learning contract holder, then numbers show through. New arrangements which allow employers to receive funds directly from the local Learning and Skills Council will assist in capturing the volume, levels and outcomes of this work. The local LSC consistently makes the point that having gaps in basic skills does not necessarily mean that workers are vocationally 'low skill', or do not have Level 1 basic skills.

Birmingham and Solihull Learning and Skills Council have been working with a range of agencies to develop an approach that will lever out much higher levels of work-focused basic skills developments. There are a number of strands to this model. These include:

(i) <u>Stressing the strategic importance of work with employers/employees</u>
- high profile in Birmingham and Solihull LSC's strategic plan to 2005
- linked to national drives via 'Skills for Life' national adult basic skills strategy
- inclusion in co-financing framework
- build into sector development plans/Human Resource plans
- high level of development activity in 2002-2003 via Core Skills Development Partnership resources
- high priority within Regeneration Zone activity

(ii) <u>Promoting importance of basic skills at work</u>
- better understanding of specific needs of each sector – by job levels; by changing nature of jobs etc
- employer briefings, making use of 'champion' employers
- strengthened links to developments via CBI; Sector Skills Councils; TUC etc
- marketing campaign to sectors/employers

(iii) <u>Integration into unified business support package</u>
- part of company process analysis work
- part of support for Investors in People
- part of company Training Needs Analysis (using Skills Scan etc)
- linked to sector/company Human Resource strategies (via HR Planner etc)
- recognised brokerage processes to give access to appropriate, skilled providers
- part of development of learning points/learning centres on company premises
- sector specific curriculum development work – focusing on work tasks (e.g. sector-focused CD-ROMs on bite-sized learning)
- linked to role of union learning representatives

(iv) <u>Business Link (for smes) and local LSC (for larger companies) hold promotion and brokerage role</u>
- Two kinds of trained brokers – 'generic' and 'more advanced'
- Generic brokerage promotes the value of basic skills development in the workplace and discusses general needs. This function likely to be fulfilled e.g. by existing IiP Advisers and Business Skills Advisers
- More enhanced brokerage, e.g. via Business Link staff who have specialisms in a sector, able to discuss the support available and to create links to appropriate external providers

(v) <u>Improved range of providers</u>
- 'First steps' provision often able to be made in company via sector-specific software, learning points, boxes of learning resources, trained learning champions/learning representatives
- work with learndirect to ensure that on-line learning in companies, adequately covers basic skills needs
- Including company trainers in any basic skills training sessions
- Providers increasingly benchmark to higher standards re Common Inspection Framework; and as a minimum meet a standard equivalent to the Basic Skills Agency Quality Mark
- Providers offered training on how to more effectively work with different companies and deliver in an employer context
- Providers encouraged to see this work as part of longer term relationships with companies

- LSC and ES providers become more familiar with NTO/Sector Skills Council mapping re basic skills and vocational programmes

As with other things, there is not really one 'workplace' but a spiky spectrum of workplaces – some easier to access than others, some with rhythms that are difficult to match; some that simply want a 'quick fix' for a number of staff (and only after that is met, to be offered a wider menu of options).

The Employer Training Pilot (one of six national such pilots) in Birmingham and Solihull will work with 4,200 employees, across selected sectors, between September 2002 and August 2003. 2,000 of these will be working on basic skills achievements at Entry level, Level 1 or Level 2. This will be the first testing of the capacity of the system to deliver large scale activity over a short time scale. This in turn is raising queries about the extent to which the elements are in place re brokerage; capacity of providers to really deliver basic skills in work contexts etc.

Within approaches that offer support both for NVQ and for basic skills outcomes there may be employers who 'know' NVQ but don't 'know' the basic skills test i.e. there is a need to promote the benefits of the tests (possible as a milestone with NVQ2 as a subsequent outcome, especially for 25+ age group).

On the one hand, there are training providers who have experience of vocational training and an understanding of the workplace, but little or no understanding of basic skills and adult learning. On the other hand, some colleges have staff with extensive experience of basic skills delivery but little understanding of delivery in the workplace, experience in the sector, or sector understanding. Tutors need to have advanced skills in teaching basic skills and an understanding of the context in which basic skills may be applied in the workplace. This happens in the 'best case' examples, but is far from universal.

The experience of several basic skills providers shows how complicated the process of commissioning, designing and delivering in-company training is. They also need to be able to assess quickly what skills are needed since employers are reluctant to spend large amounts of time with basic skills tutors to set up a programme of learning. Employers who participated in the basic skills review suggested that basic skills practitioners are simply not able to survey the situation and design learning programmes quickly enough and that, if tutors are not up to speed, the employer will disengage.

Six Job Recruitment Agencies will be engaged to provide 100 of their advisers to be trained in using screening and diagnostic tools in sector contexts; to strengthen their links with workplace basic skills providers; and to build on the Basic Skills Agency sector skills work that has mapped sector skills to the basic skills framework. A resource centre will be

developed, that will incorporate work-related basic skills work, and which will act as a resource base for more than 50 employer providers.

Section 5: Diversity of learning opportunities

Range of providers
The Birmingham and Solihull area is well served by a large and varied set of provider organisations This provider base has grown from a position where adult basic skills was delivered almost entirely by 2 or 3 providers to a position where every provider is delivering some form of adult basic skills support. This increase has been in response to shifts in national legislation, changing funding priorities and recent strategy drivers.

Organisations that previously may have held a view of themselves as the predominant provider of basic skills in an area have had to adjust to:
- ➢ a recognition of a much widened agenda for adult basic skills work; with it now forming a part of many other activities
- ➢ multi agency activity with the same client group; requiring the mind-set shift in seeing this less in terms of potential for competition and more in terms of potential for collaboration
- ➢ other agencies, that were a partnership source of learners, increasingly taking on their own direct delivery staff
- ➢ increased specifications for basic skills work; the need to be much more explicit about the 'what', 'why' and 'how' of the work
- ➢ higher gear/brighter spotlight expectations for this area of work; the challenge of now being called on to deliver all that was claimed to be possible 'if only the funding were available'
- ➢ the beginnings of a cultural shift from 'participation' to 'achievement'; from 'process' to 'outcome'; and from 'caring provision' to 'skills acquisition'.

There is clearly the potential to both expand the variety of basic skills opportunities available to adults and to increase the local area coherence of the opportunities.

Variety of modes and models
Across the provider base there are large variations in the volume and balance of programmes offered by different partners. Sometimes this reflects the needs of the community, sometimes it is more the result of organisational constraints, sometimes simply the result of relatively unplanned organic growth. Some examples of this variety are:

- ➢ ESOL/ language support varies from almost zero to more than 30% of the activity in providers that have substantial numbers of learners with language needs.
- ➢ Most providers offer a range of literacy/ numeracy/ ESOL – but the balance varies dramatically from provider to provider, with varying relationships to levels of need in the area. Overall numeracy provision is relatively sparse.

> ➤ Training providers are more experienced in offering embedded basic skills. Embedded work is less prevalent than it could be within other providers.
> ➤ One of the largest providers delivers overwhelmingly discrete courses of below 8 hours a week; and very little integrated basic skills support

Overall, models across the range of basic skills provision in Birmingham and Solihull have been diversified in the past two years, beyond the 'staple diet' of part-time programmes and generalised learning support. Examples of this increased diversity include:

~ more short course provision
~ intensive 60-hour model being introduced for more learners
~ some modular, focused programmes – linked to learning specific skills or to early entry to national tests
~ the activity of the People's Learning Partnership and Learning Exchange learndirect hubs etc
~ increased bridging work and some increased direct delivery via voluntary sector and health organisations
~ the increased volume and variety of the family literacy/numeracy provision
~ increased delivery supported by ICT, with an expansion of locations equipped with more reasonable levels of equipment
~ more systematic, and clearer, use of diagnostic assessment enabling providers to identify both adults' existing skills and their gaps in knowledge and skills; and construct programmes to move people on in their skills levels

All of this is an indication of the trend away from generic, mixed level, mixed skills, 'facilitated' groups to specific, taught courses based on skills analysis; targeting basic skills outcomes; within particular contexts; enabling rapid progress to be made.

At the same time, despite these changes, it remains the case that a large proportion of the provision is in the form of discrete, non-contextualised general-skills, year-long courses, with few hours teaching each week.

Throughout the review the key role of the teacher, in whether or not learners make substantial progress, has been clear. Work is needed to enhance the attitude of many tutors, but there are other organisational factors that assist or hinder learner progress.

Modular, focused provision offered in the same place or same locality is a requirement if learners are to make rapid progress. Putting a wider range of provision into one venue facilitates the establishment of learning pathways. At the same time having only basic skills provision in one venue defines that place as a 'basic skills centre' and can act as a barrier to progression to the wider curriculum. Where possible disconnected basic skills only centres should be avoided if the venue is large enough to support both an adequate range of basic skills provision and learning opportunities across a broad curriculum range.

Use of ICT as a tool for basic skills improvement

Overall, ICT support for basic skills has developed well:

➢ The use of ICT to support basic skills learning is now seen as more routine in a number of providers
➢ There is increasing access to adequate ICT hardware; increasing use of internet as a resource; and use of a more consistent set of software (increasingly related to the adult basic skills standards)
➢ There has been some customised development and use of software, including vocational CD-ROMs, as well as more widespread use of standard set of assessment and learning software (Target Skills) etc
➢ There has been some involvement in testing the application of new technologies, providing a focus for links with national developments in ICT use re adult basic skills
➢ A larger number of ICT-rich venues has been established
➢ Tutors and learners are responding with more motivation

At the same time, ICT is not used as broadly to teach basic skills as the rhetoric might suggest. Its use is dependent on two conditions: access to facilities and an enthusiastic practitioner. Good use has been made of area regeneration funding to ensure guaranteed levels of ICT facilities in local venues used for basic skills teaching.

Almost all providers provide access to ICT for some or all of their basic skills learners but it is clear that some are better equipped to do so than others. At least one organisation is making increased substantial use of interactive whiteboards, data projectors etc. At the same time there are still gaps even at the basic video and audio equipment level. Even more worrying are the reports of lack of more fundamental resources such as paper for photocopies. Access to reliable technical support is viewed as vital once the use of ICT starts to reach substantial levels. There is the potential to create new network-based services to supply some of the support needed.

ICT is widely reported, by providers, as having strongly motivational roles (particularly with young people). It also offers some more efficient ways of individual learner support but on its own, i.e. without some direct teaching, is not leading to large learning gains. It was reported as improving the quality of the experience more than leading to accelerated outcomes.

There are sometimes assumptions made that using computers will 'automatically' increase people's basic skills levels. More curriculum linkages can be made between the 'standard' ICT skills (word processing, spreadsheets, databases etc) and literacy/numeracy skills, within generic ICT activities. Certainly more remains to be done to ensure that all basic skills learners are offered access to ICT-based learning, and all ICT learners are able to access basic skills support.

During the timescale covered by this review, additional basic skills support has been developed around the learndirect activities. Recognising this some actions have recently been taken. These have included:

- awareness raising with staff of learndirect centres
- basic skills awareness training
- information about national tests and national standards etc
- provision of additional basic skills tutor support time
- appointment of a basic skills development worker etc
- registering learndirect centres as test centres, able to offer regular on-line assessment.

In parallel, at a less structured level, there has been activity to place laptops, loaded with consistent sets of basic skills software, within a wide variety of community organisations. These have been used flexibly and creatively in settings such as work with deaf adults and young people, work with young homeless, work with young people in 'cyber-café' settings, work with people with disabilities, work with a range of users of established community projects etc. In the majority of these cases, workers within the community organisation have had some 'basic skills and ICT' training and are able to make 'first steps' use of the equipment opportunities have been taken to link the extension of this access to locally-flexible basic skills resources, to the development of a range of paraprofessionals and community tutors.

Embedding of basic skills into other activities
Providers are largely aware that embedded learning and support provision offers a substantial way forward in raising basic skills levels in the population as well as meeting the Birmingham & Solihull LSC targets but there is uncertainty how to go about delivering it at high volumes. National and regional support and advice is developing for providers re embedding basic skills in other centres.

Whilst there has been a steady increase in the volume of this embedded work over the last ten years, little attention has been given to establishing models that will have the high-volume, multi-context applicability needed if the numbers of basic skills 'succeeders' is to be dramatically increased.

Section 6: Quality

Quality standards and initiatives
This review was not an inspection of provision but visits made to providers gave ample evidence of good delivery: lively teaching, variety of individual, group and pair work, and effective teacher input. At the other extreme there were also indications of poor teaching with learners working on their own through a meaningless sequence of worksheets or with under resourced, unambitious teaching.

Most training providers have realised that elements of their work need to change. The past introduction of materials related to Wordpower and Numberpower had encouraged many training provider basic skills tutors to rely overly on published packs of worksheets. One provider observed 'Staff have lost the skill to deliver imaginatively and to the need of the learner'. The increased refocusing on teaching and learning was welcomed and there is

more to be done to further develop the ability of some training provider staff to teach basic skills rather than being a basic skills facilitator or assessor.

Most were considering restructuring programmes to make more space for diagnostic assessment, Individual Training Plan development and the need for reviews of trainee progress.

There is a clear understanding that responsibility for quality primarily rests with each provider organisation. Others, notably the local Learning and Skills Council, have a duty to both challenge and support organisations in their structured work to continuously improve the quality of basic skills learning.

Outcomes from inspection reports
There is a case to be made for making more frequent use for the self assessment process as part of the continuous improvement expected of organisations, with key 'next steps' being linked to performance review and development support funding.

Of the inspections to date, the basic skills components have been shown to be satisfactory or better in all cases. There are a number of examples where the basic skill provision is graded as good or excellent. Even in situations where organisations have had poor grading in other aspects (and recognising that poor overall management/leadership, quality assurance or equal opportunities will have an impact on the basic skills sections) the basic skills grades have remained satisfactory.

Basic skills strengths within organisations in Birmingham and Solihull across organisations (with not all of these applying in each case) have been listed as:
- successful teaching: high retention and pass rates
- good accommodation
- good links with other providers and agencies
- effective widening of participation
- effective processes for staff training
- responsive flexible provision to meet diverse needs
- good support for learners
- innovative ways of delivering basic skills work in context
- extensive use of accreditation (but not necessarily nationally-recognised certification)
- effective management and support of staff
- good use of ICT
- motivated learners
- strong focus on individual needs in many sessions
- use of individual learning plans to identify learner targets
- well planned sessions
- most lessons have pace and challenge

Basic skills weaknesses: (again generalised across organisations) tend to be:
- inconsistent identification and review of targets for this area of work
- insufficient attention to longer term progression for learners
- weak linkage of initial assessment to learning plans

- poor levels of take up of additional support
- materials do not match needs of learners
- low levels of specialist support for numeracy
- insufficient coordination across different sections of organisation
- assessments not related to context
- individual learning plans not used enough as working documents (to get challenging learner targets; reflect accomplishments etc)
- expectations of learners not high enough
- demanding and realistic targets to be better set for various parts of service
- schemes of work underdeveloped
- narrow ESOL curriculum
- inappropriate / weakness in staff qualifications
- lack of clarity re expected outcomes from some provision
- inconsistency of advice offered re progression from discrete basic skills activity

Staffing, management and capacity
(a) Teacher supply and capacity building

More than 90% of provision of adult basic skills is via colleges, adult education and training providers. Of the basic skills staff in these organisations:

➢ 80% are on permanent or continuing contracts; 10% are on fixed term/short term contracts; 10% are Agency staff
➢ More than 40% are employed for 6-15 hours/week; less than 20% teach under 6 hours/week
➢ More than 80% are white; just under 10% are African Caribbean; 2% are Indian. There are extremely low numbers of teachers from the Bangladeshi and Pakistani communities
➢ Relatively few are over 55 (i.e. there is not a large gap about to be created by large scale retirement) and very few are under 25. There is a spread across the 25-55 age range.
➢ 73% are female
➢ It is a reasonable well qualified workforce. 72% have some form of Level 4 qualification – 42% as a teaching qualification. There are up to 50% who have only the barest introductory qualifications re teaching of basic skills
➢ It is a relatively experienced workforce. Almost 40% have worked in this area for more than 5 years. 25% have worked for less than a year in teaching basic skills.

Of the organisations who provided data on their ability to meet learning needs, most felt that their current staffing levels and skills were fairly acceptable for existing volumes, modes of delivery, and client groups – with the recognition of an underlying need to continuously upgrade the level and range of the basic skills teaching skills of some of their tutors.

More work needs to be done by organisations, supported by the local LSC, to scale out the growth of provision; the contribution to targets; estimated guided learning hours etc – that will lead to estimates of tutor need (and

whether meeting this need can be managed at provider level or whether it needs some LSC-supported collaborative activity).

Providers were much less sure about their ability to provide adequate staffing levels and skills to cater for future provision. Projected levels of growth in basic skills work, an increased focus on particular target groups, and an expectation of use of ICT would all create their own difficulties for existing staff levels and capabilities. Many providers described their ability to deliver embedded basic skills provision – both currently and future – as barely adequate or worse.

Almost all organisations reported some difficulties in finding new staff with sufficient qualifications and experience, related to any new growth in work-related provision, in numeracy, in higher level skills work, in work with particular target groups (e.g. young people) etc. One college had been extremely successful as a result of a concerted, widespread drive to find new basic skills teachers.

In some cases uncertainty of future funding or future LSC models etc has been used as a reason for not reshaping staffing patterns – whilst other organisations have assumed some continuity and gone ahead with substantial appointments. Messages about availability of funding for basic skills are not always clear to providers. Nor are all providers seeing their basic skills work as a plan beyond the one year strategic plan for the LSC. Planning decisions are easier to make where there are indications of e.g. 3 year stability of contracts.

There is variability in the extent to which the managers of provider organisations are engaging with the new basic skills issues; the extent to which managers themselves need updating re basic skills shifts in expectations; and the extent to which senior managers take responsibility for monitoring basic skills developments. Key notifications from the local Learning and Skills Council re basic skills developments are not always passed to the relevant basic skills manager in the organisation. Without going round the Learning and Skills Council Learning Programmes need to communicate with one named point of contact for contract administration purposes, it may be possible for some notification to go out directly from the LSC Basic Skills Co-ordinator to named Basic Skills contacts and for discussions to be held directly with those with relevant expertise.

(b) Teacher qualifications
While, overall, provider managers are committed to staff development many struggled with an early low awareness of the FENTO framework and the national expectations re staff qualifications. National information on these are now clearer. Staff newly recruited from September 2002 are required to work towards both a recognised teaching qualification and a subject qualification at Level 4 (the Certificate for Adult Literacy or Numeracy Subject Specialists) if they are involved in direct teaching. The situation with existing staff is still to be determined.

Work is underway to establish how Birmingham and Solihull LSC and Advantage West Midlands can best ensure a growth in the skills and qualifications of the workforce of several hundred basic skills workers in the area.

Organisations provided data on the qualifications of 600 existing staff. This was cross referenced to the background information teachers gave when attending the intensive curriculum training courses. These show the following profiles:

♦ 61% of literacy teachers are qualified or on their way towards a recognised qualification; compared with 54% of numeracy teachers; and 69% of ESOL teachers.

♦ 9% literacy teachers; 23% numeracy teachers; and 14% esol teachers are described as 'completely unqualified'. This is worrying and needs to be addressed as a matter of priority. Almost half of these unqualified teachers were working within 1 or 2 voluntary sector organisations. Historically, there had been a widespread belief that 928/1 training was sufficient.

The upgrading of the existing teaching force will be a large task (because of the numbers and the proportion of these that are at the 'beginning' end of the qualifying spectrum), but will not be difficult (because of the experienced nature of the staff; and because of the proportion who are partly qualified) once training structures and APL processes are in place.

Achievement, progression, and tracking issues

The national tests were trialled locally in July 2001 and have been promoted within providers over the past year. In themselves the tests are not seen as negative and there is evidence that many learners like them. There is a concern about the limited scope of the tests with the danger that some providers may be tempted to teach to the reading part of the curriculum without addressing writing so that they can more easily achieve outcomes. Whilst the limitations of the current tests are recognised, it is increasingly seen as one element of the overall teaching and learning process.

The test will play an increasingly prominent role as it becomes available on a weekly basis, as learndirect centres become assessment centres for the new certificates; as the test is used as a way of strengthening a CV etc.

There is growing recognition of the powerful effect that formative assessment has on learning outcomes, but most of the assessment focus has recently been on initial diagnostic 'placing' of learning or on summative 'testing' of learning. Any moves towards shorter units, learning pathways etc can easily be linked to formative assessment and learner choice. Similarly on-course activities and assignments can be a way of highlighting next steps of learning rather than grading.

To date more than 700 adults in Birmingham and Solihull have taken the new adult basic skills tests (with an overall pass rate of 60%). There needs to be in excess of 4500 entries to these tests each year.

Promotion of access to the tests is needed for this step change to take place.

7: Implementing the 'Skills for Life' adult basic skills strategy

As soon as the 'Skills for Life' strategy was launched its main development aspects were listed as a checklist so that Birmingham and Solihull's progress in implementing the strategy could be audited and tracked over time.

7.1 Progress in implementing the strategy locally

Substantial progress has already been made in the 15 months since the launch of the strategy. Birmingham and Solihull was a literacy and numeracy pathfinder area for the West Midlands. This worked well in ensuring a rapid improvement in the infrastructure for delivering basic skills, towards:

- ➢ all current teaching staff trained in use of new curricula
- ➢ curriculum/standards being referred to when planning learning
- ➢ widespread use of initial assessment and of diagnostic assessment
- ➢ increased use of individual learning plans that relate to specific curriculum skills
- ➢ use of national tests with learners
- ➢ consistency of approach across wide range of providers
- ➢ consistency of approaches across range of client groups (young people, workplace etc)
- ➢ expansion of more diverse forms of learning
- ➢ more intensive provision
- ➢ more provision focused on particular skills
- ➢ more residential work on basic skills
- ➢ increased working through other agencies to 'move on' basic skills learners into provision

Birmingham and Solihull organisations have also been involved in various ways in other aspects of the strategy:

- ➢ training staff in neighbourhood nurseries to be aware of basic skills issues (part completed – via Birmingham LEA)
- ➢ developing and training people into a range of volunteer and mentor roles (via Birmingham Voluntary Service Council)
- ➢ hosting a 'springboard' event to bring together the broad sets of thinking/developments around ICT support for basic skills – as a way of suggesting ways forward in this still developing area.
- ➢ trialling basic skills training for vocational tutors, to introduce non-basic skills experts to the new requirements
- ➢ keeping all of these developments moving forward in the context of a mainstream 'whole area' approach to basic skills
- ➢ capturing the area's coherent approach to work re basic skills and young people
- ➢ capturing the flexibilities within the area's high quality/high volume dual outcome family basic skills developments

- capturing the area's coherent approach to work re basic skills via voluntary/community organisations
- working with national strategy developments re basic skills and employee development
- building basic skills into the wide range of regeneration and development activities
- improving the skills of staff and quality of resources in the voluntary sector, in housing organisations and in libraries
- offering the local ESOL toolkit for updating as part of the wider national development of assessment materials
- briefings of others at local, regional and national levels
- providing national researchers with access to learners for interviews about how basic skills is affecting their lives
- providing access to provision, for filming etc as part of BBC's/Basic Skills Agency developments
- access to managers views on the way developments should go
- access to teachers (and others) for feedback on BBC Skillswise website; feedback on developments of materials; feedback on developing assessment materials etc

7.2 Attaining short and medium term targets

(a) Local LSC targets

Department for Education and Skills Public Service Targets, for 2001-2004, have been agreed as 750,000 individuals (aged 16+) improving their basic skills by moving up a level to attain:

- Entry level certificate in adult literacy or in adult numeracy
- or Level 1 certificate in adult literacy or in adult numeracy, GCSE (D-G) or Level 1 Key Skills (Communication/Number)
- or Level 2 certificate in adult literacy or in adult numeracy, GSCE (A-C), or Level 2 Key Skills (Communication/Number)

These targets were extended in the recent comprehensive spending review to cover a further 750,000 making similar progress between levels between 2004 and 2007.

The local Learning and Skills contribution to the national 2001-2004 targets are 20,877 spread across three years.

Year	2001-2002	2002-2003	2003-2004	Total
Target	6,959	6,959	6,959	20,877

Whilst there are indications that nationally and locally the system is on track to deliver these target levels of success, Birmingham and Solihull LSC are not currently able to confirm progress against the targets in time to adjust the delivery mechanisms.

(b) Indications from providers

Many of the providers interviewed were, at the time, unaware of the basic skills targets which the Birmingham & Solihull area is to achieve

by 2004; or, where targets were known, little had been done to establish direct implications for their own service.

A number of providers also reported that their core provision was relatively static and that they had recently only expanded because they had been offered additional contracts or been part of short-life initiatives. Stated growth targets for this contract year are, for the most part, relatively modest and range from 5% to 15%. Where a training provider already assesses and provides basic skills to all its learners expansion is only possible if the total contract value is increased. These, of course, are participation growth targets and substantial work needs to be done with providers to assist in declaring targets of individuals moving up a level.

Birmingham and Solihull Learning and Skills Council is seen as the 'holder' of the targets (with the targets now being seen as a whole-organisation issue, rather than as belonging to one section/one person with the LSC). The LSC locally cannot deliver the targets alone, but only through its delivery organisations. It is clear to providers, and to staff at Birmingham and Solihull Learning and Skills Council, that organic growth within providers is not, on its own, sufficient in order to reach the basic skills targets. Growth in achievements will need to be managed, in partnership with provider organisations, with challenge and support from LSC staff. This include clear and reliable information flows between national LSC; local LSCs and provider organisations.

(c) Other services targets
Although targets are being introduced with JobCentre Plus and with the Probation Service, these will only marginally affect the total moving up a level over the next 18months. They will make much more of a contribution to the 2004-2007 targets.

(d) Longer term ambitions
There is a general belief that current LSC targets are realistically attainable. The more challenging ambition is to reduce the levels of basic skills needs by 50% by 2010. This aspiration was originally (in 2000) stated as shown in the table below:

Year	Numbers working on their basic skills	% achieving	Numbers achieving	Increase in level (from school etc)	Net reduction in basic skills need	Level of basic skills need remaining
2000 baseline	9,874	30		3,000		141,440
(targets)						
2000 - 2001	12,000	40	4,800	2,000	2,800	138,640
2001 - 2002	15,000	50	7,500	2,000	5,500	133,340
2002 - 2003	15,000	50	7,500	1,500	6,000	127,340
2003 - 2004	16,000	50	8,000	1,500	6,500	120,840
2004 - 2005	18,000	50	9,000	1,300	7,700	113,140
2005 - 2006	18,000	50	9,000	1,200	7,800	105,340
2006 - 2007	18,000	50	9,000	1,000	8,000	97,340
2007 - 2008	18,000	50	9,000	500	8,500	88,840
2008 - 2009	18,000	50	9,000	500	8,500	80,340
2009 - 2010	18,000	60	10,800	500	10,300	70,040

On the basis of the survey of need, these aspirations can be disaggregated to show the separate ambitions for literacy and for numeracy at Levels 1 and 2.

The 2000 levels for these are shown below together with the figures indicated for 2002 by the review survey of need. The 2010 goal is to have reduced the numbers not at Level 2 by 50%, with a corresponding shift in the numbers able (by 2010) to demonstrate literacy and numeracy skills at level 1 but not yet at level 2.

Aspirational Levels of Ability (Birmingham and Solihull)

	Language/literacy			Numeracy		
	Entry	L1	L2	Entry	L1	L2
2000 (actual)	85%	82%	79%	81%	63%	50%
2002 (actual)	88%	85%	82%	81%	63%	50%
2005 (aspired to)	90%	87%	84%	85%	72%	62%
2010 (aspired to)	94%	92%	90%	90%	82%	75%

To make the scale of progress in the table above will require approximately three times the number of adults to move up a level each year in literacy and in numeracy as are currently achieving.

There is no separate column for Esol/Language since above E3/L1 successes in language can show through as successes in Level 1/Level 2 accreditations. Excluding refugees/asylum seekers, the numbers needing to achieve at E1/E2 are incorporated in the language/literacy figures above.

Given the improvements in quality and the changes in culture and infrastructure indicated by this review as being necessary, it is reasonable to assume that increased numbers of people in all

programmes will be entering national accreditations and that the current pass rates will be maintained or improved upon i.e. there will be increasingly rapid progress towards targets. The challenging nature of the targets means that they are unlikely to simply be met without organisations engaging much more with disaggregated data – on levels of needs in areas by skills levels, by subject, by client groups etc.

Achieving this aspirational level of impact will require (across Birmingham and Solihull):

(a) 1286 people, each year, to succeed at Level 2 literacy
    1364 people, each year, to succeed at Level 1 literacy
    2493 people, each year, to succeed at Entry Level literacy

    i.e. 5143 to move up a level in literacy (and a further 3246 people to make progress, each year, within Entry Level literacy).

(b) 5764 people, each year, to succeed at Level 2 numeracy
    8466 people, each year, to succeed at Level 1 numeracy
    4311 people, each year, to succeed at Entry Level numeracy

    i.e. 18561 to move up a level in numeracy (and a further 4377 people to make progress, each year, within Entry Level numeracy).

Birmingham and Solihull Learning and Skills Council has an average annual target of 6,959 individuals moving up a level (in either literacy, numeracy, or both). Solving the skills gap issues in literacy appears therefore, to be relatively quite achievable. Closing the numeracy skills gap even to Level 1 – is a much more difficult task.

Making these substantial reductions in the overall numbers of people with low levels of literacy, numeracy and language will be increasingly challenging over the next 6-10 years. There are some actions that will help:
  ➢ Clarification of the various targets with key intermediary organisations (e.g. main providers)
  ➢ Increasing the development of provider plans to contribute to local targets. This requires closer links between organisational plans and area/regional/national strategies.
  ➢ Speeding up the extension of the basic skills offer into community and voluntary organisations, and to 'non-participants' in focused ways
  ➢ Planners and funders taking an active part in building the capacity of organisations' staff to directly deliver basic skills up to test levels, through an emphasis on achievement at Level 1, Level 2 as well as participation at Entry Level.
  ➢ Strengthening professional focus onto the outcomes for learners - recognising basic skills as a product as well as a process; getting the questions 'What do you want from this?' 'How quickly do you want to get there?' built into initial assessment.

- Promoting the national accreditations within all supported programmes; and creating clearer links between motivation, identification of specific skills needs, construction of programmes, and expected accreditation outcomes.
- Support and challenge to provider organisations to set realistic but demanding organisational targets (across the range 'minimum' to 'ambitious'?) with commissioning of work to close identified gaps to reaching the targets.
- Creating access to national accreditations in wider range of courses; in other programmes; and as public 'off the street' access in a wider range of approved venues.
- Ensuring that starting points and achievements are recorded for all basic skills learners, against the standard levels.

There is still a degree of unreliability of data (of all kinds) across the system. Without wanting to collect unnecessary data, or to measure things because they exist, key data sets need to be agreed and adhered to with some reliability. Data collection and management systems will need to:

~ ensure that the most accurate methods are used to collect data with regard to achievement towards targets (and where these measures are not available put resources in to develop them)
~ collect data about levels from generic basic skills courses
~ collect basic skills data from the content embedded in vocational and other courses
~ take account of the work of a number of agencies, and recognise any contributions to targets by non-traditional activity

Section 8: Potential for further Developments

8.1 Next steps in implementing the Skills for Life strategy in Birmingham and Solihull

The checklist already being used to track the implementation of the national strategy, across aspects of activity in Birmingham and Solihull, is proving a useful tool for staying on track. Over two years the area has rapidly moved from a position of 'this is everything that needs to be done' to 'this is the distance still to be travelled' i.e. the checklist has helped to maintain focus on a clear set of goals, and has directed energies towards particular outcomes.

The Core Skills Development Partnership has assisted the Adult Basic Skills Strategy Unit, the DfES Policy Implementation Unit, and the Prime Minister's Delivery Unit to undertake research as part of their priority reviewing of key strategy implementations.

This involved talking to adults who had basic skills needs but who were not likely to have these met by existing mechanisms. The range of agencies that these people regularly used (doctor; post office; community centre; neighbourhood advice centre; playcare organisation; market/shops; park;

jobcentre; library; neighbourhood office etc) were visited to explore what roles (if any) such organisations could play within the next set of drives to implement the Skills for Life strategy.

The outcome from this exercise was a confirmation that the strategy had already been embedded in main 'structural' provision and was, additionally, being pushed well through voluntary sector agencies that had links into learning.

At the next ring out (i.e. voluntary/community organisations whose prime business was other than learning) there was:
- ➢ some recognition of issues associated with adult basic skills
- ➢ understandably, a patchier understanding of what was available as 'solutions'
- ➢ appreciation that many of the people they saw, for other reasons, had low levels of basic skills
- ➢ some suggestions re ways their own organisation could engage more with the national drive to raise basic skills levels
- ➢ largely a feeling that basic skills meant 'illiterate'; that the topic could not be raised as a neutral discussion of skills (i.e. was associated with 'shame') i.e. basic skills widely used as a term with strong negative connotations
- ➢ more to be done (at national 'promotion' level) to link basic skills improvement and the core business of these agencies, in terms of aiding more efficient 'transactions'
- ➢ an opportunity via those places of public gathering of large numbers of people which offered the potential for getting generalised messages across
- ➢ still a sense in which many of the intermediaries had a misplaced sensitivity around raising/responding to the issue of adult basic skills gaps. Their attitudes were often dominant in whether someone succeeded or not
- ➢ agencies might be working with a further education provider on one topic but still remain relatively unaware of the larger basic skills strategy
- ➢ potential for a wider exploration of community mentors/activists to take the strategy up a step further
- ➢ some surprising gaps e.g. the 'one-stop' neighbourhood advice offices not having been geared up to engage with basic skills
- ➢ some excellent examples where an agency apparently far from this strategy (e.g. parks/nature conservation) could immediately see ways for them to engage
- ➢ stronger links possible to public safety (reading instructions etc); to accidents at home; to participation in public reviews/client consultation
- ➢ potential to build basic skills into a wide range of other activities in community organisations
- ➢ a recognition of the often difficult lives lived by some of the adults met. Other preoccupations might well get in the way of regular, fixed attendance models of support.

> ➢ more scope for adult basic skills awareness/responsiveness to be built into agendas of a far wider range of organisations (re customer care policies; Equal opportunities policies; frontline staff training; modules within professional training; use of Investors in People etc; organisational development plans etc)
> ➢ a wider range of regional/national funding sources could require bidders to demonstrate links to Skills for Life agenda
> ➢ stronger emphasis that 'basic skills' ranges up to Level 2 (GCSE equivalent)
> ➢ more scope for basic skills services to be delivered in peripatetic ways, reaching out into wider community organisations
> ➢ exploration of how 'non-accredited' intermediary organisations are able to deliver some elements of the basic skills agenda.

8.2 Winning hearts and minds on the level and nature of basic skills needs

There is more to be done to make providers, key intermediaries, and Jobcentre Plus/Learning and Skills Council staff aware of basic skills in general as well as the fact that basic skills means not just very low levels of achievement i.e. pre-entry and entry level. Many providers do not deliver basic skills at a higher level for this reason. There is also more to be done in some intermediaries, to move general social attitudes:

> away from the 1970s view that 'these poor people are a bit deficient and need to be got into provision that will protect them and slowly educate them'
>
> towards a 2002 view that 'many people have gaps in specific skills that they need to learn about and practice – so they need to be clear about how to gain the skills; be supported in getting those skills boosted; and helped to get on with their life'.

8.3 Adult Basic Skills and Neighbourhood Renewal

The aims of neighbourhood renewal are:
- ❑ to close gaps between localities
- ❑ to ensure outcome levels are above floor targets
- ❑ to increase local decision-making
- ❑ to improve mainstream services

All of these align with:
- ○ using the national 'Skills for Life' strategy to reduce basic skills gaps between localities
- ○ the intention to work towards underpinning levels of achievement/activity in all areas
- ○ increasing the diversity of provision, ensuring that adults have a choice of appropriate support: local management decisions within a stronger city framework
- ○ improving the quality, volume and diversity of adult basic skills provision

Improving levels of adult basic skills is a key element of the overall drive for neighbourhood renewal. This has been recognised in Birmingham by

including adult basic skills improvements as a specific objective within the city's Community Plan.

Basic skills levels have strong links across to the wider social outcomes to be delivered through neighbourhood renewal processes e.g. making changes to levels of unemployment; homelessness; offending; life expectancy; social engagement. Making these linkages more explicit would strengthen the understanding that whilst the larger proportion of basic skills achievements are ultimately going to be delivered through education and training organisations, the benefits affect the agendas of many other types of organisation. It is appropriate therefore that Local Strategic Partnerships include the adult basic skills dimension within their considerations.

The Skills for Life strategy also aims to support the community engagement processes within the renewal of neighbourhoods. Adequate basic skills are a prerequisite for citizenship and wider forms of governance. Strengthening communication skills is part of the wider capacity-building package that better enables the local involvement of residents in decision making around neighbourhood renewal. Part of the Community Engagement Fund could be dedicated to some 'front-end' work of the kind that strengthens the democratic process through targeted, relevant basic skills work through the Adult Education Service, Colleges or voluntary organisations.

There are, currently, an increasing number of activities aiming to support the renewal of neighbourhoods. The national Learning and Skills Council has recently released a Neighbourhood Learning in Deprived Communities initiative. This initiative provides the resource stream that will enable progress to be made on:
- outreach delivered in partnership
- first step innovative provision
- developing local learning champions
- creating links between dispersed activity and mainstream progression routes

Whilst this is wider than adult basic skills, there is the expectation that projects supported by this fund should address literacy and numeracy. Similarly, basic skills is an expected component of the ESF co-financing frameworks, of the range of European Union funded development programmes, of Regeneration Zone developments etc etc.

There is thus an increasing range of capacity-building/development initiatives each making separate references to adult basic skills developments. There is the potential for this to lead to a proliferation of disconnected activity, agreed by different people, with little cross referencing to other developments. The Core Skills Development Partnership can play a role, where invited by separate partners, in ensuring appropriate double-checks are made as part of the agreement processes. Where agreement processes remain wholly within one

organisation, more can be done to reference proposals across to a basic skills contact person in the organisation before final approvals are made.

8.4 Potential for Floor Targets

Using the levels of skills in each ward at the moment, and the overall planned levels of skill for the whole area for 2005 and 2010, it is possible to set aspirational minimum levels for 2005 (levels below which no ward will remain by that time).

These floor/minimum levels can be set for literacy (at E2, E3, L1, L2) and numeracy (at E2, E3, L1, L2). The aspirational levels can be differentially set for sub-areas e.g. for Solihull and for Birmingham; or for Solihull and for various different areas within Birmingham (e.g. the 6 'joined up delivery' areas being proposed by Birmingham and Solihull Learning and Skills Council).

This process allows for planned progress within identified wards; with percentages of the population translating into real numbers expected to make progress (i.e. linking across to Learning and Skills Council targets); and with supporting activity able to draw, for example, on neighbourhood renewal funding locally in each ward.

The argument against ward-based floor targets are twofold. Firstly, monitoring progress against the targets requires, ideally, a remeasuring of overall skills levels for the ward's population each year. Secondly, those wards with furthest distance to travel to reach the floor target are often wards characterised by high levels of population turnover. This mobility of population is, however, usually an exchange between similar wards and, whilst made up of different individuals, the ward population characteristics have a degree of stability.

Rather than constant monitoring of skills levels, a better approach could be to convert the distances to be travelled (within each ward, in order to reach/surpass the floor target) into numbers of adults needing to move up a level over the period to 2005 and to annually monitor the numbers 'succeeding' in this way within the target wards.

Potential floor targets for literacy (at 4 levels) and numeracy (at 4 levels) are shown, for Birmingham wards and for Solihull wards separately, in Appendix 1.

8.5 Area based activity

There is an obvious need to shift the planning of delivery of specific provision away from disconnected institutional planning onto the basis of linked area planning, and there have been a number of attempts at this over the past 15 years, with some examples of where this has worked well. At the same time there is an equally strong recognition that the model of simply devolving allocations to areas has not been successful. There are useful lessons emerging from the government's review of area-

based initiatives. In the past the experiments with locality-based focusing on learning has led to:
- too much energy going into structures rather than purposes
- a focus on territory and organisations, rather than learners
- loss of cross-system coherence; reduction in cost effectiveness because of duplication of processes
- lack of ability to effectively intervene for change, because the locality acts as gatekeeper
- too much emphasis on branding, and 'ownership' by areas, rather than focusing on area contributions to broader strategies
- localities focusing on bidding of additional resources rather than delivery of outcomes within existing resources
- areas reinventing their own version of what is already happening, leading to 'deadweight' activity
- area-based models reinforcing unhelpful thinking in terms of artificial 'boundaries'.

All types of adult basic skills work permeate programmes that are part the Learning and Skills Council activity, part of Probation Service activity, part of learndirect activity, part of LEA work with schools, part of JobCentre Plus activity etc. For this reason it is unlikely that any single agency can be thought of as 'leading' all of the basic skills delivery (in terms of direct management responsibility for it). Basic skills work will continue to be the responsibility of an increasing number of organisations, but this is not a reason for disconnected (or competing) delivery.

There are clear reasons for central specification of work in some cases. At the same time there are clearly strong benefits in a number of organisations coming together to:
- produce area wide thematic information based on specific skills to be achieved
- ensure that a wide range of organisations (providers, libraries, community organisations, JobCentre Plus offices, Neighbourhood offices etc) can act as frontages that open up entry to a range of learning opportunities in the locality.
- determine the overall balance of opportunities in an area, in relation to any targets to be achieved and any wider strategic framework
- monitor area level progress of learners and reductions of levels of need in the area
- share continuing professional development opportunities
- create exchange mechanisms for resources, staff expertise etc
- provide information and opportunities re ways forward for learners
- decision how best to locally respond to centrally-determined contracts

Across the whole of Birmingham and Solihull one would expect to see:
    (a) a higher volume of adult basic skills provision
    (b) a better match between a diversity of accessible provision and the distribution of levels of skills gaps (across literacy, numeracy and ESOL; and across the three standard levels of skills)

(c) better access to national accreditation
(d) clearer routes from community activities to skills accreditations

8.6 Clarity of roles

Adult basic skills is a high priority on the agendas of an increased number of organisations. This is to be welcomed. At the same time there is an increased need for active work to ensure coherence and reduce wasted energies. There are national, regional, local and institutional levels at which basic skills developments are taking place, with a need for clarity about appropriate activity at each level:

- at national level: strategy formulation; widescale 'universal' developments
- at LSC level: local plan for implementing the strategies in a relevant and coherent way; drive for progress/change
- at locality level: aligning of learning opportunities; clear information; rearrangements of delivery based on robust data
- at regional level: additional activity that cannot be carried forward at LSC/national level, linked to clear regional agenda; regionalisation of national activity where this brings better effectiveness or value for money
- at institutional level: responsibility for quality of own delivery; quality of linkages/alignment with other providers; clear statement of own contribution to wider changes

At times of rapid development one can identify contradictory and competing activities. A possible example is where an organisation trials a national development with the aim of rolling it out across LSCs in a region; a regional development gains funding to do a similar activity (also to be rolled out across LSCs in the region); the local LSC has its own development activity on the same topic; an institution within the LSC area gains separate funding to undertake the same set of developments.

The potential turbulence that can come from such multi-layered activity on the same topic has been minimised by:

- national developments working at LSC level through existing local staff and mechanisms, rather than introducing their own 'project' staff and processes at LSC/regional level
- the LSC having clearly articulated its development intentions
- good 'intelligence' through the networking between a wide variety of organisations (concerned with basic skills) across the LSC area
- recognition of the key roles/expertise of certain organisations and individuals
- the 'partnership' culture that has been developed and is being promoted
- having one known 'basic skills' reference group that cross references between different developments and activities
- having known basic skills reference people who are used as a double-check for any wider development proposals that include a basic skills aspect.

8.7 Adult Basic Skills Strategy Group

Most of the developments covered by this review, such as information requirements, shifts in provision to align with broad indicators of need, the need to focus teacher supply and training etc apply to most if not all providers and will apply across areas.

The Birmingham and Solihull LSC area currently does not have an overall adult basic skills strategy group. It benefits from the existence of a regional Skills for Life group which has the capacity to align the regional activities of various national bodies (notably the Basic Skills Agency, the Learning and Skills Development Agency, learndirect, the National Institute for Adult and Continuing Education) with the basic skills dimensions of Advantage West Midland's regional skills strategy, and with the adult basic skills plans of six local Learning and Skills Councils within the region. The time is right for a review of the function of this group

Within Birmingham and Solihull Learning and Skills Council itself there is a cross team thematic group for adult basic skills. Implementation of the broad basic skills agenda challenges LSCs to work in a joined up way more than has been needed for other single activity developments. Whilst Birmingham and Solihull LSC has an idenitfied basic skills co-ordinator basic skills is helpfully being addressed as a whole LSC issue.

For the past two years, to assist with the rapid implementation of changes associated with the new national strategy, the Birmingham Core Skills Development Partnership has hosted the facility for senior managers with basic skills responsibilities, from a wide range of organisations, to come together around specific topics. This has been supplemented by an email updating facility to ensure that all organisations have stayed up to date on the implementation of the strategy. This has been welcomed by the vast majority of organisations but was only seen as being necessary for the two-year period now coming to an end, and had the function of staying 'in front of the waves' as the strategy was rapidly rolled out.

None of these groups has sought to operate as an adult basic skills strategy group in relation to:
  - ➢ decision making about the overall pattern of provision expected through LSC-funded provision; JCP provision etc
  - ➢ decision making about best use of the variety of quality/development resources available
  - ➢ decision making about interventions needed to ensure progress towards targets
  - ➢ decision making re areas where additional activity need to be commissioned

There is a need for key funders and planners to have the capacity to set overall strategic frameworks that release resources at the 'front line' of delivery (i.e. reduce resources spent on unnecessary bureaucracy) but

retains overall direction. A group that brings together key partners at LSC level will enable a focus to be kept on:
> patterns of provision
> progress towards targets
> deployment of development funding
> overall issues re quality and capacity

Section 9: Conclusions, recommendations and actions taken as a result of the review

Although there are many potential development points raised within this Review report, overall the picture of basic skills/esol provision in Birmingham & Solihull is very positive. There is much good practice, but the most noticeable development is a sense of active engagement in a highly structured drive to raise basic skills levels across the area. Factors which will help improve delivery and reach the targets are the clear willingness of managers, teachers and planners to review provision, search for new ways to improve delivery; and the continued development role that has been a strong feature within the area over the last few years.

The system is well connected into national and regional developments in a number of interconnecting ways, and has good intelligence about short and medium term positioning of its capacity.

Providers have a relatively good set of relationships with each other, and with Birmingham and Solihull Jobcentre Plus, Birmingham and Solihull Learning and Skills Council, and Birmingham and Solihull Connexions. The voluntary sector is taking an active role in delivering the basic skills agenda. Birmingham, in particular, has benefited from a development edge focused on basic skills managed independently of any one major body, but contributed to by all of them.

Some of the proposals emerging during the review have already been dealt with by the appropriate organisation. Some are still being addressed. None are awaiting decisions before action can be taken. The various development proposals emerging in their different ways throughout the review have been related back to a few key strategic changes. These are:
- **Stimulate more adults to address real skills gaps**
  - shift attitudes to basic skills
  - better information and promotion
- **More appropriate range of learner choices**
  - more diverse range of delivery
  - engage more organisations in activities leading to basic skills outcomes
  - customisation to needs of particular groups of adults
- **Improve quality of teaching and learning; and increase access to assessment**
  - better screening, assessment, individual learning plans and access to accreditation

- match teacher availability, skills and qualifications to new planned expectations
- improve basic skills services across the provider base

- **Secure planned, substantial improvements in basic skills levels**
    - better planning of local delivery offer, based on reliable data
    - appropriate use of targets to close attainment gaps
    - robust strategic framework and direction

The table below shows the steps being taken in relation to each strategic objective:

1. Stimulate more adults to address real skills gaps
(a) shift attitudes to basic skills
• Take opportunities to shift perspectives towards a more 'modern' view of basic skills e.g. build more appropriate attitudes to, and understanding of, 'basic skills', by key intermediaries; and a shift onto neutral, specific skills acquisition, and away from a focus on inadequacies of individuals. Use a series of key messages to encourage and motivate potential learners.
• Strengthen emphasis on basic skills being up to Level 2. All key documents, programmes and promotions to reinforce this message.
• Create more focus on achievement; access to booster provision, focusing on rehearsing specific skills, linked to national accreditations.
(b) better information and promotion
• Ensure (via Information, Advice and Guidance network) that all basic skills contact details are appropriately registered with national referral processes. 'Seamless connection' to be guaranteed between national promotions, learndirect referrals, Learning Shop, local provision.
• Explore use of community mentors/activists/champions to take basic skills work further into target groups and actively motivate specific groups
• Produce area-based thematic information
• Produce clearer definition of courses by purpose, level etc; based on a clearer understanding of the levels of numeracy skills needed to operate functionally, in a range of contexts, and on increased clarity of approaches to English for Speakers of Other Languages
• Undertake a multi-agency promotional campaign, making use of wide range of mechanisms to use differentiated promotional messages, often via intermediary organisations or structures. Use existing networks' capacity to promote key and basic skills strategic messages.
• Ensure that all learners, already in contact with programmes, are aware of the possibilities for improving their basic skills. Update and insert list of basic skills contacts into existing 'non basic skills' programmes.
• Undertake area wide promotion of the new national certificates at Entry Level, Level 1 and Level 2.

2. More appropriate range of learner choices
(a) more diverse range of delivery
• Continued highlighting to employers of the need to address basic skills and the support available, in the structured way being promoted by Birmingham and Solihull LSC.
• Increase amount of provision to deliver intensive progress towards planned skills outcomes
• Increase (and diversify) provision at Entry 3 and above, to meet the higher level skills focus (especially in ESOL)
• Increase focus on numeracy at all levels
• Ensure an appropriate offer and 'customisation' for the range of learners with disabilities, that matches the broadening offer for other learners; with specific attention to meeting the needs of adults with deafness or hearing loss; and the needs of adults who are blind or partially sighted.
• Create a more adequate range of full-time/ short/ modular courses

• Create an increased focus on the ESOL component of basic skills strategy. In relation to ESOL, including:
  - more intensive provision which teaches English not just for survival but also in the work context.
  - programmes to give sufficient English learning before progress onto specific programmes with language support
  - meeting differentiated needs e.g. of adults who have low written skills and high spoken skills
  - training providers to offer an appropriate range of ESOL opportunities to meet the language needs of new arrivals who have no English language skills at all, as well as to those who were born here but whose English is influenced by the mother-tongue of their community (e.g. Creole).
  - ensuring that ESOL is not simply being equated with entry level
  - increasing the volume of ESOL provision via JobCentrePlus, within an overall expansion of the numbers being referred to basic skills support

• Create booster provision to support entry to national tests (literacy/numeracy certificate at Levels 1 and 2; public service entrance tests etc)
• Explore the possibilities for new 'managed services' that are able to extend the reach of high quality basic skills work beyond courses/groups. Possibility of developing a range of new programmes for home and community learning.
• Target work to meet the specific skills needs of officers/members of community organisations; adults/young people wanting to participate more in community involvement processes
• Target work to meet the numeracy and communication skills needs of managers across a range of public services
• Create further expansion of ICT-based, basic skills learning opportunities
• Integrate basic skills work into ICT courses and other ICT-based opportunities; increase basic skills support in ICT learning centres e.g. UKOnline/learndirect centres; increase opportunities for ICT based assessment
• Clarify further delivery models, linked to basic and key skills outcomes, including embedding basic skills/key skills in vocational/ non-vocational programmes

(b) engage more organisations in activities leading to basic skills outcomes
• Review main agencies who may not yet have adequate basic skills plans for their service.
• Forge stronger links between existing LSC providers and organisations such as Foyers, Youth Offending Service, Drugs Action Team etc
• Review list of key voluntary organisations and their capacity to recognise/refer/assess/deliver/accredit. Voluntary organisations to be more structurally tied into range of basic skills local developments. Agree coherent development activity with a range of organisations that are not direct providers of basic skills, but who are active with large numbers of disadvantaged young people and whose core business links easily across to basic skills issues.
• Identify existing 'non basic skills' programmes in localities/ with client groups likely to have basic skills needs and draw up intervention proposals.
• Outline current/planned provision re refugees/asylum seekers.
• Establish 'Front end' work to support community engagement with renewal and regeneration processes
(c) customisation to needs of particular groups of adults
• Create a strong focus on sector-specific work-related basic skills. Produce additional sector-specific CD-ROMs, with a coherent plan for their distribution and use in the workplace.
• Substantially increase work with public sector workers

3. Improve quality of teaching and learning; and increase access to assessment
(a) better screening, assessment, individual learning plans and access to accreditation
• Promote stronger linkages between screening processes, outreach processes, bridging processes and main programme activities. Audit basic skills awareness, screening and assessment training needs of network members, leading to planned costed programme of updating (linking, where appropriate, to new assessment tools to be available nationally)
• Promote a 'common message' across teaching staff, that the purpose of their work is to assist learners to maximise their skills (and thereby help to contribute to organisational/LSC/National targets) whilst not letting targets/tests inappropriately skew the skills attainment.
• Encourage more organisations to register as assessment centres. Develop open-access test centres to increase access to and take-up of national tests. Explore options for system-wide basic skills assessment/referral workers
• Actively promote access to national basic skills accreditations via employer training pilot; EQUAL programme; Entry to Employment etc
• Provide better routes from community activities to accreditation opportunities

(b) match teacher availability, skills and qualifications to new planned expectations
• Work with Advantage West Midlands to support a coherent approach to capacity building of current providers (and potential providers), with a strong focus on professional development centres/networks and on assisting staff to raise their levels of skills and qualifications re basic skills delivery and management.
• Set up a training group with representation across Birmingham and Solihull, with a medium term focus on teacher training, and providing a steer for continuing professional development activity beyond the level where this can be met within the separate organisations
• Increase management capacity, particularly in work-based providers
• Make more use of organisational mentoring
• Promote range of basic skills roles; with more clarity re Level 2/Level 3 functions and requirements
• Enhance the role of the 'learning advisor'/'basic skills adviser' both as organisational mentors and as community motivators for basic skills activity
• Recruit and train more people to teach basic skills, in particular numeracy; promote the mentoring of new teachers.
(c) improve basic skills services across the provider base
• Secure better performance on progression, for example from family programmes into substantial basic skills provision; or from outreach work into effective basic skills provision; or from 'guidance'/'contact' on to basic skills assessment with young people
• Establish an increased pool of trainers, organisational mentors, quality advisers etc to be drawn on flexibly (without removing provider organisations' responsibilities for the continuing professional development of their staff).
• Encourage those organisations, whose inspection reports highlighted excellent practise, to share their expertise with other organisations in the area; customise the model of shared expertise/demonstration sessions for use amongst adult providers. Facilitate sharing of expertise between providers – recognising that almost every organisation has succeeded in 'cracking' some puzzle that others can learn from.
• Reshape the basic skills guidance accompanying the Common Inspection Framework into guidance sheets to be issued to those organisations that need support on specific aspects; pre-inspection work to be encouraged in organisations
• Link Learning and Skills Council/JobCentrePlus quality development resources more closely to gaps identified through rigorous self-assessment.
• Pull lessons from the school sector's implementation e.g. of language across the curriculum in the Key Stage 3 strategy, so that these can be shared cross phases.
• Create tutor network meetings, where providers can get together to exchange information/get further training.

• Support the best use of Internet, electronic whiteboards etc, in group and other provision. Support wider sharing of information on suitable software and ICT approaches. Encourage providers to have a broader overview of ICT provision including Learndirect provision. Use area regeneration funds to ensure maximum number of centres are appropriately equipped.
• Promote the dual purpose of the strong schools-led model of family literacy/numeracy, with maximum support to schools by moving to 3 year indications of scale of activity brokered, via the LEA schools section, to include the most appropriate area-based adult basic skills provider
• Produce exemplar activities which integrate basic skills in meaningful Individual Learning Plans, session plans and overall schemes of work. Identify which providers deliver successful, systematic embedded basic skills and disseminate good practice through staff training sessions and exchange visits. Set targets for the number of vocational/educational specialists who are trained and active in basic skills delivery.

4. Secure planned, substantial improvements in basic skills levels
(a) better planning of local delivery offer, based on reliable data
• Refine area-based data to produce area-focused definitions of need; ensure better match between levels of provision and levels of need
• Promote survey findings to local area planning groups – securing agreement to aspirational 'floor targets' re minimum levels of basic skills abilities.
• Encourage clearer links between local providers producing coherent plan of future provision (taking account of Regeneration Zones and other area based initiatives)
(b) appropriate use of targets to close attainment gaps
• Encourage providers to set increasingly disaggregated targets. Base forward plans not simply on 'basic skills' but separately on numeracy, literacy and language development.
• Organisations set their own realistic but challenging targets (maybe across a range from 'guaranteed minimum' to 'aspirational maximum') with identified support and challenge assisting them in attaining these targets. Identify each major programme's potential for contributing towards local and national targets
• Ensure that data collection is made more reliable in terms of position re levels/targets
• Produce annual reports of progress towards various sets of targets
• Commission work to bridge any gaps re target attainment
(c) robust strategic framework and direction
• Ensure clearer specification of links between local strategic partnerships; community plans; neighbourhood renewal strategies and potential for aspirational floor targets
• Promote the basic skills benefits to wider range of organisations (via local strategic partnership members)

- List range of development/capacity building initiatives that have (or could have) a basic skills dimension, and institute 'double check' system
- Move towards area-based delivery planning (taking advantage of re moves towards shared continuing professional development; area-level monitoring of learner outcomes; interchangeability of staff expertise/resources etc)
- Focus the existing Basic Skills Forum on (a) ESOL issues and (b) continuing professional development issues until November 2003.
- Form a Birmingham and Solihull Basic Skills Strategy Group, with an initial 3 year life span, to assist organisations in meeting local and national targets, and advising Learning and Skills Council/Jobcentre Plus etc re best investments.
- Draw up 3-7 year proposals for long term change across the sub region – recognising that, clearly within certain areas and demographic groups, there are significant proportions of adults in Birmingham and Solihull with basic skills needs still to be met.

Appendix 1

- 2002 levels of % capabilities in literacy and numeracy (at Entry Level, Level 1 and Level 2)

- Possible 'aspirational' floor targets across Birmingham and Solihull (ie no locality below this level by 2005)

Appendix 2: Scope of the Review

- This review has covered the whole range of adult basic skills activity:
  - Learning and Skills Council funded; Job Centre Plus; Business Link; Regeneration funded; Local Education Authority/voluntary sector funded; European funded
  - Literacy; Numeracy; ESOL/Language support
  - Basic skills for people with learning difficulties and disabilities

- It has been applied across the full range of settings:
  - vocational training; work related/work place; family learning; community/voluntary; via offender services; via housing/health/libraries etc; adult/further education

- Its intention is to create insights that can be used to inform future strategy and planning:
  - of local Learning and Skills Council/LEAs/Job Centre Plus
  - of Core Skills Development Partnership
  - in relation to the local implementation of the national adult basic skills strategy
  - relating to other changes (planned or underway) of 16-19 learning; adult & community learning; etc
  - at regional and subregional levels

- The review work has made explicit linkages
  - with Learning Gateway; Connexions
  - with youth justice processes
  - with neighbourhood renewal processes
  - with Learndirect activity
  - with trade union activity
  - with school standards agenda
  - with voluntary sector strategy; workforce development strategy
  - with regional development agendas
  - with key skills issues
  - with other reviews
  - with the alignment of organisational plans/area plans/national strategy
  - with national programmes and developments
  - with a range of funding streams/development opportunities
  - with the various plans of funders and providers

This Review deliberately did not undertake work that was to be covered by the planned Adult and Community Learning Review i.e. geographical patterns of provision; quality of venues etc. Where general issues have been addressed, these have been from the specific perspective of adult basic skills.

The review has been managed by the Birmingham Core Skills Development Partnership and, as such, has had active involvement (at the specification

stage, the exploratory stage, the interim reporting stage etc) of a range of key partner organisations.

The detailed work has relied on Philida Schellekens and Jim Pateman, two well-respected national consultants, who have met with planners and managers; brought together focus groups; visited or surveyed the range of providers; reviewed plans, strategies and reports; made comparisons with other areas; and helped to keep this work located within the larger national pictures. In turn they have been able to draw on the time and expertise of particular people brought in around specific topics.

Supporting desk review work and data analysis work was undertaken by the Birmingham Core Skills Development Partnership. This drew on plans of a range of organisations, returns from questionnaires, a variety of surveys and audits, and the information (including views of teachers and learners) from the Pathfinder activity. The Review has therefore been inclusive across the widest variety of inputs, and wide ranging across topics covered.

A review steering group has met 5 times and has had senior representation from:
- Birmingham and Solihull College Principals' network
- Solihull LEA
- Birmingham LEA – Family learning Service
- Birmingham LEA – Adult Education Service
- Birmingham and Solihull Learning and Skills Council
- Birmingham Voluntary Service Council
- Careers Education Business Partnership/Connexions
- Birmingham and Solihull Job Centre Plus
- Learndirect
- Learning and Skills Development Agency
- Basic Skills Agency
- Adult Basic Skills Strategy Unit
- Advantage West Midlands

This group, and the stages of the review, benefited from the oversight and guidance of Barry Brooks, Head of the National Adult Basic Skills Strategy Unit. Data analysis work has been undertaken by Birmingham and Solihull Learning and Skills Council, by Opinion Research Business, by Be Consultancy and by Cambridge Training and Development. In all the review has drawn on inputs from more than 200 individuals and organisations.

This review is a specific activity undertaken at the request of the local Learning and Skills Council. It sits, at the same time, within a flow of continuous review of various aspects of adult basic skills developments across the area and will feed into other ongoing reviews i.e. it is a specific but not isolated undertaking.
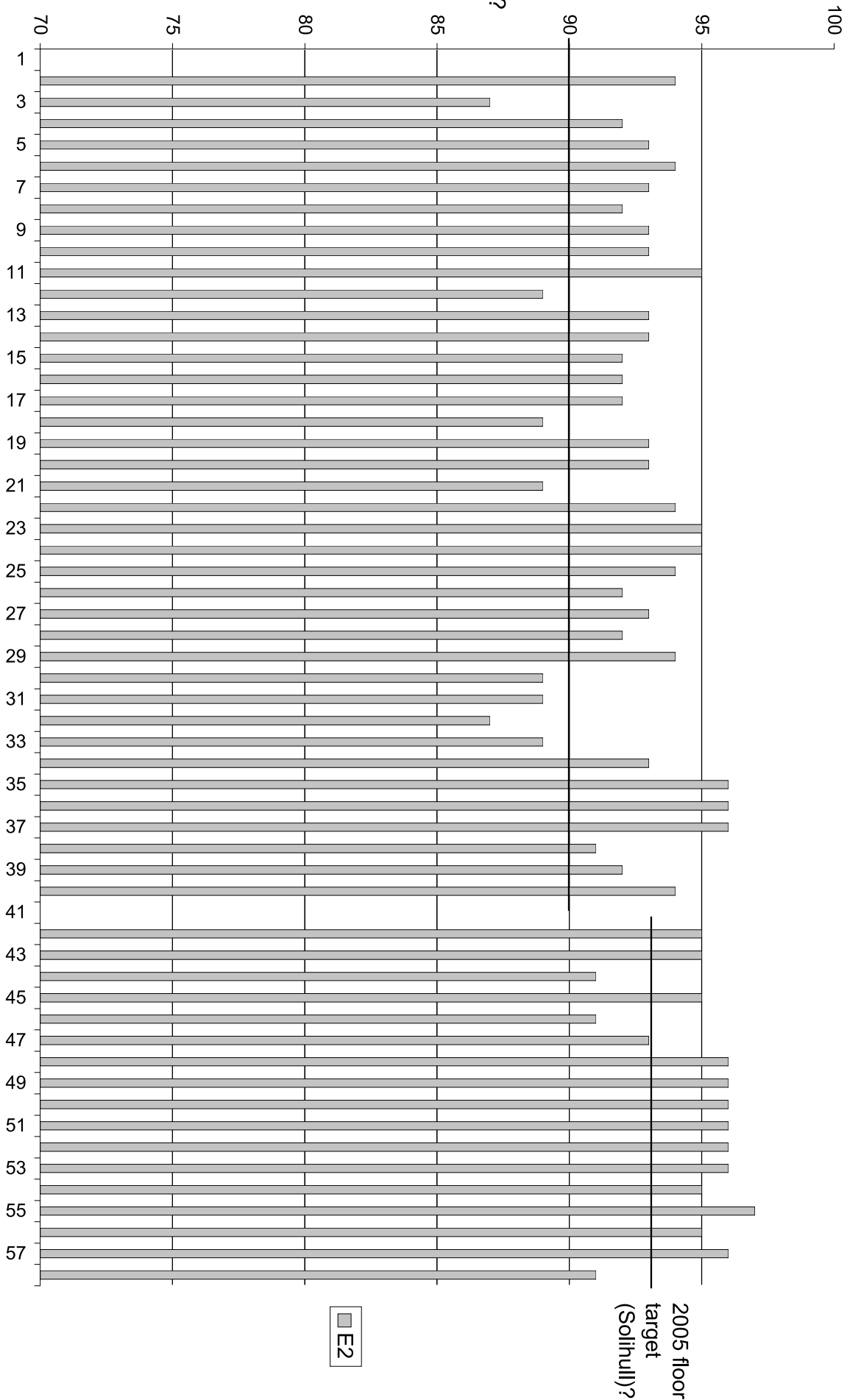
2002 Levels of % capability in basic skills

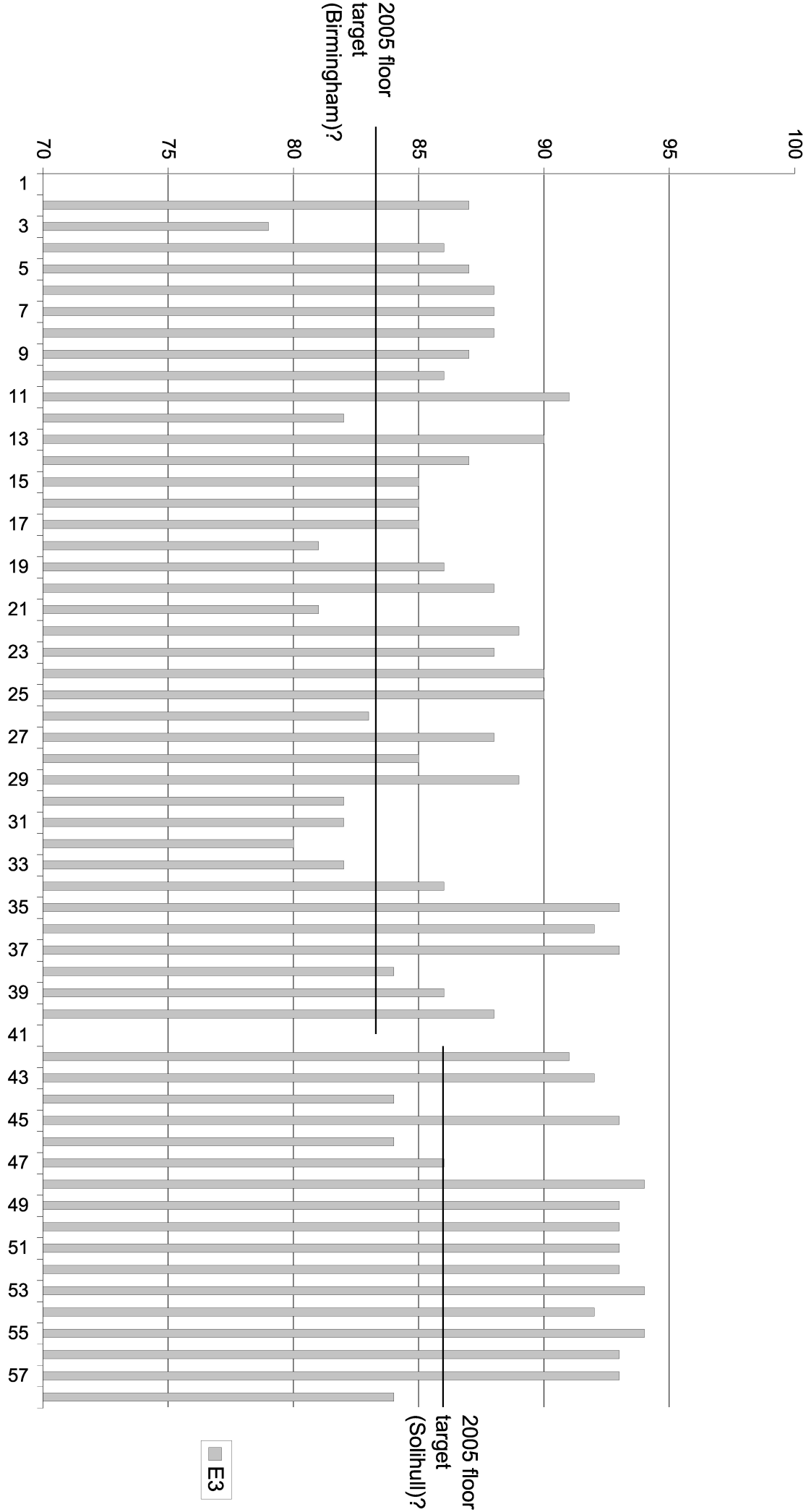|	Literacy				Numeracy			
	E2	E3	L1	L2	E2	E3	L1	L2
Birmingham								
Acocks Green	94	87	82	79	91	78	57	43
Aston	87	79	76	72	83	68	49	35
Bartley Green	92	86	82	78	91	79	56	41
Billesley	93	87	84	81	91	79	58	43
Bournville	94	88	83	80	91	80	59	45
Brandwood	93	88	84	81	91	80	60	45
Edgbaston	92	88	87	83	91	82	66	54
Erdington	93	87	84	80	91	79	59	46
Fox Hollies	93	86	82	79	91	77	55	38
Hall Green	95	91	88	86	92	85	67	54
Handsworth	89	82	79	75	85	71	53	39
Harborne	93	90	87	85	92	84	67	54
Hodge Hill	93	87	83	80	91	78	57	43
Kingsbury	92	85	80	77	89	74	53	36
Kings Norton	92	85	81	78	88	77	56	41
Kingstanding	92	85	82	79	90	76	55	37
Ladywood	89	81	79	75	85	72	54	42
Longbridge	93	86	79	77	90	75	54	37
Moseley	93	88	87	82	90	82	64	53
Nechells	89	81	78	74	84	71	51	36
Northfield	94	89	85	82	93	82	61	47
Oscott	95	88	82	80	93	77	57	40
Perry Barr	95	90	84	82	93	80	60	45
Quinton	94	90	87	85	93	83	63	49
Sandwell	92	83	79	74	84	75	55	47
Selly Oak	93	88	87	83	91	82	67	54
Shard End	92	85	81	78	90	76	54	37
Sheldon	94	89	84	82	93	81	59	44
Small Heath	89	82	79	75	86	71	51	37
Soho	89	82	79	75	86	71	52	36
Sparkbrook	87	80	77	73	83	68	50	37
Sparkhill	89	82	80	75	85	72	55	43
Stockland Green	93	86	82	78	90	78	57	43
Sutton Four Oaks	96	93	91	89	93	91	75	63
Sutton New Hall	96	92	91	88	94	88	71	60
Sutton Vesey	96	93	91	89	94	91	75	62
Washwood Heath	91	84	81	77	88	73	53	37
Weoley	92	86	83	80	90	78	58	42
Yardley	94	88	85	82	92	79	59	45
Solihull								
Bickenhill	95	91	89	87	93	87	70	58
Castle Bromwich	95	92	90	87	94	86	70	57
Chelmsley Wood	91	84	81	78	89	74	53	34
Elmdon	95	93	89	87	95	84	65	49
Fordbridge	91	84	81	78	89	75	53	37
Kingshurst	93	86	84	81	90	79	57	43
Knowle	96	94	92	90	94	93	78	66
Lyndon	96	93	89	87	95	84	65	51
Meriden	96	93	91	90	93	92	77	64
Olton	96	93	91	89	93	90	74	60
Packwood	96	93	93	89	93	93	77	67
St Alphege	96	94	92	90	93	94	79	68
Shirley East	95	92	90	87	94	88	69	56
Shirley South	97	94	92	91	95	92	80	70
Shirley West	95	93	91	87	95	85	66	53
Silhill	96	93	91	87	94	89	70	57
Smith's Wood	91	84	81	78	89	74	53	35

Potential for aspirational floor targets. (By 2005 no ward will be less than this level).
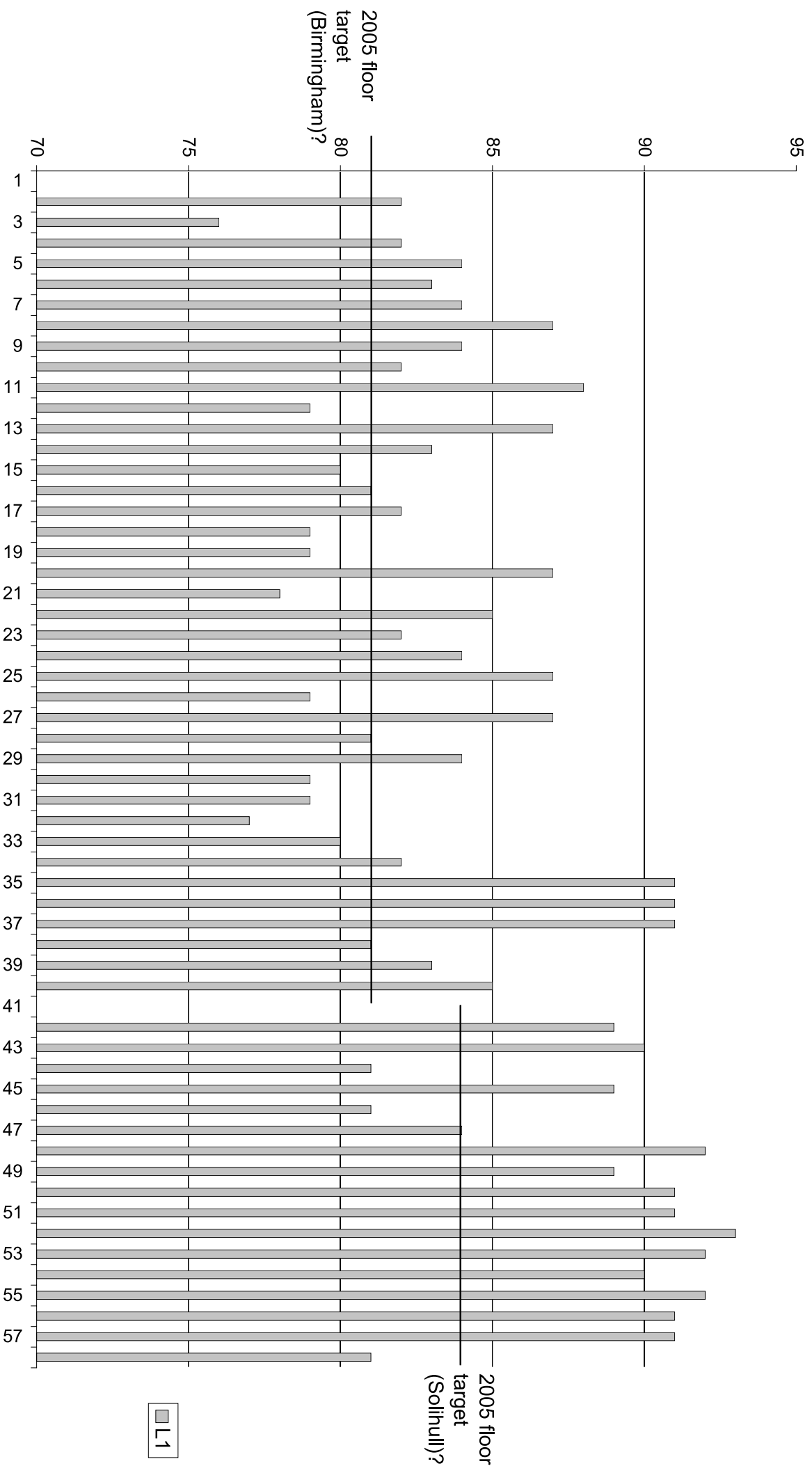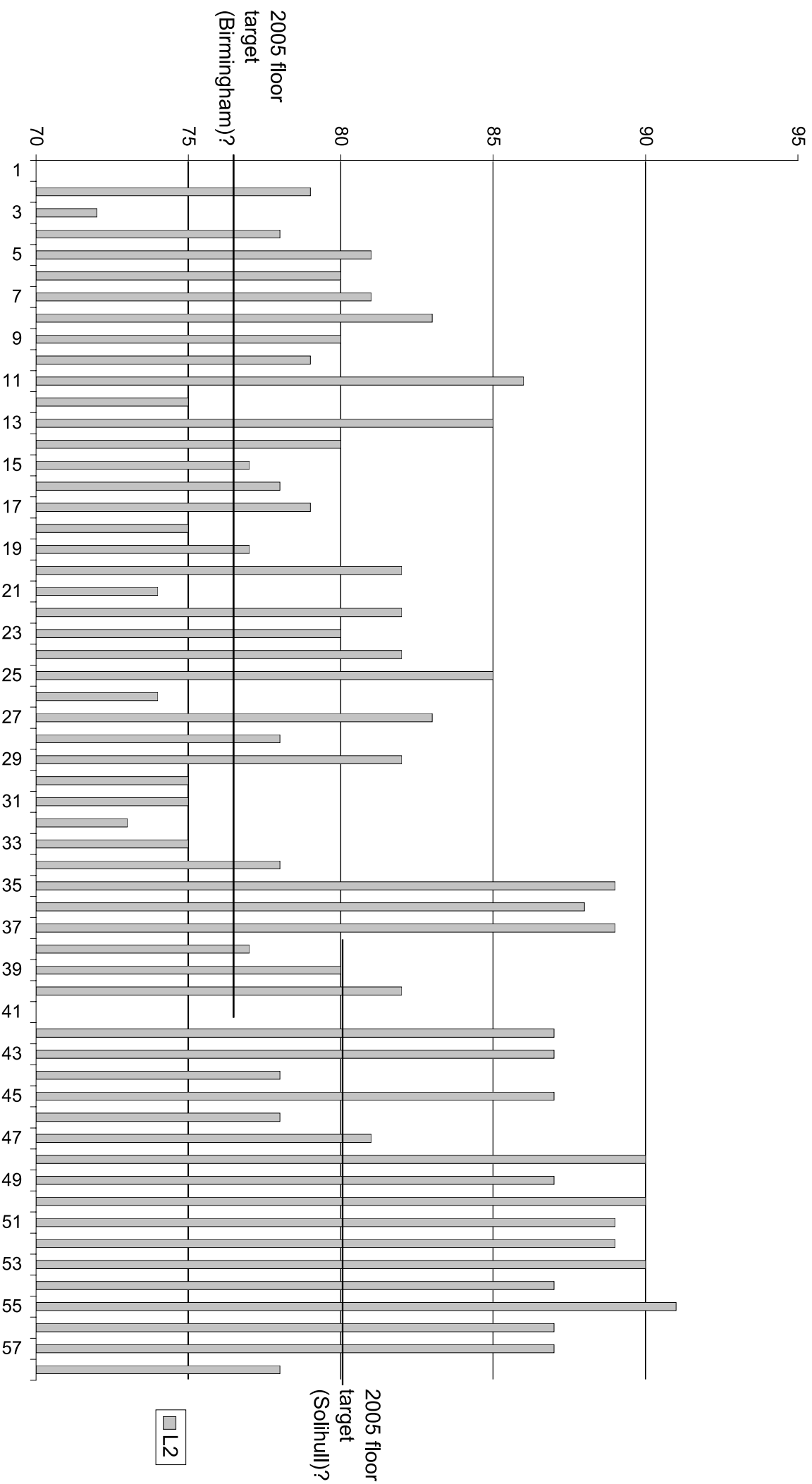
Literacy Entry 2

2005 floor target (Birmingham)?

2005 floor target (Solihull)?

E2

Literacy Entry 3

2005 floor target (Birmingham)?

2005 floor target (Solihull)?

E3

Literacy Level 1

2005 floor target (Birmingham)?

2005 floor target (Solihull)?

L1

Literacy Level 2

Numeracy Entry 2

Numeracy Entry 3

Horizontal bar chart with categories numbered 1 to 57 on the vertical axis and a scale from 65 to 95 on the horizontal axis. Vertical reference lines labelled "2005 floor target (Birmingham)?" at approximately 77 and "2005 floor target (Solihull)?" at 80.
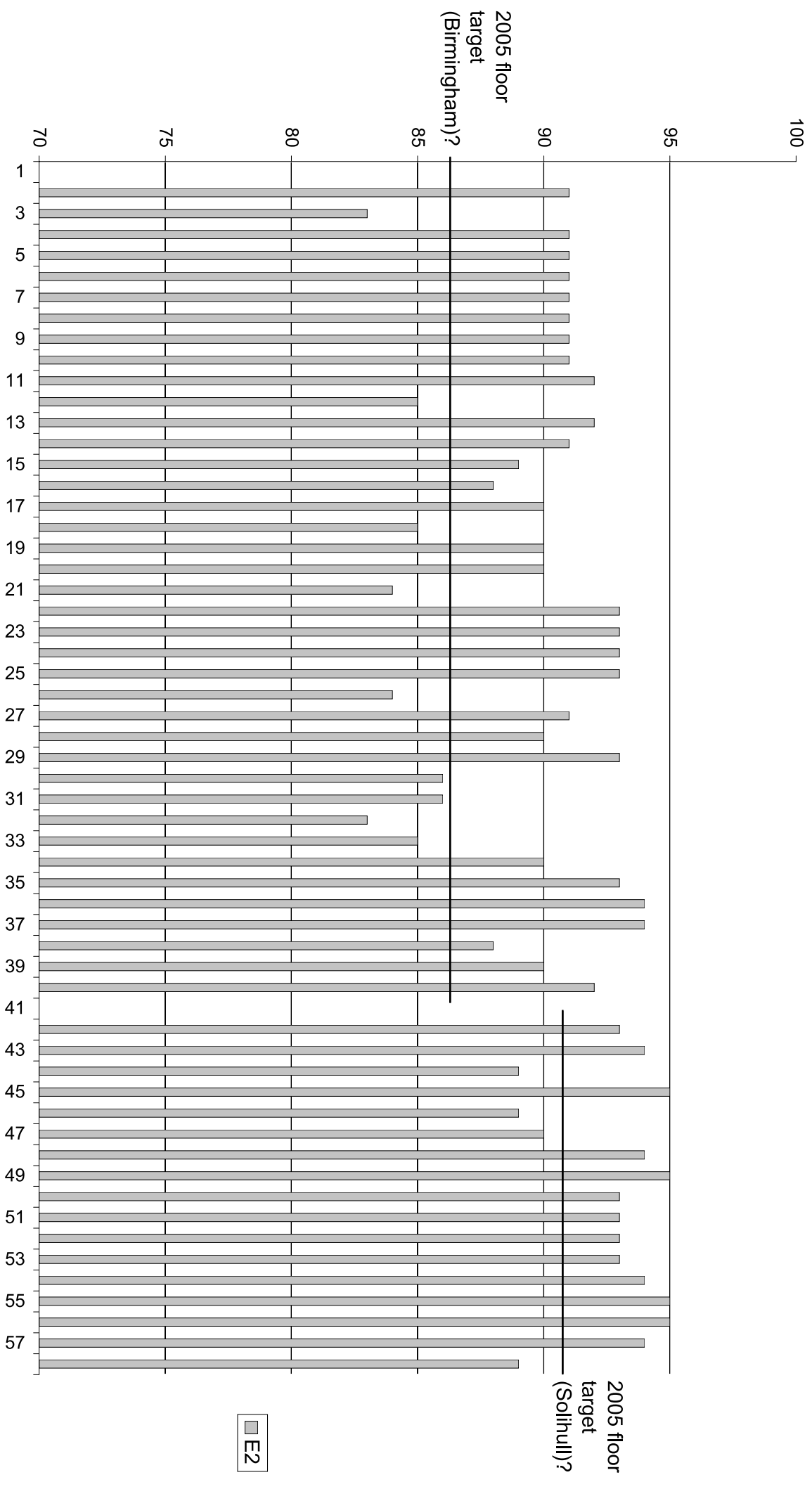
Legend: E3
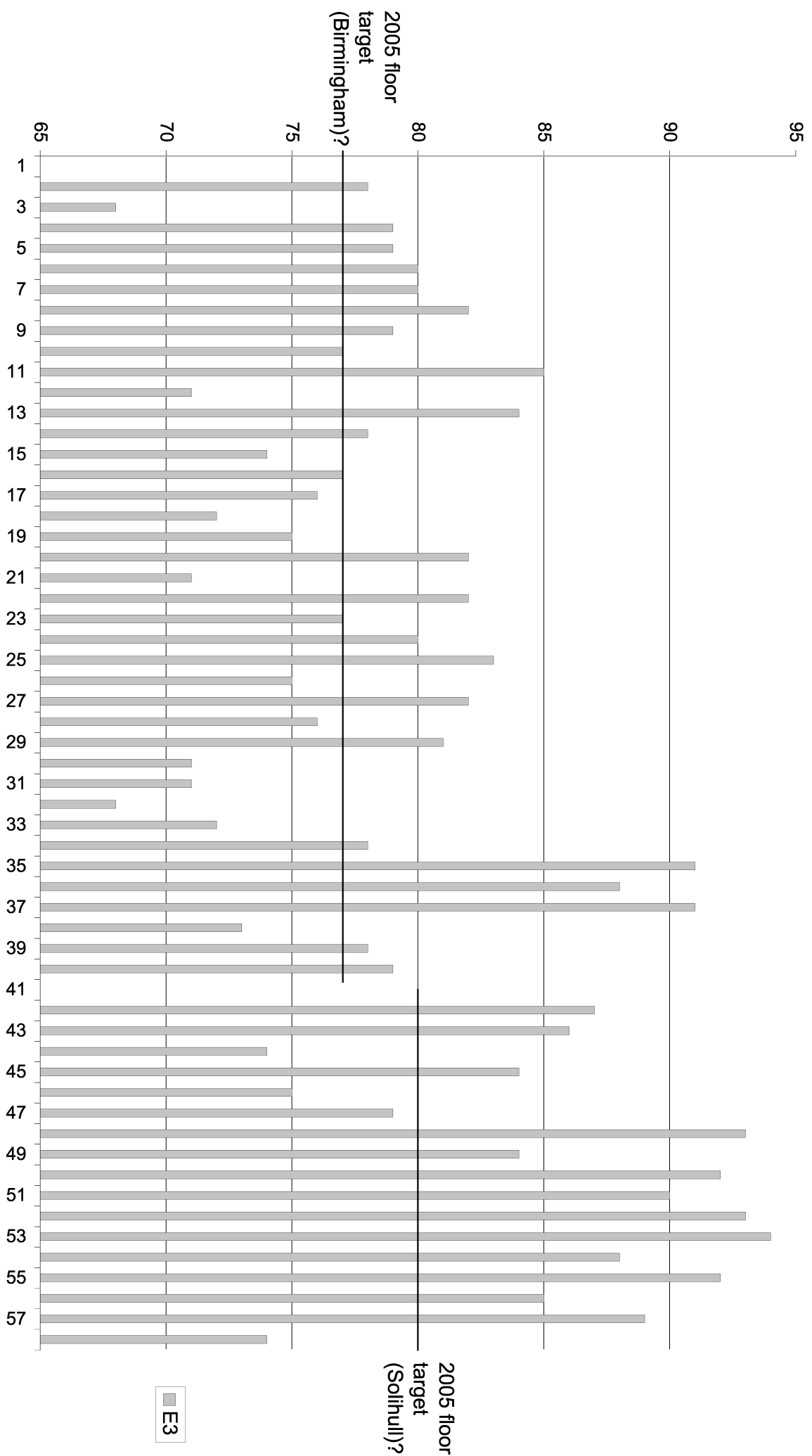
Numeracy Level 1

Numeracy Level 2