



National Research and Development Centre
for adult literacy and numeracy

NRDC Annual Report 2003/04:

**Generating knowledge and transforming it into
practice**



NRDC Annual Report April 2003 - March 2004

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Summary

Background

The NRDC was established in 2002 as part of the **Skills for Life** strategy, as a consortium of 11 partner organisations, led by the Institute of Education, University of London. The Basic Skills Agency is a key partner. The NRDC is dedicated to improving literacy, numeracy and language and related skills and knowledge; to refresh and help take forward the government's **Skills for Life** strategy. NRDC brings together research, development and action for positive change to improve the quality of learning and the achievements and progression of learners to further learning and employment.

What were our key achievements in 2003/04?

Research

In June 2003, we published the *NRDC strategy 2003-2007: generating knowledge and transforming it into practice*. Key achievements in delivering the strategy include:

- Producing comprehensive international reviews of the state of knowledge in **Skills for Life** subject areas
- Running a world-class research programme: by March 2004, NRDC had 35 linked projects in progress, from long-term investigations of effective practice to short, focused development and evaluation projects
- Establishing a major ESF-supported research project *Skills for Work and Life*: rigorous research on 'what works', 'before and after' assessment of learners, detailed observation of teaching and learning, and correlations of learners' progress and achievements with different teaching and learning strategies.

Development

A wide range of development activities, including:

- Two handbooks for practitioners, published jointly with national organisations (BSA and FENTO).
- Supporting other DfES and cross-government policy teams by conducting development and evaluation work on Foundation Degrees, Apprenticeships, Skills for Life and Health; DfES adult ICT team; paper for OFSTED/ALI.
- NRDC' role as a strategic partner with CfBT delivering *Skills for Life Quality Initiative* on behalf of LSC.
- Reports and themed workshops on initial teacher education and CPD, together with development work with national partners (QCA, FENTO, BSA and others).
- Development of NRDC networks of practitioners in teacher education, numeracy and ESOL; creating links with other practitioner networks, e.g RAPAL, NATECLA.

- Supporting the DfES by: taking forward the *Needs and Impact Survey* to provide advice on international surveys; responding to new research needs, e.g. the impact of **Skills for Life** on learners; promoting embedded learning.

Communication, promotion and dissemination

- In 2003/04 NRDC has developed its website and publications in an instantly recognisable house-style and achieved a high profile at events across the country and internationally:
- Raising the profile of numeracy: ministerial conference at the Institute of Education, University of London in December 2003; publications; workshops for teachers; engagement of practitioners in research and development; Adults Learning Maths network.
- Published 14 research reports to date.
- Three **Skills for Life** conferences for DfES in November 2003, reaching over 1,200 practitioners, regional and local planners and funders.
- Three conferences to launch six contextualised *Raising Standards Guides* in March 2004.
- Second international conference (March 2004); speakers from four continents; international seminar - lessons learned from developing countries (December 2003).
- Themed workshops, including family learning; ESOL; assessment.

Practitioner engagement

NRDC places practitioners at the heart of project design, involving them at all stages of research and development. Key achievements in 2003/04 include:

- Six research and development projects, led by practitioner groups across the country, to find out '*New Ways of Engaging New Groups of Learners*'.
- 19,300 publications distributed; in addition, NRDC reached over 4,000 practitioners through speaking and workshop engagements nationally and regionally.
- Training and deploying over 80 practitioners engaged actively as fieldworkers, observers and practitioner consultants in research.
- Conference for 100 practitioner-researchers and stakeholder groups: January 2004.

Forthcoming publications and activities include:

- *Developmental dyslexia in adults: a research review*
- Research reports to be published end of June 2004: ICT in literacy, numeracy and ESOL; reading and writing; followed by conferences and workshops

- Trialing of new 'e' and paper-based publishing formats to ensure our publications speak to all stakeholders. These include:
 - short accessible booklets: produced with practitioners on the implications for action from research in numeracy, literacy, teacher education, ICT and ESOL .
 - research and practice magazine/journal: new publication for and by practitioners, fostering engagement with research, development and action for improvement. First issue October 2004.
- Communication and action of numeracy and maths research (following the completion of the *Making Numeracy Teaching Meaningful* and *Teaching Common Measures* projects in August 2004).
- Action to enhance effective provision of literacy, numeracy and maths in the workplace and embedded in vocational and other provision to enable learners to progress to Level 2 skills and qualifications.

What is NRDC research saying? Messages and issues arising from work in progress.

The workplace

- The need for adult numeracy/mathematical skills is extending throughout the workforce. Employees increasingly need to have broader general problem-solving skills, inter-relating IT with mathematics.
- Robust evidence from large-scale UK surveys shows that poor literacy and numeracy skills have adverse effects on the earning and employment prospects of individuals.

Motivation to learn

- Young adults are not resistant to learning as such, but to the manner of delivery, which is critical to successful recruitment and engagement. Important to identify and develop a range of options, including short, sharp 'bursts' of activity and embedding basic skills.
- Some findings defy expectation: many adults learn numeracy not to cope better with their daily lives, but in order to get the better of a subject that once defeated them.
- There remain significant difficulties in the way of recruiting and retaining adult learners. A high proportion of learners are young and full time.

Basic skills and social inclusion

- Cohort studies show that over the last 20 years, adults with literacy, numeracy and language problems have faced increasing difficulties gaining and maintaining work.
- Learning environments can improve confidence and participation by providing structure and social support. Example: learning for ESOL learners often takes the form of structured group interactions.

Teaching and learning

- Context matters. Learners often engage most successfully with real and situated literacy, numeracy and language practices, seen as directly relevant to their wider goals and lives.
- Embedding basic skills in other types of learning or in the workplace is often the best way of attracting learners.
- There is often no clear distinction between formal and informal learning as a mode of delivery; getting the right balance is what matters most.
- Young offenders: traditional classroom arrangements impede learning; the largest literacy and numeracy learning gains occur in vocational contexts.
- Oracy: much knowledge and understanding is gained through speaking and listening, but it is often a neglected feature of teaching practice.
- Teaching and learning across **Skills for Life** have much to learn from practices for dyslexic people.

Teacher education and professional development

- Involving teachers in research projects make a large contribution to their professional development, to the culture of their work places and to regional networks.
- There is a need to develop better understanding of cultural issues in working with the hardest-to-reach and priority **Skills for Life** groups.
- There is support among teacher trainers and trainees for raising subject knowledge to improve practice; getting the right balance between subject and pedagogic knowledge is a challenge for teacher trainers.
- 53 per cent of teachers have recognised teaching qualifications; a challenge remains to upskill the workforce.

NRDC Annual Report 2003/04: a year of purposeful and decisive transition

1. Introduction

(a) Scope of this report

This is the second Annual Report of the National Research and Development Centre for Adult Literacy and Numeracy (NRDC or the Centre) for the year April 2003 - March 2004. It uses broadly the same framework as that previously published for 2002/03 and that of the NRDC Strategy, to enable continuity and ease of reference to earlier and later reports.

The report sets out NRDC decisions, activities and achievements during the year 2003/04. It summarises the vision and purpose set out in NRDC's Strategy, published in July 2003; briefly reviews the events of the year and outlines the progress of each of the research and development projects and other principal investments the Centre has been engaged in over the period.

The first Annual Report was in essence that of a new organisation getting itself established. It described the interim arrangements, staff recruitment and strategic thinking which took place in 2002/03. This second report is of a purposeful and decisive transition to full operation in the year April 2003 to March 2004.

(b) The background to the creation of NRDC

Literacy, numeracy and language needs in the adult population have been recognised for decades. A major national campaign was mounted in the 1970s to address the issues.

In 1996, the OECD reported on its major study 'The International Adult Literacy Survey'. In response, the UK government established a national committee to investigate the issues. The Committee, chaired by Lord Moser, reported in 1999.

The Moser report ***A Fresh Start*** highlighted the need for urgent action in the light of the scale of the challenge. The committee estimated that up to seven million adults in England had significant problems with literacy and 40 per cent of the population had very low numeracy skills. They recommended research and development to address these needs.

The government responded by creating the Adult Basic Skills Strategy Unit at the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) and developed its ***Skills for Life*** strategy for England (separate arrangements apply in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland).

Skills for Life is defined by the Strategy Unit as "an all embracing literacy, language and numeracy strategy, covering all post-16 learners on pre-entry up to Level 2, discrete and embedded provision, classroom, community and voluntary and work based learning

with assessment through Key Skills, GCSE Maths and English and Adult Literacy and Numeracy Skills certification. It also engages with the emerging 14 -19 strategy, the initiative for encouraging young people to commit to continued learning, whether in school, college or the workplace.”

(c) Setting up NRDC

In the light of the Moser report, DfES concluded that it was appropriate to create a dedicated centre as part of **Skills for Life** to improve the knowledge base in the field of adult literacy, numeracy and ESOL. NRDC was established in 2002 after a thorough tendering process. It was charged with placing emphasis on **development** as well as **research** and with working to ensure practitioners are involved in all its work, in support of maximising its **impact** on practice and policy development.

The Centre is a consortium of partners led by the Institute of Education, University of London. It brings together the best UK researchers in the field, together with talented and experienced development professionals and a wide range of practitioner opinion. The consortium partners and organisation are set out in section 3 below.

NRDC collaborates closely with the Adult Basic Skills Strategy Unit (the Strategy Unit) at DfES, to whom it reports, the analytical services division and a range of national organisations

The Centre also works internationally, and has developed strong links with researchers in other countries, especially the USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and France.

The initial contract for the National Research and Development Centre for Adult Literacy and Numeracy (NRDC) was awarded in January 2002 and runs to March 2005. The Adult Basic Skills Strategy Unit at the DfES have confirmed that a further contract to March 2007 will be awarded in good time before the expiry of the current contract. Most current NRDC projects are due to be completed by March 2005. The exceptions are those funded by the ESF (see Section 4(c) below and individual projects throughout the Programmes) which run to June 2006 and some smaller studies where it was judged appropriate to commit to work beyond the current contract.

2. About NRDC: vision, aims and values

NRDC's vision is:

“To become an internationally recognised centre of excellence for research, development and effective practice in adult literacy, numeracy and ESOL”

About NRDC

NRDC is the national centre dedicated to research and development on adult literacy, numeracy and ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages). It is an expert and experienced consortium, led by the Institute of Education, University of London. It aims to provide an independent voice through rigorous and relevant research. The Centre plans to improve practice and inform policy through the generation of new and useful knowledge, by creating a strong interdisciplinary research culture in the field and by developing professional practice.

The Centre seeks synergy across all its programmes and work to ensure that outcomes are communicated effectively. Whenever appropriate it will bring together evidence from separate but related studies to enhance their usefulness in addressing key issues relating to ***Skills for Life***.

NRDC's unique remit is to design and conduct research and development, linking the two to create a strong evidence base. It promotes the use of, and engagement in, research by practitioners and policy makers. Its programmes of work use a staged, cyclical approach, so that they have a strong and positive impact, embedding findings and messages in practice and informing the future development of policy.

The Centre works closely with stakeholders and partners at local, national and international levels. It prioritises the engagement of practitioners in research and development and always has as its focus the needs and success of learners.

The NRDC consortium partners are:

- Institute of Education, University of London
- Literacy Research Centre, Lancaster University
- School of Continuing Education, The University of Nottingham
- School of Education, The University of Sheffield
- East London Pathfinder Consortium
- Liverpool Lifelong Learning Partnership
- Basic Skills Agency (BSA)
- Learning and Skills Development Agency (LSDA)
- LLU+, London South Bank University
- National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE)
- King's College, University of London

A wider group of associates contribute to the Centre's work, including: The University of Leeds; Read on, Write Away!; Cambridge Training and Development (CTAD); Centre for British Teachers (CfBT); Portland College.

NRDC's strategic aims are to:

- become, within five years, an internationally recognised centre of excellence for research and the development of effective practice in adult literacy, numeracy and ESOL.
- create a coherent and reliable research resource which develops literacy, numeracy and ESOL policy, improves practice and identifies further research needs.
- establish reliable and useful research evidence drawn from quantitative, qualitative and experimental methods and develop a strong international dimension to our work, sharing ideas.
- engage with, refresh and help take forward the **Skills for Life** strategy.
- create new theory, scholarship and innovative thinking in the field, engaging interdisciplinary and multi-disciplinary approaches.
- contribute to establishing a strong professional identity for teachers and other practitioners, through new training and development frameworks.
- devise new ways of transforming research and development, so that they are effectively and routinely used to develop policy and practice, and support researchers in communicating with practitioners about research findings.
- build research capacity, reflective practice and career development, through the systematic engagement of teachers and other practitioners in the Centre.
- systematically engage the users of research – particularly: employers and unions, teachers and the wider **Skills for Life** workforce, and agents of change in communities and the wider social context.
- draw on research and good practice from across the world, developing and sharing ideas and outcomes.

The values and principles underpinning NRDC's activity are set out in full in "**Strategy 2003-2007: generating knowledge and transforming it into practice**"

3. Review of 2003/2004: Highlights of NRDC's Year

(a) NRDC's Strategy 2003 - 2007

Work on re-focusing the Centre's strategy began in February 2003, following the appointment of the Director, Dr. Ursula Howard and the establishment of its Management Group. Between March and June 2003 an exhaustive process of consultation within and outside the Consortium took place, with a view to creating a strategy which would stand for a period of four years, the longest planning horizon thought prudent in the light of the rapidly changing environment of the adult literacy and numeracy sector.

The Strategy Unit at DfES was closely involved in commenting on the draft Strategy, but its final content was entirely the work of the NRDC Management Group and its advisers.

"Strategy 2003-2007: generating knowledge and transforming it into practice" was completed in June 2003 and formally published at a reception in London on 8 July hosted by the Minister for Skills and Vocational Education, Ivan Lewis MP.

The Minister welcomed the Strategy, saying:

"The work of the National Research and Development Centre for Adult Literacy and Numeracy is central to the Government's Skills for Life strategy, which aims to improve the literacy, language and numeracy skills of adults in England. Millions of adults have skills in these areas below the levels they need for effective everyday living and working. By developing the evidence for how to engage adults in learning these skills and providing guidance on effective strategies for teaching and learning literacy and numeracy NRDC will play a key role in equipping individual learners to improve their life chances and ensuring teaching and training provision meets their needs."

(b) Launching the Website

The NRDC's website at <http://www.nrdc.org.uk> was created in parallel to the development of the strategy. Previously an interim website had been hosted by the Institute of Education, University of Leeds. Consultants Winona E-Solutions devised the architecture and visual appearance of the website, consistent with NRDC's design style and the Centre's Management Group determined the content.

The site went live in May 2003 and has since then been continually added to and improved. All NRDC publications (including this report) are available as free downloads from the site which also includes information about events relevant to NRDC stakeholders and details of NRDC research and development projects.

A significant expansion of the site was in planning at the end of the year with online discussion forum pages. A searchable database of NRDC and other research and teaching materials in the field of adult basic skills will also be built up.

Individual visitors to the website started at about 100 per week and by March 2004 had reached 300 per week.

(c) The ESF project: “Skills for Work and Life”

In early 2003 NRDC was invited to bid for additional funding through the European Social Fund. After an extensive process of drafting, supported throughout by the DfES Europe advisers and staff of the Strategy Unit, this bid was successful.

In the summer of 2003 NRDC received approval for an exciting new project to extend its research, entitled “**Skills for Work and Life**”. This project focuses especially on improving the employability of adult learners. It is for a total of £3 million over three years, July 2003 to June 2006. Under the ESF rules this additional £3 million is matched (45:55) by £3.66 million of the NRDC’s core DfES funding over that period.

This project extended significantly NRDC’s capacity to conduct important research in the in a range of areas, most especially a series of linked investigations into effective practice in teaching and learning. Four major linked studies of “Effective Practice in Teaching and Learning” in reading, writing, numeracy and ESOL are complemented by a strand which will develop and evaluate effective ICT-based teaching strategies for adult literacy, numeracy and ESOL learners.

The ESF funding is also enabling the Centre to add an inter-generational component to the long term cohort studies of adult learners. This will provide valuable information on how family and other circumstances influence skills acquisition and employability.

It further includes the substantial programme of **practitioner-led projects** which will increase research capacity, undertake valuable small, focused research projects and develop the strategy for engaging practitioners in all its activities.

In the field of teacher development the ESF funding is supporting the extension of the Network of Networks of engaged practitioners across the nine English regions, and funding an evaluation of implementation strategies, stages and models in the new Initial Teacher Education (ITE) Programmes for teachers of literacy, numeracy and ESOL.

The final part of the ESF funding supports a continuation of the project to investigate the effectiveness of embedded teaching and learning in support of increased employability of adult learners, in parallel with the Adult Basic Skills Strategy Unit sponsored development of contextualised learning materials.

All ESF funded projects are identified in the details of individual projects which form the bulk of this Annual Report by the words “ESF” at the end of the project number.

(d) The Skills for Life Conferences, November 2003

NRDC was again asked by the Strategy Unit to undertake the overall management of the annual **Skills for Life** Conferences. There were this time three conferences, in London, York and Birmingham. Over 1,200 practitioners, policy makers, planners, funders and researchers took part in the conferences in November 2003. Delegates at all three events were extremely enthusiastic. The sheer numbers of participants

demonstrated the high levels of interest in the fields of adult literacy, numeracy and language and the importance of the aims of the **Skills for Life** strategy.

A particular highlight of all the conferences was the contribution from learners themselves, which placed the issues surrounding adult learning in a real context. At all three conferences, panel interview sessions with learners provided valuable insights into their motivations for returning to learning as adults. Participants heard powerful messages from learners about the importance of motivators: helping their children; gaining confidence; “sorting your life out”; getting jobs or better jobs; and many other factors which convinced them to return to structured learning to improve their lives, skills and knowledge and often move on to further learning.

Each conference included keynote speeches from policy makers and others, a progress report on emerging NRDC research findings, and a huge range of workshops on detailed areas of adult literacy, numeracy and ESOL policy, research and development.

(e) The NRDC Advisory Group

In 2003/04 NRDC established an external Advisory Group to guide its long term strategic thinking, priorities and communication work. The Terms of Reference of the Group are set out at Annex 3.

The Advisory Group consists of experienced people from policy, teaching and training practice, employment and research. It is chaired by Maggie Semple, Chief Executive of the Experience Corps. Other members include Lord Moser, Lord Layard and Susan Pember, Director of the Strategy Unit. The Group met twice in 2003/04.

The role of the Advisory Group is to support and guide NRDC, to enable it to achieve the goals set out in its strategy and to help it to maximise the impact of its research and development activity on the successful delivery of **Skills for Life**. The experience, commitment, expertise and standing of the members of this group will strengthen NRDC as an organisation and further ensure its work is rigorous and relevant.

(f) A New NRDC fund to support small-scale practitioner-led research

Through the ESF “**Skills for Work and Life**” funding, NRDC has been able to establish a nationally co-ordinated series of small-scale practitioner-led research projects over the next three years. The aims of the programme are to:

- build research capacity in the field.
- embed the activities of the NRDC in practice.
- undertake important small-scale research projects which contribute to NRDC’s overall programmes.
- strengthen research networks linking practitioners, researchers and policy agencies.

The programme is aimed at groups of between three and six people who are directly involved in the delivery and development of adult literacy, numeracy and ESOL in any

institutional setting anywhere across England. Collaborations between institutions are welcome, including links with Higher Education Institutions.

Six small-scale projects will be funded in each of three bidding rounds, with up to £10,000 available for each nine month project. Each year will address a different priority topic. In 2004 the projects address the social exclusion and how we stimulate demand for learning under the heading of: “**New ways of reaching new groups of learners**”. The NRDC Management Group makes the funding decisions. Communication activities, including an end of project event, will enable groups to present and compare findings with one another and to contribute to networking between them.

The first round was completed in February 2004 and the six successful projects are set out at Annex 2.

(g) The Numeracy conference “Numeracy and maths: the challenges for lifelong learning”

This international conference with over 130 participants was held at the Institute of Education, University of London on 4 December 2003. Its aim was to recognise that numeracy is the most pressing issue in helping adults improve their basic skills and help establish adult numeracy as a top priority within the **Skills for Life** strategy. It also sought to prompt constructive discussion about developing adults’ numeracy skills, and to help to dismantle boundaries and build links between ‘maths’ and ‘numeracy’.

NRDC Director, Ursula Howard told the conference that recent research has confirmed just how pressing the need is to address numeracy needs among millions of adults whose skills are well below what they need for their work, home and social life. NRDC was working to raise awareness of adult numeracy as the number one challenge for policy makers and teachers and re-position numeracy and maths in relation to literacy. The problem was that numeracy has always been the poor cousin with greater levels of need met by weaker provision and less professional capacity, while the world was changing rapidly. Adults were facing uncertainty and risk, increasing the need for skills in using and understanding number.

The keynote speakers were Ivan Lewis MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Skills and Vocational Education and Professor Adrian Smith, Chair of the post-14 Mathematics Inquiry. Other main speakers were Barry Brooks, Deputy Director of ABSSU and Professor Celia Hoyles of the Institute of Education, University of London who looked at how we can popularise maths through engaging the broadcast media. Professor Alan Bishop of Monash University, Australia argued for closer links between maths, science and technology in the 21st century.

There were also contributions on international and UK research on adult numeracy and mathematics learning in practice and new survey evidence of adult numeracy needs in England. Workshop sessions explored a wide range of topics, including mathematics in work, financial literacy, teaching numeracy and mathematics to adults, and raising public awareness of mathematics.

4. Research and development programmes

NRDC's work is organised in five linked programmes. During 2003/04 NRDC consulted widely with practitioners, policy makers and a range of other stakeholders engaged with **Skills for Life**. It also examined literacy, numeracy and ESOL research strategies in other countries, particularly the USA, Canada and Australia. On this basis, it developed its draft strategy and priorities and as a result, re-organised its work into five programmes, underpinned by procedures to ensure that it addresses all the key national priorities:

Programme one: economic development and social inclusion

Programme two: participation: motivation and engagement

Programme three: effective teaching and learning

Programme four: professional development and the Skills for Life workforce

Programme five: the infrastructure of provision

All projects and development work have been assigned to one of these categories. However, many research issues and questions will also be relevant to other programmes. NRDC's approach will therefore be to ensure interactivity, information sharing and synergy and coherence across all its programmes and projects.

While each programme has a central focus, synergy between programmes will be actively pursued to triangulate and secure the validity of findings and depth of understanding of key issues. Whenever relevant, projects will be designed and inducted in linked ways to ensure that evidence about a problem or an issue, e.g. the needs of young adults, or the quality of teaching and learning, can be synthesised and applied widely.

Programme one: economic development and social inclusion

Programme one investigates the benefits of literacy, numeracy and ESOL to productivity and economic development and employability; and to social and individual well-being. The consequences of underachievement and low skills will also be investigated. The definition of 'basic skills' will change in the future. Research needs to focus on preparing people to live and work to their full potential in the 21st century, with changing skill and technology requirements.

Key Questions:

What are the economic, social and personal benefits of literacy, numeracy and English Language Skills?

The following projects were active during 2003/04:

PG1.1. British Cohort Studies: 1958 and 1970 British birth cohort studies enhanced to include literacy and numeracy measures

The major work of the project includes literacy and numeracy assessment in the whole of the February 2004 interviewing "sweep" and will correlate educational achievement, employment and other aspects of life histories. This will multiply tenfold the scope of previous work undertaken on the cohort studies, providing invaluable evidence on adult skills experience and personal histories. This project is also extending work on the existing body of birth cohort data by analysing it in additional ways.

During 2003/04, work concentrated on developing new tests, piloting these and redesign of assessment instruments for the next wave of the BCS70 cohort study, which commenced in February 2004.

Project leader: Professor John Bynner (Institute of Education)

Dates: April 2002 - March 2005

Outputs 2003/04: field work is under way.

PG1.2 Adult Learners Lives: developing a research resource using ethnographic and biographical data to examine the social and economic context of learners' lives and their experience of learning programmes

The project is building a resource for detailed ethnographic research on the roles, uses and meanings of literacy, language and numeracy in adult learners' lives, based on data from at least 250 learners across multiple sites. This comprises a series of studies of

designated populations in workplace and community settings linked in an integrated programme.

The study in four towns in North West England (Accrington, Blackburn Lancaster and Liverpool) includes people from non-English speaking backgrounds, adults with learning difficulties, disabled adults, and older and young offenders. The research will enable understanding of learners' social and economic contexts and their experience of learning programmes.

During 2003/04, research was under way in all four locations. The work also expanded, moving from college sites to work in a homeless shelter, a women's group and drugs programme, where learners are likely to be hard to reach. The project completed work on learning, including a review on learning and teaching.

Some emerging findings from the interim report include:

- Relationships matter in learning, including teacher/student and student/student relationships, and the networks of support learners are part of.
- Learning environments often offer structure and stability in learners' lives.
- Being in control is a key motivation for learning.
- Health is often a barrier to learning, both physical and mental health.
- There is a need to recognise small gains in Language Literacy and Numeracy and the wider benefits for learners.
- There is a complex relationship between teaching and learning: learners don't simply learn what teachers teach.
- There needs to be more interagency response to the social and learning needs of students seeking asylum.
- In ESOL classes learners often express satisfaction with their classes, but issues remain, including needing more free use of language and "bringing the outside in".
- Involving teachers in research projects can make a great contribution to the teachers' professional development, to the culture of their work-places, and to regional networks.

Project leader: Professor David Barton (Lancaster)

Dates: September 2002 - March 2005

Outputs 2003/04: progress report including emerging findings and methodological developments (published May 2004). A number of papers on evidence and on practitioner involvement in seminars and conferences, nationally and internationally, including seminars in colleges in the North west on ESOL, young offenders and practitioner research.

PG1.3 Identifying effective workplace basic skills strategies for enhancing employee development and productivity.

This project focuses on workplace-linked basic skills initiatives that are delivered in the workplace or recruit through employers or unions. The objective is to identify when and how such programmes are effective in improving adults' measured basic skills, as well as the effects on productivity and other life-course variables.

During 2003/04, the project was engaged in a scoping and pilot study and researching in a number of locations across England. The project has been expanded and extended by incorporation into a major project funded by the ESRC Teaching and Learning Research Programme, entitled "Enhancing **Skills for Life**: Adult Basic Skills and Workplace Learning", which commenced in October 2003.

Project leaders: Professor Karen Evans (Institute of Education, University of London) and Professor Alison Wolf (IoE and King's College London)

Dates: September 2002 - June 2005

Outputs 2003/04: i) a literature review: the benefits to employers of raising basic skills, published in October 2003; ii) a progress report on the scoping and pilot study, published March 2004.

PG1.4ESF Inter-generational component of birth cohort studies

ESF Funding (extension to PG1.1 above). This project is running concurrently with the existing research and will add an intergenerational component to the surveys, interviewing children of participants. It will generate important data on intergenerational aspects of adult literacy and numeracy skills needs.

Final design of parent & child self completion questionnaires and child assessments was completed in January 2004; interviewers were briefed to carry out child assessments as part of the main fieldwork, which began in February as scheduled.

Project leader: Professor John Bynner (Institute of Education)

Dates: July 2003 - March 2005

PG1.5 Socrates / Grundtvig European Partnership: empowering mentors and other bi-lingual adults to work in the wider community

This three year project is examining learning provision for bi-lingual adults in the partnership countries. It is a collaboration with Denmark, Ireland, Finland, Greece and Hertfordshire LEA. There will be a project website and a final report in 2006.

A partnership meeting was held in Athens. The objective of this part of the project was to allow partners to meet with Greek national organisations and international organisations working in Greece to share information and experiences about pan-European strategy and practice in the area of training and support for asylum seekers and refugees.

Project leader: Olivia Sagan (NRDC Core team)

Dates: July 2003 - March 2006

Outputs 2003/04: all programmed mobility visits between partners took place as planned. These were visits for practitioners to travel to counterpart organisations to become acquainted with aspects of policy and practice in partner countries.

Programme two: participation, agency, motivation

Programme two explores how to stimulate demand for learning; how to widen participation in formal and informal literacy, numeracy and language learning; and how to encourage motivation and persistence.

Key Questions:

- How can we attract more learners and enable them to persist and succeed in learning?
- What impact does participation in learning have on learners' lives and how can this be assessed?
- How do people cope with, use and develop their skills in, and knowledge of, literacy, numeracy and language in daily life?

The following projects were active in 2003/04:

PG2.1 Improving the literacy and numeracy of young offenders and disaffected young people

This project focuses on post-16 learning for young offenders, both in custody and in the community. The project aims to establish how to deliver a promising pedagogy to this group; whether or not such educational intervention can significantly improve these young people's literacy, numeracy and English language levels relative to a comparison group; and whether this, in turn, will significantly reduce subsequent offending, unemployment or uptake of benefits.

During 2003/04, fieldwork commenced at four sites (two young offender institutions and two community schemes). It has since expanded and has collected data on 200 young people in 14 research sites. Young people tend to be focused on skills that will help them get work. The implication for basic skills education is that contextualising and embedding are a priority.

Project leader: Dr Jane Hurry, Institute of Education

Dates: September 2003 - March 2005

Outputs 2003/04: interim report to be published in June 2004

PG2.2 Making numeracy teaching meaningful to adult learners

The project aims to explore adult learners' relations with numeracy in both formal and informal contexts, and is based in three colleges of Further Education, working with three teacher-researchers.

It is investigating ways in which teachers' knowledge of learners' numerate practices outside the classroom inform numeracy teaching inside the classroom and learners' reasons and motivations for attending adult numeracy classes. It is exploring how learning numeracy transforms learners' identities within and outside the classroom.

The two principal methods of data collection are by semi-participant observation within the classroom and semi-structured interviews.

In 2003/04 the main phase of data collection was under way: observation in classes; interviewing learners; initiating learners' journals re: numerate practices outside the classroom. Most of the fieldwork was completed. An informal progress report/discussion paper (including emerging findings) was prepared.

Work in progress on the project was presented at:

- NRDC 2nd International Conference, University of Loughborough, 25 – 27 March 2004.
- British Society for Research into the Learning of Mathematics (BSRLM) Thematic Day, 28 February 2004. King's College London.
- Presentation to the London group of Adults Learning Mathematics – A Research Forum (ALM London), 31st of January 2004.
- BERA Symposium 4. British Educational Research Association (BERA) conference. Herriot Watt University, Edinburgh, September 2003.
- Learning Mathematics to Live and Work in our World, 10th international conference of Adults Learning Mathematics – A Research Forum (ALM10), Strobl, Austria, 29 June - 2 July 2003.

Project leader: Dr Diana Coben (University of Nottingham and King's College London)

Dates: December 2002 - August 2004

PG2.3 Literacy, learning and health

This project commenced in October 2003. During the first months the focus was on Identification of research sites and negotiation of access. The main research phase is now under way; a questionnaire has been designed and is currently being piloted. Identification of field sites across the north of England is under way.

Project leader: Dr Uta Papen (Lancaster)

Dates: October 2003 - June 2006.

PG2.4 The role of informal education in literacy, language and numeracy skills for young adults

This project started with a literature review and exploratory discussions with practitioners and others. Selection of case study sites; production of initial framework of critical success factors; establishment of consultation panel for resources review were all undertaken.

Project leaders: Carol Jackson and Christine Taylor (NIACE)

Dates: September 2003 - July 2004.

Outputs 2003/04: literature review and interim report completed.

Programme three: effective teaching and learning

Programme three addresses how we improve teaching and learning practices in education, work and community settings so that learners' progress and achieve their goals in effective learning programmes.

Key questions:

- How can teaching, learning and assessing literacy, numeracy and ESOL be improved?
- What factors contribute to successful learning?

The programme seeks to develop a body of evidence on effective practice in the teaching and learning of adult literacy, numeracy and ESOL – in a variety of contexts and with a comprehensive range of different groups of learners

The following projects were active in 2003/04:

PG3.1 Adult numeracy: review of research and related literature

This study reviewed UK and international research and related literature on adult numeracy. It was the first comprehensive review of its field. Although the main work was completed in 2002/03, extensive consultation with practitioners, researchers and policy makers and drafting revision was undertaken in 2003/04. The review was published in November 2003 and was discussed at the NRDC Numeracy Conference in December 2003 (see section 4 above).

Project leader: Dr Diana Coben (University of Nottingham and King's College London)

Dates: February 2002 - March 2003

Outputs 2003/04: literature review of 168 pages and a selected bibliographical database with more than 2,500 annotated entries, published November 2003.

PG3.2 Development of an adult literacy assessment tool

As there is no suitable research assessment tool for adult literacy (reading and writing), calibrated to **Skills for Life** levels, NRDC commissioned the NFER to develop such an instrument. The instrument was designed, field tested and standardised for use on NRDC literacy research projects.

Project leaders: Professor Greg Brooks, University of Sheffield and Professor Alison Wolf, Institute of Education / King's College; Chris Whetton, NFER

Dates: January 2003 – December 2003

Outputs 2003/04: two parallel forms of an assessment instrument of adult literacy (reading and writing) across levels from Entry 2 to Level 2. Report to be published summer 2004.

PG3.3 Effective approaches to the teaching and learning of writing, Phase 1

The first phase of this project had two parts, a review of literature and a review of current practice.

The review of practice includes a series of focus groups followed by ten in-depth case studies. The focus groups were completed and a report was ready by the end of April 2003. This informed the detailed planning of the interview and observation schedules for the case studies. Ten practitioner researchers were recruited and trained to undertake these case studies during May and June 2003. The draft report was completed and submitted.

Project Leader: Sue Grief, LSDA

Dates: July 2002 – September 2003

Outputs 2003/04: a consultation conference was held in November 2003. Publication of research report due Summer 2004

PG3.4 ESF Effective approaches to the teaching and learning of writing, Phase 2

The project is one of five linked projects forming the core of the ESF “Skills for Work and Life” project, which are exploring effective practice in the areas of reading, writing, numeracy, ESOL and ICT, with emphasis on understanding how to improve learners’ skills and employability. It will work especially closely with the project on reading (PG 3.9ESF), and the methodology and approach of this project will be closely aligned with those of the project on reading.

The project builds on Phase 1 of the project undertaken in 2002 and 2003 (PG3.3 above). It is investigating the correlations between classroom practice in relation to the teaching and learning of writing used in adult literacy provision and the progress of learners in the development of the skills of writing and their confidence as writers. A toolkit for teachers that can support effective practice in the teaching of writing will be produced and communicated widely towards the end of the project.

Practitioner researchers have been recruited and potential sites identified. Research instruments were completed ready for trialling.

Project Leader: Sue Grief, LSDA

Dates: October 2003 – March 2004 (This project followed on from Phase I. Work started in October 2003.)

Outputs 2003/04: project report completed, to be published June 2004.

PG3.5 Reading difficulties in adult literacy learning

This was an exploratory project designed to find out current practice in teaching reading to adult literacy learners. The main outcome was the development of informed hypotheses on first, the nature and scope of adult readers' difficulties, and second the relationship between current teaching practices and learner difficulties. Whilst these hypotheses on the latter should lead to further investigation, the data from the diagnostic reading assessments have the potential to provide important insight into the reading problems of adult learners. In particular, the widespread recognition by practitioners of 'spiky profiles' in learners' attainments was largely confirmed, though a few of those in this study seemed to have problems in none of the areas tested, while a few others had problems in every area.

Project leader: Professor Greg Brooks, Sheffield

Dates: September 2002 – May 2003

Outputs 2003/04: summary published July 2003. Revised final report in preparation for May 2004 publication

PG3.6 Teaching and learning common measures, especially at Entry Level

This project is investigating the teaching and learning of common measures, a key numeracy skill. The project – working with teacher researchers in three sites (prisons and further education colleges) – seeks to investigate how adults effectively learn measures, how teaching can be effective and to produce learning materials.

The first phase – September to November 2002 – established the project in terms of staff recruitment and training and the design of the research. Initial fieldwork was undertaken between November 2002 and March 2003, piloting instruments and analysing data. The main fieldwork began in April 2003.

In 2003/04 work focused on surveying teaching/learning materials from post-16 and school sources to inform development of project materials. An internal progress report/discussion paper was completed. In the later part of the year, teaching/learning materials and lesson plans were in development, website design commenced and discussions held with learners.

Project leader: Dr Diana Coben (University of Nottingham and King's College London)

Dates: October 2002 - August 2004

Outputs 2003/04:

Work in progress on the project was presented at:

- NRDC 2nd International Conference, University of Loughborough, 25 – 27 March 2004.
- British Society for Research into the Learning of Mathematics (BSRLM) Thematic Day, 28 February 2004. King's College London.
- Presentation to the London group of Adults Learning Mathematics – A Research Forum (ALM London), 31st of January 2004.
- BERA Symposium 4. British Educational Research Association conference. Herriot Watt University, Edinburgh, September 2003.
- *Learning Mathematics to Live and Work in our World*, 10th international conference of Adults Learning Mathematics – A Research Forum (ALM10), Strobl, Austria, 29 June - 2 July 2003.

PG3.7 Case studies in ESOL provision and learners' needs and resources

This project focused on individual classrooms and related the micro - processes of learning and teaching to how students perceive their learning and the issues which affect it. Five case studies covered different types of provision, different groups of learners and different levels of language competence from which some common themes will be drawn. The results are intended to provide information on practice in dedicated ESOL classes and distinctive features of ESOL learners.

The five case studies were:

1. Perception of the learning experience of refugees and asylum seekers attending Blackburn College (University of Lancaster).
2. Bilingual students learning in ESOL and numeracy classes: a contrastive study of classroom delivery (University of Leeds).
3. The *Bridge to Work* project: A study of an advanced ESOL course as preparation for work (CETS Croydon and Schellekens Consultancy).
4. Individual processes and group activity in the heterogeneous community based classroom (King's College London and the London Language and Literacy Unit, London South Bank University).
5. Exploration of the teaching of reading to adult ESOL learners (Institute of Education, University of London).

Project leader: Dr Celia Roberts (King's College, London)

Dates: November 2002 - July 2003

Outputs 2003/04: Report published March 2004 and presented to two national ESOL Pathfinder conferences March 2004

PG3.8 ICT and adult literacy, numeracy and ESOL

Previous work looking at ICT and adult literacy and numeracy (e.g. Hopey 1998, Mellar *et al.*, 2001) had mainly been based on surveys or interviews with managers, tutors and learners, and whilst this had given an insight into some of the principal variables that might be involved, there was little detailed account of what tutors actually do when they are using ICT. This study developed the methodology to carry out a detailed observational study over 11 classes in order to begin to identify more closely the factors involved in effective teaching with ICT within college settings. Close working with the tutor-researchers was invaluable in gaining insights into present practice. Most of the research was completed in 2002/03; during 2003/04 the material was written up, discussed and taken forward towards publication, and also fed into the design of the ESF “Effective Learning” project (PG3.14ESF).

Project leaders: Dr Harvey Mellar and Dr Maria Kambouri (Institute of Education)

Dates: August 2002 - April 2003

Outputs 2003/04: a summary was published in July 2003. Final report due out in January 2004.

PG3.9 ESF Reading “Effective teaching and Learning” study

The project began in October 2003. It is investigating (a) the range of approaches to the teaching of reading to adult learners, (b) changes in learners’ attainment and attitudes, and (c) the correlation between the two. It will make recommendations for effective practice, for intervention studies and for increasing learners’ employability.

Learners’ attainment and attitudes are being measured at three points (pre, mid and post), and teaching sessions observed systematically, in about 70 classes in order to achieve a pre-test sample of about 500 learners, with a target post-test sample of at least 250. Statistical analyses will correlate variations in pedagogy with changes in learners’ attainment and attitudes. In 2003/04 a total of 186 learners were pre-tested, and acceptable numbers were traced at the mid and post assessment stages. Also, 88 teaching sessions were observed.

Qualitative analyses of observation and test data and recruitment of extra fieldworkers and sites for Year 2 have begun; data entry has been largely completed, and data analysis has commenced.

Project leader: Professor Greg Brooks, Sheffield

Dates: October 2003 – June 2006

PG3.10 ESF Numeracy “Effective teaching and Learning” study

This project began in October 2003 and early effort focused primarily on design and preparatory aspects. The first round of data collection, which includes assessing learners, lesson observations and interviews with teachers and learners, commenced. Project leader: Dr Diana Coben (University of Nottingham and King’s College London)

Dates: October 2003 – June 2006

Outputs 2003/04: work in progress on the project was presented at the 2004 NRDC International Conference: *Researching Effective Practice in Adult Literacy, Language and Numeracy* at Loughborough University; fieldwork under way.

PG3.11 Learning Styles Toolkit - Phases 1 and 2

This project pilots the use of sections of a learning styles toolkit developed by LLU+ (formerly the London Language and Literacy Unit) at London South Bank University. Working with the NRDC, LLU+, who trained and supported the teachers in the sample, and LSDA are undertaking the research and analysis. Teachers of numeracy for adults at six FE sites are being given training in the use of the toolkit, and subsequently observed while using it with their classes.

The observations and data collection note changes in practitioners’ classroom practice, and their observations of the impact of their training and use of toolkit on their work. The project is also observing effects of the use of relevant sections of the toolkit on learners.

Outcomes will include a final report, recommendations for the further production or amending of the toolkit, implications for teacher training and a practitioner seminar.

Project leaders: Olivia Sagan and Dr John Vorhaus (NRDC Core Team), Dr Madeleine Held (LLU+)

Dates: October 2003 – June 2004

Outputs 2003/04: refinement of numeracy assessment tool, establishment of advisory group to inform necessary methodological changes.

PG3.12 ESF ESOL “Effective teaching and Learning” study

Work commenced in October 2003. Early activity in 2003/04 included design, research site selection and staff recruitment. Data was being collected in 14 sites after extensive development and trialling of coding instruments

Project leader: Celia Roberts, (King’s College, London)

Dates: October 2003 – June 2004

Outputs 2003/04: field work under way.

PG3.13 Supporting learners in embedded teaching and learning – Phase I

Embedded learning – delivery of adult literacy, numeracy and language teaching and support as part of subject specific and/or vocational training is an area of increasing interest to both NRDC and the Strategy Unit, who provided additional funding in 2003/04 to commence a major series of studies of the effectiveness of this approach (work in 2004/05 will continue as part of the ESF “Skills for Work and Life” project – see PG3.15ESF below)

The project started in October 2003. Work focused on developing approaches and finalising subject areas, including an element based in Northern Ireland.

Project leaders: Professor Greg Brooks (Sheffield) and Celia Roberts (King’s College, London)

Dates: October 2003 – March 2004

PG3.14 ESF ICT “Effective teaching and Learning” study

This project follows on from the earlier project (PG3.8). Recognising the relative underdevelopment of the research base in ICT and adult skills, Stage II will develop and evaluate effective ICT based teaching strategies through a series of trials using ICT with adult literacy, numeracy and ESOL learners, with theoretically grounded ICT task designs targeted at specific learning objectives. Involvement of tutors is a key element of this process, in both deciding on the development of the ICT interventions and in the research process through reflection on their developing practice using ICT. Through the use of ICT in teaching the project will be looking both for development of literacy and numeracy skills, and for development in ICT literacy skills.

Over its three year life the project will support the development of an MA module in ICT and adult basic education, deliver case studies of good practice for practitioners and prepare a research report. Three teacher workshops were held, writing of MA module in ICT and Adult Basic Education undertaken and the first round of implementation projects completed. Identification of more numeracy sites was under way.

Project leaders: Dr Harvey Mellor and Dr Maria Kambouri (Institute of Education, University of London)

Dates: October 2003 – June 2006

Outputs 2003/04: presentations to *Skills for Life* and NRDC International Conferences.

PG3.15 ESF: Supporting learners in embedded teaching and learning – Phase 2

This project was approved in 2003/04 but not commenced during the year. It will follow on from PG3.13.

PG3.16 E-Learning evaluation

ABSSU commissioned LSDA and partners to develop ICT training activities via the E-Learning project which began in August 2003 and will run until March 2005. The project aims to develop its approach to 'e-learning' by securing an 'information and learning technology' (ILT) methodology whereby 'information and communication technology' (ICT) skills are integrated within a sound pedagogy. E-learning training will take place in a variety of settings across the UK, aiming to work with 2,000 teachers over two years.

The goal of the evaluation will be to establish outcomes of the E-learning project, helping to inform future activity roll-out.

Project Leaders: Helen Casey and Desiree Lopez (NRDC Core Team)

Dates: March 2004 – March 2005

Outputs 2003/04: draft project proposal completed and meetings with key stakeholders have begun. Work will progress into 2004-2005 with the final report to be published in Spring 2005.

The following projects, completed in 2002/03 and not formally included in Programme Three, were being written up, edited and processed for publication during 2003/04 (publication dates in parentheses):

- **Adult literacy and numeracy interventions and outcomes: a review of controlled trials (March 2004)** - project leaders: Carole Torgerson (York) and Professor Greg Brooks (Sheffield). In addition, two articles arising from this project have been published in a peer-reviewed journal (**Journal of Research in Reading**).
- **Assessing adult literacy and numeracy: a review of assessment instruments (Summer 2004)** - project leader: Professor Greg Brooks (Sheffield).
- **Models of adult learning: a literature review of models applicable to *Skills for Life* (December 2003)** - project leader: Professor David Barton (Lancaster).
- **Adult ESOL Pedagogy: a review of research, an annotated bibliography and recommendations for future research (October 2003)** - project leader: Professor David Barton (Lancaster).
- **Literacy and numeracy for adults with disabilities and learning difficulties: a review and exploration (Summer 2004)** - project leaders: Professor Greg Brooks (Sheffield) and Dr Dawn Green (Portland College, Mansfield, Nottinghamshire).
- **Community-focused provision in adult, literacy numeracy and language: and exploratory study (October 2003)** - project leader: Dr Kate Pahl (Sheffield).
- **Developmental dyslexia with reference to adult basic education and ESOL – a literature review (May 2004)** - project leaders: Dr Michael Rice (Cambridge) and Professor Greg Brooks (Sheffield). Final draft report presented to DfES / LSDA / NIACE steering group – January 2004; revised and completed March 2004; to be published May 2004.

Programme four: professional development and the *Skills for Life* workforce

Programme four is working to build capacity: to develop a fully professional workforce with recognised career structures; to research and develop effective practice in the professional development of teachers, managers and others who support learning; and to collaborate on strategic development work with key national bodies.

A crucial part of this work depends on the building of practitioner-informed networks, and the strengthening of pre-existing professional bridges including partners at FENTO, the Standards Unit, ABSSU, QCA, BSA. Necessarily this involves 'outputs' which are not immediately evident, but which nevertheless are a vital element of programme four work.

Key questions:

- How can improving initial training and the professional development of the ***Skills for Life*** workforce enhance learning?
- What are the major issues and challenges in delivering ITE (Initial Teacher Education) and CPD (Continuing Professional Development) programmes?

Skills for Life has set out a challenging agenda for creating a new framework and professional identity for teachers and others engaged in the delivery of literacy, numeracy and ESOL in post-16 education and training.

The new Level 4 programmes cross the interface between HE and FE and require combinations of subject expertise not previously found in post-compulsory education and training. They require new models of delivery that demand the development and accreditation of both subject knowledge and teaching skills.

NRDC recognised from the outset that there was an urgent need to commission some major projects immediately with a view to both helping to build capacity and to ensure experience is being evaluated and good practice shared from the outset.

The following projects were continuing or commenced in 2003/04

PG4.1 New initial teacher education programmes for teachers of literacy, numeracy and ESOL 2002/03: an exploratory study

This project investigated new PGCE/Cert Ed programmes offered by 11 institutions: drawing general lessons on best practice from these; ensuring that all participating institutions benefited from and contributed to this evaluation process; and making recommendations to the Strategy Unit and providers about best practice and future national roll-out of such courses. The areas of focus of the project were:

- How are the courses taught/organised?
- How is subject knowledge (theory) related to teaching knowledge (practice)?
- How is existing experience and teaching knowledge used to make sense of the subject specifications?
- What questions and approaches can we raise and share that will help providers to organise and improve their courses?
- Diversity of cohorts.

Project leaders: Helen Casey (NRDC Core Team) and Norman Lucas (Institute of Education, University of London)

Dates: February 2002 - July 2003

Outputs: Consultation workshop with stakeholders: July 2003; project report: published February 2004, launched at the Institute of Education, University of London, Open Day, 12 February 2004

PG4.2 Development and evaluation of a national programme of post-graduate continuing professional development (CPD) through open and distance learning (ODL)

Continuation of work undertaken in 2002/03 transferred to project PG4.10 below.

PG4.3 A longitudinal study of the impact of *Skills for Life* on teachers' qualifications, their classroom and organisational practice, role definition and concept of the field of adult literacy, numeracy and ESOL

The study aims to evaluate the impact of the ***Skills for Life*** strategy on the classroom practice of teachers and trainers and its effect on learning. The study will also gather information on teachers' demographics, qualifications, prior experience, employment details, professional development activities, training needs, organisational/work environment, reasons for entering the profession, job satisfaction, career pathways, as well as their attitudes to the new policy initiatives.

The study will be following a cohort of approximately 1,500 teachers and trainers for a minimum of three years, who will be working on a nationally representative sample of programmes. The data will be collected through structured interviews, which will be supplemented by a small number of in-depth interviews and focus groups.

The study will work in tandem with the NRDC study of the impact of the ***Skills for Life*** learning infrastructure on learners. Both studies will be using the same sample of programmes/organisations and the data collected will be combined to explore the link between the way teachers and trainers teach/train and learner outcomes, such as learner motivation, retention and achievement.

A revised project plan was agreed during the summer of 2003 and the fieldwork contractor selected in November. A pilot of the questionnaire was undertaken during early 2004.

Project leader: John Vorhaus (NRDC Core Team)

Dates: September 2002 - March 2005

Outputs 2003/04: Draft report on methodology, presentation to NRDC International Conference

PG4.4 Evaluation of Teacher Researcher Programme Model

This project evaluated models of good practice in supporting teacher-researchers in the fields of adult literacy, numeracy and ESOL using the first year experience of the NRDC's Teacher-Researcher Programme and by reviewing evidence from the US, Australia, Canada, Scandinavia and the UK.

Project leader: Professor Mary Hamilton (Lancaster)

Dates: September 2002 – September 2003

Outputs 2003/04: seminar for 100 practitioners and others, 30 January 2004. Final report to be published.

PG4.5 *Skills for Life* core curriculum training programmes 2001-2003: characteristics of teacher participants

This project produced an analysis of the participants on the national core curriculum training programme and of the indications for future training needs.

Project leader: Professor Norman Lucas (Institute of Education, University of London) and Helen Casey (NRDC Core Team)

Dates: April 2002 - Autumn 2003

Project report: published February 2004, launched at IoE Open Day

PG4.6 On-line core curriculum training modules for adult literacy, numeracy, ESOL and Access for All

This project makes elements of the core curriculum training available as online modules. Introductory modules to all four core curricula are available to teachers who have not been able to access the face-to-face core curriculum training. This work was undertaken in partnership with the Basic Skills Agency, the LLU+, London South Bank University, NIACE and the Open University. The modules were completed, trialled and agreed; they

went “live” in November 2003. In collaboration with the national LSC, the modules formed the first substantive element of the new LSCQI professional development website for practitioners. Official launches took place in London and Liverpool, and were well-attended interactive events where practitioners could access the modules, give initial feedback and discuss ideas for their development.

Project leader: Helen Casey, NRDC Core Team

Dates: February 2003 - November 2003

Outputs 2003/04: 21 online professional development modules for teachers. Launched 18/19 November 2003 at Tower Hamlets and Liverpool Community Colleges as initial content in LSCQI *Skills for Life* Professional development website at lsc.gov.uk/sflqi

PG4.7 ESF Practitioner-led projects

As part of the ESF project “Skills for Work and Life” NRDC created in 2003/04 a new programme, the Practitioner-Led Research Initiative. The aims of the programme are:

- to produce findings which will give new insights into adult literacy, numeracy and ESOL
- to build research capacity and to strengthen networks which links practice, research, development and policy.

In February 2004 NRDC announced the funding of the first six small-scale projects addressing a common theme “New Ways of Engaging New learners”. The projects are running between March and December 2004. A linked scheme is being developed in Northern Ireland.

Projects are carried out by locally based consortia, led by those who are directly involved with ***Skills for Life*** learners. The six projects come together for three networking and information sharing meetings. Each will produce a report of their findings for the NRDC in December 2004.

Project leader: Professor Mary Hamilton (Lancaster)

Dates: September 2003 – June 2006

Outputs 2003/04: approval of first projects, to be completed December 2004

PG4.8 ESF The new initial teacher education programmes for teachers of adult literacy, numeracy and ESOL: an evaluation of implementation strategies, stages and models

This project builds on the earlier work of project PG4.1. Data will be collected from 30 programmes nationwide, from ten programmes in each subject area, literacy, numeracy and ESOL. It focuses on;

- how the subject specifications in adult literacy, numeracy are being used and developed in Universities in the second year of delivery, as part of the initial teacher education and professional development programmes.
- the introduction and implementation of the ESOL subject specifications from September 2003.
- the new programmes in the Learning and Skills sector accredited by awarding bodies, contrasting the experience of FE colleges with that in HE.
- the dissemination of good practice throughout ITE programmes.

The project is designed to aid an understanding of:

- the diversity of curriculum approaches to delivering the subject specifications.
- the balance to be struck between subject specific knowledge, pedagogic knowledge and practical teaching skills.
- the extent to which subject knowledge is translated into classroom skills.
- the different implementation issues across the three subject specialisms.
- the role of core curricula and guidance documentation in ITE programmes.
- the different problems faced by those offering programmes in higher education and the Learning and Skills sector.
- trainees' evaluations and perceptions of Adult Literacy, Numeracy and ESOL teacher training programmes.

Project leader: Helen Casey (NRDC Core Team)/Norman Lucas (Institute of Education, University of London)

Dates: September 2003 – March 2005

Outputs 2003/04: engagement of 30 research sites nationwide and commencement of data collection.

PG4.9 ESF NRDC Professional Development Network

This project supports the implementation and development of the new initial teacher education programmes, following the introduction of the subject specifications for teachers of literacy, numeracy and ESOL. The NRDC facilitates a national network linking regional teacher training networks to promote an effective flow of emerging information from work in progress around the country and from NRDC evaluation and research work.

Project leader: Helen Casey (NRDC Core Team)

Dates: September 2003 – June 2006

Outputs 2003/04: three full meetings of network partners. Network training events: training the teacher trainers, October 2003; Level 3 curriculum development, March 2004 and Level 2 curriculum development day planned for June 2004

PG4.10 Web Portal and online collection for postgraduate CPD materials

This project follows on from PG4.2. It is developing an online resource for postgraduate CPD materials. The development work is shared by four participating universities.

Work of the Autumn of 2003 concentrated on developing website architecture and analysing data needs. Spring 2004 saw the focus move to data collection and development of the website design. The project aims to launch the resource for wider use in summer 2004.

Project leaders: Mary Hamilton (Lancaster) and Helen Casey (NRDC Core Team)

Dates: September 2003 – June 2004

Outputs 2003/04: Web-portal in place in preparation for launch in July 2004

PG4.11 Review of literature on teacher training for teachers of literacy, numeracy and ESOL

This is an international review which will focus on contemporary developments, focussing mainly (but not exclusively) on Anglophone countries. The review will pay particular attention to work focusing on the training of teachers to teach literacy, numeracy and ESOL, but will also take into account methodologies in other fields which are relevant to developing a broad awareness and understanding of developments in this area, including international English Language Teaching teacher training.

This project will review relevant aspects of NRDC's work so far and place it in a wider context, linking the review to other work carried out by the centre.

Project leader: Helen Casey (NRDC Core Team) and Mike Baynham (University of Leeds)

Dates: October 2003 – August 2004

PG4.12 Mental health awareness at Enfield College

This small project explored issues linking mental health and ABS in one local area. The work brought local mental health and disability groups with their users and the college to inform a programme of training for staff. The training equipped learning support staff and tutors with a working knowledge of the requirements of Disability and Discrimination Act

4 and how these requirements translate into action and awareness of the learner with mental health problems. The training also looked at aspects of policy and procedure, and ways of working more closely with the community and voluntary groups who support many of the mentally ill learners in the community.

Local ethnic group representatives were invited to discuss the particular issues faced by members of their communities with mental health problems and how college staff can assist in building a more positive, sensitive learning environment. It is hoped this project will equip staff to better manage the challenge of facilitating learning amongst this learner group, and trigger more reflective practice around issues of different learning styles and needs.

Project leader: Olivia Sagan (NRDC Core Team)

Dates: September 2003 – July 2004

Outputs 2003/04: training workshops for community groups and college staff; Final dissemination event for local colleges and community groups; Final report to be posted on NRDC website

PG4.13 Evaluation of UK online centres CPD project (see section on evaluation work below)

The **Skills for Life** UK Online and **learndirect** development project focuses on professional development of practitioners working with learners in an ICT environment. It is one of a number of initiatives designed to tackle the training needs of practitioners who may be working alongside potential basic skills learners.

The external evaluation of the NIACE **Skills for Life** and UK Online Development Project was commissioned on behalf of the DfES by the Adult Basic Skills Strategy Unit and the UK Online Centres Future Policy Team (OCFPT).

The objectives of the evaluation were to:

- Report on the effectiveness of the project and outcomes achieved.
- Comment on the added value brought about by the project.
- Produce recommendations for practice in project organisation with particular regard to models of training for staff that identify the skills required to promote the **Skills for Life** Strategy in UK Online and Ufi **learndirect** centres.
- Inform the future direction of staff training and development in relation to literacy, language and numeracy work in UK online and Ufi **learndirect** centres.
- Assess the impact of this project on recruiting and retaining **Skills for Life** learning and on widening participation.

- Draw conclusions on the effectiveness of the model adopted and the implications / recommendations for a national strategy for staff training and development to **Skills for Life**.

Project Leader: Helen Casey (NRDC Core Team) and Anne-Marie Houghton (University of Lancaster)

Outputs 2003/04: report to ABSSU

PG 4.14 Evaluation of the front end delivery of basic and key skills in modern apprenticeships

(see section on evaluation work below)

The project evaluated a development project led by LSDA, funded by DfES., which was designed to evaluate the effectiveness of front loaded delivery of key and basic skills in improving achievement through the development of intensive and locally designed Front End Modules in a variety of Modern Apprenticeship frameworks.

The aims of the project were:

- To evaluate front-end basic/key skills delivery models of teaching and learning.
- To ascertain what type of training trainers need to deliver the module.
- To evaluate assessment methods and tools including the use of initial and diagnostic assessment and on-screen testing where this is available.
- To evaluate individual learning plans and their impact on teaching and learning.
- To identify and describe models of effective practice.
- To explore what optional elements are possible for different subjects / groups.
- For students to successfully acquire the key skills necessary for the achievement of broader aims.

Lead: Helen Casey (NRDC Core team) and Professor Karen Evans (IoE)

September 2003 - March 2004.

Outputs 2003/04: Report to DfES and LSDA.

PG4.15 Foundation degrees

In this project, NRDC has worked with City & Guilds and Wolverhampton University to create a framework for foundation degrees for teachers of adult literacy, numeracy and ESOL. The framework will enable non-graduate teachers to progress through initial teacher education programmes to further modules to build towards a foundation degree and beyond.

The overall purpose of the project is to:

- integrate previous work into a single package of modules. This framework will be designed to be workable from both HEI and National Awarding Body perspectives.
- Develop a user-friendly, coherent route map to guide potential applicants through the various possible entry points and options within the framework.

Project Leader: Helen Casey (NRDC Core Team)

Outputs 2003/04: the draft National Framework document being circulated for comment.

PG4.16 Guide for teacher trainers with FENTO

This project worked in collaboration with FENTO to produce the in a series of guidance publications for teacher educators.

This document is for generic teacher trainers. It aims to exemplify and support inclusive approaches to literacy/numeracy and ESOL for teachers of all subjects and vocational areas.

The guidance offers support to teacher educators to exemplify ways of ensuring that teacher education programmes enable trainee teachers to:

- teach using techniques and strategies appropriate to the literacy/Numeracy/ESOL skills of learners.
- assess the literacy/numeracy/ESOL demands of the subject area and their own teaching approaches.
- develop awareness of and sensitivity to learners' literacy/numeracy/ESOL needs.

Project Leader: Helen Casey (NRDC Core Team)

Outputs 2003/04: NRDC/FENTO document: “Including language, literacy and numeracy in all post-16 education - Guidance on curriculum and methodology for generic initial teacher education programmes” published in February 2004.

PG4.17 Evaluation of NHSU Skills for Life provision

(see section on evaluation work below)

All three evaluations have now begun. Quantitative and qualitative data collection is under way.

NRDC will lead the evaluation of three NHSU projects (*Skills Advance*, *Skills for Life and Health and Customer Care*). All three projects will endeavour to inform the

development of **Skills for Life** strategy within the NSHU. The evaluations will assess the strengths and weaknesses of project development in order to inform regional roll out, as well as assessing the infrastructure to support **Skills for Life** within the NHSU. Finally, the evaluations will attempt to explore the ways in which these initiatives contribute to organisational improvement.

The project proposal was completed through consultation with key stakeholders. Initial data collection and attendance at stakeholder meetings have begun. Work will progress into 2004/05.

Project Leaders: John Vorhaus and Desiree Lopez (NRDC Core Team)

Dates: February 2003 – January 2005

PG4.18 Evaluation of NIACE “RETRO” project
(see section on evaluation work below)

In August 2003, NIACE and partners began the RETRO project to recruit and train a total of 250 new teachers and 125 in-active teachers in three regions (West Midlands, Northeast, and East). These teachers will be supported to access training, enabling them to strengthen Literacy, ESOL and Numeracy provision within the **Skills for Life** strategy.

The goal of the evaluation will be to establish specific strengths of RETRO activities in relation to infrastructures, partnerships and unique activities.

Draft project proposal completed and meetings with key stakeholders have begun. Work will progress into 2004/05 with the final report to be published in Spring 2005.

Project Leaders: Helen Casey and Desiree Lopez (NRDC Core Team)

Dates: March 2004 – March 2005

Evaluation Work

During 2003/04, with the support of the Strategy Unit, NRDC developed its expertise and experience of researching and evaluating, and towards the end of the year appointed a full time Research and Evaluation Officer. It has become increasingly involved in evaluative projects exploring a wide range of adult language, literacy and numeracy provision, encompassing both innovative and more traditional approaches. NRDC evaluations seek to provide in-depth exploration of some of the more complex and subtle strands of programme delivery, for example, systemic and structural factors whilst also measuring some of the more explicit characteristics of weakness and strength.

NRDC evaluations draw on the management and support of the Research and Evaluation Officer and also the wealth of experience and technical knowledge of its consortium partners. The NRDC Evaluation team feeds back to project stakeholders, ensuring a formal link to the projects and accountability for evaluation activities. The Evaluation Team also participates in seminars, conferences and other networking events to both feed back directly to practitioners and to engage with professionals involved in the projects at all levels. This generates vital debate around different aspects of the evaluations.

The NRDC is able to offer evaluation management in addition to evaluator/research expertise encompassing a wide range of disciplines. Within this remit, the NRDC is able to provide formative evaluation support, ensuring that in addition to advisory expertise on a developmental level, reflection on systemic practise will also feed into programme development, delivery and outcomes. Additionally, NRDC is well positioned to draw upon work from its national consortium partners and international partners, which will further inform the evaluation and increase dissemination opportunities. Evaluation team members vary according to project and may include members from the NRDC consortium as well as members from external stakeholders.

Responsibility: John Vorhaus and Desiree Lopez (NRDC Core Team)

Strategic development work with key national partners

The Associate Director (Development and Teacher Education) is a member of a number of national committees concerned with workforce development and professional accreditation. She also works with QCA, FENTO, BSA and The Strategy Unit on the development and drafting of guides for Level 2, 3 and 4 qualifications. She undertook joint production with FENTO of guides for teacher training and awarding institutes on specialist pedagogy.

Responsibility: Helen Casey (NRDC Core Team)

Outputs 2003/04: contribution to policy development and guides for *Skills for Life* practitioners.

Programme five: the context and infrastructure for *Skills for Life*

Programme Five focuses on how the infrastructure, financing and costs of learning – as well as the wider environment and significant economic, social and educational trends and developments – can impact on learners and learning, now and in the future. The programme examines how the ‘supply side’ can respond most effectively.

Key questions

- In the context of ***Skills for Life***, how do systems, structures and strategies for planning, funding, delivering and evaluating provision help or hinder learning outcomes?
- How do individual learners best interact with systems and structures to maximise achievement and progress?

The following projects were active during 2003/04:

PG5.1 Developing Countries Symposium

This symposium was held on 4 – 6 December 2003 in Lancaster, with participants from Uganda, Nepal, India, Namibia, Caribbean U.S.A. and the UK. It was jointly funded by NRDC and the Department for International Development.

The Symposium provided an invaluable forum for exchanging views between countries about how the “developing” and more developed countries can learn from each other.

Organiser: David Barton (Lancaster)

Outputs 2003/04: report being drafted for 2004 publication

PG5.2 Provision of and learner engagement with adult literacy, numeracy and ESOL support in rural England

This project follows on from PG5.3. It is assessing the level and nature of support for adult literacy, numeracy and ESOL in six rural study areas in both the formal and voluntary sectors. It will ask whether the nature of rurality is a consideration for those forming and implementing policy in adult literacy, numeracy and ESOL in these areas. It will examine what practitioners and learners believe works best in supporting adult numeracy, literacy and ESOL within their areas. (This will provide both examples of generalisable good practice and highlight gaps in local/national policy.)

Initial questionnaire data has been collected from policy makers and parishioners. The Steering group met on the 1 March 2004 to consider the next stages of data collection.

Emerging issues include: Scale of ESOL in rural areas; management of rural provision; characteristics of successful provision; barriers and gaps in provision; strategies used to overcome barriers; what's different about rural provision.

Project Leader: Dr Chris Atkin (Nottingham)

Dates: September 2003 – March 2005

PG5.3 The impact of adult literacy and numeracy levels on small businesses in rural Lincolnshire and Rutland: a case study

This small scale sixth month project examined issues of basic skills and small businesses in a rural setting through the analysis of questionnaire and interviews with businesses and with providers.

A follow-on project, **PG5.2**: provision of and learner engagement with adult literacy, numeracy and ESOL support in rural England was approved Summer 2003 (see above).

Project leader: Dr Chris Atkin (Nottingham)

Dates: February 2003 - August 2003

Outputs 2003/04: research report and summary (published March 2004).

PG5.4 Longitudinal study of the impact of the *Skills for Life* learning infrastructure on learners

This project complements the longitudinal study of teachers (PG4.3). The design study was finalised over the summer 2003 and contractors (NOP) were appointed in November 2003 to undertake the fieldwork.

Activity during the remainder of 2003/04 focussed on finalising samples and sending first questionnaires. Approaches to national bodies for analyses of existing data were proceeding; also specification and delivery to NOP for piloting of instruments for gathering of new data. The first few qualitative interviews were carried out

Project leaders: Professor Greg Brooks (Sheffield) and Paul Davies (Lancaster)

Dates: September 2003 – March 2007.

PG5.5 Review of provision of learning programmes and accreditation in financial literacy.

This project commenced January 2004. It is reviewing the provision and accreditation of financial literacy education at the levels covered by *Skills for Life*. Financial literacy is defined as the ability to make informed judgments and to take effective decisions

regarding the use and management of money. Work in progress on the project was presented at the 2004 NRDC International Conference. Following the conference, the final draft of the project report has been passed to project advisor Paul Worrall, BSA, for comment.

Project leader: Dr Diana Coben (University of Nottingham and King's College London)

Dates: January 2004 – August 2004.

5. Communication and impact

All NRDC's research, development and other activity is aimed at improving adult literacy, language and numeracy provision for learners in all relevant settings. To achieve this, the Centre must influence the development of **Skills for Life** policy and maximise the impact of its research and development on practice and, through this, on learning outcomes.

Under the NRDC Communication and Impact strategy, each research and development project identifies at the planning stage how the evidence and advice it generates will engage relevant practice and policy communities; who findings and other useful information will be communicated; and how the project will have impact on learners.

Specific activities to support impact are funded both through individual projects and as part of the Centre's overall Communication and Impact plan.

Key tactical approaches

NRDC aims to:

- work proactively with research, policy and practice communities to develop better understanding of how/where research can have impact.
- develop strong practitioner involvement in NRDC activities including planning of communication and marketing of research and development outputs.
- use limited communications resources (both project and centre-wide) effectively, focusing on activities with the greatest potential for impact, and working with key partners – especially the Strategy Unit, BSA, LSDA, LLU+, London South Bank University and NIACE – to share networks of communication and influence.
- be realistic about our ability to engage proactively with other organisations, and use newsletters, briefings, website, etc., to keep them informed.
- support training and development for the research community on how best to present and communicate research and research findings; and how to engage productively with practitioners.

Work carried out during 2003/04

1. Conferences, etc.

- **Strategy Launch**

See section 4

- **Skills for Life Conferences 2003**

See section 4

- **Numeracy Conference, 4 December 2004, London - What counts as evidence for what purposes in research in adult literacy, numeracy and ESOL**

See section 4

- **NRDC's second International Conference held at Burleigh Court, Loughborough, 23 - 25 March 2004**

130 delegates took part in this inspiring three day conference, including a substantial number of practitioners from within and outside NRDC. Papers and workshops were presented from USA, Canada, Australia, France and UK. Conference papers being edited for publication by NRDC.

- **Skills for Life Contextualised Guides Conferences**

NRDC contributed to and co-organised three major one day conferences for the DfES in March 2004 (Birmingham, London and Manchester). Five new guides to delivering **Skills for Life** in different contexts were launched to go with 5 previously published and over 450 delegates took part in discussion of these.

2. Contribution of papers, support and participation in conferences and seminars, organised by other NRDC network partners

- **LSRN Conference, Warwick, 9 - 11 December 2003** (NRDC was one of the sponsors of this conference)

3. NRDC Contributions to other events

Members of the NRDC management team contributed to many conferences, seminars and other events throughout the year. The Director spoke at 11 events to a total of 740 people; the Associate Director Teacher Training and Professional Development spoke at four events involving a total of 240 people. Other NRDC core staff and consortium members gave papers, presentations, talks and workshops to over 2,400 people in 2003/04, making a total of around 3,400.

4. Publications

Following appointment of a house designer and agreement of the NRDC's style guide, the programme of research publications commenced in June 2004. Eleven two-page research summaries were published along with the Strategy and a four page Strategy Summary at the launch on 8 July 2003.

Starting in October 2003, 11 major research reports and reviews with high quality design and print values were published before the end of the year as well as a further 3 two page summaries and a number of other reports. All these were made available for download from the website and distributed extensively at conferences, seminars and other events where adult literacy, numeracy and ESOL practitioners and policy makers were present.

These publications have been very well received and many are already needing further print runs.

Planning also commenced in 2003/04 for an NRDC magazine style journal aimed principally at practitioners. This will foster engagement with NRDC research and development, communicate issues arising from projects succinctly and provide a forum for them to communicate with each other.

5. NRDC Newsletter

Six issues of the NRDC newsletter were published and disseminated to a wide range of interested parties. These reported on events, included short articles of interest to practitioners and updated interested parties on developments in NRDC.

6. Website

See section 4(b) on page 10.

7. Database

During the latter part of 2003/04 NRDC updated, developed and expanded its database of contracts, especially practitioners engaged with or interested in knowing about its work. This will enable the Centre to communicate more effectively with particular interest groups. It will be supported by more website developments, segmenting the information on research, development, partnership and networking activities and links to publications more accessibly.

6. Practitioner engagement

As stated in its Strategy, NRDC aims to maximise practitioner engagement and to embed a research culture in the field. This is to ensure that the work of the Centre is relevant and geared to the needs of adult learners, that its value is recognised by teachers and other practitioners and that they feel a sense of ownership of and commitment to the research itself.

NRDC works to engage practitioners in all stages of its work. It has been doing this in a number of ways in 2003/04.

- (i) **Research and Development Programmes.** Practitioners have been involved at design, implementation and conclusion stages of most NRDC projects commissioned and in progress during the year. All projects which involve field work have included teacher fieldworkers, teacher researchers and / or practitioner consultants as appropriate. Training has been provided and about 80 teacher researchers/fieldworkers have contributed to projects during the year. Practitioner researchers contribute to project steering groups.
- (ii) Evaluation of the **Teacher-Researcher model** (project PG4.4) This project, completed in 2003/04, evaluated models of good practice in supporting Teacher-Researchers in the fields of adult literacy, numeracy and ESOL using the first year experience of the NRDC's Teacher-Researcher Programme and by reviewing evidence from the US, Australia, Canada, Scandinavia and the UK. A one day conference of practitioners discussed draft findings in January 2004 and the final project report will be widely communicated and discussed during 2004/05.
- (iii) A Conference entitled "**Practitioner involvement in research – experiences from the first year of NRDC**" was held on 30 January 2004 at Birkbeck College, London. There were 84 participants; workshops were led by teacher-researchers.
- (iv) The **practitioner-led projects** programme described above (PG4.4.7 ESF). The first set of projects approved towards the end of the year are summarised in Annex 2 below.
- (v) The **Network of Networks**, bringing together regional practitioner groupings to exchange ideas and information, using ESF funding (Project PG4.9 ESF).
- (vi) Training has been provided and about **80 teacher researchers / fieldworkers** have contributed to projects during the year.
- (vii) Funding practitioner places at conferences. NRDC was able to fund over **30 practitioner researchers** to take part in its International Conference in March 2004. They presented and co-presented at many of the workshops.
- (viii) Planning for the future. NRDC is making 2004/05 the "**Year of the Practitioner**" - See Annex 4 for a slightly updated version of an article from the Basic Skills Bulletin.

7. Management and Organisation

1. General

NRDC is a wide ranging consortium. The Director, supported by three Associate Directors and an Operations Manager, leads a NRDC Core Team at the Institute of Education, University of London which is responsible for strategy, management, quality assurance, communication and publications, and for finance. There are Research Directors at the main university partners, plus Project Leaders and research officer teams based in the consortium partners and associates.

NRDC has a Management Group and Quality Management Group who meet in alternate months. The Research and Development group hold regular seminars for all NRDC researchers. The full Consortium involving all the core partners (see page 7 above) and associate organisations meets twice a year to discuss conceptual and strategic themes. The Advisory group meets three times a year.

Progress meetings with the Strategy Unit (“KIT Meetings”) are held normally monthly. Three of these are Strategic KIT meetings, focusing on new project developments, budget setting and an Annual Review.

2. Staffing

As at end March 2004 NRDC had 73 full and part-time staff.

NRDC Directing Team

| | | |
|--------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|
| Director | Dr Ursula Howard | |
| Associate Director. Development and Teacher Education | Helen Casey | |
| Associate Director: Communication and Impact | Dr John Kanefsky David Mallows | (to December 2003) (from March 2004) |
| Associate Director. Research Programmes | Dr John Vorhaus | (from February 2004) |
| Operations Manager | Vanessa Gordon Moya Wilkie | (to January 2004) (from March 2004) |

Research and other staff (full-time and part-time)

| | Research Director | Staff |
|-------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|
| Institute of Education and NRDC Core Team | Professor John Bynner (to Dec 2003) Professor Karen Evans (from Jan 2004) | 26 |
| Lancaster University | Professor David Barton | 14 |
| University of Nottingham | Dr Diana Coben | 4 |

| | | |
|----------------------------------------|-----------------------|----|
| University of Sheffield | Professor Greg Brooks | 11 |
| King's College London | | 8 |
| Learning and Skills Development Agency | | 2 |
| NIACE / National Youth Agency | | 3 |
| University of Leeds | | 2 |

3. Management and Quality Assurance

Project proposals for commissioning work are subject to a scrutiny process and are then approved by the Management Group. An Annual Operational Plan and a detailed budget are drawn up for each project. Milestones and budgets are monitored quarterly. Reports and outputs are required from each project every six months. Quality, synergy and impact are discussed and planned at regular intervals by the Research and Development Group and the Associate Director for Communication and Impact.

4. Finance and Funding

The Institute of Education, University of London is the contractor for NRDC responsible for to the Department for Education and Skills. All work undertaken outside the Institute of Education, University of London by partners, associates and other contractors as appropriate is subject to sub-contracts. A large amount of work was undertaken during 2003/04 to refine and develop budgeting and accounting procedures for NRDC as a whole and for each of the partners.

Annex 1: Publications in print, March 2004

| Title | Date Publ. |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| Research reports and reviews (lead author) | |
| The benefits to employers of raising workforce basic skills (Wolf) | Oct 03 |
| Community focused provision in adult literacy, numeracy and language: an exploratory study (Pahl) | Oct 03 |
| Adult ESOL pedagogy: a review of research, an annotated bibliography and recommendations for future research (Barton) | Oct 03 |
| Literature review of ESOL for learners with learning difficulties and disabilities (Armstrong) | Oct 03 |
| Adult numeracy: review of research and related literature (Coben) | Nov 03 |
| Models of adult learning: a literature review (Barton) | Dec 03 |
| Using laptop computers to develop basic skills: (Kambouri) [joint BSA / NRDC publication] | Jan 04 |
| New initial teacher education programmes for teachers of literacy, numeracy and ESOL 2002/03: an exploratory study (Lucas / Casey) | Feb 04 |
| Skills for Life core curriculum training programmes 2001-03: characteristics of successful participants (Lucas/ Casey) | Feb 04 |
| The impact of adult literacy and numeracy levels on small businesses in rural Lincolnshire and Rutland: a case study (Atkins) | Mar 04 |
| Adult literacy and numeracy interventions and outcomes: a review of controlled trials (Torgerson) | Mar 04 |
| Other Publications | |
| Strategy 2003-2007: Generating knowledge and transforming it into practice | Jul 03 |
| NRDC Annual Report 2003 (Howard / Jupp) | Aug 03 |
| What Counts as Evidence? (International Conference Report, 2003, Nottingham) | Mar 04 |
| Identifying effective workplace basic skills strategies for enhancing employee productivity and deployment: scoping and pilot study (Ananiadou) | Mar 04 |
| Including language, literacy and numeracy in all post-16 education [FENTO Guidance on curriculum and methodology for generic initial teacher education programmes] | Feb 04 |

| Research Summaries (two page summaries) | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------|
| The benefits to employers of raising workforce basic skills | Jul 03 |
| Community focused provision in adult literacy, numeracy and language: an exploratory study | Jul 03 |
| Literacy and numeracy for adults with disabilities and learning difficulties | Jul 03 |
| Literature review of ESOL for learners with learning difficulties and disabilities | Jul 03 |
| Adult numeracy: review of research and related literature | Jul 03 |
| Models of adult learning: a literature review | Jul 03 |
| English to speakers of other languages (ESOL) in the workplace: a review | Jul 03 |
| Assessing adult literacy and numeracy: a review of assessment instruments | Jul 03 |
| ICT and adult literacy and numeracy: a review | Jul 03 |
| Developing adult reading skills | Jul 03 |
| Adult literacy and numeracy interventions and outcomes: a review of controlled trials | Jul 03 |
| Adult ESOL pedagogy: a review of research, an annotated bibliography and recommendations for future research | Jul 03 |
| The impact of adult literacy and numeracy levels on small businesses in rural Lincolnshire and Rutland: a case study (Atkins) | Mar 04 |
| Identifying effective workplace basic skills strategies for enhancing employee productivity and deployment | Mar 04 |

Copies of these reports, reviews and other publications can be downloaded from the Publications page of the NRDC website at www.nrdc.org.uk or ordered by post or email from:

Publications, NRDC, Institute of Education, University of London, 20 Bedford Way, London WC1H 0AL (tel: 0207 612 6476), publications@nrdc.org.uk

Individual copies of all publications are free, but a handling charge will be made for multiple copies of the same report.

Annex 2: practitioner-led projects: first phase

“New ways of engaging new groups of learners”

1. Evaluation of essential skills support for health care assistants

Project submitted by Lancashire Teaching Hospitals and NHS Trust

Contact Name K Lynn Ireland

Contact email Lynn.Ireland@lthtr.nhw.uk

Project outline

The aim of this project is to provide information to support current and future essential skills training in two NHS hospital trusts and focuses on working with recently recruited groups of Health Care Assistants. The outcomes include gaining information regarding learners' experiences, their managers' experiences, levels of staff retention and achievement on the literacy program and the NVQ. This information will have the potential to be used to improve support for Health Care Assistants with essential skills needs.

2. Reaching and engaging new learners using popular culture through a blend of on-line and classroom learning

Project submitted by The Sheffield College

Contact Name Phil Eusden

Contact email Phil.Eusden@sheffcol.ac.uk

Project outline

This project aims to develop the teaching of literacy through a blend of online and classroom learning and to find out whether an approach using popular culture, rap and local specific content can re-engage and develop the literacy skills of young **Skills for Life** learners. The anticipated outcomes include providing a teaching methodology which considers how research ideas on genre, multi-modality, popular culture and communicative practices can engage new learners, together with strategies for delivering online courses which can be applied to other settings.

3. Improving workplace training and support for council employees

Project submitted by Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council

Contact name Hamid Patel

Contact email hamid.patel@blackburn.gov.uk

Project outline

This project aims to investigate the provision for and barriers to basic skills provision for council employees by seeking the advice, noting the experience and documenting the concerns of workers, trainers, supervisors and managers engaged in basic skills needs provision. The project extends work already being carried out by the EQUAL project and focuses specifically on the skills and views of supervisory staff and management. It also aims to develop simple supportive training programs to support these needs. Dissemination of findings includes the development of good practice guidelines to be circulated to the borough council Executive Directors Group and to Local Authorities involved in the **Skills for Life** EQUAL project.

4. What methods could be used to engage classroom assistants working in Schools and in the post-16 sector to improve their own literacy and numeracy skills through the *Skills for Life* agenda?

Project submitted by East Riding of Yorkshire Learning Partnership – ***Skills for Life*** Consortium

Contact name Cheryl Dillon

Contact email dillonc@bishopb-college.ac.uk

Project outline

This project aims to conduct a confidential survey of the attitudes to learning of classroom assistants in schools and further education establishments and to discover the incentives and methods that would engage them to take up training in order to achieve the new national qualifications in literacy and numeracy. Intended outcomes include expanding knowledge as to what percentage of classroom assistants have appropriate levels of skills, identifying the most suitable methods of engaging this group of learners, using these findings to inform national campaigns and to develop strategies for professional development.

5. Engaging new learners in rural SMEs

Project submitted by Somerset Learning Partnership

Contact name – Sandi Wales

Contact email sandi.wales@btconnect.com

Project outline

This project aims to investigate and analyse the factors which influence the engagement of employers and employees working in small and medium sized enterprises in ***Skills for Life*** development and provision. It also aims to identify the implications of those factors for basic skills practitioners. Expected outcomes include identifying critical success factors in LLN provision for SMEs in rural areas and recommendations for practitioners working in this specialist field.

6. CLICK

Project submitted by South East Derbyshire College

Contact name Sue Pilbeam

Contact email sue.pilbeam@sedc.ac.uk

Project outline

This project focuses on the effectiveness of a community engagement model of provision for learners categorised as hard to reach, vulnerable or socially and economically excluded. It intends to measure success through evaluating increase in personal confidence and aspiration of the learners using the 'Catching Confidence' tool. It also intends monitoring learners' learning journeys giving particular attention to participation in programs that raise literacy and numeracy and incidences of 'serial learning'. Intended outcomes include the development of research capacity and research techniques and to encourage a wide dissemination of findings at both local and national level.

Annex 3: NRDC Advisory Group Terms of reference:

- To guide and support the Centre in achieving the goals set out in NRDC's **Strategy 2003 – 2007**.
- To guide the work of NRDC by commenting and advising on priorities, methods, and messages and findings which emerge during and at the conclusion of research.
- To advise on appropriate strategies for communication and impact.
- To ensure that NRDC engages policy makers, practitioners and learners in its work.
- To comment on the frameworks for evaluating NRDC's activities and its implementation.
- To act as champions for the programmes of research and development, and evidence and ideas which are produced to support the success and further development of **Skills for Life**.

Annex 4: 2004/05: NRDC's 'Year of the Practitioner'

NRDC has unsurprisingly devoted much of its energy and resources in its first two years to developing its research and development strategy, and to commissioning and undertaking a substantial number of research and development reviews and projects in the field of adult literacy and numeracy. It has also got well under way its programme of communication and impact work, through networking, conferences, newsletters, website development and publishing the outcomes of research and development. 11 substantial reports and 14 summaries have been published and many more are already in the pipeline.

This is, however, only the first step towards the goal of making a substantial difference to learners outcomes through research and development. NRDC therefore intends to make 2004/05 its 'Year of the Practitioner'.

How will we do this?

We intend to make a step change in reaching and engaging the people who deliver the skills for life strategy across the country. We appreciate that to maximise the impact from our work we need to communicate with, consult and engage many thousands more practitioners.

We must therefore reach those working in all types of organisations which offer or support literacy, numeracy and language learning for adults, whether this is offered separately or integrated into other programmes of learning. We must also include in the term "practitioner" not just teachers and trainers but guidance and support workers, leaders and managers at all levels and others who work as local intermediaries and brokers to encourage and motivate people to learn.

We recognise that:

- Practitioners need to have more sense of ownership of NRDC and be more actively involved, not only in our work but also in the evolution of the **Skills for Life** strategy.
- Research publications do not change practice by themselves. That will only happen through further development work and transformation work, transforming research findings into useful knowledge and practical guidance to improve and invigorate teaching and learning.
- Substantial numbers of practitioners are hungry to engage personally with research and development. They can contribute significantly to this research themselves, supported where necessary with training and mentoring. Equally, NRDC benefits from the professional knowledge which teachers and managers bring to research.
- If we want to grow a vibrant and knowledgeable profession which can use the findings of research, we need to both increase the numbers involved in our work and devise ways of cascading to the wider practice community the knowledge and culture the research/practice collaboration brings.

We propose to achieve this through a multi-stranded approach to offer something which will engage all our practitioner stakeholders:

- We plan a wider range of events, including seminars, conferences, networks and consultative 'listening' activities. ***Ideas for good ways of developing these would be very welcome.***
- We will put research findings and recommendations into the hands of more and more practitioners. We will do this in accessible language and formats which enable them easily to absorb, judge the value of, and translate them into day to day practice. ***We welcome advice on ways to deliver this goal.***
- We will also make sure that practitioners' opinions and ideas for taking NRDC's work forward are continuously sought, both in person and through our website. ***Please let us know your views.***
- Developing and maintaining the website is a priority task. The web is an increasingly important means of communication. We aim to make the site more 'content rich', more interactive with spaces for dialogue and contributions from practitioners include learners' voices. ***Let us know what you would like to see on the site.***

To support this programme we are developing a comprehensive database to ensure we reach as many as possible of those who can benefit from our work and build up our contacts list of research and development active practitioners.

You can make sure you have a say in what we do and are informed about NRDC developments by signing up on the website www.nrdc.org.uk or by emailing info@nrdc.org.uk