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PROGRESS REPORT

Success factors in informal learning: young adults' experience of literacy, language and numeracy

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INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
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Executive summary

This interim report covers the activities of the *Success factors in informal learning: young adults' experiences of literacy, language and numeracy* project from August 2003 to April 2004.

The report provides an overview of the data collected through the research activities in Phase One of the project and the emerging themes from initial analysis.

Initial activity included a literature review, focusing on the theory, practice and policy of literacy, language and numeracy skills provision for young adults. The review, which will be published separately, provides a synopsis and critique of significant literature.

Action research was aimed at identifying practices, materials and resources currently being used to develop the literacy, language and numeracy skills of socially excluded young adults. Its purpose was to produce a framework of critical success factors for working informally and non-formally in this area. This mapping exercise included 25 project visits, with eight selected for representation as in-depth case studies. A postal questionnaire to over 300 organisations working with young adults was followed up by telephone interviews. The project has also built up an active email discussion group of over 220 subscribers.

The report identifies the overall themes arising from the first seven months' research, including the characteristics of young adults involved in literacy, language and numeracy learning; how practitioners are working to engage and develop sustainable relationships with them; models of delivery in literacy, language and numeracy provision for this cohort; assessment and accreditation; practitioner training; and funding issues.

The report outlines plans to coordinate a consultation panel to review and evaluate teaching and learning resources for literacy, language and numeracy work with this cohort, and follow up activities recommended by the panel. A wide-ranging consultation with practitioners on their experiences of training and perceptions of need will also be undertaken with the aim of responding to the findings of the consultation within the timeframe of the project.

Key points

This is an interim report covering a wide range of initial activity. Some of the emerging themes from the research are:

■ Most projects are working across the spectrum of formal, non-formal and informal approaches to learning, resulting in a variety of hybrid forms of delivery that respond to competing needs and pressures in each setting.
■ Provision of this type is usually located within community venues – youth clubs, community and neighbourhood centres, or specially-acquired shop units in town centres – rather than formal educational environments such as schools or colleges. Many practitioners actively work to disrupt the traditional teacher/pupil hierarchical relationship.
■ The majority of funding is short-term and temporary, leading to uncertainty and anxiety about continuing or developing work in this area. Time is particularly important in developing meaningful relationships with young adults.

■ There is a common belief that an 'embedded' approach to literacy, language and numeracy provision is the most effective for this cohort, but there is little shared understanding of terminology amongst practitioners, or agreement about what this means in practice.

■ Numeracy is commonly embedded into vocational or life skills sessions and is very rarely referred to as 'numeracy'. It exists more implicitly in provision than literacy, which is frequently highlighted.

■ The development of young adults' oracy skills is often overlooked, although many practitioners referred to improving communication skills as a soft outcome of their work.

■ Responses to accreditation and assessment were mixed and often contradictory: there was no unified response from practitioners about their approach. For some, accreditation and assessment functioned as a motivating element to provision; for others, it represented a barrier in itself.

■ Young adult learners are aware of the job-related value of certificates and qualifications, but are less willing to undertake the work related to them, particularly ongoing work such as building a portfolio.

■ More projects were accrediting their work with young adults than were not. A wide variety of accreditation and certification was being offered, with National Open College Network units (OCN) being the most popular for their flexibility and wide range of topic areas.

■ The overwhelming majority of practitioners working in this area have very little specific literacy, language and numeracy training. There was confusion over the training and qualifications that are available and appropriate, and a general lack of confidence from both managers and practitioners about the academic ability needed to undertake this training.

■ There was a strong feeling that practitioners initially trained as youth workers are the 'right' people to work with young adults. Youth workers are sometimes reluctant to undertake specific literacy, language and numeracy training because youth work and basic skills teaching are seen as two very distinct vocations. Similarly, tutors working in local colleges are not always willing to work with a more challenging cohort.

■ Whilst the majority of practitioners expressed the need for more and better resources for work with this cohort, many were unclear about what resources were available and where to access them.

■ Practitioners identified many barriers to learning and engagement as experienced by young adults. Most frequently mentioned were negative experiences of education and school, chaotic lives, substance abuse and Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). Many of these barriers effectively defined the approach taken to provision.

■ Practitioners were keen to share the reasons for their successes, which included recognising the importance of effective engagement, developing credible publicity, ensuring provision is real and relevant, incorporating ICT into provision and retaining an informal approach.

Section 1. Introduction

The Young Adults Learning Partnership (YALP) is a joint initiative between the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE) and The National Youth Agency (NYA).

YALP researches and develops effective approaches to learning and personal development among young adults, aged 16 to 25, who are on the margins of education, training and employment. Its purpose is to foster their capability and integration as young workers, parents and citizens. YALP seeks a closer match between learning and skills providers' policies and programmes and the needs, interests and aspirations of young adults. For example, it promotes ways of teaching, learning and assessing that enhance self-esteem, emotional literacy and the development of basic skills.

YALP works by combining action research and development activities. Research seeks to explore and understand the social circumstances and experiences that shape young adults' attitudes towards learning, while development activities try out new ideas and encourage critical thinking and practice across institutional boundaries. YALP is therefore able to contribute to debate and development at policy-making level with national and local government, and to the formation of strategies that make a real difference for individual young adult learners.

In August 2003, YALP began this research and development project which focuses on informal education and the development of socially-excluded young adults' literacy, language and numeracy skills. This is a 15 month project, due to end in November 2004.

YALP has undertaken a range of research and development work in connection with young adult learners, including *Finding the Missing* (1998), which established the reasons for and consequences of young adults' disengagement from learning; *Only Connect* (1999), a guide to good practice in educational work with disaffected young adult learners; *Getting Connected* (2000), an alternative curriculum for social inclusion; and ways in which informal learning helps and supports young adults with mental health difficulties.

In 2001/02, YALP undertook research into improving take-up and achievement of young adults in basic skills provision. This provided a snapshot of current basic skills provision for 16 to 25-year olds not in formal education, employment or training (sometimes referred to as the 'NEET' group). It showed that the range and quality of provision varied enormously and that there was a real need for development of practices, materials and policy.

The current research is premised on the need for greater knowledge of current practices and materials. It also relates to a key priority within the **Skills for Life** strategy which seeks to engage and improve participation with young adults aged 16–25, particularly those who are not engaged in learning activity. The research corresponds with the widening participation and social inclusion agendas of both local and central government, including growing concerns about the number of young adults not in education, employment or training. The project has particular relevance to the government's *Transforming Youth Work: Resourcing Excellent Youth Services* (DfES, 2002), the white paper, *14–19 opportunity and excellence* (DfES, 2003), and the Skills Strategy white paper *21st Century Skills: Realising our Potential* (DfES, 2003).

The project runs until November 2004 and aims to:

■ Identify and disseminate practices, materials and resources for work with previously or currently marginalised young adults that encourage the development of literacy, language and numeracy skill levels in informal learning.
■ Provide a framework of critical success factors for working informally on literacy, language and numeracy skills with young adults.
■ Design, pilot, evaluate and produce learning and teaching materials oriented specifically to work with young adults in informal learning settings.
■ Identify practitioners' training needs and possible strategies to address them.

The project is divided into two phases.

Phase one – August 2003 to April 2004

Phase one initially focused on a review of literature about the theory, practice and policy of literacy, language and numeracy skills provision for young adults. This provided a synopsis and critique of significant literature. Phase one also involved mapping the territory of literacy, language and numeracy provision through initial visits to projects, a postal questionnaire, case studies and follow-up telephone interviews.

Phase two – April 2004 to November 2004

The work in phase two builds on that in phase one, beginning with the formation of a consultation panel of young adults and practitioners. The role of the panel is to examine and assess a selection of teaching and learning resources, identifying their strengths and weaknesses and recommending how they might be adapted and used. The review will inform the subsequent development of new materials.

Other groups of practitioners and young adults are also being asked to test existing local materials or to devise new materials to be piloted and evaluated through existing local projects and produced with guidance notes.

A report will identify any specific gaps in the training available for practitioners, and will be followed by a number of training events or briefings.

Reporting and dissemination takes place in early 2005 through the internet, project reports and papers/presentations to conferences and seminars.

This report covers activities of the young adults and basic skills project from August 2003 to March 2004, and outlines the next phase of the research. It provides an overview of the main activities undertaken as part of the research and expands on the emerging themes. lt also includes an executive summary of the literature review, which is produced in full in a separate document.

Section 2. Summary of activities in phase one

The main activities in phase one, as anticipated in the research schedule, were:

■ Mapping the territory of informal literacy and numeracy provision for 16 to 25-year olds across England.
■ Literature search and review.
■ Case study visits.
■ Questionnaire and telephone interviews.
■ Dissemination and information exchange.
The following sections detail activity undertaken within each strand, the emerging themes, and the implications for phase two of the research.

2.1 Mapping the territory of literacy, language and numeracy skills provision and practices

The work in this area aimed to identify informal learning practices, both discrete and embedded, perceived by practitioners and learners to contribute to the development of young adults' literacy, language and numeracy skills. The mapping exercise adopted both qualitative and quantitative methods, used appropriately with the data concerned, in order to create a typology of provision. The work can be split into two strands: developing contacts; and project visits.

2.1.1 Developing contacts
A crucial part of the early research was to contact practitioners working with young adults aged 16 to 25 in a wide variety of locations, sectors and contexts. Articles were published in *Young People Now*, *Clued In* (the YALP newsletter) and the National Research and Development Centre for Adult Literacy and Numeracy (NRDC) newsletter. Publicity flyers were also distributed via conferences, events and mail-outs. Projects funded through the Adult and Community Learning Fund (ACLF), managed by NIACE, and the Neighbourhood Support Fund (NSF), managed by The NYA, were also contacted. The project now has a database of over 160 organisations and individuals with whom we are in sustained contact and that number is constantly expanding.

Figure 1. Breakdown of contacts by sector

Sector/context	Number of contacts
Youth service	41
Connexions	5
Entry to Employment providers	6
Policy makers/researchers	14
Managers and consultants	21
Libraries	2
Schools	3
Criminal justice system	5
Voluntary sector organisations/charities	53
Further education colleges	25
Active projects (currently working with young adults)	76
Total	**251**

(note that contacts may appear under more than one sector/context)

Figure 2. Breakdown of contacts by Government Office region

Region	Number of contacts
North West	20
East of England	1
North East	20
West Midlands	12
South West	11
South East	31
Wales	2
East Midlands	35
London	17
Yorkshire and the Humber	17
Total	**166**

2.1.2 Project visits

The mapping phase of the research involved visiting projects to generate information for an initial framework of critical success factors. These initial visits provided information on the range of practices, provision, geographical locations and institutional contexts. This typology was then used to guide the selection of further sites for in-depth case studies, to ensure representation and inclusion of the full spectrum. A total of 23 project visits were undertaken to the following organisations:

- click@depaul, IT learning and lifeskills project, the Depaul Trust, Newcastle upon Tyne.
- Sports development project, the Depaul Trust, Newcastle upon Tyne.
- M25 Group, Doncaster.
- Loughborough College, Leicestershire.
- Lincolnshire Youth Service, Entry to Employment provision.
- Acorn Initiative, Entry to Employment provision, Nottinghamshire.
- Castelnau Youth Club, Barnes, south-west London, YouthBOOX group.
- Nacro, Byker Village, Newcastle.
- Green Apprentices, Knowsley, Merseyside.

- St Helens Community Link, Merseyside.
- YWCA, Doncaster.
- Edlington Youth Centre, Doncaster.
- Chelmer Training, Entry to Employment provision, Romford, Essex.
- Barking and Dagenham Training Services, Entry to Employment provision, Essex.
- Steps Forward, Newcastle upon Tyne.
- Middlesbrough Youth Service.
- Back on Track, Connexions, Coalville.
- Financial Inclusion Newcastle.
- Light for Life, Southport.
- Buddy Plus Reading Project, Read On – Write Away! Derbyshire.
- Post-16 Partnership, Wolgarston High School, Staffordshire.
- Doncaster College.
- SOVA Numeracy and Literacy Mentoring, Barnsley.

Strong links were also made with ContinYou's Skilled! project. Skilled! is working in four areas of the country to support the development of 30-hour literacy and numeracy courses, facilitated by local colleges and delivered in youth club surroundings.

The projects visited form a sample of provision across England, and are not necessarily representative of practices, approaches or composition of target groups. We are particularly aware that these contacts do not represent existing ethnic diversity or ongoing work with young adults with disabilities, and efforts are being made to address this imbalance. Similarly, whilst these examples of provision are illuminative and illustrative, the knowledge gained from them is not necessarily transferable to other settings.

Initial visits involved unstructured observation of the work programme and activities of each organisation or project, including the environment and surroundings, the interaction between practitioners and young adults, and the resources used in provision. These observations were recorded as field notes and were supplemented by other information provided by the projects, such as organisational strategies, publicity materials and newsletters.

Unstructured interviews were also undertaken with practitioners at each project, including tutors, support workers, volunteers, youth workers and managers. A framework was used to guide the interviewer only in terms of areas of interest (see Appendix 2), in order that the interview remained unstructured. Notes were taken at each interview. Where appropriate, informal conversations were also held with young adult learners.

2.2 Themes emerging from project visits

The data generated from the visits highlighted several emerging themes and demonstrated the wide variety of work taking place in this field. This data was supplemented by information from telephone and email contact with a broad range of organisations during the initial research activities.

It became apparent that the original focus on informal education was problematic. There were few examples of practice that shared a common definition of informal education and theorists, and researchers are themselves unable to agree a definition. The majority of provision fell somewhere on a continuum of formal, non-formal and informal education,

adopting a hybrid approach in response to competing pressures.

Literacy, language and numeracy provision for 16 to 25-year olds is usually delivered within community venues – youth clubs, community and neighbourhood centres, or specially acquired shop units in town centres – rather than formal educational environments such as schools or colleges. It is not delivered through an externally-set curriculum, and avoids the hierarchical teacher/pupil relationship. However, much of this provision is accredited, or encourages learners to take the National Tests for Adult Literacy and Numeracy. It is clear that defining provision as 'informal', 'formal' or 'non-formal' masks intricacies of delivery and development – each project needs to be viewed outside set definitions, within its own context.

Project visits and interviews were structured around several key issues, as laid out below. We also wanted to explore barriers to learning and engagement for young adults and, crucially, to identify the critical success factors in developing literacy, language and numeracy provision for them.

2.2.1 Funding
Projects and provision received funding from a variety of bodies and organisations, including the Youth Justice Board, Learning and Skills Councils (LSCs), Youth Offending Teams (YOTs) and Connexions. Within any one organisation, members of staff may receive their funding from different sources. The majority of funding is short-term and temporary, leading to uncertainty and anxiety about continuing and developing the work in this area.

2.2.2 Partnerships
Without exception, all projects visited were working with a range of other organisations to deliver literacy, language and numeracy provision. Many were working with Connexions, sometimes as a referral agency, sometimes as a development partner. There were also strong partnerships with agencies such as the wider youth services, leaving care teams, the Probation Service, drug and alcohol advice centres, and YOTs.

Several practitioners mentioned their increasing contact with local schools and pupil referral units (PRUs), reflecting the general trend to widen access by working with younger age groups, particularly those under 16.

A number of projects also worked with local colleges, either as provision to refer young adults on to, or as a partner in offering distance learning courses. Some projects were working with literacy and numeracy tutors from local colleges to deliver sessions within their own provision because they were unable to recruit trained tutors themselves. For those projects relying on volunteer mentors or tutors, project managers endeavoured to forge strong links with local volunteer centres.

2.2.3 Target groups
Most of the projects had a target group for whom the provision was developed but, in practice, worked with a variety of groups to avoid putting restrictions on their provision. Several projects targeted young offenders, or young adults in contact with the criminal justice system. This extended their remit and many of these projects were also working with local PRUs.

Other projects were aimed at young adults excluded from school or school non-attenders. All *Entry to Employment* (E2E) provision has a guarantee group (16–19, not employed), and is aimed at the Connexions priority 1 group which includes young offenders, young adults with

drugs issues and young parents. Other projects targeted homeless or low income young adults, care leavers or young adults from black and ethnic minority communities. One practitioner noted that they took *'young people that others would turn away'.*

Although a variety of age ranges was targeted, most practitioners noted that the majority of young adults engaging with their provision fell into the 16–18 age group, with some noting a slightly wider age group of 16–21. A minority of projects targeted the 20+ age group, but no projects reported the majority of their client group falling into this age bracket. It was difficult to locate provision for this age group.

Across most projects, more young men participated than young women. Many examples of provision actively targeted young men but, for others, this gender breakdown was not intended. As one practitioner noted, *'lads tend to hang around [for longer], but girls know what they want, so they don't hang around'.*

The majority of projects had an overarching remit to engage with the 'NEET' group (young adults not in education, employment or training), which meant that many of the young adults had also experienced a variety of social exclusion issues. Provision often had an emphasis on employability or progression into employment and the majority of young adults involved in this vocationally-focused provision (as opposed to provision focusing on, for example, digital media, mentoring or music production) were from white British backgrounds. Similarly, these vocationally-focused projects were the most likely to make contact with the research team.

2.2.4 Number of staff and young adults involved
There was an average ratio of one staff member to 8–10 young adults, although many projects aimed for smaller groups than this. Other projects worked only in 1:1 situations. There was a general feeling, as one practitioner expressed it, that there were *'not enough staff'.*

2.2.5 Referrals
The way in which young adults are referred to provision varies according to the type of provision. For example, E2E provision takes its referrals through Connexions in principle, but in practice the majority of E2E providers were willing to take self-referrals and then link to Connexions retrospectively. It was felt that young people might not engage with Connexions in the first instance through lack of information, *'young people won't know their Connexions personal adviser if they don't attend [school]'*, or through scepticism, *'young people ask "what have Connexions done for me?"'.* Another project mentioned problems with referrals through Connexions in that *'young people arrive with nothing'*, instead of the referral documentation expected from Connexions personal advisers.

Other projects took their referrals through YOTs, hostels, external support groups and, increasingly, schools and PRUs. The majority of projects supported young adults in self-referring, either through drop-in facilities, or by taking word-of-mouth referrals.

2.2.6 Publicity
Although projects and organisations used a variety of publicity methods – leaflets, newsletters, websites, posters, flyers and recruitment events – it was widely acknowledged that the best form of publicity in working with young adults was word of mouth. One provider noted, *'young people believe other young people'.*

Another important factor was the organisation's perceived standing in the community: several

projects felt that their success in recruiting and engaging young adults was because the community knew them and accepted them. This factor arose in conjunction with provision being sited in a youth club or community centre so that young adults found it more approachable; being in touch with local schools and holding open days; providing open, non-contested space for young adults; and providing young adults with a base on their 'patch' so that they did not have to venture into areas they would normally avoid. Another provider noted that providing a safe open space had actually encouraged young adults to travel to estates or parts of estates to which they would never normally go.

2.2.7 Literacy, language and numeracy delivery

The way in which literacy, language and numeracy was delivered varied from project to project. There was a strong emphasis on embedding them into provision, but also an effort by many projects to emphasise the importance of basic skills by making them explicit in individual sessions. Embedded literacy, language and numeracy provision has been defined as provision that develops these skills in the context of another course, experience or activity*. The aim in this case is to develop literacy, language and numeracy skills, *and* skills and knowledge in the subject being used as a vehicle.

Literacy and numeracy were commonly embedded into sessions such as 'shop and cook' where young adults chose menus, made shopping lists, budgeted for their purchases, planned and cooked the meal and, of course, ate it at the end! Other popular topics included gym and fitness, calorie counting, juggling, darts, media awareness, life skills, sexual health, employability/job search, map reading and journey planning, and financial awareness. In these cases, the young adults were not always aware that they were working to improve their numeracy or literacy skills.

A minority of projects ran discrete literacy and/or numeracy sessions, either in groups or as 1:1 sessions. These sessions were often organised around a topic of interest to the group – for example, buying and running a car, Black history week, working in the construction industry, or applying for a job – but the literacy or numeracy content was explicit throughout.

A number of projects ran both embedded and discrete literacy and numeracy sessions. In many organisations, staff were encouraged to ensure that literacy and numeracy were features of all their sessions, whether they delivered painting and decorating, motor mechanics or life skills. At the same time, for several sessions a week, young adults attended specific maths and English sessions. One provider said that the fact that basic skills underpinned everything else (and were seen as the starting point) was the key to their success. As the manager explained, *'what's the point of applying for work if you can't tell the time?'* Other similar approaches included always calling 'basic skills' just that, in an effort to create a culture where literacy and numeracy were paramount. Another provider commented, *'we do not have a discussion about whether or not the learner will do basic skills, but about how much basic skills they will do'*.

A number of projects did not employ a basic skills tutor and so referred learners on to specialist providers for literacy, language and numeracy support. Nevertheless, these projects either offered provision with literacy and/or numeracy running through them (for example, football coaching) or offered 1:1 mentoring for issues that deal with literacy and/or numeracy (such as journey planning or applying for a bank account).

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* See Developing Embedded Basic Skills newsletters (2003), a NIACE managed project, jointly commissioned by the Learning and Skills Council and DfES

In practice, numeracy was far more likely to be embedded into vocational subject areas or specific life skills sessions, featuring most prominently as an aspect of financial awareness or budgeting. Numeracy was rarely referred to as 'numeracy', and practitioners felt far less confident about this element of provision, both in terms of their own skills, and the anticipated response from the young adults. Consequently, it was nearly always incorporated as an implicit element. By contrast, literacy appeared much more explicitly and practitioners were far more confident about incorporating it within their provision.

Although some practitioners spoke of working to develop young adults' communication skills, the development of their language skills, or oracy, received substantially less attention than literacy and numeracy. Although oracy development often occurs through many different strands of work, practitioners did not mention it as an explicit element of their provision. Our initial contacts located only one project offering ESOL provision, and this was to one young Portuguese woman on youth service/E2E provision. Further examples have been, and continue to be, sought for representation in the research.

2.2.8 Resources
Providers use a wide variety of materials and resources in their work with young adults. Most were creative with their resources, thinking on their feet and developing activities and materials around the young adults' interests, using whatever came to hand. Overwhelmingly, providers felt that there were simply not enough resources for work with young adults ('*there's a void*') and that staff do not have the time to develop/find the quality resources they need. Pre-existing materials were noted to be '*an insult*', '*school-like*', '*inappropriate*', or '*a bit young*'. Resources being used successfully included Axis Education workbooks and Basic and Key Skills Builder materials.

More often than not, providers were using other materials and vehicles to deliver literacy and numeracy including:

- Newsletters.
- Video projects.
- Information about budgeting or opening a bank account.
- Information about setting up an email account online.
- Magazines.
- Poetry – especially poetry written for young adults.
- Non-fiction books.
- Job application forms.

Some practitioners felt that books and worksheets were a '*turn-off*', because young adults made negative associations with books, school and appearing 'childlike'. One project manager noted that young adults feel able to walk around carrying a newspaper, but would not feel happy about carrying a book. Some distinction was made between fiction and non-fiction, in that fiction was even more of a '*no-no*', as one provider said. Despite this, some projects reported young adults, especially younger members of the groups, enjoying completing or working through workbooks and exercises including resources that had an element of self-assessment. The ***Skills for Life*** teaching and learning materials, published in 2003, were only mentioned by one practitioner. When asked, other practitioners had either not heard of them, or did not know how to access them.

Use of ICT fell into two categories: projects using ICT as a medium for developing literacy and

numeracy skills, where any development of ICT skills was incidental; and projects developing ICT skills as the primary aim, with ICT being considered as a basic skill in its own right. The projects using ICT as a medium said that, in general, computers and the internet were successful methods of developing numeracy and literacy, and also functioned as 'hooks' to attract young adults into provision. Many of these projects used word processing to develop and encourage literacy skills, mainly through the production of newsletters.

Projects developing ICT skills as the main aim mentioned a variety of resources as being useful, including: Dance eJay recording studio PC software; D-Code, a drugs awareness CD-Rom produced by the Health Education Authority, Prison! Me! No way! the No-Way Trust's crime prevention CD-Rom for younger adults; and a CD-Rom which allows the user to 'create' their own home. Many projects were also using BBC Skillswise resources.

2.2.9 Assessment, accreditation and qualifications

Responses to accreditation and assessment were mixed and often contradictory. Several projects were adopting *'as many certificates as possible'*, with the idea that certificates would serve as a motivational element of provision. Two practitioners said that many young adults were overjoyed to receive their first ever achievement on paper. One mentoring project said they wanted everyone to *'have something to show at the end of the programme'* as it *'provides focus and a sense of achievement'*.

There was a wide variety of accreditation and certification being offered, including ASDAN, key skills awards, The Duke of Edinburgh's Award, Youth Achievement Awards, AQA, NCFE, BBC WebWise, City & Guilds, National Open College Network (NOCN), National Tests for Adult Literacy and Numeracy and a variety of sporting awards. OCN units were most popular, as they cover a wide range of topic areas. A need was expressed for units that accredited literacy/numeracy via other topics within personal and social development. For example, one project that delivered drugs awareness sessions was also trying to develop literacy and numeracy accreditation, and wanted accreditation that was flexible enough to cover both angles: *'you can get accreditation for drug awareness but not for the literacy work that goes alongside'*.

A number of projects were using the National Tests as part of their provision, with mixed results. Providers noted *'panic'* and *'nerves'* from the young adults at the idea of tests, especially in English and maths. One practitioner had tried unsuccessfully to introduce the tests, finding that the group were too afraid – a fact she put down to negative associations with school. A provider working with young offenders had matched individual young adults with mentors who were interested in taking the tests themselves, and encouraged mentor and mentee to work together to prepare.

While some projects were trying to *'fit everything around accreditation'*, others were less concerned about this aspect of provision. As one practitioner said, *'it's more about engagement than formal outcomes'*. Several other practitioners and project managers also said that outcomes were not as important as subjective or anecdotal *'general help and support'*. Other practitioners using accreditation were reluctant to let it *'run the programme'*: *'no expectation, so no failure'* and *'we never expect it, if it happens, that's great'*. One tutor reported running his programme around the learner's individual learning plan (ILP), and fitting accreditation into this, rather than the other way round. Numerous respondents also said that certificates or qualifications did not initially motivate young adults although, as they engaged further with the programmes, some became more motivated by accreditation.

For those projects gearing provision to accreditation or certification, there was a concerted effort to ensure that a majority, if not all, of the young adults achieved some form of recognition. In some cases, this meant presenting a variety of certificates (for example, for attendance, punctuality, supporting friends, or overall improvement) in order that all learners received at least one. For projects using accreditation, it was common for provision to be tailored to collect the evidence required for the qualification. Both of these approaches meant that the majority of young adults involved in provision had *'something to show'* for their involvement, and could be said to have achieved.

For projects using the National Tests, the achievement profile was much more erratic. A minority of learners were at a level appropriate to sitting the tests and not all of these learners were willing to do so. Practitioners using the tests as part of their provision often found it challenging to convince learners of the value of the tests and to overcome their fear of them.

For many practitioners, there was a real tension between hard and soft outcomes – their main aim was to engage with young adults and motivate them to attend provision long-term, but they acknowledged that much of their funding was target-related and therefore accreditation-related. This created a pressurised environment and personal conflict for staff.

2.2.10 Screening, initial assessment and diagnostics

The majority of projects used The Basic Skills Agency's *Initial Assessment* with young adults. Other assessment tools included the *Salford Sentence Reading Test*, *Target Skills: Initial Assessment*, and one practitioner using the **Skills for Life** diagnostic material. Other resources used to complement basic skills assessment included Kudos, The Rickter Scale and, increasingly, learning style questionnaires.

Some form of initial assessment was widely agreed to be useful, but practitioners differed in the information they sought. Some felt that reading age was more useful than an indication of level, just as others preferred to have more information on social and behavioural issues than on literacy and numeracy need.

There were mixed responses to new ICT tools that print out individual training/learning plans (ITP/ILPs) mapped to the core curriculum. For some, they were useful and time-saving, but one respondent commented that the ITP/ILPs were *'not much use'* in that they always said the same thing and were not representative of learners' abilities. Such tools also depend on access to ICT equipment, which some practitioners did not have. Forms of *recorded* ongoing, or formative, assessment were rarely mentioned, with only one practitioner holding regular formal reviews and monitoring progress with young adult learners. However, since many practitioners reported undertaking informal initial assessment, it is likely that any formative assessment was also undertaken informally.

2.2.11 Staff training

The majority of practitioners have very little specific literacy, language and numeracy teacher training. Most practitioners had undertaken a standard three-day basic skills awareness course, delivered either in-house or by a local college or basic skills network. Other training (mentioned less frequently) included core curriculum training, counselling and a certificate in initial assessment and support for the learner, although very few had attended the national **Skills for Life** training programme. One project manager was planning to offer staff City & Guilds 7407, but was concerned that staff might struggle academically. The confusion over

what is available and how to access it was also mentioned. Projects offering training to their mentors normally included some basic skills awareness in their training package.

There was a strong feeling that practitioners who were initially trained as youth workers were the 'right' people to work with young adults, whether or not they had any specific training related to literacy, language or numeracy. As one project manager said, *'the ethos of youth work is most important'*, echoing the views of other practitioners that the abilities and empathy required as a youth worker were paramount and innate. Another project manager commented that he needed staff with *'a gut instinct for working with kids on the edge'*. Several respondents expressed the feeling that practitioners trained originally as literacy and/or numeracy tutors may not have the skills of a youth worker, and might not be able to engage with young adults. There was a general acknowledgement of the problem of recruiting staff specialists, especially when practitioners are expected to be 'double-qualified'.

2.2.12 Issues defining provision

The interviews undertaken as part of the project visits were loosely structured around a framework (see appendix two). They used open-ended questions to allow practitioners to expand on their responses and direct the interview towards issues that had a strong bearing on the delivery and development of their literacy, language and numeracy provision for young adults. Practitioners were keen to talk about the impact of the following areas:

Working with socially-excluded young adults
- Working with groups who don't see the value of basic skills in their lives.
- The fact that the majority of young adults involved in provision left school in year 10, with no qualifications.
- Although some young adults have qualifications, they lack 'soft skills'.
- Previously undiagnosed dyslexia.

Negative associations with formal education
- Young adults being *'afraid of the written word'*.
- 'School-phobia'.

The 'accreditation imperative'
- Offering young adults financial incentives for achieving units of accreditation and/or the National Tests as part of E2E.

Creating the right approach and environment for young adults
- Accommodation – finding enough space and the right kind of environment.
- Working with groups – constantly battling with individual needs vs. wider group needs.

Retention and engagement
- Length of provision – encouraging young adults to stay to increase achievement, but without creating dependency and discouraging progression.
- Retention – young adults tend to drop out of provision.
These factors have shaped the development and delivery of their provision for young adults, and were raised repeatedly across organisations and sectors.

2.2.13 Barriers

A common strand to practitioners' work in this area is overcoming barriers to young adults'

learning and engagement. Practitioners described a wide range of experiences of working with this cohort. The most frequently raised issues, regardless of location, sector or approach are below.

The lives of marginalised young adults
- Chaotic lives, lack of consistency, traumatic life events.
- Problems with regular attendance, punctuality and long-term commitment.
- Learning *'can't compete with what's going on in their own lives'*.
- Offending behaviour, court appearances.
- No aspirations, unable to look to the future, no motivation, low expectations.
- Falsely high expectations, *'aspiring to anything'*, unrealistic hopes.
- Lack of confidence, afraid of meeting new people.
- Poor social skills, unaware of the *'boundaries'*, challenging behaviour.
- *'Don't want to do anything'*.
- *'Major barrier is themselves'* – goalless, chaotic, unstructured, poor communication.

Experiences of school and learning
- Negative previous experiences of education and/or school specifically, leading to a general negative perception of education and learning.
- Dislike of tests or exams.
- Stigma attached either to learning or being referred via an agency such as a Youth Offending Team.
- Exclusion from school or leaving before year 11.
- Problems with formal college or educational environments.
- Communication and language – formal style problematic.

Experiences of exclusion
- Substance misuse (mainly cannabis), drug use as *'common as coffee'* causes financial and motivational problems.
- Alcohol abuse.
- Homelessness, poor relationship with parents and family, living alone at a young age.
- Third generation unemployment.
- Signing on, being expected to leave provision to take up employment.

Behavioural issues
- Undiagnosed issues at school: up to one in three of the client group dyslexic.
- Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) – high levels of undiagnosed difficulties
- Mixing Ritalin, taken for ADHD, with cannabis.
- Anger.

2.3 Initial framework of critical success factors

Whilst there were multiple barriers and enduring social exclusion facing a majority of the young adults involved in provision, there was also a clear indication of the strategies and approaches that practitioners had found successful. This initial framework has been generated through comments from practitioners during project visits, from initial contacts and observations.

'Hooks'
- Build on young adults' interests: dance music and mixing, mobile phone ring tones, chat

rooms, ICT and the internet, cars and motorbikes, fashion and beauty, graffiti, cookery, sports.

■ Offer tangible and quick prizes (clothing or money, not certificates) to reward, for example, attendance or behaviour.

■ Ensure sessions are relevant to young adults' lives at that time. Make provision useful.

Pedagogy

■ Use non-academic approaches.

■ Individualise programmes through non-generic teaching, retaining as much of a 1:1 approach as possible.

■ Be flexible in all aspects of provision, maintaining open access.

■ Use learning style questionnaires, and recognise that the dominant learning style for this client group is likely to be kinaesthetic.

■ Work towards homogeneity of groups where 1:1 is not feasible.

Relationships

■ Maintain a non-judgemental attitude.

■ Ensure staff are *'user-friendly' and 'not being like teachers'*.

■ Foster mutual respect based on responsibility and effective compromise within the rules.

■ Treat young adults as individuals.

■ Interrupt the adult/child relationship – encourage young adults to teach practitioners.

■ Respect the young adult's circumstances and any responsibilities they already have.

Accreditation and outcomes

■ Gear sessions towards achieving a qualification if that's the intended end result.

■ Provide certificates – they are important and young adults recognise that they can be a *'passport to work'*.

■ Provide certificates for attendance and in recognition of other achievements.

■ Research the requirements for the qualification/accrediting body.

■ Recognise what accreditation/certification means to the group – it may be their number one reason for being there, or it may hold no meaning at all.

Engagement

■ Offer tailored provision.

■ Accept the young adult's communication style.

■ Start from the point the individual is at.

■ Get groups together to ensure they can work together successfully – recognise the politics of the group, such as territorial issues or concerns about prior associations.

■ Find out where young adults are – physically and emotionally – and meet them there, *'no compromise'*.

■ Encourage 'team meetings' or recording of issues and feelings.

Literacy, language and numeracy delivery

■ Project basic skills positively – if tutor/youth worker dislikes literacy, language and numeracy, so will young adults.

■ Integrate – embed but don't disguise.

■ Highlight literacy and numeracy within sessions.

■ Link to vocational interests.

■ Use initial assessment and diagnostics to your advantage, in conjunction with other tools such as learning style questionnaires and careers questionnaires.

■ Don't treat basic skills as a bolt-on. All staff and young adults must see that literacy and numeracy run through everything, *'not just on Thursday afternoons'*. Create a culture of recognition.

2.4 Summary of emerging themes from the project visits

Many of the interviews, informal conversations and observations during the initial project visits highlighted issues and themes common to practitioners across projects, regardless of sector, location or style of provision. Many of these issues had a defining role in day-to-day delivery and in planning the development of provision.

2.4.1 Funding
The majority of funding is short-term and often comes from a variety of sources. In practice, this means that two members of staff working closely together on the same project may be funded from different sources, and their roles may reflect this. The majority of funding is fixed-term and managers are constantly looking to secure their next source of income. Projects are often surrounded by a sense of insecurity and impermanence, with providers unable to say how much longer their provision will continue. Money usually comes from external sources rather than from core funding.

2.4.2 Staffing
Many project managers find it difficult to recruit qualified literacy, language and numeracy tutors to work with young adults. Qualified tutors who have worked in colleges are sometimes reluctant to work with a more challenging cohort. Even where they begin work with young adults, some do not stay because the reality of working with hard-to-reach young adults proves to be more difficult than they originally thought.

Managers wishing to offer their staff training in literacy, language and numeracy delivery are often confused about the routes and qualifications available, and where to access appropriate courses. When managers know of local courses, there are problems with capacity, finances and cover. For practitioners working face to face with young adults for the majority of their working week, professional development is often low on the list of priorities.

Although many youth workers would value the opportunity to enhance their skills and develop professionally, some are reluctant to undertake teacher training for basic skills because they see youth work and teaching as two distinct vocations. Both managers and youth workers have concerns that staff may not have appropriate literacy and numeracy skills and that they often lack confidence in their own abilities.

2.4.3 Engagement
One of the enduring issues facing practitioners is engaging effectively with hard-to-reach young adults. Many projects aim to reach young adults not in education, employment or training and this cohort, by its very nature, is very difficult to find, let alone engage. Practitioners find it hard to develop credible publicity for young adults in order to engage them initially. It is widely acknowledged that they respond well to 'hooks' to attract them to provision and to promote retention, since keeping them 'on board' is an ongoing challenge. However, balancing these hooks and related rewards (such as computer games, meals, sportswear and vouchers) with the learning element of the provision is a constant struggle, offsetting the competing pressures of sustained engagement with learning activities.

2.4.4 Terminology

Although practitioners have a strong desire to talk about their provision and to share experiences, there is not necessarily a shared understanding of the terminology that is used. This is especially true for practitioners working outside colleges. Literacy, language and numeracy provision is often referred to as 'discrete' or 'embedded', but these labels can mask intricacies of provision.

Practitioners frequently opt for an embedded approach because of the strong negative associations with the formal, traditional school environment (both in the minds of the young adults and the practitioners themselves). Consequently, it is now widely perceived that embedding literacy and numeracy in other subjects or topics is the most successful approach when working with hard-to-reach/engage cohorts. For many practitioners, especially those with little or no access to related training (for example, curriculum mapping or **Skills for Life** events), there is a constant search for examples of best practice to guide their own provision. At present, best practice is commonly believed to centre on an embedded approach. However, distinctions between embedding and contextualising are not always clear or commonly understood. Similarly, the differences between bolt-on provision and discrete provision are not always clear to providers.

There is a commonly held belief that an informal approach to provision is most successful. However, there is no shared understanding of the terminology. 'Informal' is used to mean 'not in a college or school' or to describe the style of relationships (for example, that learners may use the tutor's first name). It may also mean a lack of monitoring or tracking procedures, a lack of accreditation or qualification, or an unstructured approach to sessions. The terms 'informal' and 'non-formal' are often used interchangeably. 'Formal' is perceived as taking place within a traditional educational establishment, using monitoring procedures, working to targets, or accrediting work/offering a qualification. Whilst the ability to 'self-define' when sharing practice and experiences is important and valid, a lack of shared understanding of terminology can often cloud issues.

2.4.5 Resources

Most practitioners expressed a need for more resources, particularly those specifically designed for use with this cohort. Current resources are not perceived to be appropriate because of content or style, or the fact that many are designed as worksheets, which *'assume that the learner is willing to learn'*. Many practitioners do not have access to networks that publicise resources and so may be unaware of existing resources. Emerging findings centre on four main points: practitioners do not have the resources they need; practitioners are not always aware of the resources that already exist; resources in use at present are not always appropriate for the cohort; and resources often assume a style of learning that is not the most effective for young adults.

2.4.6 Accreditation/qualifications

A majority of projects offer some form of accreditation or qualification to young adults. Accreditation and qualifications are often related to gaining certificates, and can involve sitting some form of test or exam. Practitioners vary in their perception of this as a motivating factor or as a barrier in itself. Similarly, opinions vary as to whether young adults value accreditation, qualifications and certification. There has been an increasing drive to accredit programmes, or to offer qualifications as a component, and this often features as part of projects' organisational strategies or areas for future development. Some practitioners see accrediting their programme as a sign of quality, or professionalism,

whereas some see it as an unwelcome intrusion into a more holistic and 'informal' programme.

Young adult learners' feelings about accreditation also vary. Most regard a certificate or unit as a positive step towards employment, but are less willing to undertake the work to achieve it. This is especially true of longer-term portfolio building. Tests and exams seem to cause a degree of fear leading to an up-front refusal to sit any. However, careful introduction and integration of an exam or test into provision can result in young adult learners feeling confident to tackle it.

2.5 Literature search and review

The literature search and review focused on the theory, practice and policy of literacy, language and numeracy provision for young adults aged 16–25. The review informed subsequent stages of the research, in particular the framework for observations and interviews during project visits, and the questionnaire. The full version is produced separately.

The review focused on three areas of literature: young adults and social exclusion; research into young adults and literacy, language and numeracy; and a review of theories of informal education.

2.5.1 Executive summary
Young adults and social exclusion

■ Young adults in today's society occupy a contested terrain between childhood and adulthood in terms of rights and responsibilities. Their role in a 'new' Britain', marked by a growth in the 'knowledge' economy and a rising premium on skills, is also contested. Simultaneously, the attainment profile of young adults in the UK is hollowing out, so that the largest groups are those with no or low skills and those with degrees, as exemplified by Tony Blair's concern over the gap between the 'skills rich' and the 'skills poor' (*21st Century Skills: Realising our Potential* (DfES, 2003).

■ A variety of government policies from the mid-1990s onwards reflected concerns about disengagement, non-participation and non-attainment amongst young adults. *The Learning Age* (DfEE, 1998) and *Learning to Succeed* (DfEE, 1999) formally created Connexions as a coherent and uniform strategy of *'investing in young people'*. The new single advice and support service would also have a comprehensive record system to track and 'steer young people aged 13 to 19 through the system'. *14–19 opportunity and excellence* (DfES, 2003) set out a new framework for 14 to 19 learning, with an emphasis on learning to become a *'responsible and healthy adult'*. *Transforming Youth Work: Resourcing Excellent Youth Services* laid out local targets to reach those young adults assessed as being 'NEET' – not in employment, education or training.

■ *Skills for Life*, the national strategy for improving adult literacy and numeracy (DfES, 2001), listed young adults as a target group, albeit with reference to their specific role as 'low skilled' adults in employment. The more recent *Skills for Life* Survey (DfES, 2003) found that 57 per cent of 16 to 25-year olds were working at level one or below in literacy, and approximately 77 per cent of this cohort were working at level one or below in numeracy.

■ The social exclusion suffered by young adults, although labelled in a variety of different ways, is related to a number of widely agreed risk factors, which are seen as being mutually reinforcing. These factors increase the risk of marginalisation and young adults tend not to experience them in isolation.

■ Low attainment or non-attainment in the education system has been linked to longer periods of unemployment, periods of economic inactivity, involvement in crime, experience of poverty and teenage parenthood.

Research into young adults and literacy, language and numeracy
■ There has been very little research undertaken into young adults and their literacy and numeracy skills levels. According to the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (2002), one in four 19-year olds lacks a basic qualification, and The Prince's Trust states that one in five young adults lack the *'basic literacy and numeracy skills required for today's world'*.
■ A UK Youth/Basic Skills Agency report, *Basic Skills & Young Adults* (2002), noted that only half of the young adults surveyed felt that receiving help with their reading and writing would improve their employment prospects. It also demonstrated the strong association between maths and English and negative experiences of school. According to the report, over 60 per cent of youth workers were delivering basic skills regularly, with little or no training. Despite this, over 90 per cent of youth workers surveyed felt confident to deliver basic skills, and 90 per cent felt it was appropriate for them to be involved in basic skills support for young adults.
■ Other authors, such as Merton (1997, 1998, 1999, 2000), Jackson and Aylward (2002), and Bentley and Gurumurthy (1999), have made a variety of recommendations for developing literacy and numeracy provision for young adults. These recommendations concern the values and relationships between project workers and young adults, the content and structure of the provision and the organisational issues.

Theories of informal education
■ Research has long pointed to the fact that young adults find a variety of elements of formal education problematic. In response to this, informal education has gained increasing currency in recent years. However, there is no common definition agreed by writers and theorists.
■ Jeffs and Smith (1990, 1996) strongly advocate the role of informal education in youth work through a dialogical, learner-controlled approach.
■ Other theorists have argued that informal and formal education lie along a spectrum, the two ends of which converge. Colley, Hodkinson and Malcolm (2003) claim that we are seeing parallel drives to formalise the informal through assessment and accreditation, and to informalise the formal through the use of less structured approaches. The end result of this, they claim, will be to create *'one more widely applicable hybrid'*.

2.6 Case study visits

As part of the development of the mapping strand of the research, eight projects were selected to be used as in-depth case studies. These are to form part of the final reporting activity, offering more detailed, specific and contextualised information, and an understanding of activity in a particular setting.

Each case study visit used a mixture of methods, according to the setting and the young adult learners involved. These methods included:

■ Focus groups with young adult learners to elicit and share views on their learning experiences, the activities undertaken, and their feelings about learning, literacy and numeracy for the future.
■ Semi-structured interviews with practitioners and volunteers.
■ Unstructured observation of activities.
■ Informal conversations with young adults, volunteers, practitioners and key stakeholders.

All focus groups, interviews and some informal conversations (dependent upon the nature of the conversation) were tape recorded and transcribed.

The case study sites were chosen to represent the diversity of types of literacy and numeracy programmes for young adults. Some sectors (in particular, work targeted at young women and work with young asylum seekers and refugees) are not represented because of the difficulty in making sustained contact with provision of this type. Only one project was working with *any* ESOL learners – in this case, a young Portuguese woman on E2E. The geographical spread of the case studies also represents the overall geographical spread of projects in contact with YALP as part of the research.

This strand of the work has generated rich and detailed data, and will enable the framework of critical success factors to be developed into a framework for successful practice.

2.6.1 Nacro Newcastle
Nacro, a national organisation, has a centre in Byker Village, Newcastle that works with young adults, including young offenders and young adults at risk of offending. The building they occupy is a former cigarette factory which has been transformed into a community base offering a wide variety of learning opportunities.

Their facilities include a motor mechanics workshop, a small animal care centre, a gym and fitness suite, mixing decks, and the Nacro 'house'. The house is undoubtedly one of the most successful aspects of the provision – a purpose-built simulation which learners helped to construct, and which includes a kitchen with appliances, a nursery where learners attend childcare sessions, a lounge with video and television, and plenty of space where life skills classes are delivered.

Nacro Newcastle holds a contract for E2E and also delivers a range of other programmes including NVQs in motor mechanics, small animal care, horticulture and fitness. Nacro Newcastle also operates a variety of outreach programmes in the evenings, including community football. The centre has a basic skills section, with computers and a wide range of resources. Basic skills run through all sessions, but learners also attend discrete sessions, delivered by committed volunteers and the basic skills trainer. Provision is accredited according to the needs and circumstances of each individual learner.

Nacro works with some of the hardest-to-reach young adults in the area, although they are keen to shake off the image that has traditionally tied them to offenders and stress that they will not turn anyone away. They have established themselves as a well-known and trusted base within the community, and work continually to improve their links with local schools and other voluntary organisations. However, the most frequent form of publicity is word of mouth – young adults speak highly of their involvement with NACRO and encourage their friends and family to attend too.

2.6.2 Financial Inclusion Newcastle (FIN)
FIN is a Newcastle-based not for profit organisation, funded by New Deal for Communities, the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), Lloyds TSB (NRF and ESF/UK) and Reviving the Heart of the West End. FIN exists primarily to offer support to local credit unions, but also has a major aim to promote financial literacy in the community. FIN has a dedicated community money advice worker, contracted from the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB), who (along with project officers from FIN) has been involved in outreach activities to promote and

deliver financial inclusion/literacy for young adults living independently for the first time. At the time of this phase of the research, FIN had launched a new project, 'Financial Awareness through Basic Skills', in partnership with Newcastle College and Newcastle CAB, to develop a range of resources for delivery in the community to increase financial awareness whilst raising literacy, numeracy and ICT skills.

2.6.3 Chelmer Training
Chelmer Training is a private training provider based in Romford, Essex, and is primarily contracted to deliver E2E via LSC funding. Chelmer Training offers totally individual learning routes with no timetabled sessions for learners. Instead, young adult learners undertake projects and work towards key skills awards as part of their carefully-followed ILP.

ILPs are reviewed with learners regularly to ensure they are up to date, and to maximise retention. All work is undertaken on computer, and learning support workers mix with learners to provide support and guidance throughout. Chelmer Training offers a taster in health and beauty, where learners can work towards internal certification and also has its own workshop, connected to a training centre, where it offers a construction taster course.

Chelmer Training assists learners in securing vocational placements, and has a counsellor on site weekly. At the time of the research it was in the final stages of agreeing a contract with the local LSC to deliver testing and support to local employees with literacy and numeracy needs, and will be delivering the National Tests.

2.6.4 Buddy Plus
Buddy Plus is one of the projects under the umbrella of Read On – Write Away!, the literacy initiative for Derbyshire and Derby city. Buddy Plus, funded by The Youth Justice Board, offers 1:1 mentoring for young offenders referred by the local YOTs and, increasingly, by schools and pupil referral units. Buddy Plus relies entirely on volunteer mentors, and only the project manager is a paid member of staff.

Young adults are matched with mentors and meet them weekly in libraries, museums, coffee shops or the local YOT offices. Mentors and mentees choose books and material to read together, go on educational outings to a museum or library, or simply take a walk in the local shopping centre or park, reading signs and notices to develop independent living skills, and discussing related issues. The mentoring relationship continues for six months, where ever possible.

2.6.5 Back on Track
Back on Track is provision offered as part of Connexions Leicester Shire, based at a specialist centre in Coalville. The course is aimed at disengaged young adults referred by student support services (most are excluded long-term or temporarily, or are non-attenders), Connexions, YOTs and social services. Young adults may also self-refer. The sessions mainly cover personal and social development, with an emphasis on areas such as sexual health, drug awareness and budgeting. A basic skills element is present, but embedded, throughout. Back on Track also uses *Getting Connected* , YALP's alternative curriculum for social inclusion, which is accredited via OCR. It is looking to accredit via ASDAN to complement *Getting Connected*. The centre also runs summer programmes.

2.6.6 E2E, Lincolnshire Youth Service
Lincolnshire Youth Service has a contract to deliver E2E in two youth centres, Earlsfield (in

Grantham) and Sleaford (a rural market town). The provision is delivered by a qualified basic skills tutor and several qualified youth workers. Learners attend a variety of sessions across both sites, including ICT, media awareness, and shop and cook. Literacy and numeracy is strongly embedded in all sessions, but learners also attend separate maths and English sessions. Learners are working towards their National Tests in Literacy and Numeracy at Level 1 and 2, and this is a main strand to the provision. Lincolnshire Youth Service also uses *Getting Connected*.

2.6.7 Light for Life
The Youth Training and Involvement Project (YTIP) is one strand of a local charity, Light for Life, which began as a church-based group concerned with local homelessness. It offers a wide range of services and provision for young adults in Southport, Merseyside. There are two bases – a shop unit in the town centre and a training centre. The town centre unit houses the drop-in centre for information, advice and guidance, as well as offering practical support such as crisis food vouchers from the local supermarket.

Staff follow up the practical support with budgeting sessions, through which they seek to engage the cohort further. They also offer a number of taster sessions including ICT, cookery and sport, which have been used as the basis of an E2E programme. They aim to accredit work through ASDAN and *Getting Connected*. The four members of staff (one with a particular basic skills interest) are committed to developing an informal model of delivery. They are working with Southport College to deliver literacy and numeracy as part of the E2E provision. Light for Life is developing effective strategies for working with this highly challenging cohort of young adults.

2.6.8 M25
M25 is a housing support group based in Doncaster. Along with four other local organisations, it has been part of ContinYou's Skilled! project. Skilled! aims to help youth work organisations develop basic skills provision with the support of tutors from Doncaster College. Residents at M25's foyers have been attending (initially) 30-hour literacy and numeracy courses within their own supported accommodation. Accreditation is offered through City & Guilds. Although sessions have previously been delivered by a basic skills tutor from Doncaster College, the Skilled! funding has allowed M25's own staff to train to deliver literacy and numeracy themselves.

2.6.9 Emerging themes from case study visits
The case study visits highlighted similar issues to those generated by the initial project visits, again demonstrating the enduring nature of the themes and their relevance across projects. The main issues were resources and engaging with hard-to-reach young adults.

Many of the projects were struggling to find resources that were appropriate for the cohort: attractive and stimulating, adult yet not boring, and easily accessible (or free!). All practitioners were eager for news of new resources or initiatives, and keen for any helpful information.

For many practitioners, the day-to-day reality of working with hard-to-reach young adults was a defining feature of provision. The chaotic lifestyles of many young adults in this cohort make sustained engagement ever more challenging. Drug use, unstable accommodation, family break-ups and relationship difficulties mean that learning and engagement are rarely able to compete with the rest of the young adults' lives. Faced with difficulties, practitioners were

keen to share these experiences with others, and to seek support. Consequently, there was a desire for a network, or communication forum, to share practice and disseminate information.

Several projects mentioned staffing issues: for example, the need to recruit and rely upon volunteers and the difficulties of partnership working. A number of projects work with local colleges to deliver literacy and numeracy and found that these tutors were not always aware of the complex issues involved in working with the young adult age group. Poor relationships between young adults and tutors sometimes caused problems. One college mentioned their difficulty in finding staff willing to work with this age group.

2.7 Questionnaire analysis

300 questionnaires were circulated to organisations working with the target group in order to collect qualitative data on practitioners' opinions, and quantitative data on the extent and scope of provision. 58 questionnaires were returned, a response rate of 19 per cent. The questionnaire sought to establish further details about informal literacy, language and numeracy provision with young adults, and covered a variety of areas central to the development and delivery of such provision.

Figure 3. Questionnaires – sector breakdown of respondents

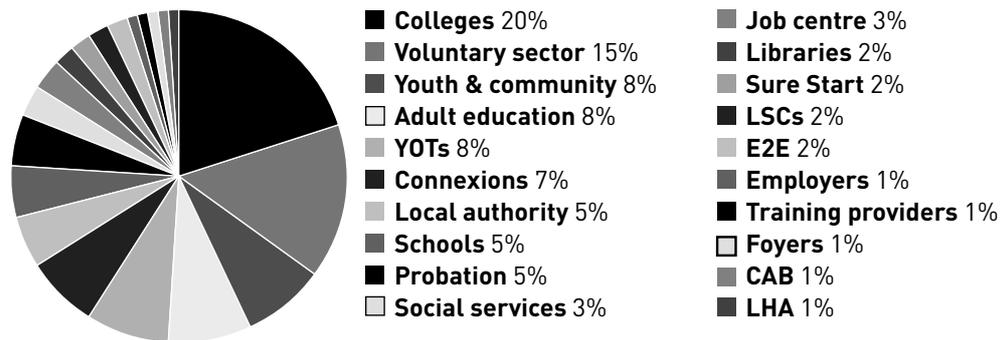|	%	Numbers
Youth service	35	18
Voluntary sector	35	18
Further education colleges	13	7
Training providers	4	2
Connexions	9	5
Adult education service/centre	4	2
Total		52

Young adults targeted by respondents ranged from age 11 to 29, with the most popular age ranges being 13–19 and 16–25.

69 per cent of respondents ran programmes that address both literacy and numeracy skills. 9 per cent ran programmes that address literacy only, and 2 per cent ran programmes that address numeracy only. 11 per cent offered ESOL provision, and 57 per cent addressed ICT skills. Youth service projects were most likely to include development of ICT skills alongside literacy and numeracy provision.

2.7.1 Partnership working

Without exception, respondents were working with a range of partners to deliver literacy, language, numeracy and ICT provision for young adults. Partnership working operated on a variety of levels, and at different stages of development. Some partnerships assisted in the development of provision, and worked at a strategic level, either locally or regionally. Some organisations (mainly within the voluntary sector) worked in partnership with specialist organisations (for example, the Newcastle Literacy Trust, or a local college) to support young adult learners with literacy and/or numeracy skill needs. Other organisations relied on partnership working to generate referrals, or to signpost young adults towards further support or opportunities. For some organisations, partnership working was closely tied in to funding relationships.

Figure 4. Questionnaires – respondents identified their partner organisations

■ **Colleges** 20%   ■ **Job centre** 3%
■ **Voluntary sector** 15%   ■ **Libraries** 2%
■ **Youth & community** 8%   ■ **Sure Start** 2%
□ **Adult education** 8%   ■ **LSCs** 2%
■ **YOTs** 8%   ■ **E2E** 2%
■ **Connexions** 7%   ■ **Employers** 1%
■ **Local authority** 5%   ■ **Training providers** 1%
■ **Schools** 5%   □ **Foyers** 1%
■ **Probation** 5%   ■ **CAB** 1%
□ **Social services** 3%   ■ **LHA** 1%

2.7.2 Type of provision

Respondents identified whether their literacy, language and numeracy provision was 'embedded', 'discrete' or a combination of both.

Figure 5. Questionnaires – responders identified their type of provision

■ **Embedded** 39%
■ **Discrete** 18%
■ **Both** 21%
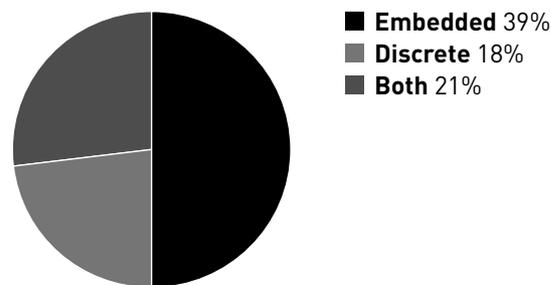
The majority of respondents delivering embedded courses used life skills as a vehicle. Life skills sessions encompassed:

Shopping	Cooking
Sexual health	Job club
Boys' talk	Mentoring
Offending behaviour	Confidence building
How to deal with difficult situations	Citizenship
Independent living skills	Social skills
Resolving benefit issues	Personal development
Handling finance	CV skills
Housing management	

Other vehicles for embedding included:

Mentoring – work with travellers	Multi-media courses
Horticulture	Photography
Arts	Drama
Outdoor activities	DIY
Beauty on a budget	Motorbike maintenance
Painting and decorating	DJing
ICT/CLAIT	Use of local library
Music	Sport
Alternative curriculum projects	

Some respondents offered accreditation as part of an embedded course through:

- NOCN
- The Duke of Edinburgh's Award
- Youth Achievement Awards
- City & Guilds
- ASDAN
- Getting Connected
- The Prince's Trust curriculum xl

38 per cent of respondents said they delivered discrete sessions, as part of which one provider offered accreditation from City & Guilds in numeracy, literacy and ICT. 12 per cent of respondents delivered both embedded and discrete literacy and numeracy sessions.

The majority of practitioners are aware of two main approaches to delivery – 'discrete' (English and maths sessions consciously delivered separately from other aspects of provision) and 'embedded' (which, in practice, is a residual definition covering all types of provision that are not 'discrete'). The umbrella of 'embedded basic skills' is often used to cover a variety of other approaches to provision, some of which are clearly being successfully used in literacy and numeracy provision for young adults. Both contextualised provision, and bolt-on literacy and numeracy provision are in evidence, but are rarely referred to in these terms. There is a common belief that an embedded approach is more successful, and the majority of practitioners therefore steer away from providing discrete literacy and numeracy sessions.

2.7.3 Marketing and recruitment
Respondents were asked whether their provision was marketed directly as basic skills or incorporated as an element of another programme.

Figure 6. Questionnaires – targeting of provision

- **Embedded in another session** 56%
- **Discrete** 15%
- **Embedded and discrete** 21%
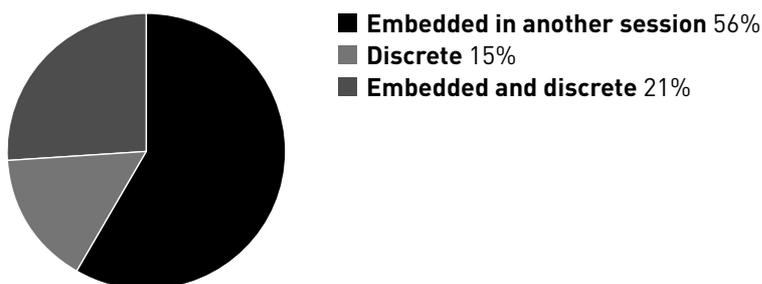
Respondents overwhelmingly replied that using the term 'basic skills' acted as a barrier and put young adults off accessing provision.

> Sessions are very rarely marketed as basic skills, or literacy/numeracy sessions. We find that this approach simply does not work – learners do not turn up, retention rates are low. *Voluntary sector organisation*

> One project is named Undercover Artists which is working alongside an artist to embed basic skills. *Voluntary sector organisation*

Some respondents said that they did not market literacy and numeracy provision directly, but dealt with needs as they arose.

All providers used more than one way of publicising their programmes. The most popular methods were leaflets, flyers, posters and notices, followed by magazines, booklets, newspapers and websites.

Half of respondents received referrals from other agencies, including YOTs, PRUs, Connexions, schools, other youth work programmes, local colleges, libraries, health centres, social services, foyer projects, Job Centre Plus, and adult education providers. Many projects also supported young adults in self-referring. In an attempt to improve engagement, projects were widening their contact groups, for example one project was taking referrals from pub landlords. 37 per cent publicised their provision by word of mouth and by face-to-face contact.

Two respondents said that young adults' attendance at literacy, language and numeracy provision was compulsory as part of a programme such as E2E and New Deal Mentoring, or that participants had an incentive to attend such as leaving care and being paid by social services.

Respondents were asked how important they thought the basic skills element was, compared with other elements of provision for this cohort. 78 per cent responded *that it was 'as important as everything else'*:

> The Prince's Trust team is about developing self-awareness, self-esteem and confidence. Basic skills is integral to that development. *Voluntary sector organisation*

> Basic skills underpins success across the board and is essential for confidence and furthering potential. *Youth service*
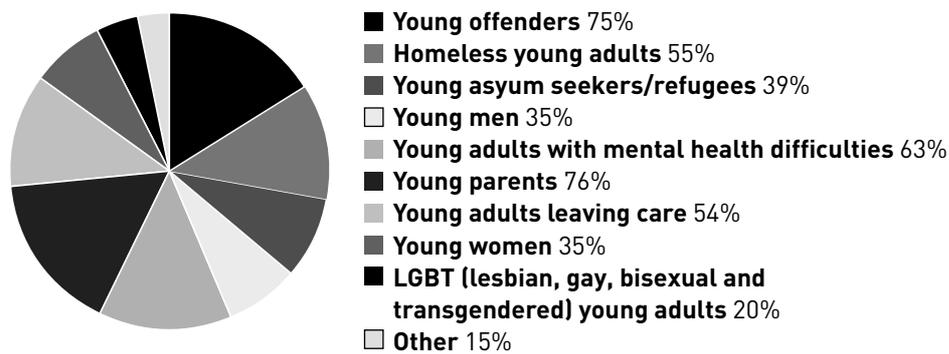
One in ten felt other elements were more important. They emphasised the need for personal development in order to have the confidence to tackle literacy and numeracy learning.

> It is more often the case that you cannot start with basic skills. Personal development, building confidence and the ability to trust people, as well as teaching young people to look after themselves, are the most common starting point.
> *Voluntary sector organisation*

Only three respondents felt that basic skills were the most important element and three further respondents felt the importance depended on the client group, their individual needs and levels of ability.

Providers worked with diverse groups of young adults and youth service projects worked with the most diverse groups of all. Overall, projects were most likely to be working with young offenders.

Figure 7. Questionnaires – diversity of groups involved in provision

- ■ **Young offenders** 75%
- ■ **Homeless young adults** 55%
- ■ **Young asyum seekers/refugees** 39%
- ▢ **Young men** 35%
- ■ **Young adults with mental health difficulties** 63%
- ■ **Young parents** 76%
- ■ **Young adults leaving care** 54%
- ■ **Young women** 35%
- ■ **LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered) young adults** 20%
- ▢ **Other** 15%

'Other' groups included: young adults not in employment, education or training; young adults of compulsory school age in alternative education projects; young adults with learning difficulties or disabilities; travellers; and young adults with physical disabilities.

Whilst most organisations agreed that they would not turn any young adults away, many projects were actively targeting certain groups of young adults, and tailoring their provision to these groups. Groups included: unemployed young adults; young men; young parents; young adults not in employment, education or training; young adults on probation; young adults experiencing mental health difficulties; lone parents; care leavers; young homeless adults; persistent and serious young offenders; young adults not accessing provision elsewhere; young adults experiencing rural isolation; young adults with physical disabilities and/or acquired brain injuries; hard-to-reach learners; vulnerable and single young adults; young adults living on inner city estates; and young refugees. Many youth service respondents replied that their provision is not targeted according to categories as they are a *'universal service'*.

2.7.4 Funding
Respondents were asked who funded their provision and to provide details of any problems and/or successes related to funding.

More than half of responding projects were funded by more than one body, with LSC funding being the largest single funding source. Only one in four projects received core funding for their literacy, language and numeracy work with young adults:

41% LSC funded	24% core funded
20% college funded	18% Connexions funded

Other suppliers of funds included:

The Prince's Trust	Social services
European Social Fund (ESF)	Single Regeneration Budget (SRB)
Job Centre Plus	Neighbourhood Renewal Fund (NRF)
Youth Justice Board	Local probation service
Adult and Community Learning Fund (ACLF)	

The main problems outlined with funding were:

- ■ Complicated paperwork to apply for LSC funding in particular.
- ■ Criteria set by funding bodies, eg. learning/achieving accreditation at a certain level.

■ Funding being short-term, not allowing staff enough time to build up relationships of trust with young people.
■ Fitting the work to the funding criteria.
■ Not enough money available.
■ Not enough money, eg. to provide child care facilities.
■ Funding not sustainable and too disparate.

2.7.5 Staff training

Overall, 60 per cent of respondents had *some* form of specific literacy and numeracy teacher training, and 24 per cent said their staff had no specific training. However, these figures merit further breakdown into sectors. Respondents based in the FE sector, perhaps unsurprisingly, were all qualified basic skills tutors (ie. they had completed at least a level 3 qualification). For practitioners working within the youth service, however, the picture is different. Of the 26 respondents, four had either achieved their initial teaching qualifications, or were working towards them. A further four respondents had attended awareness-raising training. Five respondents were working on programmes or projects that employed tutors from local colleges. The remainder had no specific training relating to literacy, language or numeracy delivery.

Of the 11 voluntary sector responses, four had some specific training, but did not specify what this training comprised. For many projects, basic skills awareness training (often a three-day in-house course) was considered subject-specific training. Practitioners working for Connexions said that, as a rule, their support staff are not specifically trained.

Of the practitioners who had received subject-specific training, the majority were qualified at Level 2, or equivalent. In contrast, all practitioners working within the youth service sector were fully qualified youth workers. Across the voluntary sector organisations, this picture was far less consistent. Connexions workers had either undertaken, or were working towards, the Connexions personal advisor diploma.

2.7.6 Accreditation

Of the provision represented through the questionnaires, more organisations and projects were offering accreditation as part of their literacy and numeracy provision than were not. The most popular type of accreditation was OCN units. A third of respondents offer, or are considering offering, the National Tests. Around half of respondents were not offering the National Tests and did not plan to.

Figure 8. Questionnaires – accreditation

■ **National Tests** 11%
■ **City & Guilds** 15%
■ **OCN** 28%
■ **Other** 14%
■ **No accred** 32%
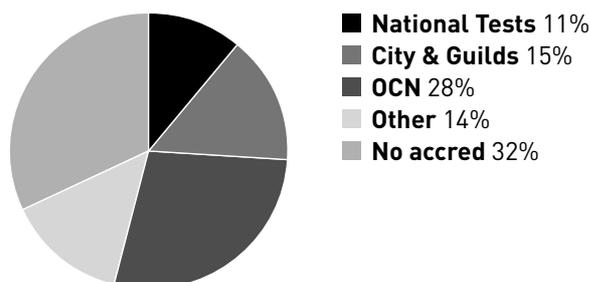
Accreditation from other respondents was offered through:

- ASDAN key skills.
- ASDAN foundation training awards.
- Youth Achievement Award.
- AQA Unit Award Scheme
- The Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme.
- Gloucestershire Award.
- City & Guilds Profile of Achievement.
- London Open College Network Peer Motivator Award.
- Getting Connected.
- Edexcel.

The majority of accreditation offered was not directly related to literacy and/or numeracy. Practitioners were using the pursuit of other qualifications (for example, portfolio building or research towards OCN units) to develop young adults' literacy and numeracy skills. 28 per cent of respondents said they were developing accreditation as an aspect of their provision or would like to do so:

> This is an area we are presently developing through a recent piece of consultancy, the development of a policy and guidance to staff. *Youth service*

Respondents commented on both the positive and negative effects of accreditation on young adults:

> Acquiring basic skills is a crucial part of work with NEET young people. Accreditation is a great motivator for traditional non-achievers. *Connexions*

> It is important to accredit work when it is appropriate for the young adult.
> *Voluntary sector organisation*

> It opens doors for further education. *Youth service*

> We wouldn't want this to become a compulsory part of the provision.
> *Voluntary sector organisation*

> It could be off-putting to a young person who has no academic achievement, and little or no self-esteem. *Voluntary sector organisation*

A number of respondents indicated that accreditation is an area they wish to develop in line with national and local strategies.

2.7.7 Screening and assessment
A third of respondents did not screen or assess learners. Of the remainder, almost half used initial assessment (without specifying whether this was Basic Skills Agency initial assessment, or an in-house method). 16 per cent of respondents used learning styles questionnaires. Initial assessment tools included:

- The Basic Skills Agency's (BSA's) Fast Track.
- BSA's Target Skills.

- The Connexions APIR Framework.
- The Rickter Scale.
- Learndirect's online initial assessment.

Other types of assessment included dyslexia assessment and 'informal' assessment (no further details were given).

2.7.8 Resources and materials
36 per cent of respondents used ICT-based resources or tools, for example, Cambridge Training and Development (CTAD) resources, BBC Skillswise, KUDOS software and learndirect modules. The internet was also widely used.

21 per cent of respondents were developing their own resources and adapting existing resources, in all formats.

In terms of pre-prepared or commercially available resources, a very small range was identified, including ABSSU materials and City & Guilds Numberskills. Practitioners also mentioned using newspapers, magazines, videos and media and broadcasting.

Respondents were asked to comment on the relevance of pre-existing materials for young adults. Only four respondents considered the relevance of the resources to be very good or excellent. The majority of respondents had either not heard of or were not using the **Skills for Life** teaching and learning resources.

Figure 9. Questionnaires – usefulness of pre-existing resources

Legend:
- **Excellent** 1
- **Very good** 3
- **Good** 10
- **Adequate** 9
- **Poor** 8
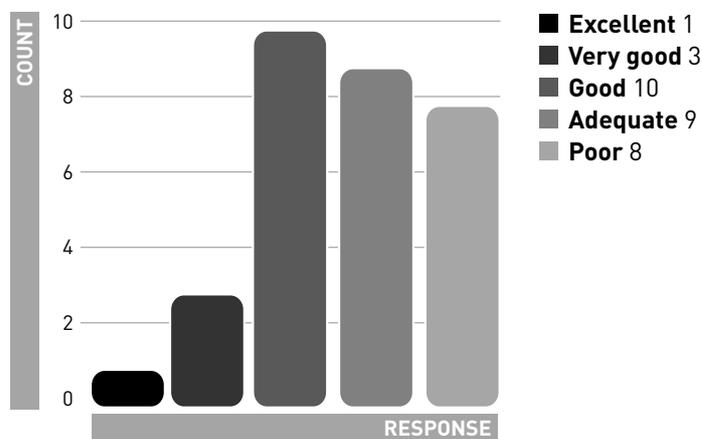
2.7.9 New provision
58 per cent of respondents were planning new provision of some kind including:

- Life skills group.
- Family learning courses using IT.
- 1:1 literacy support.
- Music mixing.
- Cookery.
- Linking basic skills with sing and sign communication session for young parents and their children.
- Taster courses with literacy and numeracy embedded.

2.7.10 Training or resources to develop provision

Almost half of respondents felt that training would improve their provision. This training included:

■ Basic skills tutor training.
■ Training in literacy and numeracy provision specifically for students with learning difficulties or disabilities.
■ Vocational training.
■ Training in what motivates young people.
■ Training in dealing with challenging behaviour.

Respondents said they wanted more information on the training available, including levels and routes to qualification.

35 per cent of respondents felt that more, or better, resources would improve their provision. Useful types of resources identified included:

■ Resources aimed at young adults who are disaffected/disengaged, that can be easily accredited with simple criteria.
■ Resources focusing on drama, drugs and music.

2.7.11 Successful strategies for working with young adults

The most commonly mentioned success factor was embedding, with 51 per cent of respondents noting it was important to embed literacy and numeracy within something that interests and motivates the young person.

34 per cent said that building a trusting relationship with workers and other colleagues was crucial to achieving success in building self-esteem and self-confidence in young adults.

> Make sure the tutors are key people they can relate to. *Youth service*
> Building a relationship of trust, respect and 'OK- ness'. *Connexions*

Other factors included:

■ Offering a young adult a safe place to learn, listening to their needs.
■ Using resources with a subject matter that engages young adults.
■ Praising positives and not picking up on negatives.
■ Running awareness training for staff.
■ Flexible funding.
■ Multi-agency working.

2.7.12 Difficulties and challenges

17 per cent of respondents identified staffing as a key challenge: for example, the lack of suitably qualified staff. For 9 per cent, funding was an issue. 14 per cent identified a lack of good resources as an issue.

Half of respondents identified issues particular to working with young adults, for example:

■ Apprehension about attending.
■ Young adults not enjoying academic work.

■ Negative experiences of school.
■ Erratic attendance patterns, young adults 'on the move'.

Other issues included:

■ Culture clash between college and youth work staff.
■ Selling basic skills as exciting and worthwhile.

2.7.13 Networks and forums
54 per cent of respondents said they were not involved in any kind of practitioners' network or forum for discussion. 46 per cent said they were involved and said that they participated in a combination of online support, newsletters and meetings. The types of forums and networks included:

■ LEA forum for adult education.
■ The email discussion group attached to this research project.
■ Tyne & Wear Practitioners' Network.

Respondents identified the type of forum or network they would find most useful:

Figure 10. Questionnaires – desired forums and networks

■ **Online** 34%
■ **Newsletters** 33%
■ **Meetings** 42%
■ **Yearly conference** 2%
■ **Telephone calls** 2%
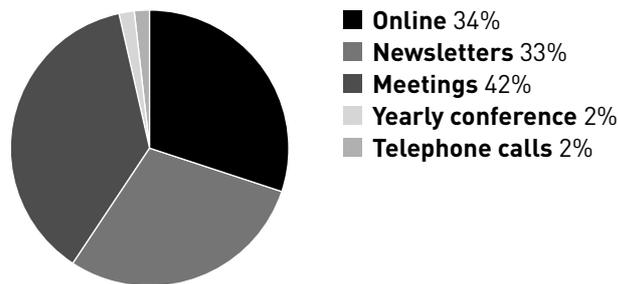
2.7.14 Emerging themes from the questionnaires
The purpose of the postal questionnaires was to elicit a wide range of information and opinion from providers about how literacy, language and numeracy provision was being delivered, what kind of teaching and learning resources were being used, assessment and accreditation, and staff training needs. We also wanted to explore young adults' barriers to learning and engagement and, crucially, the critical success factors in developing literacy, language and numeracy provision for young adults.

The postal questionnaire responses brought out similarities to the themes that had emerged from the case study visits.

Relating to the issue of funding, three common factors emerged from responses. Applying for funding was often a complicated, drawn-out process. Funding was hard to sustain and often granted on a short-term basis, which did not allow staff to build up a relationship with the young adults involved. The criteria set by funding bodies were considered to be unrealistic for this cohort: for example, specifying a set number of learners who should achieve a certain level of accreditation by the end of the funding period.

The main problem identified with funding was the inability to establish and maintain a

relationship of trust with young adults because of time limitations. Over half of the respondents were funded by more than one body, which also increased perceptions of the funding process as a complicated and overly bureaucratic process.

Although it was preferable to recruit staff who had both a youth work background and a literacy/numeracy teaching qualification, this was perceived as too difficult. Many respondents identified a need for staff training in literacy, language and numeracy delivery, in embedding literacy and numeracy into provision, and in delivering to learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Training was also identified as the main influence on developing provision in the future because of its potential to enable providers to expand the range and quantity of what was offered.

The difficulties in finding and *'using resources with subject matter that engages young people'* emerged strongly from the majority of respondents. Respondents clearly perceived a lack of resources to engage young adults. The majority identified that embedded literacy, language and numeracy resources would be the most useful, particularly with a vocational focus. Formal education providers said that young adult learners responded better to a structured session whilst youth service staff felt that informal learning was key to engaging young adults, in an environment that was safe and where they could progress at their own pace.

A clear message emerged that the term 'basic skills' is a *'turn off'* for young adult learners.

> Sessions are very rarely marketed as 'basic skills', or 'literacy/numeracy' sessions. We find that this approach simply does not work – learners do not turn up, retention rates are low. *Voluntary sector organisation*

Most respondents said that they embedded literacy, language and numeracy within another programme and used the subject as the programme title. However, it is not clear whether all respondents have a common understanding of embedding.

Respondents were generally divided in their opinion about how young adults responded to accreditation. Some said that a certificate was a motivator for young adults, as in many cases it was the first certificate they had received. Others said the pressure of taking exams or assessments, such as the National Tests, was too much for young adults with low self-confidence and low self-esteem. The strong negative associations with school and tests or exams were also noted. However, the point has also been made that achievement as a result of sitting an exam or test can successfully turn around self-perceptions of failure. Several respondents said that accreditation was only useful when appropriate to the individual.

2.8 Telephone interview analysis

From the 58 completed questionnaires, 36 people agreed to be interviewed by telephone as part of the follow-up. The sector breakdown of telephone interview respondents was as follows:

Figure 11. Telephone interview – sector breakdown of respondents

Sector	Numbers
Youth service	12
Voluntary sector	18
Further education colleges	4
Training providers	1
Connexions	1
Adult education service/ centre	0
Total	36

The purpose of the telephone interviews was to draw out more detail and opinion, and to enhance the typology generated through initial project visits. Of the 36 possible follow-up interviews, 26 took place and seven were arranged as face-to-face interviews during project visits. Each interview took approximately half an hour (see appendix five for telephone interview questions). The questions were designed to develop the themes from the questionnaire and to explore practitioners' experiences of and opinions about the main issues emerging from the first phase of the research.

2.8.1 Delivery
The delivery of literacy and numeracy provision for young adults varies widely, embracing a range of types of provider, cohorts and settings. Approaches included:

- Working with reluctant readers in a youth club setting to encourage reading and creative writing through the development of a book collection in the local library.
- Working with young offenders to develop their literacy skills in a mentoring context.
- Embedding literacy and numeracy into sessions delivered in foyers, such as cookery, gardening, budgeting, sexual health, job search and photography.
- Working in community venues to deliver short literacy courses embedded into areas such as healthy eating, film and TV, and beauty.
- Vocational taster sessions.
- A 12-week training programme for young parents, incorporating life skills, cooking, budgeting and art.
- A plastering course for young offenders.
- IT tuition to develop literacy and numeracy.
- 1:1 literacy and numeracy sessions organised around a topic of interest.
- Embedding literacy and numeracy into The Duke of Edinburgh's Awards.
- Working with young travellers in the community to deliver life skills sessions.
- Embedding literacy and numeracy into a furniture restoration project.
- Delivering an accredited literacy and numeracy programme using construction work as a vehicle.

2.8.2 Promotion and recruitment
Without exception, practitioners in the telephone interviews said that young adults respond better to provision when it is not marketed as basic skills. Basic skills were noted to be *'unattractive'* and *'a big turn off'*, to be associated with stigma and with school, and use of the phrase would result in *'zero uptake'*. Many young adults were *'suspicious'* of education, and the association of literacy and numeracy with negative school experiences was powerful. One college had not called their literacy and numeracy centre a basic skills centre because it was felt that this was *'too close to a divvy centre'*. One practitioner commented that she did not

like the term basic skills, as it insinuated that learners were unable to tackle anything else, without first learning these.

Some practitioners, whilst not actively marketing or promoting the literacy or numeracy element of their provision, do not hide it either. Using another element such as ICT as a hook, and then introducing literacy and numeracy, has proved very successful for many. However, there was also a significant number in the telephone interviews (one-quarter of interviewees) who reported introducing literacy and numeracy *'by stealth'*. It was felt that *'wrapping it up in something else'* (for example as part of The Duke of Edinburgh's Award programme) caused *'less stress'*, and that the *'devious way'* was more effective.

In terms of the most successful hooks for young adults, practical courses such as art, motor mechanics, sport, beauty, filmmaking and music were listed. Cookery was the most popular, with a majority of practitioners mentioning this as a successful element of their provision.

2.8.3 Embedding
The majority of practitioners were embedding literacy and numeracy into other provision. In all cases, the intention was still to create or develop literacy and numeracy provision, rather than other types of programmes and the element of embedding was deliberate. From the original questionnaire, it was clear that this is not always the intention for every practitioner.

Overwhelmingly, it was felt that literacy and numeracy provision works better when embedded into a context that is interesting, relevant and important to young adults. Embedding was also seen to be another way of making the provision *'not like school'*, *'unthreatening'* and part of the remit to *'engage the hardest-to-reach learners'*. However, the point was also made that embedding has to be done effectively and professionally. Another practitioner was keen to make distinctions between embedding, contextualising and 'bolting on'.

Delivering literacy and numeracy alongside ICT, or using ICT as a vehicle, were seen to be particularly successful. One practitioner commented that young adult learners were happy and able to tackle 'straightforward' literacy and numeracy if ICT was used as a medium – work they would otherwise be unhappy or unable to tackle on paper.

2.8.4 Formality, non-formality and informality in provision
The majority of practitioners felt that their provision was informal, in that it was unplanned, deliberately *'totally different from school',* flexible and more about atmosphere and relationships.

Other practitioners said that they had not previously categorised or thought of their provision in this way but, when asked, defined it as non-formal. One practitioner said their provision was currently undergoing a transition from informal to formal, due to their involvement with the national LSC, and the introduction of City & Guilds accreditation.

One college felt it was possible for provision to be informal and formal at the same time. Whilst the approach and atmosphere may be informal, the work behind the scenes was not, in terms of record-keeping and working towards targets. Another practitioner used the label of informal as a hook – it was felt that more young adults would respond to informal provision, but the style of delivery was more non-formal in that it included assessment and monitoring.

2.8.5 Engagement

Young men and young offenders are widely perceived to be the hardest groups with which to engage. Young men were seen as particularly isolated, especially those outside employment. Young mothers and asylum seekers were easier to engage with, because their motivation was higher and, for young mothers in particular, it was possible to attract them to provision via other agencies such as Sure Start. Care leavers were thought to have very little trust in professionals, and experienced many other conflicting issues in their lives. One practitioner thought it was hardest to reach the NEET group, both in terms of engagement and sustained involvement.

2.8.6 Training

Most practitioners thought training should begin with youth work (essential), adding literacy and numeracy teacher training where necessary (*an optional extra*). One practitioner said that youth work training was more important as it is a 'profession', but did acknowledge that literacy and numeracy were perceived as a valuable part of youth work training courses. Managers also found it hard to find trained basic skills practitioners who were willing to work with groups of (often challenging) young adults. The most important element of provision was reaching young adults, and youth work training and a *'natural empathy with young adults'* were seen as crucial prerequisites for this.

Dual-trained practitioners were seen as desirable, and literacy and numeracy teacher training as *'valuable'*, but the time and cost implications were a barrier to achieving this. Literacy and numeracy teacher training would also need to be relevant, addressing the particular issues involved in working with a cohort of hard-to-reach young adults. Youth workers themselves would need a good level of literacy and numeracy skills, which was an issue of concern for some managers.

One practitioner felt himself *'lucky'* to have received a large amount of training, but felt that there now needed to be an opportunity for those who receive training to embed it in practice.

2.8.7 Accreditation and testing

Accreditation once again provoked a mixed response. Certificates or 'accreditation on paper' were noted to be important in terms of *'proving skills'*, and were a way of demonstrating what young adult learners had achieved. One practitioner also mentioned, however, that young adult learners *'do not have much store in paper'*, and certificates did not always hold meaning for them.

It was felt that publicising accreditation as an outcome of provision might initially be a barrier. Accreditation, qualifications and certificates often function only to remind young adults of school, and of perceived failures. Entering provision in which accreditation is an element requires confidence on the part of the learner, especially if the accreditation is to be gained through sitting some form of test.

One relevant factor was the way in which accreditation was 'sold' to learners. One practitioner felt that accreditation is more important for young adults than we appreciate: as well-qualified professionals, practitioners can overlook or underplay this dimension for young adult learners. Accreditation and qualifications were important for young adults' self-esteem, especially if they had overcome a lack of confidence to sit a test or exam. The certificate, qualification or award offered had to be something recognised by young adults as 'currency' – for example, City & Guilds qualifications were seen as desirable, whereas NOCN provoked less keen responses.

Practitioners agreed that young adults were seldom keen on accreditation, qualifications, certificates or tests at the beginning of provision but, depending on how this element was introduced and 'sold', it could become a key element to the provision. As long as any tests were presented appropriately, and rewards followed swiftly, the response from young adult learners was often favourable.

2.8.8 Resources

A wide range of resources were being used in literacy and numeracy work with young adults. Many practitioners used collections of personal resources, amassed over time, which they adapted. In terms of paper-based materials, the preference was for contextualised materials, such as life skills or financial capability resources, rather than worksheets which *'assume how willing the learner is to learn'*, and are seen as more appropriate for older adult learners.

Resources were chosen for a variety of positive reasons, including:

- Being able to dip in and out of them, rather than having to work through from start to finish.
- Taking into account the full range of learning styles.
- Using methods of delivery other than worksheets.
- Attractive and eye-catching material.

When asked what new resources they would like to see developed, practitioners mentioned the following:

- Resources that can be used on laptops and computers.
- CD-Rom resources that enable practitioners to print off only what is required, and are consequently more cost effective.
- More non-fiction books with a high-interest, low-ability context.
- Literacy and numeracy effectively embedded into personal development and self-awareness materials.
- Development of resources around frameworks (for example music or fashion) so that material could be updated easily.
- A framework of resources one can pick up and put down again.
- Development of emotional literacy elements.
- Materials that photocopy effectively – many materials produced in colour do not photocopy well.
- Resources developed specifically for embedded literacy and numeracy provision.
- Resources that have a clear link to everyday life.
- Effective adaptations of materials from everyday life, demonstrating clear skills development and relevance.

In terms of developing new resources, one practitioner pointed out the importance of not *'re-inventing the wheel'*.

2.8.9 Success factors and challenges

Practitioners were asked to expand on their questionnaire responses about successful strategies and challenges.

Successful strategies
- Building relationships with young adults.

- Using initial assessment informally to assess need rather than just level.
- Essential to retain a 1:1 approach.
- Not introducing literacy and numeracy immediately – progressing to it.
- Effective engagement takes priority.
- Building confidence, with simple exercises to develop a sense of achievement.
- Developing an unpressurised, friendly and supportive environment.
- Following a structured action plan, negotiated with the learner.
- Maintaining flexibility.
- Working at the learner's pace and level.
- Not putting the young adults *'in boxes'*.
- Using ICT to reduce perceived stigma of learning and literacy/numeracy.
- Raising awareness of literacy and numeracy right across the organisation, from admin to training staff.
- Training staff as mentors, which has a very positive effect.
- Incorporating different learning styles across all sessions.
- Using games rather than worksheets.
- Focusing on practical elements of provision.
- Utilising an additional support model, so that numeracy and literacy can be related to all subject areas.
- Encouraging young adults to be adults rather than children.
- Using learning champions to act as a link to young adults.

Challenges
- Finding funding. Funding is sourced from too many places and is often short-term. Access to funding for under-16s out of school is limited.
- Working with young adults who have so much else going on in their lives that education is just not important.
- Working to targets imposed by other bodies, which are not appropriate for young adults.
- Poor cooperation from referral agencies.
- Helping learners to understand their need for literacy and numeracy provision.
- Keeping young adults motivated and engaged.
- Lack of consistency when young adults are referred on to other organisations.
- Finding basic skills tutors who are willing to work with more challenging young adults.
- Drug-related issues.
- Initial assessments that do not always look at the 'whole picture'.
- Dealing with the *'casualties'* from the formal education system.

2.8.10 The future
Practitioners were asked what would help them most in the future:

- Challenging the existing culture to fund more provision for young adults.
- Access to past education records and assessments.
- Developing support and training through a regional network or group.
- Developing the Connexions personal advisor role to focus more on hard-to-reach young adults.
- Dissemination of best practice alongside resources.
- Having more people 'on the ground' to signpost provision.
- More appropriate training for staff.
- Cooperation of more agencies/practitioners who work effectively with young adults.
- More basic skills teacher training.

■ Forum for sharing ideas and practice.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, 'more funding' was the most frequent response to this question.

2.8.11 Emerging themes from the telephone interviews

The telephone interviews followed up and developed the themes from the project visits and questionnaires. They show a picture of varied and flexible provision, often delivered with short-term and piecemeal funding. Practitioners commonly face the same issues and challenges and often follow the same strategies for successful provision, but may be unaware of this because there is no network or forum for sharing practice.

Once again, the subject of accreditation produces a mixed response. The overarching message is that the success or failure of accreditation depends on how it is 'sold' and integrated into the provision. Introduced sensitively, and with a clear message about its currency, it appears that accreditation and certification can have a positive impact on confidence and engagement.

There continues to be some disagreement over training needs: for example, whether or not practitioners should pursue specialist literacy, language and numeracy training in addition to, or instead of, specialist youth work qualifications. Many practitioners and managers feel that a youth work 'ethos' is core, but would also value literacy, language and numeracy training even though these are often viewed as optional extras, rather than a crucial prerequisite. Conversely, some literacy, language and numeracy-trained practitioners commented that – if youth work requires a particular ethos or empathy with young adults – this is more likely to be an innate quality than something achieved through specialist training. However, there is recognition from some quarters that skills in all areas can be enhanced and supported through training.

2.9 Dissemination and information exchange

Reporting and dissemination, as a discrete outcome of the research project, included the following aims:

■ Construction of designated webpages on the NYA and main NIACE sites.
■ Project reports disseminated via the networks of NIACE, The National Youth Agency and NRDC.
■ Reports, papers and presentations to conferences.

2.9.1 Webpage construction

A designated page has been constructed on the main NIACE site, describing the background, aims and schedule of the project, and giving contact details. Documents related to the project are uploaded when appropriate. It will continue to be developed and expanded throughout the life of the research project. The research project is also referenced on the YALP pages and on the basic skills team pages. The NYA's site also includes details of the research project.

Main NIACE site: www.niace.org.uk/projects/successfactors

Young Adults Learning Partnership pages: www.niace.org.uk/research/YALP/

Basic skills team pages: www.niace.org.uk/research/basicskills/default.htm

NYA site: www.nya.org.uk

2.9.2 Project reports

Regular reports have been submitted to NRDC, and progress reports are presented at each quarterly Advisory Group meeting (see appendix one for list of members). This interim report has also been produced in a shortened, more accessible format, for distribution across networks.

2.9.3 Reports, papers and presentations to conferences

Team members facilitated successful and well-received workshops at the 2003 *Skills for Life* national conferences (November 2003), and at the 2004 NRDC international conference (March 2004). A paper was presented at the Lancaster Literacy Research Centre (February 2004) as part of their seminar series. A paper was also presented at the Learning and Skills Development Agency (LSDA) East Midlands Research summer conference (June 2004), and at the Research and Practice in Adult Literacy (RaPAL) conference in July 2004. A presentation was also addressed to the Youth Literacies Discussion Group which is part of Communities Scotland (May 2004).

2.9.4 Additional activities

Foremost among the guiding values and principles for the research project was a commitment to involve young adults and practitioners in a collaborative process of research. Additionally, there emerged from the research a general feeling of isolation among many practitioners, especially those based outside formal educational establishments. As a result, a quarterly newsletter has been distributed to the contact database and uploaded on to the webpages. An email discussion group was also established in December 2003 and now has over 210 members. This discussion group is a 'closed' list, and may be joined either via the webpages or by contacting the moderator, Bethia McNeil, project officer, directly.

A shortened version of this report was distributed to practitioners and projects involved in the research project. Young adult learners were consulted during the visits to case study sites and are represented on the resources consultation panel.

Section 3. Work in phase two

The work in phase two of the research will build on that in Phase One, and will include the following.

3.1 Resources consultation panel

A panel of practitioners and young adult learners has been drawn together from those projects involved at the various stages of phase one. Its role is to examine and assess a range of teaching and learning materials for developing literacy, numeracy, language and ICT skills with young adults aged 16 to 25. Following an introductory meeting, members of the panel will meet at the beginning of the process, and then review and evaluate materials in their own environments. They will reconvene, to share their findings and evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of the materials, and their recommendations for adaptation or successful use. Their findings will also inform any subsequent development of new materials.

3.2 Development of new materials

Based on the consultation panel's report, new materials or guidance frameworks for activities may be developed and piloted in a variety of settings and contexts. Publicity has been distributed to practitioners to inform them of this stage of work and to generate expressions of interest. A number of projects have already registered to trial any new materials or frameworks developed.

3.3 Report on the training needs of practitioners

A report on the specific training needs of practitioners will be produced, drawing on data collected during phase one, supplemented by information gathered through further consultation on this specific strand of work. In response to perceived need, training and/or briefing events will be facilitated, covering literacy and numeracy skills awareness, reaching the hardest to reach, and effective teaching and learning strategies/activities to develop literacy and numeracy skills among the 16 to 25 age group.

3.4 Dissemination

Quarterly newsletters are being produced for the duration of the research, and the email discussion group continues, as does recruitment of new members for the group. As the research has developed, the website has grown in content, aiming to disseminate useful information to practitioners (for example, publication of a new resource) in an accessible and straightforward format. Official dissemination activities will take place at the end of the research, and will include a project report, a shorter, more accessible version of the project findings, a literature review, and dissemination at a variety of events and conferences, both regionally and locally.

Section 4. Framework of critical success factors

One of the major outcomes planned for the research was a framework of critical success factors. This initial framework was constructed using both qualitative and quantitative data generated from phase one. The framework is based on the common themes stressed by practitioners as being crucial to their work, and will be further developed for production as part of the final report. An outline follows.

Engagement

- Working to develop confidence.
- Flexibility of funding to experiment with different approaches.
- Multi-agency work in identifying need.
- Using learning champions to act as a link to young adults.
- Effective engagement must take priority.

Hooks

- Linking literacy and numeracy to the needs and interests of the young person.
- Family learning.
- Using ICT.
- Offering provision relevant to young adults.
- Offering local provision.
- Offering young adults a safe place to learn.

Pedagogy

- Involving young adults in the planning/delivery of the projects.
- Using initial assessment informally to identify need rather than just level.
- Maintaining flexibility.
- Using ICT to reduce perceived stigma relating to learning and literacy/numeracy.
- Incorporating a range of learning styles across all sessions.
- Using games rather than worksheets.
- Focusing on practical elements of the provision.
- Utilising an additional support model, so that literacy and numeracy work can be related to all subject areas.
- Following a structured action plan, negotiated with the learner.
- Utilising a 1:1 approach wherever possible.
- Allowing learners to develop at their own pace, at individual levels.
- De-stigmatising learning for disaffected young adults.
- Retaining an informal approach.
- Delivering within a youth work environment.
- Allowing young adults to develop their literacy and numeracy by planning, delivering and evaluating the projects and challenges in the programme.

■ Encouraging young adults to take ownership of their work.

■ Adopting individual approaches that do not highlight the level of the learner to other learners.

■ Using small group work.

■ Not picking up on negatives, but praising the positives.

■ Providing a structured learning programme which encourages attendance and punctuality and promotes learning.

■ Allowing the young adult to lead the learning.

Relationships

■ Using younger members of staff.

■ Breaking down pre-conceived ideas/barriers.

■ Maintaining a non-judgemental approach.

■ Having high expectations of the young adults.

■ Ensuring tutors are people young adults can relate to.

■ Listening to young adults' needs.

■ Concentrating on building relationships with young adults.

■ Building confidence with simple exercises to develop a sense of achievement.

■ Developing an unpressurised, friendly and supporting environment

■ Training staff as mentors.

■ Encouraging young adults to be adults rather than children.

Literacy, language and numeracy – 'selling' and delivering

■ Avoiding references to 'basic skills' – search for alternative terminology

■ Relating literacy and numeracy to everyday and real-life situations.

■ Using ICT to deliver literacy and numeracy.

■ Embedding literacy and numeracy within a subject of interest.

■ Raising awareness of the importance of basic skills issues right across the organisation.

■ Forming partnerships with literacy project workers.

Section 5. Emerging themes and recommendations

A number of defining themes emerged from phase one that were commonly experienced and play a critical role in the development and delivery of informal literacy, language and numeracy provision for hard-to-reach young adults. From these themes, a number of initial recommendations emerge for policy makers, practitioners and researchers.

5.1 Funding

Practitioners would benefit from greater clarity about the processes of applying for funding. A key element is provision of more information on possible sources of funding for work with this cohort, with realistic and appropriate targets needed to secure funding. In order to promote sustainability and effective long-term relationships with young adults, practitioners feel they would also benefit from more core funding for the literacy, language and numeracy elements of informal and non-formal provision.

5.2 Staffing and professional development

Training is perceived to be the area that would most help practitioners develop their provision in the future. The expansion of professional development routes for practitioners working with this cohort is clearly a key area for consideration. Stronger relationships between the wider youth services and specialist basic skills centres could be developed by forging links between local literacy, language and numeracy providers and new or existing youth service projects. Links with professional development centres could be helpful. These relationships could also be used to deliver cross-developmental training to practitioners from both sectors.

Educational institutions within the further education sector may consider developing opportunities for basic skills tutors to work in partnership with local voluntary sector organisations and youth services to enhance skills and break down any perceived barriers. Although many practitioners based in educational establishments attended *Skills for Life* training, it has not necessarily been accessible or seemed relevant to those from other sectors, especially those working with young adults. Similarly, for practitioners working in this sector, roles (for example, sign poster, advocate, learner support) are not always clear, which can further complicate access to and the pursuit of professional development. This is an area for further research in order to gauge and explore the training needs and opportunities for practitioners.

5.3 Terminology and sharing information

From the research to date, a clear desire has emerged from practitioners for more information, both in terms of developments in the field and sharing challenges and good practice. A majority of practitioners feel they would benefit from a network, with almost equal numbers requesting meetings, online discussion groups, and newsletters. The further extension of educational networks – to include all sectors working with young adults – would

promote a shared understanding of terminology and increase the confidence of practitioners working outside colleges to define their approach to practice. In addition to this, 'guide sheets' or 'glossaries' in an easily accessible format could be very beneficial to practitioners working outside traditional education contexts.

Practitioners are seeking ways to 'sell' literacy, language and numeracy learning to young adults and to find language that engages with young adults, rather than repels them. Additionally, they seek ways to define their own approach to provision. This research has shown that existing terms and definitions (such as 'informal', 'non-formal' and 'formal') do not adequately represent the scope and variety of work being undertaken, and can distract attention from the success of the provision. Young adults are not resistant to learning itself, yet will strongly resist provision that they perceive as being related to 'formal', school-like learning situations. Providers need to project provision as relevant, exciting, flexible and non-pressurised.

5.4 Learning infrastructure

Use of the *Skills for Life* learning infrastructure is very patchy, possibly because of a lack of awareness and training in this area. Some practitioners raised screening, and initial and diagnostic assessment, as supporting their approach to literacy, language and numeracy provision with young adults, but these were not revealed as being of high importance. We would recommend further research into the most effective infrastructure to support literacy, language and numeracy with young adults.

5.5 Resources

An overwhelming majority of practitioners perceive there to be a lack of appropriate resources for this cohort. This perception may be because they are not aware of what is available, although practitioners who have the capacity to search for resources comment that they are unable to locate effective and appropriate materials. This research project is currently undertaking further work to determine characteristics for effectiveness and appropriateness, and will report on this strand of the project as part of the dissemination activities.

Practitioners have emphasised the usefulness of frameworks compared with standardised paper-based schemes of work. This allows for the flexibility and differentiation crucial to work with this cohort, and ensures that the materials can be updated when necessary to match local trends and cultures. Resources mapped to the adult literacy and numeracy core curriculum are easier to adapt for use with individual learners and allow for the critical element of flexibility in provision. Such a framework would allow practitioners to develop provision around the 'hooks' and interests identified as being relevant to their particular cohort.

5.6 Accreditation, qualifications, certification

Young adults' perception of accreditation is important. It needs to be viewed as a 'qualification' with currency for employers which may suggest a nationally recognised

qualification is needed. However, whilst young adults seek accreditation/qualification that is both worthwhile and has currency, this is often too demanding in practice and can dominate the initial aims of learning.

For practitioners, accreditation needs to acknowledge the literacy and numeracy element contained within other areas, such as preparation for employment. Whatever provision is offered, it needs to include elements of accreditation as appropriate to the interests and aspirations of young adults in general, but also to accommodate the goals and ambitions of individuals. The option of accreditation should be available if young adults wish to take it.

Appendix 1. Advisory group members

Fiona Cameron, learning team manager, Read On – Write Away!

Lisa Capper, East Midlands regional coordinator, ABSSU

Diane Dalby, **_Skills for Life_** manager, Chesterfield College

Jan Eldred, senior development officer, NIACE

Wendy Flint, development officer, NYA

Sue Houlton, council youth services manager, Leicestershire Youth and Community Services

Chris Hutchings, participation and volunteering team manager, DfES

Carol Jackson, development officer, YALP, NIACE/NYA

Ruth Harrison, The Reading Agency

Maureen McDaid, DfES

Bethia McNeil, project officer, YALP

Linda Smith, research assistant, YALP

Anita Wilson, research fellow, Lancaster University

Appendix 2. Framework for project visits

Project visit grid

Name of project and contact

Date

**History and funding –
voluntary or local
authority?:**

Partnerships:

Target groups:

**Number of staff and
young adults involved:**

Referrals – in and out:

Basic skills delivery:

Resources:

**Assessment materials
and qualifications:**

Measurement of outcomes:

Staff training:

Issues – retention, attendance, accommodation:

Barriers:

What works?
Strategies for working
with the target group:

In an ideal world, what would
you like to see?:

Further comments:

Appendix 3. Questionnaire

Please note: this questionnaire is concerned with the experience of young adults aged 16–25. All questions relate to this age group.

Section 1

a) Does your organisational/project strategy include targeting young adults' basic skills needs?

Yes   No   **(Please circle appropriate answer)**

b) Does your organisation/project run programmes that address young adults' basic skills needs?

Yes   No   **(Please circle appropriate answer)**

If yes, which of the following skills does it address? **(Please circle appropriate answers)**

Literacy   Numeracy   ESOL   ICT

c) What age group is the provision aimed at/open to, and what has been the average age of young adults involved in the provision?

_____

d) Does your organisation/project work in partnership with any other organisations or local authority services in developing/offering provision for basic skills needs?

Please give details

_____

e) Please give further details of existing basic skills provision for young adult learners within your organisation/project

_____

Section 2

a) Thinking about the way your organisation/project **targets/markets** provision, is it directly targeted as 'basic skills', or are basic skills incorporated as an element of other programmes that you run (eg. mentoring, financial awareness or motor mechanics)?

Please give details:

_____

b) Thinking about the way basic skills provision is **delivered** within your organisation/project, is it delivered as a stand alone session (eg. a discrete maths or English session) or embedded into another session (eg. sexual health, budgeting or cookery)?

Please give details:

_____

c) How important do you consider a basic skills element to be, compared to other elements of provision for young adults, such as personal and social development, independent living skills, health awareness, or employability skills? (Please tick box)

The most important element   ☐
As important as everything else   ☐
Other elements are more important   ☐
It's the least important element   ☐

Please add any further comments

_____

d) Does your project/organisation currently work with any of the following:

☐ Young offenders   ☐ Young parents
☐ Homeless young adults   ☐ Young adults leaving care
☐ Young asylum seekers/refugees   ☐ Young women only (not parents)
☐ Young men only (not parents)   ☐ LGBT young adults
☐ Young adults with mental health difficulties
☐ Other (please add)

_____

e) Are specific groups **targeted** by your organisation/project?

Please give details

_____

f) How are your programmes/provision publicised?

_____

g) Is the basic skills element of your provision explicit in any marketing/publicity materials you may use? **(Please circle appropriate answer)**

Yes   No   Do not use marketing materials

h) How does the recruitment process for your project/programmes work for young adults involved?

_____

Section 3

a) How is your basic skills provision funded and by whom?

_____

b) Please provide details of any problems and/or successes related to funding

_____

Section 4

a) Are staff provided with specific training for the basic skills work they undertake?

Yes   No   **(Please circle appropriate answer)**

Please give details of this training, and who provides and funds it

_____

b) What percentage/number of staff are qualified basic skills tutors, if any?

_____

c) What percentage/number of staff are qualified youth workers, if any?

_____

d) Does your organisation/project use mentors or volunteers in work with young adults with basic skills needs?)

Yes   No   **(Please circle appropriate answer)**

If yes, what training does your organisation/project offer potential mentors?

_____

Section 5

a) Is the basic skills work that your organisation/project undertakes accredited?

Please give details

_____

b) Is your organisation/project using or planning to use the **_Skills for Life_** National Tests?

Yes   No   **(Please circle appropriate answer)**

c) Please add any further comments you have around accrediting basic skills work with young adults

_____

Section 6

a) Does your organisation/project screen/assess learners?

Yes   No   **(Please circle appropriate answer)**

If so, what tools are used (eg. Initial Assessment, Fast Track, Learning Styles Questionnaire) and which tools have proved the most useful?

_____

b) Please provide details of any specific resources or materials that your organisation uses in work with young adults with basic skills needs, and any materials your organisation has adapted for use with this target group. Please detail anything you have found particularly useful.

_____

c) How relevant has your organisation found pre-existing basic skills resources or materials to be for young adults?

excellent   very good   good   adequate   poor   useless   **(Please circle appropriate answer)**

d) Are you aware of the new ***Skills for Life*** teaching and learning materials produced as a result of the national consultations in 2002/3?

Yes   No   **(Please circle appropriate answer)**

If yes, are you using them? Have they helped your work?

_____

Section 7

a) Are you planning any new provision for young adults to meet their basic skills needs?

Yes   No   **(Please circle appropriate answer)**

If yes, please give details

_____

b) Please provide details of anything that would help you to develop or improve your provision, for example, specific training or resources:

_____

Section 8

a) What do you feel have been the most successful strategies in your work with young people and basic skills?

_____

b) What difficulties and challenges have you encountered with this work?

_____

Section 9

a) Are you involved in any kind of practitioners' network or forum for discussion?

Yes   No   **(Please circle appropriate answer)**

b) Would you find a network (whether local or national) related to this area of work (specifically young adults and basic skills) useful, and how would you most like it to function (eg. online, newsletters, monthly meetings etc)?

_____

Many thanks for your time. We would like to follow up some of the questionnaires with a telephone interview lasting approximately 30 minutes. If you are happy for us to contact you for this purpose, please tick the box and ensure we have the correct contact details for you. ☐

We would very much appreciate having your contact details for our database in order that you can be included in mailings and dissemination of findings. If you have received a project newsletter from us recently, and are therefore on the project database, please just complete your name. Information included in your questionnaire responses may be published, but will be done so anonymously. Your details will not be passed on to a third party. If you have any questions regarding the use of the information, please do not hesitate to contact Bethia McNeil, Project Officer, Young Adults Learning Partnership, on 0116 285 3726 or bethiam@nya.org.uk

Name
_____

Job title
_____

Organisation
_____

Address
_____

_____

_____

Telephone
_____

Email
_____

Alternatively, you may wish to include a compliments slip or business card with your reply.

Appendix 4. Telephone interview questions

1. Can you tell me a bit more about how literacy and numeracy are delivered with young adults in your organisation/project?

2. In terms of selling, marketing and promoting these programmes… is it your experience that young adults respond better when provision is not marketed as 'basic skills'?

3. What programmes do young adults respond best to, either in attracting them to provision in the first place, or as sessions within a programme such as E2E: for example, motor mechanics, cooking, budgeting, etc?

4. Do you feel that embedding literacy and numeracy within other sessions works better than delivering discrete maths and English sessions? Does your organisation use both approaches?

5. Do you consider your work with young adults to be 'informal' or 'non-formal', or do you not categorise your work in this way?

6. Do you have any feelings about what type of approach works best with young adults?

7. What groups of young adults are you working with at present? What cohorts have you found easiest and hardest to engage with?

8. What sort of training would you like for yourself/your staff? Do you feel that training in youth work or training in basic skills is more important?

9. How important is accreditation for you/your learners in your programme? What does it mean to young adults?

10. How do young adults respond to accreditation/qualifications/testing in your experience? Are 'tests' perceived differently from portfolio building or evidence gathering?

11. In terms of resources, how did you choose/select the ones you are using at present?

12. What comments do you have on the resources you are using currently, and any other examples you have seen?

13. What would you like to see in the development of new resources for work with young adults in this area?

14. Possible follow up questions on success factors

15. Possible follow up questions on difficulties and challenges

16. What would help you most as a practitioner in this area?
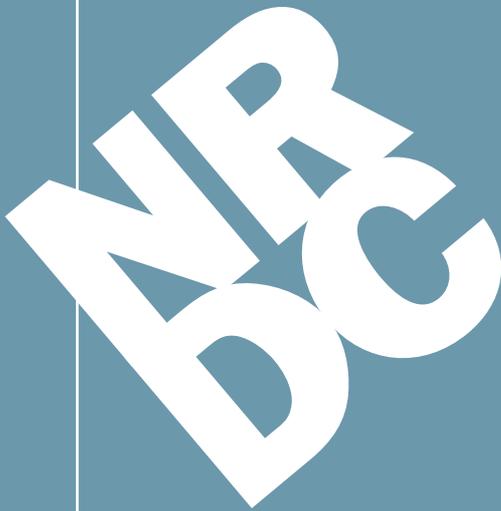
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