

# National Probation Service & Learning and Skills Council



Learning+Skills Council

## Joint Protocol



NATIONAL PROBATION SERVICE  
for England and Wales

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## Scope of the Protocol

1. This protocol sets out how the National Probation Service (NPS) and the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) intend to work together to improve the literacy, numeracy and language (English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)) skills of offenders on NPS supervision.

Appendix 1 gives relevant background information about the NPS.

Appendix 2 gives relevant background information about the LSC.

## The Purpose of NPS/LSC Collaboration

2. Offenders on NPS supervision are one of the priority groups identified in *Skills for Life* (DfEE, 2001).

The rationale for NPS/ LSC collaboration is to ensure that:

- Offenders access the learning opportunities to which they are entitled as part of the *Skills for Life* strategy.
- Progress towards the NPS Service Delivery Agreement (SDA) targets for qualifications (see Appendix 1) is recognised as progress towards the *Skills for Life* target (see Appendix 2), where:
  - an offender improves his/her literacy, numeracy or language (ESOL) skills by one level
  - an offender has not previously been counted towards the *Skills for Life* target.

## The NPS' and LSC's Commitment

3. The **NPS' commitment:** in order to contribute to reduced re-offending through the integration of offenders into society, the NPS is committed to:

- Ensuring all offenders are screened for literacy and numeracy needs.
- Ensuring offenders have access to initial and diagnostic assessment.
- Ensuring offenders have access to community based provision which is appropriate to their needs, through joint working with local LSCs and local providers.

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### 3. Continued...

- Working collaboratively with the LSC, Offenders' Learning and Skills Unit (OLSU) and other key partners to ensure that offenders access appropriate learning opportunities
- Establishing frameworks at national, regional and local level for joint working between probation areas, local LSCs and other key partners.

### 4. The **LSC's commitment**: in order to ensure that local LSCs and their providers address the needs of offenders on NPS supervision, the LSC is committed to:

- Working closely with the NPS to address the *Skills for Life* target of helping 750,000 adults to improve their literacy, numeracy or language (ESOL) skills by 2004, and to increase this to 1.5 million adults by 2007.
- Working with the NPS to develop local structures to identify, understand and respond positively to the literacy, numeracy and language (ESOL) needs of offenders on community supervision and post-release licence.
- Working jointly with providers to raise awareness of the literacy, numeracy and language (ESOL) needs of offenders on community supervision.
- Ensuring that our approach to funding is understood **by our respective staff** and clearly communicated to providers.
- Jointly supporting providers in developing flexible and responsive approaches to delivery in order to meet effectively the needs of this priority group.

## Collaboration between the NPS and the LSC

### 5. **Progress to date (May 2003)**: collaboration to date between the NPS and the LSC has consisted of:

- Regular Keep in Touch (KIT) meetings between the National Probation Directorate (NPD) and the national LSC.
- An LSC/NPS national seminar in May 2002, supported by the Department for Education and Skills' (DfES') Adult Basic Skills Strategy Unit (ABSSU).
- A NPS/LSC national conference in January 2003, supported by ABSSU.

5. continued...

- Dissemination of NPS/ LSC collaboration in NPS and LSC publications.
- Development of a range of models for working together at national, regional and local level.

6. **Future collaboration:** in the future we will look to strengthen collaboration through:

- Regular KIT meetings between NPD and the national LSC, with standing agenda items such as sharing information on performance and delivery in relation to progress towards the national targets.
- Joint development of effective monitoring systems.
- Using an evidence-based approach to identify, develop and review effective models of NPS/LSC collaboration.
- Sharing relevant aspects of business plans and annual reports.
- Sharing information about funding, targets and any co-financing protocols as appropriate.
- Encouraging dissemination of effective NPS/ LSC collaboration through, for example, joint seminars/conferences and NPS and LSC publications.
- Annual review of the NPS/LSC protocol.

## Managing the Protocol

7. The content and context of this protocol will be reviewed annually, with the first review to take place in January 2004.

## Appendix 1: The NPS

### 1. The NPS

- Consists of the NPD and 42 probation areas, grouped in 10 regions (9 government regions in England, & Wales).
- Has a remit to be a public service that protects the public, operates and enforces court orders and prison licences, and rehabilitates offenders to law abiding lives.
- Writes pre-sentence reports (PSRs) on offenders, after conviction but before sentence. In 2001, 222,800 PSRs were written by the NPS.
- Supervises offenders sentenced to community orders. In 2001, 122,100 offenders started a community sentence.
- Has a Public Service Agreement (PSA) target of reducing re-offending rates by 5% by 2004.
- Is committed to the *What Works* initiative. *What Works* aims to reduce re-offending, by ensuring all probation practice is based on interventions which are evidence-based, delivered to a consistent standard, and accessible and effective for all groups of offenders. Basic skills is seen as part of the *What Works* agenda and is located within a stream of interventions, which aim to reintegrate offenders into society.

### 2. Basic Skills and the NPS - the NPS Basic Skills Pathfinder

- From 1999 to 2002, there were seven NPS basic skills pathfinder projects, based in seven probation areas.
- The projects tested out procedures for screening, more detailed assessment of basic skills needs, basic skills provision, and an effective infrastructure to support take up of and attendance at basic skills.
- The pathfinder projects were externally evaluated. Screening results for a sample of over 10000 offenders indicated that 32% had probable basic skills needs below level one. This figure probably under-reports the true level of basic skills need among the offender population, because the screening tool used was based on self-report.

### **3. NPS Funding for Basic Skills.**

- Probation areas were allocated funds from the SR 2000 spending round to improve the basic skills of offenders on community supervision. The funding was to support an effective infrastructure to maximise take up of basic skills provision. The funding was not intended to cover end-to-end basic skills provision and was predicated on offenders accessing local provision. In recognition of this position ministers have agreed that from 2004/05 lead policy responsibility for the delivery of basic skills provision will move to the Offenders' Learning and Skills Unit (OLSU). A joint project board has been established between the NPD, OLSU, ABSSU, and the LSC to achieve this policy objective.

### **4. Targets**

- The NPS has Service Delivery Agreement (SDA) targets for basic skills.
- For 2002/03, these consist of 6000 starts on basic skills programmes and 1000 qualifications at any level.
- For 2003/04, these currently consist of 12000 qualifications (2000 at entry level, 8000 at level 1 and 2000 at level 2).
- Qualifications which count towards the NPS basic skills targets are Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) nationally recognised and approved basic skills qualifications at entry level, the national test at levels 1 and 2, Key Skills in Communication and Application of Number at levels 1 and 2, and GCSEs in English and Maths at grades A\*-C for level 2 qualifications, and grades D-G for level 1 qualifications.

### **5. Implementation of Basic Skills in Probation Areas**

The NPS has a framework for basic skills, which recommends that probation areas should:

- Have an implementation plan for basic skills, which is submitted to the NPD.
- Screen all offenders for basic skills needs at PSR stage.
- Provide or facilitate access to, where appropriate, a more detailed assessment of basic skills needs at the start of supervision.
- Refer offenders to basic skills provision, where possible in the community.
- Establish an effective infrastructure and use a range of motivational strategies to minimise the attrition of offenders between screening, more detailed assessment, the take up of basic skills provision, and over the course of provision.
- Use an approved individual learning plan (ILP) to structure and monitor a learning programme.

- Provide standardised monthly monitoring information on basic skills to NPD.
- Liaise closely with local LSCs.
- Develop effective working relationships with LSC funded providers.
- Collaborate at regional level to share best practice and improve performance.

## **6. Working with Key Partners**

- In developing and implementing policy on basic skills, the NPS is committed to working collaboratively with key partners: the DfES' ABSSU, the LSC, OLSU, the Youth Justice Board (YJB), the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), the Basic Skills Agency (BSA) and the voluntary sector.



## Appendix 2: The LSC

### 1. The LSC:

- Consists of a national office based in Coventry and 47 local offices (LSCs) strategically located across the nine government regions in England.
- Is responsible for the funding and planning of education and training for all learners aged 16+ in England (with the exception of those engaged in HE provision).
- Has a mission to raise participation and attainment through high-quality education and training that puts learners first and a vision that, by 2010, young people and adults in England will have the knowledge and productive skills matching the best in the world.
- Has five key objectives within the current LSC corporate plan, one of which is to "Raise the achievement of adults".
- One of the LSC's outcome targets for 2004 is to raise the literacy, numeracy or language skills of 750,000 adults and to increase this to 1.5 million adults by 2007.

### 2. Basic Skills and the LSC

- Adult basic skills provision is defined as provision that caters for the literacy, language (ESOL) and numeracy needs of post-16 learners, including those with learning difficulties or disabilities, from pre-entry level to level 2.
- In response to *Skills for Life*, the Council has written a delivery plan which sets out how it intends to meet this challenging target in the initial years of its operation and how, with its partners, it will build the foundations for long term, successful action in improving literacy, numeracy and language (ESOL) skills in the future.
- The delivery plan identifies minimum targets for the 47 local LSCs and states that, in working towards the overall target, local LSCs should focus on the priority groups identified in *Skills for Life*. It highlights the importance of working closely with partners and providers in order to reach those priority groups and deliver the expansion of provision that is needed to meet the national target.

### 3. LSC funding for Basic Skills

- In *Skills for Life – the national strategy for improving adult literacy and numeracy*, the DfES indicated that providers would have access to a total budget of £1.5 billion between 2001 and 2004.
- The LSC expects to spend in the region of £300m on adult literacy, numeracy and ESOL provision in 2002/03.
- Local LSCs are responsible for planning and funding in their areas, and will fund local approved providers to deliver adult literacy, numeracy and ESOL provision to meet local needs.
- The LSC has made a commitment that adult literacy; numeracy and ESOL provision must be free to learners. Providers can claim fee remittance from the LSC.
- The LSC recognises that providers may incur additional costs in delivering adult literacy, numeracy and ESOL, and has uplifted the funding for this provision to 1.4 of the national base rate. In addition, all basic skills learners are eligible for a disadvantage uplift of 10% (12% in 2003/04).
- Guidance on LSC funding can be found in the LSC document:  
*FE Funding Guidance for Further Education 2002/03*  
(or on the LSC website at [www.lsc.gov.uk/news\\_doc/Funding\\_Guidance-FE.pdf](http://www.lsc.gov.uk/news_doc/Funding_Guidance-FE.pdf)).

### 4. Targets

- The LSC has adopted the national target of improving the literacy, numeracy or language (ESOL) skills of 750,000 adults by 2004, increasing to 1.5m adults by 2007.
- Local LSCs have agreed their local targets and will work with providers to achieve these.
- Qualifications that count towards the target are as follows:
  - Certificates in Adult Literacy, Numeracy and ESOL at Entry level, Level 1 and Level 2 (for Entry Level, only those certificates awarded at Entry Level 3 will count towards the target)
  - Key skills qualifications in Communications and Application of Number at levels 1 and 2
  - GCSE English and GCSE Maths at grades A\*-C for level 2 awards and grades D-G for level 1 awards.
- The LSC makes a distinction between provision that is eligible for funding as basic skills and that which counts towards the target. Both definitions are set out in the LSC's delivery plan, *Improving Adult Literacy, Numeracy and Language*, and in *FE Funding Guidance for Further Education 2003/04*.

- Provision that is eligible for funding as basic skills is as follows:
  - Learning aims that are based on the national standards for adult literacy and numeracy but that do not lead to approved qualifications.
  - Approved, nationally recognised qualifications in adult literacy, numeracy and ESOL, at Entry Level, Level 1 and Level 2.
  - Key skills awards in Communications and Application of Number at Levels 1 and 2, where these do not form part of a full-time programme for those aged 16-18 years.

## **5. Working with Key Partners**

- The LSC works through its 47 local arms and its provider partners to expand and improve the quality of provision of literacy, numeracy and ESOL and to meet the targets set in the LSC's Corporate Plan.
- Local LSCs have already formed close working relationships with providers and other key agencies, and have established networks to share good practice and build local capacity.
- In developing and implementing policy on adult literacy, numeracy and ESOL, the LSC is therefore committed to strengthening relationships and working collaboratively with: the DfES' ABSSU, the NPS, the PLSU, the YJB, the DWP and other government departments, University for Industry (UfI), the voluntary sector and key national agencies including the BSA, the Learning and Skills Development Agency (LSDA) and the National Institute for Adult Continuing Education (NIACE).