National Research and Development Centre
for adult literacy and numeracy

Engaging homeless people, Black and Minority Ethnic and other priority groups in Skills for Life

Research report

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Preface: Policy context

Since the launch of the Skills for Life strategy in 2001, over 5.7 million adults have improved their basic skills, with over 2.8 million achieving a nationally recognised qualification. The government has emphasised that although this is significant progress, we need to go further given that there are still millions of adults who lack functional levels of literacy and numeracy.

Since this research was undertaken in 2007–8, the government has committed itself to the ambition of being a world leader in skills by 2020, benchmarked against the upper quartile of OECD[1] countries (Leitch 2006). For Skills for Life, this means ensuring that, by 2020, 95 per cent of adults possess at least functional levels of literacy and numeracy – defined as Entry level 3 numeracy and Level 1 literacy.

To make progress towards this ambition, the government has a Public Service Agreement (PSA) target that between 2008 and 2011:

- 597,000 people of working age achieve a first Level 1 or above literacy qualification;
- 390,000 people of working age achieve a first Entry level 3 or above numeracy qualification.

To deliver this target and in doing so drive progress towards the 2020 ambition, the government published a refreshed Skills for Life strategy in March 2009 (DIUS 2009). The refreshed strategy focuses on three central themes:

1. Focusing Skills for Life on employability, ensuring that the literacy, language and numeracy skills we help people develop will support them to find, stay and progress in work.

2. Raising demand for literacy, language and particularly numeracy skills among individuals and employers, changing the culture and attitudes to Skills for Life that prevent people from embarking on learning.

3. Delivering flexible and responsive Skills for Life provision which meets learner and employer needs, is high quality, delivered in innovative ways and embedded in wider skills provision where that is the best way to meet individual learners' needs.

The priority learner groups identified within the overall refreshed strategy are:

- people who are unemployed and on benefits;
- low-skilled adults in employment;
- offenders in custody and those supervised in the community; and
- other groups at risk of social exclusion.

Since this research pre-dates the refreshed Skills for Life strategy, there may be information in this document that relates solely to the original strategy, and thus does not reflect developments as set out in the refreshed strategy.

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[1] Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.

1. Introduction

Anna Reisenberger

Overview

This report examines what we know about how adults identified as priority groups in the Skills for Life strategy[2] are engaging in learning related to improving their language, literacy and numeracy skills. This overview draws principally, but not solely, on research carried out by the National Research and Development Centre for Adult Literacy and Numeracy (NRDC). Since its inception in 2002, NRDC has undertaken quantitative, qualitative and practitioner-led research to illuminate and improve the learning experiences of the most disadvantaged learners.

The report includes two research studies, which illustrate both the issues faced by two different priority groups and principles of effective practice in helping them to learn. The University of Lancaster analysed issues facing adults who are homeless and studied educational provision in the Blackpool area that aims to address homeless people's needs. NIACE examined how Black and Minority Ethnic minority communities fare in further education in order to identify priority learners and examples of effective community-based provision. Both studies are complemented by guides for practitioners, which are being published separately in 2009.

The rest of this chapter provides the context for the research.

Background

When the Skills for Life strategy was introduced in 2001 it was aimed at groups where literacy and numeracy difficulties were thought to be common. The *Skills for Life Survey* (DfES 2003) demonstrated that lower levels of literacy and numeracy were particularly associated with areas of socio-economic deprivation, with social class, and with not having English as a first language. Not surprisingly, a strong correlation was found between an adult's level of literacy and numeracy and his or her level of education, employment prospects and earnings. The revised *Skills for Life: National Strategy for Improving Adult Literacy and Numeracy Skills* (DfEE 2001) identified some key priority groups: unemployed people and benefit claimants; prisoners and those supervised in the community; employees (including public sector employees and adults with low skills), young adults, other groups at risk of exclusion, including speakers of other languages and those in disadvantaged communities. More recently, Black and Minority Ethnic groups have been identified as a further priority. From 2008 all departments across government will be participating in a cross-cutting strategy to increase settled accommodation, employment, education and training for the most socially excluded adults identified by the Social Exclusion Unit. Those identified include adults with mental health issues, adult offenders under

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[2] At its inception in 2001 and subsequently.

probation supervision and those with moderate to severe learning difficulties (Social Exclusion Unit 2005).

Following the publication in 2007 of *World Class Skills* (DIUS 2007), new targets were set: by 2020, 95 per cent of adults should have functional literacy and numeracy skills, and more than 90 per cent should be qualified to at least Level 2 (see Appendix 2 for explanation of levels). An increasing emphasis on employment and the Level 2 target has led some colleges to refocus their funding onto work-related learning, to the concern of practitioners helping priority groups re-engage in education and training. This report demonstrates the necessity of continuing to provide adequate Entry level literacy, numeracy and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), not only for progression into other learning, but as an important means of reaching the most socially-excluded adults and families. Alongside the focus on employability, the government's stated aims for adult learning still include 'targeting hard-to-reach learners', with learning opportunities delivered through community settings as well as through employers, job centres and colleges (DIUS 2007). The government has recently published its White Paper on informal adult learning, *The Learning Revolution* (DIUS 2009), in which it sets out a strategy for informal learning, and recognises the importance of informal learning for people with low skills and poor experiences of formal education. Prioritising the education of marginalised adults is an important contribution to a number of policy goals led by different government departments such as the social inclusion, community cohesion initiatives and the Children's Plan, but national strategies have to be supported by funding, local strategies and action by learning providers.

When discussing 'priority groups' it is important to recognise that individuals may face multiple barriers and have a complex range of needs, so cannot always be simply categorised as belonging to one particular group. Nor are statistics routinely collected in a way that enables uptake of provision by priority groups to be measured. For example, studies have shown that the most disadvantaged people are likely to have skills at Entry level 2 or below, but the Learning and Skills Council does not distinguish Entry levels 1, 2 and 3 in their learner records, so progress through these levels cannot be measured. Statistics are not collected on particular minorities such as travellers, asylum-seekers or other subsets of the black and minority ethnic census categories. There are several different definitions of homelessness and considerable variation in estimates of how many people there are in each. Researching the experiences of particular groups provides a richer picture of the challenges they face and how these may be overcome. The research studies on homeless people and on Black and Minority Ethnic learners in Chapters 2 and 3 of this report demonstrate the value of scrutinising data and definitions, as well as focusing on individual learners and how community and education providers seek to meet their needs.

The most vulnerable learners may be hardest for traditional providers of education and training to attract, as those with better skills take advantage of new opportunities sooner. People with poor experiences of education are understandably reluctant to repeat the experience. Many people find strategies to get by with their level of basic skills and unless they acknowledge those difficulties are unlikely to seek help; even then, there may be a number of personal challenges and structural barriers to overcome before enrolling on a course. Education and training have to be designed with an acknowledgement of

the inequalities people have to contend with, if priority groups are to participate in learning in greater numbers.

Social disadvantage and basic skills

National studies which have collected data on individuals at regular intervals in their lives have shown a strong relationship between poor language, literacy and numeracy (LLN) and continuing disadvantage throughout adulthood. When a sample of adults aged 34 from the 1970 British Cohort Study (BCS70) and their children were interviewed and assessed, parents with the poorest skills (at Entry level 2 or below) were likely to be much more disadvantaged than those with higher level skills, and their children were likely to fall behind in literacy and numeracy (Bynner and Parsons 2006).

Compared to adults with Level 1 or higher skills, these adults had also experienced relatively economically disadvantaged childhoods. Their own parents had not experienced post-school education, had not read to them regularly or been viewed by teachers as being interested in their children's education. In turn they themselves were less engaged in their own children's education. Their level of literacy and numeracy had an ongoing impact on their working lives. They were most likely to have left school at the earliest opportunity with no qualifications, to hold negative views of the value of education for future employment possibilities and to experience much lower levels of training when in work. In comparison with adults with Level 1 skills, men with the lowest skill levels were up to four times more likely to be unemployed or in insecure employment. Both men and women with poorest skills were far more likely to suffer from digital exclusion, being four times as likely to have no computer and three times as likely to have no access to the internet at home.

Basic skill needs often become evident at key transitions in life such as on re-entering the job market or when children start school. Some individuals are able to turn their lives around through effective support at home, in the community, through formal education or the workplace: four out of five who had achieved Level 2 had done so via a vocational route. Men and women who had improved their literacy and numeracy between the ages of 21 and 34 were more likely to be in full-time jobs, to use computers at work, and to be generally better off than those whose skills had not improved. They were also more likely to be engaged in areas such as politics and school or community organisations. Conversely, deterioration in skills over that period, particularly for women, was associated with a number of negative effects – less likelihood of employment for example – which increase social and economic marginalisation. The positive benefits of enhancing basic skills seems to be opening up economic opportunities and reducing social exclusion, as intended by the Skills for Life strategy, although the cause and effect relationship needs to be better understood.

Not every individual will experience these long-term 'trajectories of disadvantage' and many people find ways to overcome the disadvantages they face. However at every stage of life opportunities are missed to help young people and adults improve their literacy and numeracy; less than half of those with Entry level skills aged 34 had reading problems recognised by parents or addressed by teachers at age 10 (Bynner and Parsons 2007).

Supporting disadvantaged families

Further comparison of these 34 year olds' skills and their children's test scores has found that, even controlling for a wide range of variables such as the parents' work status, income levels, ability aged 5, or the children's gender and position in the family, there is clear evidence that parents with higher basic skills have children who perform better in tests of literacy and numeracy (de Coulon et al. 2008). These findings suggest that investing in policies which improve parents' basic skills could have a large intergenerational impact.

The findings support the premise on which family literacy is based. These programmes were started in the 1990s to help families, particularly in areas of disadvantage, to learn together so parents can support their children's education. The range of programmes has increased since the start of the Skills for Life strategy with the typical model being separate learning sessions for parents and children, followed by joint sessions where they work together. Individual programmes have been shown to benefit children's literacy, language or numeracy. As well as improving their own literacy, parents benefit in other ways including gaining self-confidence, employment, and getting involved with their children's schools, although men are not involved as much as women. The impact of these programmes appears to be sustained long after they have finished (Brooks et al. 2007).

For many adults family learning is a first step back into education and a chance to improve their own literacy, language and numeracy whilst supporting their children. Typically recruitment is via the school. Good liaison between the adult and children's tutors, separate spaces for adults and children, and sensitivity to possible negative feelings about the school environment and accreditation are important components of effective practice. Successful programmes acknowledge and build on families' own literacy, language and numeracy practices, provide bilingual tutors when needed and introduce accreditation only when learners are ready (Mallows 2007a).

Reaching hard-to-reach learners

Learners who are commonly called 'hard to reach' by education providers may find that institutional barriers make further education and training equally 'hard to reach'. They may be reluctant to attend large colleges but be in touch with a number of different community and support organisations. Learning may not be their primary reason for getting involved with these agencies. The majority of the adults interviewed – in community projects for people who were homeless, drug and alcohol dependent, victims of domestic violence, or who were living on estates in deprived areas – had negative experiences of education and authority figures. They experienced a range of personal, physical, social or emotional constraints on engaging in learning and were subject to unpredictable changes in their lives. They also faced barriers related to funding, such as childcare and travel costs, and these difficulties were often further compounded because their projects had short-term funding. Learning opportunities which were not formal and which enabled them to engage when the time was right for them were the most successful (Barton et al 2006).

Relating the curriculum to their current life circumstances helped them build positively on the way they used their existing literacy skills. Flexible courses – allowing for dropping in and out of learning, so they could deal with other responsibilities or changes in their lives – were more likely to help them progress than time-limited provision. Sympathetic tutors and project staff were crucial to people feeling safe and valued, and gaining the confidence to move to mainstream provision. It was found that specialist LLN tutors from colleges also needed training and support to work in specific community settings (Appleby 2007).

In rural areas potential learners can face quite different kinds of social exclusion. Access and childcare are major barriers to learning, contributing also to the difficulty for providers in attracting enough learners to make local courses viable. Promotion was often by word of mouth and the Gremlins advertising campaign also reduced the stigma felt by rural learners in asking for help with literacy and numeracy.

Rural learners were more likely to enrol to help their children at school, although motivation often changed over time, and they were also more ready to come forward for numeracy rather than literacy qualifications. As a result of learning they reported significant gains in self-esteem as well as skills. Rural provision needs to consider seasonal work and transport issues, as well as addressing a shortfall in suitably qualified teachers. There are also increasing numbers of ESOL learners in rural settings who are not provided for, many of whom were well educated and skilled in their home country, and need differentiated learning opportunities to meet their individual requirements.

It is not only in rural areas that people can be isolated and marginalised. Many learners live in deprived neighbourhoods without access to key services, thereby compounding social exclusion. The Index of Multiple Deprivation can help planners understand differences at district level, identified according to domains of deprivation relating to income, employment, health and disability, education and training, housing and services, living environment and crime[3]. The 'proportion of adults in an area with no or low qualifications' can be used as the starting point for identifying potential basic skill needs.

Through its sampling, the *Skills for Life Survey* (DfES 2003) also identified regional variations in ESOL, language and numeracy levels[4]. Both the 2007 Index of Multiple Deprivation and the 2003 *Skills for Life Survey* show that areas of the North- West, the North-East and London are particularly disadvantaged. Wales also had lower levels of basic skills. Locally these are being addressed through targeted strategies and Local Area Agreements for economic development and regeneration. However, long-term structural inequalities have a major impact on people's life chances and there is little data available on how far regional variations in LLN have been addressed.

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[3] www.communities.gov.uk/indices
[4] www.dfes.gov.uk/readwriteplus_skillsforlifesurvey

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Learning in the workplace

Half of the people with poor basic skills are already in employment. Many are in low-skilled jobs and would be unlikely to attend formal education institutions, either because it is difficult to find the time, or because formal learning environments are unappealingly reminiscent of an unsatisfactory experience of compulsory education. Training in the workplace has also traditionally been more available to those with higher skill levels, especially those in professional jobs. Through the Skills for Life initiative, public sector employers' schemes, including those in the health service and the army, have re-engaged substantial numbers of employees in learning. Union learning representatives have also had a positive impact by encouraging workers to participate in LLN learning at work, but they found opportunities for workers are still very dependent on the role managers play in facilitating or blocking access to learning.

Although workplace learning is a key component of the Skills for Life strategy, little is known about its impact. A joint NRDC/Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) longitudinal study of over 500 adults in 55 organisations is already demonstrating the potential to engage learners not reached by other forms of provision. Two-thirds were male, over half had left full-time education with no qualifications, the average age was 40 and over a third in the sample were ESOL learners. On average they had already been with their current employers for eight years. As a result of participating in workplace learning, over 60 per cent reported developing new skills and increased confidence in and outside work, and nearly 80 per cent said that learning at work had changed their attitude to training and education. Increased confidence, particularly in communicating with colleagues and using technology, often led to willingness to 'take on more' and progress further (Wolf and Waite 2007).

Unemployed learners and jobseekers

Higher levels of literacy, and especially numeracy, are associated with improved employment prospects, and higher levels of skills with higher earnings. Programmes for jobseekers such as New Deal now include basic skills, but need to be more sensitive to individual learners' levels to ensure retention and success. Those who did persist not only improved their basic skills and qualifications; in addition they improved also their soft skills – confidence and self-esteem for example – whilst also increasing their employability.

Many programmes for the unemployed and jobseekers have sanctions applied to them, such as loss of benefits for non-participation or non-completion. A study of voluntary and non-voluntary learners has shown that the voluntary learners reported wider benefits such as personal confidence, more commitment and better understanding of their basic skills competencies and limitations, but also that compulsion does not have a significant negative effect as long as it is regarded as fair (O'Grady and Atkin 2005, 2006). The critical factor seems to be to have literacy, numeracy and ESOL available to those who need and want it, within programmes tailored as far as possible to individual requirements.

Unemployment strategies since the 1980s have shown that subsidised work schemes had most impact in the short term, although education might be most

beneficial in the long term. Both employers and employees value relevant basic skills training. It might therefore be most effective if there was appropriate support in language, literacy and numeracy so people could develop the skills needed for their work situations and aspirations (Tusting and Barton 2007).

Disengaged young people

Half the Skills for Life qualifications gained between 2000–1 and 2004–5 were achieved by young people aged 16 to 19, rather than by adults. However since 1994 approximately 9 to 10 per cent of 16 to 19-year-olds are not in education, training or employment (NEET) and they are of particular concern to policymakers. Young people are more likely to be in this group if they have low attainment at GCSE, were persistent truants in year 11, come from lower socio-economic groups or are teenage mothers. But the group is highly diverse: young people with learning difficulties are twice as likely as others to be NEET, but 27 per cent of NEETs have high GCSE attainment. Some of those who cause most concern, especially the 1 per cent who are 'long-term' NEET, at 16, 17 and 18, experience a range of problems including being in care, subject to supervision orders, homeless, engaged in criminal activity or drug or alcohol abuse (DfES 2005a). Through the Every Child Matters agenda, Connexions and the 14–19 education and skills agenda there are attempts to provide an inter-agency approach and an individualised plan for each young person to help them address the barriers to re-engaging in learning.

However, a study comparing regions with different rates of disengaged young people found that there were a number of structural barriers which impeded the progress of initiatives focusing on NEET reduction. These included: funders emphasising targets for hard outcomes and disregarding soft outcomes, and the time it takes to reintegrate these young people; sufficient provision of Entry to Employment (E2E) programmes; lack of clarity between organisations about their responsibilities; insufficient involvement of young people in decision-making and planning.

Young adults who are not engaged in learning or employment are very difficult to locate. Many programmes therefore concentrate on reaching out to them and motivating them to join in an unthreatening environment, before introducing them to 'basic skills', which some of them see as a 'turn off'. There are many statutory and voluntary organisations working to address the needs of these young people, but due to a lack of networking, practitioners found it difficult to find out about sources of funding or appropriate resources that could help them teach LLN. Across all sectors, embedding LLN was widely believed to be the most effective approach, building LLN in to the programmes as something intrinsic to their learning. Other critical success factors included building on learners' interests, making learning relevant and useful, and taking account of individual life situations and needs. Provision which was informal and open access and allowed learners to develop at their own pace was effective. Young people were very motivated by learning with information technology and benefitted from having informal initial assessment, and a structured learning plan, with high expectations and rewards (McNeil and Dixon 2005).

Offenders

Adult and young offenders experience a range of disadvantages: the majority have no qualifications (compared with 15 per cent of the general public), nearly half have experienced exclusion from school and two-thirds were unemployed before prison. More than half of young offenders in custody or being supervised in the community have skills below Level 1 in literacy and numeracy, though it cannot be said that poor basic skills is the cause of offending behaviour. It is has not been established whether a comparable group of non-offending young people would have the same poor basic skill levels too, but when adult male prisoners were compared to a group of men from similar backgrounds, there were no differences in skill levels. However evidence (DfES 2005b) suggests that both education and employment do result in lower reoffending rates. One study showed offenders attending programmes promoting employment and basic skills were much more likely to be employed six months after completion than those in comparison groups. The Skills for Life strategy has significantly increased the number of basic skills qualifications achieved in prisons, rising from 25,300 in 2001–2 to 63,500 in 2003–4 (HM Government Green Paper 2005).

Young offenders are particularly difficult to engage in language, literacy and numeracy provision, because of previous negative experiences of education and school exclusion, the custodial environment being associated primarily with punishment, the additional disruption caused by 'prison churn' and lack of consistency of provision, and other factors such as bullying. The prison curriculum may not meet their needs and it is difficult to ensure continuity in learning programmes. Flexible programmes which are responsive to their interests and aspirations are more likely to engage them. Successful programmes have been found to use a variety of methods and contextualise basic skills so they are relevant to their interests and ambitions. Because young offenders have complex needs, programmes which are multi-modal – for instance, using ICT and practical skills as well as behaviour management and communication skills – are most effective. The largest literacy and numeracy learning gains have been made in vocational contexts, and disaffected young people are motivated by environments that resemble the flexibility of the workplace (Hurry 2007).

Homeless people

Many of the strategies that work with young people, such as recognising and celebrating achievement, are equally important for people who are homeless. As the study in Chapter 2 shows, data is not easy to collect for homeless people, as many people in this heterogeneous group fall outside particular categories and have complex needs. However, research suggests that 60 per cent have qualifications below Level 2 and 37 per cent have no qualifications (compared to 32 per cent and 15 per cent respectively in the general population). The longer people were homeless and the older they were, the less likely they were to participate in education or training. Nevertheless many expect to take part in education or training in the future and one in five got a job after participating in education or training activities.

A number of agencies provide education, including literacy and numeracy, but provision is patchy and there is some uncertainty about who is responsible for funding. Homeless people valued voluntary-sector provision particularly highly because staff had a good understanding of their needs. Some research suggests better collaboration is needed between sectors to help homeless people make progress in their learning.

Black and Minority Ethnic learners

Chapter 3 explores the experience of Black and Minority Ethnic learners in detail, and there are positive and negative messages about their success. Black and Minority Ethnic learners' participation in LLN provision was nearly a third of total enrolments between 2000 and 2005; this was considerably higher than their proportion in the adult population, which is closer to 10 per cent. However, achievements of Skills for Life qualifications by ethnic minority learners are not rising as fast as those of white learners. Retention rates were also lower in ESOL classes than on adult courses generally, possibly owing to the unpredictability of ESOL learners' lives.

Proficiency in English language appears to be a key factor in minority groups' success rates. ESOL is over-subscribed and the take up could be seen as a major success story of the Skills for Life strategy. However, many of the achievements gained do not 'count' towards Skills for Life targets and ESOL has been subject to funding cuts, which causes many of the most marginalised individuals to be excluded from full participation. The 2008 consultation on ESOL and community cohesion (DIUS 2008b) is an acknowledgement that there is a cost to the wider community as well as a risk of social exclusion to the individual if access to learning English is denied.

There is considerable variation in the participation and success rates of different minorities and it is important that provision is responsive to their differing needs. For instance, Chinese and Indian minorities in the general population have high levels of qualifications and high levels of achievement in further and higher education, whereas Pakistani and Bangladeshi learners have lower levels and are more engaged in learning at Levels 1 and 2. Minorities who do not appear in the statistics, such as refugees and travellers, need strategies that take account of the particular barriers they face. Indicators of effective practice include differentiation in response to learners' diversity of backgrounds, provision of good role models, both teachers and mentors, and more support and guidance at key transition points.

Learners with learning disabilities and/or learning difficulties

Although not identified as a priority group at the start of the Skills for Life strategy, many learners with disabilities may also be in other disadvantaged groups, for example they are much more likely to be unemployed. Learners in further education who consider that they have a learning difficulty, disability or health problem are identified in Individual Learner Records (ILR) and so appear in the statistics. It is encouraging that the overall success rate of 76 per cent (in 2005/6) is the same for all learners, regardless of disability. However fewer individuals

with a disability were participating in education, compared with non-disabled individuals (8 per cent and 18 per cent respectively in 2001) although by 2007 this had almost doubled for men with a disability and risen about a third for women to 10 per cent and 14 per cent respectively. People with disabilities are more likely to have no qualifications and to be studying at lower levels, although between 2001 and 2007 more people with disabilities were taking up courses and studying at higher levels (Labour Force Survey 2001 and 2007 UK data archive University of Essex, cited in Frumkin and Yates 2007).

It appears that the Skills for Life strategy may be helping people with disabilities gain qualifications, although the sample sizes are not large and the effect could be due to other initiatives such as Inclusive Learning. NRDC qualitative studies suggest that there may be insufficient places to meet demand for Entry to Employment courses (E2E) and that provision for learners with learning difficulties below Level 1 is being squeezed by college pressure to achieve their targets at higher levels. For learners with moderate to severe learning difficulties, learning which enables them to maintain the skills to cope with everyday life is as important as progression to the next level of competence.

The learning environment

This study does not focus on specific teaching and learning strategies. Some learners, particularly those with specific learning disabilities such as dyslexia, will need tutors who are experts in the field. But all tutors working with the priority groups mentioned above need a repertoire of strategies that take account of individual adults' difficulties which have prevented them from participating in the past and which continue to act as barriers to their learning. 'Personalised' programmes which build on individuals' strengths and how they use literacy, numeracy and language in their everyday lives, and a contextualised curriculum which tailors the material to their interests and motivations for learning can make a significant impact. Promoting informal social interaction and peer support, whether in the workplace or in community-based classes, strengthens students' confidence and is highly valued.

NRDC research has shown that embedding basic skills within other subjects can address issues of motivation and engagement. Using specialist teachers alongside vocational tutors resulted in significantly higher achievement of literacy, ESOL and, to a lesser extent, numeracy qualifications. Courses that had a greater degree of embedding were also associated with higher overall success rates in the vocational course and learners rating the course as better preparation for work (Casey et al. 2006).

Different kinds of providers, colleges, learndirect centres and adult education providers vary in the way they support the most disadvantaged adults, and have different strengths. Inspection reports point to the success of learndirect's literacy and numeracy programmes in improving learners' confidence, employability and life chances. Success rates in national assessments and qualifications are high (over 70 per cent in most centres); very few learners withdraw before the end of their courses and a large majority progress to further courses. Adult and community learning providers are praised for their work with a very diverse range of learners, including those with learning difficulties or disabilities, those with

mental health difficulties, Travellers, migrant workers and substance abusers. However, it is noted that too many adult education providers offering qualifications in literacy, numeracy and ESOL have low success rates. Many colleges have effective learner-support services providing initial assessment and tailored programmes, which are closely monitored, though lack of suitably qualified ESOL staff hampered responsiveness to growing demand in some colleges. Overall the inspectors comment that for disadvantaged post-16 learners, there are not enough individualised learning programmes and there is still too much concentration on simply passing the test, rather than on the value of the learning process (Ofsted 2007).

Persistence and progression

Breaking down barriers to access and encouraging students to take part in language, literacy or numeracy will not result in progress unless measures are in place to help them stay in learning, or to continue when they have setbacks or interruptions because of other pressures in their lives. NRDC ongoing studies of learner persistence show that hard-to-reach learners can find it very difficult to persist in learning. Sensitive initial assessment and an emphasis on building self-confidence rather than qualifications help them to succeed. Support from mentors or peers is particularly valuable in helping 'at risk' learners weather transitions. Although many prefer an informal atmosphere, some learners, particularly those at lower levels or 'at risk', say they benefit from the routine and structure of more formal learning environments. Many learners welcome having their achievements recognised and receiving certificates, providing the most appropriate accreditation has been selected (Litster and Lopez 2007).

Evidence is emerging that the Skills for Life strategy may be having a large and positive impact on progression for adults with Level 1 or below qualifications, from analysis of the Learning and Skills Council Individual Learner Records (ILR). Upward progression rates of 10 per cent in the years preceding the Skills for Life strategy rose in 2000–4 to 13 per cent. Learners in further education, particularly those at lower levels, appear to be using basic skills as a platform for progression to other learning, moving from basic skills to vocational, and to a lesser extent, academic learning (Brooks et al. forthcoming). Further analysis needs to be undertaken to understand whether this represents a significant improvement in basic skills and a stepping stone to longer-term engagement in learning for the priority groups.

Other research, following cohorts of learners over several years, suggests that as a predictor of achieving Level 2 qualifications in adulthood, being on a course which does not lead to qualifications is as important as being enrolled in training or achieving Level 1 qualifications. Whilst doing well at school aged 7 and through to 16 is the most important predictor, placing those who struggle at a long-term disadvantage, engaging in any kind of post-school learning appears to encourage further participation, and is a more important factor than people's socio-economic status. This is a positive message for those working with the most disadvantaged priority groups. People's progression pathways were found to be very varied and this reinforces the need for a range of opportunities that help people both acquire basic skills and gain confidence (Sabates et al. 2007).

A study of the impact of Skills for Life has found that between 2004 and 2006 adult literacy, language and numeracy learners progressed equally well and literacy learners and ESOL learners' confidence and attitudes also improved significantly. The study concludes that the strategy appears to be working equally well for many different groups (Brooks et al. forthcoming).

2. Skills for Life provision for homeless people

David Barton, Candice Satchwell and Anita Wilson

Introduction

The lives of people described as 'homeless' are often complex, as are the reasons leading to their being homeless and their reactions to it. It is important to understand issues of homelessness before considering the place of educational interventions. This section begins by examining some definitions of homelessness, and reviewing the various categories of homeless people. It continues with an overview of current provision for homeless people, both statutory and voluntary, and the different agencies' various aims and priorities. The report considers the available routes into education and the types of courses available to homeless people, as well as noting their difficulties in gaining access to the provision and the barriers to making such provision known to them. It is important to understand the complexities of homelessness and how it is experienced on the ground, and we provide a detailed case study of homelessness and provision in one town in England, Blackpool; it covers the range of organisations involved, including the views of people working with homeless people, and homeless people themselves. Examples of existing good practice in Blackpool are described, along with an analysis of associated barriers and difficulties. This is all drawn together in a discussion of the place of Skills for Life in provision for homeless people. Conclusions are drawn about the educational provision available, the gaps in provision, and the possible ways of improving both provision and access.

What is homelessness?

The common public image of a homeless person is often of someone begging in the street or sleeping rough in a shop doorway. However, the situation is far more complex than this, with a considerable proportion of homeless people remaining hidden from the public gaze. As there is no one generic definition of homelessness, official definitions are crucial as they dictate a set range of responses. Terms such as 'daytime homelessness', 'threatened homelessness' or 'statutory homelessness' not only have their own special meaning but also have implications for the provision that is available to the person who comes within them. Likewise, those who fall in and out of homelessness cannot be categorised only in terms of their accommodation status (or lack of it), but fall into other equally broad groups such as offender, ex-offender, care leaver or veteran. While each of these groups may have its own 'primary' provider – an ex-offender and the Probation Service for example – nevertheless an individual may come under the auspices of homelessness agencies and services. In many cases, providers work successfully in multi-agency partnerships, but it is also possible that an individual might fall through various nets as each service assumes that attendant needs are being picked up by someone else. Multi-agency provision also makes it difficult to untangle the efficacy and positive intervention of any one service. For example, while successfully housing someone denotes a positive

intervention to an accommodation service, such accommodation may in fact impact negatively on a person being able to access education or training provided by a homelessness service.

Definitions of homelessness

The current, legal definition of homelessness is given in Appendix 1. The Crisis report, *How many, how much* (Kenway and Palmer 2003) picks up the subjectivity of two important phrases in this definition: 'licence to occupy' and 'reasonable to occupy', and claims that these contribute to a lack of clarity in the application of the legal definition. The law does not focus on the circumstances in which a homeless person is living, but rather on their entitlement to a home.

With regard to people who present themselves as in need of housing, local authorities have a duty to assess applicants for housing under homelessness legislation and to determine whether:

- they are homeless intentionally or unintentionally, and
- meet the criteria for 'priority housing need'.

This creates two groups: 'statutory homeless people' and 'non-statutory homeless people'.

Statutory homeless people
For statistics provided by the Department of Communities and Local Government, statutory homeless households are those 'unintentionally homeless and falling within a priority need group, and consequently owed a main homelessness duty'.[5] Statutory homeless people tend to be in households with children under 18, and will be found to be eligible for priority housing and other assistance from local authorities. Being in the 'priority need' category implies that people will be rehoused. However, people from these groups may still find themselves homeless for complex and varied reasons. For example, people with or without children may find themselves homeless for a period of time while a local authority decides whether or not they are intentionally homeless; as may people evicted from homes for reasons beyond their control. There may also be people who would be classified as in priority need, but who have not made themselves known as being homeless.

Non-statutory homeless people
Non-statutory homeless people are not eligible for priority housing. They tend to be single, although not exclusively, and they may not have applied for housing or may have had their application refused. They are not recognised by local authorities as homeless and include those who: sleep rough, sleep on friends' floors, 'sofa surf', squat, stay in shelters or hostels intended as temporary accommodation, or stay in bed and breakfast hotels. Many of these people receive help from voluntary sector organisations, but others are 'hidden' – having not declared their homelessness, having not sought help, or not living in an area where non-statutory help is available.

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[5] www.statistics.gov.uk/hub/people-places/housing-and-households/housing-need-and-homelessness

The Crisis report's application of the legal definition of homelessness results in the following categories of single homeless people which need to be included in any estimate of the numbers of homeless people (Kenway and Palmer 2003):

- rough sleepers
- those who have been provided with supported housing for whatever reason (hostels/YMCAs/shelters)
- bed and breakfast and other boarded accommodation
- people in owner-occupier and rented accommodation at imminent risk of eviction
- squatters, because they have no alternative*
- involuntary sharing – multiple family units sharing overcrowded accommodation
- involuntary sharing – multiple family units sharing accommodation which is not overcrowded
- people in institutions because they have nowhere else to go*
- people staying on the floors and sofas of friends and family*
- people whose personal safety or well-being is at risk*.

*For these categories there are no data available.

It is also possible for the same person to fall into different categories, without related multiple issues being addressed. For example, while the demographic of offenders are known to include a high number of care leavers (27 per cent of the total prison population), and more than 80 per cent of offenders are known to have left school aged 16 or younger (NIACE 2006a), no mention is made – or record kept of offenders who are ex-Service personnel or who have previously experienced homelessness, and any impact this may have had on either their imprisonment or their educational development. Furthermore, within the offender population, there are the more specific needs of young offenders under the age of 18, many of whom identified housing as first becoming an issue between the ages of 13–15 (Youth Justice Board 2007).

'Invisible' homeless
Some groups continue to be 'missed out' of statistics on homelessness. As noted in the Local Authorities Homelessness Strategies summary (ODPM 2004) in assessing the number of homeless people within their authority, one-fifth of Local Housing Authorities failed to include 'single homeless people and/or rough sleepers, ex-services personnel, Black and Minority Ethnic groups, former asylum-seekers and refugees, and Gypsies/Travellers' (ODPM 2005, p. 6). Only a small number of authorities, such as Wolverhampton, prioritised linking aspects of tenancy support and education and employment facilities (ODPM 2005, p. 9). The report also highlighted the fact that 'homelessness is seen as a housing problem' (p. 4) – something which hindered true partnership working.

Daytime homeless
Additionally, there is a group known as 'daytime homeless', described as those who have a bed for the night but are ejected each morning from their accommodation, thus rendering them 'daytime homeless' (Jones and Pleace 2005). The people identified in their study as 'daytime homeless' accessed a

variety of daytime provision and services at day centres, drop-in centres or soup kitchens. In such cases people often work out a personal 'timetable' for themselves, moving between opening times of various services.

Numbers of homeless people

In order to provide numbers of homeless people, Kenway and Palmer (2003) apply filters to each category (apart from rough sleepers) to include only those who fulfil both the condition that there is no available accommodation which they have a licence to occupy, and the condition that any accommodation that is available is unreasonable to occupy, even though in principle homelessness requires only one condition. Their total estimates of homeless adults in the UK (excluding Ireland) without dependent children for 2003 are in the range 310,000 to 380,000. Of these, less than 1000 are rough sleepers. Around a quarter are single people in hostels, bed and breakfast accommodation, or facing imminent threat of eviction on the grounds of debt. The remaining three-quarters are in 'concealed households', residing with friends or family, but without any explicit right to do so, and in accommodation which is unsatisfactory in some significant way. For more on the profile of homeless people, see *The Big Issue Manifesto* (Big Issue 2006).

This complexity of determining figures for homeless people illustrates the difficulties: who to count and how to count them. Resulting figures are therefore debatable. For example, official figures put the number of rough sleepers at 498 people in England (see Appendix 1) whilst a report from Broadway (2007) claims there has been a rise of 14 per cent to 2997 in the number of rough sleepers in London since 2004/5. It also claims that fewer people are being assisted to move off the streets by outreach teams. A further complication with national figures is that a town is not registered as having any homeless people if fewer than 10 are counted.

In a general comment about such figures, Adam Sampson, Chief Executive of Shelter, has pointed out on their website:

> 'Any drop in new cases of homelessness is to be welcomed … provided this is brought about by genuine work to prevent people from losing their homes in the first place, rather than preventing them from registering to get the help they need.'[6]

Once a household is recognised as being entitled to assistance, a number of services are, in theory at least, available. However, Randall and Brown (2003) found a dearth of literature on the needs of and provision for homeless households, including those with children, and their own research found that provision was variable according to agencies available in different areas. They identified a wide range of needs among homeless families, who included several groups: vulnerable lone parents, many of whom were young with no social support network; women made homeless by domestic violence; people with mental health and emotional problems, and often repeated homelessness; victims and perpetrators of anti-social behaviour and those involved in neighbour

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[6] Available at: http://england.shelter.org.uk/home/home-624.cfm/pressreleaselisting/1/pressrelease/257/ at the time of writing.

disputes; people with drug and alcohol problems, or literacy and educational difficulties; and children with behavioural and educational problems. Their recommendations centre around the need to prevent homelessness in the first instance, by assessing and attending to the needs of those who are homeless or at risk of being homeless.

For those who are not deemed eligible for state assistance, the priority for them and for the charities and organisations which exist to help them, is often not education, nor even addressing multiple personal problems, but food, warmth and shelter. Non-statutory homeless people can therefore be regarded as being the 'hardest-to-reach', particularly in terms of education.

Reasons for becoming homeless

According to the Homeless Link website[7], people most at risk of becoming homeless are likely to have had at least one of the following life experiences:

- in care as a child or had a disturbed childhood
- have a mental illness or addiction
- have been in the armed forces
- have spent time in prison
- have migrated to this country from Eastern or Central Europe or arrived as an asylum-seeker.

It is also more likely that a homeless person is black or from a minority ethnic group. Such factors are important as they can be part of the reasons for people becoming homeless and they can be as important as homelessness in affecting their current experiences. The wide variety of reasons which lead to people becoming homeless means that, although homeless people are a priority group for Skills for Life, the group is not a single, cohesive collection of people, but comprises individuals of different ages, with different backgrounds, needs, motivations and aspirations. As *The Big Issue Manifesto* (Big Issue 2006) says:

'It is very rare for a homeless person to only have a lack of home as the cause of their problems. There is normally a cocktail of problems: mental health issues; low self-esteem; restlessness; addiction problems; physical health issues; limited education.'

Although each individual has their own story to tell, we have identified from our sample some categories of people with similar backgrounds and/or similar needs. These include: ex-prisoners; ex-servicemen; A8 nationals (people from 8 of the countries which joined the EU in 2004 – Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia); young people leaving care homes or family breakdowns; and seasonal workers. Within each of these groups there may be problems in addition to their homelessness, such as physical or mental health problems; alcohol or drug problems; difficulties in adjusting to new lifestyles or environment; lack of self-esteem etc. These may have been issues which contributed to them becoming homeless, or they may have developed in response to their homeless situation. The need to take account of other influential factors is crucial and we return to it throughout the report.

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[7] www.homeless.org.uk/policyandinfo/facts/riskhomeless

Three vignettes

John

John is a friendly white man in his early forties, and regularly attends the Salvation Army drop-in centre. He attended a special school in Leeds as a child, did not progress well at school, and often went 'on the wagon' with his dad who worked as a pipe-layer instead of going to school. As a result he learnt a lot about the building trade, and worked for many years in factories and on building sites.

John became homeless as a result of family breakdown. His father died, he argued with his mother and she asked him to leave. He left Leeds and went to Blackpool. He ended up sleeping under the pier, and through word-of-mouth found the Salvation Army drop-in centre. From there he was helped into temporary accommodation and it transpired that he was unable to read and write beyond signing his name.

Despite his willingness to work, his lifestyle and his low literacy levels became barriers to him getting a job. In addition, recent legislation dictates that all workers on building sites must have a Construction Skills Certification Scheme (CSCS) card, which involves passing a health and safety test. John began attending literacy classes at the local library, provided by Adult Community Learning, which were later substituted by sessions with a tutor at the Bridge Project. While his literacy skills are improving generally, John's sole aim is to pass the test so that he can get into the work he wants. He will soon be moving onto a Construction course at the local college, where he will be able to take his Health and Safety test with Basic Skills support. His support worker from Positive Steps into Work will accompany him on his first visits to the college and he will take the test with individual support. For John this will be the gateway to working for a living once again, in an area he has worked in previously for many years.

Jason

Jason is a lively young man who attends Streetlife, a centre for homeless people aged between 16 and 25. He is aged 23, black, articulate, friendly and has a creative bent. He originally left Blackpool where he lived with his mother after a family disagreement when he turned 18. He returned to Blackpool from Manchester just over six months ago after problems with his father. He was unable to prove he had a local connection and was therefore not considered a priority by the council. Now that he has been resident for six months the council have been trying to find him a flat. He has since found that his ex-partner in Blackpool has a son and that he is the father, but he has been unable to trace his son so far. He currently sleeps either in the Streetlife shelter or on the streets, although it can be dangerous. Before he left Blackpool, Jason was attending college and hoping to study architecture at university. However, he had dropped out of conventional schooling when his mother became ill and he took over her business for her. His attendance at college dropped when he got into drinking. He says that he has always wanted to return to education, but it has been very hard since he has been homeless. Being over 19, he is too old to get onto the courses he wants to do and he finds it difficult to attend regularly.

His attendance at Streetlife has been intermittent and sporadic. However, he was encouraged to attend a film-making workshop put on as a taster session by First Take, who are committed to finding hidden talent in socially excluded young people. The success of this initial intervention has inspired him to engage in other types of education and he is currently attending courses for a Youth Achievement Award.

He would like to get back into education to further his opportunities, get a job, get his own place, and eventually run his own business. Streetlife has helped with finding him somewhere to stay and health issues, but he feels that what he needs most to fulfil his ambitions is structure. He finds it difficult to keep appointments, to sign on regularly and to find somewhere to sleep every night. He would like to be able to focus on education and his future, but needs to deal with more immediate problems first.

Valentina

Valentina has just arrived from Bulgaria. She is a Romani and although she says she is 16, she seems a lot younger. She is always accompanied by an older, smarter-dressed man who she refers to as her husband. There is a possibility that she may be one of 'The Natasha's' (Malarek 2004) – girls who have been transported away from their home countries and who become exploited. She speaks very little English and usually leaves her husband to do the talking. Their main concerns are to find out more about how to deal with issues about rent, a flat, obtaining a meal and aspects of the law. Although many young homeless immigrants become involved with drug-running or prostitution, Valentina is selling the Big Issue. Her time is mostly taken up with selling the magazine, and so although the Big Issue has an outreach worker who could direct her to language courses, Valentina would find it difficult to access them. The organisation has already tried to run classes, but the girls say they can only turn up to classes occasionally as their lives are so strictly timetabled.

Although Valentina might want to improve her English or learn to read and write in another language, she has many barriers to overcome if she wants to achieve this. While shelter, food and warmth are her immediate priorities, she also has to negotiate other cultural constraints that might stand in the way of her learning.

Provision for homeless people

There are many agencies and charities working with issues of homelessness. Some are umbrella organisations, for example Homeless Link which acts as a 'national membership organisation for frontline homelessness agencies in England'[8]. Many – such as St Mungo's, Broadway, and Crisis – focus on homelessness in specific geographical areas (usually London). Others, such as Shelter, operate on a nationwide basis with centres in many parts of the country. The majority, understandably, focus primarily on issues of accommodation and prioritise basic needs such as shelter, food, warmth and family life. Others focus on specific issues around homelessness. Off the Streets and Into Work (OSW) is a registered charity which 'works with a variety of specialist homelessness and

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[8] www.homeless.org.uk/aboutus

training agencies to provide a range of services, including job coaching, training, and job brokerage[9]. Some agencies focus on specific age groups. Centrepoint work primarily with younger people; Women's Aid include aspects of homelessness and women within their remit; the Coalition on Older Homelessness is concerned with raising the profile of older homeless people in the UK[10]. Foyers focus specifically on the needs of young people while other organisations focus on particular groups, such as in the work done with homeless veterans by the Salvation Army and the British Legion. A list of organisations is given in Appendix 3.

The different forms of provision which are available for homeless people are important for understanding where educational provision can be accessed. Organisations have different motivations and priorities in working with homeless people. Many hold to political, religious or social justice principles, with various agendas including moving people into work, preventing homelessness or providing homes, etc. They also differ in whether they are addressing immediate 'emergency' needs or longer-term problems, and whether they are trying to bring about change in the individual or in society. How far education is involved in their provision depends on these factors, as well as on how much funding they receive and any requirements or constraints that are attached to particular sources of funding.

Overnight accommodation

Hostels provide temporary accommodation until needs are assessed and addressed. Direct-access or 'first-stage' hostels accept people with various problems and needs, rough sleepers, and some self-referrals. Specialist or 'second-stage' hostels focus on rehabilitation, treatment and resettlement. Some are single-sex, others mixed. There tend to be more hostels for young homeless people, but very few specifically for older people. They range from catering for 6–12 residents to around 300, but most large hostels have more recently been replaced by smaller ones. Services provided in hostels also vary, from advice on benefits and housing, to individual case work with key workers. Some have only a TV lounge, while others provide rehabilitation programmes, gardening schemes, literacy classes, art and music workshops.

Night centres and shelters place fewer demands on residents than hostels and can be a stepping stone to a hostel or other support. Some operate all year, some only in winter. The Rough Sleepers Unit (RSU) was originally created by the government in 1990 to provide an integrated approach to rough sleeping. In 2000 RSU introduced a programme of 'rolling shelters' in London, operating throughout the year, with each shelter remaining open for 24 weeks and each client staying for up to three weeks. RSU-supported night centres have been set up in London, Bristol and Manchester since 2000. They do not provide beds, but people can sleep in chairs or on the floor. Some have links with services and have skilled staff; others are run by volunteers and have minimal services. They are often linked to churches.

Bed and breakfast hotels which accept homeless people are run by private owners or the local council under the Private Sector Leasing Scheme. Some only

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[9] www.osw.org.uk
[10] www.olderhomelessness.org.uk

accept people who have been referred by social services or the council. Bed and breakfasts have often been used by local authorities for homeless families or single homeless in 'priority need' while they assess the case and look for longer term housing, but government directives have been put in place to reduce the amount of households in bed and breakfast accommodation for any longer than is necessary.

In addition, many of the 'hidden homeless' are to be found sleeping on friends' or relatives' floors, in squats, or on the street. They may be sleeping in overcrowded housing to which they have no legal entitlement, or are sleeping in tents, cars, caravans, on the street, in abandoned buildings or elsewhere.

Other provision

Drop in and day centres

Drop in and day centres are used daily by around 10,000 homeless and housed people (Warnes et al. 2003, p. 82) and can be open at different times of the day. Some are age-specific. Some are run by volunteers and depend on donations; others have salaried staff and regular sessions from resettlement workers, health professionals, social security benefit advisors, and substance misuse workers. Some have become 'learning zones' or 'healthy living centres', and a few have formal links with FE colleges, and provide skills and employment training. Drop in and day centres generally provide food, washing facilities, health care and advice about welfare benefits, and are contact points for onward referral to hostels.

Shared and supported housing

Shared houses are usually for between 4 and 10 people; sharing kitchen, sitting room and bathroom. Tenants prepare meals and bills are paid for from their statutory entitlements. Many are managed by homelessness sector agencies or housing providers that work with special needs groups, so tend to be used by homeless or vulnerable people. Support workers visit a few times each week, but the tenants are largely left to get on with things. The dynamics of shared housing mean that this is not always seen as a successful solution for the tenants, while grouped self-contained flats tend to be more successful.

Resettlement services

There are also resettlement services which are designed to rehouse people and support them during early tenancy. Resettlement training is provided by, for example, Homeless Link and Broadway in London, but some resettlement work is carried out by hostel and day centre staff, while bigger organisations have dedicated resettlement workers. Regardless of the provision, however, all agencies have to work within national, regional and local policy frameworks.

Homelessness and national policy

'For as long as historical records have been kept, Britain has had a homelessness problem.'[11]

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[11] www.mungos.org/homelessness/history/

Homelessness – and the difficulties associated with it – has moved in and out of the public consciousness over a significant period of time. As noted by St Mungo's, London's leading charity for homeless people, the problem goes 'as far back as the 7th century [when] the English king Hlothaere passed laws to punish vagrants'[12]. In more recent times, interest and concern has continued to grow. The 1980s saw a rapid increase in the number of people on the streets. This increase was blamed on a number of interlinked changes such as alterations in benefits, the closure of large dormitories (which improved the quality of accommodation but reduced the number of available beds) and the growing number of people with mental health issues or problems with substance misuse.

The government has continued to address the issues, firstly by setting up Rough Sleepers Initiatives and the Homeless Mentally Ill Initiative, and then with the formation of the Rough Sleepers Unit (RSU) in 1999. The focus of the RSU was based primarily on the Social Exclusion Unit's report *Coming in from the cold: The government's strategy on rough sleeping* (1999). This report was designed to provide an integrated approach to rough sleeping and reduce the number of rough sleepers by at least two-thirds by 2002. However, while the intervention was timely, it was primarily focused on issues of homelessness in London (RSU 2000).

In 2002, a number of other key changes were also made. The Homelessness Act was brought in, and the government produced two key resources – *More than a roof: A report into tackling homelessness* (DCLG 2003) and *Homelessness strategies: A good practice handbook* (DCLG 2001) – outlining how the Act should be implemented by local authorities. After two years of planning, 2003 saw the introduction of The Supporting People programme, a partnership of local government, service users and support agencies, which provides services to support vulnerable people to live independently in their own accommodation. The effect has been a national increase in access to housing support. Their website includes an online Directory of Supporting People Services available in England, which draws together a number of housing services in different regions for people facing homelessness and/or other difficulties such as mental health problems, drugs or alcohol, HIV/AIDS, learning difficulties, domestic violence, or being an ex-offender.

In 2005 the ODPM published *Sustainable Communities: settled homes; changing lives* which not only set out the considerable achievements that had been made with regard to reducing the use of bed and breakfast accommodation but also set out plans for the next five years.

Additionally, with reference to the provision of hostel accommodation, 2005 also saw the launch of The Hostels Capital Improvement Programme which aimed to make hostels 'places of change'. As part of this £90m programme, 150 projects were put in place across England to develop hostels and day centres to become places where people can access education and training, and move into work and independent accommodation. An example of one such project is included in the case study of Blackpool below.

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[12] www.mungos.org/homelessness/history/

Routes through homelessness

Figure 1 below illustrates the three most common pathways through homelessness: the statutory pathway, the pathway single homeless take and a hidden pathway. Individuals' circumstances dictate which is the most likely, while of course there are also variations depending on the time, place and accompanying issues for any one person. For example, the time factor in relation to length of service in the military or length of imprisonment appears to correlate with the amount of help given subsequently. Hence, for people coming out of prison after a 'short term', there is a relative lack of provision or support for them across the various services. The Social Exclusion Unit report (2002) *Reducing re-offending by ex-prisoners* noted that the 'majority of prisoners, particularly those serving short-term sentences, receive little practical support, before release or afterwards'. Longer-term prisoners are better supported in their moves to re-enter the outside world in terms of accommodation and the attendant services that are geared towards employment.

Figure 1: The three principal contemporary prevalent pathways through homelessness

The principal contemporary three prevalent pathways through homelessness
(from Homelessness Factfile, Crisis, 2003, p.57)
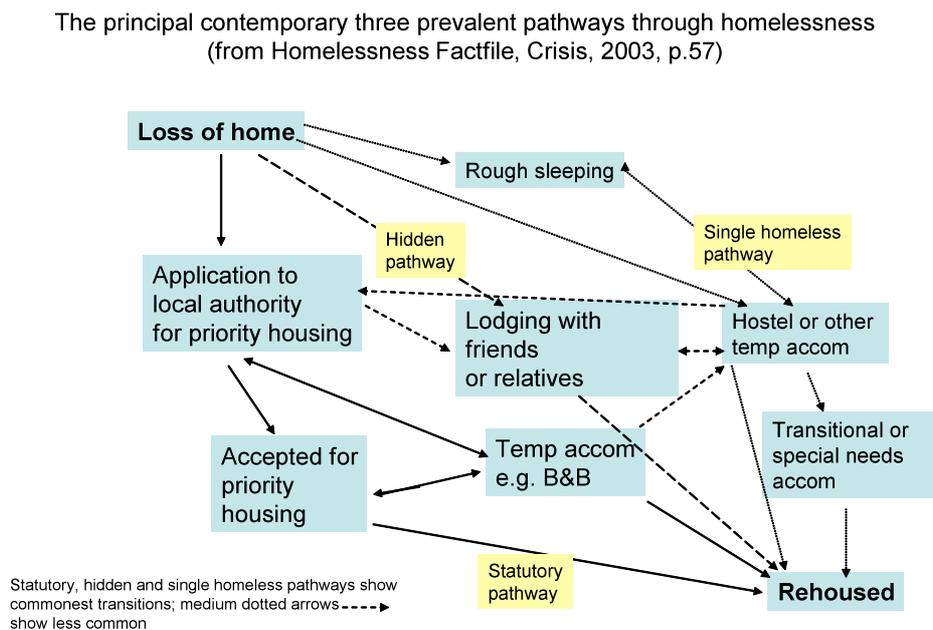
The same discrepancies appear to affect those who have undertaken military service. While a significant number of people leaving the Armed Forces are offered employment, training and resettlement, there are a considerable number for whom this is not an option. Those who have served less than three years or those who leave with less than an honourable discharge are not eligible for any support. As the Crisis report *Lest We Forget* points out:

> Resettlement help and support for personnel serving less than three years remains less than adequate. Yet, in some ways these are the same personnel who are less likely to have gained transferable skills by their time of discharge

and may therefore be more vulnerable on the two key fronts of employment and immediate accommodation.

(Crisis 2000:19)

Additionally, many ex-servicemen leave the Service as single men (7 in every 10 according to Randall and Brown (1994)) and therefore have no fixed base or social network to rely upon. Many find it difficult to settle into the accommodation that they are given: Ballantyne and Hanks report that 51 per cent moved into accommodation that they did not want, 60 per cent had stayed in their first accommodation for less than a year, while 39 per cent had never had a home since leaving the Forces (Ballantyne and Hanks 2000: 14). This means that accessing any support services is going to be difficult and sporadic.

The same criteria apply to ex-offenders who may not have had accommodation prior to coming into prison. Although the recently formed National Offender Management Service (NOMS) has a remit to provide more 'end-to-end' services for offenders, those serving sentences of less than 12 months do not come under the auspices of the Probation service and are therefore unable to access services and provision to which those serving longer sentences become entitled. Given that evidence suggests that a substantial number of prisoners have low levels of literacy, the need for the positive contribution of Skills for Life interventions in these circumstances is clear.

With regard to homelessness prior to prison – a situation that may well reoccur on release – there is strong evidence to suggest that, when '46 per cent of children in prison are or have been in care' (Hart 2006), for these children[13], having a stable home is already something that is not part of their life experience. Their time in prison seems to set up a pattern of pre-custodial difficulties which would only be followed by post-custodial difficulties around accommodation.

Furthermore, the difficulties of organising meetings, and the lack of understanding and conflict among the various agencies that are involved, make it difficult to make proper arrangements for accommodation and other services on release. The feelings of isolation – expressed by ex-service personnel and recently released prisoners – are reflected in the comments of children who contributed to the NCB report (Hart 2006). It was also found that no child had received any education in the three months following their release from prison, something we return to later (Hart 2006: 15). Education for looked after children is also notoriously patchy, according to the latest strategy on care leavers (DfES 2007a).

Another reason for the difficulty of escaping homelessness is that while many older people aspire to move from sheltered or supported housing to individualised living, the independence nevertheless brings its own difficulties of isolation and loneliness, and a lack of social contact and continued access to facilities. This abandonment can return them to the cycle of homelessness (Pannell 2005: 5). This is particularly true when people have a history of structure, regimentation or strict timetabling such as those leaving care, coming from the military or leaving prison.

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[13] People under the age of 18 are classed as children in the criminal justice system.

The place of education

Issues in relating education and homelessness

> Before we can ask people to engage with their housing or complex personal problems, we need to start by making them feel safe, trusted and happy. So opportunities to play sport, make music or cook dinner can be a beginning that ultimately leads to a resolve to confront bigger long-term issues. Once that resolve is in place there must be opportunities in the hostel to access training, education and job opportunities. College taster sessions, job coaching and social enterprise can all be offered on-site in facilities that inspire more than the old standard TV room and pool table. Easy-to-access activities can also have the added value of embedding learning in literacy and numeracy skills …. Alongside the need to have housing pathways for hostel residents it is equally important to have employment pathways.

> (DCLG 2006, p.7)

Homeless people are mentioned in the original Skills for Life strategy as one of the 'other groups at risk of exclusion'. The report refers to 100,000 homeless people, of whom around 60,000 are perceived to have literacy and numeracy needs. It states that they are at risk of exclusion from mainstream society as a result of their problems with literacy and numeracy and that literacy and numeracy needs contribute to their difficulty in finding a place to stay and a place to work. Homeless people must also be able to obtain high-quality advice and support in addressing their own literacy and numeracy needs. The strategy states that:

> We will engage with charities and other community and voluntary organisations to ensure that all those registered as homeless can have their literacy and numeracy skills identified, and that they can be given flexible learning opportunities which are sensitive to their circumstances.

> (DfEE 2001, p.28, para. 63)

Like the definition of homelessness itself, the role of education in provision for homeless people is not straightforward. While homeless people are considered to be under-skilled and under-equipped for today's workplace, provision of education, training and employment is not a priority for local housing authorities, nor is it always considered a priority by homeless people themselves. Furthermore, education, training or preparation for employment is not always easy to find in policy documentation concerned with homelessness. Equally, documentation on the provision of education and training, including Skills for Life, does not always include reference to homeless people. However, examples of good practice have demonstrated that access to education can be both empowering and a route to employment (Social Exclusion Unit 2005).

While a major drive for 'inclusion' and 'widening participation' in education led many initiatives in the late 1990s, more recently employment has become a focus for a number of government initiatives, including some which are targeted at disadvantaged groups, including homeless people. However, the difficulties

incumbent on being homeless can often impact negatively on people's ability to take part in the initiatives.

For example, New Deal is a programme for helping unemployed people to find and keep a job, implemented by Job Centre Plus. Although New Deal was adapted in April 2004 to make it more appropriate for homeless people, eligibility still requires people to have been claiming Jobseeker's Allowance for at least six months consecutively if aged 25 or under, or at least 18 months consecutively if over age 25. As Parsons and Palmer (2004) explain, 'This may make it unsuitable for many homeless people whose itinerant and chaotic lifestyles often mean that there have been gaps in the claiming of benefits' (p.11).

Matters of finance are often one of the routes into homelessness (Randall and Brown 2003). However, while Wallace and Quilgars (2005) highlight the difficulties faced by homeless people with regard to banking, saving, opening an account, debt, credit and money management, they give no indication of the useful contribution that Skills for Life might offer to alleviate some of the problems.

Some national agencies focus specifically on delivering services to learners, such as learndirect's flexible learning opportunities. Foyers incorporate education into their accommodation services; Connexions embed skills provision with a raft of advice and services offered to young people; and Jobcentre Plus includes learning within their overall remit to return people to work. However, such initiatives often have additional constraints for homeless people. It is the government's intention to deliver a 'full skills health check' to 500,000 unemployed and another 500,000 low-skilled adults by 2011 (Leitch 2006); and advisors will have the power to make it mandatory for those on unemployment benefit after six months. We return to the implications of this, as removal from benefits can mean removal from services, later in the report.

Some consideration has been given to the specific learning needs of homeless people. For instance, The Social Exclusion Unit report (2005) recognised that facilitating access to IT while people were homeless not only gave them access to other services but gave them the opportunity to increase IT skills. This is amply borne out by the Off the Streets and into Work (OSW) initiatives which offer access to IT at drop-in centres.

Developing integrated policy

A literature review for Crisis (Centre for Economic and Social Inclusion 2005) found little reference to homeless people in government evaluations of education and skills provision, and very limited information on homeless people's participation in mainstream education and skills training:

> Figures of homeless people's participation in education programmes are extremely limited, and are not routinely collected. For example, figures of use of learndirect by homeless people are unknown (Parsons and Palmer 2004). A wide range of government-sponsored evaluations and strategies on skills and learning provision make no mention of the needs of homeless people (for example Bysshes and Parsons 1999, DfES 2003 and DWP 2003). Even where previous strategies have included homeless people, initiatives have

often been limited to those who are statutorily homeless (Parsons and Palmer 2004)

The same report continues:

> There are some limited data available on homeless people's participation in life skills programmes. The Crisis life skills model emphasises that life skills development work is not only about giving people skills they did not previously have, 'but also aims to equip them with an awareness of their existing abilities, showing how these can be useful in the mainstream (Lownsborough, 2005, p. 29)
>
> (Centre for Economic and Social Inclusion, 2005, p. 14.)

Based on their findings, their recommendations for policy were as follows:

- Improved monitoring information is required to enable services to assess how well they are serving homeless people
- Quality provision needs to take account of the heterogeneity of the homeless population
- Closer collaboration between statutory and voluntary providers is needed to increase educational access for homeless people
- Further investment is needed to support homeless people throughout and after learning, and to support homeless people's ongoing progression in education.

With reference to the capital investment programme to improve hostels for the homeless, the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister report in 2005 said:

> We are investing £90m over the next three years through the Hostels Capital Improvement Programme. Underlying the programme is the need to change the very nature of hostels so that they provide better opportunities for people who have experienced homelessness and prevent them from becoming homeless again. Hostels will cease to be a place of last resort, but instead will be centres of excellence and choice which positively change lives. Re-modelling will allow staff to better address the needs of residents and could also be used to link in other services such as Jobcentre Plus or drug treatment work.
>
> (ODPM 2005, p. 300)

There is no explicit reference here to education or skills, but, according to Luby and Welch (2006) 'The inclusion of meaningful occupation, such as learning and skills work, is seen to be a key part of service delivery in these modernised services' (p.20). They also report:

> Funding for the development of independent living skills is potentially available from the Supporting People programme. However, although support for the development of life skills is seen to be part of the remit of Supporting People, the boundaries of what this funding source can cover, and what DCLG (the sponsoring government department) expects other funding programmes (such as funding from LSCs) to cover is blurred. Certainly it would not expect Supporting People to fund the development of literacy and

numeracy skills and yet the Basic Skills Agency has highlighted the importance of reading, writing and communication skills for successful rehousing.

(ibid, p. 20)

This suggests that there is some uncertainty about the responsibility for literacy and numeracy, even though there is a strong case for investing in learning and skills for homeless people. In addition, the *Sustainable Communities* report (ODPM 2005) makes little reference to adult education, training and skills except in its action plan as part of 'Tackling wider causes and symptoms':

Improving Skills and employability: Support roll out of National Learning and Skills Council programme to help train homeless people and those helping them to improve their skills.

(ODPM 2005, p.43)

Most recently, the government in its 2006 FE White Paper (DES 2006) acknowledges the importance of education and training for personal fulfilment and the need for 'stepping stone' provision which 'helps prepare people for success in life as well as work' – but says this will not be the central goal of mainstream-funded further education in the future.

A range of government departments deal with different groups of people who may be homeless. Communities and Local Government, for example, deals with homelessness only in relation to housing. Various other Departments cover ex-offenders (Ministry of Justice) with a connected interest in employment (Department for Work and Pensions), education and training (Department of Innovations, Universities and Skills or Department for Children, Schools and Families), care leavers (Department of Health) with an acknowledgement that many have already slipped through the net of sound educational provision, and veterans (Ministry of Defence), many of whom have already gained qualifications in their respective Services but which are either not recognised or inappropriate for employment, education or training in civilian settings.

While basic skills are part of the remit for Probation, there is a tension between the ethos of Skills for Life (education) and Probation (compliance with orders or licences). There are further tensions. Education in prison is (relatively) accessible – especially for those with basic skills needs. However, attending college in the outside world, while adhering to the conditions imposed by a Licence which may include an Exclusion Order, may prevent offenders from attending the college of their choice. There is also a discrepancy of expectation between Probation and literacy tutors with neither side really getting a grasp of what the other side is about (Hudson 2003).

Current provision

A recent report prepared for *Crisis, Homeless people and learning and skills: participation, barriers and progression* (Crisis/Opinion Leader Research 2006), contains useful, if limited information. The report is a combination of qualitative and quantitative data, based on six group discussions with eight people in each, and 203 interviews with homeless individuals across Newcastle, Birmingham and

London. The following statistics are taken from this report, and roughly concur with those to be found in the earlier literature review from the Centre for Economic and Social Inclusion (2005).

- 60 per cent of homeless people have qualifications below Level 2 or no qualifications, almost twice that of the adult population (32 per cent).

- 37 per cent of homeless people do not have any formal qualifications. The national average is 13 per cent of the adult population.

- 13 per cent of homeless people have Level 3 qualifications or above. National average is 46 per cent.

- 19 per cent of homeless people are currently taking part in a training or educational activity, compared to 48 per cent of people of working age currently participating in taught learning.

- Those who have been homeless for more than three years are less likely than other homeless people to be taking part in a training/educational activity (15 per cent).

- Those aged under 44 were more likely to be taking part in training and educational activities than those aged over 45 (32 per cent compared to 13 per cent).

- 56 per cent of homeless people want to take part in training/educational activities now or in the future.

- One in five homeless people got a job after participating in training/educational activities.

Homeless people received a wide range of benefits, and 81 per cent of the sample received benefits. Some people stop signing on because of pressure from government agencies to find work, e.g. Jobseeker's Allowance. Courses for homeless people were provided by a range of providers from the statutory and voluntary sectors. Eighteen per cent were provided by Jobcentre Plus and 18 per cent were provided by FE colleges. Thirty-six per cent of courses were provided by charities. The remaining 28 per cent were provided in workplaces or spread across other organisations. Homeless people rated the courses provided by voluntary organisations as good (87 per cent). They thought voluntary organisations were better able to provide educational/training services for homeless people because:

- they understand what courses homeless people want/need;

- they have staff who are supportive and understand the issues facing homeless people;

- the learning environment is more informal and less rigid than other providers.

Seven per cent had received support or undertaken a training/educational activity with New Deal; 5 per cent had received support or undertaken a training/ educational activity with other government schemes.

Homeless people who had attended a training/educational activity cited 'help from staff who believe in me' as the 'single most useful thing' to help them take part. The main benefit gained from undertaking the activity was feeling more confident (58 per cent), while achieving a qualification or certificate was the

second most important benefit (44 per cent). Twenty per cent said it helped them to get work.

The way these issues play out in the day-to-day realities of homeless people and the agencies and initiatives that seek to support them is illustrated by the current situation in one specific town in England, Blackpool.

Blackpool: a case study

Organisations in the North West will work together to actively tackle the underlying causes of homelessness, to prevent homelessness, and provide excellent services to support people to access warm, secure, and affordable homes.

(North West Regional Housing Board 2006)

As we are providing a case study from the North West in this report, it is important to situate our study, not only within the national framework, but also to link it to the regional and local context. Geographically, in 2005 the North West ranked as the forth highest region in terms of concentration of homelessness (DCLG 2006). With the 2002 Homelessness Act, each region was required by its Government Office to produce a Regional Homelessness strategy and each Local Housing Authority was required to carry out a review of homelessness in their area and to produce their own strategy 'based on the results of that Review' (ODPM 2004). For our case study this is the *Homelessness Strategy 2003–2008 Blackpool Borough Council* document.[14]

Introduction and rationale

Our fieldwork focused on researching one town in England to see how the initiatives and policies were working 'on the ground'. We chose Blackpool as a location currently in receipt of a variety of funding sources due to its deprived area status; also, as a seaside town, it attracts a variety of individuals from outside of the area who are in danger of becoming homeless. The case study is based on visits to and interviews with a range of organisations working with homeless people, including the council (housing and education departments), the local college, the Salvation Army, several different hostels and day centres for younger and older people, and some of the homeless people who accessed these agencies. We began by considering the town in terms of the routes through homelessness, adapting Figure 1 from p.28 to the specific case of Blackpool.

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[14] www2.blackpool.gov.uk/democracy/corpdocs/Homelessness%20Strategy%20draft2.pdf

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Figure 2: The three principal contemporary pathways through homelessness, applied to Blackpool

The principal contemporary three prevalent pathways through homelessness, applied to Blackpool (from Homelessness Factfile, Crisis, 2003, p.57)
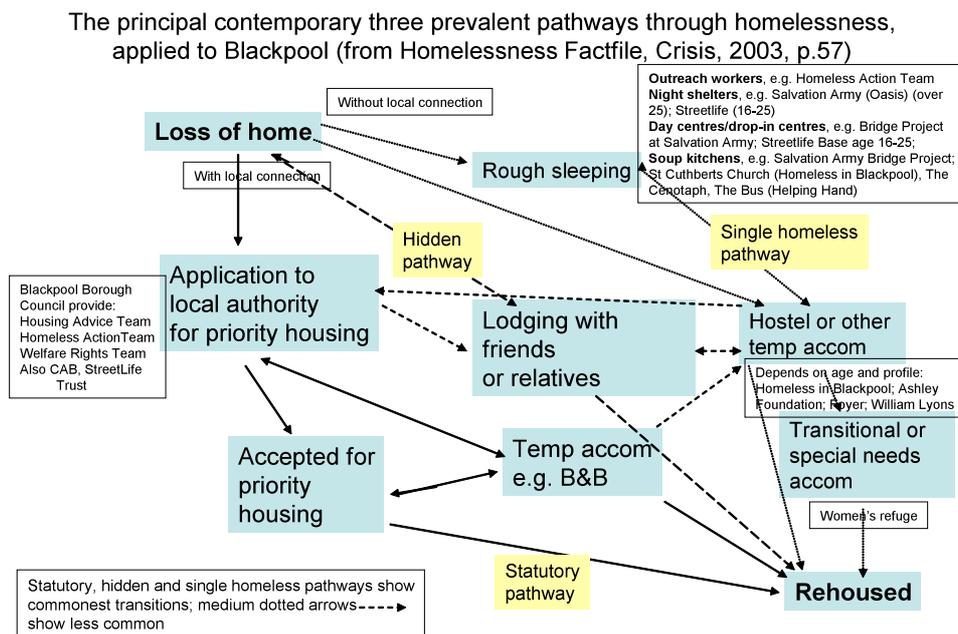
Blackpool contains deprived areas with a high proportion of NEET (Not in Employment, Education or Training) individuals, and many long-term unemployed.[15] It also attracts people who are homeless because it has connotations of being fun, safe, and with plenty of seasonal work. These factors mean that in recent years Blackpool has had many homeless people to deal with from all over the UK. As a reaction to this, the council, along with others in the UK with similar problems, enforced in 2006 the 'Local Connection' rule, which means that any individual presenting as homeless in Blackpool must have been living there for six months in the last year, or three years out of the last five; or must have a job there; or must have close family in the town whom they want or need to live near. The council will provide a travel warrant for anyone without a local connection to return to the place they have come from, provided it is deemed safe to do so. If the person remains in Blackpool, they will not be entitled to access to hostels or night shelters for more than three nights, will not be able to claim benefits, and will not have access to support from the council. These people are often those 'sleeping rough'. For example, at Streetlife, a drop in centre for people aged 16–25, many of the clients are 'serving out' their six months on the streets before being able to claim a local connection.

Figures from Lancashire County Council in September 2007 indicate that Blackpool has a total of 232 households accepted as homeless, which was a 45.9 per cent increase over the four-year period to the end of March 2006. This contrasts with an overall 27.5 per cent decline in homelessness figures for this

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[15] A higher percentage of resident working age people (24.3 per cent) were claimants of key benefits in Blackpool than in the North West as a whole (18 per cent) and Great Britain (14.7 per cent). (Source: DWP benefits claimants February 2007 – NOMIS website); A higher percentage of resident working age people (13.4 per cent) claimed Incapacity Benefit than in the North West (9.7 per cent) and in Great Britain (7.3 per cent). (Source: DWP benefits claimants February 2007 – NOMIS website); 3.2 per cent of the resident working age population in Blackpool were Jobseeker's Allowance claimants compared to 2.6 per cent in the North West and 2.3 per cent in Great Britain. (Source: ONS Claimant count July 2007 – NOMIS website)

period for the whole of England (and a 12.2 per cent decrease in the North West region)[16].

According to the Self-Assessment Report and Action Plan for Blackpool and The Fylde College 2002:

> Blackpool is the 13th most deprived local authority in England with high deprivation, low educational participation and achievement rates. The key equality challenge for the college is therefore to counter deprivation and assist regeneration by widening participation and student success[17].

Blackpool is currently receiving substantial funding from a variety of sources due to its status as a deprived area. For example, the Arts Council England has granted Blackpool's Regeneration Arts Programme (RAP) £120,000 over two years, starting in 2007, awarded to a series of contemporary arts projects which aim to increase community participation in the arts (Arts Council England, North West 2007).

The town has also successfully bid to the Government's Local Enterprise Growth Initiative (LEGI) and received an award of £10.8m in December 2006. LEGI is a joint initiative of the Treasury, Small Business Service and the Department of Communities and Local Government restricted to areas in receipt of Neighbourhood Renewal Fund (NRF). Its aim is:

> to release the economic and productivity potential of the most deprived local areas across the country through enterprise and investment, thereby boosting local incomes and employment opportunities and building sustainable communities.[18]

Through this funding a number of initiatives have been instigated.[19]

Provision for homeless people in Blackpool

The council in Blackpool adopts an integrated approach to issues of homelessness. A representative described their Single Homeless and Rough Sleeping Team's work as:

> 'trying to get them [homeless people] to a position where they can actually move off the streets into some form of accommodation which now is the Night Shelter accommodation, trying at that stage to unpick what's going on here, why has someone been on and off the streets for however long, linking them in the day to daytime services at the Bridge [Salvation Army Bridge Project] and our people go in every day and do surgeries there and then, when they're ready, try and link them into education and some kind of training. The education may not be what you or I might access but it's whatever's right for

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[16] See: www.lancashire.gov.uk/office_of_the_chief_executive/lancashireprofile
[17] http://www.blackpool.ac.uk/pdf/management/equality/eq_sarap.pdf
[18] www.blackpool.gov.uk/democracy/members/admin/files/30da7586-fb72-4e59-9573-6f1d7904ad10/LEGI report.doc
[19] The Neighbourhood Renewal Fund ended in March 2008. From April 2008 Blackpool has been awarded approx. £14m over three years as part of the Working Neighbourhoods Fund which is aimed at providing additional support for those local authorities facing particular challenges in terms of worklessness, and low levels of skills and enterprise

them at that stage in their life.'

This approach means that a variety of different organisations, both statutory and voluntary, are working together to address the multiple problems associated with homelessness. As a representative of the Salvation Army Bridge Project stated: 'You cannot in doing this work be a little island on your own or you can't do it properly'. The council representative continued:

> 'We have within this building all the key services that somebody would need, so you can come through the front door and we can sort out most of your problems within this building, which is a big plus. We have a welfare rights service... We can sort your health needs out. We've got environmental health We've got debt workers here … we have multi-disciplinary panels that sit to determine different other things … So we've got that pretty well sewn up, it's not perfect but it's getting there.'

Supporting People (SP), an ODPM (Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, now DCLG) sponsored national policy initiative, began operating in April 2003 and is a partnership between Blackpool Council, Blackpool Primary Care Trust and Lancashire Probation Service. The aim is for less dependence on institutions and more independence with a greater emphasis on people staying in their own homes, especially older people.

Following the first street head count in 1997 which identified Blackpool as one of the top 33 rough sleeping areas outside of London, Blackpool Council has put in place a range of comprehensive services which aim to eliminate the need for anyone to have to sleep rough on the streets of Blackpool. The launch of the latest Places of Change Initiative, which has provided funding from DCLG for developing the Oasis night shelter and the Salvation Army's latest café and training initiative, comes shortly after the introduction of the new Street Outreach Response Team – a team of specially trained council workers who undertake daily street outreach on bikes to link up with rough sleepers as soon as they hit the streets.

In addition to the work of the council, the following organisations provide a variety of services for homeless people:

- **The Foyer** in Blackpool is part of the Foyer movement and provides accommodation for young people between the ages of 16–25 for up to two years. Blackpool Foyer is developed by Great Places, a combination of Ashiana Housing Association and Manchester Methodist Housing Group. Residents must have a local connection. Children are not allowed to stay there, but they can visit. The Foyer has a commitment to enabling change in its residents, and supplies a variety of educational opportunities. Residents are required to commit to a certain number of hours of contact time with workers.

- **The Ashley Foundation** is a registered homeless charity established in 1997. It has three direct access hostels in the Blackpool area providing accommodation for people over 18, on a first come first served basis. Residents must have a local connection, but otherwise there are few restrictions: they will take those who are using drugs or alcohol, people with violent backgrounds or court cases pending, ex-offenders and sex offenders. The team also offers social life skills courses and has links with a

variety of educational establishments who provide courses on-site. These will include any courses which can be provided free of charge. Clients may also be sent to courses at Blackpool and The Fylde College: for example a group of four or five may attend a basic skills course at the Seasiders site where they will follow a Skills for Life course in literacy or numeracy. However, the manager of the Ashley Foundation explained that no clients would be sent on such a course without first addressing any problems they may have, and on the first few visits to the college a worker from the Foundation would accompany them. It was also crucial to build on the interests and motivations of the client. The Prince's Trust runs courses every three months and takes three people from the Ashley Foundation – one from each hostel (see 'Educational provision reaching homeless people in Blackpool' below).

- **Streetlife** has a night shelter and a day centre, The Base. The night shelter was purpose built with funding from central government (the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister) and it opened in 2002. An old building on the site had previously been attached to a church and had operated as an emergency shelter. The new shelter runs with funding from Supporting People and Housing Benefit, which also funds three Volunteers in Training who work full-time with young homeless people. Eight beds are available for young people between the ages of 16 and 25, and admission is by priority needs on a nightly basis. The shelter is open from 9pm to 9am, so the residents are outside all day. The Base is open during the day with individual appointments for residents and a variety of sessions related to education (see below).

- **The Oasis night shelter** is run by the national charity, Crime Reduction Initiatives (CRI) and works in partnership with The Salvation Army. It has eight beds and provides emergency accommodation for homeless men and women aged 26 and over. It aims to offer support and assistance to enable homeless people to deal with issues that have led to their current situation. One of the requirements therefore is for people accessing the shelter to attend morning appointments at the Salvation Army Bridge Project across the road, where their immediate needs are addressed and a key worker is assigned to work with clients to attend to issues such as mental or physical health, domestic abuse, drink or drug problems, and from there to be encouraged into education or training programmes (see below).

- **Vincent House** is part of a Christian project called Homeless in Blackpool and can provide accommodation for up to 19 people, in mostly twin-bedded rooms. However, despite the numbers of people requiring overnight accommodation, there are often empty beds at Vincent House because they are not allowed to take in people with criminal records for violence, arson or sexual offences. In this way they differ from the Salvation Army who are committed to giving everyone a second (or more) chance.

There are also a range of day centres and drop-in centres.

- **The Base** is a drop-in centre linked to the Streetlife emergency night shelter, for young people aged 16–25. Each person who accesses the night shelter has a morning appointment at the Base, where an individual support plan is drawn up with a worker at the centre. Hot drinks and meals are provided, often linked into a variety of sessions run at the centre. (See 'Good Practice' section below.)

- **The Bridge Project** is a drop-in centre run by the Salvation Army.
- **Helping Hand Community Centre** is a Christian organisation run by volunteers to help homeless people. It has a bus, which has a timetable of locations for homeless people across Blackpool to access it.
- There are also **soup kitchens** run by The Cenotaph/The Bus (Helping Hand outreach work), St Cuthberts Church and Homeless in Blackpool.

Educational provision reaching homeless people in Blackpool

Blackpool and The Fylde College has several campuses across the area and is the biggest provider of further education and training in the town. One of Blackpool and The Fylde college sites is Seasiders, which is a dedicated community learning centre in the heart of the resort. Since 2004 the Skills for Life team have been focusing on Work Readiness programmes, targeting people in workplaces such as the local hospital, care homes and hotels. As the Curriculum Manager for Skills for Life Maria said, 'we've switched from the widening participation agenda now to the Leitch where it's about getting people prepared and ready either to go into work or to be training up people who are currently in work'. Providing courses for hard-to-reach groups such as ex-offenders, drug and alcohol users, and homeless people, however, is dependent on additional funding, which may come from sources including the European Social Fund (ESF), European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) or the Learning and Skills Council (LSC). Additional funding of this kind allows for projects to be designed with particular groups of people in mind, and includes resources for the particular needs of the group, for example allowing for particularly small classes, and providing food, childcare, and travel expenses.

College outreach
Maria described an ESF project in 2006 called Community Learning, which was to engage around 220 learners in imaginative ways with the aim of progressing from non-qualification courses into Skills for Life, Basic Skills, or Further Education. She described how she developed a partnership with Leisure Learning, funded through the LEA in order to access the people most difficult to reach, including young homeless people:

> 'it was very important not to necessarily work towards a qualification, it was all about the softer skills, the confidence building, the self-esteem, "who am I, who do I want to be, I can do this", you know it was about developing that person and then once you could do that, lead them into the qualification side of the programme. … in the past under the Skills for Life, we were able to do that. Now when we run our programmes, we have to work straight away from a qualification aim, but what we've done, is we link in with our Leisure Learning area and they have the first step provision so because they can work towards non-qualification, it's important that we link with them.'

Working with homeless people also included providing a breakfast in the morning, and taking the course to Streetlife, a drop-in centre for under 25s, or hostels such as the Ashley Foundation, William Lyons House and the Foyer. The programmes on offer were only between six and eight weeks, and because of the turbulent lifestyles of the learners, attendance was sporadic. Hence, although Leisure Learning succeeded in engaging a group of learners in a course such as 'Computers from Scratch' (also 'Holistic Therapies', 'Organic Gardening' and

'Confidence Building'), only a small number then moved onto Skills for Life. Maria commented on the problems of funding coming to an end:

> 'what tends to happen if a project almost comes to an end and they're coming on to mainstream, funding isn't normally there to sustain those additional needs, break down those additional barriers, so then you come up against another problem, because now you can't offer the child care and you can't offer the food, so it is very difficult.'

However, a success story was of a young woman who was in a women's refuge when she first encountered Community Learning and took a non-counting qualification. She was then encouraged to move on to the college's Skills for Life programme until she reached the Level 4 programme, which took a full academic year, and was about to move onto mainstream provision at the main FE campus to take a qualification in Health Care in Early Years. This was 'a wonderful example of how it works if we link it across the layers'.

Maria also highlighted the need to address the needs of people who may not fall into any one particular group, and could therefore be overlooked. Our research has indicated that people who are on the outskirts of a number of groups may in fact be the hardest to reach, because, for example, they are not officially homeless, not an ex-offender, not a registered drug user, not a lone parent, and yet are also not a part of mainstream life. Because 'homelessness' is such an indeterminate category, the danger of falling outside different sets of criteria is particularly applicable. One way of addressing this at the college was by providing the Seasiders centre in the heart of the community, away from the more intimidating main campuses where academic and vocational courses were taught:

> 'There are lots of people that certainly come through this door that wouldn't walk through our main college, yet. But by the time they've done the programme here with us we are moving them on to our main college into further courses.'

English for Speakers of Other Languages
At Blackpool & The Fylde College, English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) provision is separated from other Skills for Life subjects, being provided through the School of Academic Studies as part of the Languages Department. The majority of recent migrants in Blackpool are Polish, but also from Lithuania, Latvia and the Czech Republic. They are likely to have been well educated in their own countries, but may require ESOL classes. There are strong networking systems for Polish people in Blackpool: they have their own Polish Centre and a church that provides a Polish service on Sunday mornings. The students who access the college often support one another and will sleep on one another's floors. Some Poles who come to classes at the college have been sent by agencies, who also provide work and accommodation (albeit often basic and overcrowded); or they may be sent by their employers, who would like to allow them to move up in their jobs, having proved themselves to be reliable and competent workers. Homelessness amongst migrant workers is not a visible problem in Blackpool, although there may be cases of 'invisible homelessness' within the community.

Young people not in education, employment or training (NEETs)

The LSC has funded a specialist learning mentor project for 15 months to target young NEET people at Blackpool and The Fylde College, and several of the people who come into this category are homeless, or living in hostels or unstable accommodation. Two project workers are employed, one focusing on health and welfare, and the other on employability. The workers, who are both experienced youth workers, appreciate the fact that the project allows them to focus on the individuals' needs. They have an open door policy which means that any student who feels in need of support can approach them, rather than only targeted students being eligible. As with other examples of good practice, the individual person is the starting point for providing help, irrespective of whether or not they fall into a target group. For example, as one of the workers pointed out, it was possible that they would recommend and assist a student to leave college and take up a job if that seemed to be the most appropriate course of action for them. However, the funding is short-lived and it is not clear how many or how much students can be helped in the allocated period.

Adult Community Learning

Blackpool Council run a range of courses for people aged 19 or over, using three main providers: Blackpool and The Fylde College, Montgomery Education Centre, and the Council itself. Some of these are free to people on benefits but there is a minimum £5 administration fee. The courses run at a variety of venues, including local libraries and community learning centres. Adult Community Learning (ACL) provides two tutors who run discrete (i.e. non-advertised) courses at the Salvation Army Bridge project which are IT-based, e.g. Introduction to Computers, and relate to individual needs, such as literacy, CVs etc. Some courses are accredited in small units by the Assessment and Qualifications Alliance (AQA) and the team has had some success with homeless people leading to further training, volunteering or work. One recently got a job and used his certificate to show his employer that he was IT literate.

John, whose was provided previously, was one such man who accessed a literacy class with a tutor funded by ACL. The class originally had two participants, but one left to return to Scotland where there was no requirement for a Construction Skills Certification Scheme (CSCS) certificate in order to enter work, which both men were working towards. John therefore received individual tuition for a number of weeks, working up from learning letter sounds to three letter words and then to recognising full words or phrases, such as 'CO2 Fire Extinguisher', that would be relevant to him in the workplace and for achieving his Health and Safety Certificate. His tutor explained that the work she did with him was not specifically within the Skills for Life framework, although she did use a Standards Unit Construction Learner Workbook and had a copy of the Adult Literacy Core Curriculum. Alongside these materials she used shop-bought workbooks, flashcards and materials from the internet.

One-to-one support

Positive Steps into Work, an example of successful working with a particularly difficult client group, advise on the best way forward for individuals who have been out of work for a substantial period, and for some this involves recommending clients to attend Adult Community Learning classes. The Salvation Army explained:

'Positive Steps staff do one-to-one work, they were actually really good. They were the first people that we actually managed to get to help us get one of our clients to do a one-to-one literacy course. He always refused to do it, he wouldn't go into a classroom. Because a lot of people are ashamed when they can't read and write and they don't want to go and sit in a class with other people.'

A month after a worker from Positive Steps had first visited the centre, two clients had successfully engaged with them. The manager of the Bridge Project continued:

'I know two clients doesn't sound a lot but it's two more than we had in the rest of the year … we've got one of them on one of their courses, he is actually doing quite a long course, it's a 13 week course to get him back into work as well.'

Positive Steps into Work is funded through the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and from Northern Way. The European money is to fulfil objective two of the ERDF: 'the socio-economic change of urban, industrial and rural areas'[20], and funds Positive Steps to give support to certain deprived wards in Blackpool, which includes the location of the Salvation Army. The Northern Way funding is intended for people on incapacity benefit and comes through the Government Office North West. The combination of funding enables one-to-one sessions with individuals to establish the best way forward, followed by locating and securing appropriate courses, accompanied by intensive support both during the training and as the individual enters work. With this ongoing support and guidance, including practical and emotional help with other issues such as drink or drug problems, health problems, personal relationships, and housing, the return to work or education is more likely to succeed.

The worker at Positive Steps commented on how people can be put onto inappropriate programmes if the Job Centre do not understand the full story:

'Expecting somebody that's living on the streets to go on a 13-week, 16-hours-a-week provision, it's just not going to happen and I personally wouldn't put that person in that predicament.'

What he enjoyed about his work was that Positive Steps had the freedom to do what was appropriate for different people. He was particularly against a 'one size fits all' approach.

Training providers
Some independent training providers in Blackpool can come across homeless people while this is not their main focus. These include organisations such as:

- Beneast Training Limited, which links into government funding and delivers Train to Gain and learndirect courses for adults, as well as bespoke course for employers;
- Standguide, a training and employment consultancy contracted to Jobcentre Plus, LSC and various local councils to train unemployed people;

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[20] www.communities.gov.uk/citiesandregions/european/europeanregeneration (active at time of writing)

- Training 2000, a Lancashire-based organisation which provides training needs for individuals and employers, and is funded by the LSC to provide free courses in basic skills.

The manager of the Ashley Foundation in Blackpool spoke highly of Prince's Trust courses which were run by the Fire Brigade and included camping, work placement, voluntary work, City & Guilds up to Level 3, and firefighting. The courses took place every three months and three people from the Ashley Foundation were able to have places. When clients returned the Ashley Foundation would enable them to buy an outfit or a suit as a reward and invite them to attend a presentation night. The main benefit was a gain in confidence, and the manager said that after such an experience it was much easier to settle a resident in accommodation.

Integrated or tailored provision?
Homeless people in Blackpool may access such organisations through the job centre, or through charities such as drop-in centres for the homeless. There is clearly a case for homeless people being integrated with others: Crisis/Opinion Leader Research (2006) state that the homeless people they interviewed 'wanted to mix with non-homeless people to help them become more integrated into society. However, at other times homeless people felt more comfortable sharing space with other homeless people' (p.24). There is also a possibility that when an organisation is not geared specifically to the client group, the particular and multiple needs of homeless people will not be accounted for. This was the case when an independent training organisation went into the Salvation Army and delivered a course over one week, apparently regardless of the characteristics of the very few people who attended. The course was in Food Hygiene, but was entirely theoretical and did not involve practical work.

High level literacy and numeracy
It is important to point out that, although there is a perception that homeless people are lacking in literacy and numeracy skills, in our research we found several people who were qualified to a high level, for example with NVQs in Health Care, Catering, and qualifications in electrical engineering. In addition, many of those who spent time in the Salvation Army drop-in centre would be poring over newspapers, leaflets and closely written sheets, looking for accommodation, benefits advice or jobs. Staff were on hand for help with this, but for many the process of finding a bed for the night involved literacy and numeracy practices which they were perfectly capable of. For example, one man who was new to the area explained how he had had to travel to one destination for an early morning appointment to view a possible room, and then had to travel to the other side of Blackpool to look at another. When the first landlady required a deposit of £40 (which he did not have), he commented that 'It would have helped if it said that on the sheet before I went'.

Examples of effective practice

The following two examples have been identified during the course of the research in Blackpool as good practice in providing education for homeless people. The first is the Salvation Army Bridge Project catering for people over 25; the second is Streetlife which focuses on young people under 25. Both organisations have extensive experience with homeless people which has

enabled them to tailor their educational programmes carefully and to deliver them sensitively and effectively.

Effective Practice example 1: Salvation Army Bridge Project

The Salvation Army has a long-standing reputation for providing immediate assistance to homeless and vulnerable people. In Blackpool the Salvation Army is situated in a large red brick building, which on the ground floor houses the citadel or church, as well as containing a number of rooms which can be hired out for different functions. Upstairs is a crèche, while downstairs there is the Bridge Project, with its own door at the back of the building. The Bridge Project began in June 2002, when the Salvation Army in Blackpool used Single Regeneration Budget funding for rebuilding a purpose-built centre for homeless adults. Over the next few years the project worked in partnership with Blackpool Borough Council Adult and Community Learning, the NHS and statutory and voluntary support services to develop a range of services and facilities it could offer to clients. These included accommodation, housing advice, substance misuse support, an NHS clinic, lifestyle and employment guidance, a café, a food store for emergency food parcels, facilities for showering, washing and drying clothes, a clothing store and private consultation rooms.

There are usually a number of people around the back door area, smoking and talking, some with plastic bags containing their possessions. The door leads into a reception area which, once admission has been granted by staff behind a desk, leads into a room containing chairs and tables for people to socialise. The kitchen is open at lunchtimes and serves bread which the staff get from bakers first thing in the morning, left over from the day before, soup cooked by volunteers, and cups of tea. From behind the reception area people can request sleeping bags, washing equipment and clean clothes, although these are only available according to supply and are given to those in greatest need. There are individual showers available and also rooms for consultations, as well as office space for staff.

The staff consists of a mixture of Salvationists and others, some paid and some voluntary. At the time of the research the staff comprised: a receptionist who was on a placement as part of a university social work course; three Salvationists – one working as the manager of the Bridge Project, another who had previously been the manager, and another who managed the whole community centre; a full-time project worker who had previously worked as a volunteer and then was employed part time; a volunteer who had himself been homeless on first arriving in Blackpool; and several other volunteers in the kitchen. The Salvation Army Major and his wife oversaw all activities and were responsible for funding at the centre.

While the Salvation Army's focus has traditionally been on immediate needs, the staff said that this was due to limitations of funding, and their aims included changing people's life situations:

> 'Given the funding, given the opportunity, you have to start somewhere, you have to start at the crisis. You can't miss that out. Whatever funding a charity has, has to be first used on the crisis because you can't move them on without meeting their immediate needs but very often the charity doesn't get

any funds to go any further.'

On similar lines, the manager of the Salvation Army Bridge Project recognised that education is more likely to be successful when other problems, including housing, are solved. Her personal ambition was to have a centre of ten flats attached to the Salvation Army to move people into and to continue to provide support until they were confident enough to live independently. At this stage an education or training programme would be much more likely to succeed than, say, the Pathways programme at the centre which she described as having floundered because clients were inconsistent with attendance and commitment or motivation.

Twice a week, people from ACL come in to help people with literacy, numeracy and ICT. This initiative is funded by the Neighbourhood Learning in Deprived Communities (NLDC) project, which is part of the North and West Lancashire Learning Partnership (NWLLP). The original funding in 2005 enabled the Bridge Project to buy three laptop computers and tutor hours. The following is a description taken from the NWLLP write-up of the project:

> 'Although it took clients a few weeks to approach the tutor who had 'taken up residence' with his laptop in the centre once a week, soon interaction developed into trust, resulting in 56 people over the four month period making use of this new support service (the funding target agreed was 28).

> Clients' needs were very varied and the tutor was able to be flexible in what support could be offered. Some people were computer literate and only wanted an email address to contact friends and relatives (homeless people cannot access the internet in public libraries because they do not have a home address), others were using ICT equipment and software for the first time.

> The clients were able to learn in a 'safe' environment and several achieved over 90% attendance at the sessions. Given the chaotic lifestyle of the client group, this was a positive success. One of the most regular to attend was over 55 years old.'[21]

As a result of the success of this project, NLDC funding has continued, but only on a yearly basis.

A more recent, additional initiative at the Bridge Project ihas been the development of a new café, which is a social enterprise facility funded by the Department of Communities and Local Government. The café has now been fully refurbished as a training kitchen and opened in October 2007. The workers in the kitchen are clients of the Salvation Army who will work towards gaining NVQs in Catering and Hospitality. Blackpool and The Fylde College has provided a supervisor to oversee the provision of the NVQs, while the Salvation Army has employed a chef to oversee the practical work in the kitchen. She is also being trained by the college to become an NVQ assessor. Until that time, a lecturer from the college comes in once a week to give input to the students on the NVQ programme and to assess the students. The centre has also been equipped with a training room, which contains new soft furniture, an interactive whiteboard and projector, and space to sit and socialise or work. Training sessions take place

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[21] http://www.nwlancslp.org.uk/pp013.shtml (active at the time of writing).

here or in the café in the afternoons. At this time the café was in its earliest stages, with eight individuals enrolled on the NVQ programme. The agreement with the college is that this will rise to 12 individuals over the year.

The Major stressed the significance of the café initiative because it recognised how important it is for people to feel ownership of their learning and to see it having an immediate purpose. He gave an example of one young woman who was only 19 – normally the Salvation Army deals only with people over 25 – but 'no-one else would have her'. She had a drink problem, having been fed alcohol by her mother as a very young child to get her to sleep. She found interaction with others in social situations very difficult. However, she started washing up in the café, and she was now doing a Food Handling Certificate, and would also do a Fire Certificate. She had not attended school and had never learned to read and write, but had begun to receive tuition in literacy from the Adult Learning programme at the Bridge Project. So, although she was not yet able to enrol on the NVQ programme, the involvement in a social setting through working in the kitchen had enabled her to take the first steps towards engaging in both education and work.

In accord with our other respondents, the Major also recognised the importance of continued social and educational support:

> 'All of those who are on the programme upstairs are still on the programme downstairs so the adult learning that's happening downstairs is still available to them. So that which has brought them this far is not cut off. Although we're trying to bring them out of the ghetto atmosphere, neither are we trying to take away their whole social network at the same time.'

While the future of the initiative is unknown, it would appear to have the foundations of success. It is drawing on the skills and experience of both people who work with the homeless and those who work in education to provide homeless people with a worthwhile and immediately useful combination of occupation and qualification.

Effective Practice example 2: Streetlife drop-in centre, The Base

Streetlife is an organisation consisting of an emergency night shelter in the town centre and a daytime drop-in centre at a separate location. The night shelter is funded through Supporting People and housing benefit; and the Base is funded from a variety of sources and is dependent on constant bids for funding. It is set up on Christian principles and run on youth work guidelines with an emphasis on empowering and enabling, while being non-judgemental. A concern amongst the workers was to keep their priorities as an independent charity and not to be steered by the demands and targets of funders. They currently employ an accreditation officer who works closely with the young people and encourages them to take part in activities at the centre which will lead to some form of recognised accreditation. The post is funded by Fair Share, part of the Big Lottery fund, and carries the remit of 20 young people gaining recognised accreditation in one year. The worker charged with this task remarked:

> 'It doesn't sound like massive numbers but when you're dealing with chaotic people and transient people, 20 is actually quite hard. If you appreciate their lifestyles, with homelessness lots of other issues come, we tend to get the drug abuse or substance misuse in some way, maybe mental health issues,

general health issues. So for them accreditation is the bottom, it's the last thing they want to do really. A lot of the young people that do come to us have dropped out of education previously so that's very much why we need to make it informal because the last thing they want to do is feel like they're sat back in a classroom. The minute we put them in that environment, they switch off and it's very hard to get them to commit to something.'

For these reasons, the forms of accreditation were carefully selected. AQA's Unit Award Scheme allows short units to be taken discretely, in a wide variety of curriculum areas which can be written according to the needs or interests of the students. Success in each unit is recognised on an ongoing basis through the issue of a Unit Award Statement which details the outcomes demonstrated by the student. Each student also receives a summary Letter of Credit which lists all the units s/he has completed.

Youth Achievement Awards, accredited by ASDAN (Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network) are also offered to young people at Streetlife. These require a higher level of commitment, requiring 60 hours to complete, whereas an AQA unit can often be completed in one session. The Youth Awards can, however, be gained incrementally over time, which is an important consideration when working with homeless people. As the Streetlife worker said:

'Even though it is very informal and they can pick it up and start it and drop it, at the end of the day if they actually complete it, they've got to have committed to 60 hours … if I look at any sort of studying that's available like WEA or the college, see what they're offering, I always look at how many hours actually the course is going to run because they might manage a day course if you're lucky but to get them to commit to a lot of sessions is really hard.'

Students at Streetlife begin by taking a Bronze Award which requires them to undertake four 15-hour challenges supported by the Award Group Worker. They can then move on to take the Silver, Gold, and eventually there is the chance of taking the Platinum Award, The bronze and silver awards are the most likely achievements for young people at Streetlife. The individuals can choose their own challenges, and provide evidence over time of having achieved them.

The Arts Award is another programme which Streetlife uses with its young people. It is a QCA qualification and sits on the National Qualifications Framework at levels 1, 2 and 3. The award is assessed through a portfolio of evidence created by the young person, and crucially evidence can be presented in any format.

Her reasoning for the choice of qualifications was that there was a need for the students to see it as immediately relevant and accessible:

'if you've got no roof over your head, the idea of learning how to read and write is not important, it's just not relevant to them at all. So it's about trying to make things relevant as well to their needs of where they are at this moment in time.'

Because many of the young people were battling with many problems, it was important to address other issues such as health or addiction, and housing

problems. Having received this help, the young people were more likely then to be in a position to think beyond their immediate needs to their future, and their education.

One such person was a young man who had been accessing the centre for some time but had now moved into semi-independent accommodation and had begun an Access to FE course at the local college to pursue art, alongside literacy and numeracy qualifications. Despite these steps towards independence, he still attended the sessions at Streetlife and was engaged in producing work for his YAA. Importantly, the artwork he had produced at the homeless centre could contribute to his college course, and he was keen to have it returned to him for this purpose. For him, Streetlife provided continuity and security while he accessed the more conventional, but also more daunting, provision at the college. Continued support was cited as crucial by the practitioners we spoke to. This agrees with the findings from Worley and Smith (2001) who looked at the transition from Foyer accommodation to independent living, and concluded that young people would benefit from peripatetic or floating support after they move out of the Foyer – particularly young women and asylum seekers.

The young people at Streetlife, consistent with other findings on certification, were pleased to receive material recognition of their achievement. The Streetlife worker said:

> 'We did an award ceremony in March for the first year which was fantastic because two of the young people actually organised it for part of a Gold Youth Achievement Award. Phenomenal really to expect them to even do that and we gave out about 165 AQA units. It was fantastic and the response from the young people, they absolutely loved it, they loved going up, they loved getting their certificates – and it really does build their self esteem. If you were looking at the big scheme of things, getting an AQA for an Introduction to Badminton is nothing, but for them it is a massive, massive thing to say that they have a certificate for doing it.'

It was clear that despite their difficulties the young people were fully engaged in the work they were doing for their awards. They waited on the doorstep until it was time to open the centre, and then made themselves cups of tea. They needed no encouragement to go upstairs to the room in which they were going to work, and it was striking that all were still engaged when it was time to end. On one occasion one young man arrived late, having only just been released from hospital after having his stomach pumped out, but he still sat and wrote a film review during the morning. Fieldnotes from that session ended with the following summary:

> 'I thought it was an inspiring session. The table, which was barely big enough for them to sit around, was covered in pens and paper and there was an atmosphere of informal working. The young people seemed to find it satisfying and worthwhile. Some mentioned the fact they would get certificates like the ones displayed downstairs, and Stephen said he would do the Silver one after he had completed the Bronze, 'definitely', even though he had displayed signs of anxiety and depression during the session, wanting to spend time on his own. It was striking how many of them showed an enthusiasm for art – their first mode of communication was through drawing rather than writing, e.g. Stephen immediately settling down to a drawing of Jason; Michelle carefully 'drawing' the words Street Life using stylised letters

and colouring it in, and enthusiastically telling the others she wanted to make a collage of them all, with speech bubbles to show their likes and dislikes; and Sara drawing graphs to illustrate how many people attended film nights, and which films they preferred.'

The fact that the kinds of accreditation selected by the workers at StreetLife were flexible, built on the young people's own interests and skills, and were delivered in an informal yet structured environment, contributed to the young people's engagement with the work. Although traditional forms of reading and writing were not the first choice for these young people – and the worker commented that literacy and numeracy classes would have no takers unless they were called something else – the activities they chose to do inevitably included reading and writing of various kinds. For example, Michelle's collage would include writing in speech bubbles, as well as drawings of her peers. While Stephen was spending time on his own, he was looking on the internet for film reviews to help him to write his own for his folder; and Brian's drawing of the Streetlife centre was covered in annotations and labels. All of these activities were chosen by the young people themselves as ways of representing something they wanted to include in their achievement of the Youth Award.

Barriers to education for homeless people

Although the vast majority of homeless people want to improve their skills and move into work (Crisis/Opinion Leader Research 2006), research such as the Centre for Economic and Social Inclusion report (2005) suggests a range of barriers which homeless people may face when trying to access education services. The following list includes additional barriers from our own research, and all have been cited by practitioners and homeless people we interviewed. Whilst they overlap with issues faced by other hard-to-reach groups, these barriers apply to homeless people in particular ways. There are also other more nuanced factors that we identify and discuss below.

- Lack of secure accommodation
- Lack of money
- Low self-esteem
- Lack of information, awareness, or adequate support
- Turbulent lifestyles
- Dependants
- Drug and alcohol misuse
- Health problems
- Mental health problems
- Benefit traps
- Negative experiences of formal education
- Lack of relevance
- Linguistic barriers

Practical and personal issues

Many of the people we came across who were homeless were actively seeking accommodation for that night; were attending appointments with health workers, housing department, the benefits office and the Job Centre; and finding food, drink and clothing for immediate needs. Squirrell (2001) reports that 'some interviewees felt that trying to resolve their accommodation issues took so much time that it reduced their motivation to address other issues' (p.8).

The report *Homeless people and learning and skills: Participation, barriers and progression* (Crisis/Opinion Leader Research 2006) reports that barriers to taking part in training and educational activities, for those who had not participated in the last five years, included mainly health reasons, as well as lack of information or awareness. A third of the people they studied were not interested in education because of a perceived lack of relevance to their lives and they expressed resistance to obligatory courses related to being unemployed. This study found that the most popular things to facilitate future activities would be financial incentive, help with travel costs, stable housing, tutors who understood homelessness issues, and courses that led onto job opportunities.

Systemic issues

For many people the combination of factors affecting them is particularly problematic and may lead to conflicting priorities and benefit traps. These include situations where a person loses their access to learning when their situation changes. However this situation varies according to provision in different areas. Since this report was written there are indications of increased flexibility by agencies in their approach to supporting and training individuals in response to the integrated employment and skills agenda.

Examples of potential problems include:
- Foyers[22] offer young people accommodation and access to education and training. However anyone over the age of 19 and in education or training for more than 16 hours per week is no longer entitled to claim Housing Benefit. This means that some young people have to choose between education and accommodation. This anomaly is under review at the time of writing.[23] Jason, in our case study, at the age of 23, was no longer eligible for free courses at the local college, even though he expressed a keen interest in returning to education.
- A person claiming Jobseeker's Allowance is allowed to undertake part-time education; if, however, they get a job, their access to education may be limited.
- An ex-offender may receive education or training as part of their parole or licence, but if they either return to prison or get a job their access to education is removed.
- If someone is offered education as part of their rehabilitation programme – on a drugs programme, for instance – failure to meet the requirements of their parole order can mean losing their place in educational provision.

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[22] See Appendix for explanation of Foyer.
[23] See www.foyer.net/mpn/

Issues of funding can also create barriers. The two examples of good practice we provided share the fact that the funding is likely to be short-lived and dependent on achieving targets which have been set by outside agencies. While many providers offered informal opportunities for employment training and education, many felt that funders failed to recognise the specific needs of the clientele and set targets that were too difficult to achieve or that clashed with the ethos of the service providers and the wishes of the clients.

Many felt that while many clients might never be able to take up or return to work, nevertheless the services they provided helped in terms of combating isolation and boredom (Jones and Pleace 2005: vi). These concerns had already been identified in a report by Squirrell (2001) which suggested that in addition to the concerns reflected by Jones and Pleace – taking the needs of clients into account, sufficient time needed to be given to such work, and an appropriate amount of emphasis being placed on targets and outcomes – key additional factors were insufficient or unsuitable premises (i.e. hostels) for provision to take place; lack of proper staff development and recruitment of appropriate staff; and the lack of a range of activities appropriate to the client group (Taylor et al. 2005).

Learning environments

More generally, colleges get funding from LSCs for support for learners from disadvantaged groups, but homeless people are generally less attracted by colleges than by voluntary or community organisations they already know. Also, most funding is targeted at courses that lead to national qualifications – so people requiring low level or non-accredited courses are disadvantaged. Other research supports these findings.

For example, Crisis/Opinion Leader Research (2006) found that homeless people preferred education or training to be provided by voluntary organisations rather than government training schemes, because they were more understanding and more flexible. They also found financial incentives to be important. Hamilton and Wilson (2006), looking at Skills for Life practitioner-led projects to design innovative ways of engaging new and traditionally hard-to-reach learners, concluded:

> Key to the effectiveness of engaging new learners is a programme negotiated around learners' personal needs and aspirations and a flexible, on-site model of delivery.

Specific groups

Specific groups of homeless people can face particular barriers. For example, according to the Homeless Link (2006) a person is more likely to become homeless once they have been granted leave to remain. This is because there is a remit to house those waiting to have their case processed. This change of circumstance may well impact on access to literacy/ESOL provision and integration.

People leaving care, prison or the Armed Forces are identified as priority groups in terms of tackling homelessness (DCLG 2003). However, while there is a recognition that such groups have specific needs, little emphasis is given to

ensuring that they have attained a level of basic or key skills so that they are on a par with mainstream society. For example, basic skills for young people leaving care are described as 'cooking and hygiene' while the priority for those leaving prison or the Armed Forces focuses on 'setting up home' (DCLG 2003: p.16). (While not made explicit, however, aspects of cooking, hygiene and setting up home require a certain level of proficiency in maths and English which is currently not being addressed.)

With regard to ex-offenders, the North West strategy document *North West Reducing Re-Offending Delivery Plan* (National Offender Management Service 2007) points out homelessness as a great risk for ex-offenders and cites employment and education as a key pathway to reducing re-offending. It includes practical deliverables such as probation staff embedding learning and skills with other interventions and Job Centre staff making links with other criminal justice partners. With specific reference to Skills for Life, the strategy cites 'incorporating accreditation into unpaid work and reparation activities' and integrating Skills for Life accreditation for progression from offending behaviour programmes and unpaid work towards schemes such as Train to Gain (p 59). Both these activities are to come under the auspices of the LSC. It does not, however, make any direct links to the practical skills that may be required in order to negotiate the bureaucracy of finding accommodation which is dealt with under a separate pathway of 'Accommodation'.

Skills for Life and homelessness

There seem to be various points before, during and after homelessness where Skills for Life interventions are appropriate. There is certainly evidence to suggest that some previous gaps in education and training might well have exacerbated the ability to manage living arrangements prior to becoming homeless. Financial literacy particularly seems to be something that has contributed to losing a home. Having difficulty working out bills, mortgage payments or rent is often cited as one of the first steps of feeling overwhelmed and unable to cope with housing issues (Pannell 2005). Likewise, dealing with the complex bureaucracy of bereavement, of benefit claims or judicial papers can be a daunting task if embarked upon alone and with limited skills.

Contextualising Skills for Life for homeless people

While the provision of accommodation is paramount, nevertheless some agencies are recognising that good work can be done while someone is seeking accommodation or waiting for housing to become available, as in the NRDC report on the Broadway project in London: www.nrdc.org.uk/content.asp?CategoryID=1025.

According to *Inclusion through Innovation* (Social Exclusion Unit 2005), ICT is being used in a number of innovative and productive ways. In the North East, young women are being encouraged to send text messages to ask questions relating to sexual health. According to this report, it also offers individuals the chance to take control of not only their own learning but to access information that may help as a protective factor against future homelessness:

'It's Your Move', the website of Broadway's resettlement support project, provides access to resources and training to improve chances of success when people move into a tenancy of their own. Part of this package involves an interactive computer game in cartoon format to help guide homeless people through preparations needed to move into their own accommodation. Similarly outreach ICT training, with internet and email access, is provided by Glasgow Homelessness Network's 'Homeless Information Pages'. The associated website provides one-stop information and advice on a range of housing, health and money issues, and offers people affected by homelessness the chance to communicate via a chat room and message board (Social Exlusion Unit 2005: p.32).

While not directly related to Skills for Life, nevertheless these activities have potential to be linked into more mainstream provision and to encourage people to identify their personal literacy needs. Equally, distance learning through programmes such as learndirect can be accessed from computers in day centres and Foyers, places which are already familiar to the learner. Anecdotal evidence from a day centre (Manna House, Kendal) suggests that homeless people are keen to access materials offered by learndirect, for example, but feel more confident and are more likely to engage if they can gain access at the homeless centre rather than in the less personal and more generic learndirect centre. The appropriateness of access points is something that is noted elsewhere, e.g. Squirrell (2001).

There is also significant reason to continue to provide education and training for those who have moved on from homelessness and it is important to recognise that there are less positive sides to finding accommodation. People who no longer need to access homelessness services can feel isolated and abandoned, and this is often the catalyst for a return to the streets. Reports suggest that a number of previously homeless people continue to access services even though they are no longer technically without a home. As noted by the report by Jones and Please (2005, p. 23):

> Many people using day centres and drop-ins were people who had been homeless in the past but who had been re-housed, often for a number of years. Some of these people used day centres only occasionally, but many used the drop-ins frequently. Respondents almost always gave the same reasons for the continued use of homelessness provision, most mentioned the problems of isolation and boredom and the ongoing need for support and companionship.

This is certainly true for many 'daytime' homeless people and also for some people in our case study who continue to use day centres as a form of social as well as educational support. There is considerable potential here to engage them in suitable person-centred learning in familiar surroundings.

Motivating homeless people to participate in Skills for Life

Practitioners varied in terms of the extent to which they felt they worked within a Skills for Life Framework. The Skills for Life coordinator at Blackpool and The Fylde College, although clearly working within the Skills for Life strategy and

positive about the benefits of it, also recognised that it was not always perceived positively:

> 'When you say Skills for Life it still carries this stigma of somebody that can't read and write so we've had to change the perception of what Skills for Life is about.'

The worker at Streetlife agreed:

> 'If we've said to them, literacy and numeracy sessions, basically we wouldn't get anyone turn up. It's got to be covert really unfortunately …

In contrast, Hamilton and Wilson (2006) found that:

> Practitioners can be open and honest in offering LLN support and qualifications, as this has not been a deterrent.

The Skills for Life coordinator at Blackpool and The Fylde College stressed that with many first time or hard-to-engage learners it was important to have an initial stage which addressed softer skills only: 'When you're working with the homeless I think it's good to have a first step approach …'. As reported earlier, this was where working in partnership with Leisure Learning was productive.

The importance of 'soft outcomes' is validated by the Broadway NRDC Practitioner-Led Research Initiative (PLRI) project which aimed to demonstrate soft outcomes for homeless and vulnerable adult learners. Using a soft outcomes package which was developed from the NIACE 'Catching Confidence' tool, they found that 'all the learners on the project experienced improved communication and reduced isolation'. They also report: 'For many of Broadway's clients, these outcomes are more realistic and motivating than hard outcomes such as getting a job or going to college', but importantly they also indicate that the confidence-building programme effectively paved the way towards more formal Skills for Life activities (Menist 2005).

According to the report *Homeless people and learning and skills* (Crisis/Opinion Leader Research 2006), homeless people wanted courses that would enable them to lead an independent life, including social skills, education such as basic reading, writing and maths, IT courses, and general skills like cooking, decorating, opening a bank account. Of those who would consider taking part in the future, 39 per cent said it would help them to get work, and many perceived getting work as a key stepping stone to getting out of homelessness. Many also saw gaining confidence and self-esteem as equally or more important than getting qualifications.

Creative routes to Skills for Life

Research by Cameron et al. (2003) looking at successful learning provision for homeless people found that a programme of arts-based learning could effectively help socially-excluded people to re-engage with society and for some it acted as a turning point in their lives. The case of Jason (see the Vignettes) and the young people at Streetlife who chose art as their first means of expression, illustrate that creativity can be a way of providing a bridge to more formal education. Similar findings came from the Doncaster Arts (DARTs) project where hard to reach,

daytime homeless, and socially excluded people were encouraged to develop skills in video production, drama, dance and animation as a way of progressing them towards greater engagement with formal learning and readiness for work (Wilson and Robertshaw 2006).

Another NRDC Practitioner-led project involving young homeless people at Sunderland YMCA Foyer explored the literacy practices which were most motivating for the young people (Hamilton et al. 2007). They found that 'real learning takes place by encouraging these practices', which included those which the young people felt had a real purpose and in which they were able to make decisions and participate fully, such as campaigning activities. The project also used a peer-education model, endorsing the earlier finding that homeless people are more willing to accept help and education from others who understand their situation.

Principles of effective practice

Finally, the findings from our own research supports that of other research with the homeless. Homeless people have a wide range of characteristics, aspirations and needs which require careful consideration on an individual basis. The issues which are most likely to deter them or motivate them in terms of education are not necessarily the same as those of other socially excluded groups, and indeed are not necessarily the same as they would be for those same people once satisfactorily housed. As a way of pulling this together, the characteristics of our two examples of good practice can act as a summary of ways of working with people who are homeless.

Summary of effective ways of learning and working with people who are homeless

- Begin with the immediate needs of the person.
- Identify the skills and knowledge the potential learner already possesses.
- Tailor programmes or units to an individual's capabilities and requirements at that point in their life.
- Recognise the importance of 'softer' skills, such as confidence and social interaction.
- Be accessible, flexible and creative in terms of modes of learning.
- Adopt flexible timescales for completion; for example being able to complete one unit in one session, or being able to complete one unit which can then contribute to a programme picked up at a later date.
- Use an environment with which the learner is already familiar and feels comfortable.
- Create a sociable environment with others working towards the same goals and from similar backgrounds.
- Involve people with experience of working with homeless people, and voluntary organisations.

- Provide practical assistance with health issues, money problems, alcohol or drug problems, and counseling.

- Provide practical help with travel expenses or childcare.

- Provide incentives, which range from a cup of tea or a meal, a certificate at the end of a unit, or the promise of employment on completion.

- Give accreditation in some tangible form for completed units or courses.

- Provide opportunities for progression into further learning or employment.

Our general recommendations for future planning would include:

- Funding to cover all additional requirements for homeless people to engage in education – e.g. food, social environment, travel expenses, childcare, etc.

- Funding for ex-homeless people or homeless people to be trained as tutors.

- Training courses for tutors dealing with vulnerable people.

- Funding to be provided to voluntary organisations for educational activities without unrealistic targets attached.

- Enabling events for educational establishments to learn from voluntary organisations.

3. Black and Minority Ethnic Groups and Skills for Life: Who are the priority groups?

Caroline Law and Simon Weaver

Introduction

While Black and Minority Ethnic groups were not identified as a priority group in the Skills for Life strategy, many Black and Minority Ethnic groups have traditionally fared less well than others within education and the labour market, and therefore large numbers of people from Black and Minority Ethnic groups are likely to fall within other priority groups.

This section draws on a range of sources which help to build up a picture of the Skills for Life needs of Black and Minority Ethnic groups in England and offer useful insights and strategies for effective practice in recruiting, retaining and supporting the achievement of Black and Minority Ethnic groups in learning, which can then be applied to Skills for Life settings.

It reviews:

- The qualification levels and employment status of different Black and Minority Ethnic groups;

- The participation and achievement of Black and Minority Ethnic groups in adult learning in general and Skills for Life in particular;

- The impact of Skills for Life on Black and Minority Ethnic groups; and

- Some of the key obstacles that prevent participation and achievement for Black and Minority Ethnic groups in adult learning, and conversely some of the factors that give rise to the success and achievement of Black and Minority Ethnic groups.

Overall, it aims to define which Black and Minority Ethnic groups may be seen as 'priority groups' for whom further activity is necessary to increase participation and achievement in Skills for Life.

Methodology

Analysing data according to ethnicity is often problematic as the low numbers of people from Black and Minority Ethnic groups mean the data is not necessarily statistically robust enough to make generalisations from. Data that focuses on ethnicity often does not ask about learning needs, and in particular literacy, language and numeracy needs. It is also particularly difficult to obtain accurate data on refugees, asylum-seekers and migrants, especially in relation to their learning needs.

The Labour Force Survey data that has been used within this report often contains very small numbers of respondents from certain ethnic groups. Therefore, the data should be approached with some caution. In particular there were extremely small numbers of respondents who classed themselves as 'Black

Other'. Therefore, responses from Black Other respondents have been removed from the data. Similarly, the numbers of respondents who classed themselves as Mixed White Caribbean, Mixed White African, Mixed White Asian or Other Mixed were extremely low. Therefore, the data from these groups have been presented in the category 'Mixed groups'.

While some data has been analysed according to gender, a breakdown according to age has not been included, as the numbers of respondents for each age band are too small to be statistically significant.

However, in spite of the limitations, Labour Force Survey data has been used because it is the largest and most reliable recent data source available. It is also useful in helping to gain a better understanding of different circumstances of different Black and Minority Ethnic groups.

Black and Minority Ethnic Groups

Introduction

What is the definition of a Black and Minority Ethnic group? Which groups should be described as Black and Minority Ethnic? Different organisations and individuals use different definitions and categories for different purposes and in different settings. These can be problematic and can over-simplify things; any category will include a diverse variety of individuals with varying circumstances. For example, the term 'Pakistani' gives no indication as to whether a person who defines him or herself as Pakistani is a second- or third-generation British citizen or is someone who has recently arrived in the UK. This section does not aim to answer questions around how to best define Black and Minority Ethnic groups, but it does aim to refer briefly to such debates and to discuss the ethnic composition of Britain.

Defining Black and Minority Ethnic groups

The term 'Black and Minority Ethnic' encompasses a wide range of people with diverse circumstances and backgrounds. There is a constant debate regarding how to accurately define 'Black and Minority Ethnic groups' and categorise people according to ethnicity. For example, some people consider White non-British groups to fall under the category of Black and Minority Ethnic groups, while others do not.

The House of Lords defines an 'ethnic group' '… as a group that regards itself, or is regarded by others, as a distinct community by virtue of certain characteristics that will help to distinguish the group from the surrounding community' (Commission for Racial Equality 2007c). The House of Lords also specify that to be a distinct 'ethnic group', a group must have a long shared history and its own cultural traditions. The Commission for Racial Equality defines '"ethnic minorities" as an umbrella term, covering all the characteristics of a "racial group", as well as the religious and cultural bonds that are seen as defining Muslims, Rastafarians and other groups that may not have formal protection under the Race Relations Act' (Commission for Racial Equality 2007c). Thus it is clear there is some

disagreement about how best to define Black and Minority Ethnic groups, and that legal definitions may not be acceptable to all. For the purpose of this report we have included all non-White British groups as Black and Minority Ethnic groups.

As different organisations define Black and Minority Ethnic groups differently, often studies and reports use different definitions too. For example, many datasets, including Labour Force Survey data, do not include a category for Gypsies and Travellers. In some studies, the term 'Black and Minority Ethnic' includes people from White ethnic communities (such as 'White Irish' or 'White Other' which would include White European), whereas others consider the term Black and Minority Ethnic to exclude White people. This does add a layer of complexity when analysing data and making comparisons across data sources and conclusions.

Ethnic profile of Britain

The Census is the most reliable and large-scale study to give an overview of the ethnic composition of Britain. Census data from 2001 shows that 11.8 per cent of the population are from ethnic minority communities, and 8.1 per cent are from non-White ethnic communities (cited in Commission for Racial Equality 2007b). Table 1 gives a further breakdown of the ethnic profile of Britain in 2001.

Table 1: Ethnic profile of Britain, from Census 2001 data

Ethnic Groups		% of population
White groups	White British	88
	White Irish	1.2
	Other	2.5
Mixed groups	Mixed	1.2
Asian or Asian British groups	Indian	1.8
	Pakistani	1.3
	Bangladeshi	0.5
	Other	0.4
Black or Black British groups	Caribbean	1
	African	0.8
	Other	0.2
Chinese groups	Chinese	0.4
Other ethnic groups	Other	0.4

(Cited in Commission for Racial Equality 2007c)

Although this data is useful to give an overview, it was collected in 2001. The ethnic profile of Britain is constantly changing; a comparison between the 1991 and 2001 Census data shows a dramatic increase in the number of British residents from Black and Minority Ethnic groups over the decade. There are also likely to have been many changes since 2001, with the expansion of the European Union and the subsequent increase in numbers of migrants, especially people from Eastern European countries, settling in Britain. The percentages of

'White other' or 'Other' respondents are likely to be far higher in the 2011 Census.

Regional and age variations

There are also dramatic variations across the regions. For example, London has a large ethnic minority population with 40 per cent of residents being from ethnic minority communities; the West Midlands has the second highest figure at 13.9 per cent; the South West and the North West have the lowest figures at 4.7 per cent and 3.6 per cent respectively (Commission for Racial Equality 2007d). However in recent years a large number of Eastern Europeans have settled in rural areas. In addition to the regional variations, it is worth noting that 'The minority ethnic population has a younger age structure than the white population …' (Bhattacharyya et al. 2003, p. 4).

Gypsies and Travellers

There are no accurate figures regarding the number of Gypsies and Travellers in the UK, but the Council of Europe estimates there to be about 300,000 people who would class themselves as such. Of these, approximately 37 per cent are Gypsies of Romany origin, 28 per cent Irish Travellers, 33 per cent New Travellers, 1 per cent Scottish Gypsy Travellers and 1 per cent 'Bargies' or Boat Dwellers (NIACE 2006b).

Gypsies and Travellers have traditionally and historically faced social exclusion, isolation and persecution. Living standards can be extremely poor and while there are some well-run council sites, other Traveller housing is among the worst in Britain (NIACE 2006b). As the Commission for Racial Equality argues, 'All the evidence suggests that Travellers and Gypsies are some of the most vulnerable and marginalised ethnic minority groups in Britain' (cited in NIACE 2006b, p. 16). Also, the language needs of Gypsy and Traveller groups are often ignored. Irish Travellers may speak Gammon as their first language, while other Gypsies may speak Romany.

Conclusion

There is little consensus as to how to define Black and Minority Ethnic groups. Different pieces of research use different categories for data collection, and these categories are often limited in themselves. For example, many data sources do not include categories for Gypsies and Travellers.

The 2001 Census is the most reliable and large-scale study to give an overview of the ethnic composition of Britain. Therefore, it is the main data source used in this section. Census data shows that (in 2001) 11.8 per cent of the population were from minority ethnic backgrounds. London has a particularly high proportion of Black and Minority Ethnic residents when compared to other areas. It is likely there has been an increase in the proportion of Black and Minority Ethnic residents in recent years, partly due to the expansion of the European Union.

Background and policy context

Introduction

In recent years there have been a number of policy initiatives that have aimed to widen participation in adult learning and to raise skills levels. In addition to this, there have been a number of reports, policy initiatives and laws that have aimed to eliminate racial discrimination and promote equality (both exclusively within the learning and skills sector and within wider society). This section provides a brief overview of some of the key reports, policies and developments in order to place this report in context.

ESOL

Prior to the Skills for Life strategy little was known about the demand for ESOL. However, since the launch of the strategy '…English-language provision has become one of the central themes and most contentious elements of government policy and as a consequence the strategy has become a key aspect of addressing wider policy dimensions such as citizenship, refugees and asylum seekers, employment mobility and social unrest' (Brooks 2006, p. 16). In recent years the high demand for ESOL, the expansion of the European Union and changes to fees arrangements have meant that ESOL has had a particularly high profile.

It would be reasonable to assume that virtually all ESOL learners are likely to be from Black and Minority Ethnic groups (assuming White, non-British learners, such as White European learners, are classed as Black and Minority Ethnic groups). Therefore, any developments in ESOL provision will have a big impact on Black and Minority Ethnic groups.

ESOL provision is enormously important in enabling those with low-level English skills to develop their language skills (and their confidence) to participate more fully in economic and social life. ESOL learning has been taken up not only by people who have recently arrived in the country – asylum-seekers, refugees and migrants – but also by those living in settled communities whose low-level English skills have prevented them from socialising or working outside their communities.

ESOL provision since the launch of the Skills for Life strategy has increased with the expansion of the European Union and the inclusion of the A8 countries, which has seen large numbers of migrant workers enter the UK: 'At a time of rapid industrial and demographic change, hundreds of thousands of people have migrated to the UK to fill jobs' (NIACE 2006c, p. 5). Migrant workers bring with them vital labour skills that allow them to participate in the labour market and make a positive contribution to the economy. However, they require sufficient language skills to enable them to participate and contribute fully (Ward 2007b).

There have been recent changes in the fee arrangements for ESOL provision. Unlike literacy and numeracy provision, ESOL is no longer automatically free to learners. Provision is only free for unemployed people or those receiving income-based benefits. Following these proposals, a Race Equality Impact Assessment

(REIA) was carried out to explore the possible consequences of the proposed changes. Various concerns arose from the REIA, including that the proposals would have a detrimental effect on spouses and women with ESOL needs, asylum-seekers for whom the application process has been prolonged and people in very low-paid work (DfES 2007b).

The government responded with measures to counteract the possible negative implications. These include an increase in Learner Support Hardship Funds and free provision for asylum-seekers for whom a decision on their status has not been reached after six months.

Other significant changes to ESOL provision include an increased focus on employability. New 'ESOL for work' qualifications were launched in October 2007 to allow ESOL learners to develop the functional language skills they need for work. The new qualifications are tailored to meet the needs of employers and courses are shorter in length than generic ESOL courses.

Literacy

In the field of literacy there have been developments regarding embedded provision and materials and an increased emphasis on speaking and listening skills for adults for whom English is their first language within literacy provision.

There has been some research and literature published recently into literacy and ESOL learners (or learners who have ESOL needs). Some writers have recognised the tensions literacy teachers may face in balancing the needs of literacy learners who come from differing backgrounds and who have different skills levels and experiences of qualifications. For example, a literacy class may include literacy learners whose first language is English, migrant literacy learners who have low-level or no literacy skills in their native language and migrants who are highly educated professionals who have good literacy skills in their native language (Spiegel and Sunderland 2006). All of these learners are likely to have different needs. Other literature has highlighted how some literacy learners, such as Creole-speaking learners, may find literacy particularly difficult because the structure and patterns of the English language are so different from those of their native language (Central Manchester Caribbean English Project 1985).

Numeracy

Maths and numeracy learning has been criticised for focusing too heavily on the acquisition of procedural skills at the expense of deep understanding of mathematical ideas, and recently maths and numeracy teachers have been encouraged to adopt a more participative approach to working with learners. Swan (2005) gives an overview of what principles should underlie effective maths provision. These principles are based on a vision of active learning that is challenging and encourages learner input. It steers away from an old framework of a receptive teaching model, it encourages group learning, and it emphasises the importance of discussion of ideas.

The notion that learners should take an active role in their learning could have significant implications for Black and Minority Ethnic learners. Black and Minority Ethnic learners, and especially migrants, refugees and asylum-seekers, may

bring a variety of culturally diverse approaches to numbers to their learning. Thus, the notion of 'multicultural numeracy' has been actively developed and used in schools and in adult education for many years. This is based on the idea that:

- People from other countries may have learnt numeracy in very different ways and that numeracy provision should take account of these different learning methods; and

- Numeracy or maths can be taught in a creative way that explores how numbers are used in other countries and cultures, to enhance the learning experience.

Traditionally, many European and American mathematicians have regarded Western Mathematical theories and applications as superior, at the expense of theories and applications from other (particularly colonised) countries (Gheverghese Joseph 1991). This devalues experiences and expertises from other countries. To combat this, many numeracy providers have attempted to incorporate more culturally diverse activities into teaching and learning and many resources exist to support teachers who want to work in this way.

The Macpherson Report and the Race Relations Amendment Act 2000

The Macpherson Report following the death of Stephen Lawrence made a series of recommendations relating not only to the criminal justice system but also to the role of education and learning bodies (Macpherson 1999). In summary, these recommendations called for the National Curriculum to address and reflect diversity and for schools to record racist incidents and put strategies into place to deal with them. While the focus was mainly on compulsory education, the report also recommended that '… local Government and relevant agencies should specifically consider implementing community and local initiatives aimed at promoting cultural diversity and addressing racism …' (p. 335). Clearly, the post-compulsory education sector has a responsibility to adhere to these recommendations and these duties were enshrined in the Race Relations Amendment Act (RRAA) in 2000, which places duties on public bodies to eliminate unlawful racial discrimination, promote equality of opportunity and promote good race relations. It also sets out specific duties for FE providers, who have to have a written race equality policy, to carry out an impact assessment of policies in relation to race, and to carry out monitoring of student and staff recruitment and progression. FE providers also have a duty to make this information public (Commission for Black Staff in Further Education 2002a).

Developments in London

As discussed in the section 'Black and Minority Ethnic Groups', London has a far greater percentage of Black and Minority Ethnic residents than other regions (40 per cent) and they are more likely to be '…from developing countries … and "more recently arrived" than migrants in other regions' (Cramb 2007, p. 2).

Unemployment rates are high in London, and particularly among London's migrant population. Many migrants have low-level English skills. However, many employers have grown to rely on migrants for their labour and have welcomed

their positive attitudes towards work (Cramb 2007). As one would expect, the demand for ESOL provision in London is high and the vast majority of ESOL provision is in London.

The Mayor's draft London Refugee Strategy – *London Enriched* – recognises that 'On top of disadvantage arising from ethnicity and other dimensions of inequality, refugees face a series of barriers specific to their migration route' (p. 7). These can include language barriers, effects of persecution such as mental ill health, problems with documentation and poor housing conditions. The strategy sets out six core themes for development, including 'employment training and enterprise' and sets out proposals for actions to better meet employment training and enterprise needs (Mayor of London 2007, p. 16).

The London Skills for Life strategy (JH Consulting et al. 2006) sets out a three-year plan to develop high quality, accessible Skills for Life provision within London. The plan recognises the importance of ESOL, particularly for people from some ethnic groups and offenders, who have high levels of need but are not accessing provision. 'Key barriers include cultural issues, lack of linked childcare, and the lack of ESOL delivered in accessible locations and modes' (p. 16). It also recognises that some groups seem to fair worse in the employment market, in particular people from Somalia, the Congo, Eritrea, Afghanistan, Turkey and Bangladesh. The strategy suggests family learning and community learning models can open up access to learners and increase engagement for such groups.

The London Development Agency's Regional Skills Action Plan (2005) sets out aims to address disadvantage, and suggests ESOL provision and high quality Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) are essential for this (London Development Agency 2005). HM Treasury (2007), in their review of 'worklessness' in London, also recognises the high numbers of people living in London who are disadvantaged in the labour market – including people from Black and Minority Ethnic groups who have below average employment rates. It recommends that a London-wide strategy is needed to engage with and support '… those who are currently furthest from the labour market …' and suggests further investment in ESOL provision is needed (p. 2).

Community cohesion

Recent policy developments have included a strong focus on the importance of community cohesion. These have been due in part to concerns over violent extremism and in part to racism and resistance to cultural diversity in some communities.

In *Preventing Violent Extremism – Winning Hearts and Minds* (DCLG 2007), Ruth Kelly announced a new action plan to work with Muslim communities to prevent violent extremism. The potential role of education is highlighted in the action plan as it sets out to 'Ensure the most effective use of the education system in promoting faith understanding' (p. 6). This includes encouraging learning providers to develop high quality learning about faith and Islam within learning content, and encouraging FE providers to support faith needs via activities such as Faith Awareness Weeks and Muslim student councils.

The Commission on Integration and Cohesion recently conducted a 10-month review of changes in local communities and the challenges that have resulted from these changes. The resultant action plan includes many strands that will aim to develop communities, bring together people from different backgrounds and promote and celebrate shared values. Of particular relevance, the review found that '…a lack of English language skills is one of the biggest barriers to integration, particularly for new migrants' (Commission on Integration and Cohesion 2007, paragraph 8.25). The review reinforces the need for basic skills provision as a way of developing employability and promoting integration, and the importance of employer engagement in this.

The focus on community cohesion is particularly relevant for some Black and Minority Ethnic groups, particularly new migrants, refugees and asylum-seekers, Islamic communities, and settled communities with low level English skills or those who are isolated from the wider community. Education services have an important role to play in providing opportunities for people from different backgrounds to integrate and communicate with one another and to develop an understanding of and a respect for diversity.

People who are not British citizens are now required to take a 'Life in the UK' test to be granted citizenship or Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR). The aims of this include enabling people to acquire some knowledge of the UK and of British citizens' rights and responsibilities. Lifelong learning has had a role to play in helping learners, and in particular ESOL learners, to develop their skills and knowledge to enable them to be granted citizenship. Many learning providers now offer citizenship courses and NIACE and LLU+ at South Bank University have developed materials specifically for ESOL citizenship learners.

Conclusion

A number of developments and policy initiatives in recent years have aimed to widen participation in adult learning, to raise skills levels and to eliminate racial discrimination and promote equality (both within the learning and skills sector and within wider society). These include the Skills for Life strategy, which aimed to improve the literacy, language and numeracy skills of adults. The Macpherson report (Macpherson 1999) was pivotal in highlighting how organisational practices can perpetuate racism and racial inequalities. Recently the notion of community cohesion has dominated many policy drives and initiatives.

These developments and policy initiatives are important in helping to understand the responsibilities learning providers have to raise skills levels as well as to promote cultural diversity, good race relations and cohesion between different groups.

Existing data – Black and Minority Ethnic groups, learning, skills and employment

Introduction

It is difficult to identify statistically significant data about Black and Minority Ethnic groups' participation in Skills for Life learning. Most data sets that are large enough to offer findings that are statistically robust in terms of ethnicity (such as the Census, the British Household Survey or the Labour Force Survey) do not explore participation in Skills for Life learning. Conversely, most studies into Skills for Life learning (such as Bynner and Parson's *New Light on Literacy and Numeracy* (2006)) have not specifically explored ethnicity as a variable and numbers are likely to be too low to offer statistically significant findings.

Data relating to the following areas can be used to identify which are the priority Black and Minority Ethnic groups for whom further activity may be needed to increase participation and achievement within Skills for Life learning:

- Black and Minority Ethnic groups' participation in learning in general
- Black and Minority Ethnic groups and the labour market
- Black and Minority Ethnic groups and highest qualification levels
- Black and Minority Ethnic groups' eligibility for and participation in Skills for Life.

When looking at Black and Minority Ethnic groups and education, it is important not to underestimate the complexity of the situation. A variety of factors, such as gender, socio-economic background, etc. are likely to have a significant impact on a person's educational aspirations and experiences. Achievement also varies nationally and regionally and '…a group that may be perceived as performing less well at national level may buck this trend in other, smaller populations' (City College Norwich 2005, p.19). For these reasons, and others, the data should be approached with some caution.

Black and Minority Ethnic groups' participation in learning in general

Compulsory education
Investigating Black and Minority Ethnic groups' achievement in compulsory education can be useful in that it can help to identify those groups who seem to benefit least from early education and who are more likely to be eligible for Skills for Life provision.

A recent research brief from the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) reporting on a study of 15,000 young people in year 9 (typically aged 13–14) at school, found that Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Black Caribbean and Black African pupils perform less well than their White British peers at annual national tests. While many studies have quite rightly included an analysis of socio-economic status in their examination of the underperformance of certain ethnic minority groups, DCSF found that factors relating to socio-economic disadvantage '… are not sufficient to account for the attainment gaps for some ethnic groups, particularly Black Caribbean pupils' (DCSF 2007, p. 5).

REACH (2007) also state that 'Black boys are among the least likely to obtain 5 A* to C GCSEs, good A levels, and entry to the more established universities' (p. 15). They report that 31 per cent of Black African and 23 per cent of Black Caribbean boys get 5 A*–C GCSEs (including English and Maths) in compulsory education; the overall national average is 40 per cent.

In 2003 Bhattacharyya et al. explored participation and attainment of Black and Minority Ethnic groups in compulsory education. They reported that while Indian and Chinese pupils achieve 'good levels of success in compulsory education, Black, Bangladeshi and Pakistani pupils, and pupils with English as an Additional Language (EAL), perform less well than White pupils. They also point out that Black Caribbean pupils are three times more likely to be permanently excluded than White pupils.

There is little evidence about the success rates of Gypsies and Travellers in compulsory education. However, there is a widely held belief that they are among those most excluded from and least likely to benefit from education. Indeed, the Commission for Racial Equality (2007a) refer to Gypsies and Travellers when summarising those ethnic groups who benefit least from compulsory education: '… black children, white working class boys, Gypsies and Irish Travellers and those of Bangladeshi and Pakistani origin consistently fall below the average at all key stages' (p. 11).

Adult learning

In 2003 Aldridge and Tuckett reported on participation in learning by Black and Minority Ethnic adults by drawing on Labour Force Survey data. Although this work is slightly dated, it can give useful insights into which Black and Minority Ethnic groups appear to participate most in adult learning. They report that 7 out of 10 Black and Minority Ethnic adults report participation in learning. The figures for the general population's participation levels, and those of Black and Minority Ethnic Groups, are similar. However, there are differences between Black and Minority Ethnic groups. Table 2 gives a breakdown of percentages of each Black and Minority Ethnic group that reported participation in learning.

Table 2: Participation in learning by ethnicity

	Any learning (%)	
	Adults aged 16+	Adults aged 16–64
All respondents	68	78
All minority ethnic groups	69	73
African	82	84
Caribbean	72	80
Chinese	67	71
Indian	66	71
Pakistani	55	58
Bangladeshi	45	48
Mixed ethnic origin	80	82
Other	79	81

(Labour Force Survey 2001/2; taken from Aldridge and Tuckett 2003)

As this table shows, adults of African and Mixed ethnic origin appear to have high levels of participation, whereas Pakistani and Bangladeshi adults participate least. An analysis of gender shows that Pakistani and Bangladeshi women are

particularly less likely to participate. In fact, Aldridge and Tuckett (2003) report that women participate in learning less than men across most Black and Minority Ethnic groups, with the exception of Chinese and Caribbean groups. They also report that Bangladeshi learners are far more likely than other learners to be engaging in self-directed learning, and thus not to be learning with others in communal settings. However they do not offer any suggestions as to why.

Aldridge et al. (2006) followed up this work by looking at 2004 Labour Force Survey data. They found that the younger age profile of Black and Minority Ethnic groups played a significant role in their participation levels, as younger people are more likely to be involved in learning: 'Whilst the participation rate of ethnic minority groups as a whole is within a single percentage point of the UK population's it is five percentage points down when account is taken of the different age profile of Britain's black and minority ethnic communities' (p. 1).

The 2004 data also reinforces earlier findings that Pakistani and Bangladeshi adults participate less in learning than other ethnic groups. Participation among Bangladeshi adults was at 40 per cent, compared with 64 per cent for the general adult population.

With regard to age, Aldridge and White (2005) find that '… participation in learning declines with age across all ethnic groups, with the most severe decline occurring within Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities … Only 4 per cent of Bangladeshi adults aged over 65 are learning, compared with 43 per cent of Black Africans and 23 per cent of all minority ethnic adults in this age range' (p. 22).

However, participation is not the same as achievement. Frumkin et al. (2007) offer some useful insights into the varying levels of achievement according to ethnic group within FE. They report that while achievement rates in FE are rising, there are still big gaps between different ethnic groups and that 'in general, Black and Minority Ethnic groups succeed less well' (p. 6). They also report that 'Indian and Chinese heritage learners achieve the highest rates of success, while the majority of ethnic groups, Bangladeshi and Black Caribbean learners perform the least well' (p. 7).

The Trade Union Congress (TUC) offers some useful statistics relating to workplace training. Their analysis of Labour Force Survey data suggests that '… 31 per cent of black and minority ethnic [Black and Minority Ethnic] workers have never been offered training by their current employer' (Trade Union Congress 2005, p. 6). While this is close to the 29 per cent of White employees who have never been offered training, the TUC argue that a number of factors suggest that Black and Minority Ethnic employees should be far more likely to be offered training, such as the fact that Black and Minority Ethnic employees are 'more likely to be educated to a degree level – a factor that significantly influences access to job-related training' (p. 6). They also find that Pakistani and Bangladeshi employees fare particularly badly: 39 per cent of Pakistani employees and 47 per cent of Bangladeshi employees have never been offered training. However, women from dual heritage, Black or Black British and other ethnic groups are more likely to be offered training.

More recent research has begun to classify data by faith. It is useful to refer to data regarding Muslim adults because the majority of Muslim adults are Asian:

the 2001 Census found that 73.3 per cent of the Muslim population in England and Wales are Asian, and that 50.1 per cent of those who identified themselves as Asian also identified themselves as Muslim (Multi-Faith Centre 2007).

Recently NRDC carried out a literature review and qualitative analysis into Muslim groups and participation and achievement in learning, particularly Skills for Life provision (NRDC 2007). They found that while Muslims have high levels of engagement in learning when compared with other faith groups '…Muslims as a group appear to perform less well than other faith groups in terms of educational achievement' (NRDC 2007, p. 6). In addition to this, a large number of Muslim women have no qualifications and more young people than older people from Muslim groups are engaging in learning. These findings reiterate findings from other research that suggest that women and older people from Black and Minority Ethnic groups often fare worst. NRDC suggests that measures need to be put in place to support learners to engage in learning throughout their life course, to better reach older learners who appear to participate less.

NRDC's study (2007) also suggests that inappropriate ways of recognising and recording achievements from other countries may contribute to the finding that Muslim groups perform less well in terms of educational achievement. This may be true for a wide range of Black and Minority Ethnic groups.

Black and Minority Ethnic groups and the labour market

Investigating which Black and Minority Ethnic groups appear to have higher percentages of people who are unemployed is useful as it allows the identification of those groups that are likely to face social isolation and poor material and financial circumstances. It also helps to identify those groups who have the highest needs for learning to increase employability.

Labour Force Survey data from 2007 has been used to report on the employment status of different ethnic groups although this data should be approached with caution as there are low numbers of respondents from Black and Minority Ethnic groups.

Table 3: Employment status of adults aged 16+ by ethnic grouping (England) 2007

Ethnicity	Employment status (%)			
	In employment	ILO unemployed*	Inactive**	Total
White groups				
White British	58.6	2.7	38.7	66731
White Other	62.7	3.8	33.5	4311
Mixed groups				
Mixed groups	61	7.2	31.8	484
Asian groups				
Indian	61.8	4.4	33.8	1471
Pakistani	41.5	6.7	51.8	1024
Bangladeshi	35	9.9	55.1	354
Asian Other	60.1	6.7	33.1	534
Black groups				
Black Caribbean	53.7	7.9	38.4	848
Black African	59.5	9.1	31.4	805
Chinese				
Chinese	53.1	5.3	41.6	339
Other				
Other	54.4	7.7	38	1122
Total	45602	2439	29982	78023

*'Those who are without a job, are available to start work in the next two weeks, who want a job and have been seeking a job in the last four weeks or are waiting to start a job already obtained' (National Statistic Online 2007).

**'People who are neither in employment or unemployment. This includes those looking after a home or retired or permanently unable to work' (National Statistics Online 2007).

(Taken from Labour Force Survey data, April–June 2007)

Key findings on employment

- White Other, Indian and Mixed groups have the highest percentages of respondents in employment at 62.7 per cent, 61.8 per cent and 61 per cent respectively.

- Pakistani and Bangladeshi groups have the lowest percentages of respondents in employment at 41.5 per cent and 35 per cent respectively.

- Bangladeshi and Black African groups have the highest percentages of unemployed respondents at 9.9 per cent and 9.1 per cent respectively, followed by the Black Caribbean group at 7.9 per cent.

- White British and White Other groups have the lowest percentages of unemployed respondents at 2.7 per cent and 3.8 per cent respectively.

- Pakistani and Bangladeshi groups have the highest percentages (by far) of inactive respondents at 51.8 per cent and 55.1 per cent respectively.

Table 4: Employment status of adults aged 16+ by ethnic grouping and gender (England) 2007

Ethnicity	Employment status (% of total males/ females from ethnic group)							
	In employment		ILO unemployed		Inactive		Total	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
White groups								
White British	64.4	53.4	3.3	2.2	32.3	44.5	31593	35138
White Other	71	55.3	3.5	4	25.5	40.7	2030	2281
Mixed groups								
Mixed groups	60.3	61.5	9.6	5.5	30.1	33.1	209	275
Asian groups								
Indian	70.5	53.8	3.5	5.2	26	41	705	766
Pakistani	59.2	24.6	8.2	5.3	32.6	70	500	524
Bangladeshi	50.9	21.2	12.1	7.9	37	70.9	165	189
Asian Other	70.2	51.1	5.2	8.2	24.6	40.8	252	282
Black groups								
Black Caribbean	53.4	53.8	10.4	6	36.2	40.2	365	483
Black African	67.1	53.3	11.6	7	21.3	39.7	362	443
Chinese								
Chinese	53	53.2	6	4.7	40.9	42.1	149	190
Other								
Other	63.9	45.9	8.1	7.3	28	46.9	529	593
Total	23825	21777	1357	1082	11677	18305	36859	41164

(Taken from Labour Force Survey data, April–June 2007)

Findings on gender

- Women appear to fare better than men (in terms of employment and unemployment figures) in Mixed groups.

- In the Mixed group, 61.5 per cent of female respondents are employed, compared to 60.3 per cent of males. 5.5 per cent of female respondents are unemployed, compared to 9.6 per cent of males.

- The highest percentages of unemployment are found in Bangladeshi, Black African, and Black Caribbean male groups. For female respondents only, the highest percentages of unemployment are found among Asian Other, Bangladeshi, Other and Black African groups.

- Pakistani and Bangladeshi groups have particularly low percentages of women in employment, and particularly high percentages of women who appear economically inactive in the data.

Black and Minority Ethnic groups and highest qualification levels

Investigating which Black and Minority Ethnic groups appear to have low or no qualifications can be useful in finding out which have the greatest need for Skills for Life provision. Those that have low or no qualifications, in spite of the strategy having been implemented six years ago, can be seen as 'priority groups' for whom further activity is needed to increase participation and achievement rates.

Table 5 gives an overview of the highest qualification level held by respondents by ethnic group, as taken from Labour Force Survey data, 2007. Table 6 also

includes a breakdown according to gender. A breakdown according to age has not been included as the numbers of respondents for each age band are too small to be statistically significant.

Table 5: Highest qualification held by working age adults by ethnic grouping (England) 2007

Ethnicity	Highest qualification level (%)							Total
	NVQ L4 and above	NVQ L3	NVQ L2	Below NVQ L2	Other qualification	Trade Apprenticeship	No qualifications	
White groups								
White British	27.6	15.8	16.8	15.4	6	5.3	13.1	50687
White Other	27.1	8.4	7.4	7.7	32.4	3.8	13.2	3518
Mixed groups								
Mixed groups	28.3	15.9	17.2	14.8	10.2	0.9	12.6	459
Asian groups								
Indian	32.4	10.9	10.6	6.7	20.7	1	17.5	1307
Pakistani	17.6	10	12.7	12	19.3	1.1	27.3	937
Bangladeshi	14.2	11.1	12.3	13.3	14.2	0	34.8	316
Asian Other	31.1	10.6	7	4.8	29.3	0.8	16.4	499
Black groups								
Black Caribbean	25.9	14.3	17.2	17.2	7.9	4.6	12.9	680
Black African	33.7	12.1	10.2	7.5	21	1.2	14.3	775
Chinese								
Chinese	44.5	9.1	7.9	4.1	21.5	0	12.9	317
Other								
Other	28.4	8.2	7.7	6.5	29.6	0.6	19	1035
Total	16710	9022	9508	8687	5461	2878	8264	60530

(Taken from Labour Force Survey data, England, April–June 2007)

Findings from Table 5

- The Chinese group has the highest percentage of respondents qualified to Level 4 and above (44.5 per cent). This is far higher than any other group.

- Bangladeshi and Pakistani groups have far lower percentages of respondents qualified to Level 4 and above than other ethnic groups, at 14.2 per cent and 17.6 per cent respectively. However, they do not have particularly low numbers of respondents who are qualified to Level 2 and 3, when compared to other ethnic groups.

- Those respondents with no qualifications or with below Level 2 qualifications would be eligible for Skills for Life provision. According to this, Bangladeshi and Pakistani groups have the highest percentages of respondents that would be eligible for Skills for Life provision, at 48.1 per cent and 39.3 per cent respectively, followed by Black Caribbean respondents at 30.1 per cent.

- Bangladeshi and Pakistani groups have the highest percentages of respondents with no qualifications, at 34.8 per cent and 27.3 per cent respectively.

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- White Other, Other and Asian Other groups have the highest percentages of respondents with Other qualifications. This may reflect how many migrant workers have qualifications from their native countries that are not recognised formally within Britain or within British qualification frameworks.

Table 6: Highest qualification held by working age adults by ethnic grouping and gender (England) 2007

Ethnicity	Highest qualification level (% of total males/ females from ethnic group)															
	NVQ L4 and above		NVQ L3		NVQ L2		Below NVQ L2		Other qualification		Trade Apprenticeship		No qualifications		Total	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
White groups																
White British	27.1	28	17	14.7	13.5	20.2	13.3	17.6	7.4	4.6	8.9	1.6	12.8	13.4	25391	25296
White Other	25.8	28.3	8.6	8.3	6.3	8.4	6.6	8.8	32.7	32.1	6.1	1.6	13.9	12.6	1712	1806
Mixed groups																
Mixed Other	24.4	31.5	15.6	16.1	16.1	18.1	17.6	12.6	11.7	9.1	0.5	1.2	14.1	11.4	205	254
Asian groups																
Indian	33.2	31.7	10.5	11.4	9.5	11.7	6.6	6.9	22.8	18.8	1.6	0.5	15.9	19.1	641	666
Pakistani	20.2	15.1	8.6	11.5	12.7	12.7	12	11.9	21.2	17.4	1.7	0.4	23.6	31	466	471
Bangladeshi	18.6	10.5	9	12.9	9	15.2	12.4	14	17.9	11.1	0	0	33.1	36.3	145	171
Asian Other	35.2	27.4	10.6	10.6	8.1	6.1	4.2	5.3	28.4	30	1.3	0.4	12.3	20.2	236	263
Black groups																
Black Caribbean	18.7	31.1	15.8	13.1	14.4	19.2	18.3	16.4	9.2	7.1	9.2	1.3	14.4	11.9	284	396
Black African	36.7	31.2	12	12.2	9.7	10.6	7.7	7.3	21.5	20.7	1.4	0.9	10.9	17.1	349	426
Chinese																
Chinese	46.8	42.7	10.1	8.4	7.9	7.9	4.3	3.9	20.9	21.9	0	0	10.1	15.2	139	178
Other																
Other	26.8	29.9	9.7	6.9	7.7	7.8	6.9	6.1	32.3	27.1	1	0.2	15.7	22.1	496	539
Total	8177	8533	4782	4240	3835	5673	3780	4907	3096	2365	2421	457	3973	4291	30064	30466

(Taken from Labour Force Survey data, April–June 2007)

Findings from Table 6

- Women appear to fare better than men (in terms of having qualifications and having qualifications above Level 2) in Mixed and Black Caribbean groups.

- In the Mixed group 65.7 per cent of female respondents are qualified to Level 2 or above, compared to 56.1 per cent of males. 24 per cent of female respondents have no qualifications or qualifications below Level 2, compared to 31.7 per cent of males.

- In the Black Caribbean group 63.4 per cent of female respondents are qualified to Level 2 or above, compared to 48.9 per cent of males. 28.3 per cent of female respondents have no qualifications or qualifications below Level 2, compared to 32.7 per cent of males.

- Men fare slightly better than women in terms of having qualifications and having qualifications above Level 2 in Pakistani, Asian Other, Black African and Chinese groups. Much existing literature and research suggests Pakistani and Bangladeshi women fare worst in terms of qualification levels. While the Labour Force Survey suggests that Pakistani women do fare worse than Pakistani men, the differences are not as dramatic as one might expect. For the Bangladeshi group, more women than men have Level 2 or above qualifications (although these women are more likely to have Level 2 or 3 qualifications than Level 4), although conversely more women than men have no qualifications or qualifications below Level 2.

Black and Minority Ethnic groups' eligibility for and participation in Skills for Life

Skills for Life Survey 2003

The *Skills for Life Survey* (DfES 2003) had over 8,000 respondents and aimed to produce a national profile of adult literacy, numeracy, ESOL and ICT skills, between Entry level 1 and Level 2 and above. It was carried out between June 2002 and May 2003. It was a large-scale survey, but even so the data relating to Black and Minority Ethnic groups is relatively small and thus few statistically sound conclusions can be made. It is also dated and therefore unlikely to accurately represent the profile of Black and Minority Ethnic groups today.

Overall, the study found that, with regard to literacy, people from Black and Minority Ethnic groups tended to perform less well than White British participants. However, they found that language had a big impact – if participants whose first language wasn't English were excluded, the difference in performance across ethnic groups disappeared. The only exception to this was for Black Caribbean respondents. A study of numeracy skills had similar findings.

The Skills for Life Survey also reported that participants functioning at below Entry level 3 were more likely to be from a Black and Minority Ethnic background (25 per cent of all respondents at this level). It also reported that Pakistani and Indian participants were disproportionately represented at below Entry level 2.

Skills for Life learners

Brooks (2006) provides a useful breakdown of the ethnicity of learners starting Skills for Life courses from 2000–1 to 2004–5. Figure 3 provides an overview of the ethnic profile.

Figure 3: Learning starting Skills for Life courses by ethnicity 2000/1 to 2004/5
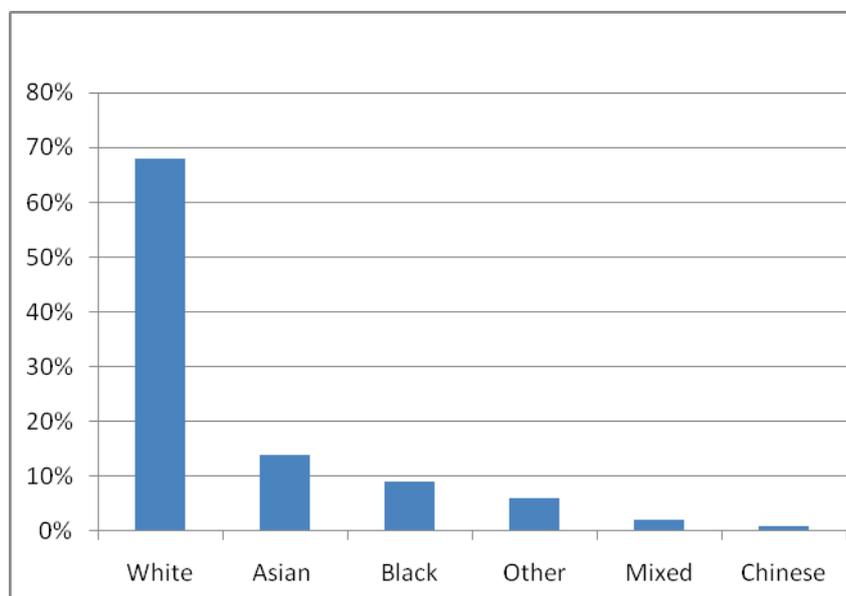
(Taken from Brooks 2006, p. 17)

As Figure 3 shows, the majority of those enrolling on Skills for Life courses between 2000 and 2005 were White. However, 32 per cent of learners were from Black and Minority Ethnic groups. This is extremely high considering that 11.8 per cent of the population is from Black and Minority Ethnic groups (Census 2001, cited in Commission for Racial Equality 2007c) and that 10 per cent of those eligible for Skills for Life in the Skills for Life Survey 2003 provision were from Black and Minority Ethnic groups (Metcalf and Meadows 2004).

Of those learners starting on Skills for Life courses between 2000 and 2005, 14 per cent were Asian. The 2001 Census found that 4 per cent of the total population was Asian. Black learners were also over represented as they constituted 9 per cent of all learners, compared to 2 per cent of the general population. (Census 2001, cited in Commission for Racial Equality 2007c)

Conclusion

This section set out to review existing data sources to identify those Black and Minority Ethnic groups that appear to fare worst in learning, skills and employment. Before reviewing the findings, it is important to note that all individuals will have different circumstances and that ethnic stereotyping should be avoided:

> 'The experience of minority ethnic groups is not uniform, the accepted picture of minority disadvantage ignores the evidence of considerable progress and achievement by people from some minority ethnic groups in examination results, job creation and career progression.'

(Owen et al., 2000, cited in The Research Centre, City College Norwich, 2005, p. 19).

Bearing this in mind, the data does provide some useful information regarding Black and Minority Ethnic groups and learning, skills and employment.

As this section has shown, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Black Caribbean and Black African pupils appear to benefit least from compulsory education. Pupils with EAL, while not a particular Black and Minority Ethnic group but who are likely to be from Black and Minority Ethnic groups, also seem to fare badly. Pakistani and Bangladeshi adults (especially women), Black Caribbean adults and Muslim adults, and older people across Black and Minority Ethnic groups, appear to participate and benefit least from adult learning.

Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Black Caribbean and Black African groups appear to fare least well in the labour market. Pakistani (especially women), Bangladeshi, White Other and Black Caribbean groups appear to fare least well in terms of qualifications and skills levels.

Black and Minority Ethnic groups are overrepresented in terms of accessing Skills for Life provision – particularly Asian and Black learners.

There is anecdotal evidence that Gypsies and Travellers fare particularly badly in terms of learning, skills and employment. However, there is little data to support this, as Gypsies and Travellers are likely to be missing from many data sources.

The most striking finding from this section is how frequently Pakistani and Bangladeshi groups are found to fare badly in terms of participation in learning, skills levels and the labour market. While this report has not explored age as a variable (due to low numbers of older people from Black and Minority Ethnic groups in Labour Force Survey data), some research has suggested that Pakistani people living in England can be roughly divided into two groups: younger people, for whom education is an accepted part of life; and older, reluctant learners who may support their children's education but '…will rarely consider training or learning for themselves' (Aldridge and White 2005, p. 16). This may be particularly true for women (Aston et al. 2007). Aldridge and White (2005) also suggest:

'The main implications for education service providers through colleges and local authorities, and for local LSCs, relates to the promotion and development of educational opportunities that specifically cater for those groups least likely to participate and most likely to be without basic qualifications. Repeatedly the statistical information points us toward Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities and to the women in those communities in particular.'

(Aldridge and White, 2005, p. 55–6).

Language has a big impact on a person's skills and employment levels. As this section has shown, Black and Minority Ethnic adults for whom English is not their first language are more likely to have Skills for Life needs. Ward, in her review of ESOL and unemployed adults, suggests that '… English language skills have a considerable impact on employment prospects and there is a direct co-relation

between proficiency in English language and labour market participation' (Ward, 2007b, p. 6). As the DfES Skills for Life Survey 2003 research has shown, if language factors are taken into account when analysing data according to ethnicity, it can become apparent how significant these are.

There are of course plenty of other factors relating to ethnicity that may be associated with skills levels, qualification levels and employment status, such as a person's religion, country of origin, status (e.g. if refugee, asylum-seeker or migrant), length of time in the UK (e.g. whether from a settled community or a new arrival), and language. It has not been within the scope of this report to explore these areas fully, but they do appear to be instrumental in shaping a person's circumstances in terms of learning and employment.

In conclusion, by assessing which groups are frequently cited in data and literature as faring least well in learning, skills and employment, one can begin to identify 'priority groups' for whom further activity may be necessary to increase participation and achievement in Skills for Life. This report finds these 'priority groups' to be: Pakistani and Bangladeshi groups (especially, but not exclusively, women); and, to a lesser extent: Black Caribbean and Black African groups; older Black and Minority Ethnic adults (although data relating to this is limited); Black and Minority Ethnic adults with English as and additional language; and Gypsies and Travellers (although data relating to this is limited).

The impact of Skills for Life on Black and Minority Ethnic groups

A study of existing literature and data is not sufficient to give a solid understanding of how the Skills for Life strategy has impacted on Black and Minority Ethnic groups. Further in-depth research – both qualitative and quantitative – with Black and Minority Ethnic groups is necessary to fully explore this. However, this section explores the possible impacts and divides these into three subsections: ESOL; literacy and numeracy; and employment status and qualification levels.

ESOL

In *'More Than a Language': NIACE Committee of Inquiry on English for Speakers of Other Languages* (NIACE 2006c) argued that ESOL is vital for social inclusion. It enables adults to participate fully in both social and economic spheres. It allows learners to gain independence. It is centrally linked and crucial to a variety of government policies including community cohesion, combating racism and improving health, housing and skills of the population.

Other research has also highlighted the positive social benefits of ESOL provision. Mallows' (2007b) review of NRDC research suggests 'ESOL learners gain significant psychological, social and emotional benefits from the classroom.' ESOL provision offers learners the chance to form new friendships, receive informal social support and 'engage in a process of socialisation through language (Mallows 2007b).
However, many of the potential benefits of learning ESOL are not fully realised due to insufficient planning and funding. The *NIACE Committee of Inquiry on*

English for Speakers of Other Languages found provision to be 'worryingly patchy' and to vary enormously in quality (NIACE 2006c, p. 7). The Committee argued that ESOL learning is very different from literacy and numeracy learning. However, this has not been taken into consideration in the way ESOL is planned and funded. Instead all three strands have been designed and delivered in the same way.

Whilst many learners with low-level literacy skills struggle with issues such as housing and benefits, these difficulties can be magnified for ESOL learners. ESOL learners, particularly those who are migrants, asylum-seekers or refugees, may have particular needs relating to their living circumstances, for which they may receive little advice outside of learning and which may impact upon their learning. These needs can be drawn upon within learning to allow learners to develop language skills and to acquire knowledge of support and advice systems. Literacy and numeracy learners are less likely to have such needs.

Literacy and numeracy

Metcalf and Meadows (2004, 2005, 2007) carried out a longitudinal study of literacy and numeracy learners, to explore the impact of such provision on learners' lives. They compared findings from their study of literacy and numeracy learners with a control group of non-learners. Unfortunately, the study focused very little on ethnicity as a variable, although there was some reference to this.

In the 2005 phase of the longitudinal study, Meadows and Metcalf (2005) looked at the effects of literacy and numeracy provision on learners' lives – both via tests and by finding out what learners themselves perceived to be the benefits. They found learners perceived that they had improved literacy and numeracy skills, had experienced employment-related benefits and had greater confidence, among other things. Via assessment tools, they measured whether the learners had experienced improvements relating to self-esteem, attitudes towards education and training, illness and disability and commitment to employment. They recognised that there will be a time delay between learning and any employment-related benefits and thus they explored 'indicators of improved employability'. In relation to Black and Minority Ethnic groups, Meadows and Metcalf (2005) concluded from their findings that:

- Black Caribbean and British Caribbean learners were less likely to gain qualifications than other groups;
- Black African and British African learners were more likely to gain qualifications, progress to a higher-level course and were less likely to believe their course had improved their literacy skills than other ethnic groups;
- Drop out rates did not vary according to ethnicity.

The sample size for this study was relatively small and therefore it is important not to generalise the findings. Unfortunately, the 2007 phase of the study does not refer to the impacts of literacy and numeracy learning according to ethnicity at all. However, Meadows and Metcalf (2007, p. 31) do conclude:

'Literacy and numeracy are building blocks to the development of skills relevant to the workplace rather than necessarily leading to a direct increase

in employability. While they are useful in themselves, the real value of literacy and numeracy courses lies in enabling people to progress to further education and training and to develop skills that more directly influence their employment and earning prospects.'

Employment status and qualification level

A comparison of Labour Force Survey data from 2001 (when the Skills for Life strategy was launched) and 2007 allows analysis as to whether Black and Minority Ethnic groups' employment and qualifications profiles appear to have altered over the six-year period. Although any changes cannot be attributed to the Skills for Life strategy, one could speculate that the strategy may have played an instrumental role in any changes.

The respondents who took part in the Labour Force Survey in 2001 will be different from the respondents who took part in 2007. Therefore, changes are not being measured among a specific group of people, but a reasonably representative sample of respondents from each Black and Minority Ethnic group.

Table 7 gives an overview of the employment status of respondents by ethnic group in 2001. Table 8 gives an overview of the highest qualification level held by respondents by ethnic group. These can be compared with Tables 3 and 6 which give the same information for 2007.

Table 7: Employment status of adults aged 16+ by ethnic grouping (England) 2001

Ethnicity	Employment status (%)			
	In Employment	ILO Unemployed	Inactive	Total
White groups				
White British	59.6	2.5	37.9	78531
White Other	58.7	3.2	38.1	2740
Mixed groups				
Mixed groups	58.1	7.1	34.8	425
Asian groups				
Indian	59.3	4.1	36.5	1464
Pakistani	50.5	17.4	32.1	616
Bangladeshi	33.2	7.5	59.3	322
Asian Other	56.6	5.1	38.3	350
Black groups				
Black Caribbean	56.3	7.7	36	917
Black African	56.9	9	34.1	622
Chinese				
Chinese	51.9	3.1	45	260
Other				
Other	49.9	5.3	44.8	359
Total	51349	2431	32826	86606

(Taken from Labour Force Survey data, March–May 2001)

Table 8: Highest qualification held by working age adults by ethnic grouping (England) 2001

Ethnicity	Highest qualification level (%)							
	NVQ L4 and above	NVQ L3	NVQ L2	Below NVQ L2	Other qualifications	Trade Apprenticeships	No qualifications	Total
White groups								
White British	22.7	13.6	15.4	16.6	7.1	8.1	16.3	60487
White Other	26.6	8.2	5.6	5.1	35.2	5.6	13.6	2286
Mixed groups								
Mixed groups	24.2	16.6	15.4	15.9	10.3	2.5	15.1	397
Asian groups								
Indian	28.5	12.2	13.3	8.5	16.6	2	19	1313
Pakistani	12.3	9.6	11	11.4	18	0.8	37	773
Bangladeshi	8.2	7.8	11.9	10.9	19.1	1.4	40.6	293
Asian Other	27.1	9.2	10.5	3.4	35.1	1.8	12.9	325
Black groups								
Black Caribbean	19.3	12.4	16.9	20.4	8.8	6.5	15.7	775
Black African	33.5	11.2	10.8	7.8	22.7	1.8	12.1	600
Chinese								
Chinese	28.5	13.8	6.3	6.3	25.1	0.8	19.2	239
Other								
Other	27.4	8.2	5.9	4.7	36.5	2.1	15.3	340
Total	15552	9017	10077	10701	6079	5163	11239	67828

(Taken from Labour Force Survey data, March–May 2001)

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A comparison of the data regarding employment status from Table 7 (2001) and Table 3 (2007) shows that most groups have experienced an increase in the percentage of employed respondents over the six-year period. The exceptions to this are White British groups, Black Caribbean groups and Pakistani groups. A comparison of the highest qualification level held in 2001 and 2007 (Table 6) shows that:

- For the majority of ethnic groups there has been a decrease in the percentages of respondents with no qualifications or qualifications below Level 2 (those who would be eligible for Skills for Life provision). This decrease was particularly significant for Pakistani, Black Caribbean and Chinese groups. The only groups that experienced an increase were White Other, Asian Other and Other ethnic groups.

- Most groups experienced a decrease in percentages of respondents with no qualifications. The exceptions to this were Asian Other groups, Black African groups and Other ethnic groups.

- Almost all groups experienced an increase in the percentages of respondents with Level 2 or above qualifications. The only exception to this was the Indian group, although the decrease was very slight. The groups that experienced a significant increase were White British, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Black Caribbean and Chinese groups.

- However Pakistani, Bangladeshi and White Other groups have continued to have the lowest percentages of respondents with Level 2 or above qualifications. Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Black Caribbean groups have continued to have the highest percentages of respondents with below Level 2 or no qualifications (therefore eligible for Skills for Life provision). Pakistani and Bangladeshi groups have continued to have the highest percentages of respondents with no qualifications.

Once again, the findings should be approached with caution because of low sample sizes. In general the skills levels in England appear to have increased since 2001. Although Pakistani and Bangladeshi groups still appear to have lower skills levels, they have experienced 7.4 per cent and 9.7 per cent increases (respectively) in percentages of respondents qualified to Level 2 or above. This is significant and is higher than the average across all ethnic groups which is 5.5 per cent.

Conclusion

In conclusion it is difficult to make clear and statistically significant statements about what impacts the Skills for Life strategy may have had on Black and Minority Ethnic groups.

The benefits of ESOL – in relation to increased social and economic participation, improved confidence and employability and benefits to social cohesion – are well documented in various pieces of literature. However, it has not been possible to locate any studies that have looked at the specific benefits for different Black and Minority Ethnic groups.

Literacy, and numeracy provision are associated with benefits to employability and to attitudes towards learning and training. Literacy and numeracy learners

may be more likely to take up other types of learning. However, again, the benefits for specific Black and Minority Ethnic groups are unclear.

A comparison of 2001 and 2007 Labour Force Survey data on employment suggests that more people are in or looking for work. There are no clear conclusions regarding employment status for Black and Minority Ethnic groups, except that overall trends in terms of which groups fare worst and best appear to have continued over the six-year period.

A comparison of 2001 and 2007 Labour Force Survey data on highest qualification levels suggests that qualification levels have increased across the six-year period for most ethnic groups. There have been particular improvements for White British, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Black Caribbean and Chinese groups. However, in spite of increases, Pakistani and Bangladeshi groups, and Black Caribbean and White Other groups to a lesser extent, have continued to fare worst. Therefore, any positive impacts of Skills for Life provision on the qualification levels of different Black and Minority Ethnic groups have not been enough to reverse trends.

Obstacles to participation and achievement

Introduction

For decades there has been research and discussion about why certain Black and Minority Ethnic groups appear to benefit least from education. Much of this has focused on compulsory education. Of course, experiences of compulsory education are likely to have a huge impact on the likelihood of a person taking up learning as an adult and on a person's attitudes towards education. Negative experiences of compulsory education may include leaving school with no qualifications, thus making a person eligible for Skills for Life provision. However, negative experiences of compulsory education may also make a person reluctant to re-enter the world of education, if they experienced this as a hostile place previously.

There are a number of obstacles that may prevent a person from taking up or achieving within learning. This section reviews some of the barriers that Black and Minority Ethnic groups may face as identified by existing research. It draws on research relating to all types of learning, and then applies these to Skills for Life settings in particular.

Obstacles to participation and achievement vary in their nature. Cross (1981, cited in Aldridge and White, 2005) offers a useful framework for grouping these obstacles:

- Situational – factors that relate to a person's personal life and family circumstances, including time and money constraints;
- Institutional – whereby educational institutions are unresponsive to a diverse range of needs; and
- Dispositional – where a person's attitudes, perceptions and expectations prevent them from taking up learning, such as feeling too old to learn.

The majority of obstacles identified in this section are 'situational' and 'institutional', although there is some evidence that 'dispositional' factors can prevent learning for Black and Minority Ethnic groups. It should be noted that some of the obstacles identified could fall into two categories: for example, a lack of childcare provision is both a situational obstacle (in that it relates to a person's particular family circumstances) and an institutional obstacle (in that if a learning provider fails to provide suitable childcare they may be excluding certain learners).

Some of these obstacles may also apply equally well to other disadvantaged groups of learners. This does not reduce their significance for Black and Minority Ethnic groups, but rather emphasises how improvements made for some learners (or potential learners) can benefit all learners.

Situational

A number of studies into Black and Minority Ethnic groups' participation in learning have identified obstacles relating to practical access issues.

Financial constraints have been frequently cited as barriers to participation in learning. White and Weaver (2007) suggest this may be partly because Black and Minority Ethnic groups are over-concentrated in poorer areas of Britain. The Department for Education and Skills 1999 *Survey of Adult Learning among Ethnic Minorities* (cited in Aldridge and White 2005) found that money-related obstacles were particularly significant for Black Caribbean and Black African non-learners who took part in the research. Financial pressures may prevent someone from taking up learning, and may also increase the likelihood of a person dropping out. However, the cost of learning is less likely to be a barrier in Skills for Life provision, as since 2001 it has been free to learners. Nonetheless, new fee arrangements for ESOL provision do raise concerns, as the new fee arrangements may restrict some Black and Minority Ethnic learners from taking up ESOL provision.

Finding the time for learning, particularly for those working long hours, can be an obstacle. The Learning and Skill Council's *National Learners' Survey* (cited in Frumkin et al. 2007) found this to be a particular problem for Black and Minority Ethnic learners (along with financial pressures). The DfES's 1999 *Survey of Adult Learning among Ethnic Minorities* (cited in Aldridge and White 2005) found time pressures to be particularly significant for Asian non-learners. Time pressures are particularly likely to be a barrier for those who have family commitments and those who work long hours.

Frumkin et al. (2007), among others, identify obstacles relating to geography and transport, particularly for those who live in urban, over-crowded areas that are lacking in local learning provision or that do not have sufficient transport to allow learners to travel to learning provision. A lack of transport may also be a barrier for those living in rural areas (Ward 2007b). Not being able to travel to learning provision, or having to undertake journeys that are long and expensive, may deter people from learning.

Many studies point towards limited childcare provision as an obstacle to learning particularly for women. Aston et al.'s 2007 study of Pakistani and Bangladeshi

women showed that family was the top priority in these women's lives, and that other activities were organised around this. A lack of appropriate childcare may mean women from Black and Minority Ethnic groups do not take up learning. For some minority groups it may be unacceptable to leave children in childcare, whether it is available or not.

Asylum-seekers and refuges may experience particular obstacles in their learning journeys in England. Barton et al.'s study (2004) of adult Skills for Life learners included specific analysis of an ESOL class of 12 learners in Blackburn seeking asylum or refugee status, who had arrived from a variety of countries. The learners reported constraints in meeting their learning needs, including their experiences of trauma, the associated mental health difficulties some experienced as a result of leaving their home countries, health issues and lack of legal support to steer their legal claims for asylum. The learners had extensive needs – such as housing, health and benefits needs. While the learning providers were aiming to meet their learning and wider needs as far as possible, their disadvantage within the wider community, and the associated insecurity and anxiety experienced, did affect their learning: 'Although the students' material needs were met, we found a complete lack of interagency support for their mental health, social and legal support needs as they arrived in Blackburn.' (Barton et al. 2004, p.31). In summarising their findings, Barton et al. (2004) suggest 'There needs to be more interagency responses to the social and learning needs of students seeking asylum' (p. 6).

Institutional

The way in which the education system is organised can be seen to be a barrier in itself, Gillborn (2005) argues. He asserts that the British education system, as it stands, reproduces ethnic inequalities via its:

- Priorities – in that educational policies have focused heavily on targets, success and attainment at the expense of inclusivity and equality;

- Beneficiaries – in that, while success rates in education have improved over recent years, White British learners have benefited most; and

- Outcomes – in that the target culture that dominates education has meant that new measures (such as tiered classes) have been introduced which have reproduced ethnic inequalities in terms of educational achievement.

Gillborn (2005) argues that '…race inequity and racism are central features of the education system. These are not aberrant or accidental phenomena that will be ironed out in time; they are fundamental characteristics of the system. It is in this sense that education policy is an act of white supremacy' (p. 498). This focus on how organisational structuring can inadvertently disadvantage certain ethnic groups reflects Macpherson's definition of institutional racism (Macpherson 1999).

The predominantly White composition of the teaching workforce is frequently cited as a possible obstacle to Black and Minority Ethnic groups' participation and achievement. The Commission for Black Staff in Further Education (2002a) found that 'Black staff are underrepresented at management and senior management levels' (p. 25). Research suggests that such a lack of Black and Minority Ethnic

adults in senior positions may make Black and Minority Ethnic learners feel isolated in a predominantly White arena and a lack of positive Black role models may limit learners' aspirations. However, the Commission for Black Staff in Further Education (2002a) did find that Black lecturers were concentrated in particular curriculum areas including basic skills and ESOL. Therefore, a lack of Black and Minority Ethnic staff in teaching positions may be less significant for Skills for Life provision than for other provision.

Support services that do not meet the needs of Black and Minority Ethnic learners can affect the learning experience. Frumkin et al. (2007) identify insufficient pastoral support as a barrier to success for Black and Minority Ethnic learners. Similarly, research carried out by The Research Centre, City College Norwich (2005) looked at factors that affected the achievement of Black and Minority Ethnic learners within the college. They found that some students may not be supported as effectively as possible – especially those who are struggling or at risk. They suggest that students may not be aware of all the support available and that a breakdown of communication between staff can exacerbate the situation. Support within learning is vital to ensure that learners' needs are being met. This is especially important for those learners who may have had negative experiences of early education: they may need more intensive support to feel at ease in the learning environment and to succeed. However, it is important to recognise that the needs of learners, particularly those who have recently arrived in the country or who may have experienced trauma such as some refugees and asylum-seekers, are often complex and acute, and education staff may be ill equipped to respond to the diverse range of complex needs (Ward 2007a).

If a learning provider does not reflect cultural diversity in a positive way, incorporate different cultures into its curriculum or appear culturally aware, this sends a strong message to learners. It reinforces the notion that education is essentially a White arena. Frumkin et al. (2007) identify insufficient cultural understanding among staff, and organisational and cultural insensitivities, as significant barriers for the increased participation and achievement of Black and Minority Ethnic learners. Similarly, The Research Centre, City College Norwich (2005) asserts that the absence of a multi-cultural curriculum can impact on the achievement of Black and Minority Ethnic learners.

The importance of being positive about cultural diversity and reflecting this within the environment and curriculum can also be reflected in the way learning is publicised to Black and Minority Ethnic groups. For example, Bristol City Council et al. (2001–2) carried out research into Black and Minority Ethnic groups and lifelong learning in Bristol. They found that one of the barriers to Black and Minority Ethnic groups' participation related to poor communication and information sharing between learning providers and Black and Minority Ethnic communities. Not liaising with Black and Minority Ethnic community organisations restricts the number of Black and Minority Ethnic adults who will be aware of the provision and may send the message that such groups are not welcome.

Funding arrangements in adult learning may also have an impact on Black and Minority Ethnic groups' participation in learning. NIACE's 2006 research into Gypsy and Traveller communities identified barriers to successful engagement with such groups (NIACE 2006b). They suggest that a lack of consistency in funding, and lack of long-term funding, makes it difficult to meet the needs of

these learners, who may need more intensive and long-term provision. McNulty (2003) also found that short-term funding and a lack of sustainability can have a detrimental effect on provision for Asian heritage communities and on their faith in learning provision: 'There is a view that professionals, mainly white, have benefited from project resources aimed at disadvantaged communities but the communities themselves have not' (p. 2). He suggests that if Black and Minority Ethnic groups become disillusioned with learning and whose interests it serves, participation in learning is likely to cease.

Issues of language can be extremely significant in shaping the likelihood of some Black and Minority Ethnic groups participating and achieving in learning. If a learner speaks a different language from their tutor and other learners this can be extremely isolating and can inhibit progress. This has been identified in research carried out in Bristol by Bristol City Council et al. (2001–2).

Dispositional

Some Black and Minority Ethnic adults may refrain from participating in learning if they do not think that education is relevant to them or will be beneficial. Various pieces of research, including White and Weaver (2007) and Frumkin et al. (2007), support this notion and suggest that the benefits of learning for the individual need to be made explicit. Many pieces of research and literature have suggested that this can be particularly beneficial in Skills for Life provision, where students '… should be taught the "skills" through content that is powerful and important in their lives, and which gives them the tools to act on their own behalf' (Spiegel and Sunderland 2006, p. 4).

Finally, barriers relating to culture and identity can be particularly significant for some Black and Minority Ethnic groups, such as Gypsies and Travellers, whose culture has not traditionally placed much importance on formal education or who have been marginalised in terms of formal education. Frumkin et al. (2007) also highlight some of the pressures for other Black and Minority Ethnic groups associated with overcoming cultural barriers: 'Peer pressure and the burden of making "learner" and "ethnic" identities co-exist affects the academic success of specific ethnic groups, most notably black groups' (p. 93).

Conclusion

This section has reviewed some of the obstacles Black and Minority Ethnic adults may face in participating or achieving in learning. These include situational barriers, such as factors associated with time, money and childcare. They also include factors that reflect some learning providers' (and funding bodies') failure to plan provision to meet the needs and reflect the circumstances of Black and Minority Ethnic learners, including having a predominantly White workforce, offering insufficient learner support and not having a culturally diverse curriculum. Finally, a person's attitudes and cultural experiences of learning may act as obstacles to participation.

An individual may experience one or more barriers, of varying significance, and they may act to reinforce one another. For example, a Black and Minority Ethnic adult who works long hours and is on a low income may be deterred from learning because of time and money constraints, as well as by the fact that the

local learning centre seems to be a predominantly White arena which doesn't offer a culturally diverse range of provision.

This section aims to avoid the stereotypes of Black and Minority Ethnic groups and not to assume all will face common obstacles to learning. Some Black and Minority Ethnic learners will not face any significant obstacle in their learning journey. Instead, it has provided an overview of some of the key obstacles some Black and Minority Ethnic learners may face so that a better understanding of these can help learning providers and policymakers to identify positive ways forward to support Black and Minority Ethnic groups to participate and achieve in learning.

Key success factors in meeting the needs of Black and Minority Ethnic groups

Introduction

Many pieces of research, particularly those that involve qualitative methods such as interviews, have been able to offer insights into factors that:

- Have enabled successful recruitment of Black and Minority Ethnic learners on to provision;
- Have offered support and learning content that has been appropriate for Black and Minority Ethnic learners; and
- Have enabled Black and Minority Ethnic learners to achieve.

Other reports have made recommendations for positive change. These findings and recommendations are set out below and can be defined as 'key success factors'. In many ways they reflect and can be seen as possible solutions to many of the barriers associated with underachievement or non-participation identified in the section 'Obstacles to participation and achievement'. While the majority of the key success factors set out in this section are not specific to Skills for Life provision, they can be adapted to Skills for Life settings. As with the obstacles discussed in the 'Obstacles to participation and achievement' section, these key success factors may also be applied to other disadvantaged groups of learners.

This section focuses largely on what learning providers can do. While it is recognised that the personal and familial circumstances of individuals may play a strong role in motivating and supporting them in their learning journey, this section does not focus on these factors, not because they are insignificant, but rather to place the onus for proactive activity on the learning provider themselves (in line with their duty to provide equality of opportunity).

These key success factors have been grouped into three main themes in this section:

- Practical access issues;
- The learning environment; and
- Learning content and curriculum.

- A short section on 'attitudes' has been included at the end to refer to this important factor also.

- Case studies of effective practice have been cited within this section to illustrate some of the issues in real-life settings.

Practical access issues

Literature and research, and evidence from Black and Minority Ethnic learners and from Black and Minority Ethnic adults who are not involved in learning, have time and time again brought up issues such as location, timings of provision, childcare and costs. Learning providers need to give consideration to these issues and how, if they are not addressed, they can act as barriers to Black and Minority Ethnic groups' participation in learning.

The place where the learning is delivered can play a huge part in whether learners can travel to it easily and whether they feel comfortable and at ease in the setting. Frumkin et al. (2007) conducted three learner forums with Black and Minority Ethnic adults learning in community-based centres. They concluded that community-based services were essential for Black and Minority Ethnic groups, especially as they can act as stepping stones into further learning activity. Ward (2007b) in her literature review of ESOL learners also found that 'Research indicates that outreach through or in partnership with community-based voluntary and faith sector organisations was a highly effective means of engaging learners least likely to access provision, especially some groups of women' (p. 19). However, she does point out that while a well-chosen venue may attract learners, it may not be ideal for teaching and thus quality may be compromised.

NIACE (2006b) found that issues relating to practical access, especially in terms of the venue, are particularly important for Gypsy and Traveller groups. They found that delivering learning in learners' homes or in mobile classrooms within their communities was particularly effective for such learners, who are traditionally isolated and are often reluctant to engage in more mainstream learning. They also found the following approaches effective in engaging with Gypsy and Traveller groups:

- Having dedicated outreach workers to engage with communities;

- Having systems in place to ensure initial contact with the communities was through a trusted individual (such as the Traveller site manager); and

- Having flexible provision (such as times and venues to suit the learners).

CASE STUDY OF EFFECTIVE PRACTICE

Gypsy/Traveller Family Learning project: Read On Write Away!

Gypsies and Travellers have been highlighted as a particularly disadvantaged community with 'the poorest life chances of any ethnic group in the UK' and also 'face widespread discrimination' (Building and Social Housing Foundation 2007). Read On Write Away!'s (ROWA's) work with Gypsies and Travellers aims to establish a learning culture and to ensure that all children receive the best possible support for early years education. A key success factor identified in an evaluation by the University of Sheffield (Spare 2005) in September 2005 was

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partnership work. This has been developed and formalised and operates as a steering group to oversee and monitor the project.

A rise of 54 per cent in participation between September 2005 and March 2007 was credited to an increase in trust and relationships between project staff and families, as well as better knowledge about the programme. However, there are differences between sites; a relatively large number of adults and children attended on one transit site, but this was often for only one or two sessions during a brief stay.

The project employs a project manager who also is a qualified Skills for Life tutor; an Early Years specialist teacher and a crèche worker deliver the children's sessions funded by the project.

The ROWA! Learning Bus is used as a venue on site. This is a distinctive double-decker bus, well equipped with an IT suite with internet access upstairs and a crèche downstairs. There are soft chairs for informal work and desks and chairs for the laptops as well as activity areas. The driver himself is very much part of the team and joins in with the activities, helping out with some of the technical problems.

The project is funded through various departments committed to work with travellers. Although this partnership approach is seen as very important, it is also very difficult to maintain. Since the funding is not from the Learning and Skills Council it does not have the same demands in terms of targets as other Family Learning activity but the project does record and monitor progress against agreed objectives, an action plan and performance indicators. It also aims to support families to access provision and services provided by LSC funds, such as adult community education.

Due to funding restrictions the project is currently working only on one site with 16 pitches occupied by mainly Irish Travellers. Eligibility to attend the sessions is determined on the basis of a family's residential status on site and their having based on families resident on the site with one or more pre-school aged children. Attendance is usually by mothers and female carers although it has been observed that there is an increase in male carers attendance in periods of reduced employment and this is also seen to reflect an increase in the trust and relationships which have been built with the families over time.

The project workers' initial engagement stage, before the arrival of the bus on site, is seen as one of the main challenges. They call on individual families in their trailers and have found the Travellers very welcoming. Staff explain how the sessions are structured and that the focus will be on improving the children's literacy and numeracy as well as having time to play. Throughout, they work co-operatively with an Early Years teacher from the Traveller Education and Advisory Support team who has close contact with families with pre-school children.

Sessions are once a week in the autumn and spring terms; in the summer term families are often travelling looking for alternative employment, usually working in the agricultural sector, and there are few on site. The family learning approach follows the model of discrete sessions for the children with an Early Years specialist teacher and a crèche worker, parents and carers with Skills for Life

teachers, followed by a joint session of both. The crèche worker is from a local nursery that the children are likely to attend.

They often begin with showing carers and parents how to read to or share a picture book with the children. Then the Skills for Life teacher works with the parents on making relevant resources for the children. In the joint session, there is often messy play such as painting, as this is not possible in the trailers. At each session there is something for each family to take away. Parents say they attend because of their perceived benefits for the children in preparing them for nursery and primary school in particular. It is also valued as being designed for them and the fact that it is on site makes it very accessible.

Originally, the project had deliberately avoided the use of any initial assessment for the adults as it was considered threatening to the learners. Usually individual levels were estimated by the Skills for Life tutor over a number of weeks through a range of activities and observations. This indicated that most learners were below Level 1, with some at pre-Entry. However, some parents requested to know their current level of skills and so the Skills for Life teacher instigated initial assessment, using the Basic Skills Agency screening tool. As a result of this, more adults were assessed and some moved on to diagnostic assessments.

The nurseries and schools attended by the children have reported a significant beneficial impact on both the children and the parents who have shown a more positive attitude and involvement with school. This positive impact has also been noted in older siblings who did not attend the sessions.

Key challenges continue to be securing continuing funding, maintaining the partnership and developing trust.

Existing research highlights how offering provision in venues with which the learner is familiar can be extremely effective for certain faith groups and for women from Black and Minority Ethnic groups. Provision that is delivered in community centres, faith centres and schools can reach out to those learners who may not consider a more formal learning setting to be right for them.

The 1999 DfES *Survey of Adult Learning among Ethnic Minorities* (cited in Aldridge and White 2005) included research with Black and Minority Ethnic non-learners into what would most encourage them to take up learning). Ten per cent of respondents gave money-related answers, and this was particularly common among Black African and Black Caribbean respondents. While course fees are not likely to inhibit participation in literacy and numeracy provision, they may do for ESOL provision. Financial support (or indeed money-related advice and guidance) for learners for course fees, travel costs, and other costs incurred with learning, could increase participation and retention levels among some Black and Minority Ethnic groups.

Having sufficient childcare provision has also been identified as a key success factor in the recruitment of Black and Minority Ethnic groups into learning, especially (as one would expect) for women. Aston et al. (2007) carried out research with 60 Pakistani and Bangladeshi women and found that, while they valued education highly, family was generally their top priority. The report

recommended that providing culturally appropriate childcare is vital to increasing opportunities for these women.

Although there was little mention of publicity materials in the literature and research reviewed, these are important in engaging learners. Having materials in a variety of languages and using images to promote ethnic diversity in a positive way are likely to be helpful in encouraging Black and Minority Ethnic adults to take up learning.

Finally, many pieces of research and literature suggest that learning providers should engage with community organisations, particularly Black and Minority Ethnic organisations, to publicise learning opportunities and create routes into learning for Black and Minority Ethnic learners. Learning providers can also benefit from liaising with Black and Minority Ethnic community organisations as it may allow them to develop their own cultural awareness and understanding.

CASE STUDY OF EFFECTIVE PRACTICE

Aurat Enterprise Project for Minority Ethnic Women

Aurat Enterprise is a well-networked community-based resource that has been extremely successful in exceeding its original targets, gaining extensions to the project lifespan and setting up creative partnerships with other agencies. Its approach to Skills for Life provision is to embed this wherever possible in ways that are relevant to learners' priorities. It has been commended by the Adult Learning Inspectorate for its responsiveness to needs being expressed in the communities it serves.

Aurat is the Punjabi word for 'women' and the project aims to work with women from Black and Minority Ethnic backgrounds helping to raise their self- esteem, identify their transferable skills and improve their long-term employment, education and training prospects through the provision of ESOL, literacy, numeracy and ICT support. A community consultation exercise which investigated the needs of Black and Minority ethnic women in Slough, who were unemployed or economically inactive, identified that women wanted classes held locally in the community and delivered by local people.

The project's administrative base is located at the Adult Education Centre in the town centre with much of the provision being delivered in community settings. Partnerships ensure understanding of the learner's cultural and religious background, support from the voluntary sector and good working relationships with local FE colleges and other providers such as the Workers' Educational Association and the Information, Advice and Guidance service. Provision of childcare, lunch and transport enable women to attend courses. These measures, along with a dedicated team of tutors and the diversity of the courses taught have contributed to a retention rate of 85 per cent.

The project's two primary target groups of women were Pakistani and African-Caribbean, who had been identified as being economically inactive and disadvantaged in the labour market. It has also worked with women from Somalia, India and Afghanistan, and more recently with women from the new

European accession countries, adopting different approaches that match these changing interests, concerns and cultures.

Even its 'core group' of learners, Pakistani women, could be differentiated. A subset, frequently referred to as 'hard-to-reach,' are long-term UK residents, economically inactive and not accessing any educational provision. Many have come from rural areas in Pakistan where education for women is not traditionally available or expected. They are predominantly at pre-Entry and Entry levels in their English language skills.

A second subset is young female migrants who have recently arrived to get married. Some already speak some English and have pre-existing training and qualifications. Their needs are less for ESOL provision per se than for confidence building and opportunities to identify their interests and skills. Advice and guidance is crucial in enabling them to understand the systems and to fast track them into gaining skills and employment. Transfer and recognition of qualifications is an important issue for these women.

Aurat uses the local Asian media to promote its activities, for example organising seasonal festivities such as Eid and Diwali parties, to engage and draw in both Indian and Pakistani communities, as well as encouraging a wider audience to join in.

Working with a Domestic Violence Unit and recognising the need to build women's confidence as a priority, the project has developed an embedded literacy course on Self-esteem through Art. This was created to give women at risk of exclusion an opportunity to explore their feelings and aspirations by using art as a medium and embedding literacy to reflect on creative imagery. It has subsequently been offered at a local Gurdwara, an Army Barracks with Ghurkha wives and in a temporary accommodation project.

Skills for Life provision is often embedded into other programmes, underpinning the IT Support or Business Start Up programmes or built into the Confidence Building or creative courses. Whilst discrete ESOL provision is offered, this tends to be community-based and doorstep provision, focusing on those women with pre-Entry and Entry level learning needs. ESOL classes for Somali women, for example, have been set up in co-operation with a local school using a mobile classroom in the playground. One result has been that the content of the ESOL classes reflects school activities and supports the women's understanding of their children's learning.

An inspection of the provision in 2006 found that learners develop their confidence and self-esteem particularly well on the Aurat Enterprise programmes. Offsite activities are arranged to forge personal relationships and to enhance learning. The project uses the concept of positive role models in relation to project staff and participants. Many of the staff are bilingual or multilingual. They have had similar experiences to the women and understand their situations; they also embody the notion of personal progress and achievement. At participant level, the project encourages learner celebrations which showcases individual women's success to inspire and motivate others.

Progression rates overall are good. Out of the 114 learners with known destinations recorded in 2005, 35 learners had gone on to work and 48 to further

learning. Figures for 2006–7 show that increasing numbers are choosing college vocational and university academic provision, rather than Adult Community Learning provision, possibly as a consequence of fee levels, making vocational and academic programmes appear to be 'better value'.

Key challenges for running the centre effectively include: cross-boundary working, ensuring that Aurat's work does not duplicate other agencies; offering embedded rather than discrete Skills for Life provision which would directly compete with other providers; and maintaining engagement with women at lower-skills levels to continually extend the learner base.

The learning environment

A learning environment should reflect principles of valuing diversity. It can do this in a number of ways including: making sure Black and Minority Ethnic learners have access to good role models; having high expectations for, and celebrating the success of, Black and Minority Ethnic learners; promoting interaction between learners from different communities; and offering extensive support to learners to meet specific needs.

It is striking how many pieces of literature and research reports suggest high quality role models and mentoring systems help ensure a positive learning experience for Black and Minority Ethnic learners. The Commission for Black Staff in Further Education (2002a) found that the majority of FE colleges employ fewer than 5 per cent Black staff and only 1 per cent have a Black principal. (In this instance, the term 'Black' refers to African, African Caribbean, Asian and other minority groups who may face racism.) Although this specific piece of research found no evidence of a correlation between low achievement of Black learners and the number of Black staff in a college, the Commission emphasises the importance of diversifying the workforce and assert the view that Black role models are essential for Black and Minority Ethnic learners: 'Black role models at all levels within the college hierarchy were also seen as essential for black learners who needed access to role models and mentors in positions of power and influence who could "illustrate professional potential"' (Commission for Black Staff in Further Education, 2002a, p. 50).

REACH's 2007 report into raising the aspirations and attainment of Black boys and young men reinforces the need for more Black and Minority Ethnic role models and mentors, as many young Black males face particular disadvantage in education, the labour market and the criminal justice system. (In this instance the term 'Black' refers to Black African and Black Caribbean.) In addition to diversifying the teaching workforce, some research has suggested that inviting guest speakers from Black and Minority Ethnic communities onto learning provision can be a positive way to publicise the achievements of Black and Minority Ethnic adults in a range of occupations and subject areas (Frumkin et al, 2007). Mentoring systems are also thought to be effective ways of supporting the achievement of learners; this may be particularly effective for disaffected learners.

While increasing the number of Black and Minority Ethnic role models and mentors may make learners more aware of the achievements of people from Black and Minority Ethnic groups, another important principle for success relates

to promoting the positive achievement of Black and Minority Ethnic learners themselves. The achievement of Black and Minority Ethnic learners should be publicised and celebrated. The Research Centre, City College Norwich (2005) recommend publicising the achievement of Black and Minority Ethnic learners on the learning provider's website and/or intranet. It also recommends that learning providers should make clear that they have high expectations for Black and Minority Ethnic learners. This has been found to be important for literacy, language and numeracy learners specifically. Barton et al.'s (2004) study of Skills for Life learners reported among its key findings the importance of recognising small gains in learning, and making explicit the benefits of these gains in everyday life.

Some existing research points towards the importance of offering Black and Minority Ethnic learners personalised and appropriate support to meet their specific needs. While of course all learners will have different needs, learning providers should be proactive in finding out what these needs are and aiming to meet them. For example, The Research Centre, City College Norwich (2005) carried out research into their own practices and those of other colleges, and how they relate to Black and Minority Ethnic learners. They identified examples of good practice including:

- making special efforts to ask ESOL learners about their support needs, as these learners may be less likely to ask for support themselves; and

- offering high quality, specialist support services to learners on issues such as benefits, immigration and housing. The availability of such support should be well publicised. This can be particularly important for asylum-seekers, refugees and migrant workers.

A variety of teaching methods and plenty of group work activities are also effective practices for some Black and Minority Ethnic groups. Ward (2007a) suggests that group work is especially beneficial for ESOL learners as '… it is essentially a collaborative and interactive activity in which learners accrue language and communication skills through talking with others' (p. 75).

Finally, common areas for students to socialise can help to promote interaction between learners, and indeed between different cultural and ethnic groups. Such interaction is likely to increase awareness of different cultures among learners and to make the learning experience more sociable and enjoyable. Having communal areas may be particularly important for refugee and asylum-seeker learners. Barton et al.'s study of Skills for Life learners included analysis of the learning experiences of a group of 12 ESOL learners who were seeking asylum or refugee status. They found that 'Having the opportunity to meet with people from similar cultural or linguistic backgrounds can help these learners through the difficulties of settling into a new location and language' (Barton et al. 2004, p. 30). The Commission for Black Staff in Further Education (2002a) also highlights the importance of having culturally appropriate resources within the learning environment, such as prayer rooms. Timetables should be sympathetic to different faith groups' prayer times so as not to disadvantage certain learners. Facilities for ablutions should be provided and canteen food should cater for different faith groups' requirements (such as by providing Kosher and Halal food).

CASE STUDY OF EFFECTIVE PRACTICE

Chinese ICT Open Learning Centre

The Chinese ICT Open Learning Centre, (an integral part of the Chinese Centre in the North of England) offers an effective Skills for Life provision to members of the Chinese heritage community and has recently been recognised as an Outstanding Provider in its Ofsted Inspection, as well as gaining an impressive series of awards since its inception in 2003.

Since 2003 the Centre has attracted more than 1000 Chinese-speaking learners. Some are now retired and many received no education beyond primary level in their home country and could not previously access educational opportunities in this country, because of their unsocial working hours in kitchens and restaurants. Younger Chinese people, working in the catering sector and unable to get to college courses, are also able to benefit from the Centre's flexible opening times and individually tailored learning provision to improve their skills and progress. The Centre not only opens up opportunities for what might otherwise be an excluded group, but does it in a supportive and holistic way; its teaching approaches are creative and interactive, whilst also being high quality, rigorous and effective. It provides state-of-the-art IT equipment and enables older learners to develop their literacy, numeracy and English language skills, often in innovative ways, such as setting up their own websites and, in the case of one learner, even compiling a book on gardening. The learning activities are seamlessly combined with the broader mission of the Centre 'to encourage social inclusion and to enable the service to be enjoyed by all communities'. The large hall is used for the Learner Achievement parties, as well as for Chinese Centre meetings and activities and for cultural events.

Most learners' language, literacy and numeracy skills are assessed at pre-Entry and Entry levels 1 and 2. The Centre offers learndirect courses and national qualifications in literacy, numeracy, language and information and communication technology and has been offering Skills for Life provision since 2005. Support from the Skills for Life Quality Improvement Programme enabled the Centre to understand the Whole Organisation Approach, develop a Skills for Life strategy and access staff development and training opportunities.

The Centre's location at the heart of the city and close to the Chinatown area as well as to all the public transport facilities means that it is in a good position to attract people from the local and Chinese communities. The Ofsted Inspection Report 2007 notes that:

'The Centre is outstandingly successful in delivering its mission to support the Chinese community. It assists Learndirect regionally to widen participation. Chinese learners are attracted from outside the immediate area and there plans to engage new immigrants from mainland China who are Mandarin and not Cantonese speakers. Efforts to engage learners from non-Chinese community include accepting referrals from DWP and promotional activities such as open days and participation in City Council events.'

Learners are initially screened according to which language they speak – here the Centre makes full use of the bilingual skills of the tutors. The Ofsted report describes how effectively this is done:

Tutors follow a very clear procedure to diagnose needs, plan programmes, set personal goals and targets and review progress. A flow-chart illustration and bilingual support ensure that learners understand each of these stages. Tutors agree specific and measurable targets for learners, relevant to their everyday life, needs and interests. For example, a numeracy learner has a target to produce a budget for a trip to Hong Kong … Follow-up diagnostic assessments check overall gains in learning at appropriate times in the learners' programmes.

For ESOL learners who are accessing the Learndirect provision, there are introductory taught courses and additional software. Once on course, one-to-one support and bilingual support classes provide a learning environment that develops confidence and help learners persist through difficult periods.

Modifying provision to cater for learners' individual or group needs and interests is high on the Centre's priorities. It has adapted materials from the Thinking Through Mathematics project on the Maths4Life website, by adding customised cards using Chinese to explain fractions. An ESOL-Citizenship Course is run for Chinese learners as an alternative route to help them qualify to apply for citizenship where their English skills are not yet good enough to pass the Life in the UK test (which requires an English level at Entry level 3). The degree to which some of the Centre's learners have previously been excluded from participation in civic life was revealed during this class. Some were able to vote for the first time having been unaware before of what the voting papers were.

Focusing on learner's strengths is intrinsic to the aims and a pragmatic approach. Carrying out accurate diagnostic assessments and identifying learners' strongest skills means that those learners can be entered for the appropriate qualifications with confidence that they will be successful. The learners are proud of the national qualification that they achieve and the Centre is successful in achieving its targets.

Many of the older Chinese learners stay at the Centre and progress through a range of IT-supported qualifications which improve their language, literacy and numeracy skills. Because the Centre is catering for learners who are starting from pre-Entry and Entry levels, progressing to Level 2 can take a long time. A few learners have gone on to employment and to college provision but the transition is not always easy. The Centre Manager spends time preparing learners for what they can expect.

Some of the key challenges the Centre faces include:
• Adapting to different funding regimes without compromising learners' interests.
• Dealing with high staff turnover due to the insecurity of changing funding regimes.
• Offering staff training to ensure that learners receive high-quality teaching but, without being able to offer job security and career development, it brings with it the continual risk that staff will, and do, move on.
• Finding funding for ESOL learners – pre-Entry to Entry level 3 – is becoming more difficult. Most of them are working but are not claiming Working Families

Tax Credit. The LSC is directing the Centre to encourage employers to offer provision but this will be difficult.
- Getting involved in 'partnership work' on equal terms is challenging as a small Black and Minority Ethnic group in terms of time, resources and developing the necessary negotiating skills.

Learning content and curriculum

There has been a great deal written about how learning content and curriculum can and should reflect and celebrate diversity, in order to promote racial equality and make the learning relevant and enjoyable for a variety of learners.

Many of the key success factors and recommendations found in existing research are based on principles of personalised learning. In order to meet the needs of the community, learning can be tailored to the potential learners. For example, The Research Centre, City College Norwich (2005) reported on promising practice in Barnfield College, which put on female-only classes specifically to attract Muslim women.

Learning activities and extra-curricular activities should incorporate different cultures and different cultural activities, to appeal to a wide audience. The Commission for Black Staff in Further Education (2002a) champions the use of multicultural activities – such as multicultural fashion shows, positive imagery of ethnic diversity and diverse catering – as a way of promoting diversity.

Thus a curriculum should: reflect cultural diversity in its content, provide opportunities for learners from culturally diverse backgrounds to make relevant contributions, and incorporate materials that positively reflect diversity.

White and Weaver's (2007) consultation with learners gave support to this as learners felt tutors should offer a culturally diverse curriculum, take into account non-European learning styles and generally be more positive about other cultures. As White and Weaver (2007) state:

> the curriculum can be a powerful tool for engagement, but it can also alienate – for example, Black and Minority Ethnic groups may not warm to an overly Euro-centric focus that draws its examples and illustrations only from Europe and ignores people, places or achievements from elsewhere in the world (p. 40).

While tutors should not stereotype learners according to their ethnic group and make assumptions about their culture, they should make an effort to develop their own cultural competencies and to ensure that the curriculum reflects a range of cultures.

In addition to being culturally diverse, the learning content should address the learners' needs and their desires regarding their learning. Many studies suggest that an in-depth, full initial assessment is paramount to a successful and enjoyable learning experience. A good initial assessment helps tutors understand a learner's motives for learning and their interests. Course content can then be shaped around this. This may be particularly important for Skills for Life provision: in Davies's 2005 study of the impact of the Skills for Life learning infrastructure,

there was feedback from stakeholders that Skills for Life provision should include a greater focus on initial assessment.

Finally, course length may have an impact on whether certain Black and Minority Ethnic groups participate and achieve. Research carried out by the Learning and Skills Development Agency in 2002 into the impacts of FE 'short courses' (tasters of 3 or 6 hour length) found that these courses are particularly successful in recruiting young people (especially men) from ethnic minority groups (cited in National Literacy Trust 2007).

Attitudes

A person's individual attitudes, and their feelings towards education, can act as barriers to learning. Auerbach, cited in Spiegel and Sunderland (2006), reinforces the need to make explicit to learners the links between learning and everyday life. She argues that learners '…should be taught the "skills" through content that is powerful and important in their lives, and which gives them the tools to act on their own behalf' (p. 6). If one can assume some Black and Minority Ethnic groups are wary of formal learning due to negative experiences of early education, these findings can be usefully applied to working with Black and Minority Ethnic learners in literacy and numeracy contexts.

Conclusion

This section has explored some of the factors that may help increase participation and success in learning for Black and Minority Ethnic groups. Practical access issues such as having appropriate childcare or offering provision in an appropriate venue, such as a community centre or school, may mean learning provision reaches and appeals to groups who may otherwise not participate. A learning environment should foster and promote the achievement of Black and Minority Ethnic groups, and celebrate cultural diversity in its environment and learning content, to support and promote the achievement of Black and Minority Ethnic learners. Research and literature also suggests that learning providers should take steps to identify learners' (and potential learners') needs and motivations and to shape provision according to these.

These key success factors may illustrate the need for staff training to enable staff to develop their own cultural competencies and to better understand the needs and circumstances of Black and Minority Ethnic learners. Frumkin et al. (2007) suggest that teachers need to be proactive in seeking Continuing Professional Development activities that can enhance their own cultural competencies, such as actively participating in culturally diverse events to increase their own understanding and awareness of different cultures. In addition, Skills for Life tutors have themselves identified specific training needs for working with Skills for Life learners. In Davies's study (2005), interviewee practitioners from Skills for Life settings reflected that they needed to know more about reasons learners have for returning to learning (which are complex and vary from learner to learner), the true goals learners have and what effective teaching and learning strategies can be employed to meet their needs.

Conclusion

The Skills for Life strategy aimed to improve the literacy, language and numeracy skills of adults with no or low-level qualifications in England. While it was aimed at all adults without a Level 2 qualification, it was specifically aimed at five priority groups: unemployed people and benefit claimants, offenders, public sector employees, low skilled workers, and other groups at risk of exclusion (Department for Education and Employment 2001). It was not specifically aimed at Black and Minority Ethnic groups, but in this report we set out to explore the relationships between Black and Minority Ethnic groups and the Skills for Life strategy.

This chapter aimed to draw on existing research, literature and data to explore:

- The qualification levels and employment status of different Black and Minority Ethnic groups;
- The participation and achievement of Black and Minority Ethnic groups in adult learning in general and Skills for Life in particular;
- The impact of Skills for Life on Black and Minority Ethnic groups; and
- Some of the key obstacles that prevent participation and achievement for Black and Minority Ethnic groups in adult learning, and conversely some of the factors that give rise to the success and achievement of Black and Minority Ethnic groups.

This chapter finds that Black and Minority Ethnic 'priority groups' (groups for whom further activity may be necessary to increase participation and achievement in Skills for Life) are: Pakistani and Bangladeshi groups (especially, but not exclusively, women); and, to a lesser extent: Black Caribbean and Black African groups; older Black and Minority Ethnic adults (although data relating to this is limited); Black and Minority Ethnic adults with English as an additional language; and Gypsies and Travellers (although data relating to this is limited).

The Skills for Life strategy appears to have reached many Black and Minority Ethnic adults. A large amount has been spent on ESOL provision, which is likely to be taken up by mainly Black and Minority Ethnic learners. Brooks (2006) found that 32 per cent of learners enrolling on Skills for Life courses between 2000 and 2005 were from Black and Minority Ethnic groups.

However, in spite of this, Labour Force Survey data from 2007 suggests that certain ethnic groups – Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Black African and Black Caribbean groups – fare worse than others in the labour market. Pakistani and Bangladeshi groups have the lowest percentages of respondents in employment at 41.5 per cent and 35 per cent respectively. Bangladeshi and Black African groups have the highest percentages of unemployed respondents at 9.9 per cent and 9.1 per cent respectively, followed by the Black Caribbean group at 7.9 per cent.

In terms of the highest qualification a person holds, once again certain ethnic groups appear to have lower achievement levels than others. Labour Force Survey data from 2007 suggests that Pakistani (especially women), Bangladeshi, White Other and Black Caribbean groups appear to fare least well in terms of

qualifications and skills levels. Pakistani, Bangladeshi and White Other groups have the lowest percentages of respondents with Level 2 or above qualifications, at 40.3 per cent, 37.6 per cent and 42.9 per cent respectively. Bangladeshi and Pakistani groups have the highest percentages of respondents with no or below Level 2 qualifications, at 48.1 per cent and 39.3 per cent respectively, followed by Black Caribbean respondents at 30.1 per cent. Therefore, there may be large numbers of Pakistani, Bangladeshi, White Other and Black Caribbean adults with unmet skills needs who would be eligible for Skills for Life provision.

Gypsies and Travellers are often missing from data collection and therefore it has not been possible to comment on their skills levels. However, anecdotal evidence suggests they are extremely isolated and marginalised groups who are likely to have low literacy, language and numeracy skills levels.

It has not been possible to make any clear conclusions about the impact of the Skills for Life strategy on Black and Minority Ethnic groups. However, Labour Force Survey data from 2001 does suggest that skills levels have improved for some Black and Minority Ethnic groups over the six-year period – including Pakistani and Bangladeshi groups. Nonetheless, as data from 2007 shows, this improvement has not been sufficient to reverse ethnic inequalities.

A large amount of research and literature has explored some of the obstacles some Black and Minority Ethnic adults may face in taking up or achieving in adult learning, and conversely some of the factors that positively enable Black and Minority Ethnic adults to participate and achieve. These include factors relating to things like: suitable childcare provision; appropriate venue; financial and time constraints faced by learners; a celebration of diversity in learning content; the ethnic profile of staff members; mentoring schemes; and suitable support services.

These findings and suggestions can be used to identify positive ways of moving forward, to further enable and support Black and Minority Ethnic adults to take up and achieve in Skills for Life settings. If a real difference is to be made, via the Skills for Life strategy, to the inequalities faced by some ethnic groups these findings need to be used to aid the design and delivery of provision that will genuinely meet the needs of Black and Minority Ethnic learners.

4. Conclusions and recommendations

The Skills for Life strategy has enabled resources to target all priority groups and good practice to be developed but additional costs of reaching out to these learners must be acknowledged. The studies of homeless people and Black and Minority Ethnic groups highlight the number of structural barriers as well as personal issues potential learners in these priority groups have to address if they are to improve their basic skills. These include course structures which do not take account of their challenging life situations that might affect attendance; short-term funding; an emphasis on targets which can reduce accessible provision; and lack of support to enable people to achieve once they have accessed provision. Funding is needed for travel, childcare and other services to enable people to engage in education. Both studies emphasise the importance of situating the learning in a supportive setting. For homeless people this is often a voluntary organisation that can offer practical assistance with the issues they have to face on a daily basis. For Black and Minority Ethnic groups services may need to adapt courses to build in language support, peer support and a culturally diverse curriculum. The case studies demonstrate how well-planned and imaginative provision, often delivered in partnership, can not only improve confidence and basic skills, but have a long-term effect on people's lives.

Many of the features of effective practice have been identified in earlier studies, but this research on specific groups has added evidence which demonstrates how important it is to have targeted strategies for groups of priority learners, rather than hoping that they will access a menu that traditionally has been on offer. Recent research on cohorts of learners and individual learner records gives new insights into the life chances of those with low level skills and illuminates how any kind of engagement in adult learning can set them on an individual route to acquiring the skills and qualification deemed essential for both employment and well-being in their lives.

From the overview of the key priority groups it can be concluded that:

- Skills for Life is having an impact on adults with the lowest skill levels and many appear to be using basic skills to progress to other courses.
- Improving literacy and numeracy of adults with the poorest skills has a positive impact on their children's performance as well as being associated with improvements in their own social and economic situation.
- Community-based provision is more likely to engage hard-to-reach groups who can feel marginalised by traditional college environments.
- Workplace training can reach learners untouched by other provision, including men and older learners.
- Courses which personalise provision and contextualise content to individual learners' lives are more successful with all priority groups.
- Black and Minority Ethnic learners are well represented in Skills for Life provision but in general experience lower success rates; effective provision is more sensitive to cultural differences and individual circumstances.

- Provision which is responsive to the location, timing and support needs of different priority learners is likely to be more effective.

- Flexible courses which allow learners to drop in and out as they deal with challenges in their personal lives are more likely to retain them in the long run.

- Peer support and key mentors or supportive key workers in the community have an important role in sustaining motivation and helping people make the transition to more formal learning.

- Learners are keen to gain recognition for their achievements if accreditation is appropriate to their goals and introduced in a non-threatening way.

Specifically in relation to Black and Minority Ethnic groups, Chapter 3 found that 'priority groups' (groups for whom further activity may be necessary to increase participation and achievement in Skills for Life) are:

- Pakistani and Bangladeshi groups (especially, but not exclusively, women);

- To a lesser extent, Black Caribbean and Black African groups;

- Older Black and Minority Ethnic adults (although data relating to this is limited);

- Black and Minority Ethnic adults with English as an additional language;

- Gypsies and Travellers (although data relating to this is limited).

Recommendations for policymakers and planners

Although the Skills for Life programmes are reaching many new learners, there are a number of interrelated ways in which the funding, curriculum and coordination can be improved to ensure that those most needing support are targeted and supported to succeed.

Funding

- Address the situational, structural and personal barriers of the most marginalised groups, including sufficient financial support for travel and childcare.

- Develop and fund positive action schemes to train people from priority groups to act as mentors and tutors.

- Ensure that voluntary organisations can access funding for educational activities without initial provision being skewed by targets; funding that also adequately covers additional costs which can act as barriers to learners' participation and continuation on courses.

Curriculum

- Develop more individualised curricula with active user engagement in planning to attract, retain and ensure success and progression to further learning.

- Prioritise family learning as it not only helps the most disadvantaged adults deal with other problems in their lives but also has a positive intergenerational impact on the literacy and numeracy of their children.

- Invest more in community-based provision with first step opportunities at Entry level and Entry to Employment so learners are able to dip out and back into learning when they are ready.

- Invest in strategies for sharing good practice and training on contextualising basic skills as well as embedding language literacy and numeracy in vocational courses

Coordination

- Invest in coordinating support for learners: education, health, social services and third sector agencies, so that policies and priorities do not conflict.

- Collect data on the impact of local strategies for Skills for Life on priority groups in areas of economic deprivation.

- Further investigate the Individual Learner Record (ILR) data to show progression pathways of Skills for Life students into other forms of learning.

- Focus policy on redressing regional variations in basic skills levels.

- Investigate good practice on addressing literacy, language and numeracy for the new priority groups identified in the comprehensive spending review targets such as care leavers, adult offenders under probation supervision, adults with moderate severe or severe learning difficulties and with mental health needs in communities.

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Appendix 1: Definition of homelessness, the Homelessness Order 2002 and information on rough sleepers

The current, legal definition of homelessness for England and Wales as given in the 1996 Housing Act is:

'175   Homelessness and threatened homelessness

(1) A person is homeless if he (sic.) has no accommodation available for his occupation, in the United Kingdom or elsewhere, which he—

(a) is entitled to occupy by virtue of an interest in it or by virtue of an order of a court,

(b) has an express or implied licence to occupy, or

(c) occupies as a residence by virtue of any enactment or rule of law giving him the right to remain in occupation or restricting the right of another person to recover possession.

(2) A person is also homeless if he has accommodation but—

(a) he cannot secure entry to it, or

(b) it consists of a moveable structure, vehicle or vessel designed or adapted for human habitation and there is no place where he is entitled or permitted both to place it and to reside in it.

(3) A person shall not be treated as having accommodation unless it is accommodation which it would be reasonable for him to continue to occupy.

(4) A person is threatened with homelessness if it is likely that he will become homeless within 28 days."

More on priority need

The Homelessness (Priority Need for Accommodation) (England) Order 2002 extended the number of homeless people with a 'priority need' for accommodation who are entitled to be rehoused under the homelessness legislation by including:

- '16 and 17 year olds – excluding 'relevant children' under the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000, and 'children in need' who are owed a duty under section 20 of the Children Act 1989.
- Care-leavers aged 18, 19 or 20 years old who were looked after, accommodated or fostered when aged 16 or 17, and who are not 'relevant students'.

- People aged 21 or over who are vulnerable as a result of being looked after, accommodated or fostered by the local authority, and who are not 'relevant students'.

- People who are vulnerable as a result of fleeing violence (or threats of violence).

- People who are vulnerable as a result of spending time in the armed forces or having been in prison or remanded in custody.

- Any homeless applicant falling within the first two categories will automatically be considered to have a priority need for accommodation. Applicants in the other groups must also be regarded as vulnerable in order to be considered to be in priority need.'
  www.homelessnessact.org.uk/Shelter/homelessnessact-110-f0.cfm

- Rough sleepers in England.

Rough sleepers

The most recent figures for the number of rough sleepers in England are given on the Department of Communities and Local Government website www.communities.gov.uk/housing/homelessness/overviewkey/:

'The number of households that became homeless (accepted by local authorities as owed the main homelessness duty) in England between April 2007 and June 2007 was 18 per cent lower than for the same period in 2006 and the lowest quarterly value since the early 1980s. This continues a downward trend which began in 2003.

In addition, the number of households living in temporary accommodation on 30 June 2007 had fallen by 10 per cent compared to 30 June 2006.

The National Rough Sleeping Estimate for 2007 shows there are now 498 people sleeping rough on the streets of England on any single night. This level represents a 73 per cent reduction in rough sleeping since 1998. The Government is committed to reducing rough sleeping to as near to zero as possible.
In addition, the use of Bed and Breakfast accommodation for families with children, for longer than six weeks, has been outlawed.'

Appendix 2: Skills for Life standards equivalence to other qualifications

National Curriculum	National Standards for adult literacy and numeracy	Key Skills	National Qualifications Framework		IALS
		Key Skills Level 5	National Qualifications Framework Level 5	Honours degrees	IALS Level 5
		Key Skills Level 4	National Qualifications Framework Level 4	Foundation degrees, etc.	IALS Level 5
		Key Skills Level 3	National Qualifications Framework Level 3	A Levels, IB, etc.	IALS Level 4
	National Standards for adult literacy and numeracy Level 2	Key Skills Level 2	National Qualifications Framework Level 2	GCSE A*–C	IALS Level 3
National Curriculum Level 5	**National Standards for adult literacy and numeracy Level 1**	Key Skills Level 1	National Qualifications Framework Level 1	GCSE D–G	IALS Level 2
National Curriculum Level 4					
National Curriculum Level 3	**National Standards for adult literacy and numeracy Entry level 3**		National Qualifications Framework Entry Level		IALS Level 1
National Curriculum Level 2	**National Standards for adult literacy and numeracy Entry level 2**				
National Curriculum Level 1	**National Standards for adult literacy and numeracy Entry level 1**				
	National Standards for adult literacy and numeracy Pre-entry level		National Qualifications Framework Pre-entry level		

Appendix 3: Organisations providing services for homeless people

National service provider organisations

- **Crisis** – relies on volunteers and almost entirely on donations from non-government organisations and the public. It has a lobbying and policy advocacy function, and commissions and publishes research to raise awareness about causes and the nature of homelessness. It has run several projects, including Open Christmas, Changing Lives, Skylight, SmartMove and FareShare. Services are run directly or in partnership with other organisations. See www.crisis.org.uk

- **Shelter** – a campaigning organisation, extending across housing conditions and management, and Housing Benefit reforms and initiatives to tackle social exclusion. It receives income from donations, fundraising, grants from local and district authorities and central government. Shelter has more than 50 Housing Aid Centres in England providing expert information, advice and advocacy, and tries to help local authorities develop homelessness strategies. It sustains the National Homeless Advice Service and runs Shelterline and a Homework Project, constituting a major 'homeless prevention' service. It also provides practical training and runs over 60 courses on law, benefits, welfare rights, etc. See http://england.shelter.org.uk/ or http://scotland.shelter.org.uk

- **Foyers** – the national 'Foyer' movement is an attempt to combine accommodation for young people aged 16–25 who are homeless or at risk of homelessness with a strong emphasis on work and training. There are 130 throughout the UK. They were introduced by Shelter in 1991, and the Foyer Federation was conceived in 1992 to support their development. Originally they were large hostels, but now new ones provide housing, employment and training opportunities. They need funding from grants, social services, faith groups, businesses, etc. to be set up. There is an emphasis on Foyers as 'learning environments', and they take a holistic approach to initial assessment of needs and service provision. See www.foyer.net

- **Centrepoint** runs shelters, hostels, foyers and flats throughout London and provides employment and training support services for 16–25-year-olds. Centrepoint established a National Development Unit to provide consultancy, training and information to organisations working with young people, to help prevent youth homelessness. They also provide educational and motivational training for young homeless people, and offer links to colleges. See www.centrepoint.org

- **Salvation Army** – the largest national provider of hostel accommodation throughout the UK. Its 'Social Services' department (SASS) addresses the needs of the homeless. It runs 50 hostels and accommodation projects for single homeless people, specialist centres for families, adolescents, men on bail, and people in alcohol detox and rehab programmes. It also runs

four children's homes, and 36 'eventide homes' and sheltered housing complexes for elderly men and women. Some Salvation Army centres are developing training programmes for clients, as in the example described in this guide. See www1.salvationarmy.org.uk

- **The Big Issue Foundation** supports homeless people to sell a magazine on the street rather than beg and addresses the wider needs of homeless people. See www.bigissue.com

- **English Churches Housing Group** – one of the largest housing associations, it provides sheltered and supported housing in 168 local authorities. It is partly funded by Rough Sleepers Unit to develop services for rough sleepers and other single homeless people, including hostels, outreach and resettlement teams, night shelters, supported housing. See www.riverside.org.uk/riverside/echg

- **Carr-Gomm Society** – provides hostels and shared housing in 48 towns in the UK. They run homeless projects, resettlement, skills and work training, and creative activities. Some funding is received from RSU and Crisis. Most of its income (two-thirds) is from local authorities for the support services they provide, and also from rent. As a Registered Social Landlord, housing association, registered charity and company, Carr-Gomm is regulated by a number of agencies, including the Housing Corporation and the Charity Commission. Funders can be statutory, charitable or individuals giving donations. See www.carrgomm.org.uk

- **Simon Community** – provides housing with support, street work, training and resettlement. It is based on a belief that homeless and non-homeless communities living together will help one another. The main work is carried out with people in London (www.simoncommunity.org.uk), with other centres in Leeds (http://leedssimoncommunity.org.uk/), Glasgow (www.glasgowsimon.com) and Belfast (www.simoncommunity.org).

- **YMCA** – England has 160 local associations and is the largest provider of safe, secure, affordable supported housing for young people, ranging from hostel rooms to self-contained flats. It is also the largest provider of Foyer places. See www.ymca.org.uk

- **OSW – Off the Streets and into Work** is a charity supporting homeless people through education and training, using the knowledge of people with experience of working with homeless people to help them target their audience appropriately. See www.osw.org.uk

- There are also other smaller providers which have a religious motivation underlying their work, such as **St Martin-in-the-Fields** in central London (www.connection-at-stmartins.org.uk/), **Thomas** (Those on the Margins of Society) in Salford (http://thomas.smartchange.org), **Caring for Life** in Leeds (http://caringforlife.co.uk/).

A range of **'Second tier' organisations** provide support to those on the front line. They give training, advice, and financial, fundraising or other management assistance. Some also have a lobbying and policy advocacy role. The following are some examples:

- **Homeless Link** is a national 'trade association' of more than 700 organisations, agencies and individuals that work with homeless people in England and Wales. See www.homeless.org.uk

- **Resource Information Service (RIS) (**www.ris.org.uk) is a registered charity that collects, analyses and publishes information to help those working with homeless people, the unemployed, disabled or disadvantaged. It maintains the Homeless UK website (http://www.homelessuk.org), which gives access to hostels online and other services, the Homeless Pages website (http://www.homelesspages.org.uk/), the UK Advice Finder website (www.advicefinder.org.uk), and other services in London.

- **Construction and Property Industry Charity for the Homeless (CRASH)** (http://www.crash.org.uk/) – a charity for professionals and companies helping homelessness charities to improve their premises.

- **UK Coalition on Older Homelessness** is a lobby group of housing and homelessness agencies concerned with raising the profile of older homeless people. See www.olderhomelessness.org.uk

There are many other organisations which although their main aim is not to address homelessness, nevertheless regularly come across and deal with homeless people. These include:

- **NACRO**, a crime reduction charity, focuses on the resettling of prisoners, provision of education and training, including literacy and numeracy, for ex-offenders, disadvantaged people and deprived communities. See www.nacro.org.uk

- **Connexions** which is for 13–19-year-olds, does not deal specifically with homelessness but encounters young homeless people and offers advice. See www.connexions-direct.com

- **The Prince's Trust** is a UK charity that focuses on people aged 14–30, helping them to overcome difficulties in their lives by providing practical support in the form of financial support, mentoring, and training and education opportunities. See www.princes-trust.org.uk.