



Basic Skills Quality Initiative

UNIT 2

Organisation and Management of Training and Quality Assurance

- Introduction
- Organisation and Management of Training
- Quality Assurance and Improving Basic Skills Provision
- Staff Appraisal and Development

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UNIT 2



Organisation and Management of Training and Quality Assurance

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Foreword

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Avril Willis

The Basic Skills Quality Initiative is a major programme of staff and organisational development that forms part of the Learning and Skills Council's (LSC) overall response to the national strategy for improving literacy and numeracy skills in young people and adults. The Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) established the initiative in 1999 and I am pleased that the Learning and Skills Council has been able to continue to build on the foundations laid by its predecessor. I am also pleased that, from 2001-02, work-based learning providers contracted to the LSC also have access to the initiative.

The initiative includes three specific elements. First, a package of materials designed for use by managers and lead practitioners. These materials were originally developed for use by those providers formerly funded by FEFC. They have now been updated and revised to make them suitable for work-based learning providers and it is these revised materials that are contained in this volume. There are two units covering *Teaching, Learning and Students' Achievements* and *Organisation and Management of Training and Quality Assurance*. Second, funding for trained facilitators to help providers make effective use of the materials and support them in addressing key issues. Third, the opportunity to attend a training event designed to focus on the strategic and operational management of basic skills. The three elements of the Basic Skills Quality Initiative comprise a comprehensive and innovative package of support.

All learners are entitled to high-quality basic skills provision. Making sure learners can read, write and use numbers confidently is part of the core business of work-based learning. These skills give learners the opportunity to take part in education and training, to complete programmes of learning successfully and to progress to employment or further study.

While these materials are intended primarily for those concerned with basic skills, they are relevant to everyone working in work-based learning. Whether we teach or manage provision in the workplace, workshops, learning centres or classrooms, the materials provide an opportunity to remind us of the vital processes of teaching and learning, and of the importance of effective structures and procedures to support them.

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The initiative was originally conceived and introduced by Merillie Vaughan-Huxley, formerly a Senior Inspector with the FEFC now with the Adult Learning Inspectorate. Thanks are also due to two of the Council's consultants, Stuart McCoy and Carol Tennyson, who have guided and contributed to the initiative in its original form and extended it to work-based learning. Colleagues from the Council's Quality Improvement team – Emer Clarke, Andrew Lambe, Kathryn O'Regan and Tim Smith – provided support throughout.

Avril Willis



At the heart of effective management and quality assurance is a clear commitment to providing a high-quality learning experience. Managers in successful organisations recognise the importance of developing an environment in which staff and learners are valued and provided with the means to reach their full potential. Managers need to give careful thought to the development of mission statements, policies, structures and procedures to provide an organisational framework which will help staff understand their roles and responsibilities in helping learners succeed.

Careful analysis of the education and training needs of people in the organisation's catchment area can help managers identify the range of programmes they should offer. Many organisations work effectively with other agencies to identify the educational or training needs of their local community. This joint work is particularly valuable in attracting people who have low levels of basic skills or who do not perceive education or training to be relevant to their needs. If organisations are to be successful in recruiting the 'hard-to-reach' learners, they need to create innovative and imaginative programmes which will be of interest and relevance to learners and that will address their basic skills needs without alienating them.

Managers need to ensure that staff have easy access to good-quality learning resources. Effective basic skills provision requires resources that are carefully matched to the needs of learners. Basic skills learners often have low self-esteem and little confidence. The opportunity to learn in high-quality accommodation that is easily accessible will encourage their engagement and continuation of their studies. The deployment of staff is equally

important for effective provision. Basic skills is a demanding subject area to teach. It requires skilled trainers and support staff who are effectively managed. The quality of learning resources, staffing and accommodation provided for basic skills reflect the value ascribed to this work by providers.

An important element in any effective organisation is target-setting for performance and planning the strategies that will help staff and learners achieve successful outcomes. The process of target-setting is particularly complex in basic skills, mainly because the achievement of qualifications is not the only indicator of success. Successful organisations work in collaboration with their auditors and management information officers to find new ways of recording information about learners' achievements. The availability of centrally held, accurate statistical data is essential in this regard.

The main purpose of quality assurance (QA) is to promote continuous quality improvement. Effective QA systems are characterised by agreement between staff and managers on the criteria for judging the quality of provision. These criteria generally include the standards of teaching, learning and achievement. Once the criteria and standards are set, policies and procedures are needed to explain how the organisation will monitor the quality of provision. As part of an organisation-wide QA framework, the basic skills QA system will need to reflect the specific demands of basic skills teaching.

In monitoring basic skills provision rigorous procedures for monitoring quality are required. Managers need to have a clear understanding of what constitutes good practice in basic skills provision and to have sound knowledge of



appropriate criteria against which to judge its quality. Involving staff in setting standards and performance indicators against which the quality of the provision is to be judged helps to develop an understanding of good quality. Rigorous and supportive procedures for monitoring staff performance will help managers to identify poor performance and to take appropriate action to address the difficulties. Effective arrangements for the internal verification and moderation of the quality of provision also play an important role.

The process of self-assessment is now well-established as an essential element of quality assurance procedures. The development of self-critical attitudes by staff and an open and positive approach to assessing the quality of their work is of major significance in promoting continuous quality improvement. Where self-assessment is most effective, staff have developed rigorous procedures for assessing the quality of their work and for developing action plans to address the issues identified through the process. The objectives they set to improve the quality of the provision are specific and measurable, and responsibilities for implementing them are clearly identified within realistic timescales.

The success of basic skills provision depends significantly on the ability of competent, confident and committed staff to contribute to the success of the learners. Staff development is one way of enabling staff to make their maximum contribution, and it does so by building their competence to deliver and their confidence in what they do. Equally importantly, staff development is a factor in building commitment: comprehensive staff development provision signals that the organisation values staff and the work they do, and that it is happy to invest in their continuing development.

This commitment to staff development becomes particularly important as the pace of change continues to increase, and organisations and individuals are expected to respond positively and creatively to meet changing and growing demands. It is also increasingly important in the context of lifelong learning. Providers now make little distinction between the training and development opportunities they offer to full- and part-time staff: all are equally valued, all are encouraged to participate. This is matched by a shift in the underlying aims of training and development, which are increasingly seen as essential parts of the QA process and as a means to continuous improvement. The emphasis is less on remedying shortcomings in individuals or provision, and more on extending strengths and identifying new areas for growth. The starting point for effective staff development is the same as for any good learning: a thorough analysis to establish the starting point and to clarify what is required. Once that is established, it is then important to provide training and development opportunities to meet the needs that have been identified.



Organisation and management of training in basic skills should:

- be based on thorough planning, and informed by needs analysis
- be set within a coherent and clearly articulated organisational framework
- be diverse and flexible enough in the provision offered to reflect the range of learners' interests and basic skills needs
- offer flexible progression routes
- be subject to rigorous planning and target-setting processes
- be integrated with learners' vocational programmes
- be supported by an accessible and accurate management information system
- demonstrate a commitment to working in partnership with other organisations to identify need and increase the take-up of basic skills provision
- ensure that resources are at least as good as those available for other learners, and better where possible
- provide resources that are fully accessible to learners in terms of location, user-friendliness and availability
- include effective co-ordination and deployment of staff, and ensure that trainers are well-qualified and experienced
- provide accommodation that is welcoming, flexible, safe and fit for purpose.

A quality assurance framework for basic skills should:

- be integrated into the overall quality framework of the institution

- be clear and accessible to all members of staff, including full- and part-time staff, managers, support staff and specialists
- apply to all areas of provision
- be sufficiently rigorous to obtain results, yet flexible enough to allow for improvements
- have a clear purpose and measure all significant areas of activity
- include a requirement for quantitative and qualitative information, performance indicators and standards
- clearly identify responsibilities for collecting and analysing data
- give clear guidelines about the documentation and data required
- be efficient in terms of time and cost
- include processes for appraisal, review and monitoring
- include mechanisms for recording the views of learners and other agencies, including local community groups, employers and external verifiers
- identify the need for action plans, including targets, responsibilities, timescales and reporting mechanisms within the quality assurance cycle.

Improvement strategies should include the use of:

- clearly defined planning, reviewing and reporting mechanisms
- institutional data to monitor participation, retention and achievement year-on-year
- learner feedback
- national data to benchmark against other organisations



- local data to devise relevant targets and performance indicators
- national and provider-based standards
- value-added systems to compare baseline assessments with end-of-programme achievements
- training for observers, appraisers and appraisees
- information from the performance review process.

Staff development in basic skills should:

- be seen as an essential part of continuous improvement and an entitlement for all staff
- ensure that the identification of training needs is seen as positive and developmental rather than focusing on deficiencies and shortcomings
- be planned and structured so that it is an integral part of staff roles and responsibilities rather than a 'bolt-on' extra
- encompass strategic and organisational needs as well as individual ones
- be delivered by skilled and qualified basic skills trainers and practitioners
- be flexible enough to cope with the differing abilities, learning styles and needs of staff
- embrace formal and informal approaches, and lead to nationally recognised accreditation, where relevant
- represent value for money and effectiveness in terms of its impact on the learner's experience and achievements.





Basic Skills Quality Initiative

UNIT 2

Organisation and Management of Training and Quality Assurance

Organisation and Management of Training:

- types of provision and approaches to review and revision
- policies and planning
- managing information, budgets and resources
- partnerships

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UNIT

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Element 1: Types of Provision and Approaches to Review and Revision



The key principle underlying all aspects of effective basic skills provision is the extent of the match between the learner and the learning programme offer. The match should take full account of the learner's objectives and personal aims as well as his or her basic skills needs. Effective providers have recognised this and as a result they have a more diverse range of provision for this group of learners. It is noticeable that the diversity is increasing rather than decreasing, as initiatives to widen participation attract groups previously reluctant to take part in training.

Some examples of this diversity of provision follow. They cannot be comprehensive – the range is too wide and is constantly changing. However, they are indicative of the range, trends and developments in provision.



Example 1

One provider developed programmes at Entry and Level 1 with an emphasis on basic and key skills. The background to the work and how it began the development of an inclusive approach are illustrated.

Background

'To cope with rapid change we must ensure that people can return to learning throughout their lives. We cannot rely on a small elite: we will need the creativity, enterprise and scholarship of all our people.'

David Blunkett: *The Learning Age* (DfEE)¹

'Learning is central to economic success and social cohesion.[...] Widening Participation means increasing access to learning and providing opportunities for success and progression to a much wider cross-section of the population than now. All those who are not fulfilling their potential or who have underachieved in the past must be drawn into successful learning.'

Helena Kennedy: *Learning Works* (FEFC)²

Planning

The Dearing report³ highlighted the need to develop a range of Entry Level programmes, and subsequently the Kennedy report emphasised widening participation. It was felt that the development of the Entry and Foundation Level programmes would not only enhance but also further enrich the existing vocational and basic skills training we offer and reflect a continued commitment to widening participation. The following section describes the work we did to develop Entry Level programmes.

A foundation working group was established. Members included a senior manager and the relevant vocational programme team heads, and basic skills co-ordinators responsible for Entry Level programmes. The remit of the group included an examination of the following areas and issues:

- current Entry Level provision
- current and potential pathways and progression routes
- accreditation
- support
- implications for other programme areas and services.

An inclusive approach

The development of this area of provision was built on the principles of inclusive learning. The following features were therefore fundamental to its success:

- provision should be **flexible**
- provision should have **clear pathways and progression routes**
- provision should offer **individual learning programmes.**

¹ *The Learning Age*, DfEE London 1998.

² *Learning Works: Widening participation in further education*, FEFC Coventry 1997.

³ *Higher Education in the 21st Century: The report of the Dearing Committee of Inquiry*, DfEE London 1997.

The first stage of the process was to identify the range of Entry Level programmes, which had been developed across the organisation. One outcome of this work was the decision to develop a modular programme. This raised the following issues and concerns:

- ownership and management
- learning hours and staffing
- review and pastoral support issues
- co-ordination.

It was agreed that the modular programme should be managed as follows:

- a programme co-ordinator was appointed. This person was responsible for the day-to-day co-ordination of the programme
- appropriate modules were identified and/or developed by each vocational team, the management of which remained the responsibility of the relevant vocational team head
- three personal support officers were made responsible for reviews and pastoral support.

Learners with basic skills needs require learning programmes that respond to an increasing range of needs, including:

- number, communication, ICT, at a range of levels and in a range of vocational contexts
- a need to feel part of the whole organisation and an ability to exercise their right to all the organisation's facilities
- a need to be recognised as an individual with more personal learning needs such as personal skills, career development and so on.

This might require a complementary range of accreditation which could be customised to a learner's needs, including:

- provider certificates mapped to individual progression
- vocational tasters
- modular certificates including:
 - communication skills
 - number skills
 - ICT skills
 - personal skills
 - induction
 - work skills
 - community skills.

Example 1 (continued)

Within the programme, learners follow a core programme of basic Maths, English and IT. Learners identify their learning goals and negotiate an individual learning programme, choosing from a range of vocational options.

The entry level programme has the following features:

- small groups
- option choices (which may be changed)
- continuous assessment
- the opportunity for learners to work towards a range of national awards
- progression to more advanced programmes such as NVO Level 1 vocational access certificates.

Example 2



In this example, the ways in which one provider organised its basic skills provision to meet the requirements of its New Deal clients are explained.

Basic skills provision

The organisation offers different types of basic skills provision:

- basic skills year-round roll-on/roll-off group provision
- basic skills year-round roll-on/roll-off workshop provision
- linked skills courses e.g. basic skills with IT
- specific basic skills e.g. for learners who are deaf and use BSL
- short intensive courses
- pre-vocational short courses.

Basic skills staff often work across a number of sites and use a range of teaching methods. Staff are line-managed locally by a lead practitioner and are invited to attend regular meetings for staff across the city at a central location. Staff training is organised through the team, the local adult education service and external agencies.

Programmes in basic skills are taught across the city on different sites and so common programme outlines have been developed to cover the core basic skills work. To make publicity clearer and to help staff who advise learners about the available programmes, we use standard titles and descriptions, although skills are still contextualised for the individual, group or locality as appropriate. The majority of basic skills work takes place in groups and workshops at Entry Level and Level 1, usually under the general title English Skills or Maths Skills. This makes progression routes easier to plan.

An important part of this provision is the network of flexible learning and guidance workshops (FLAG). A description of the FLAG workshops follows.

Flexible Learning and Guidance workshops

The FLAG (Flexible Learning and Guidance) basic skills workshops are situated above shops in the centre of two large housing estates. The centres offer a range of programmes for adults from pre-Entry Level to Level 2, through groups, workshops and one-to-one support, short basic skills courses, linked courses and support in the workplace. The local FE college also has an outreach workshop on the premises to which New Deal clients have access. The FLAG workshops have good access by lift and crèche facilities close by. The provision has the following features:

- the workshops offer basic skills for clients at Levels 1 and 2 who are ready to progress to a more independent style of learning
- they provide a route for progression from Entry Level provision on the premises
- clients on all options can negotiate an individual basic skills learning plan and can attend flexibly to fit in with work, other training and personal commitments
- clients can use the resources knowing that they are exclusively for the use of basic skills learners and fit for purpose
- the workshops are always staffed by basic skills trained specialists
- some of the main employers and work placement providers in the areas operate shift patterns and New Deal clients need easily accessible and flexible basic skills provision. Clients have the option of completing much of their work away from the centres and coming in for a one-to-one session with a basic skills trainer at a time to suit them
- some employers encourage the basic skills trainer to hold one-to-one sessions in the workplace and encourage supervisors to build on this learning during normal work activities.

Example 3



One provider developed the following programme for pre-Entry Level basic skills.

Pre-Entry Level basic skills

The programme is intended for learners who have learning difficulties and are not yet ready to join a vocational training programme. It is designed to meet the needs of a diverse group of learners but there are two main groups which are often identified at interview, during initial assessment or in the first sessions of the programme:

- learners with reasonable writing skills but with reading abilities significantly below their writing skills
- learners with Entry or pre-Entry Level skills in reading, but with a significantly lower level of ability in writing skills.

The course is designed to help learners:

- develop the confidence they need to progress to the more challenging learning environment of a basic skills workshop, life skills or other pre-vocational training
- work on reading, writing, spelling, punctuation, use of capital letters and basic grammar.

The preparation of the room, in particular the arrangement of chairs and tables, is a key starting point for any session of the pre-Entry Level group. The seating is arranged to make learners feel comfortable and at ease. Equipment, such as computers, cassette and video recorders, is easily accessible.

Meeting individual learning needs is achieved by organising the session in such a way that the learners can:

- work at their own pace
- have choice and flexibility in how they work – individually, in pairs, or small- to medium-sized groups
- access a wide range of learning materials designed to meet the different needs, interests and aptitudes
- use technical aids, in particular computers, cassette and video recorders.

Each session is evaluated and a record kept.

Each learner has an individual learning plan which consists of long-term aims and short-term targets negotiated with the careers service and the basic skills trainer. Targets are set for each period. At the end of each period, their progress is reviewed and evaluated. The learner is actively involved in the evaluation of what they have done and learnt.

Example 4

Arriving in a new country or city can be disorientating even if you speak the language. Many asylum-seekers and refugees have the additional problem of uncertainty about the future and they may have experienced considerable trauma. This example explains how one provider worked with other organisations and services to provide basic language teaching in the context of short programmes for newly arrived asylum-seekers.

Basic skills for asylum-seekers

The organisation was approached by the city council with a view to providing basic language provision for some of the Kosovan people who had been recently housed and supported by the council. It was agreed that as part of our provision we would run two programmes specifically for Kosovans.

Issues to bear in mind when organising similar provision:

- identify training staff with suitable experience in advance and involve them in every stage of the planning
- identify the target group:
 - the number of learners you are catering for
 - the nationalities and languages represented
 - the age range of the learners (in view of course content)
 - the gender mix
 - any disabilities and the facilities you have to support such learners
 - the social and economic background of the learners

All these points will affect group dynamics.

- contact with other agencies:
 - links with other agencies dealing with the learners means planning can be coherent and co-ordinated, with no duplication
 - a small mixed planning group should take things forward
- identify appropriate accommodation:
 - accessible to target group
 - good facilities, including IT, with technical backup available
 - disabled access required
 - all-day provision will need arrangements for refreshment facilities, toilets etc
 - crèche or childcare may be necessary

Choose your venue carefully.

- costs:
 - travel costs to and from the venue
 - transport costs for visits
 - entrance fees for visits, etc.
 - provide even basic resources (paper, pens etc)
 - additional resources: for example, second language dictionaries

It is important to meet potential learners and distribute general publicity approximately six weeks before the programme is due to begin. Initially you will need to:

- take time to assess their language levels across the core skills of reading, writing, listening and speaking
- give the learners a clear idea of a typical day and the things they can expect to learn during the programme
- consider using an interpreter where necessary
- set aside a day before the programme begins to complete registration forms and other documentation.

Some learners may expect a different, more formal programme than the one you have designed.

When designing the programme content:

- have clear objectives and be realistic about what is achievable in a short space of time
- have a mixture of informal and formal activities throughout the day
- incorporate visits and visiting speakers e.g. from local employers and services
- be creative and have fun!

Ideas for planning similar provision:

- negotiate a group learning contract to establish the ground rules and explain the ethos of the programme. Encourage as much input from the learners as possible. Interpreters would be particularly helpful here
- have an appropriate theme running throughout the programme to provide a sense of continuity, e.g. living and working in the city
- if facilities are available, design appropriate ICT tasks to link with the main theme, e.g. making labels and captions for displays
- a mix of informal and formal activities might include visits, grammar work, ICT, art work and photography

Example 4 (continued)

- use work in pairs, group work and individual work to provide variety and social interaction. Some learners will be unused to working with others in situations that are not formal
- relate language content to real-life situations, e.g. work on language for getting the bus then ask the learners to use it the same day
- plan visits in advance to enhance learning. Again, learners can use newly acquired language in real situations. Make use of outside resources, e.g. the personnel officer at a local employer, an Employment Service adviser
- use games to aid learning and have fun
- give learners the opportunity to recognise their own achievements and evaluate the programme
- near the end of the programme provide guidance and information about further learning and training opportunities.



Good basic skills provision can make a significant contribution to the success of individuals, communities and local economies. This realisation has led to closer scrutiny of the range and rationale for that provision.

This section looks at the way a number of providers are considering and reviewing the provision they make and finding ways to structure it in order to increase its coherence and effectiveness in meeting the needs of learners, local employers and the community. The national expectation of significantly increased numbers of basic skills learners means that existing patterns of provision will not be enough: more imaginative ways need to be found to meet the needs of those who are unwilling, for whatever reason, to participate in provision presented simply as basic skills. For some providers, this means increasing the scope of basic skills provision. As one provider puts it:

'This organisation's approach to basic skills provision depends on the continued absence of specific basic skills programmes. The strategy for the effective inclusion of basic skills learners is to ensure that the vocational teams take responsibility for the development of provision suited to learners who have literacy and numeracy learning needs. This responsiveness is monitored by quality assurance processes and also by checking that a programme is 'learner-worthy' in terms of its patterns of learner recruitment and support, and its learners' retention and achievement trends.'

The examples which follow show how three providers tackled the process of managing significant change in order to increase the scope and effectiveness of basic skills work as part of their response to local priorities and the recommendations of the Moser report⁴ and *Skills for Life*⁵.

⁴ *Improving Literacy and Numeracy: A fresh start: The report of the working group chaired by Sir Claus Moser*, DfEE London 1999

⁵ *Skills for Life*, DfEE London 1999



Example 1

This example looks at the processes supporting effective change, in this case, integrating basic skills with other provision.

Indicators of the need for change:

- basic skills staff working with learners on vocational courses were concerned that the impact of their support was limited when skills learnt were not reinforced in other sessions
- an inclusive learning pilot identified that some materials did not match learners' needs
- basic skills specialists working with other trainers found that a significant number wanted to improve their ability to support the development of learners' basic skills but time constraints made it difficult for many to attend
- where basic skills specialists and other trainers had worked successfully as a team it had been possible to develop the skills of vocational staff in a supportive way and by relating it to their area of expertise.

Clear objectives:

- basic skills specialists will work with the whole course team, not just the trainer in the session that they are supporting
- a commitment to raising awareness of basic skills in vocational training teams
- developing the skills of vocational trainers in preparing materials that are appropriate for the basic skills level of learners
- helping trainers incorporate opportunities for the development and practice of basic skills in the vocational learning programme
- helping vocational staff develop the skills needed to work effectively with learners with different ability levels in the same group
- helping vocational assessors to recognise where alternative assessment arrangements may be considered.

The organisation recognised that for change and development to be effective it is necessary to build them into the strategic plan and operational objectives of the organisation. The local community has three specific postcode areas where there is high unemployment and where a large number of people require basic literacy skills.

The provider's operational objectives include the following:

- the Basic Skills Agency quality standard will be retained
- the basic skills strategic response to *Skills for Life* will be implemented
- basic skills support programmes will be run in partnership with other providers
- a skills centre will be developed to support learners.

The provider uses labour market information to identify client groups where participation continues to be low. A significant number of these client groups have basic skills needs. As well as providing its own portfolio of basic skills programmes, the organisation works in collaboration with other economic and community partners and organisations to develop a co-ordinated approach to the provision of basic skills programmes through a local Lifelong Learning Partnership (LLP) subgroup. For developments to be successful they need the support of senior managers. It is important that individuals are clear about their responsibilities, the way in which they will evaluate their work and the managers to whom they will provide feedback.

Managing the new initiative

New initiatives which necessitate change rarely run to plan and it is wise to be aware of this from the beginning. In order to avoid some of the potential difficulties the following were built in from the start of the project:

- teams of basic skills trainers worked together so that they could support each other
- regular meetings took place so that those involved could share successes and difficulties
- an appreciation that not everyone would welcome this approach, and an acknowledgement that vocational staff who had seen the benefits the new approach could bring were our biggest allies and could do the most to change attitudes within their own teams
- each basic skills trainer developed a clear action plan for developments in their area, which was to be reviewed with the basic skills co-ordinator mid-way through the year
- evaluation of the success of the work against clear objectives.



Example 2

One work-based learning provider uses the following procedure to review basic skills programmes.

Programme review

Purpose:

- to analyse performance against programme design and contract forecasts
- to discuss feedback from all sources
- to improve all aspects of the programme's performance
- to record and communicate the issues to all concerned.

Procedure:

- issue and collect feedback questionnaires from participants, employers and staff
- invite your senior managers responsible for this provision to the review meeting
- prepare performance statistics in advance for discussion at the meeting. Include:
 - actual outcomes against expected outcomes, stated in the programme design
 - actual outcomes against targeted outcomes on LSC contract and organisation's forecast
 - occupancy against contract and forecast
 - placement figures, income and employed status rates
 - early leavers not achieving
 - contract performance indicators
- hold programme review meeting:
 - performance statistics, year-to-date, previous year, trends and forecasts
 - feedback questionnaires – learners, employers and workplace providers
 - complaints received
 - verifier reports
 - LSC financial and quality audits
 - self-assessment report: strengths, weaknesses and other improvements needed
 - implementation problems with organisational policies, health and safety, equal opportunities, training standards
 - all design criteria in the latest programme design
 - any external issues likely to have an effect in the future
- agree the date of the next programme review meeting
- create and/or update the strengths and weaknesses and action plan sections of the self-assessment report
- prepare minutes and forward these together with updated self-assessment report to your manager
- follow the programme design procedure to action any amendments.

Guidance:

- all programmes should be subject to programme review
- reviews should take place at least annually, more frequently if necessary
- participants, staff, employers and awarding and funding bodies should all, in some way, take part in the review.



Example 3

Another provider raised understanding and awareness of basic and key skills by identifying expected levels of capability and matching them to requirements for all its levels of vocational provision.

The organisation's prime catchment area is an educationally low achieving metropolitan borough. As part of the development of a new learning programme model, managers decided to identify and map the level of competence in basic skills learners needed to have to be successful in the vocational programmes offered. The purpose was to:

- improve retention and achievement
- move towards an inclusive learning environment
- place the learner at the centre of the learning
- improve the efficient and effective use of staff.

Reasons for adopting a new framework:

- the reduction of programme hours to meet efficiency drives had resulted in many NVO programmes dropping a communications element and, as a result, opportunities to develop learners' literacy skills were reduced
- the only way of addressing literacy needs was through the learning support service where learners were referred after assessment. Though take-up was reasonably good, it was generally felt that most learners needed to improve their literacy and numeracy skills for successful completion of their NVOs, progression to the higher levels or employment and that the time available was insufficient
- some vocational areas were not keeping to the policy of screening their learners to identify their levels of basic skills
- comments from some workplace supervisors that the communication skills of their trainees was poor
- specialist staff, available for the mainstream delivery of key and basic skills, were scarce
- to improve basic skills delivery and access for those who were in most need
- to raise the awareness among trainers that poor literacy and numeracy skills affect achievement and retention
- to encourage staff to recognise the baseline requirements in numeracy and literacy of their vocational programmes, and to appreciate that taking on learners who performed well below baseline expectations would be detrimental to both learners and trainers.

Example 4

This example shows how a provider set out to reach new learners.



Basic Skills Quality Initiative

The concept of 'more-than' is the provider's own. It is intended to summarise the purpose of providing learners with 'more than' a qualification and, in doing so, being 'more than' a provider to its learners. This concept therefore celebrates and promotes the numerous unaccredited developments and learning opportunities that the provider sets out to supply.

The broad purpose of the new provision is to find ways of reaching adults who have a learning need but don't see a training centre as the place for them.

Operationally, this breaks down into addressing two distinct types of non-participants, survivors and surfers.

Survivors

Survivors are people who face real barriers to education and training and have usually developed a range of alternative and highly effective problem-solving strategies.

Some of the barriers are: bad previous experience of education or training, poverty, childcare responsibilities, low levels of basic skills, disaffection, no confidence as formal learners, no coherent vocational impulse, disaffection, no sense that education could help solve any of life's problems, the use of alternative, self-developed problem-solving strategies, inability to form an effective action plan and no knowledge of what is available for them.

Surfers

Surfers are people who are not experiencing social and educational exclusion and have a range of adult learning requirements.

Our core educational approaches are:

- 'within-ness' and 'more-than-ness'
- a learner-centred approach.

This incorporates the following:

taking learning to learners: outreach with a progression imperative; hard-to-reach learners can make the first leap in outreach contexts but the overall aim is progression

evidence of demand: demand drives planning and resourcing and is following by the creation of new recruitment strategies for survivors and surfers

motivating learners: programme-building is geared to learners' interests as the first step towards motivating them towards external standards

quality assurance: maintaining quality while identifying new ways to measure the quality of non-standard or less formal learning

developing trainers: who share some of the experiences of learners; enabling trainers to become learners

Example 4 (continued)

small steps of progression: finding ways to measure and develop these

co-evolve the 'more-than-ness': working in partnership with other providers

matching costs of work: of hard-to-reach adults with unit cost imperatives.



How much has your basic skills provision changed over the last five years? Has it changed sufficiently?



What arrangements do you have for reviewing and updating basic skills provision?



How central to your overall provision is basic skills?



Does your range of provision meet the needs of all the learners with basic skills needs?



How well does the range of provision match learners' identified needs?



What is the balance between separate specialist provision and basic skills provided through vocational programmes?



Element 2: Policies and Planning

Many providers find it helpful to express their commitments and values in the form of policies, policy statements or statements of principle on particular aspects of their work. Whatever these documents are called, they set out to provide an overarching and enduring framework that allows flexibility while maintaining consistency. They also offer the opportunity to articulate and keep under review key principles which otherwise might not be easily available to others, and they help to define the position of basic skills within the organisation. They also provide the basis for planning future provision.

The policies and statements of principle that follow cover many aspects of basic skills provision – statements on programme policy, training and learning, locations, equal opportunities and confidentiality. They are here to support the review of existing policies and statements as well as their development – the debate that surrounds effective development and review is often as valuable to those involved as the policy itself. For this reason, these materials need to be used to support discussion and debate rather than adopted wholesale without detailed consideration and amendment.

Example 1

One provider includes in its mission statement the core values to which it is committed in order to give priority to those who have the greatest need.



Basic Skills Quality Initiative

Mission statement

'offering high-quality local learning opportunities'

Core values:

- widening participation
- targeting learning opportunities towards those with the greatest educational, social and personal needs
- helping individuals achieve their personal, training and employment goals
- promoting equality of opportunity and equality of regard in all aspects of its work
- working in partnerships internally and externally.



Example 2

Another provider stipulates that the following key principles for its basic skills provision are to be applied consistently across all types of learning programmes.

Key principles

- all decisions regarding changes to current content are the result of negotiating with learners, local employers, referral agencies and staff
- all new programmes are piloted before being adopted more widely
- all new programmes are linked to achievement and progression
- all new programmes are flexible enough for use in a range of different contexts
- all new programmes are subject to formal internal validation procedures
- all programmes are subject to formal and informal reviews, which feed into the self-assessment report
- all programmes will provide induction and progress reviews for learners
- all staff, learners and employers will be given an opportunity to contribute to the programme review process
- annual audits of training styles will help to steer and promote training methods
- managers will observe all trainers systematically as part of quality assurance process
- all basic skills managers will be basic skills practitioners.

Example 3



Another provider sets out guiding principles for all its training provision including basic skills. An extract follows.

A **learner-centred approach** is the basis of training and learning at all stages of contact. This produces a variety of modes of learning, including workshops, groups, one-to-one tuition and supervision and instruction in the workplace. The types of provision are equally varied and include short training programmes leading to NVQ or basic skills unit accreditation, longer term foundation and advanced modern apprenticeships, life skills, preparation for work, ICT with basic skills and other linked courses and intensive basic skills support.

A **learner-centred approach to the management of sessions** means that the trainer:

- manages the session to ensure it reflects the equal opportunities policy
- orchestrates positive group interaction
- establishes the forms of address each learner prefers
- values and uses the learner's experience
- enables the learner to feel ownership of the learning programme
- creates an atmosphere where the learner feels safe to make mistakes
- is aware of any 'real-life' issues which may affect the learner's learning
- carries out diagnostic assessment of the learner's abilities and needs
- negotiates an individual learning plan (ILP) with the learner, jointly setting targets, selecting suitable materials, providing regular assessment and feedback, and reviewing the ILP
- extends inclusion by making materials more accessible, deconstructing and rewriting text where necessary
- is aware of each learner's pace and plans sessions with this in mind
- arranges additional support for each learner where necessary
- is explicit about the purpose of each session and structures the learning appropriately
- creates the right context for skills development with the learner or group in mind
- ensures the learner covers the requirements and standards for any accreditation sought, while accommodating basic skills development needs
- records the outcomes of each session and assesses its effectiveness.

A **learner-centred approach to the management of the learning environment** means that:

- in welcoming learners, the trainer creates a relaxed atmosphere and offers guidance on what to do so that the learner does not feel uncomfortable on arrival
- the trainer ensures learners understand how things operate, to dispel any uncertainty e.g. break times
- the trainer encourages learners to have a sense of ownership of the room
- the trainer ensures that the space is arranged to encourage positive interaction

Example 3 (continued)

- the furniture is appropriate for adults and arranged to suit the session
- displays and resources are appropriate, accessible, meaningful and up-to-date
- the timing of sessions is arranged with learners' needs in mind.

A **learner-centred approach to the training room** means that it is:

- accessible and welcoming
- appropriate for adults
- a 'high priority' room within the building
- convenient for other facilities such as a crèche (if available), toilets etc.

Example 4



One work-based learning provider has developed a basic skills strategy that sets out aims, objectives and the range of learning opportunities.

Basic skills strategy

The ambition and enthusiasm to succeed and to help those who undertake training to achieve their aspirations drive every programme delivered by this organisation.

Aim

To raise awareness of our basic skills programme to benefit those who wish to improve their literacy and/or numeracy skills in order to prosper in the workplace and on the wider social level.

Objectives

- ensure that each client is treated as an individual and is fully supported and developed to improve their basic skills
- ensure that each client has access to suitable, relevant support to help them reach their potential
- ensure that we fully develop the basic skills programme delivery staff, so that they can acquire the relevant skills, knowledge and qualifications to support clients and assist each other
- provide a flexible service to our clients and to provide proper, relevant resources to help them reach their goals
- providing a comfortable, friendly and relaxed learning environment for our clients to work in
- promote equality of opportunity and ensure that no individual, group or organisation is unfairly discriminated against by this organisation, its staff or our suppliers
- underpin our service by total quality and, where things go wrong, to rectify the situation within an agreed timespan
- collect data on targets and achievements and build performance trends. From this information we aim to identify and highlight specific trends
- use data analysis to inform our management of the programme so that resources are applied to areas of need.

In order to fulfil our aim and objectives, the basic skills programme will be driven by an all-encompassing action plan that will identify and rectify weaknesses and will build upon and improve good practice.

The basic skills programme is intended to provide support in all aspects of basic skills and is not intended to be accessed only by those working towards accreditation. 'Softer' skills that are relevant to a person's employment, social and personal skills, such as communications, team building, money management, job search etc. are equally important. The purpose of the programme is as much to develop the individual as to help them achieve qualifications.

Example 4 (continued)

Resources:

- workplace sampling
- one-to-one tuition and counselling
- group work (large and small)
- client-centred workshops
- individual and group projects
- voluntary work
- key skills support
- job search
- mock interviews and interview techniques
- CV preparation and guidance.

We have delivered a basic skills programme for over 10 years. During this time the company has supported and assisted hundreds of people to improve their level of basic skills. For some, this has led to accreditation whilst others have gone on to mainstream training or directly into employment or placement. The company is fully committed to providing the best possible tuition to our basic skills clients.

We aim to expand the impact of the basic skills programme to benefit the local community. To be able to do this effectively, we are working with other relevant organisations, such as local secondary schools, behaviour support units, the local education authority, the probation service, the Foyer, community centres and local colleges. This has enabled us to promote our provision and benchmark with similar providers.

In addition, we intend to offer basic skills support in the workplace in the longer term. We currently have an employer base of nearly 600 and this provides us with an invaluable foundation upon which to work. Information relating to the basic skills programme and other company news is sent to employers via a quarterly newsletter. We intend to develop this initiative further.

The management team is currently investigating funding sources that would allow us to expand our provision. Possible sources include the Challenge Partnership, the European Social Fund, the Social Regeneration Budget and collaboration with the borough council.

Skills for Life brought the issue of basic skills to national attention. Government initiatives and additional funding sources have made it feasible for providers to contribute effectively to the improvement process. We have proved our enthusiasm and innovation in developing and promoting basic skills. There are exciting developments in the pipeline that will affect us all. Our strategy and action plan are designed to ensure that we remain in a lead position to drive forward improvements.

This section considers the role and standing of basic skills provision within organisations. Increasingly, it is being seen as a fundamental part of organisational strategy. Concepts such as widening participation and inclusive learning have gradually influenced policies and aims, and organisations are beginning to appreciate the importance of basic skills provision in promoting the development and success of their workforces.

Example 1

One provider identified shortcomings in some vocational areas where the learners' response to basic skills provision was not as positive as had been hoped. They decided to integrate basic skills development more fully within vocational provision and designed a project to provide a stronger framework for basic skills work. The project specification which follows gives the rationale for the project as well as an outline plan and intended outcomes.

Integrating basic skills development in vocational courses

Background

The provider identified that, in spite of much good practice, two main concerns about basic skills provision existed. These came to light through self-inspection, self-assessment and 'peer perusal' exercises. The concerns were:

- unsatisfactory retention and achievement rates in language and communication skills and numeracy and maths in some vocational areas, particularly NVQ construction and catering
- high drop-out rates and difficulty in accessing the vocational programme for learners on the initial training course (pre-NVQ).

There was a need for an integrated framework for teaching basic skills within the vocational context to improve retention, achievement and progression. The provider established two strands to address this need:

- developing strategies for vocational training teams to improve the teaching of basic skills as an integral part of the NVQ programme
- extending ways of using basic skills specialist staff to support the development of skills through working with vocational staff.

Intended outcomes:

- a successful model of integrated skills development
- a working cross-occupational model for integration, with identified components which can be replicated
- exemplars of good practice in:
 - using initial and diagnostic assessment to target skills teaching
 - programme delivery
 - assignments
 - training and learning materials
 - effective joint work between basic skills specialists, vocational trainers and workplace supervisors
- greater acknowledgement and increase in effectiveness of the use of basic skills specialists.

Indicators of success:

- increase in achievement rates based on:
 - projected improvement from initial screening or assessment
 - improvement between formative and summative assessments
 - comparisons with predicted achievement rates
- improvement in learner satisfaction and participation, based on attendance and views of learners and staff
- improved understanding and satisfaction of employers and workplace supervisors
- improved retention, completion and progression, with particular reference to learners initially causing concern and those whose reasons for leaving tend to be dissatisfaction or sense of 'mismatch' with the training programme.

Monitoring the above indicators was part of the initial and final review meetings of training teams and included the use of peer observation of vocational training sessions. Evidence of impact included recording trainer and peer observations, individual learning programmes, assessment records, learner responses and anything else determined at the initial planning meetings. The project involved initial staff development sessions, follow-up sessions with vocational training and assessment teams, brief development sessions with workplace supervisors, staged implementation and continuing evaluation and revision of implementation.

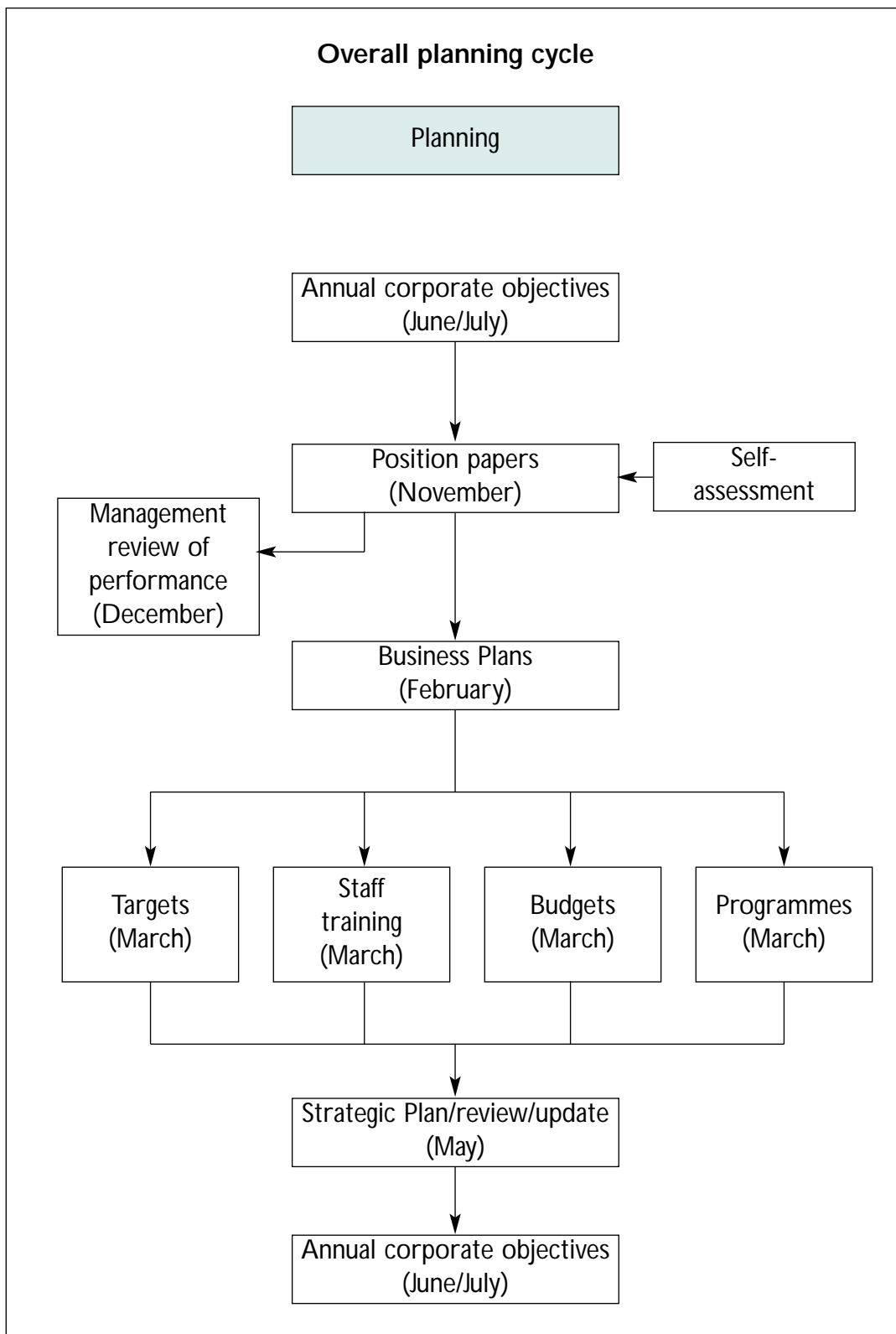
Providers of basic skills have strategies and operational planning cycles that help them manage their activities. In this section, we look at some approaches to planning for basic skills provision. This typically takes the form of:

- a review of the previous year and the current position
- development of an outline organisational budget and operating plan for the next year
- more detailed planning and development work at programme level
- approval of the year's strategic plan in July
- preparation of a needs analysis for the next planning cycle.

The following examples illustrate various elements in the planning cycle, firstly looking at basic skills in the context of the overall process for planning and setting objectives, and secondly looking more specifically at planning within basic skills provision.

Example 1

The provider in this example has a well-established planning cycle.



Example 1 (continued)

Planning model for basic skills provision

The key to effective planning is relevant and accurate management information systems (MIS) data. This is complicated within the area of basic skills. Taking organisation-wide data based on qualifications and extrapolating basic skills numbers can prove complex. Our solution has been to map basic skills provision and match it to information about achievement.

Overview

This is the planning model for basic skill provision used within the organisation. It has been developed in order to ensure that basic skills provision:

- is developed to meet identified needs and gaps
- has targets that are relevant and measurable
- achieves continual quality improvement
- is accommodated within the existing planning model and cycle within the organisation
- responds and contributes to the targets for basic skills set by the local Lifelong Learning Partnership (LLP)
- informs the strategic planning process within the organisation.

Key assumptions of the model

The planning model is based on the following key assumptions:

- a comprehensive needs analysis has been undertaken in relation to basic skills
- retention and achievement data are available and accurate
- there is a system for identifying the basic skills levels of learners on entry.

Example 1 (continued)



Stage	Planning stage	Responsibility	Vehicle	Staff involved	Associated activity
1. (May/June)	Needs analysis undertaken by the Lifelong Learning Partnership	LLP Senior manager	Community skills Audit and existing Authority data	External consultants CIS LLSC/RDA	Trustees Review provider mission
2. (July)	Borough-wide targets for improving basic skills levels developed and agreed by members of the LLP	LLP	LLP Strategic Plan	LLP working group on basic skills	Adoption of targets by trustees
3. (September)	Borough-wide targets considered and the level of contribution that can be delivered by the provider determined and agreed	Senior management team (SMT) Basic skills manager		Section leaders Marketing CIS Threshold	
4. (September)	Annual corporate objectives (for following year) set	SMT	College annual planning guidelines	Programme managers	Trustees' annual review of performance indicators
5. (October)	Review of existing provision, including a review of retention and achievement trends, recruitment trends, range of provision, progression and destination trends, learner feedback and training/learning audit	Basic skills manager Vocational training team leaders	Training learning audit Annual programme review	Training and support staff	
6. (November)	Production of position papers and annual self-assessment including targets (for following year) and action plan	Vocational training team leaders	Position paper and action plan	All staff	Trustees' review of performance
7. (January)	Provider-wide targets (for following year) produced	SMT		Programme managers	Trustees' target-setting/approval
8. (April)	Provider annual business plans produced	SMT	Business plans	Programme managers	Budget proposals prepared and received
9. (April)	Annual staff development plan, quality improvement plan and budget produced	Staff development manager Quality Manager Finance Manager			
10. (June)	Strategic plan update	SMT		SMT	Trustees approve strategic plan and set budget

■

How do you ensure all basic skills provision is subject to the same planning cycle as the other programme areas you offer?

■

How is basic skills provision identified in the strategic plan, and the overall operational or business plan?

■

What is the mission (or vision) of the basic skills team?

■

How good is the team's operating (or action) plan?
How do you check its quality?

■

What priority does your organisation place on basic skills?

■



The management of information

The collection and interpretation of data in the area of basic skills still poses considerable problems for many providers, especially ones whose provision is extensive, diverse and/or widely dispersed. However, many have successfully managed statistical and other information that has enabled the use of this information to shape and improve provision in a way that increases the individual learner's opportunities for success. One prerequisite for accurate and reliable information is effective register practice. Where providers employ a large number of part-time staff, who sometimes work only one or two hours a week in distant or non-traditional locations, this is not always easy to achieve.

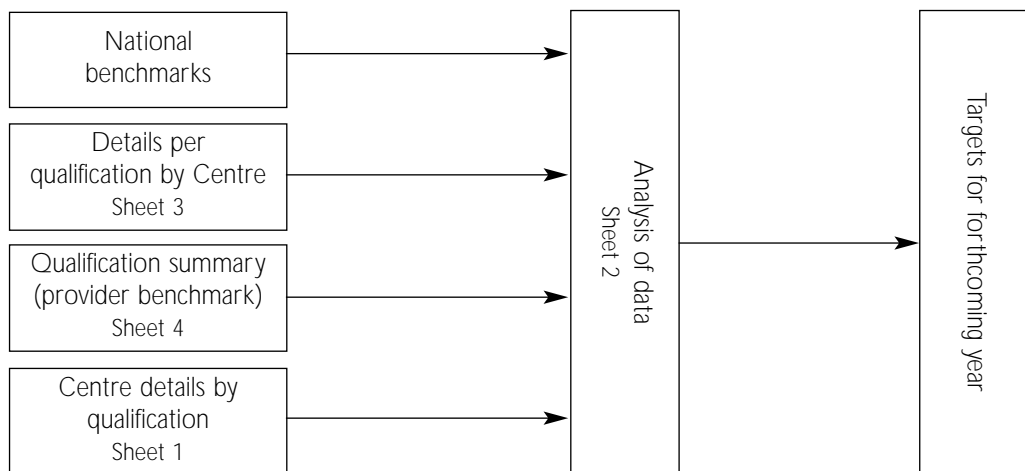
One issue relating to data in this area for many of the larger providers is how to ensure that centrally held data matches that held by the manager of the basic skills provision. The reliability of the central data system; the extent to which it supports programme managers and the level of understanding of and confidence in the system are all factors that influence this match.

The example which follows illustrates how one provider supplements its use of the central management information system with data from various centres. This allows each centre to analyse its own performance in some detail, but also to compare its performance with that of other centres. Qualification-specific data can also be set against the performance of basic skills provision as a whole.

Example 1

Data

- data on registration, retention and achievement are kept by training teams/centres
- raw data are extracted from information systems centrally and distributed to teams
- data are analysed at programme team level
- data are recorded and analysed using a standard format
- data are analysed throughout the year with a final analysis in February/March
- data can be analysed by centre or by qualification
- retention and achievement data are analysed against national benchmarks
- analysis is carried out at vocational team level and whole-organisation level
- reasons for increases and decreases in retention and achievement rates are identified, recorded as part of the self-assessment process and action taken as appropriate
- targets are then set for the forthcoming year based on the analysis
- reasons for non-achievement are classified and trends addressed at vocational team organisational level.



- each centre receives raw data on registrations, retention and achievement
- each centre analyses data in more detail, e.g. non-achievers
- performance centre by centre collated to allow comparisons
- qualification summary produced.

Example 2



One provider developed its own data management system, based on Access spreadsheets linked to the organisation's information system.

This approach:

- allowed the support managers to specify a programme which would reflect exactly the support currently delivered and the development planned for it
- prompted the support managers to consider critical features of the support and the detailed relationship between the provision of support and resource allocation
- allowed support managers to ensure that the full diversity of support and providers could be captured and monitored in a way that enabled limited funding to be distributed fairly
- allowed the programmers to customise links between the provider's MIS and the support managers' preferred data handling mechanisms.

The programme manages data in a progressive way, in the following sequence:

1. Types of support need are listed and the associated assessments costed.
2. Types of support are listed and the delivery costed at an hourly learner rate.
3. Support registers are set up, with the type of support and staffing attached to them.
4. Learners are appended to the programme from the organisation's MIS.
5. Learners are appended to registers.
6. The programme team then calculates a projected cost for the learner and organises the data into formats which include brief summary reports and completed claim sheets.
7. If learners withdraw, the programme team recalculates the support package and its cost.

The database can be adapted to provide other data sets as managers require. These have included:

- staff timetables, linked to support delivery
- computerised register print-outs
- learners for whom claiming will be difficult due to limited provision of support or incorrect funding sources for their main programme of study
- records of support and reviews
- projected overall funding out-turn.

These facilities allow managers to monitor support both learner-by-learner and organisation-wide, as well as to organise and analyse information in a wide variety of different ways. This in turn has generated more proactive and creative support provision, which is linked to learners' needs and not driven by the detail of the various funding methodologies used to resource the provision of support.

A number of providers are now looking creatively at the resourcing models they use to see how they can be used more imaginatively to support strategic goals and objectives.

Developing a resource allocation model for basic skills is a complex issue. Organisations and corporations remain committed to the principle of equity of access to resources, irrespective of programme area. However, where the low level of basic skills across all programme areas is having a significant impact on retention and achievement rates and the overall quality of learner experience, then this is something that requires a strong corporate response.

Like many providers, the organisation in the example which follows has been aware for a number of years of the need to develop a more effective response to basic skills provision. While the provider's discrete basic skills provision has shown improvements year-on-year in retention and achievement rates, the improvements for other learners have been more patchy. However, where learners are identified at initial screening as being in need of support, those who take up the support do better than those who do not, particularly where the support is integrated (i.e. provided on-programme). The provider is clear that integration is the way forward, but this requires a significant shift in the perception of both staff and learners that improving basic skills is something of long-term value to the individual, the organisation, its employer base and the community.

The organisation has recognised that the way in which resources are distributed can be a key element in shifting perceptions and developing provision. Too big or too quick a shift may damage other provision by starving it of essential resources. However, a planned and

incremental shift will enable teams to manage the changes to their programmes that will provide the basic skills training needed by so many of their learners. The example sets out the way the provider is working to establish a resource model that will support and promote basic skills provision.



A resource allocation model for basic skills

As part of the review of the strategic plan, the provider identified a number of key barriers to delivering the objectives set out in the plan. It was felt that a review of resource allocation systems was needed to address these barriers.

Barrier

The overall structure of the basic skills provision did not enable access at appropriate levels for the cohort of potential learners attracted to the vocational training provision.

Measures

Growth targets at Level 1

Where discrete basic skills provision had clear progression routes and a programme structure that enabled access at Level 1, growth targets were being achieved. Where there was reliance on providing Level 1 support for vocational programme areas, growth targets were not being met.

Barrier

The basic skills levels of many learners on entry to programmes did not match the skills required to complete the programmes successfully and gain accreditation.

Measure

Initial screening for basic skills against the skill level requirements for the training programme.

Measures

Retention and achievement rates failing to meet the year-on-year improvement targets within the strategic plan.

Initial screening identified significant numbers of learners with literacy and numeracy skill levels well below that generally required to begin the programme. This meant that the improvement in skill levels required of these learners much greater than the average for the programme.

Furthermore, learners were expected to take up the additional support they required in their own time.

The volume of basic skills provision available did not match the volume of basic skills provision required.

The volume of additional support in literacy and numeracy identified through initial screening was not matched by the levels of support available.

Barrier

The presentation and delivery of basic skills provision, particularly within mainstream provision, did not encourage active participation by learners.

Example 1 (continued)

Measures

Take-up and attendance rates on learning support programmes did not match the numbers of learners requiring support.

Learner and staff feedback suggested that the notion of support was not attractive. The perception was that it was 'remedial', was 'bolt-on', and was not an essential requirement of the programme. Learner and staff feedback also highlighted concerns about the quality of the training and the ability of staff to teach literacy and numeracy at Level 1 in a way that was vocationally relevant.

Response

In response to the review, managers established a number of task groups to provide solutions to the problems identified. One of these task groups was asked to consider the resource implications of addressing the issues and to recommend a resource allocation process that would promote the overall achievement of the organisation's strategic objectives.

Summary

The resources to deliver basic skills provision to learners on mainstream provision are top-sliced from the annual budget for programme delivery and allocated to the central co-ordinator for basic skills. She can either use the allocation to make central provision or reallocate the budget to the vocational teams if they meet the criteria (BSA quality standards) for offering basic skills provision themselves. The allocation to vocational areas is based on LSC methodology with a higher weighting on achievement.

Strengths

- top-slicing could be based on pre-identified need
- links basic skills provision to quality standards
- enables sufficient central provision to be made
- encourages vocational areas to integrate basic skills provision and not treat it as a 'bolt-on'
- encourages and promotes staff development
- relatively easy to administer and monitor.

Weaknesses

- would take 12 to 18 months to measure the effectiveness
- would need to be planned for 12 months before implementation in order to allow vocational teams to adjust their programmes accordingly.

Conclusions

The work of the task group identified two key issues that need to be addressed if the model is to succeed. These are:

- are there suitable and relevant quality standards for the distribution of the budget by the basic skills co-ordinator?
- is the necessary staff development available or does it need to be developed?

Managing Resources

The management of learning resources is a key element in their effectiveness. It is important for providers to ensure that both trainers and learners have easy access to the resources they need. The easier the access for trainers and the wider the range of formats and levels, the more likely it is that they will be able to select materials that reflect the needs, capabilities and interests of their learners. Similarly, good practice indicates that it is important for learners themselves to have independent access to a broad range of materials, both so that they can select what they need and, more importantly, so that they can develop or use their skills to develop independent learning.

Examples of different approaches to managing resources follows, reflecting the very different environments in which the providers are working.

Example 1



One provider has taken a strategic decision to invest heavily in ICT to provide an effective and high-technology learning environment for all learners. This has had a positive impact on the provision of basic skills and key skills.

The ICT strategy links directly to the provider's *Strategic Plan 2000-2002* which includes the following strategies:

- identifying an extensive learning area for basic skills and key skills provision
- ensuring that a new unitised programme framework is in place to provide breadth and depth of opportunity for all learners
- appointing 'champions' and implementing other changes that are needed to ensure that the strategy reaches all vocational areas
- widening participation in learning and improving the quality of learning as a consequence of the increased use of ICT in training delivery
- developing a variety of learning opportunities to match the needs of a wide range of potential learners
- developing innovative partnerships that break down barriers to learning and encourage disaffected and poorly represented learners to participate
- identifying minimum standards of appearance and function of all learning zones, and matching spaces to the specific type of learning strategy being employed

The ICT Strategy is consistent with, and enhances, the provider's 'Learner Progression Policy' of providing a 'broad and flexible programme, which offers progressive pathways for individuals to achieve their full potential'.

Electronic methods of delivery are viewed as an addition to other learning resources such as textbooks, handouts and guides.

All learners will complete an online Learning Styles Questionnaire as a planning tool for use by learner and training adviser when negotiating an Individual Learning Plan (ILP).

Flexible learning packages will be developed to allow learners to take control of their own learning.

The use of assistive technology will be monitored and recorded as part of the provider's commitment to inclusive learning.

The provider is currently delivering, via the intranet, simple text-based information such as induction procedures and the learner handbook. Advanced features of Office 2000 are used in some areas of the organisation to produce gapped handouts, etc.

NVQ standards and assessment requirements are currently accessible via the provider's intranet, and staff can 'bookmark' and catalogue appropriate websites that learners and staff use regularly for research.

Example 1 (continued)

All staff are encouraged to ensure that the programme on offer is free from racial or sexual stereotyping and prejudice and shall seek to influence external bodies to provide performance criteria and standards, work books, assessment documentation and other materials equally free from such prejudices.

The provider sees the enrichment of traditional delivery methods through the use of multimedia, the Internet, light projection and electronic whiteboards as a high priority, and intends to develop these in the following areas:

- Key Skills centre
- ICT centre.

All trainers will be trained in the use of interactive whiteboards by April 2001. Usage targets will be set for programme areas.

Strategic objectives

- to exploit ICT to increase participation rates among people who are under-represented in post-16 provision by an agreed percentage by July 2002
- to provide remote access to materials and online resources to off-the-job learners, and workplace learners in small to medium enterprises (SMEs) by September 2001
- to exploit ICT to increase learner retention and achievement rates among under-represented groups by an agreed percentage by July 2002
- to use ICT to create a flexible, learner-centred and learner-supported programme
- to provide new opportunities to learn in new ways and times that learners want
- to provide opportunities for staff to design and deliver training and materials which match the requirements of learners.

Management of this strategy is, in part, overseen by an ICT programme group. It has the following terms of reference:

- to prioritise programme areas for ICT development
- to consider and plan the introduction and use of electronic learning materials into programme delivery together with support policies and strategies
- to give priority to developing online learning materials as a means of supporting learning, widening participation and enhancing the learning experience
- to develop large, flexible study centres with extended opening hours and access to ICT
- to develop networking in the workplace and community
- to increase participation through ICT
- to involve training managers in developing retention and achievement strategies for ICT.



Staff development

The provider understands that trained staff are essential to the design and creation of materials, the quality control and evaluation of materials, and the assessment of learner progress and the support of learning.

The provider will therefore seek accreditation for the Professional Certificate in ICT for Trainers and this programme will be delivered throughout the college on a modular basis by September 2000.

The approved training team will deliver the qualification in the first instance to the ICT Champions. The ICT Champions will subsequently be added to the training team to deliver the programme across the organisation.

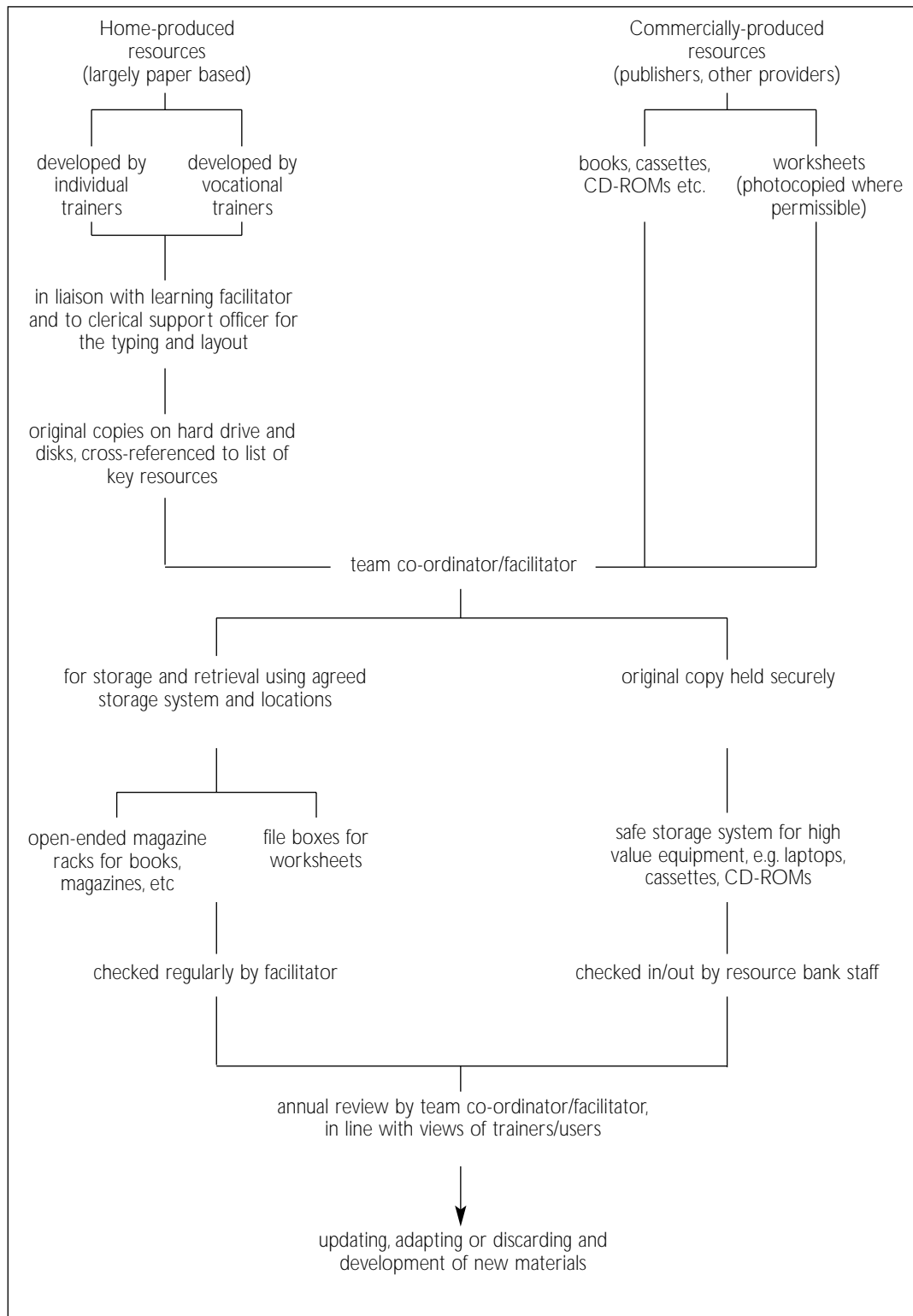
Training objectives

- all training staff working towards a professional ICT qualification by July 2002
- all staff to participate electronically in their personal development by July 2002
- all management, administrative and support staff to have appropriate ICT skills training by July 2002.

Example 2

The next example illustrates how a large urban provider set up an extensive resource bank for home-produced and commercially-available materials, with an appropriate management structure and the necessary administrative support. The organisation has provided two flowcharts, one illustrating the way it pulls together its materials into a resource bank, managed by a learning facilitator with the support of a clerical officer. The second flowchart shows the process a learner follows in order to access ICT-based materials independently. The final extract shows the structure of the resource catalogue and some sample pages.

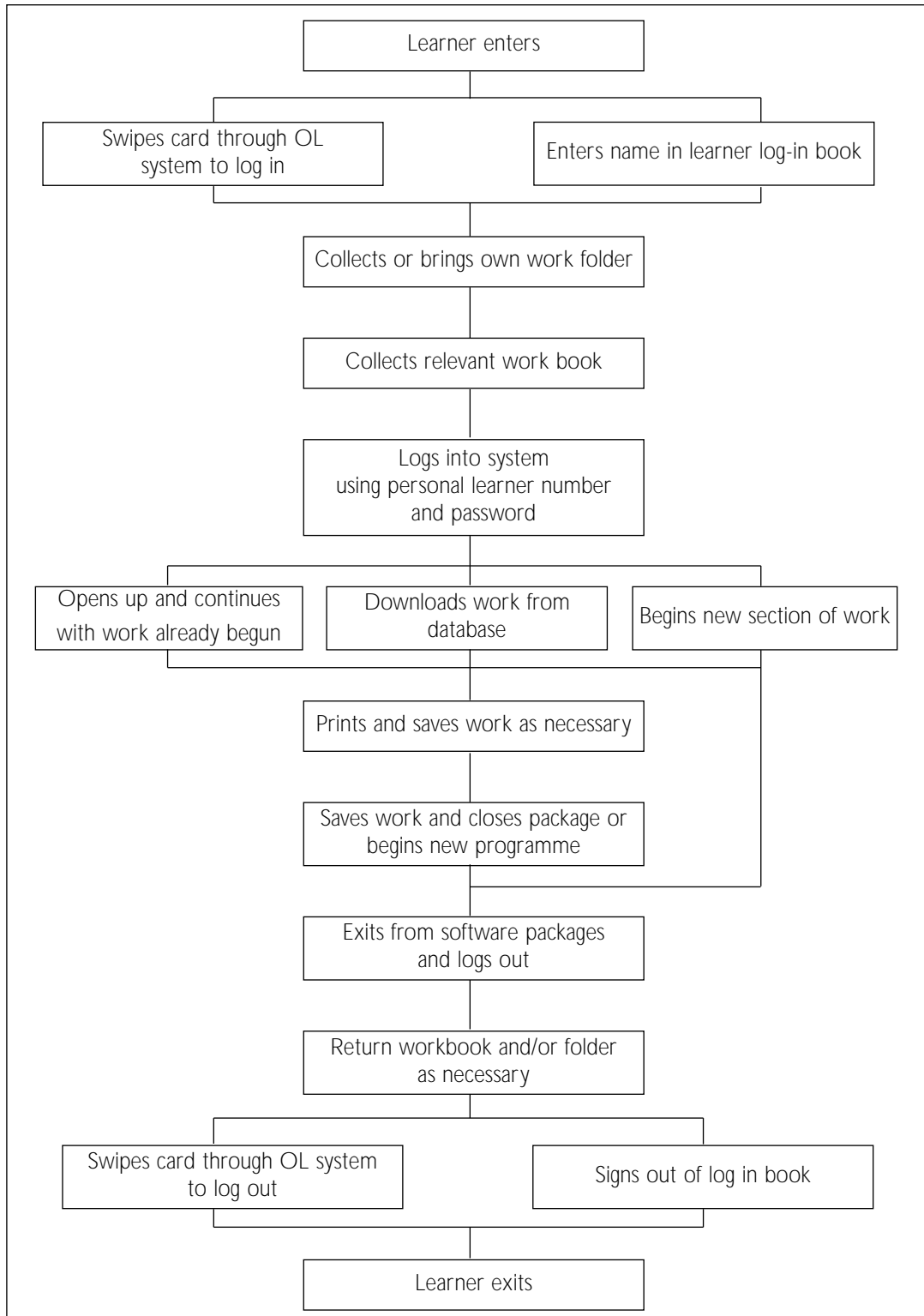
A provider resource bank





Example 2 (continued)

Self-access to ICT-based materials



Writing	Key areas	Resources available	Publisher/author	Photocopiable
	Forms Notes – Messages – Cards informal – CV Letters formal/informal Formal writing – reports – memos	Form filling at work	A----- B----- C-----	
		Self-access form filling	D-----	
		English skills – written	Home-produced	
		Communication module	E-----	✓
		Self-access series formal letters 1	F-----	
		Formal letters 2	F-----	✓
		Writing cards	G-----	✓
		Writing cheques	G-----	✓
		Writing short notes and letters	G-----	✓
		Writing letters	Home-produced	
		Better letters	H-----	
		Practise your business English		
		English (informal/formal letters)		
		Just The Job		
		Practice Your CV Writing		
	Writing Successful			
	Lets Write			
	Left T			
	H			

Staffing

The importance of appropriately qualified and experienced staff in this area of work has not always been recognised in the past, and many providers have had to take conscious steps to put this right.

Example 1

The staffing issues one provider faced in its basic skills provision are shown below, together with the strategies it adopted to deal with them.

Strategy for staffing basic skills

Nationally, and in this organisation, the area of basic skills has suffered for many years from being viewed as a 'Cinderella' service. It was at the back of the queue for the allocation of rooms, equipment and staff. We have all faced the dilemma of being asked to use staff from other areas who needed hours to fill up their timetables. In addition, part-time staff in basic skills automatically received the lowest hourly rate of pay, in line with a banding system, which paid according to the level being taught. This sent both explicit and implicit messages to those working in the sector about the status accorded to basic skills work. As the number of government-backed initiatives shows, basic skills is coming in from the cold, but it takes a long time to overcome established views. It needed a strategic and proactive commitment from management for that to happen.

The decision was taken that we would only employ staff as basic skills trainers if they already had a relevant specialist qualification or were willing to be trained. This requirement applied equally to staff from other programme areas. We also took the decision that only one part-time rate would be paid, so staff were paid the same rate whichever programme area they taught in.

The provider built a team with a wide range of skills and expertise to match the needs of a diverse range of learners. In addition, the provider set out to create a team that had the characteristics needed to promote:

- a cohesive, professional team
- an ability and willingness to accept a variety of roles within the team
- empathy for the learners they would be working with
- an informal approach, but backed by rigorous procedures
- interest and willingness to explore new avenues and share experiences
- an expectation of continued staff development
- ownership of and commitment to the continuing evolution of the strategy.

Training staff who are not primarily basic skills specialists are still expected to have at least threshold qualifications in basic skills. Specialist staff are expected to have an academic or professional qualification at degree level, and a specialised teaching qualification in the area of basic skills. Most providers will recognise the issues of dealing with a team which is still largely part time, and the difficulties of recruiting people with appropriate qualifications.

Support staff play an increasingly important part in ensuring the efficient and effective use of limited resources, whether we are talking about resource-based learning, training staff or provision in the workplace. The precise job titles and activities allocated vary from provider to provider, but some of the roles offering dedicated support in basic skills include:

Programme support facilitator

Duties might include:

- providing additional support to a range of learners, using the basic skills learning resource centre
- working on a one-to-one basis and in small groups
- helping with the diagnostic assessment of learners' needs
- liaising with vocational trainers across the organisation over the support needs of learners
- maintaining learner records.

Learning facilitator

Duties might include:

- overseeing the production of home-produced materials
- managing and maintaining resources
- monitoring usage
- checking and/or setting up equipment for learners or trainers to use
- providing first-line support to learners using computers or other equipment.

Personal adviser

Duties might include:

- providing additional support for all basic skills learners
- being on hand to answer queries

- providing guidance, help and referrals to other agencies where required
- following up non-attendance at trainers' request and enquiring about absences
- checking on the maintenance of progress and attendance records.

Administrator/reception desk

Duties might include:

- acting as a point of contact for staff or learners, or for people wanting to contact them
- record-keeping
- supply ordering
- helping to produce and/or maintain learning resources
- contacting staff and learners regarding timetable changes
- helping to maintain the effectiveness of training staff and managers.

Volunteers

Duties might include:

- working one-to-one in the workplace, or on provider premises
- providing individual support in groups being taught by basic skills trainers.

Assistants

- crèche staff enable providers to offer free or reduced-cost childcare in a secure and stimulating environment
- classroom assistants working in family learning programmes alongside basic skills trainers and mainstream early years care trainers allow more time for an increased range of learning activities to take place. They also provide learners with access to another adult who may be a parent and is not 'the trainer'.

Prompt Questions for Element 3

■
How could you improve your systems for recording information?

■
How do you help staff understand the procedures for recording data?

■
How effective is your approach to setting appropriate budgets for basic skills provision?

■
How do you provide easy access to learning resources?

■
What is your process for reviewing and improving resources?

■
What criteria do you use to evaluate the effectiveness of your resources?

■
How do you ensure that all staff are appropriately qualified and experienced?

■
What strategies do you have for the effective use of staff skills and expertise?

■
How do you ensure that you have the right amount of support staff to maximise the effectiveness of training staff?

■



Needs analysis

In order to develop effective basic skills provision, it is essential for managers to ensure that it is soundly based on identified needs. Information to help identify needs comes from market research activities carried out at local, regional and national levels, and is available to providers from local Learning and Skills Councils, local government offices, regional development agencies and national bodies such as NIACE, BSA, LSDA and the LSC. There is still a significant gap between the known levels of need identified in this way, and the actual demand for provision.

One way for providers to deal with this has been to make productive links with groups in the communities they serve. These include: publicly funded and private organisations; small business advisory agencies, community associations, charities and voluntary groups; schools; training agencies and employers. Over the past few years, these links have played an increasingly important part in helping providers to shape their provision, fund its development and ensure that it is marketed effectively. Their significance continues to increase in line with the growing emphasis on partnerships and collaborative working at every level.

However, there is still often an unexplained gap between identified need and the numbers participating in basic skills programmes. Providers and other organisations often work productively together to explore the reasons for the low level of response, and to consider how to increase participation. It is clear that when planning provision needs, organisations will need to review the level of demand and look at ways of increasing it, as well as the level of need and

how it may be met. The examples which follow describe some approaches to partnership needs analysis.



Example 1

This example shows how a provider in partnership with the local authority, local employers and other agencies carried out a community skills audit.

Community skills audit

Background

The local authority had collected a large amount of evidence relating to the basic skills levels of the local population. There was a large adult education service and the training provider also offered a wide range of basic skills provision to complement its work-based training provision. Much work had been done by local partnership groups to ensure that the spread of provision was such that most local people could access provision that would fit their lifestyles. The local council placed a high priority on raising the skill levels of the population and general resources in the area of adult learning were good.

However, over a period of 10 years, the skill levels of the population as a whole were not improving. National data showed the area declining in terms of the take-up of adult education opportunities, including basic skills, when measured against national averages. Qualification rates for those leaving school were amongst the worst in the country and measures of basic skills levels amongst the adult population showed no improvement. A number of factors contributed to this decline in adult learning. Unemployment was rising and there was a significant year-on-year increase in the numbers of people from ethnic minorities moving into the area. This influx was matched by an almost equal movement of people to more prosperous environments elsewhere.

Some initial research had shown that local people did not consider that they needed to improve their basic skills – they were far more concerned with improving other skills that they felt would make them more employable. There was a general perception that they had the underpinning knowledge and skills to undertake skill training at quite a high level. In practice, this perception proved unfounded – a large proportion of people beginning programmes of vocational training were unable to cope with the requirements of their NVOs. Often their response was to drop out. Research showed that those at risk of dropping out often rejected the offer of support to improve their basic skills levels, preferring to shift their emphasis to different forms of vocational skill training.

Response

The local authority, the training provider and the economic development unit (EDU) agreed to work together to consider in more detail the reasons for identified needs not matching demand. A joint community skills audit was agreed and the training provider was commissioned to undertake the research, using the resources of the authority and the EDU to support the activity. The purpose of the audit was to improve the knowledge and understanding held by the council, the organisation and the EDU of the local population's perception of learning and the acquisition of new skills. By identifying the barriers to the take-up of basic skills provision, providers would be better positioned to match identified need to demand.

The skills audit

The idea of a skills audit was not new. Other agencies, both locally and nationally, had carried out a similar activity. There were however some distinctive elements to this skills audit, both in its philosophy and implementation. These were as follows:

- the interviews were carried out by the training provider's community liaison tutors and a private survey organisation working together. This meant that the information gained was from a voluntary and personal basis and outside the context of any training scheme or interview
- the community liaison team had members who were able to conduct interviews in the respondent's own language
- the category 'unemployed' included the 'unwaged' (excluding those over 65). This had particular significance for women, many of whom could not be registered as unemployed because of their marital status or childcare responsibilities
- the depth of questioning and the resulting information was much greater than for previous general skills audits
- the questionnaire was based on a broad definition of skills and was designed to draw out people's perception of their work-related skills and domestic and leisure skills
- the basic philosophy of the audit was to focus on the needs of the most disadvantaged residents and to look at how the current provision of training, education, advice and counselling and economic development could be tailored to those needs.

Summary of key findings in relation to basic skills

The audit identified common perceptions across a large proportion of the respondents. The initial premise considered by the council, the organisation and the EDU proved to be supported by the respondents. The key findings were:

- many people said their basic skills were in need of improvement, although few would consider following a programme of study that *only* sought to improve their basic skills
- there was a general belief that their basic skills would automatically improve if they followed a vocational or other programme
- many interviewees attached a stigma to basic skills provision and identified it as being for people who had difficulty with learning. Generally, respondents did not identify themselves as having difficulty with learning
- respondents saw themselves as lacking in vocational skills but did not link this to a weakness in basic skills
- in relation to employment, a large number of people saw their lack of IT skills as being a greater barrier than a lack of basic skills

- most were aware of the adult education and training opportunities available to them, and some participated in some form of learning
- of those who had taken part in learning, most had selected programmes they considered to be vocational rather than general
- most respondents felt they would acquire job-related skills through on-the-job experience
- there was a tendency to believe that training took place after securing employment, not before
- those who were employed were able to give examples of the type and range of training they received. None identified basic skills training.

Recommendations

- to review current provision
- to consider the emphasis given to particular sessions
- rather than promoting discrete basic skills provision, to promote the link between basic skills and the skills required for work
- to promote the relationship between vocational access provision and the delivery of basic skills provision
- to provide a new portfolio of provision focused on combining the following skills:
 - work-related
 - IT
 - basic/key
 - language
- to combine existing resources, particularly between the authority and the training provider and to develop a single agency within the borough for the development and promotion of basic skills provision
- to provide fewer but better resourced access points
- to concentrate on giving access points a work-related and professional image.
- to streamline advice and guidance services across the borough in order to promote a single basic skills strategy.

Each member of the partnership had made a commitment to translating the recommendations into action within their own organisation. The partnership would continue to meet to monitor the implementation of the recommendations and, over a period of time, to measure their effectiveness.



Outcome

The partnership adopted the recommendations with the result that the basic skills provision of the local authority and the training provider merged and were jointly managed by a basic skills management group. The operation of the merged service became the responsibility of this provider.

At the time of the audit, basic skills provision was offered in over 60 venues throughout the borough. This has been reduced to just over 30 with eight venues providing major resource facilities. The major venues are combined with job clubs, the adult guidance network and in some instances business development services.

The range and amount of IT training has expanded considerably. It is recognised that the demand for IT provision has not been driven by the identified basic skills needs of learners. However, the basic skills team uses IT training as a means of introducing and developing basic skills.

A range of basic skills provision is offered on employers' premises and a variety of schemes has been developed with employers to promote the development of generic work skills, including basic skills.



Example 2

One work-based learning provider carefully assesses the scale of need for basic skills within its catchment area. It draws on information from the Basic Skills Agency and the LSC. What follows is an extract from a report describing how this provider responds to the need for basic skills.

Identification of basic skills needs

In addition to the delivery of the Wordpower and Numberpower qualifications, we also provide basic skills support to those with an identified need in other areas, such as literacy, numeracy (above Entry Level), communication skills or basic IT.

Generally, there are three main ways in which basic skills needs are recognised.

Assessment

All mainstream learners undertake a basic assessment as part of their initial induction before beginning their training. This includes elements of English and Maths. The assessment results are analysed by programme supervisors. If results fall below a certain level, the programme supervisor will contact the prevocational department.

Two options are then available:

- the learner can access additional support via their trainer, assessor or the prevocational department. This path tends to be used by those with slight to moderate needs and does not lead to accreditation
- the learner undertakes the Basic Skills Agency assessment test and from the results, some learners are endorsed to work towards the Wordpower and/or Numberpower qualification leading to accreditation.

Referrals

The Employment Service conducts an initial interview with unemployed adult clients in order to discuss the options open to them. One of these is a referral to our service for help in a variety of areas, such as job search skills, CV and letter-writing, basic skills, confidence-building, communication skills, personal appearance and hygiene and employability skills. If a referral is made, the client has a private and confidential pre-entry interview with a member of the Adult Training Team. During this meeting, the client will be asked to complete some informal paperwork relating to the proposed training and their previous experience, etc. This process helps to highlight problems with reading and writing. The client will be given a start date for an Adult Skills Assessment week (ASAT) at the training centre. During the first week they undergo a variety of practical assessments to help determine where their strengths and weaknesses lie. An individual learning plan is provided. In addition, every client on the ASAT week undertakes a screening test that incorporates an assessment of English and Maths. The result of this test identifies whether or not the client requires support with basic skills. The Basic Skills Agency assessment is also used to determine clients' basic skill levels.

Work-based learning for young people

All young people who undertake the Life Skills programme are referred to us by Career Link. In the initial stages, discussions take place between the client and their personal advisor at Career Link. This interview allows the personal advisor to ascertain the client's immediate and long-term requirements (e.g. goals, literacy, numeracy, communication skills etc). This permits the personal advisor and the client to agree the best way of meeting the requirements. If it is decided that the client would benefit from further evaluation, they would attend a skill evaluation week at the centre. During this week, the client undertakes a series of practical assessments, including a basic skills screening test to gain an overview of their capability to manage basic English and Maths. This test highlights the possibility that the client may need support in these areas. At the end of the skill evaluation week, the following process occurs:

A meeting of the client, the client's personal advisor and the trainer is held. If training is agreed as the preferred route, an Individual Development Plan is discussed, completed, agreed and signed by all parties.

The client commences the Life Skills programme. During the induction period, the client will undertake the BSA assessment to determine the exact level of abilities.

If abilities are determined to be at or below Entry Level, the client will be supported to work towards the LCCI Wordpower and/or Numberpower qualification. If they are assessed as being above Entry Level but weak, the client will be supported to improve the identified or preferred area.

Basic skills specialists often work with a wide range of organisations such as:

- service providers, for example, health, social services, careers or library services
- other council departments such as housing
- organisations such as colleges, LEAs or schools
- voluntary organisations
- housing associations
- employment agencies
- employers
- educational organisations involved in regeneration projects.

This joint work may take the form of a formal partnership or may be a fairly loose collaborative arrangement. Effective joint working requires that there should be clearly planned outcomes for the learners or clients and that the basic skills provider should ensure that the planned outcomes from the collaboration are clearly stated. The participants also need to be clear about their roles and responsibilities and about how the partnership or collaborative arrangement is to be resourced and reviewed.

The provision of basic skills through partnerships with other local groups and organisations is more likely to be effective if the basic skills provider develops a strategy with clear criteria about the range and type of partners with which it wishes to work.

One provider notes that the strongest partnerships are 'those where we work with agencies which are operating in a different field to us, for example, housing, but which share similar goals, such as the promotion of social well-being and economic independence and

which share with us a clear view of the benefits of joint working'.

Another identifies the following principles for effective collaboration:

- joint needs analysis, planning of the programme and marketing
- clear management structures with clearly identified roles and responsibilities
- generous lead-in time for staff to liaise and to meet prospective learners
- joint staff development
- regular review and sharing of good practice
- readiness and ability to respond quickly and appropriately to emerging needs.

Example 1



Many basic skills providers have been working with employers for several years to develop basic skills programmes linked to the specific needs of their employees. The following example describes how one provider delivered a basic skills programme on an employer's premises.

Background

The provider has a specialised unit which delivers external training. It was approached by a local company to deliver basic skills sessions to their employees. The company had identified this need after discovering that low levels of literacy and numeracy made staff less effective in a number of areas. A lack of basic literacy and numeracy skills made it difficult for some staff to complete tasks successfully and to fulfil company obligations such as health and safety procedures. The low standard of literacy and numeracy also made staff training less effective than it might have been. In addition, patterns of high absenteeism and high staff turnover existed.

Operation

A partnership between the company and provider was established to run the project. The project was endorsed at managerial and supervisory levels, and employees were actively encouraged to participate. A basic skills programme was set up on the company's premises. This was timed to coincide with shift changes to facilitate attendance and employees were allowed some time off work to attend.

The tutors concentrated particularly on the induction. This was crucial to establish the benefits of basic skills support, to stress the company's support for the project and to establish individual needs, particularly in the light of the vocational requirements that were causing concern. Staff produced materials for the programme. The programme was delivered for two hours a week over six months. The company maintained an active interest in employees' progress. The employees felt valued by their employers and the company received the Investors in People Award. The rate of staff turnover fell.

Factors contributing to success:

- *management commitment*: the company identified the need and fully supported the training. The practical benefits to the company were understood and accepted at management level
- *responsiveness*: the tutors were able to tailor the programme to meet the needs of the company and the employees

Example 1 (continued)

- *accessibility*: the programme was delivered on the company's premises in work time
- *investment*: the partnership supported the production of good-quality materials
- *strategic*: progression advice was built into the exit strategy for the course
- *collaboration*: there was joint planning and evaluation by the unit and the company
- *feedback*: the employees were consistently given feedback on their progress.

Outcomes of the project

- the participants became more confident and their self-esteem increased
- improved basic skills helped the workforce to be more productive
- the project demonstrated the success of workplace learning when management and workers are committed to the project
- the learning materials and model of working were transferable
- the employees felt valued
- the company was awarded the Investors in People Award
- staff turnover fell
- the company was able to identify a cost-saving as a result of improved productivity directly attributable to the training
- awareness of levels of literacy and numeracy and related issues were raised within the company
- some operatives achieved Entry Level awards in Wordpower and Numberpower
- the company achieved a National Training Award.

Example 2

One work-based learning provider has established an effective procedure for work placements and employed training.



Basic Skills Quality Initiative

Placements and employed training

Purpose

- to ensure participants are in suitable placements or employed training situations
- to aid the training and assessment planning processes.

Procedure

- all visits and material telephone contact with an employer must be entered on the Employer Contact Log and the key issues summarised
- check the status of the employer, initiate Employer Approval Procedure where necessary
- identify a potential participant-employer training match, bearing in mind the participant's needs and goals, the employer's opportunities and our output requirements
- discuss the programme content and delivery arrangements with the employer
- complete a Vocational Coverage Assessment to identify the training and assessment opportunities likely to arise naturally during the placement
- arrange an interview between the participant and the employer
- obtain feedback from both parties
- ensure feedback is communicated to both parties
- if both parties wish to proceed, check that the employer is on the Approved Employer List
- arrange a start date
- complete a Supplement to Contract
- agree the content of the induction with the employer
- arrange for the induction to take place in line with the Induction Procedure
- issue the employer with copies of:
 - participant's ITP
 - qualification structure and standards.

Guidance

Employers must be on the approved Employer List before a participant is placed or training of an employed participant commences.



Example 3

This example shows how a provider set up a community development network in partnership with other agencies.

Community development network

The core purpose of the community development network is 'actively working in partnership to enable success'.

The focus of the work is to 'widen participation' and 'increase access' but also to engage with unrepresented learners who may fall within the following categories:

- women returners
- minority ethnic groups
- working-class males
- black males
- learners for whom English is not a native language
- refugees
- homeless people
- people with mental health problems
- ex-offenders
- drug users
- rural communities
- single mothers
- carers
- disaffected youth.

Many of these learners have low levels of basic skills. Approximately 60 per cent of school-leavers have below-average levels of basic skills.

Criteria for selecting partner organisations

A range of general criteria will apply to all partners, together with specific criteria for community and business organisations.

General criteria

A partner organisation should:

- be able to demonstrate managerial competence in finance, general management and basic survival techniques
- be able to demonstrate successful performance against quality standards, including an ability to raise achievement

- be able to provide satisfactory business references if required, both for the partner organisation and 'affiliated' bodies
- deliver provision which is relevant to the provider's strategic priorities and expertise
- be of sufficient critical mass to make their in-house administration effective
- be the sole deliverer of the franchised provision, i.e. not subcontracted
- deliver provision within the provider's local recruitment area.

Specific criteria

In addition, **community partners** should be able to demonstrate that:

- their provision will widen participation in education by giving access into communities it is otherwise difficult for the provider to reach
- their provision will offer clear progression routes into mainstream provision
- the organisation is a not-for-profit organisation, preferably a registered charity.

In addition, **business partners** should be able to demonstrate:

- the relevance of their provision to the local regional development agency strategy
- the potential to enhance employer-led programme development and employer liaison opportunities
- that learners are continuing from previous years, where appropriate.

Setting priorities

Programmes are prioritised using the provider's standard criteria. Basic skills is a key criterion in this process.

All programmes need to be LSC-fundable and have identified progression routes and/or lead to employment and further training.

In some areas we are able to access other funds, such as the European Social Fund (ESF) and the Single Regeneration Budget (SRB). These are crucial in helping to pay for beneficiary costs such as travel, childcare and equipment. In some cases, SRB funds can be used as leverage to offset shortfall funding where the take-up of training is low.

Example 3 (continued)

Programmes must be accredited, or have as their objective progression to training which prepares learners for entry to accredited courses.

The partner's ability to resource the programme (i.e. contracting appropriate staff and providing other relevant materials and equipment) is discussed. The programme proposal form asks for 'trainer's qualifications'. It also asks for information on the experience prospective trainers have of working with similar groups; for example, their experience of working with learners with additional needs, basic skills needs, learning difficulties and disabilities etc.

The provider's ability to assure the quality of the programme through one of its programme areas is also important. The capacity of the partner organisation to deliver or engage in a partnership with the provider will dictate whether we work with them or not.

An organisation's administrative and financial systems and their equipment should be adequate. If not, the provider will use its own staff to deliver the programme and offer the necessary support. We will also enable the group to build their capacity to manage the systems and processes in the future. We shall also provide support with bids to access extra funding, for example, for childcare and equipment.

If the programme is being delivered directly by the provider, provider staff with appropriate knowledge will be selected. The community development team has a bank of community tutors who are deployed on a regular basis.

If the programme is a franchised programme, the organisation will use its own tutor. The tutor must have the minimum City & Guilds Stage 1 Teaching Certificate, as well as training and experience within the programme area.

Other essential attributes include: experience of delivering training in the community and to that target group, awareness and understanding of cultural and gender differences and working within an equal opportunities framework.

All newly recruited staff are offered training in basic skills awareness and delivery.

Key principles for prioritising primary basic skills provision

The following principles are used to inform the decision-making process when requesting and allocating resources; responding to requests for provision; planning and setting targets and writing operating statements:

- socio-economic data for the region – e.g. labour market information, demographic trends
- Basic Skills Agency benchmark information on the scale of need in different areas of England
- responsiveness to government initiatives: widening participation; inclusive learning
- funding and 'alternative' funding potential
- market research
- data from the organisation's information services on viability of provision (enrolment, retention, achievement)
- provider budget information
- the provider's audit of current provision – who we already provide for, and where
- the provider's mission
- specific policies, for example on programme and quality assurance
- SWOT analysis – the provider's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats
- audit of available training staff – experience, skills, attitudes, etc. (gender, race etc. needed to match the targeted learner group)
- analysis of learner questionnaires
- initial assessment of prospective learners
- adequacy of suitable venues, access for those with mobility difficulties
- distance for staff and learners to travel
- specialist resources needed for specific subject areas
- motivation of identified target learner groups
- existing networks (communication, workplace, shared interests, shared leisure time etc.) within targeted learner groups
- achievement/progression opportunities for targeted learner groups.

Example 3 (continued)

Sample checklist:

- training accommodation
- training equipment
- access for people with mobility difficulties
- organisation policy and structure
- financial viability, i.e. organisation in existence over three years
- equal opportunities policy
- health and safety procedures
- fire certificate
- public liability insurance
- employer liability insurance
- childcare facilities
- business references
- issues of double funding (for example, ESF; LSC; DTI; New Deal; Employment Service etc.)
- do they receive any LSC funding from any other providers?
- do learners reside and work in the UK?
- are your target learners employed?
- is the training open?

Does the programme:

- have a scheme of work?
- show evidence of session planning?
- have built-in diagnosis and assessment for basic skills and key skills?
- have start and end dates, a timetable and defined total hours commitment?
- have clear evaluation strategies for programme and trainers?
- cater for learners with a range of additional needs?

Does the organisation:

- have awarding body approval or validation?
- employ staff with relevant experience and qualifications in the teaching of basic skills?
- employ staff with relevant experience and qualifications in terms of the specific nature and characteristics of the client group?



One of the government's priorities is to reach those who are excluded from participation in society, those held willingly or unwillingly in lives of underachievement or low expectations, and in a cycle of unemployment or low-paid insecure work with little opportunity to break free.

All basic skills providers share the objective of reaching out to these individuals and groups, and giving them the skills, attitudes and understanding they need to break out of the cycles of deprivation in which they find themselves, for whatever reason. Providers are involved in developing a host of innovative strategies and initiatives for breaking down barriers to reach the socially excluded, and offering significant and attractive development opportunities for those who wish to learn. Many of these imaginative approaches are described in other parts of this unit. Here, examples are taken from initiatives specifically designed for those who are at risk or who are particularly hard to reach.



Example 1

This example gives details of some of the strategies developed by one provider to reach adult learners who are not recruited through existing recruitment strategies.

Marketing and recruitment for adult learners

Because it is known that many unemployed or low-paid adults who might benefit from training do not readily take up existing opportunities because of low levels of basic skills, one of the key remits of this initiative is to provide a range of learning opportunities which aim to improve basic skills and facilitate progression onto vocational courses.

During the four months of operation, the following roles have emerged in developing provision for basic skills learners:

- to develop, in partnership with other community organisations, a model for identifying the educational and training requirements of potential learners who may be excluded from training for a variety of social reasons including deprivation, low confidence, previous negative experiences, or low levels of basic skills
- to secure the resources for and deliver provision in outreach and training centres, which responds to the needs of this target group
- to develop provision which reaches learners and which enables effective learning in contexts which are motivating and comfortable for people for whom training and education is not initially attractive. Examples include introducing basic skills into sports programmes, leisure activities, crafts courses and so on in a variety of informal settings
- to have an impact on general training programme planning and delivery for basic skills learners, in order to further develop the organisation's responsiveness to learners most vulnerable to failure because of poor basic skills.

Methods and examples of innovative marketing and recruitment

The initiative is a new marketing and recruitment strategy which enables time and specialist resources to be targeted towards reaching people with basic skills needs in the places where they actually are, rather than recruitment strategies which require them to come to the training centre.

The strategy which is currently being developed is a proactive strategy, which sees the concerns of local people as the starting point for the analysis of training and educational needs.

Since people tend to go to community organisations which can offer them advice, help and resources, it makes sense for the training provider to go to these organisations and jointly identify with them and their users, how training and education can help in the short- and longer-term. Examples of partnerships are as follows:

Refugee Network

Working with the local Refugee Network, staff identified a group of newly-arrived Somali women asylum-seekers. Rather than assuming that they would want ESOL classes, we asked them what they would like to do. They said they would like to learn basic sewing skills so that they could make summer clothes, and curtains with donated fabrics for their temporary accommodation. A number of small, family-owned dressmaking businesses in the area could provide work experience and subsequent employment. The resultant training provided the sewing skills and donated fabrics, with language support and advice and guidance on employment built in so that each woman could plan her next training step with the organisation.

Housing Association

A local housing association had an idea that some of their tenants would be highly motivated by an Internet connection and through learning some basic IT skills, together with basic skills tailored to their requirements. As non-educationalists, they were unsure how to make this into a viable learning opportunity. The project was able to help them plan a flexible learning programme, which is now being taken up not only by younger unemployed and disaffected adults but also by older learners for whom a lack of basic skills had contributed to a lifetime of feeling excluded. Some learners now work voluntarily for the housing association and are keen to develop vocational skills in administration.

Hostel

A hostel for homeless and displaced people wanted a programme which they could build around their highly popular sports coaching/motivational programme. Staff on the project helped plan and deliver a workshop combining basic skills, job search skills and ESOL which all participants on the sports programme are encouraged to attend. Increased confidence for many has resulted in progressing to vocational training.

The common denominator in these examples of marketing and recruitment is flexibility and responsiveness to community-identified need.

Example 1 (continued)

With clear and flexible progression targets in mind, the greatest challenge is in finding ways to fund the flexibility of delivery which is frequently essential with excluded learners for whom poor levels of basic skills make formal learning difficult and often slow.

Franchised partnerships

Franchised partnerships frequently do not cover the costs of outreach work with learners who have basic skills needs and may be disaffected. With these target groups, typically only between 20 and 30 per cent of the people contacted informally will achieve measurable educational outcomes or progress immediately in that funding year. The project is currently developing models of partnership in the form of service level agreements, which depart from the franchise model. These will devolve the responsibility of the employer to the partnership organisation, fund the work at the level required in order to enable progression and progress, and leave responsibility for programme planning, management and delivery with the organisation

Principles underlying effective partnership provision

In order to ensure the effectiveness of partnership planning and delivery, the following principles need to be observed:

- partnerships need to contain development opportunities for all the organisations involved
- partnerships need to be clear and flexible. Educational outreach work is labour-intensive and it can take some time before specific training or educational programmes develop from it. Senior managers need to understand this
- flexibility, and clarity about the objectives of each partner
- putting learners' needs first, asking and listening, not telling
- assuming that anything is possible even if the means of achieving outcomes is not established
- saying no clearly when something is not feasible, and going on to find the next-best solution
- having in place formal service level agreements specifying responsibility for programme, monitoring, evaluation, advice and guidance, health and safety and employers' liability
- using every opportunity to educate and be educated about the impact that the lack of basic skills has on people's lives.

Example 2



In this example a partnership between a provider and a school provided training and education as an alternative to the schools system.

The project was set up in 1972 as a free school offering alternative education for those who have rejected school or been rejected by it. The project has charitable status and is funded from a variety of sources including the local education authority. Operating out of a terraced house it offers school-based support at Key Stage (KS) 2 and discrete provision at Key Stage 4.

The provider's transition programme was established some five years ago and is a key part of KS4. The learners work on basic and key skills, vocational tasters, self-awareness and confidence, as well as building up a portfolio for awards and undertaking work experience. By year 11 learners are spending 40 per cent of their learning time in the training centre, 40 per cent on work experience and 20 per cent at the project concentrating on the planning, review and management of this experience.

The year 10 programme has two main objectives:

- to offer access to a full-time programme for young people who have moved out of mainstream education at a crucial time in their lives
- to provide young people with the skills and knowledge necessary for adult life and employment.

The learners in year 10 are based at the project's premises and are offered a core programme as well as embarking on the Youth Award Scheme. The programme is delivered by project staff. However, during the final term the young people are gradually introduced to the provider's environment in order to facilitate transition to the year 11 programme.

An important element of the year 11 programme is to ensure that each learner has a coherent package of learning across the week, together with continuity of support. The project provides a full-time co-ordinator who manages the programme and supports the learners throughout the week. She spends 20 per cent of her working time working with learners on an individual basis, 40 per cent supporting the group at the centre and 40 per cent monitoring work experience placements.

While the provider's staff manage and deliver basic and key skills awards, the project co-ordinator reviews work with individual learners and sets new targets. She also manages the Youth Award Scheme and the final production of a Record of Achievement.

The learners have full access to all the provider's services. Guidance interviews are arranged for individual learners to help them plan their progression. The learners achieve at a range of levels. The joint programme has been running for five years and progression into further training and education continues to improve.

Prompt Questions for Element 4

■
What is the degree of match between the level of basic skills needs and the numbers participating in programmes of learning?

■
What are your priority areas for increasing participation?

■
To what extent have you collaborated with others to carry out an analysis of the needs of priority groups or localities?

■
What criteria do you use to identify appropriate partners for your work?

■
How effective are you in the way you manage these partnerships, from initial contact to the monitoring and review of provision?

■
To what extent is partnership provision subject to the same scrutiny and quality processes as other programme areas?

■
Which are the 'hard-to-reach' groups in your locality?
How do you know?

■
What approaches are you using/have you used to try to reach them?

■
How effective have you been in tackling issues of social exclusion?
■



Basic Skills Quality Initiative

UNIT 2

Organisation and Management of Training and Quality Assurance

Quality Assurance and Improving Basic Skills Provision:

- assessing the quality of basic skills provision
- planning for improvement

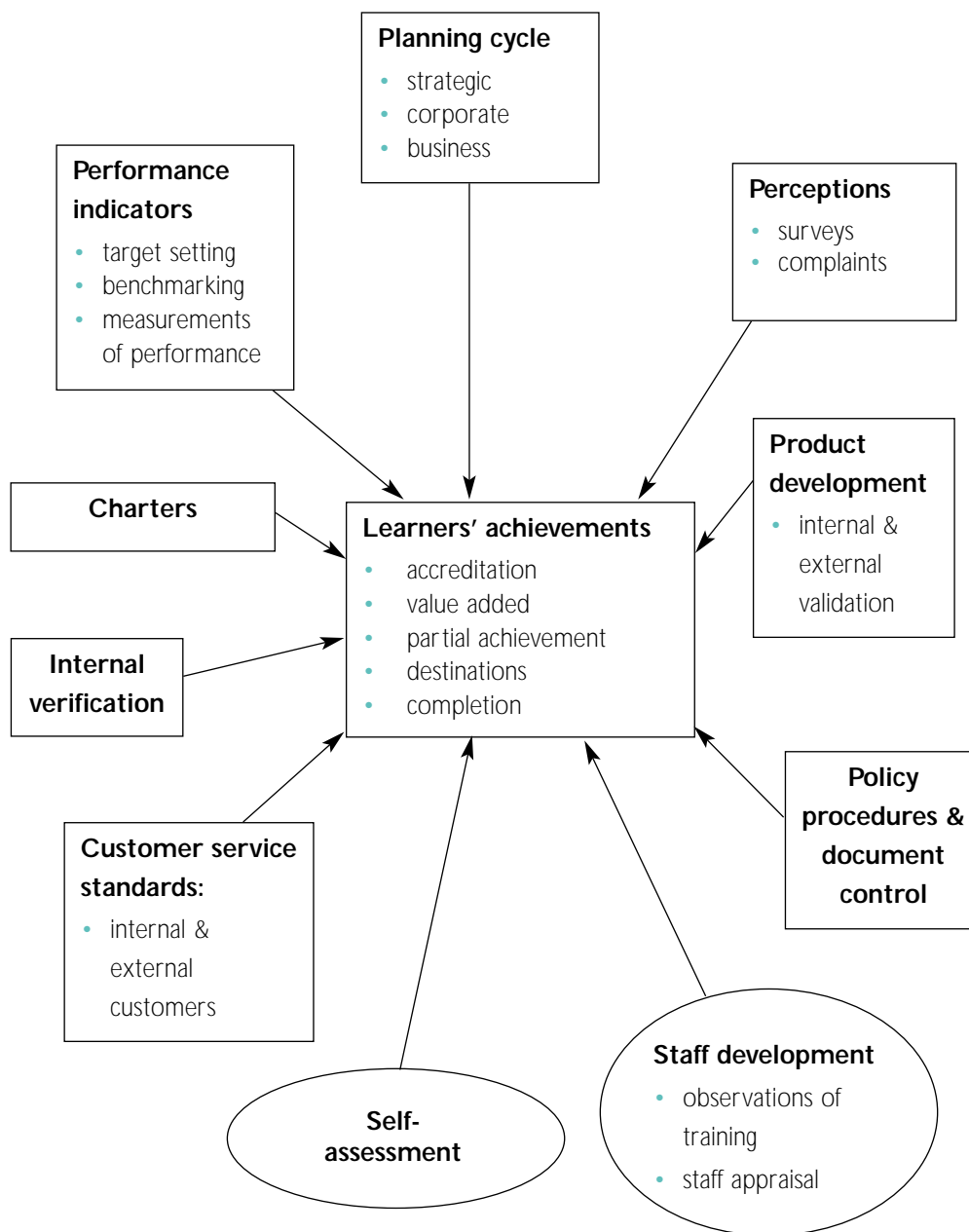
Structures and procedures

To ensure a consistent approach to quality assurance, most providers have developed a quality framework which includes policies and procedures to guide staff as to the action they should take to assure the quality of the provision. A timetable of what needs to be done and when is often given to staff to help them understand how the separate elements of the system are part of an overall quality assurance process or cycle. Although quality assurance frameworks will have similar elements, there is not one 'ideal' model which can be implemented in every establishment. Providers need to develop their own quality assurance framework to suit their particular circumstances.



Example 1

The following example shows the quality assurance framework devised by one provider.



Monitoring the Quality of Basic Skills Provision



Basic Skills Quality Initiative

Although an effective quality assurance policy will cover all aspects of an establishment's work, it is sometimes necessary to develop different procedures for different aspects of the work. The following example outlines the main elements of one provider's quality assurance system and describes the adaptations that have been made to ensure that the system is effective in monitoring the quality of the basic skills provision.

Example 2

Overview of the college's quality assurance (QA) process

All aspects of the QA process apply to basic skills.

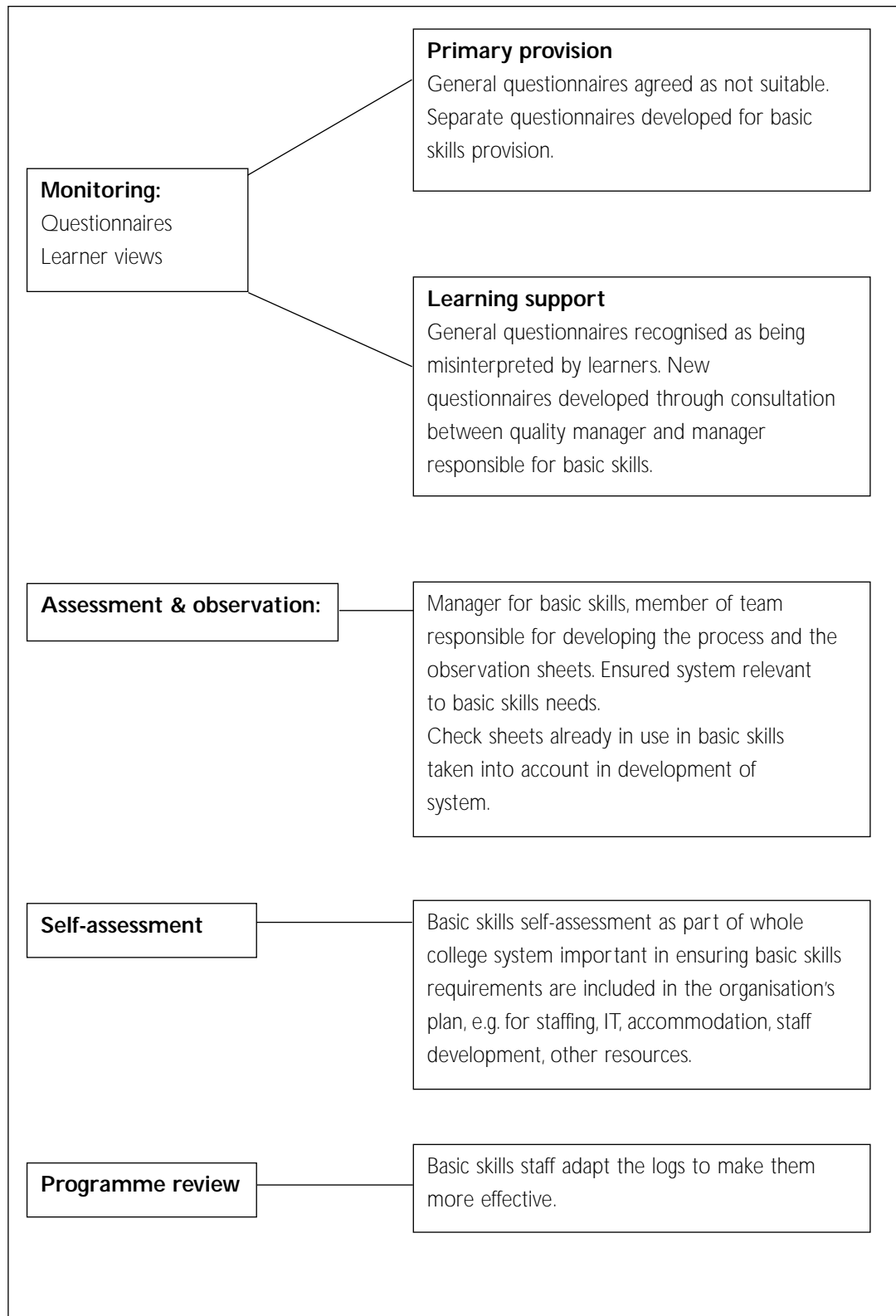
This covers:

- self-assessment
- service standards
- programme logs
- assessment of training delivery and learning through observation
- collection of all data, e.g. performance indicators, learner survey data.

Development and monitoring of the provider's quality framework and the link to basic skills

- the provider has a quality group with designates from each programme area
- this group meets regularly with the quality manager
- a basic skills delegate is a member of the quality group
- the quality manager also works separately with the basic skills section to ensure the process is meaningful to basic skills.

Example 2 (continued)



Role of Basic Skills Staff in the Quality Assurance Process



Basic Skills Quality Initiative

In many establishments a wide range of staff are involved in teaching basic skills. The following example shows how one provider has developed 'quality circles' to enable as many staff as possible to play a positive role in monitoring the quality of basic skills provision, much of which is based across a number of training sites.

Example 1

The role of the quality circle is to:

- discuss current programme issues
- discuss other or alternative forms of accreditation
- make recommendations to vocational programme area co-ordinators for future developments
- share and disseminate good practice, knowledge and experience
- create and share materials to meet specific needs
- maintain a database of colleagues currently delivering in this programme area to inform them of developments via the minutes
- encourage participation from all members of the group
- establish support opportunities
- identify and request common training
- prevent trainer isolation
- create standard information sheets for the vocational areas
- provide a forum for internal verification.

Organisation

- quality circles usually meet six times a year. They are convened by the link trainer and held in different training centres on a voluntary basis
- each circle has a chairperson or link trainer. Minutes are taken and circulated to the team and vocational programme area co-ordinators. Area co-ordinators disseminate information to relevant programme managers
- link trainers induct new trainers into the relevant awards.

Vocational area quality circles

All staff are contractually obliged to attend at least two a year.

Cross-provider quality circles

One representative from each vocational area attends. In the case of subjects with a large offer (e.g. construction) the link trainer of the vocational area quality circle attends the working groups and reports to both.

Example 2



Managers in another organisation have produced the following information to describe how part-time staff are expected to contribute to the quality assurance process.

Involvement of part-time paid trainers and assessors in the quality assurance system

- all part-time paid trainers and assessors for both discrete basic skills provision and learning support are required to follow the procedures necessary to fulfil the requirements for quality assurance
- these procedures are explained to each trainer/assessor on appointment and are reviewed at a September team meeting. In particular, they include the maintenance of records for measuring achievements, retention and attendance
- all attend basic skills team meetings, which provide information for the programme log
- all are asked to contribute to the review for self-assessment
- all have a designated line manager who carries out an annual performance review
- all have their teaching observed on a minimum of two occasions a year (permanent staff are observed on three occasions)
- all are required to provide vocational programme organisers with attendance, achievement, retention and destination data for learners also undertaking vocational training
- all are required to follow the organisation record-keeping systems that underpin the QA systems.

Permanent trainers

- all permanent trainers, whether fractional or permanent, are required to follow the systems outlined above
- all are appraised and observed by a manager on three occasions a year.

Good communication is an essential element of a QA framework. One provider has introduced quality bulletins which are distributed to all members of staff. The bulletins, an example of which follows, are used to communicate key information to staff on a monthly basis or more frequently if necessary. Basic skills staff feel that the bulletins keep them in touch with developments and provide them with useful discussion points for team meetings.

Example

Quality Bulletin no. 7	
Internal Inspection	
<p>The internal inspection team have identified what constitutes a 'strength' and a 'weakness'. Strengths should demonstrate the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • help to improve the learners' experience • evidence to support the judgements • triangulation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – staff know it – learners know it – 'external' individuals know it • 'sufficiency' • 'validity' <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – say it is and it is – it is what it appears to be • general awareness and enthusiasm for this 'thing' • stand out above the norm in association with a defined benchmark • consistency and reliability – occurs more than just once and across a number of areas. <p>Weaknesses have the following features:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • an absence of evidence that demonstrates that it helps to improve the learner's experience • lack of process, systems • inconsistency 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • barriers to improvement/constraints on improvement • not making the most of what you've got • intransigence • lack of understanding – no targets set • reluctance to recognise the impact of one thing on another • lack of rigour • lack of sharing and enthusiasm about objectives • an over-reliance on reactive approaches • inadequate, insufficient or non-existent evidence. 	

Effective training delivery and learning are at the heart of good basic skills provision. Most providers now realise that arrangements to monitor the quality of training and learning are of crucial importance in a quality assurance framework. However, careful planning and preparation are needed to ensure that the judgements made as a result of observations will be accurate and useful. In establishments where training session observation procedures are effective, senior managers have developed standards for training delivery and learning and have established criteria against which the quality of sessions can be judged. It is essential that these criteria and standards are set, wherever possible, with reference to national norms. Inspection reports and the ALI Annual Report provide useful information about the quality of training delivery and learning in each vocational area. Care is also needed to ensure that observers have appropriate subject knowledge and experience for their role. This is as necessary in basic skills provision as it is in other programme areas.

This section provides examples of the ways in which providers monitor the quality of training delivery and learning.

Setting standards for training delivery and learning

One provider has produced the following information that has been gathered through training session observations. The information is disseminated to staff and used to help them understand what constitutes good and poor practice.



Example 1

What follows is a summary of information gathered from observations of training and learning.

Comment	Suggestions from team
<p>Planning – related to schemes of work, schedules of work, competencies and lesson plans.</p> <p>Insufficient detail</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • schemes and schedules should be planned in teams and not just be a copy of the standards • schemes, schedules and session plans should be stored centrally with the programme's leader to allow opportunity for random checking • all schemes and schedules should include session objectives which are then transferred to session plans • recommended layout to be used for schemes, schedules and session plans (currently on intranet) • steering group members prepared to deliver team sessions on schedules of work and session plans.
<p>Pace and speed of delivery not appropriate for target group of learners.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • this comes back to insufficient planning and inappropriate resources • all learners should be able to succeed which means opportunity provided at different levels • observers need to check very carefully the timing of the session plan against what actually happens • pace does not mean speed! The intention is not to 'get through the session' • measure and monitor who is learning.
<p>Inclusion of all learners in the room. Some learners not taking part and no evidence of their learning.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • session plan should be structured to include all learners – everyone must be given the opportunity to succeed at something • differentiation needs to be addressed in teams – otherwise why bother? • measure and monitor who is learning and who is not • relate new learning to the learner experience • make sure the quiet learners are also learning.
<p>Training room management – discipline and control issues.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • can be a result of poor planning – using the incorrect method of training and inappropriate learning materials • investigate and use the variety of training methods available • work in teams to investigate more imaginative training methods and materials • bored learners are more difficult to control than involved learners.
<p>Starting and finishing lessons – recap and consolidation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • basic teaching principles. Moving from the 'known' to the 'unknown' • always begin with a recap of previous knowledge (q/a, quiz, OHT, handout) • introduce learners' objectives for the session at the start • always finish with a summary (board, OHT, handout questions) – check that learners have achieved their objectives • this must be included on the session plan.



<p>Provision for learners who arrive late – opportunity for catch up</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • instil rules and regulations on what is not acceptable – stick to them! • any catch up sessions should be provided out of formal training session hours – handouts and exercises on intranet or provided later as packs.
<p>Room layout to suit type of session</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • although not always the fault of the trainer, some alteration of layout is often possible • time should be built into session plan for reorganising at beginning and end of session • make sure everyone can see OHT,TV etc.
<p>Appropriate use of board, handouts, OHTs – when to take notes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • availability of guide on use of resources to be available on intranet • board and OHTs used to introduce, emphasise and summarise • use to give instructions to learners rather than merely tell them • note-taking in sessions is usually not appropriate and a waste of time.
<p>Demonstrate rather than tell</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demonstrate and give examples • ask learners to think of examples and adopt the model • demonstration leaves the learner with a visual image which lasts longer than a verbal instruction.
<p>Ensuring all learners are on-task all session</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • monitor learning taking place and achievement regularly • plan for differentiation and expect learners to learn at a different pace.
<p>Appropriate position of trainer in the training room or environment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • position so that trainer can view all learners • if not possible then room may need to be rearranged • walk round constantly to help learners stay on-task • know when to back off to leave students time to learn.
<p>Setting tasks</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • learners need to be given a timescale when task is set • leaving time open means that learners may not use time wisely and session plan will not run according to schedule.
<p>Variety of activity</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • session plan should clearly indicate 'trainer activity' and 'learner activity' • changing activity encourages differentiation and discourages boredom • encourage teams to devise imaginative methods and to share a range of activities which have worked for their subject area.

Example 1 (continued)

<p>Quality of handouts, OHTs etc. needs to be improved</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • staff should provide self-produced worksheets • photocopies from textbooks can be a fall-back position but must not be relied on • OHTs should be produced using PowerPoint • all handout materials should be word-processed • copies of handouts on disk should be centrally stored with the team so that amendments can be made easily when a member of staff leaves.
<p>Too much trainer led with too much initial exposition</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 to 10 minutes maximum • learner should be set tasks early in the session.
<p>More variety needed in visual aids and other supporting materials</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • make use of manuals on PowerPoint and DTP • avoid gimmicks and respond to learner reactions • ensure that materials are always up to date and relevant • visual aids help to reinforce learning and improve internalisation.
<p>Use individual learning plans and targets to monitor learner progress</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • essential if differentiation is to be effective • should be undertaken with each learner at different stages of their training: following learning styles assessment; after first assessed piece of work; following learner review process; at regular intervals • learners must be encouraged to see action-planning and target-setting as vital to their success.
<p>Questioning techniques</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • more use to be made of open and directed questions – use learners' names rather than directing to whole class • link question and answer techniques to differentiated learning strategies • have questions (and answers) ready prepared on paper • ensure that everyone in the group has a chance to answer at least one question (differentiation and inclusion again).
<p>Encourage learner participation in general discussion work</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use pairs, groups (have identified criteria to constitute groups rather than learner selection) • sometimes has to be trainer-led • good discussion work needs very careful preparation beforehand by trainer – it cannot be left to chance • summarise findings for everyone.
<p>Assessment methods</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use as wide a range of assessment opportunities as possible to include all learning styles • assessment should be continuous throughout the session using formal and informal methods • don't be restricted by final assessment method only • include assessment methods and opportunities on session plan.

Example 2



Another provider uses the following good practice guide to help staff understand what constitutes good practice. It also provides useful prompts for those who are observing sessions. Three sections of the guide are shown.

This note constitutes an initial guide and checklist for all trainers providing sessions. It can be supplemented by trainers' own practice and will need to be revised in the light of experience.

1. Training programme organisation and planning

- 1.1 Have all staff involved in the training programme been briefed about the nature of the learner group, their needs, and expectations?
- 1.2 Have trainers and, where appropriate, learners, been briefed about the needs of, and resources available for learners with basic skills needs or learners with learning difficulties or disabilities?
- 1.3 Have learners been consulted regarding the design of their training programme, their expectations and needs?
- 1.4 Have learners been adequately briefed regarding the nature and location of the training centre, and its facilities?
- 1.5 Are learners aware of any accreditation arrangements pertaining to their training, and of any requirements connected to accreditation?

2. The programme statement

- 2.1 Is there a brief, clear statement of the programme of which the session is a part? The statement should embrace aims, methods, expected learning outcomes, resources, assessment and the trainers' names?
- 2.2 Are the learners aware of and in possession of the training programme statement? How is it shared with them?
- 2.3 Does the training programme statement need to be produced in another format, to meet equal opportunities criteria or the needs of learners with learning difficulties or disabilities?
- 2.4 Does the training programme explicitly address and embed basic skills or key skills within training and learning, as appropriate?
- 2.5 Do the aims and learning outcomes of the training link to the other activities of the group outside the training centre – e.g. workplace?
- 2.6 Is it clear how this element of the training programme fits in with the overall programme being followed by the learners concerned (i.e. New Deal option, foundation modern apprenticeship framework etc.)?
- 2.7 Are copies of the training programme statement lodged with Registrations and Records, learning support and guidance team, the document bank and other (relevant) trainers?
- 2.8 Does the trainer have spare copies of the training programme statement with her or him or are they easily and quickly available?

Example 2 (continued)

3. The plan of the sessions

- 3.1 Is it clear, to both trainers and learners, how the session generally fits in with the overall programme being followed by the learners? Has any necessary briefing taken place?
- 3.2 Does the plan indicate how sessions are to be prepared and presented for learners with basic skills needs or learning difficulties or disabilities?
- 3.3 Is it clear to trainers and learners how the session fits into the sequence of sessions, and relates both to previous and subsequent sessions, where appropriate?
- 3.4 Is there a clear plan for the session(s) you will be delivering? This might include the following:
 - subject matter, focus or topic to be covered
 - aims, expected learning outcomes, training and learning methods, resources and assessment
 - resources, materials, handouts, exercises and tasks, reading etc.
 - structure and organisation of the session
 - time available for different elements of the session (where relevant), including any breaks
 - provision for learners with specific needs
- 3.5 Does the plan of the session start from where the learners are, including drawing on their own experience, previous learning etc?
- 3.6 How is the plan of the session shared with the learners?
- 3.7 Is there space in the plan for some flexibility and responsiveness, which will still allow the aims of the session to be met?
- 3.8 How is it intended to review the session plan?

Observation of Training



One provider has produced the following information to explain their approach to observation. An example of a completed feedback sheet is included.

Example 1

Observation of training

Rationale

A systematic and rolling programme of observation and evaluation of training and learning will develop a more robust and self-critical culture within a learning environment.

This observation process is intended to be comprehensive and rigorous, withstanding close scrutiny. It is applicable to all training and facilitating roles. For the purposes of this pack, documentation has been selected for off-the-job training sessions only.

The feedback from observations will inform assessment of performance within the establishment and will contribute towards future self-assessment and quality reports.

Policy:

- training session observation focuses on aspects of training and learning and identifies good practice which can be disseminated throughout programme areas
- observation is used to support staff in the identification of individual and team training and development needs. Identified needs are monitored and incorporated into the training needs analysis during the staff review.
- each member of staff agrees to the observation taking place
- sessions to be observed are selected by the observer and focus on the main programme specialism of the trainer
- all observations are graded
- participation is obligatory.

Example 1 (continued)

Process:

- at least one week before observation, the observer will notify the member of staff of the week in which the observation will take place. This will be confirmed in writing, copied to the relevant middle manager
- at the beginning of the session, the member of staff to be observed should give the observer all necessary documentation
- registers should be available to establish attendance patterns together with records of learners' work to gauge progress (where appropriate)
- observations should be at least an hour long
- observers must be non-participative and non-directive during the observation
- feedback lasting approximately 15 minutes should take place immediately after the session, or if this is not possible within 48 hours
- observations will be graded using the agreed criteria
- relevant documentation should be completed by the observer and signed by the observee.
- copies of the completed documentation will be distributed to the following:
 - the observee
 - the relevant middle manager
 - the staff development manager
 - the observer
- in the case of an unsatisfactory grade, a member of staff may wish to negotiate a further observation. If this cannot be resolved the member of staff may wish to appeal against the grade. Appeals must be made to the senior manager of the organisation or the quality manager within 10 working days, who will respond within 10 days of receipt
- training needs identified by the observer will be collated by the staff development manager and implemented through the staff development process. Observees will be asked to take part in training and development activities
- all staff, including part-time staff, will be observed a minimum of once every two years
- this procedure covers all trainers and facilitators.

Completed feedback sheet on basic skills session observation

Name of observer:.....Observee/s:.....

Date:.....Programme:

Measure	Comment
Awareness and understanding of learning styles within the group. Use of Learning Styles Inventory – PPP tasks undertaken, reflected in differentiated lesson plans. Recognition of individual needs and different strategies to meet these needs.	Each learner had a copy of their learning plan. Trainer produced a session plan for each learner attending the workshop related to learning plan. Learners' progress record identified a variety of strategies used each week to facilitate learning.
Awareness, understanding and use of learning support systems, monitoring progress.	Progress records identified future action to assist planning of future sessions. Volunteers and support assistant working to plans for learners.
Learning goals agreed and reviewed with learners, individual action plans in place.	Evidence of updating of learning plans. Copies of reviews on file. Learner input on learning plans and review identified.
Methods used to sustain learners' interest and lead to effective learning. Appropriate use of resources/equipment including specialist equipment where appropriate.	Use of textbooks, worksheet, CD-ROM, enlarged text on hard copies and on screen. Learners encouraged to word-process some assignment work. Discussion in small groups to develop verbal skills.
Involvement of learners in assessing, reviewing and recording their own progress at regular intervals during the course.	Assessment takes place against personal goals and accreditation criteria.

Comments

The learning taking place was clearly focused on the learners' individual action plans. There was a wide range of activity within the session with the effective use of ILT, paper-based resources and trainer input. Support staff and volunteers had a clear understanding of each learner's aims and objectives and assisted in the planning of sessions for learners they were supporting.

There was a relaxed, working atmosphere within the workshop. The trainer involved each learner in the ongoing assessment process and achievement was recorded where appropriate.

Example 2

The following documentation gives guidance to staff on the observation of training and learning.

The observation of training and learning

Introduction

Why observe?

- two reasons – appraisal and self-assessment
- one purpose – improving quality.

The observers will be:

- experienced trainers
- trained
- moderated
- drawn from all areas of the organisation
- supported and advised by quality assurance
- qualified or working towards an appropriate qualification.

Stages in the observation process

Before the observation

- pre-observation meeting
- session plan and copy of any handout, etc.
- agree time for verbal feedback.

At the start

- arrive before the learners
- have your presence explained
- disappear into the background; don't take part.

Recording the observation

- take notes as fully as possible and keep them
- observation report form and observers' checklist
- try to 'look through the eyes of the learners'
- stay until you can grade, usually about 45 minutes.

Grading

- be definite; no borderline grades
- may require reflection; not essential in verbal feedback.

Giving feedback

- brief verbal feedback, same day
- written report within three working days
- copy of report to basic skills co-ordinator and quality manager
- consider second observation if necessary.

Observers' checklist

1 Trainer structures, plans and manages the learning experience appropriately

- has clear aims and objectives
- produces a session plan
- shows evidence of effective preparation
- uses materials at the appropriate level
- manages the group activities effectively.

2 Uses a variety of teaching/learning approaches that involve learners appropriately

- involves learners actively for at least part of the session
- uses variety of techniques
- techniques used enable objectives to be achieved.

3 Provides appropriate assessment and feedback on learners' performance

- checks understanding and learning
- if formal assessment, explains purpose of assessment and implications of results
- provides supportive feedback.

4 Responds appropriately to individual learners' needs

- responds to questions effectively
- revisits difficult material effectively
- shows awareness of relevant equal opportunities issues
- ensures involvement of all learners in learning
- demonstrates good health and safety practice at all times.

5 Has productive rapport with learners, and promotes successful interaction between all learners

- has comfortable, two-way communication with learners
- displays encouraging, supportive interpersonal skills
- motivates, stimulates, involves all.

6 Uses resources and environment to contribute to learning

- uses appropriate resources effectively
- written/visual resources are clear and unambiguous
- resources aid the understanding/learning process
- adapts environment, where appropriate, to help facilitate learning.

Example 3

What follows are completed session observation reports for sessions graded 1, 2, 3 or 4. Grade 1 is excellent, and Grade 4 is unsatisfactory.

Example of a teaching and learning observation report for a Grade 1 session

Training Unit	Date & time of observation
Trainer A	Basic skills session
Observer	Venue
Criteria	Comments
1. Trainer structures, plans and manages the learning experience appropriately.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • clear, detailed session plan • time was well-managed throughout session, as was pace and rigour. Some learners did begin to drift a little towards the end • group-work also well-planned and well-managed • generally, trainer managed rather than dictated the learning process.
2. Uses variety of teaching/learning approaches that involve learners appropriately.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • good question & answer techniques which involved all learners • learners were engaged and challenged • good use of OHP • all learners involved during group work • individual learners contributed well to the group presentations.
3. Provides appropriate assessment and feedback on learners' performance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • trainer displayed good listening skills during question & answer sessions and responded carefully to each learner's comments • each group received feedback on their contribution to the whole task • allowed time at each stage for any additional questions.
4. Responds appropriately to individual learners' needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • trainer showed an awareness of individual learner's ability to question and answer orally and handled the process sympathetically • some learners stayed at the end of the session and were given further clarification of the work.
5. Has productive rapport with learners, and promotes successful interaction between all learners.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • trainer maintained an excellent learning environment throughout the session; obviously well-respected by learners • excellent style of individual questioning; sympathetic, yet challenging • good use of individual praise/affirmation.
6. Uses resources and environment to contribute to learning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • trainer used the room well, including the limited space for group work.
Overall assessment	1 =
Signed by observer	
Trainer's comments on this report	
Signed	Date



Example of a training session observation report for a Grade 4 session

Training Unit	Date & time of observation
Trainer B	Basic skills session
Observer	Venue
Criteria	Comments
1. Trainer structures, plans and manages the learning experience appropriately.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • session plan needed some indication of session aim, timescale and most importantly, learner activity • trainer generally 'doing all the work'. Expectation of learner mainly limited to listening rather than thinking.
2. Uses variety of teaching/learning approaches that involve learners appropriately.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • too much reading from handout. Ask or challenge learners rather than simply telling them • particularly with such a small group some opportunities missed for group work and/or brainstorming which could have drawn from learners' own prior knowledge or experience, e.g. where to look for job opportunities, what motivates people at work?
3. Provides appropriate assessment and feedback on learners' performance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • more directed questions and answers needed in order to check that individual learning is taking place • when commenting on potentially overdue assignments, ask whether there are any problems.
4. Responds appropriately to individual learners' needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • trainer showed good awareness of individuals when they volunteered contributions • on occasions the rest of the members of the class were not engaged when one individual was talking at length.
5. Has productive rapport with learners, and promotes successful interaction between all learners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • good atmosphere generally in group and good rapport between trainer and individual learners • individuals not given opportunities to share experiences with one another, e.g. job interviews.
6. Uses resources and environment to contribute to learning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • despite large room and small group, learners grouped nicely together and near the front • the OHP used at the start of the session was difficult to read and dismissed quickly.
Overall assessment	4
Signed by observer	
Trainer's comments on this report	
Signed	Date

Example 4

The following is an example of how an observation sheet for a learning support session might be completed.

Preparation	Comments
1. Has the trainer arrived in advance of the session and prepared the room?	<i>Yes – all folders complete and ready for learners to pick up as they come in.</i>
2. Does each learner have a learning plan with clear, measurable goals?	<i>Learning plan in place. Goals not easily measurable.</i>
3. Do the learner's learning goals relate to the learner's current aims?	<i>Yes – clearly linked to occupational area.</i>
Content of the work	
4. Does each piece of work offered to the learner have a clear purpose linked to his or her learning goal?	<i>Not always – some goals for English not tightly enough linked.</i>
5. Does the learner understand this purpose?	<i>Not always – some work straight through what they are doing.</i>
6. Is each piece of work relevant to the learner in terms of content and linked to the learner's needs?	<i>Work is all adult and relevant – all linked to needs but as above not always tightly enough linked to goals or vocational area.</i>
7. Is each piece of work clearly presented or photocopied?	<i>Yes</i>
8. Does the trainer give clear explanations of learning points?	<i>Yes</i>
External accreditation	
9. Is each learner working for an appropriate externally accredited certificate?	<i>Yes – some are working very slowly for Wordpower. Most working for NVQ amenity horticulture</i>
10. If not, are the reasons for not aiming for a certificate consistent with the learner's personal aims?	<i>Yes – e.g. learner needing specific writing tasks for work.</i>
11. Is each learner clear about how the certificates will be assessed?	<i>Yes</i>

Progress	Comments
12. Are learners achieving their personal targets?	<i>Spelling goals not always being achieved.</i>
13. If not, why not?	<i>Regular system not always being used.</i>
Record-keeping	
14. Are the blue weekly record sheets informative about the learner's progress?	<i>Insufficient comment</i>
15. Are the blue sheets completed by the learner and trainer together?	<i>Learners do write on the sheets but tend to write 'done' with no comment.</i>
16. Are the progress reviews completed appropriately?	Yes
17. Is all relevant organisational documentation completed?	Yes
18. Are the reasons for non-attendance kept in the register?	Yes
Relationship within the group	
19. Does the trainer relate comfortably to all learners?	<i>Yes – good atmosphere in the room. Learners anxious to praise trainer's helpfulness.</i>
20. Does the trainer listen to the learners and attempt to analyse reasons for difficulties?	<i>Yes – very good listening leading to explanations – need to use analysis to link to materials.</i>
21. Do learners in the group relate comfortably to each other?	<i>All work separately but buzzes of conversation.</i>
22. Does the trainer end the session appropriately with time to take leave and discuss any outstanding points?	<i>Bit rushed at the end. Queue of learners. Worth encouraging learners to begin to finish a bit earlier.</i>

Example 4 (continued)

Volunteers	Comments
23. Does the trainer manage the volunteer's time well?	<i>Volunteer is new and not yet clear about role.</i>
24. Is the volunteer clear what he or she has to do?	<i>Trainer did explain but needs time.</i>
25. Is there any discussion with the volunteer before or after the session?	<i>Discussion before the session. Afterwards no time.</i>
Advice and guidance	
26. Are learners aware of facilities available to them in the training centre?	<i>Yes – but session was at horticulture unit site so not easy to access main centre's facilities.</i>
Equal opportunities	
27. Does the trainer make sure that equal opportunities are respected through the resources used, the treatment of each individual and group session management?	<i>All individuals treated well. Materials adult and appropriate. Atmosphere of mutual respect throughout.</i>

Observer's signature

Trainer's signature

Date

cc: Observer, Trainer, Manager

Example 5



This example shows an action plan that has been completed following observation of training and learning.

Action plan completed by trainer following an observation

Following observation of my group, I plan to:

1. Ensure that each piece of work is tightly linked to the learner's learning goals.
2. Make learning goals more measurable.
3. Reduce number and simplify learning goals on learning plans.
4. Encourage more learners to do regular spelling practice, using the yellow sheets and encourage volunteers to use them too.
5. Remind volunteers of what needs to be put on the record sheets. Need to comment on achievement and on further work needed.

Following observation of this group, the basic skills co-ordinator plans to:

1. Talk to the senior manager about 'new' computer for the resource room used by the group.

Signed

TrainerOrganiser

Date.....



Characteristics of Good Practice

Basic Skills Quality Initiative

Although generic principles of good practice are relevant to basic skills provision, there are additional characteristics of good practice which are specific to it. The following table shows how the criteria used to monitor the quality of training and learning in one organisation have been adjusted for the purposes of monitoring the quality of basic skills provision.



Teaching observation – criteria for basic skills

Provider criteria	What this section means for basic skills provision	Evidence – what we will be looking for
<p>Trainer structures, plans and manages the learning experience appropriately</p> <p>This relates to what you do in advance of, during and after the session to ensure your time with the learner is effective. It will include both the process of identifying needs that you went through with the learner at the start of their programme, as well as what you will be planning for this specific session.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - initial assessment and identification - of skills, of needs, of learning styles, of fears and hopes - planning a programme to meet those needs - preparing an adult learning environment - time management - records and register 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - checklists, goal sheets, notes of discussions, assessment exercises - learning programme/support plan, scheme of work, standards, equipment, activities or materials identified in advance, session/session plans or notes, individual plans or notes - materials/equipment ready, appropriate seating/positioning, control of noise/light as appropriate, liaison with other staff as appropriate - balance between sticking to the plan and responding to the learning process, i.e. coping with or even using the unpredicted. - completed fully and accurately.
<p>Uses variety of teaching/learning approaches that involve learners appropriately</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - variety of teaching styles – explaining, demonstrating or modelling, discussing, questioning, eliciting, ILT 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - a range of approaches being used within each observed session.
<p>Provides appropriate assessment and feedback on learner's performance</p> <p>For all of the sessions observed, this will relate to formative assessment. Sometimes it will also cover summative assessment.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - checking progress - checking satisfaction - setting assessment tasks - feedback - verification/moderation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - progress reviews - discussion of learning with each learner - seeking feedback from learner - student evaluation - assessment exercises in learners' folders - checking work and written feedback

Example 1 (continued)

Provider criteria	What this section means for basic skills provision	Evidence – what we will be looking for
<p>Responds appropriately to individual learners' needs</p> <p>Not a special category for us as most of what we do is individual but will relate to needs arising from a disability or a learning difficulty.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - referral to and liaison with learning support - adapting teaching practice to suit needs - working with support workers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - records discussion with learning support workers about learner needs - handouts, positioning, voice, language used, board work etc. - joint planning, liaison, keeping support worker informed, role explained to rest of group.
<p>Has productive rapport with learners and promotes successful interaction between all learners</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - learner participation - learner autonomy - attendance patterns - peer support amongst learners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - learners joining in, answering questions, asking questions, concentrating, not waiting to be told - learners working unaided, choosing materials freely, keeping their own records - regular attendance where appropriate staying long enough for it to have an 'effect' - mutual help, attitudes to newcomers.
<p>Uses resources and environment to contribute to learning</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - range of resources used - high-quality materials - smooth handling of equipment - materials at right level and in relevant context for learners' needs - taking responsibility for the learning environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - not only paper-based – includes IT, video, audio, graphic, adult, real - quality of layout, photocopying, collating, etc - equipment ready, that works, that you know how to use! - level and contextualisation of ideas, language, amount of text, images - trying to keep the space tidy, light enough, quiet enough etc.

Using Information from Session Observations to Improve Quality



Basic Skills Quality Initiative

In order to ensure that procedures for observing training and learning result in improvements in the quality of sessions, providers need to make sure that the information gathered from session observations is used effectively by different staff within the establishment.

The following example outlines the different ways one provider uses the information gathered from session observations.



Example 1

In one organisation, information from session observations is used for the following purposes.

To improve training delivery and learning through feedback to individual on- and off-the-job trainers

- According to the protocol for the observation process, feedback should take place within two days and should be for a minimum of 15-20 minutes.
- Feedback must include **evidence** for comments made. For example, if it is stated that learners' work does not link sufficiently tightly to their learning goals or the learners' assessed needs, examples must be shown to illustrate this.
- Each off-the-job trainer will have an individual action plan agreed at the end of the feedback session and monitored through appraisal.
- On-the-job trainers will be offered guidance and training courses to develop their training skills.

To improve training delivery and learning through discussion with all basic skills trainers

The following are extracts from minutes of a meeting of trainers supporting learners on individualised programmes.

General feedback from observations

- there is a need to tighten the goals on some short-term learning plans; they must be measurable
don't write Improve spelling
do write e.g. learn 20 spellings in six weeks
- targets on spelling programmes should relate to the learners' actual needs and the tasks they need to perform; ensure all words are relevant
- on accredited courses there is a need to be strict about meeting the performance criteria and not providing any help on assessed tasks
- accreditation should be offered to as many learners as possible; however, care should be taken that the qualification units do not become the plan
- worksheets must have a clear purpose; a worksheet may be topical but make sure it has a clear aims linked to the learner's learning goals
- there were a few examples of poor-quality worksheets being used
- in the comments section of the record sheets trainers need to be specific. 'More practice needed next week'. 'Revise in six weeks'. 'Completely understood' etc.
- make sure learners are stimulated and encouraged to 'stretch themselves'. Their aim should be to achieve and move on.



To improve training and learning through the identification of resource needs

Environmental aspects outside the control of the trainer are noted on the form. These can be identified by the observer or the trainer being observed. Trainer comments:

'Since more learners have joined the group from January, the class is starting to become cramped.'

'Several learners would like to word-process their work but no word-processors are available.'

Action points stated on the observation form also include action from the observer. e.g. in relation to the above example:

- request new room at next staff meeting
- ask IT resources manager if any word-processors could be placed in the room – e.g. old ones being replaced – or if there is any funding available for laptops.

To feed into the self-assessment report

- the profile of grades from observations is fed into the self-assessment report
- strengths and weaknesses in the provision are identified through the observations and recorded in the self-assessment report

e.g. strength – all learners have an individual learning plan linked to their personal learning goals

weakness – insufficient use of IT as an alternative medium for training and learning.

To feed into the self-assessment action plan

e.g. linked to the above:

- request more IT resources for basic skills provision
- provide staff development in IT for basic skills trainers.

Example 1 (continued)

To feed into the staff development action plan

e.g. the following is the staff development programme set up following one round of training session observation.

Jan – March	Setting achievable goals
April – July	Reviewing Wordpower (Held regularly to keep consistency on standards).
April – July	Teaching spelling
August – October	Working with beginner level learners (Need arose during discussion following observations).

To feed into the business plan

Requests for resources, if not immediately available, are included in the business plan for basic skills so that they will be considered in the next annual allocation of resources. This covers requests for staffing, accommodation, IT and paper-based resources.



Most providers now use questionnaires to seek learners' views about the quality of their training programmes and the facilities provided within the establishment. The information gained from these helps the provider to identify the changes needed to improve the quality of programmes and the services provided for learners. The following section includes examples of questionnaires which have been developed by some providers specifically for use with basic skills learners. Some information is also provided about the ways in which the feedback has been used to improve the provision.

Example 1

In one establishment it was agreed with the quality assurance manager that basic skills learners should not be asked to complete the questionnaire which had been designed for use with vocational learners, because:

- the reading level of the questionnaire is too high for many basic skills learners
- the time taken to complete the questionnaire is not justified for part-time programmes.

A separate questionnaire was therefore devised for completion by basic skills learners in June. If learners need help with reading, the questionnaire is completed with the aid of support assistants.

The responses were analysed and a report included in the programme review.

Basic skills quality questionnaire			
Please shade in the boxes which apply to you.			
Group			
Spelling/writing	<input type="checkbox"/>	Numeracy	<input type="checkbox"/>
one-to-one	<input type="checkbox"/>	Short Course	<input type="checkbox"/>
Training centre			
.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Basic skills help given			
At workplace	<input type="checkbox"/>	Off-the-job	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other details			
Male	<input type="checkbox"/>	Female	<input type="checkbox"/>
How long have you been getting help with basic skills?			
Less than 3 months	<input type="checkbox"/>		
3-6 months	<input type="checkbox"/>		
More than 6 months	<input type="checkbox"/>		

Example 1 (continued)



	Yes	No
1. It was easy to find out about the support.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. I was given an interview in reasonable time after my enquiry at a convenient training centre.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. The interview before I began getting help was useful.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. I was given clear information about the basic skills help before I joined.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. I had to go on a waiting list.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. I was able to get support at a time and place which suited me.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. When I started I was given enough information to find my way around.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. Starting basic skills support was quite straightforward.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. I have been given help on how to learn.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. The room I am taught in is good enough.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. I use materials in the centre's learning resource room.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12. There is a good relationship between trainers and learners.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13. I can see that I am making progress.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14. The handouts and materials are good.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
15. I am learning what I want to learn.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
16. The course has done what I wanted/expected.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
17. I understand the way my work is marked.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
18. I know that I can work for a certificate if I want to.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
19. I am working towards a certificate.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
20. I understand what I have to do to get a certificate.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
21. I would recommend basic skills support to someone else.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
22. I know where I can progress to.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
23. I know where to find information on other training.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Please use this space below to write any other comments you might like to make.

Action taken from the results

The following were identified as action points following one analysis.

1. Marketing and publicity

15% of learners said they had difficulty finding out about the basic skills support.

- Action
- meet with recruitment and guidance staff to improve information available
 - meet with vocational training staff to improve understanding.

- Outcome
- changes made to the way information leaflets were displayed
 - recruitment and guidance staff briefed regularly at all training centres
 - some vocational staff now trained to deliver basic skills support
 - survey following year found 8% of learners had difficulties finding out about classes.

2. Progression

11% of learners did not know where they could progress from their basic skills support and 1% did not know where to find out further information.

- Action
- run staff development courses for all staff on progression routes
 - the leaflet on progression routes to be updated and redistributed.

- Outcome
- staff development courses run
 - leaflets updated
 - 10% still did not know where to progress – reason may be learners' own uncertainty.

3. Use of learning materials and central resources room

The questionnaire identified limited use of the central learning resources.

- Action
- make sure all learners are fully informed at induction of the facilities available
 - make sure all trainers keep learners informed of the facilities available.

- Outcome
- monitoring system set up to ensure all learners given induction information
 - discussion with learners indicated lack of desire to use central learning materials in the central resources. Lack of use of learning resources to be addressed further.

Example 2



This example shows a revised questionnaire for the collection of learners' views on the basic skills learning support service because one provider's initial questionnaires had not produced sufficiently detailed information to be of practical use in improving basic skills learning support. This was because:

- the limited space on the questionnaires and the number of areas to be covered meant that only a few questions could be included on the learning support service
- the information on the questionnaire was read through an optical mark reader.

Although this was essential for the rapid collation of the data it meant that questions had to be phrased in terms of 'yes' or 'no'. It did not allow for the inclusion of open-ended questions inviting comments from learners.

Example 2 (continued)

Aim: To collect more detailed information on the accessibility of the learning support service and on the delivery of learning support.

Proposed basic skills learning support questionnaire:

The questions proposed for this questionnaire were as follows:

Section 1 Code to identify learner's vocational training programme

Section 2 Awareness of the basic skills learning support service

- | | Yes | No |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Do you know that there is a basic skills learning support service? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. You may tick more than one box. | | |
| Have you seen information about the basic skills learning support service: | | |
| • on a leaflet | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • on a notice board | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • another place – please say where. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. Did you have an interview for your training programme? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| If 'Yes', were you told about the basic skills learning support? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. During induction (at the start of your course) did your trainer: | | |
| a. explain about basic skills learning support | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| b. show you a leaflet? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. Have you contacted the basic skills learning support team? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| If yes, please go to Section 3. | | |
| If no, please go to Section 4. | | |



Section 3 Response to interest in the basic skills learning support service

You may tick more than one box for each statement

Yes No

6. I discussed my interest in basic skills learning support:
- when I first contacted the training centre Yes No
 - on my application form Yes No
 - at my interview Yes No
 - with my vocational trainer. Yes No

7. I contacted basic skills learning support:
- myself Yes No
 - through my careers officer Yes No
 - through my parents/friend/family Yes No
 - through my trainer Yes No
 - as a result of my initial assessment Yes No
 - by completing a leaflet. Yes No

8. If you wanted one, did you have a confidential meeting with a basic skills learning support trainer to discuss your needs? Yes No

9. If Yes, how long did it take to arrange from the time you requested the meeting?
- | Number of weeks | | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1-2 | 3-4 | 5-6 | 7-8 | longer |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

10. Did you find the discussion useful? Yes No

11. Did you agree/decide to attend basic skills learning support? Yes No

12. Which type of support are you receiving?
- workshop or small group work Yes No
 - one-to-one session Yes No
 - support during NVQ training Yes No
 - a specialist assessment e.g. dyslexia Yes No
 - special help with assessments (e.g. extra time, taped evidence etc.) Yes No
 - loan of equipment Yes No
 - other Yes No
- please state: _____

Example 2 (continued)

You may tick more than one box for each statement

	Yes	No	
13. Which of these statements apply to you?			
• basic skills learning support has helped me stay on the training programme	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
• basic skills learning support has made me more confident in my work	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
• basic skills learning support has helped me improve my written work	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
• basic skills learning support has fitted into my timetable	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
• basic skills learning support has helped me understand my NVQ assessments	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
• I have a good relationship with my basic skills learning support trainer	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
14. If you have answered No to any of the questions can you say why you feel this way?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	Yes	No	N/A
15. Attendance at basic skills learning support (tick one answer only)			
I attended:			
• every session	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• sometimes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• gave up	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• never attended	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Section 4 Improvement of the service

Please tell us how we can improve the learning support service we offer to learners.

Effective arrangements for reviewing and evaluating provision are essential elements in continuous quality improvement. It is only by reflecting on the strengths and weaknesses of programmes that improvements can be made. In many organisations, procedures for reviewing and evaluating basic skills programmes are not as well developed as they are for other programmes. External verifiers' reports have often been the only evidence which has been used to make judgements about the quality of the provision. However, where provision is good, staff have developed rigorous procedures and established clear criteria for reviewing and evaluating programmes.

The following section describes the procedures developed by different providers for reviewing and evaluating their programmes. It outlines the different elements of these procedures and describes how they contribute to the process of self-assessment.

Programme logs are an essential element of programme reviews in one large, multi-site training organisation. The logs and the ways in which they are used within the provider's quality assurance framework are shown in the following example.

Example 1

The use of the programme log in programme review

What is the programme log?

It is the primary source document for data collection, analysis and action planning. It is central to the quality assurance framework.

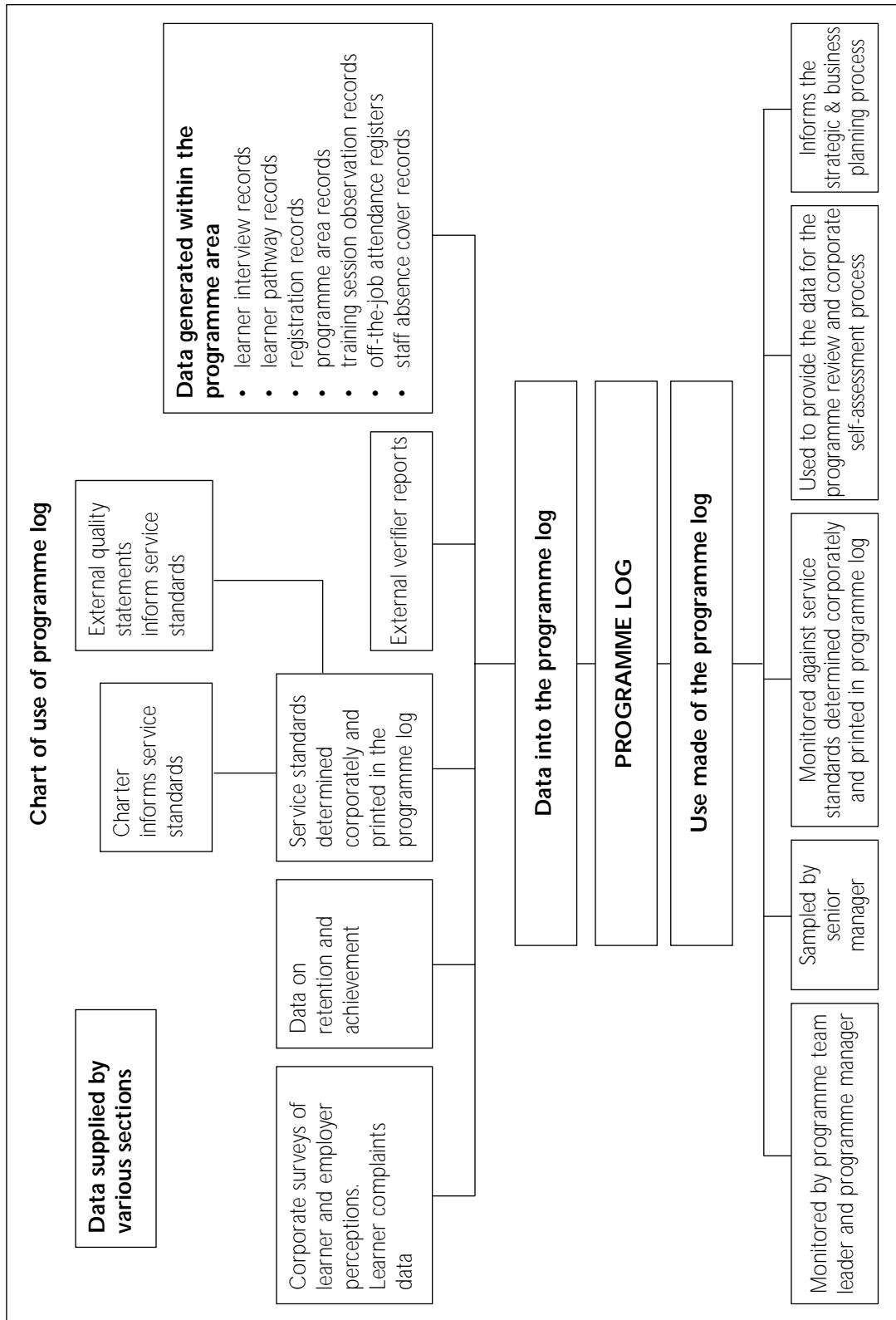
How the programme log fits into the data collection process

Programme logs form part of a course file which holds all relevant documents relating to the management of a learning programme.

Course files include:

- the programme log
- learner perception survey results
- programme team minutes
- assessment plan/calendar
- internal verification plan – action points for internal verification meeting and record and results of sampling
- external moderator/verifier reports and action plans
- standards and schemes of work
- other, e.g. timetable, handbooks, work experience details, etc.

Example 1 (continued)



Structure of the programme log

The log is divided into 5 sections

Section 1

Details key outcomes from the previous 2 financial years and the targets for the current financial year under the following headings:

Performance

- registrations
- % learner number target met
- % retention (in-year)
- % attendance at 1 November
- % attendance at 1 February
- % attendance at 15 May
- % achievement of individual learning plan (completers)
- % of completers progressing with the organisation
- % of completers progressing into further or higher education
- % of completers progressing to employment
- % of completers progressing where destination unknown.

Section 1 must be completed by the programme team prior to the start of each programme or at beginning of financial year if roll-on/roll-off.

Section 2

Provides planning prompts for the training programme team to consider prior to and at the start of the training programme (or at beginning of financial year if roll-on/roll-off).

Areas covered include:

- a description of the learner target group
- promotion strategy
- intended learning outcomes/qualifications
- staffing needs
- learning materials
- schedule of training team meetings.

This data is recorded as it becomes available and is monitored at the end of the entry and induction phase against the service standards.

An action plan is completed at the end of this process.

Example 1 (continued)

Section 3

This contains progress reviews for the end of each quarter. Issues and action points are recorded and signed off by the manager responsible for this area of work.

Section 4

This lists the corporate standards and, if in existence, programme area standards which form the basis of the evaluation (self-assessment).

Section 5

This provides pro-forma for self-assessment and action planning.

Application of the programme log to basic skills provision

A separate programme log is kept for:

- basic skills primary provision
- learning support – covering:
 - basic skills learning support
 - ESOL
 - disability learning support.

The provision of basic skills as part of integrated provision is also addressed in the programme logs kept by vocational training teams.

Effects of the process on the quality of provision

Issues identified	Action planned	Outcomes
Accommodation – lack of base room on all training sites in which resources may be kept readily available for basic skills students.	Issue taken to senior management team and recorded in self-assessment report.	Allocation of resource base for basic skills on all main training sites.
Achievement against primary learning goals which are not externally accredited is not recorded on the management information system.	Meeting with Training Administrator to develop means of recording achievement on the system.	Forms and systems agreed – still being piloted.
Remark made from training team meeting of need for tighter follow-up of all learners who do not attend for 2 consecutive weeks without explanation.	Action required from all trainers, part time and permanent, to follow up absence. Choice of action by telephone or letter. Results of contact to be recorded in learner's personal file.	Routine letter made available to all trainers to send out. Learners' attendance improved.
Hourly paid trainers unhappy about attending team meetings in their own time.	Request payment for hourly paid trainers for attendance at meetings.	Agreed payment for 2 hours for each quarterly meeting.

In another large establishment all programme areas are required to produce a position paper each October. The paper describes the quality of the provision which has been reviewed and is used to inform planning.

The following guidelines have been produced to help staff produce position papers.

Example 1

Purpose

The purpose of the position paper is to:

- review the past year and make comments on the performance and achievements of the section
- outline the planned developments for the current year
- provide an action plan to be used by the section to achieve quality improvements in service and delivery
- to be used as a working document throughout the year.

Position papers form part of the establishment's planning and quality cycle. They will be used as follows:

- as the basis for ensuring that the organisation is continually improving the quality of service and delivery
- by line managers as the basis for their annual business plans
- to set establishment-wide targets for retention and achievement
- to update the organisation's self-assessment report
- by the senior management team in their annual review of retention and achievement
- to update the establishment's strategic plan and financial forecast
- as the basis for the establishment-wide staff development plan.

Before you start

Make sure that you involve all members of the team and your line manager in the preparation of the position paper.

Have available:

- last year's position paper and action plan
- the establishment's self-assessment report

- programme end of year review minutes and notes
- a completed training and learning assessment pack
- details of any programme developments that related specifically to your area and need to be included in your planned developments
- a copy of the training and learning policy
- inclusive learning support materials
- the organisation's annual corporate objectives.

Review

1. Self-assessment of training and learning

Last year all programme teams completed a self-assessment workpack and allocated a grade for each of the programmes they offered (e.g. New Deal, Work-based Learning for Adults, Foundation Modern Apprenticeships, Advanced Modern Apprenticeships, Life Skills, Other Youth Training).

These grades were then aggregated to provide an overall grade for the vocational area.

This year, programme teams are asked to complete the exercise again and to consider their performance against the self-assessment they completed last year.

When the workpacks have been completed you need to summarise in the position paper the key strengths and weaknesses that have arisen out of this exercise. For example, there may be an improvement for assessment planning, no movement on the effectiveness of reviews and a downward trend in session planning – all of which should be addressed in your action plan.

Please note that it is as important to highlight improvements and build on these in the action plan as it is to highlight areas to be improved.

2. Review of the previous position paper and action plan

Take each of the action points from last year's position paper and comment on whether you and your team completed the actions and the effect this has had on provision and delivery. For example, if you had an action point to extend the range of assessment evidence for a particular NVQ was this achieved and if so did it produce the desired effects? If it was not achieved, why not? Was it that the timescale was too ambitious or the qualifications were not available – or was it that staff were not identified to lead the developments through?

3. Retention and achievement

Comment on the position of the section in relation to retention and achievement. For example, are trends up/down? Did you employ specific strategies to improve? Were these successful? How does performance compare with national averages?

Example 1 (continued)

4. Grading

Enter here your grade for the section. If the grade is higher or lower than last year you must outline why this is so.

In grading the programme area please note the following:

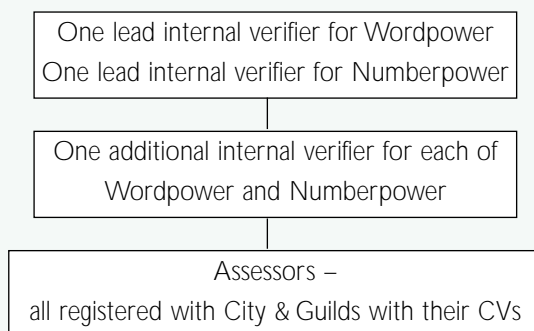
- if there have been improvements have these improvements been in place long enough to justify a shift in grade?
- grade ones have to be supported by consistently high levels of retention and achievement – above the national averages
- if weaknesses have been addressed has this resulted in an overall improvement in quality?
- have you given equal consideration to your strengths or have you focused too much on your weaknesses?
- are the strengths you have identified 'real' strengths or could they be considered as normal practice?

Verification procedures are used to promote consistency in standards and, as such, are important elements of a quality assurance framework. The following example describes the processes used by one provider to ensure consistency of standards in two programmes.

Example 1

Process to ensure consistency of standards and approach in Wordpower and Numberpower

Internal verifier and assessors



The lead internal verifiers verify the majority of the folders. Their own candidates' portfolios are verified by the additional internal verifier.

Assessors

All assessors are either accredited with D32 and D33 or with the Initial Certificate in Teaching Basic Skills. They will also have another teaching qualification or equivalent qualification. Volunteer tutors do not assess learners' work for Wordpower and Numberpower but pass work for assessment onto their fully qualified support trainer.

Example 1 (continued)

Training of Assessors

All assessors new to Wordpower and Numberpower attend an initial training programme.

This covers the following areas:

- the importance of teaching and practising skills and tasks before competence in the task is assessed
- practice in identifying the skills needed to complete a particular task
- the importance of the assessed work being the independent work of the learner
- the importance of performance criteria and how to use them
- practice in assessing pieces of work against performance criteria.

Regular meetings of assessors

All assessors attend one meeting a year which is dedicated to issues on Wordpower and Numberpower. The meeting focuses on borderline pieces of work, issues about interpreting performance criteria, suggestions on selecting and creating materials to meet particular elements and ensuring consistency in assessment. In addition as all assessors are paid trainers they also attend trainer's meetings quarterly. Wordpower and/or Numberpower may be an agenda item at these meetings.

Regular meetings of internal verifiers

The internal verifiers are also the individual training centre organisers for primary basic skills provision. They meet on a fortnightly basis and any internal verification (IV) issues are placed on this agenda. This meets the organisation's requirement of at least 5 IV meetings per year.

Contact between assessors and the internal verifiers

This is the key to the maintenance of consistency in standards and approach.

New assessors are given on-going guidance on the work they are offering and assessing.

Experienced assessors seek advice on any pieces of work about which they are uncertain.

Small group discussions between internal verifiers and assessors take place on any borderline work.

The principal internal verifier keeps records of the names of all candidates currently registered and working for Wordpower and Numberpower and the expected date of completion.

Contact between internal verifier and the external verifier

Any areas of doubt that cannot be resolved by the organisation's staff are posted to the external verifier, e.g. the level of spelling error acceptable from a dyslexic learner.

Observation of assessor

All assessors are observed annually by the internal verifier. (This observation can take place as part of the organisation's Assessment of Training and Learning Process.)

The actual internal verification

The organisation's guideline on sample size for internal verification is 10%. The sampling framework for the organisation also requires that every unit, every assessor and every candidate should be internally verified. In practice this has meant that the sample size for internal verification is closer to 50%. Internal verification should be on-going not on completion of the award.

The use made of the external verifier's reports and visits

A copy of the external verifier's report is sent to the senior manager responsible for basic skills to monitor any action points. Copies are also kept in the programme log.

The principal internal verifier for each of Wordpower and Numberpower writes a report of the external verifier's visit which is copied to all assessors.



Example 2

The following gives extracts from the reports of the external verifier which are used in the process of quality assurance.

Extracts from reports following the visit of the external verifier

Wordpower

Meeting all p.c.s in an element

If one p.c. is not met in a particular piece of work, e.g. inclusion of an image is not relevant; this p.c. must be met by another of the pieces of work included for this element.

If a gap in evidence continues use 'what if' questioning to establish the learners' ability to meet the performance criteria (pc), e.g. Unit 301.E1.3 Refer to instructions to carry out an activity pc 'If the outcome is not achieved, check the instructions and identify and report the reason.'

'What if...?' questions can be used if all instructions are always carried out accurately and the end product achieved. Another example when 'what if...?' questions can be used is for reading elements where the pc says.

'Identify the meaning of unfamiliar words, phrases and image accurately.'

If the learner knew all the words, etc. the assessor should ask 'What would you have done if you had not known all the words in the text?'

Level 2

The portfolios should not just be one topic. Even if a learner on a vocational training programme is building a portfolio, different aspects should be taken.

Forms should be complex, e.g. accident report form or job application form with free writing involved.

Key factors in the verification process which improve and maintain the quality of the delivery of Wordpower and Numberpower

- good initial training
- the regular availability of the internal verifiers to assessors for discussion of areas of uncertainty
- the regular monitoring of assessors who are new to Wordpower or Numberpower
- the circulation of written comments to all assessors and to individual assessors both following the external verifier's visit and following the internal verifier's verification of portfolios
- the high level of sampling keeps the internal verifier closely in touch with all aspects of delivery and assessment. This is particularly important in relation to the materials being used and the assessment feedback for the learners
- the organisation's allowance of time to the internal verifiers to carry out this work.

Example 3

The notes on internal moderation provided for staff in another organisation are shown below.



Internal moderation notes for basic skills programmes

Aims

- to standardise assessment across basic skills provision
- to review assessment procedures and documentation
- to support development of staff and programme.

Procedure

Internal moderation meetings will take place at least twice a year.

It is the responsibility of trainers to bring at least three pieces of assessed work for each qualification aim.

Forms will be used to document moderation.

For each piece of assessed work the trainer should complete sections 1, 2 and 3 before submitting assessed work for moderation.

Assessed work will be moderated by colleagues who will complete the remaining sections and return the form to the trainer. Comments should be constructive with suggestions for improvement as appropriate.

Any issues regarding quality of assessment should be referred to the internal verifier.

The internal verifier will retain copies of all forms.

Sampling will be recorded by entering the initials of the moderator and date of moderation on the sampling overview form.



Example 3 (continued)

One of the forms used in the process is shown below.

Basic skills internal moderation form	
1. Title:	2. Trainer:
3. Evidence required:	4. Does the assessed work meet the evidence requirements?
5. Learning objectives:	6. Does the assessed work show that learning objectives have been met?
7. Feedback Is there evidence of feedback for the learner? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Is feedback appropriate? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> N/A <input type="checkbox"/> Is there evidence that the learner has responded to feedback? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> N/A <input type="checkbox"/>	
8. Level Is the assessed work: At/Above/Below the level you would expect for the programme?	
9. Documentation Are there clear records of the individual achievement? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	
Additional comments	
Moderated by:	Date:
Verified by:	Date:

Example 4

One work-based learning provider uses the following procedure for internal verification.



Internal Verification

Purpose:

- To ensure that all assessments are valid, reliable, sufficient and consistent.
- To advise and support assessors.
- To monitor assessment and record internal verification.

Procedure:

- Collect the evidence awaiting internal verification (for all candidates not just those that are to be sampled).
- Enter the candidate name, assessor and evidence presented on the Internal Verification Summary – N110.
- Establish the sample size applicable to the assessor/qualification combination in question (from the previous IV Summary, if possible) and record at top of the IV Summary – N110.
- Identify on the summary the planned sample for internal verification.
- Internally verify the sample and complete the IV Report – N109a/b. If a unit does not meet the standard return it to the assessor for correction. Verify another unit for that candidate and include another example of the original unit from a different candidate in the sample.
- Record: verification, assessor and verifier methods used and the outcome onto the IV Summary.
- Review the sample size for each assessor and record at the bottom of the IV Summary – N110.
- Hold assessor and internal verifier meetings as required (min. six-monthly) to discuss: development areas and standardisation of examples of sampled evidence, External Verifier feedback and action points, revision of standards and procedures, training needs, etc. Minutes of these meeting must be produced and retained with the internal verification paperwork. A copy must go to the Manager/Co-ordinator.

Guidance:

- All assessors should be observed conducting a live assessment twice a year.
- For new assessors or assessors who are assessing the qualification for the first time, at least 50% of every portfolio must be internally verified until all the units have been internally verified and the IV is satisfied that the standard is being consistently met.
- The percentage of portfolios sampled and the percentage of units internally verified may then gradually decrease as confidence permits.
- The percentage can drop to a minimum of 20% of portfolios, 10% of units for an assessor who is proved to be meeting the standard consistently.

Example 4 (continued)

- This must increase if problems are encountered during internal or external verification.
- Internal verification must seek to cover all units in each assessor/qualification combination in a systematic way.
- The Internal Verification records and copies of candidate's Cumulative Assessment Record must be retained at the Centre for two years after the certificate has been requested from the awarding body.

Internal Verification Report

Candidate: _____ **Qualification:** _____
Assessor: _____ **Main unit being assessed:** _____
Internal verifier: _____ **Date:** _____

Did the assessor: Please tick n/a, yes or no. Reference 'no' responses to specific evidence and comment, if appropriate:

- Explain the assessment process to the candidate Yes No
- Use only the specified performance criteria N/A Yes No
- Only use simulations/tests in line with evidence requirements N/A Yes No
- Use sufficient questions to infer competent performance N/A Yes No
- Were the questions; clear, open and non-leading N/A Yes No
- Were the questions; relevant, justifiable N/A Yes No
- Encourage the candidate to identify the relevant information Yes No
- Encourage the individual to ask questions Yes No
- Confirm success as soon as sufficient evidence obtained N/A Yes No
- Give feedback as soon as practicable Yes No
- Remain as unobtrusive as possible Yes No
- Use the specified assessment documentation Yes No

Questions for the candidate: _____ Candidate signature: _____

- Did the assessor:
- Arrange the assessment in advance with you and your supervisor Yes No
 - Explain, in advance, the form the assessment would take Yes No
 - Explain, in advance, the criteria on which you would be assessed Yes No
 - Give you enough chance to comment on your own performance Yes No
 - Did you find the feedback constructive Yes No
 - Did you feel the feedback was fair Yes No
 - Are you aware of the Appeals procedure Yes No
 - Was this assessment typical of others you have had Yes No
- Any comment you would like to make about your assessments to-date:

Feedback: Enter the evidence/unit ref, action required, by whom and agreed date (continue overleaf).

Assessor signature _____

Internal verifier signature _____

Example 4 (continued)

Internal Verification Report	
Candidate:	Assessor:
Date:	Internal verifier:
Qualification:	Units verified:
<p>Was the evidence recorded in such a way as to indicate that * had been adequately covered and assessed:</p> <p style="text-align: right; font-size: small;">Please tick yes or no. Reference 'no' responses to specific evidence and comment, if appropriate.</p>	
* performance criteria	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
* range statements	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
* underpinning knowledge	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
<p>Had the assessor ensured that the evidence was:</p>	
Valid	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
Authentic	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
Current	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
Sufficient	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
In line with the specified evidence requirements	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
Used efficiently and adequately cross referenced	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
<p>Did the assessor:</p>	
Interpret the standards correctly and at the appropriate level	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
Use the specified assessment documentation	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
Use a variety of evidence sources	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
Have the necessary skills (relevant experience, D units, etc.)	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
Was the volume of evidence indicative of efficient assessment	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
<p>If present, was the candidate able to:</p>	<p>Candidate signature: _____</p>
Explain the assessment process	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
Explain relationship between the evidence and the performance criteria	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
Did the candidate receive relevant and timely feedback	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
Did the assessor confirm unit success as soon as sufficient evidence obtained	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
<p>Feedback: Enter the evidence/unit ref, action required, by whom and agreed date (continue overleaf).</p>	
Assessor signature	Internal verifier signature

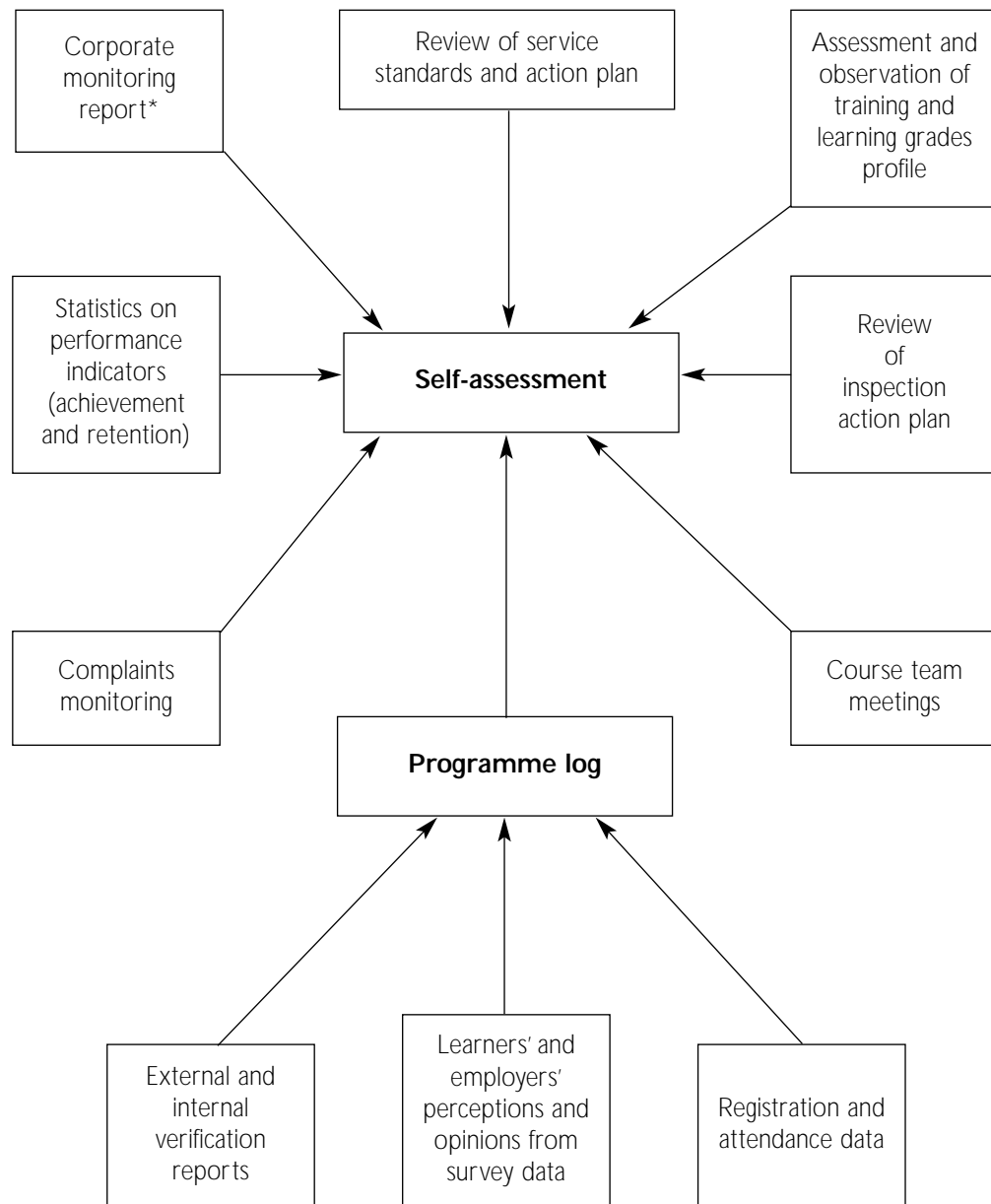


Self-assessment is now a well-established element of programme reviews. In many organisations self-assessment drives quality assurance procedures.

Example 1

The following diagram illustrates the separate elements of one provider's framework for self-assessment.

Framework for self-assessment



*Corporate monitoring = monitoring of training and learning by senior managers. Includes observing sessions, talking to staff and talking to programme managers.

Example 1 (continued)



A description of the procedures used by basic skills staff to assess the quality of basic skills provision follows.

Involvement of basic skills staff in the self-assessment of basic skills discrete provision

A team meeting is held for discrete provision and a team meeting for learning support although many of the staff teach in both areas.

All staff, permanent and part-time hourly paid, are invited to these meetings.

Part-time hourly paid tutors are paid for attendance at one meeting each quarter.

Further meetings are attended in their own time.

On-going process of self-assessment

- individual follow-up meeting to assessment and observation of training and learning (all staff)
- course team meetings with agenda items of EV and IV reports, reviews of enrolment and attendance, reviews of learner survey data, review of performance indicators (all staff)
- quarterly review meetings (managers and training staff representatives).

Writing the self-assessment reports

- information for report collected from all sources listed in the organisation's framework
- team meeting prior to writing includes a discussion of strengths and weaknesses
- discussion of evidence for strengths and weaknesses
- written by manager responsible for basic skills.

Validation of self-assessment reports

- reviewed by staff responsible for organising different areas of basic skills provision
- co-ordinators for basic skills discrete provision
- basic skills staff on permanent contracts.

Also reviewed with senior managers.



Example 1 (continued)

An example of an action plan following self-assessment is given below.

Action plan: Primary provision	
Action	Outcome
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Carry out training for staff on the use of information technology as an aid to learning and assessment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Staff aware of and confident in using information technology as a means of learning and assessment.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Further develop Learning Bases with access to computers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Learning Bases for employability skills and ESOL programmes in place on 3 additional training sites.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase the use of information technology within learning and assessment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Increased usage of information technology evidenced during assessment and observation of training and learning.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop improved systems for recording retention on roll-on, roll-off programmes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Systems developed with learner records to record retention on roll-on programmes, taking account of early completers.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop improved systems for measuring and recording achievement against non-externally accredited primary learning goals. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Systems developed with learner records to define and record achievement.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with recruitment and guidance staff to widen participation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Has led to recruitment in other vocational areas.

Example 2



Another provider has developed the following principles of self-assessment which underpin its self-assessment process.

Ten principles of self-assessment

1. The organisation is committed to quality, equality and achievement in all areas of its work. Without quality the other two lack meaning.
2. The organisation is committed to self-assessment as the primary means of increasing quality.
3. Self-assessment is part of the normal pattern of annual activity and will be supported by resources. It is not a bolt-on exercise.
4. Self-assessment means self-assessment, not being assessed by someone else.
5. Self-assessment means being honest about strengths, weaknesses and areas for improvement and operates in a no blame culture either upwards or downwards.
6. Self-assessment means taking responsibility for the areas you control and attempting to improve them. It operates within the context of the organisation: its organisation, finance and environment.
7. Statements of quality must be based on evidence that can and will be verified by someone outside the team.
8. Evidence must always include feedback from learners or other users.
9. Self-assessment demands action if weaknesses are found: actions which are the responsibility of the team but which are supported by the organisation.
10. Action plans must be SMART: specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, time-constrained. Above all they are the working documents. They are regularly reviewed.



Example 2 (continued)

A description of the provider's self-assessment process follows.

1. Self-assessment reports (SARs) are the key system for assessing and raising the quality of service we offer. They involve all staff within the organisation.
2. Staff in vocational and support teams assess and grade the quality of their service, identify strengths, weaknesses and other improvements needed and provide an action plan for improvement.
3. The organisation's SAR is based, to a large extent, on the reports from training and support teams. The SAR is the base document for inspection and the key document for raising quality across the organisation.
4. The process and timetable for the production of the annual self-assessment report for the organisation is as follows:

July	Each vocational area training team or support area completes its own SAR on the year's work.
September	Each team or area produces its own SAR and action plan as an aggregation of reviews and all the evidence affecting quality that the team has developed throughout the year.
October	Production of draft 'whole establishment' SAR.
November	Presentation of the SAR to Chief Executive. Key issues of quality identified in the SAR inform the planning process for the following year.
February	Teams review implementation of action plans.
March onwards	Strategic plan developed which addresses key issues raised in the SAR.
June-July	Teams review and sign off action plans and produce new SAR on the past year's work.
5. Forms for self-assessment purposes are provided for each team. Guidance is available for their completion.



a. Grading

Each team awards itself a grade which, it feels, best reflects its provision in the previous year. The grades range from 1 to 5 according to the Common Inspection Framework.

b. Progress

A list of all developments that improved the quality of provision in the previous year. This would include the completion of the year's action plan as well as significant changes achieved over the year.

c. Strengths

A numbered list of strengths. For learning areas this would be related to the inspection framework. All strengths need to be specific, evidenced and measurable.

d. Weaknesses

A numbered list of weaknesses or areas which need improvement. This would normally be a file, where it is kept and who is responsible for it.

e. Evidence

The evidence that proves the strength, weakness or other improvement needed. This would normally be a file, where it is kept and who is responsible for it.

f. The action plan

This proposes a response to every identified strength, weakness and other improvement needed. It must be:

- specific targets must be clear
- measurable targets must be capable of verification
- attainable what is put in the action plan must be achievable by the team
- realistic the action plans operate in a specific context
- timed each action needs a target date for its achievement and its review.

6. Verification of SARs

Verification of SARs is the process by which the accuracy, consistency and reliability of the report can be interrogated. Managers interview those responsible for the SAR. They ensure that:

- the previous year's action plan has been achieved
- progress, strengths, weaknesses and other improvements needed are appropriate
- no significant progress, strengths, weaknesses or other improvements needed have been omitted
- there is evidence to support the identified progress, strengths, weaknesses and other improvements needed
- action plans are 'SMART'
- the grade that is awarded is accurate.

■
How has your establishment ensured that its quality assurance procedures are appropriate for basic skills?

■
What arrangements are made to help staff understand their roles in the quality assurance process?

■
How effective are your procedures for monitoring the quality of training and learning?

■
How do you ensure the information gained from session observations is used effectively?

■
How effective is the training you provide for staff on session observation?

■
How do you ensure basic skills learners are able to comment on the services provided by the establishment and the quality of their programmes?

■
How do you ensure that effective use is made of the feedback provided by learners and employers?

■
How might you improve your arrangements for moderation and verification?

■
How effective are your arrangements for self-assessment and action planning?

■



Element 2: Planning for Improvement

The purpose of quality assurance procedures is to improve the quality of the provision. For this to be possible, it is necessary to assess the quality of the provision at a given time, to set the standards it is hoped to achieve, to establish performance indicators to facilitate measurement of progress, and to set realistic but challenging targets for improvement.

Currently, the main performance indicators used by providers are learners' achievements and retention rates. When judging the quality of their provision providers are able to use national benchmarking data to compare their performance with that of similar organisations.

In basic skills provision, not all learners want or need to study for a qualification. For many learners, the achievement of a qualification does not fully reflect the benefit they have gained from their studies. National performance indicators are not currently available for achievement which is expressed in terms of individual competencies or gains in confidence or self-esteem. Nevertheless basic skills staff are keen to establish ways of measuring progress and ensuring that the setting of targets leads to continuous improvements in the quality of the provision.

The following section describes the approaches to the above issues adopted by a number of providers.

As with planning in other programme areas, the process of action-planning in basic skills involves setting targets for performance. In any action plan, the **outcomes** tell us what the provider hopes to achieve, the **actions** tell us how it hopes to achieve it, and the **targets** tell us how it will measure its progress towards its goals and how it will know when it has achieved them.

Setting targets requires thorough knowledge of current performance levels, together with an understanding of what can realistically be achieved in terms of improvements, year-on-year.

Basic skills managers still face difficulties in setting targets for basic skills provision, many associated with fundamental data. This is particularly true of those working in a setting which might involve provision in a number of locations, 'drop-in' workshops as well as longer support programmes, and support integrated with vocational training as well as separate specialist provision. Until recently, statistical information about basic skills across the organisation as a whole was rarely collected or held centrally. A particular issue is the continuing unwillingness of auditors and central management information systems managers to accept that, in this programme area alone, basic skills learning does not have to lead to an externally accredited qualification in order to be funded. A second area of difficulty is the limited number of national benchmarks available to inform the setting of targets. National benchmarks currently exist for only some of the qualifications used in basic skills. Even where they do exist, they may well be relatively meaningless or need careful interpretation; for example, where the practice exists of only entering learners for a qualification when they are sure to succeed. Basic skills targets need to take into account a much

broader consideration of local circumstances, partnerships and needs than targets produced for provision beyond Entry Level and Level 1. For all these reasons, effective target-setting is still problematic for many basic skills providers.

Example

The example which follows shows how a provider goes about setting targets. It sets out the provider's quantitative approach to effective target-setting in its discrete literacy and numeracy sessions below Level 2 for learners who are following vocational courses. The provider describes this as its central provision.

Target-setting for basic skills provision

Process for setting targets

Central provision

Central provision is provision which is offered, through timetabled teaching sessions and workshops and/or 'drop-in' workshop sessions, to all learners who need help in basic skills. Throughout the week there are a number of literacy and numeracy sessions below Level 2. Learners will either attend on a voluntary basis or will be timetabled into sessions by their vocational programme trainer.

Target-setting for this aspect of basic skills provision is undertaken by the basic skills co-ordinator.

Key influences

The key influences when setting targets for central provision are as follows:

- past and current performance
- recruitment patterns for full-time and substantive part-time learners (over 6 hours per week), including New Deal, TEC/local LSC and ESF provision
- the current and projected number of Entry Level learners in the organisation as a whole
- the outcomes of initial assessment.

Example (continued)



The following table gives an example of the targets that have been set for a two-year period.

Target	Current performance	2000/2001	2001/2002
1. Take-up	52%	65%	80%
2. Achievement	35%	65%	75%
3. Attendance	64%	65%	75%
4. Average group size	10	12	16
5. Teaching and learning grade profile	-5%	+5%	+6%

Explanatory notes

- Take-up:** This figure represents the number of learners who have been timetabled into provision against the number of full-time learners on Level 1 and Level 2 provision (excluding students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and ESOL).
- Achievement:** The number of learners who are attending central sessions who achieve a qualification in literacy and/or numeracy below Level 2.
- Attendance:** The average attendance across a 12-month period.
- Average group size:** The average group size for all sessions.
- Teaching and learning grade profile:** Observation of teaching sessions takes place for all staff. The profile of grades awarded across the provision is mapped against national averages (from the Chief Inspector's Annual Report).

Retention is measured through the learner's main programme of study.



Standards

Basic Skills Quality Initiative

Reaching an agreement amongst staff about the standards to be achieved is an important element of improving basic skills provision. The following example describes the process one provider used to set standards for its basic skills learning support service and outlines the way the standards are monitored, reviewed and reported. Desirable features of the provision, the standards to be achieved, the measures used to monitor achievement and responsibilities for monitoring are also included.

Developing standards in basic skills learning support

1. Meeting of QA Manager and learning support managers to clarify the system for developing and monitoring quality standards.

2. Desirable features of the learning support service:

Pre-entry	Marketing Publicity Recruitment Assessment
On entry	Induction Assessment Support plan
On programme	Review of support plan Assessment Achievement and progression Management and organisation
Quality assurance	
Staff development	

3. The desirable features were mapped against:

- the standards for delivery
- the measures indicating the standard had been met.

4. Responsibility allocated for the delivery of each standard.

5. Dates set for monitoring the standard.

6. Results of monitoring are fed to senior management and lead to action points for further improvements.

Example 1 (continued)

Standards for raising the quality of basic skills support

Ensure clients are aware of what is available

This prevents some people from 'slipping through the net'.

All learners must complete an initial assessment, carried out by appropriately trained staff

This identifies their need for basic skills support and makes staff aware of those needs.

All learners referred for learning support are offered a confidential interview.

This prevents learners from being inhibited by the presence of work colleagues.

Learning support is offered at a time and place accessible to the learner.

This encourages attendance and enhances the efficient use of resources through planning.



Learning support programme should meet individual learner needs.

Successful learning is planned and negotiated with the client.

Review the learning support

This monitors achievement and ensures that progress is taking place as planned.

Access to appropriate accreditation opportunities.

This produces benefits for the learner and the employer.

Monitoring at senior level

Senior management commitment is important for the success of learning support services.

Use of specially qualified staff

This raises the quality of teaching and learning.



Example 2

The following example shows how one provider used performance indicators to measure achievement.

Performance indicators chosen

PI 1 – percentage of full achievement of primary learning goals

PI 2 – percentage of partial achievement of primary learning goals.

These are key performance indicators for self-assessment both for basic skills provision and for all other programme areas.

Targets

PI 1 78%

PI 2 17%

Example 2 (continued)



The provider's definition of achievement and how it is to be measured follows.

Inclusion of partial achievement (PI 2)

Partial achievement was felt to be a useful indicator. The difficulties of defining, measuring and recording achievement in basic skills is such that a true picture of the provision was not obtained by only recording full achievement and non-achievement.

Measurement of achievement

Achievement is not measured against external accreditation but against the achievement of the learner's personal learning goals as stated in his or her learning plan.

Definition of full and partial achievement

Each learner has a set of learning goals for each period, and the number of learning goals per learner varies. Initially, achievement was measured by trainers calculating whether learners had achieved a majority, significant or few of their learning goals within the agreed timespan. A more sophisticated system was developed in which learners receive an achievement score for the year, based on their achievement of goals set out in learning plans.

A score of 5 or 6 equates to full achievement, a score of 3 or 4 is recorded as a partial achievement and a score of 2 or under is a null achievement.

The achievement score is recorded on the central information system.

Example 2 (continued)

The following sheet shows how achievement is recorded.

Review of achievements and goals

To be completed at the end of each session. When three sessions are complete (or when the learners leaves) file the top copy in learner's blue folder. Send 2nd copy to Basic Skills Organiser.

Name of learner: AB

Name of trainer: TC

Course code: JD 1234

At the end of each session, calculate how many of the learning goals in the learning plan were achieved.

Full achievement = 80% of learning goals achieved

Partial achievement = 50% of learning goals achieved

Null achievement = Under 50% of learning goals achieved

Tick and date the appropriate box for each session.

Score 2 for full, 1 for partial, 0 for null.

	Full	Partial	Null	Score
Session 1 Date completed	7	2	—	2
Session 2 Date completed	6	4	—	1
Session 3 Date completed	8	1	—	2
Total score for all three sessions				5

Accreditation achieved in these 3 sessions = Full achievement

Name of certificate	Date completed OR	Date exam taken OR	Units completed so far



Limitations of the system

- the system depends on the tight definition of learning goals in a measurable form within a set timespan
- there can be a temptation for trainers to be insufficiently challenging in their definition of learning goals to make sure that learners succeed
- achievement of external accreditation goals has been omitted to date. This is needed for comparison with national indicators but setting achievement of external accreditation as a performance indicator may lead to learners being required to work for inappropriate external accreditation
- setting the full achievement level at 80% of learning goals appears to be too high. Many learners appear to be achieving 70-80% of their primary learning goals even when they have clearly achieved well. If the learner states at the end of six weeks that they are uncertain about only two of eight areas covered this leads to only a 75% achievement rate.



Example 2 (continued)

An evaluation of the use of performance indicators to improve the quality of provision is shown below.

Value of having performance indicators

- trainers are forced to consider how their learner's achievement can be measured – especially when the learner is not working for accreditation
- trainers and learners are forced to confront issues of partial and non-achievement and assess the reasons for it
- learners no longer work for vague reading and writing or numeracy goals but are clearer about their aims
- the need to demonstrate achievement has ensured that work offered to learners has a much higher link to the learner's personal learning goals
- comparison of results between different groups in both achievement and retention forces an analysis of why results differ.

Action that has arisen from a consideration of performance indicators:

- the development of training courses for staff in defining learning goals
- discussion with trainers and managers on how achievement and retention can be recorded on the central system
- an incentive to trainers to be less tolerant of absenteeism which hinders learners' progress and tends to lead to partial achievement only.
- consideration of the possibility of including absence rates as a third key performance indicator
- encouragement towards external accreditation where appropriate.

Dangers of setting performance indicators

- the difficulty of meaningful measurement can be overlooked and the quality of provision judged on a single figure derived from non-rigorous data
- they may lead to an overemphasis on external accreditation simply because learners' achievements are easily measurable through this.

Critical factors in setting performance indicators

- clear definitions
- staff understanding of why they are used
- ease of collection and analysis of data
- important that trainers return data in a form that can be readily collated.

Example 3



One work-based learning provider analyses previous performance and then sets improvement targets each year.

In the initial stages of setting our targets, we rely on performance and compliance information from our main paymasters. At the beginning of each financial year, we are awarded with contracts that specify the expectations on take-up of the programme, retention, achievements and positive outcomes. This informs the overall planning and budget processes of the company and determines the resources required to operate each programme successfully. In order to effectively monitor our contract performance, a general manager, training manager and individual programme supervisors meet on a monthly basis to analyse whether or not actual targets comply with profiled figures. Data from these meetings are kept by our records department for future use. This historical data has enabled us to analyse our basic skills programme performance and achievement levels over a number of previous years. Data for April 1999 – March 2000 is provided below:

Total number of clients undertaking programmes:	1247
Total number undertaking initial assessment/screening	959 incorporating
	597 mainstream (youth)
	88 Life skills/Skill Development
	103 New Deal
	171 Adult Training Skills Workshop
Total undertaking basic skills assessment	161 (17% of those initially screened) incorporating
	100 Life skills/Skills Development
	45 ATSW/New Deal (14.42%)
	28 mainstream (youth) (4.7%)
Percentage of those identified with a learning need	136 (85%)
Percentage of need met by the programme	64.17% (88 in total)
Average length of stay on programme	12 weeks
Retention of clients for more than 12 weeks	76.64%
Qualifications achieved	133 in total, incorporating
	19 Numberpower (Entry Level)
	45 Wordpower (Entry Level)
	57 Key skills (Level 1)
	12 IT (Level 1)
Progression into employment	73
Progression into other training	14
Other NVOs	26
Other positive outcomes	375

Example 3 (continued)

The targets that are set out below are based on a projected improvement of programme take-up and achievement for the forthcoming year. In addition, various other factors will mean that some rates of achievement and referrals will increase naturally. The most relevant points to be considered are:

- psychometric testing has, since April, been introduced for all mainstream applicants (Youth)
- from April 2000 we are offering support to work towards Wordpower and Numberpower Level 1
- we are currently investigating the viability of opening a drop-in facility in the evenings for the local community
- Employment Services are currently under taking some form of basic skills assessment for their New Deal clients and this should provide more accurate information and assessments on this client group's needs.

Full monitoring and evaluation arrangements of these targets are provided.

Targets for 2000-2001

Total number of clients undertaking programmes	1487
Total number undertaking initial assessment/screening	987 incorporating: 551 mainstream (youth) 100 Life skills/Skill Development 80 New Deal 160 Adult Training Skills Workshop 66 Adult course 30 via proposed drop in facility
Total undertaking basic skills assessment	240 (24.3% of those initially screened) incorporating 100 Life skills 32 ATSW 25 New Deal 7 mainstream (youth) 100 drop in clients
Qualifications achieved	211 in total, incorporating 37 Numberpower (Entry Level) 77 Wordpower (Entry Level) 3 Numberpower (Level 1) 12 Wordpower (Level 1) 65 Key skills (Level one) 15 Information Technology (Level 1)
Average length of stay on programme	12 weeks
Retention of clients for more than 12 weeks	85%
Progression into employment	80
Progression into other training	50
Other positive outcomes	465



Action-planning

Basic Skills Quality Initiative

Monitoring and reporting on the quality of provision does not in itself lead to improvements in the quality of provision. For this to happen it is essential to build on the strengths and address the weaknesses and other improvements needed which have been identified through the quality assurance procedures. The development of an action plan provides a clear framework to help staff understand what they have to do, who is responsible for particular actions and the timescale within which it is to take place. For it to be effective, the action plan has to have specific objectives which clearly state what is to be achieved. Without specific objectives it is impossible for the provider to monitor whether or not the action taken has had a positive impact on the quality of the provision.

The following example is an extract from a basic skills action plan developed by a provider.

Quality improvement action plan

<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">Department</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">Programme/Functional Area</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">Programme/Functional Manager(s)</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">Manager responsible for monitoring plan</td> </tr> </table>						Department	Programme/Functional Area	Programme/Functional Manager(s)	Manager responsible for monitoring plan
Department									
Programme/Functional Area									
Programme/Functional Manager(s)									
Manager responsible for monitoring plan									
Issue	Actions	By whom	By when	Process and timetable for monitoring and evaluation	Progress to date				
1. Induction to the organisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use NOCN 'Making choices/managing learning' as a framework Identify learning managers to act as personal tutors for each learner Induction process to be formally agreed and recording forms designed. 	Basic skills team	Sept 99	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review timetable at co-ordinators' meeting Report formally to interim self-assessment 					
2. Improvement of attendance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More detailed initial assessment and agreeing individual learning programmes to be the responsibility of learning managers Attendance to be tracked more systematically by tutors Referral to learning managers as soon as attendance becomes irregular Progress review to be conducted by a learning manager outside of the learning environment to encourage openness 	JW and team	Sept 99 and ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monthly attendance reviews with co-ordinators 					
3. Diversification of teaching and learning strategies and styles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff development sessions during admin weeks New resources including IT and multi-sensory approaches Start appraisal observations earlier and focus upon strategies Peer support sessions to be organised during term for sharing good practice. 	JW with staff development	Sept and onwards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trainer observations and interim self-assessment process 					

Example 1 (continued)

Department		Basic Skills			Progress to date
Programme/Functional Area					
Programme/Functional Manager(s)					
Manager responsible for monitoring plan					
Issue	Actions	By whom	By when	Process and timetable for monitoring and evaluation	Progress to date
4. Improve approach to planning formative assessment into programmes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with part-time tutors to raise awareness of need Staff development sessions re use of formative assessment strategies and retention and achievement 	JD with staff development	Sept 99 and ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitoring course planning processes and trainers observations, perceptions of learners 	
5. Improve range of accreditation on offer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop wider range of entry level vocational qualifications or unit accreditation Develop vocational basic skills 	Basic skills co-ordinator	Dec 99		
6. Develop longer term strategy and targets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Draft strategic plan and basic skills policy Consult and implement 	JW with JS and team	Sept onwards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interim self-assessment 	



What is the process in your organisation for agreeing and identifying targets, standards and performance indicators for basic skills provision?



What targets do you set for basic skills provision?



How do you ensure that they are SMART?



How do you decide what statistical data you will report on?



How effective are the action plans you have developed for basic skills provision?



How do you help staff to set specific objectives within action plans?





Basic Skills Quality Initiative

UNIT 2	<h2>Organisation and Management of Training and Quality Assurance</h2>
	<p>Staff Appraisal and Development:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • appraisal and identifying training needs • implementing staff development

Performance review

To ensure good-quality provision it is essential that providers have skilled staff who work effectively to promote continuous quality improvement. Most providers now have systems for appraising the performance of staff in order to celebrate their strengths, identify areas for development and provide support to enable them to improve their performance.

For appraisal to work effectively, staff need to be clear about their roles, responsibilities, targets and objectives. The provider's approach to appraisal needs to be clearly stated and the procedures for its implementation require careful thought and planning. Where the process is effective, appraisers and appraisees have undertaken training to help them understand the process and to play a full part in it.

The monitoring of performance through observation forms a central part of most appraisal systems. For this to work effectively, care is needed to ensure that observers have the necessary skills and experience to make accurate judgements. Many providers have now developed clear criteria to help them judge the quality of learning sessions.

The following section shows the approaches to appraisal and performance review developed by different providers.

Example 1

The documentation used by a provider to explain the rationale and procedures of its performance review are given below.

Performance review

Performance review is a key strategy to ensure that an organisation improves learning by enabling staff to evaluate their role and skills within the organisation. The review frameworks and process will enhance the effectiveness of staff development provision by helping to ensure that it is responsive to the needs of all the staff. Both the reviewer and the interviewee share a mutual responsibility for the success of the review process. The development benefits of the performance review are only likely to be realised if both reviewer and interviewee behave with mutual respect, openness, honesty, sensitivity and professionalism.

The purpose of the scheme is to continually improve the quality of the service provided to the learner. The scheme provides a model in which organisational objectives and outcomes are delivered through the professional development of all staff. The emphasis of the scheme is:

- evaluation of past performance
- agreed target-setting
- identification of development needs
- monitoring continuous improvement.

It is not the function of the scheme to determine pay in relation to performance.

Principles

The basic principles underlying the scheme are that staff give of their best if they:

- know and agree what is expected of them
- receive feedback from colleagues
- are able to raise issues with those who have managerial or organisational responsibility for them
- receive support and guidance to achieve agreed objectives
- have their contribution recognised
- can see how their performance helps other colleagues to meet strategic objectives.

Aims

The aims of this scheme are to:

- support the staff to meet organisational objectives
- support development planning and the effective management of the organisation
- improve the quality of training for all learners by enabling staff to perform their duties effectively
- provide an opportunity to review the performance of the individuals within the organisation
- recognise achievements and workloads of staff
- support staff to realise their full potential
- target areas for professional development and support
- improve teamwork and the effectiveness of departments within the organisation.

The essential feature of the scheme is to manage and support performance. Individuals will benefit from an annual review meeting by having an opportunity to evaluate performance, assess and plan workload and identify development needs linked to their role within the organisation.

Staff will be reviewed by someone with management, supervisory or programme management responsibility. The identification of the individual reviews will be the responsibility of the line managers in consultation with each member being reviewed. Requests for an alternative reviewer will be considered.

The scheme will operate on a yearly basis. New staff will be reviewed within their first month of appointment to identify any immediate development needs. In certain circumstances it may be necessary to meet informally in the interim period.

All reviewers will receive training on performance review skills including target-setting and measuring performance against standards.

Briefing sessions for staff being reviewed will also be held by line managers.

Example 1 (continued)

Procedure

- seven days before the review, the interviewee is to complete a preview preparation form (PR1) which is sent to the reviewer. This allows the interviewee to consider current roles, responsibilities and achievement of previously set targets and training development needs and allows the reviewer to prepare for the review
- an initial discussion will take place with the reviewer and reviewee to consider PR1. This will assist in clarifying roles and responsibilities and provide an opportunity to consider and agree additional duties to be undertaken during the year
- achievement of targets set in the previous year is to be recorded in section 1.1 of the document PR2 and details of any actions to be carried forward in section 1.2.

Reviewer and reviewee to discuss and agree

- 3-5 key goals, which are to be achieved in the forthcoming year. These are to be recorded in section 2.1 of the document PR2. Methods of achieving these goals and dates are to be recorded in columns 2.2, 2.3 and 2.4. One copy to the reviewee, second copy to be retained by the reviewee (NCR)
- training and development needs are to be recorded on document PR3. A copy of the NCR is forwarded to the staff development manager and a copy is kept by the reviewer
- allocation of training/assessing hours is recorded on the staff timetable
- evaluation forms PR6 are to be completed by both reviewer and reviewee and sent to the staff development manager.

Documents are to be agreed and signed by the reviewer and reviewee.

Appeals and complaints

If disagreements emerge during the review process that cannot be resolved by discussion between reviewer and reviewee, one or more of the following steps must be adopted:

- agree to record the disagreement but complete the review where possible
- adjourn the review process to enable either or both parties to seek advice before recommencing the process
- both parties acknowledge that an impasse has been reached and inform their senior manager who will advise on an appropriate course of action, which may include the appointment of an alternative reviewer.

Example 2



Providers often adjust performance review arrangements for different groups of staff. The following example describes the arrangements made by one provider.

Arrangements for the performance review of basic skills staff

All permanent staff have three appraisal reviews as part of the appraisal programme. A summative appraisal review is held in March at which performance objectives are set for the following financial year. These performance objectives must be consistent with the programme area business plan and the organisation's strategic plan. In the autumn and the winter the member of staff's achievements are reviewed and objectives are amended following discussion between appraiser and appraisee. Appraisal covers the member of staff's whole job as outlined in job descriptions, not just the priority areas specified in performance objectives.

Review of performance

Both appraiser and appraisee review and grade the appraisee's performance in the following areas:

- awareness of the organisation's key strategic objectives
- current job knowledge and skills
- quality of work
- personal organisation
- communication skills
- working with others
- dependability
- initiative.

Appraisees are also asked to comment on how they could improve their own performance.

Setting performance objectives

The performance objectives set in the summative review must be SMART.

Specific	The member of staff must have a clear understanding of the objectives and know exactly what is required or expected.
Measurable	It should be possible to assess what has been achieved within a given timescale.
Achievable	The objective or task should not be too demanding or obscure to be achievable.
Relevant	The objectives should be relevant to the job and correspond to wider plans in the programme area or the organisation.
Timescale	A realistic amount of time should be allowed to achieve the goal.

Example 2 (continued)

It is important in setting objectives that they are accepted and agreed by the appraisee and that they take into account the appraisee's own comments on how to improve performance.

Support in achieving performance objectives

- training or staff development required to achieve the objectives is agreed and recorded
- actions are agreed that will support the achievement and the date by which they will be undertaken. The actions may be by the appraiser or appraisee.

Performance objective

- to increase the use of IT with basic skills learners.

Staff development required

- staff development on the programmes currently loaded on the machine in the learning base
- staff development on how to write/adapt the programmes to be able to provide relevant learning materials to learners.

Agreed activities	By whom and timescale
Set up staff development session	Line manager by April 1999 (appraiser)
Attend staff development session	Trainer (appraisee) by April 1999
Offer IT based materials to learners for whom this may be appropriate.	Trainer (appraisee) by June 1999
Prepare learning materials linked to vocational areas. Materials should be accessible by other learners and staff.	Trainer (appraisee) by July 1999.

Using the Outcomes of Performance Review to Improve Provision



Basic Skills Quality Initiative

As the main purpose of performance review is to improve the quality of provision, it is essential to make good use of the information gained from the process. One of the main outcomes of performance review is the identification of staff training needs but other information relating, for example, to resources, communication and team management will point to changes which are required to improve the quality of the provision.

The following examples show how two providers have used the information gained from the performance review process to improve the quality of their basic skills provision.

Example 1

1. Regular staff development programme linked to trainers' requirements.

Information collected on future training requirements has led to courses on:

- teaching spelling
- selecting and creating materials
- setting achievable goals
- working with beginner readers
- underpinning skills
- understanding dyslexia
- tackling reading problems
- use of IT.

2. Clarity for individual staff about what is expected of them.

- trainers have clear targets set out in their performance objectives
- hourly paid staff have clear action points which are reviewed at subsequent meetings.

3. Clarity for the manager responsible for basic skills about the support needs of basic skills staff.

- using staff views, managers can obtain an overview of resource deficiencies, accommodation difficulties, difficulties with paperwork and other areas of concern and can act accordingly.

4. The cohesiveness of the provision is maintained so that all learners can expect the same quality of basic skills teaching.

- all trainers are monitored to ensure that the teaching they offer links to the learning goals of their learners
- organisers are kept in contact with the diversity of the provision and the needs of all learners.

The review maintains a link that ensures all learners are offered appropriate accreditation and progression opportunities.



Post-appraisal training plan

Needs identified at appraisal	How?	Accreditation available? Funding?	Who might need/want it? Others can too
IT Skills			
Individual needs	Possible peripatetic IT trainer for the department, helping individuals with their particular needs.	Depends on funding	All of us!
IT with learners	Our ILT champion has some time allocated to do sessions for us tailored to our needs, e.g. how to use ILT in our teaching	Accreditation not necessary.	All who teach
Systematic training	Central training in learning centres or through staff development programme	CLAIT available or OCNs free to staff	Anyone who would like to take it up - good for beginners
Tutoring			
Counselling	Counselling skills in the development of learning	Staff development will fund	Overall Basic Skills Co-ordinator
Liaising and co-ordinating	Team sessions – we can teach ourselves	In-house Training & Development standards unit C11 co-ordinate the provision of learning opportunities with other contributors to the learning programme	All co-ordinators
Guidance	Team sessions using an internal trainer - perhaps from guidance	In-house T&D unit C26 support and advise individual learners or OCN introduction to adult guidance	All basic skills co-ordinators
Promoting learner autonomy	Team sessions – using each other to learn from and develop new ideas	Nothing available	Everyone - but especially basic skills and study support teams
Identifying learning needs and styles	Team sessions - using each other to learn from and trying out new learning styles materials	In-house T&D unit A21 identify individuals' learning aims, needs and styles	Everyone - but especially basic skills and study support teams

Example 2 (continued)

Needs identified at appraisal	How?	Accreditation available? Funding?	Who might need/want it? Others can too
Training			
General	City and Guilds 7306 for new trainers/tutors	In-house I hope C&G 7306 in a series of T&D units (A21, B21, B33, C21, C22, C25, D11, D32, D33, E21, E31, E41)	New basic skills tutors
Literacy	Practical strategies for existing and new staff - a mix between the Basic Skills Initial Certificate revamped to make it more lively and practical for new tutors (it will contribute to the 7306) - and team sessions using our own materials and those in the inclusive learning pack	In-house C&G 9282	New literacy tutors
		In-house C&G 9283	New numeracy tutors
		In-house T&D unit B21 designing learning programmes to meet learners' requirements	Most vocational trainers & basic skills tutors would find it useful
		In-house T&D unit E41 develop training and development methods	Everybody - this is really important and interesting
Language training	English as an Additional Language training Team sessions led by language support co-ordinator	Diploma through language unit Not accredited	New language support tutor Anyone supporting multilingual students
Assessment	Understanding how to use competence-based assessments e.g. for OCNs, basic skills qualifications like Wordpower, or key skills	In-house T&D unit D32 Assess candidate performance In-house T&D unit D33 Assess candidate using diverse evidence	Anyone who hasn't got it already - this is compulsory
Co-ordinator Skills			
Internal verification	Checking that assessment systems are being adhered to, helping maintain quality	In-house T&D unit D34 support and verify the internal assessment process	Any co-ordinators who haven't got it - and me!
Prioritising and time management	Team sessions sharing good ideas	Not accredited but might contribute to certificate in management studies at a later date	All co-ordinators!

Identifying Training Needs



One provider uses the following process to identify training needs and plan staff development.

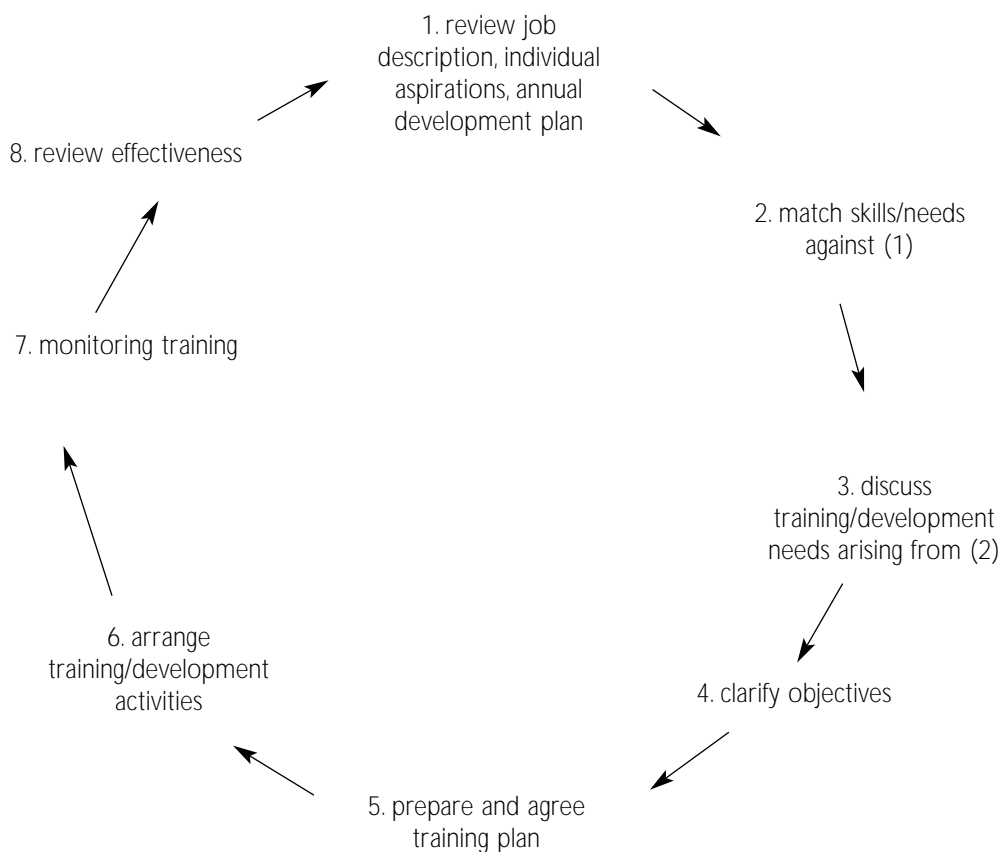
Example 1

Staff Development Statement

The organisation is committed to developing a culture of lifelong learning and to embed this concept in the workplace as an entitlement for all staff.

In line with this, the quality of provision offered by the organisation and the development of a responsive, flexible and relevant programme will be supported by a planned programme of development.

The stages to be followed in planning individual staff development are as follows:





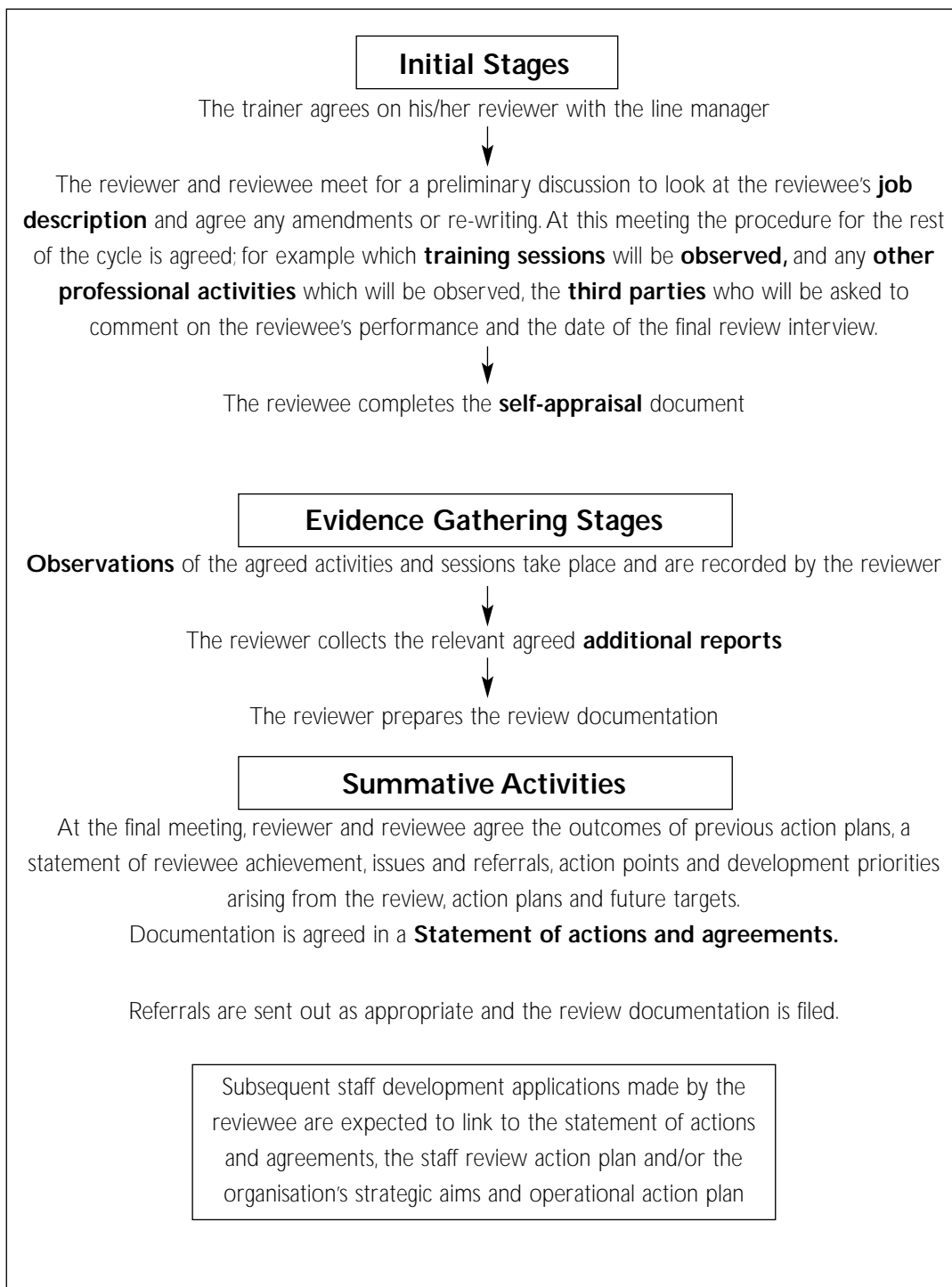
Example 2

One provider uses a Staff Review Process to identify training and development needs. This includes self-assessment in the form of a self-monitoring inventory.

Staff review process

- review of personal job descriptions and the opportunity to update them
- the fact that each individual can choose their reviewer and their observer, which enables both specialist and non-specialist staff and managers to be involved
- self-assessment, supported by a 'self-monitoring inventory' and a 'training evaluation checklist' used independently by individual trainers
- the observation of other professional activities as well as training, which recognises the varied roles and demands on basic skills trainers e.g. individual advice and guidance for learners, progress reviews
- the opportunity for each individual to invite others to contribute to 'third party' reports; this is often a volunteer tutor or another colleague
- the final outcome, which is a statement of actions agreed and/or agreements reached

Staff review cycle



Example 2 (continued)

Self-monitoring inventory

It can be helpful to your development as a trainer if you keep an eye on progress in those areas which are important to you personally. You can use this Inventory to help you with this process by checking yourself on the various items listed and any others which you think are important to you. Be gentle with yourself and be honest about your strengths as well as about areas which you feel need more attention.

It is important that you develop all-round skills of self-evaluation so that you can become a skilled observer of your own performance.

Once you have identified areas which need more attention, you will find it encouraging.....

- if you try to tackle one or two of these areas at a time rather than the whole lot together
- if you start by trying to tackle areas which are easier to deal with rather than those which are more difficult
- if you invite the co-operation of your colleagues in this activity and discuss your own self-assessment with someone else from time to time.

	Satisfied with this at present	Keeping my eye on this	Needs more of my attention
Introducing myself to learners			
Being friendly and welcoming			
Encouraging the learners to work together, share and support each other			
Being able to negotiate an individual programme to meet learners' learning needs/goals			
Diagnosing learners' learning needs and acting on these			
Setting realistic and achievable learning goals with learners			
Identifying learners' different learning styles and mixing and matching these			

Many providers make good use of individual self-evaluation as a way of encouraging staff to be constructive and self-critical. Sometimes this forms part of the provider's quality assurance cycle, contributing to the production of an annual self-assessment report for the provision. Sometimes it is used to help an individual prepare for a development interview or appraisal. It may also be used to focus on individual training needs or contribute to the development of an annual programme of training or development.

The principle of self-assessment applies to basic skills team leaders and managers as well as teaching staff, and is used in the same ways. The extracts which follow illustrate two approaches from the same provider, one a 'can-do' profile for middle managers and the other targeting more senior managers and encouraging them to consider not only whether they have a particular skill but also its effectiveness.

Example

Self-assessment Checklist		
	Confident	Like Support
...3 Supporting learners	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• interviewing and assessing new learners	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• organising dyslexia assessments	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• arranging and recording progression routes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
...4 Financial management	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• setting up trainer salaries	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• using budget codes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• using budget codes to monitor expenditure	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• submitting claims to external agencies	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Example (continued)

Needs analysis form

In order to evaluate present skills and effectiveness as well as assess priorities for development/training, indicate on a scale of 1-5 how frequently you perform a task, how satisfied you are with the way you perform it, and how successful you have been in achieving the task. 1 = lowest, 5 = highest.

Tasks	Frequency					Satisfaction					Success				
	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Programme															
Develop programme, setting objectives and strategies															
Hold team meetings															
Carry out observation															
Meet quality standards															
Set up systems which provide evidence for quality assurance															
Develop business plans															

Vocational trainers

The increasing emphasis on improved retention and achievement has confirmed what has been conventional wisdom for some time: that many non-specialist trainers are often unable to provide adequate support for learners who have poor basic skills, and these learners are likely either to leave their training programme early or not to succeed in their achievement aims, even if they do complete the course.

Although many of these trainers recognise they would benefit from a greater understanding of basic skills and the problems faced by learners with basic skills needs, finding acceptable ways to give them the knowledge and understanding they require is no easy matter. A range of responses has emerged, ranging from a requirement for all trainers working at NVQ Levels 1 and 2 or equivalent to obtain an initial certificate in teaching basic skills to the redeployment of basic skills staff from teaching roles to working alongside other trainers to support their learning on the job.

Trainers from other organisations

As well as working with staff from within the same organisation, many providers offer training to trainers from other organisations, for example, employers and workplace providers, other training agencies or basic skills providers, the WEA and voluntary organisations.

Administration and reception staff

One of the key roles of administrative or front-of-house staff is to respond to enquiries from people who have a basic skills need and who have come forward for information and help. These members of staff are usually not basic skills specialists, but they give information

as part of their general duties. They are very often the first contact a prospective learner has with the basic skills service. It is therefore essential that they are able to respond to enquiries in a supportive and reassuring way, as well as being knowledgeable and effective. They are key members of the team, and accordingly need access to appropriate training and development opportunities both as part of their induction and regularly thereafter.



Example 1

One provider uses a self-assessment checklist during induction and as a prompt for discussing aspects of the job at appraisal. This encourages staff to ask for more information and support and to discuss further training and development.

Induction checklist for administrative staff

Dealing with basic skills enquiries

Task:

please tick

Can you answer questions/advise on...?

range of basic skills provision available

location/time/cost

process of getting support

how basic skills assessment is carried out

the type of support available within courses

what prior knowledge is needed

what a learner needs to bring to the first session

the make-up of learners in a support group (age, sex, etc)

what leaflets are available

Would you know...?

who can deal with specific requests/answer questions about:

dyslexia

maths

English as an additional language

communication skills

special learning needs

learning support

basic skills in the workplace

who can deal with complaints

who else provides basic skills courses in the area

Would you know

how to give information to someone who

speaks very little English?

Would you know how to...?

process the information given to you by a prospective learner

use referral forms

deal with confidential information

Are you familiar with...?

BSA quality standards

The policy on equal opportunities

Information, guidance and training is available to cover the following areas:

Please indicate aspects that you are particularly interested in:

Basic skills provision –

- types of support/learning/session content
- staffing structures
- accreditation opportunities
- what a learner can expect from a session

Adult learning

- barriers to learning
- impact of lack of basic skills on adults' lives
- individual learning styles
- learner expectations/motivation

Dealing with enquiries –

- on the phone and face-to-face
- using language clearly and unambiguously
- dealing with difficult behaviour
- dealing with complaints
- understanding the referral system

Quality assurance

- equal opportunities
- inclusive learning
- Basic Skills Agency standards

Other:

Example 2

An increasing number of employers are interested in offering workplace support for their employees, not so much by using an adult education service or a training provider to provide the support but by looking for ways in which supervisors, trainers or managers can be helped to integrate basic skills support with the work they do. The kind of supervisory and managerial staff who may benefit from an improved understanding of the aims, content and models of workplace support include:

- personnel staff, who may need to consider basic skill levels when recruiting supporting staff
- supervisors, who may encounter the need to help employees when training employees on the job
- trainers who may find employees struggling with essential training programmes because of problems with basic skills
- managers who wish to discuss an employee's basic skills needs at an appraisal but are unsure how to go about it
- staff who draft written material such as operating instructions, graphs, newsletters, and who wish to make them more accessible
- trainers who are considering open or on-line resources for employees.

A provider identifies the following stages in developing this work:

1 Initial contact

Usually an approach from the employer, followed up by a phone call or a letter from a basic skills adviser outlining the range of training models and services available, and the provision of an information leaflet, summarising the range of courses or support that can be delivered on site.

2 Obtaining background information

An initial meeting with an employer to establish the context, including the number and type of employees, and the general level of qualification; job tasks and responsibilities; induction and other training offered; management structure and lines of communication. It is also useful to ask about any production or training issues, such as difficulties in making internal promotions, health and safety problems, quality assurance problems and quality assurance procedures, that have been experienced in the past, are current or are anticipated.

3 Identifying training needs

Before moving on to look at how basic skills support can be offered, it is useful to have a concise summary of the different needs of employees, and in this context in particular, of managers, supervisors and other staff who will be offering support.

This can be summarised using a training needs checklist (see following example), and/or a workplace skills checklist, looking at the basic skills underpinning frequent tasks at work (see following example). These will need to be customised to reflect the type of work environment under discussion. The example used was drafted for hospital work.

4 Reaching the agreement

To help clarify the options available to the workplace supervisors, managers and trainers, it is useful to have examples of the resources, topics or support materials that have been used in similar provision elsewhere. These might include publicity leaflets, simplified operating instructions, customised assessment materials, and customised training resources.

This will help those involved gain a clearer understanding of their own training needs as well as an insight into possible ways forward.

Finally, before starting to implement any training programme, it is essential that those trainers who will be involved are familiar with the main developments which have impacted on the workplace and the ethos of training at work. Some of these may indeed have prompted the employer to consider offering basic skills support at work in the first place. They include:

- the introduction of total quality management and the flattened management structures that increasingly place decision-making and problem-solving within teams
- the various quality assurance initiatives e.g. ISO 9000, the Business Excellence model, Investors in People
- quality control systems like statistical process control which involve all employees in gathering and using data to bring about improvement
- the downsizing of organisations, resulting in a smaller workforce that needs to be flexible and multi-skilled
- tighter health and safety legislation
- new technology in manufacturing processes and in communication and management systems.

These will form an important element of any briefing or training programme for workplace trainers.

Example 2 (continued)

Checklist of workplace training needs

	Urgent need	Longer term interest	Not relevant
Employees			
Numeracy e.g. averages, metric, percentages, graphs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Written communication e.g. downtime sheets, accident forms, reports, note-taking at meetings, operating instructions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Job specific oral communication e.g. team briefings, improvement groups, presentations giving instructions, telephone skills	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Study skills, e.g. for NVQs, team leader training	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Managers and Supervisors			
Raising awareness of the need for support	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
How to assess basic skills in the workplace	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Developing a customised assessment pack	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Integrating basic skills support into current training, e.g. health & safety, food hygiene,	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Readability of workplace resources e.g. use of plain English	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
How to discuss basic skills needs in appraisals	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Guidance on open learning materials	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Accredited training, e.g. C&G 7324	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Workplace skills checklist – writing

Complete time-sheets, work records
<input type="checkbox"/> Fill in forms	
• self-certification for sickness	
• incident reports	
• holiday requests	
• applying for internal promotion	
• other
<input type="checkbox"/> Complete patient records
<input type="checkbox"/> Leave telephone messages, notes, and memos
<input type="checkbox"/> More formal letter writing
<input type="checkbox"/> Complete and update order forms, stock lists, log sheets
<input type="checkbox"/> Make notes during training sessions
<input type="checkbox"/> Take minutes, write reports for staff meetings, social clubs, newsletters
<input type="checkbox"/> Written tasks and projects on training courses, e.g. hygiene certificate
Any other writing skills relating to job responsibilities, training, NVQ assessments	
.....	
.....	
.....	

Prompt Questions for Element 1

■
How could you improve your arrangements for monitoring the performance of staff?

■
How effective is your training for appraisers and appraisees?

■
What guidance do you give to staff who observe sessions?

■
How do you ensure that the information gained from the performance review process is used effectively to improve the quality of the provision?

■
What is your approach to identifying the training needs of basic skills trainers?

■
How do you ensure that the training needs of other staff who contribute to basic skills provision have been considered?

■
How effective are your arrangements for reviewing and prioritising training for basic skills?

■

Support mechanisms

This element looks at the various approaches providers have developed in order to meet the training and development needs of those involved in basic skills provision. Most providers, especially those involved in extensive provision, have a considerable portfolio of training and development activities which they have developed over time and which they review, adjust and add to continually to meet changing demands.

One of the weaknesses of basic skills provision has been the relatively small number of staff with relevant teaching qualifications. While most full-time staff and increasing numbers of part-time staff have qualified teacher or trainer status, until relatively recently few held qualifications specific to this area of work. This is now changing significantly. Whereas at the start the focus was largely on initial training alone, most schemes now have a range of courses, from initial training certificates through to teaching diplomas and beyond.

As well as formal qualifications, providers continue to offer substantial numbers of training courses and events that they devise for themselves, to develop and maintain the commitment and professionalism shown by their staff. One provider lists the following areas of training activity.

Example 1

- courses leading to qualifications
e.g. C&G 9281, 9285, 7324
- staff training on specific topics:
 - measuring and recording achievement
 - teaching basic skills
 - inclusive learning
 - Skills for Life
 - qualifications
- quality assurance and basic skills
- equality assurance
- funding work-based learning
- key skills
- BSA quality mark
- OCN qualifications and funding
- observations and standards
- Edexcel: Entry Level provision
- OCN moderators' award
- deaf awareness
- observation of training and learning in drop-in centres
- improving delivery in basic skills
- inspection
- better basic skills in practice



Supporting Documentation

In addition to courses and training activities, other forms of support and development are also available to basic skill trainers. For example, handbooks are often used to provide information and guidance. These form an essential part of basic skills provision, offering a consistent framework for the team's work, a focus for planning and reviewing, and an invaluable source of reference for all staff, particularly new staff. Additionally, the process of developing and maintaining the handbook provides a real opportunity for team members to share ideas and good practice.

Example 2

One provider outlines their approach to the handbook as follows:

Rationale for handbook

There had been discussions about the need for a handbook, but staff were concerned about the tension between the need to allow for individual creativity, particularly with experienced staff, and the extent to which less experienced staff would benefit from a more prescriptive approach. However, internal verification highlighted the need for much greater consistency within the primary basic skills provision, and the decision was taken to produce a handbook prescribing policies and procedures. The draft handbook was the focus of a half-day staff development event, and staff were given time to assimilate the contents and begin implementing the procedures. Each member of staff met with the basic skills team leader to discuss how they were coping with the procedures, bringing with them examples such as records of progress, and to raise any issues of concern they had. This proved invaluable, and some parts of the handbook were modified in the light of experience. The handbook is now an accepted and valued part of support for staff.

Because of the amount of teaching done by part-timers it is difficult to ensure the quality of the provision:

- part-time staff place their own interpretation on the service they need to provide
- they find it hard to keep up with changing procedures
- they can feel isolated; they do not always receive general communications
- as a result, learners have different experiences depending on who is teaching them.

To address these problems, a tutor folder was developed to go in each study centre which held:

- information on learner enrolment processes and register practice
- guidance on initial assessment, marking and interpretation of results
- information about how the review system works, and learning support available to learners
- record-keeping and learner portfolios.

Mentoring

A second development method that does not involve formal training is the helpful support and encouragement obtained as a result of good coaching and mentoring processes. One approach is to use mentoring to help newly appointed staff, or existing staff about to take on an additional role or who are in need of help. At its simplest, the process consists of providing opportunities for less experienced staff to observe good practice in operation, that is, to observe skilled trainers going about their work. It can also involve opportunities for those being observed to contribute to tuition in a supportive context, so that they can extend their skills and confidence.

Meetings

It is important to acknowledge the key contribution that team meetings make to staff development. Providers recognise their important role in establishing a sense of identity and shared purpose in a team or a service, in keeping staff in touch with developments internally and in the outside world, in identifying problems and pooling resources to solve them, and in sharing and developing good practice. It is for that reason that many providers have found ways to pay part-time staff to attend.



To complement initial training and make sure that it is translated effectively into action in the workplace, most providers take pains to ensure that part-time trainers receive an effective induction to the service within which they will be working. It is worth noting that the processes of inducting as well as training new trainers is for many providers a significant part of annual training activities. Providers invest much time and trouble in ensuring that their induction processes as well as the initial training offered are thorough and effective and establish the right professional ethos for basic skills work from the start.

Example

One large provider typically offers between four and six induction sessions a year for its new part-time trainers, each lasting a day. This is complemented by an induction booklet and a checklist, which the relevant programme leader or manager completes with the member of staff concerned.

Induction checklist:		
Area to be covered	Comments	Done?
induction booklet		
team structure and names		
work roles: programme leader		
team leader		
trainers/assessors		
placement officers (reviews, work placement monitoring, attendance records)		
guidance & support staff		
admin & clerical support staff		
resources:		
photocopies, resource bank		
stationery		
health and safety		
quality assurance		
training information		
team meeting dates		
scheme of work		
session plans		
assessment information		
external verification dates		
admin information		
complaints, concerns		
claims, queries		
Additional comments:		
I confirm that the above has been explained to me:		
Signature of staff member:		Date:
Programme leader:		



Staff Training and Development Programmes

Staff training plays a crucial role in basic skills provision. It is frequently presented to staff as an entitlement and indeed, in some instances, attendance on particular issues is obligatory.

Example 1

One provider structures its staff development programme around an annual training plan, linked in turn to the organisation's business and strategic plans.

Objectives for staff training and development				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to provide a relevant range of training and development opportunities • to identify and disseminate good practice • to ensure we meet our service standards • to provide information on current trends and requirements • to enable us to respond positively and effectively to changes in training ethos and practice. 				
Extracts from annual training plan				
Goals	Training need	Approach	When	Evaluation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • key staff to gain D units 32, 33/34 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • able to work more effectively on OCN and vocational courses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • self study • taught sessions • tutorials 	On-going	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • achievement of accreditation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to extend work-based learning provision 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • clarify good practice for external provision 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • training and workshop sessions 	Sept/Oct initially	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • increase in work-based learning • repeat business
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to register as a centre for additional accreditations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • meet organisation's and centre requirements and set up procedures needed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • training sessions 	January	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • approval as registered centre
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to review and extend opportunities for numeracy accreditation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • establish what is to be offered and set up standardisation and moderation processes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • training sessions 	April onwards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • registrations for new vocational awards • learners' achievement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to improve our service in relation to customer satisfaction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • promote customer care code, complaints procedure, performance standards 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • training sessions • support visits • individual reviews 	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • survey results • feedback from visits • customer care targets met

For a range of reasons, most providers base their staff training on courses that they provide themselves rather than on attendance on training events run by external organisations. They also use a blend of accredited and non-accredited courses, varying the mix to meet changing needs and resources. The same provider uses primarily in-house provision, reserving attendance at external events mainly for keeping up to date and obtaining information that can then be cascaded more widely, internally. It sets out the costs and benefits of the different types of provision it uses as follows.

Training Programme – Costs and Benefits		
Rationale	Costs	Benefits
In-house training programme		
This part of the training programme is delivered by our own training team. This ensures that the trainer fully understands the need for and the required outcomes of the training and it is customised to the needs of our staff. Expertise in this field could not be attained to meet our specific needs through the use of outside trainers.	Provided by training team at hourly rates with on-costs.	Pre-course and post-course evaluation is able to be used more effectively through the continuous interaction of staff. The availability of further support following training is an important feature of this type of training.
Externally accredited training		
Quality for internal staff development is high because all training is provided through the training team. It is strategic policy to uphold our quality training by retaining its planning, delivery and evaluation in accordance with lead body standards and external verification.	Hourly rates with on-costs a) dedicated part of staff time; b) funded by organisation but re-couped through training programme funding.	Provides benchmarking of the quality of our training.
Attendance at external training		
Attendance at external training such as national and regional conferences and initiatives allows us to keep up to date with national and local initiatives. 'Quality assurance' initiatives are an important part of this training.	Paid from: a) training budget; b) the income generated from commercial training courses.	Enables us to gain a wider picture of what the future holds for providers in our field of expertise. This knowledge is essential to us in formulating our vision and business plan.

One area receiving increasing attention in training and development programmes is understanding and meeting the needs of awarding bodies, as the emphasis on retention and achievement post-16 increases, both generally and particularly in relation to basic skills. This is particularly true where accreditation involves internal assessment of course work and portfolios. One provider, for example, offers a day's training on open college units in basic skills, supplementing the taught sessions with a reference folder of guidelines for paperwork and portfolio building. Another offers training to help staff with Wordpower and Numberpower, including internal verification processes, assessing evidence, and understanding the amount of support that can be given.

Training to help staff provide effective guidance about progression opportunities

As well as training relevant to the teaching and assessment of learning, support is given for the other aspects of a trainer or tutor's work. One area of particular importance for basic skills is helping the learner move out of basic skills to other provision, and a number of providers now offer training and support for staff to help them with this. One provider offers the OCR certificate in Educational and Vocational Guidance to its trainers and to its clerical and administrative staff. Last year, 15 staff took the course. Another provider has developed an accredited unit enabling staff to offer advice and guidance that will help learners choose the best route through a wide range of learning opportunities, and then to link this to the learner's programme of learning. As well as its use with basic skills staff at main training sites,

the unit is also used by other organisations offering help and advice in other contexts, such as social services, the probation service and some employers' personnel departments.

Training for Vocational Tutors



Basic Skills Quality Initiative

One provider requires staff delivering NVO Level 1 programmes, and sometimes Level 2, to undertake a training course, usually one leading to accreditation.

Example

Training for vocational trainers – a case study

The provider identified a need through staff appraisals for vocational trainers to take part in basic skills training. This needed to include raising awareness of the impact that poor basic skills has on a learner, and how to identify and support a learner with basic skills needs. Vocational trainers themselves had recognised that they were often unable to give these learners the help they needed, and as a result learners were dropping out of training programmes or not completing them successfully. There was a need to give these staff the skills they required to support all their learners. The course chosen for this was the initial certificate in basic skills because:

- it is relatively short (16 weeks)
- it is delivered in taught sessions with time allowed for portfolio building
- it covers the generic skills needed for literacy and numeracy
- the content can be adapted to accommodate relevant specific issues such as dyslexia and learning styles
- assignments can be contextualised to the vocational area, e.g. catering staff chose activities and materials to work with that were already familiar to them, other staff did the same for their areas.

The course was delivered at a mutually convenient time to suit all the participants who came from four vocational areas. There was the opportunity to discuss and compare basic skills needed in these areas and how the staff dealt with these. The participants were able to swap and share ideas.



The Role of Partnership Teaching in Training

A less formal approach to training adopted by a number of providers is to involve basic skills trainers in working alongside vocational trainers. This approach has evolved in response to many of the issues identified in the previous example. One provider sets them out as follows.

Example

- difficulties in finding a time when all can attend
- trainers who resent having to attend staff development sessions which encroach on their administration and preparations (or their own time, if they are part-time)
- staff development that is too generic and that a particular trainer will consider irrelevant to his or her particular needs or situation
- the fragmented nature of the training: two hours a week, rather than a more intensive experience that they can try out straightaway.

In response to these difficulties, the basic skills team decided the best approach was for basic skills 'development tutors' to work with vocational trainers, removing the issues around timing, ensuring relevance to need, and providing instant feedback and support. Over time, they developed a comprehensive approach to providing mentoring support that included:

- identifying and developing the skills needed by basic skills development tutors
- guidelines for partnership teaching to help both basic skills and vocational staff.

What follows is the handout given to managers and staff outlining the role of the basic skills development trainer.

The partnership approach:

Role of the basic skills development tutor

The precise role will differ according to the course, the learners and the vocational trainer they are working with. The role includes:

- supporting learners
- increasing the awareness of the mainstream vocational trainer of basic skills issues and approaches
- providing extra support sessions if the need arises
- providing materials to develop the basic skills needed for the vocational programme and/or for progression to the next level
- adapting learning materials so that all learners can use them
- providing differentiated materials on topics and for assessments
- carrying out an analysis of the basic skills requirements of the NVQ
- helping identify where basic skills development can happen naturally.

For this to work, it is vital that the vocational trainer and the development tutor work together in off-the-job training sessions and share information on training in the workplace and that the development tutor becomes part of the vocational training team.

It is helpful if the tutor:

- can attend vocational training team meetings
- has a pigeon-hole somewhere in the vocational area and somewhere to store materials
- is included in all relevant communications.

Remember:

- vocational staff can feel intimidated by having someone else teaching with them
- basic skills staff can feel intimidated by having to work in someone else's territory
- staff can feel it is a personal criticism of them when someone suggests adaptations to approaches or materials they have produced.



Example (continued)

How this partnership approach worked in practice is shown below.

Basic skills development work in a practical setting: NVQ in Information Technology

Characteristics of learner group

The majority of learners had difficulties with reading, writing and numeracy identified through the initial screening procedure. Half were identified as having specific learning difficulties or showed indications of these.

Learners reported

- difficulties copying notes from OHT
- difficulties in understanding some of the technical words.

Issues

- the vocational trainer felt threatened by the presence of the basic skills development tutor:
 - he lacked confidence
 - he was concerned that he was being observed
 - he felt his own spelling was weak
- the basic skills development tutor took time to explain to the vocational training team the way in which the learners' difficulties would affect their learning
- the basic skills development tutor was keen to emphasise the trainer's vocational expertise and her own expertise in basic skills
- the basic skills development tutor outlined ways in which she could help the team in making materials more accessible.

The team shared materials which the basic skills development tutor simplified.

New strategies were suggested for delivery that did not involve copying from an OHP, learners would be given copies of the OHT and tutors encouraged to develop questions to check learning.

Results

- the vocational trainer saw how much easier the adapted material was to read
- the vocational trainer became more aware that other material, including material assessing underpinning knowledge, could be improved and was prepared to discuss this with the basic skills development tutor
- the vocational trainer was keen to demonstrate to other trainers in this area the difference the changes had made.



How do you ensure that training meets the needs of all staff involved in basic skills provision?



What is your approach to planning and reviewing staff development for basic skills?



How effective is the training in making tangible improvements in provision?

