



National Research and Development Centre  
for adult literacy and numeracy



## **Strategy 2003-2007**

Generating knowledge and  
transforming it into practice

# Why the National Research and Development Centre for Adult Literacy and Numeracy (NRDC) was created

Literacy, numeracy and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) 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 Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development reported on an international survey, a major study 'The International Adult Literacy Survey'. As a result, a national committee was established 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. They estimated that:

- up to 7 million adults in England had significant problems with literacy
- 40% of the population had very low numeracy skills.

The report also estimated that only 250,000 of those 7 million adults were at that time undertaking any relevant course of study.

In 2001 **the Department for Education and Skills** (DfES) responded to this challenge by launching the **Skills for Life** Strategy. **Skills for Life** set an initial aim of helping to improve the literacy and numeracy achievement of 750,000 adults by 2004, rising to 1.5 million by 2007.

The Moser Committee report also noted that:

- there were major gaps in our knowledge about literacy, numeracy and ESOL
- further research was needed, including:
  - the benefits of developing basic skills for individuals and the economy
  - continued use of longitudinal studies which focus on the impact of basic skills, and the intergenerational impact of basic skills needs in adult learning
  - studies of the effectiveness of different approaches to teaching, learning and assessment in literacy, numeracy and language learning with an international dimension
  - an international comparative evaluation of the impact of policies and initiatives on literacy, numeracy and language.
- research in the past had focused on problems with reading and to a lesser extent with 'numberwork'. Future research should focus on:
  - language and numeracy for speakers of other languages
  - writing
  - oral communication skills
  - ICT and other key skills
  - learners with disabilities and those with learning difficulties, including dyslexia
  - assessment procedures
  - literacy and numeracy needs at work, across a range of occupations.

The **Skills for Life** strategy responded to the Moser report's recommendations by establishing a National Research and Development Centre for Adult Literacy and Numeracy.

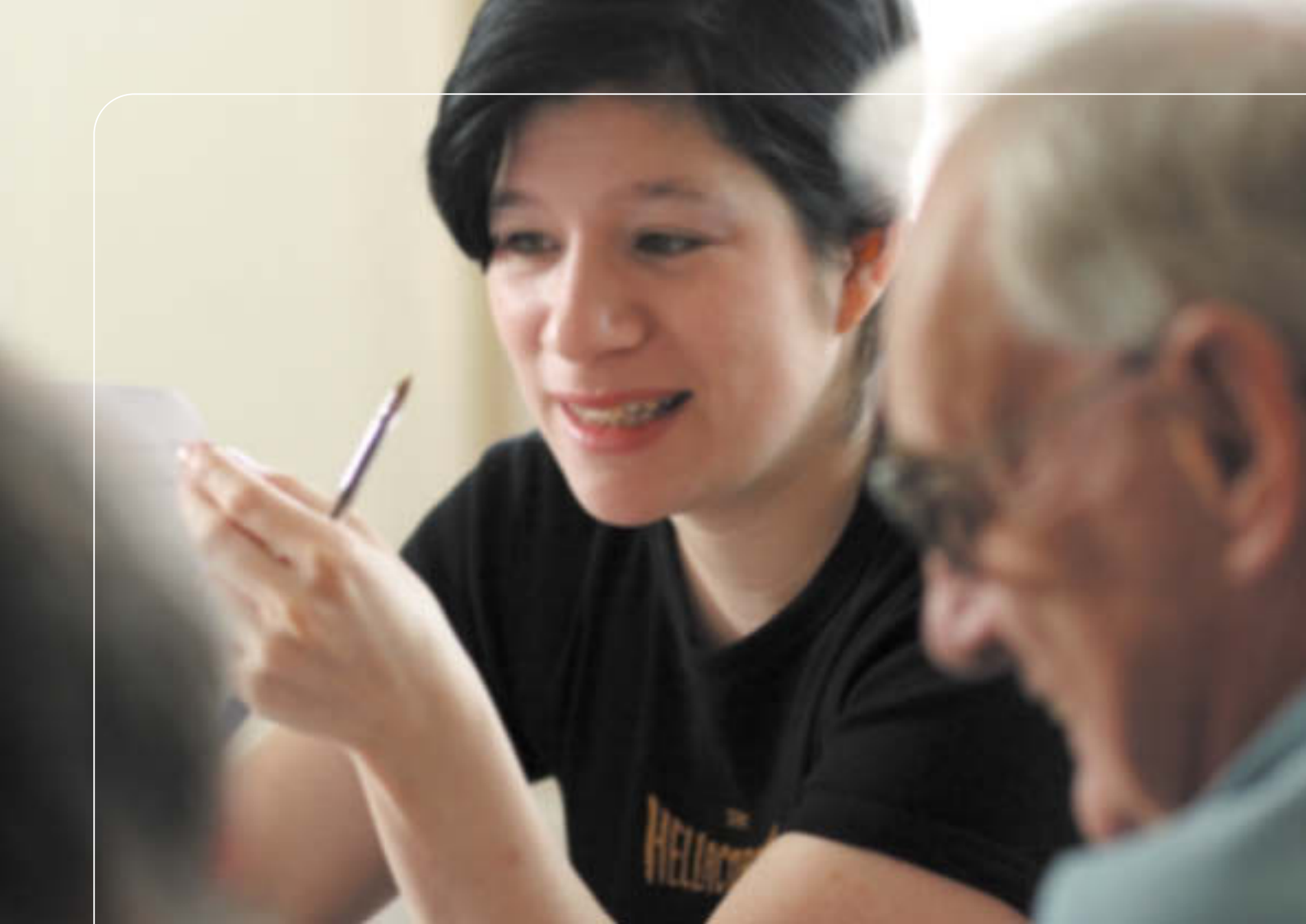




**Skills for Life** is an all embracing literacy, language and numeracy strategy, covering all 16+ learners on pre-entry up to Level 2, discrete and embedded provision, classroom, community and voluntary and work based learning with assessment through Key Skills, GCSE Maths and English and Adult Literacy 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.

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# Foreword

by Susan Pember, Director,  
Adult Basic Skills Strategy Unit (ABSSU)

I am delighted to introduce the Strategy for the National Research and Development Centre for Adult Literacy and Numeracy.

The Centre is a cornerstone of the **Skills for Life** strategy created by government to improve the levels of literacy, language and numeracy skills of millions of adults. Sound research, and the development of the professional workforce, are crucial to the continued success of **Skills for Life** in meeting the demands for skills at work and at home, and helping adults to participate in the success of the UK economy.

NRDC was established by the DfES with a unique remit. Firstly, we placed emphasis on ‘development’ as well as research. The Centre brings together the best UK researchers in the field, together with talented and experienced development professionals.

The intention is both to change practice and to help take forward policy on the basis of new knowledge. The achievement of learners is at the heart of the Centre’s concerns, and research is the means to that end. We know that research needs development as a key to transforming research findings into practice. Here, the two are brought together in an innovative way.

The second aspect of the Centre’s unique remit is its commitment to effective and sustained communication and ‘impact’ activities throughout the course of its life, not just at the end of individual research projects. We have high hopes that this innovative approach to an educational research centre – I believe it is a ‘first’ – will make a real difference, helping us to attract many more learners and helping them to achieve their goals and achieve perhaps their first-ever qualification.

The **Skills for Life** strategy sets challenging targets. But we have already achieved a great deal, and we believe we will meet the challenge. Many more adults with literacy, numeracy and language needs are now engaged with learning – an estimated 1.5 million. More than 300,000 people have achieved a recognised national qualification, mainly the National Test. Over 200,000 people have telephoned for information and advice as a result of the ‘Get On’ campaign to attract new learners, and we have achieved over 90% public recognition of the ‘Gremlins’ campaign. Bolstered by new policies such as **Success for All** and the new **Skills Strategy**, we are confident of making the quantum leap we need.

We look to the Centre to demonstrate what effective teaching and learning are about, bringing together quality and innovation. We want to use evidence to ensure a continuing rise in standards and in learners’ achievements. We also want the Centre to ensure that teachers and other professionals learn from, implement and develop their practice from guidance based on reliable research.

Through the Centre, we have a rare opportunity to tackle a deep-seated problem in a thorough way. This is why we look to NRDC to give us the knowledge and the tools to ensure **Skills for Life** succeeds and innovatory practices are developed and sustained.



# Introduction

## **NRDC's vision**

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

NRDC's strategy is the result of consultation, debate and reviews of existing knowledge and research activity in literacy, language and numeracy. It is an ambitious strategy and we are excited by the challenge of delivering it successfully. We are committed to working closely with all our partners in the research and policy communities, and with practitioners and learners engaged in *Skills for Life*. We want to blend rigour with risk; careful analysis and hard facts with innovation and risk; and anticipate learning needs for a fast-changing future.

The opportunity to learn and to practice literacy and numeracy and use the English language

successfully is a critically important right for every person, as well as for the economic and social well-being of the country. We hope to contribute to making more and better opportunities and a rich and growing culture of literacy and numeracy practices for everyone in our society.

Please work with us. We would like feedback on our strategy, which we will review regularly. We welcome new ideas, creative thinking and important information at any time to help us develop and promote a vibrant research culture in the field.

**Ursula Howard, Director, NRDC**



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## About NRDC

NRDC is the national centre dedicated to research and development on adult literacy, numeracy and ESOL. It was established by the DfES Adult Basic Skills Strategy Unit (ABSSU) in 2002 as part of *Skills for Life*, the national strategy for improving adult literacy and numeracy skills. It is funded by the DfES for five years. 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 purpose of the Centre is 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. We seek synergy across all our programmes and work to ensure that outcomes are communicated effectively. Whenever appropriate we 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, we will promote the use of, and engagement in, research by practitioners and policy makers. We are devising programmes of work using a staged, cyclical approach, so that the programmes have a strong and positive impact, embedding findings and messages in practice and informing the future development of policy. We work closely with stakeholders and partners at local, national and international levels. We prioritise the engagement of practitioners in research and development. We are focused on 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)
- London Language and Literacy Unit, 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, Derbyshire
- Cambridge Training and Development
- Centre for British Teachers (CfBT)
- Portland College.

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## Working with stakeholders

Many organisations will be critical to NRDC's success. As well as ABSSU, and Analytical Services Division at the DfES, we will work closely with organisations and agencies, including:

- the Learning and Skills Council (LSC), national and local
- the DfES Standards Unit
- other government departments, particularly Work and Pensions (Jobcentre Plus); Trade and Industry, and Culture, Media and Sport
- cross-government units
- the National Education Research Forum (NERF) at the DfES and the other major DfES research centres
- Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) Teaching and Learning Research Programme
- the Offenders' Learning and Skills Unit and the Youth Justice Board
- the Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) and Ofsted
- the Sector Skills Development Agency and Sector Skills Councils (SSCs)
- employers, unions and the TUC
- the Regional Development Agencies
- the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA)
- the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit
- national organisations concerned with literacy, numeracy, language and learners with disabilities and those with learning difficulties including dyslexia and dyscalculia
- government departments and key organisations in Northern Ireland, Wales and Scotland.

## The context

Unprecedented social, economic and technological changes are impacting on education globally, at all levels, and in fundamental ways. Basic questions are being asked about the nature of learning and its social and economic significance. What needs to be learned is changing, and the ways in which it is learned are changing. This has important implications for practice and provides great opportunities and challenges. New research is yielding new theories and methodologies that take account of the changing nature of knowledge and media, and increasing linguistic and cultural diversity.

NRDC's strategy is contributing to these new understandings within this rapidly changing context. When applied to the field of adult literacy, numeracy and ESOL, there is a set of policy issues underpinning the *Skills for Life* strategy that can be addressed by research and development.

- **Adults are voluntary participants.** Their learning goals vary, their lives and commitments are complex. They bring to learning a personal history, often including a negative experience of initial education. We need to understand the impact of earlier life and education, to maximise adults' chances of re-engaging successfully.
- **Levels of literacy, numeracy and language.** Significant proportions of adults have literacy, numeracy and ESOL needs, and there are issues concerning the relation of these to family background, initial education and their effects on later life.
- **Numeracy.** There has been a more recent awareness of and focus on problems with numeracy, their crucial relationship to employment, and their past neglect by researchers. In particular, there are institutional demands for greater and more complex financial skills for individuals and families as well as for businesses.
- **International comparisons.** There are questions about levels of literacy and numeracy in the UK in relation to other developed countries. Comparisons within the UK economy suggest a polarised skills profile, with a low skills base alongside a high graduate population, leaving a critical gap in intermediate skills.
- **New technologies.** New technologies impact all areas of life. In education they provide potential new tools for learning. At the same time, there is a danger that lack of access and skills will exacerbate a 'digital divide'.
- **Language and cultural issues** arising from increased mobility and displacement.
- **Changing demands in the home and workplace.** Social and technological changes are leading to constantly changing demands for literacy, numeracy, English language skills and ICT, at work and in all domains of life.
- **The shift to a higher-skills economy,** the changing nature of employment, greater mobility, displacement and increasing uncertainty all make greater skill demands on individuals and communities. Such changes highlight the need for learning throughout life in non-formal as well as formal contexts.
- **Social inclusion.** There are well documented links between qualifications gained in school education and patterns of participation in post-16 learning; similarly, low levels of educational achievement are reflected in low levels of active participation in community and social activities.
- **Demographic changes.** There is an ageing population who need to sustain independence, health and well-being, all of which require skills – with proven links between learning and health.

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## **Policies and initiatives which NRDC's work will aim to inform, support and develop include:**

- the **Skills for Life** strategy and targets, which aim to reduce dramatically the number of adults with literacy, numeracy and ESOL difficulties
- **Key Skills**, a range of essential skills, closely related to basic skills, that underpin success in education, employment, lifelong learning and personal development
- **Jobcentre Plus**, the Department for Work and Pensions initiative for improving support for job seekers including basic skills training
- **Success for All**, the government's strategy to improve the quality of teaching and learning, develop teacher education, develop leadership and management and improve governance and accountability across post-16 learning and skills provision
- **reforms to 14–19 education**, with its strong focus on vocational learning, manageable assessment, a simpler, clearer qualifications framework, particularly for vocational qualifications, and wider choice for learners
- **The post-16 qualifications framework**, and the range of new and revised qualifications at advanced level
- the **National Skills Strategy and Delivery Plan**
- the **DfES e-learning strategy** and the recommendation that ICT should become a basic skill and entitlement
- the **National Health Service University (NHSU)**, with an estimated 60,000 NHS staff who may have difficulty with literacy, numeracy and ESOL; and learning opportunities for patients and carers to improve substantially literacy, language and numeracy and their positive links to health
- **University for Industry(Ufi)/learndirect** which aims to fit learning into life, using ICT to meet the needs of learners and employers, bringing new educational opportunities to adults, promoting social inclusion and offering programmes with literacy and numeracy skills
- the **Neighbourhood Renewal Unit** promoting high quality education, housing and better health in the 88 most deprived wards in the country
- the **Disability Discrimination Act, 1995**, Part IV of which specifically promotes the educational needs of adult learners and the necessity to make reasonable adjustments for the learning of literacy and numeracy
- LSC's **Skills for Life Quality Initiative**, encompassing professional development for teachers, managers and leaders.



# Strategic aims

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### **Our 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.

To support these aims, the Centre will attract new sponsorship and sources of funding for research, development, evaluation and impact studies in adult literacy, numeracy and ESOL.

## What we stand for

The values and principles underpinning NRDC's activity are:

- to ensure that the needs of learners are the central focus of our work
- to address equality and diversity in all our activities
- to engage practitioners in all stages of our work
- to exemplify good partnership, working within and beyond the consortium
- to work in accordance with accepted ethical frameworks for research
- to make NRDC's operations as transparent as possible
- to work towards a world-class standard in our research and development.

### Ensuring flexibility

Because significant new issues can emerge quickly, flexibility will be essential. During the five year period of the NRDC strategy, we will review annually the priorities and activities across the five programmes, as well as our strategies for communication, dissemination and impact, and for practitioner engagement. In this way, we will ensure that the focus remains timely and each programme is able to incorporate significant new developments, synergy with other research and policy perspectives.

## Delivering the strategy

NRDC's strategy will be delivered through a 'Delivery Plan' as part of *Skills for Life*; together with annual operating plans and reports. These will be available on NRDC's website.

## Evaluating NRDC's success

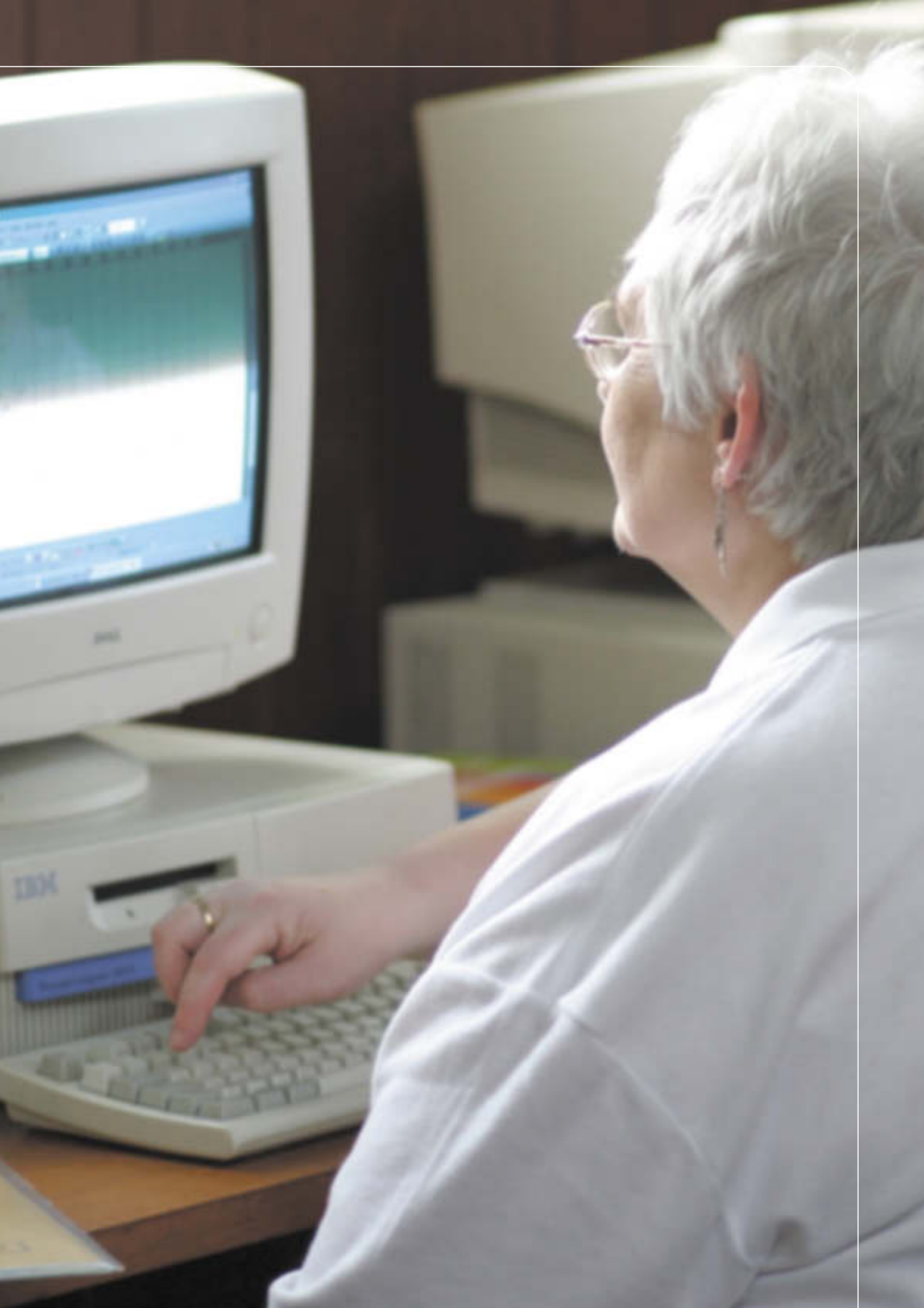
NRDC will evaluate the quality of its work and its impact on its users. NRDC's evaluative self-assessment will ask:

- are we meeting our strategic aims?
- is our research and development of high quality, offering evidence and knowledge from rigorous and innovative processes?
- are we constantly addressing the interests of learners and potential learners?
- are we successfully engaging practitioners?
- are we having a positive impact on practice?
- is our research usefully informing policy?

NRDC will embed self-evaluation into our programmes and projects. This assessment will be formative, summative and evaluative. Our annual Operational Plan includes delivery and impact performance measures. Evaluation will focus on NRDC's impact on practitioners, particularly teachers. It will also draw on comparison with initiatives in other countries.

NRDC's external Advisory Group will guide our evaluation and impact strategy. Evaluation reports will be made available through the website. At the end of the strategy period a final summative evaluation report will be published.

"For the first time since I am in England, I feel I belong to something. I am part of a group of students, people in some way like me, eager to learn and improve each day. They are real people, with families, dreams and worries, not the distant human shapes I used to see through my window."





# Getting the process right: a strategic approach

About 30 years ago there was much talk that geologists ought only to observe and not theorise; and I well remember someone saying that at this rate a man might as well go into a gravel pit and count the pebbles and describe the colours. How odd it is that anyone should not see that all observation must be for or against some view if it is to be of any service!

**Charles Darwin, 18 September 1861**



## The research and development cycle

NRDC is committed to ensuring that its research is both methodologically rigorous and grounded in the needs of learners, practitioners and employers. We make every effort to reflect these commitments in all stages of the research process, particularly by involving policy and practice communities in the planning and delivery of our work.

We see the research and development process as including work to identify effective practices and ensure that these and other research outcomes are developed and applied as widely as possible in the relevant policy and practice contexts. Impact is integral to all we do. It is not just a linear process of ‘what we do with the results’.

The stages of research engage a wide range of stakeholders, practitioners, policy makers and others in a cycle that can be expressed diagrammatically, as in Figure 1. This diagram summarises a complex and iterative process; research and development includes the whole of this cycle, not just the ‘investigating’ part. Planning the work, in collaboration with appropriate policy and practice inputs, is vital to the generation of useful research evidence and development products. Equally, we will work to transform the outcomes to integrate them into the everyday activities of practice. Research evidence on its own rarely leads directly to large changes.

The stages of this diagram may also be repeated, jumped, or omitted in the circumstances of individual projects.



Figure 1: The Cycle of research Adapted from Morris (2002)

## Range and scope

Programmes of study will engage with the range of subject areas, learning environments, groups of learners and distinct populations.

- **Subject areas: literacy, reading and writing, numeracy and ESOL**

We will conduct research into literacy, ESOL and numeracy as discrete elements in basic skills and their articulation with Key Skills. Other studies will look at specific issues that are relevant across the domains. We will also carry out research and development into how best literacy, numeracy and English language needs can be integrated at every level in vocational and academic programmes of learning, taking into account the increasing importance of ICT as a crucial medium and set of skills needed for work.

- **The diversity of learners**

Our work will include all learners with literacy, numeracy and language needs from entry level onwards. Our strategy will address the diversity of learners and their range of learning needs. We recognise that some learners need to develop in a single domain, while others require support across the *Skills for Life* curricula. Our work will include

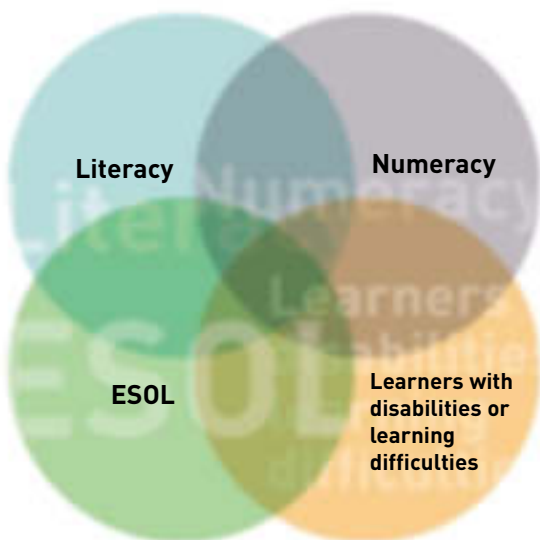


Figure 2: Learners' needs can range from a specific aspect of *Skills for Life* to a wide-ranging and overlapping set of needs.

studies with a focus on the needs of particular groups in the population, including people with disabilities or learning difficulties or mental health problems, refugees and asylum seekers, homeless people, young people at risk, offenders and older learners.

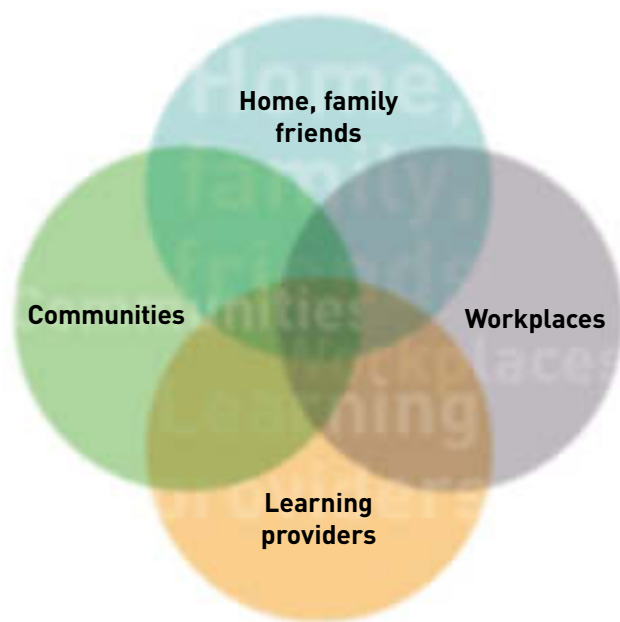


Figure 3: The variety and overlapping nature of contexts and sites of learning

- **The range of learning environments**

We will ensure our work addresses learning in context. A diversity of contexts – urban and rural settings; multi-cultural communities; large and small businesses, etc. – demand a relevant and focused offer from the supply-side. We will include learning that takes place at work; in colleges and learning centres; in families; neighbourhoods and communities; in prisons; and ICT-supported provision, whether discrete or blended with classroom-based provision. The range of environments will change, with the possibility of much more access to learning through interactive digital TV, more ubiquitous computing, enabling more informal and possibly smaller chunks of learning than has been common to date. We will seek to ensure that the knowledge we generate is relevant to learning wherever and whenever it takes place, now and in the future.

## Research methodology

The NRDC methodology is wide ranging, embracing large-scale longitudinal and cross-sectional studies (which follow a sizeable cohort of people born at a particular time); ethnographic and biographical studies (based on individuals and groups in a variety of contexts); exploratory and intervention studies (including, if possible, randomised controlled trials); and systematic research reviews. The Centre is committed to methodological integration, using the appropriate method to address each research question and triangulating evidence from one method to another to gain optimum insights and synergy into the processes and outcomes of basic skills learning and teaching. Strong practitioner involvement is also central to our programmes.

Our aim is to improve understanding of the operation of *Skills for Life* and to help shape its development through developing and testing explanatory models to support the policy process. This requires evidence that is both rooted in practice and meets the highest standards of methodological rigour. For maximum effectiveness, therefore, NRDC research programmes and the DfES policy process need to work in tandem.

Figure 4 represents this relationship as one of continuing 'dialogue between ideas and evidence'. The surrounding area is the policy environment; the outer circle is the policy process; and the space between the two outer circles is the research-policy ideas interface. The inner circle represents the research process itself, directed at building models through the scientific procedures of:

- formulating research questions and hypotheses
- operationalisation through a research design
- observation
- generalisation.

### Types of research project include:

- general population studies
- studies of distinct populations
- case studies in particular settings.

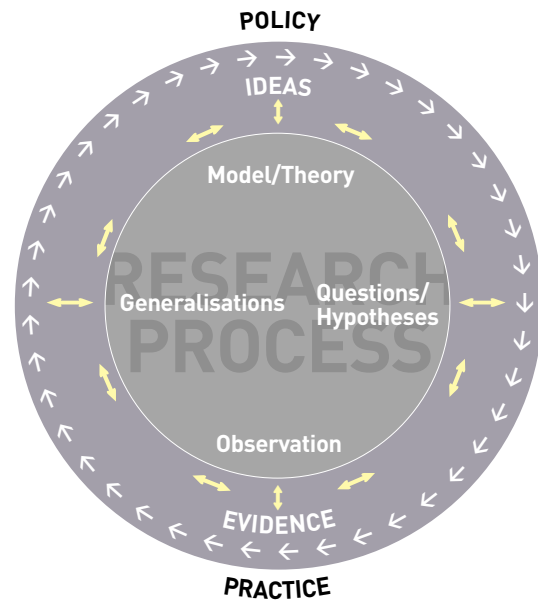


Figure 4: Dialogue between ideas and evidence

### Methods include:

- research reviews
- longitudinal and cross-sectional surveys
- experiments
- ethnography and social biography.

### Distinct populations include:

- speakers of other languages, including refugees and asylum seekers
- adults with disabilities or learning difficulties
- learners with mental health problems
- offenders and young people at risk
- people living in rural areas
- older learners.

### Settings include:

- workplace
- educational institutions
- community
- family
- offenders' institutions and support services
- online provision.

### Cross-cutting themes include:

- motivation and functionality
- employability and productivity
- exclusion and integration
- access to mainstream and embedding

- curriculum and assessment
- pedagogy, teaching and learning
- quality and effectiveness and type of provision.

NRDC's use of longitudinal surveys includes augmenting the 1958 and 1970 British birth cohort studies with literacy, numeracy and ESOL interview questions and cohort member assessments. There will be an intergenerational extension through parent-and-child assessments. New longitudinal enquiries will include the teacher and learner and ESOL panels, and follow-up of groups such as young offenders and adults with learning difficulties.

Experimental methodology is treated broadly, signifying comparisons of groups with differing exposure to a policy initiative, curriculum innovation or teaching approach. Experiments can range from 'quasi' or natural experiments, in which there is no attempt to manipulate the way in which the 'treatment' is experienced, through matched treatment and control groups, to randomised control trials where a clear need exists to investigate causality.

Ethnographic enquiries include participant and non-participant observations, learners' and teachers' accounts, biographical (life history) interviews and analysis of documents. Practitioner researchers will have a major role at all stages of design, data collection and interpretation.

Systematic reviews and best-evidence syntheses can identify reliable findings and sometimes produce recommendations for pedagogy.

All new data collected will be archived for secondary use by others in the programme and by the wider research community in Britain and overseas.

## A guide to the research process

- 1 **Problem.** What are we trying to find out, and are we sure it is the right issue? What is already known about this problem?
- 2 **Purpose.** When we have answered our questions, what use are the answers and what will we do with them?
- 3 **Consultation.** Have we involved the right people outside the research community in scoping the problem?
- 4 **Questions.** What research questions will address the problem? Have our partners been involved in formulating them? What research evidence already exists on these questions?
- 5 **Methodology.** What research methodology (ies) best addresses these questions?
- 6 **Resources.** What resources do we need to undertake the project? How will we recruit and train any expertise for which there are gaps in our team?
- 7 **Timetable.** How long will it realistically take to undertake the project, including work to embed research findings into practice?
- 8 **Risk.** What are the risks of delays and loss of key personnel?
- 9 **Cost.** How much money is needed (for planning, research and impact)?
- 10 **The unexpected.** What will we do if the research approach proves to be unrealistic or the results are not what we expect?
- 11 **Impact.** How do we plan to transform, communicate and work for the integration of what we find out into the everyday activities of our communities?





# Developing NRDC's programmes

In its first year of operation, we have completed a series of reviews of research in the areas of:

- reading difficulty
- the teaching and learning of writing
- numeracy
- ESOL
- dyslexia
- work-based literacy and numeracy
- the needs of rural employers
- community-focused provision
- ESOL for learners with learning difficulties
- learners with sensory or physical disabilities
- models of adult learning.

We have also consulted with practitioners, policy makers and a wide range of stakeholders engaged with *Skills for Life*. We have looked at literacy, numeracy and ESOL research strategies in other countries, particularly the USA, Canada and Australia. On this basis, we have reviewed our draft strategy and priorities. As a result, our Strategy 2003–2007 is organised into five programmes, underpinned by procedures to ensure that we address all the key national priorities.

Many research issues and questions will also be relevant to other programmes. NRDC's approach will 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.

#### **Programme Two Participation: agency motivation and engagement**

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.

#### **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.

#### **Programme Four Professional development and the Skills for Life workforce**

Programme Four will work 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 promote reflective practice through the engagement of practitioners in research.

#### **Programme Five The content and infrastructure of Skills for Life**

Programme Five will focus 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 will focus on how the 'supply side' can respond most effectively.

#### **Underpinning strategies**

NRDC's programmes will be underpinned by specific strategies for:

- **communication and impact**, including the relationship between research and development in transforming research into practice
- **practitioner engagement**, capacity building and the development of teachers as researchers and reflective practitioners.

# Programme One

## Economic development and social inclusion

Whether or not education is financially good for their country, the past half-century teaches that it is certainly good for the educated. The more education you acquire, the higher your income is likely to be and the less likely you are to experience long- or even short-term unemployment.

(Alison Wolf, *Does education matter?* 2001)

There is ... a powerful public good argument to be made on behalf of focused state intervention to support community-based and informal learning. Government can ... help create the kind of social capital that is needed to enable the most excluded groups and communities to break through the profound external obstacles and internal constraints that are inhibiting regeneration and renewal.

(John Field in F. Coffield (ed) *What progress are we making with lifelong learning? – the evidence from research.* 2001)

“Learning to read and write at forty was the hardest thing I have ever done. First I had to admit to myself that I needed help, then I had to ask strangers for help. It was hard work and up hill all the way for the first two years, but I think it was the best thing I have ever done.”

Coare, P and A Thomson (eds.) (1996) *Through the Joy of Learning: diary of 1,000 Adult Learners.* NIACE.

### KEY QUESTIONS

- What are the economic and social consequences of literacy, language, numeracy and ESOL problems for individual adults and for society?
- What are the economic, social and personal benefits of literacy, numeracy and English language skills?

The strong links between socio-economic variables and literacy and numeracy skills are well established and underlie the *Skills for Life* strategy. Existing cohort studies show that over the last twenty years, adults with literacy, numeracy and language problems have faced increasing difficulties gaining and maintaining work. Men often drift towards the margins of the labour market, moving between casual unskilled jobs and unemployment. Young women often leave paid work early to have children. Both outcomes are identified with ‘social exclusion’, in which poor employment prospects can lead to marginalisation in other ways, including poverty, poor physical and psychological health, drug abuse, crime and intergenerational cycles of social and educational disadvantage.

As shown by the work of the Social Exclusion Unit and the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit, these processes may be exacerbated among particular groups and in particular locations. People with a non-English speaking background, (including refugees and asylum seekers), adults with learning difficulties and those with disabilities, teenage parents and people living in disadvantaged areas are more prone on average to basic skills problems and the predisposing conditions for social exclusion.

The *Skills for Life* strategy is based on the premise that improving literacy, numeracy and English language skills will help to turn social exclusion to social inclusion, and will also contribute to social and economic well-being.

Raising skill levels will enhance not only employability, but productivity. Nonetheless, it has proved complex and challenging in the past to engage employers, and raise commitment to lifelong learning for their employees, particularly those with low skills. Finding effective ways to support the skills of self-employed people and small businesses – a vast sector of the economy – remains a major challenge. NRDC’s research and development will seek to engage employers and unions, both to inform our work and to communicate its findings.

Literacy, numeracy and spoken English are the foundation of capabilities that underlie the different forms of ‘capital’ that individuals need to function well in modern society:

- They provide the route to educational achievement and credentials – the basis of **human capital**.
- Learning and using literacy and numeracy also play an integral part in developing **social capital** and active citizenship, by facilitating participation in communities and strengthening social relationships.
- The development of knowledge and skills also contributes to a wider set of psychological and social attributes and capabilities, termed **identity capital**, ranging from self-confidence to teamwork, and increasingly in demand by employers.



Access to these forms of capital equips people to construct a productive and fulfilling life in a fast-changing world that constantly presents new demands and challenges.

The effectiveness of the **Skills for Life** strategy will be strongly dependent on how well we understand and can act upon the links between basic skills and socio-economic outcomes. The knowledge and evidence NRDC generates will inform the future development of literacy, language and numeracy policy and its implementation at national, regional and local levels.

#### AIMS

This programme is concerned with research to identify, and aid understanding of, the impact of literacy, numeracy and English language in the socio-economic domain. Objective quantitative information from British population studies exists only in the limited collection of data in the 1958 and 1970 birth cohorts. Enhancing these studies by applying basic skills assessments to all cohort members will greatly increase the knowledge base of the British population. It will contribute to knowledge about the role of basic skills in human, social and identity capital, and the mediating value of enhanced capability in determining socio-economic outcomes in later life, including:

- the effects of basic skills on productivity among particular groups in particular occupational areas
- the effects on the social exclusion of different categories of individuals

without sufficient literacy, numeracy and English language skills to change their lives for the better.

The studies will take account of adversity and risk in the development of educational and occupational careers marred by lack of basic skills, and the impact on later transitions and outcomes throughout adult life.

In this programme we will:

- model the economic and social returns to basic skills, the key influences on skills acquisition, and how progress can be accelerated
- model the impact of accumulated risk and failure to acquire sufficient literacy, numeracy and English language skills
- monitor the demand for literacy, language and numeracy in a changing labour market and the role they have in productivity
- assess the role of basic skills in the processes underlying social exclusion and social cohesion
- assess the impact of initial education and family literacy on post-16 learning, and the impact of **Skills for Life** on the next generation through intergenerational studies
- identify the impact of literacy, numeracy and ESOL on productivity, earnings, social inclusion and personal development 'life changing' skills, especially how improved numeracy enhances employment chances.

In addition to general population studies involving longitudinal and cross-

sectional surveys, studies of particular populations in settings such as the community and the workplace will use ethnographic and experimental methods. These populations include people from non-English speaking backgrounds, offenders and people with disabilities or learning difficulties; those with dyslexia or dyscalculia. Other groups are likely to gain prominence in the light of social and economic trends and changing policy concerns. They will be kept under review.

Major themes running through this programme's research are the roles that literacy, numeracy and English language play for different groups in different life domains, and the critical issue of how people cope with basic skills difficulties. Programme Two will explore these issues in depth, including thorough major qualitative studies.

## Research in Programme One includes:

- **The 1958 and 1970 British birth cohort studies enhanced to include literacy and numeracy measures** in the next follow-ups, scheduled for 2003/04. This will multiply ten-fold the scope of previous work, which was based on 10% samples of the cohorts.
- **An intergenerational component to assess the literacy and numeracy development of children of members of the 1970 British Cohort Study.** This will follow a comparable survey in 1991 that used the 1958 cohort at the same age. To extend the survey more fully to a family study, partners of cohort members will also be interviewed.
- **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 will comprise a series of studies of designated populations in workplace and community settings, linked in an integrated programme. The study will include 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.
- **Identifying effective workplace basic skills strategies for enhancing employee development and productivity.** This project began in 2002 and 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.
- **The impact on productivity of workforce development that includes or integrates basic skills.** This project will focus on literacy, numeracy, ESOL and related skills tailored to the workplace. It seeks a clearer correlation or measurement of the impact on productivity of investment in skills, and aims to secure a reliable research base for the cost to UK industry of poor basic skills. This challenging task will require matched studies of companies with and without strong workforce development that includes basic skills.
- **The returns to ESOL learning for learners' lives and the economy.** This longitudinal study will include the impact on employability and earnings, health and wider social inclusion for individuals and their families.
- **Longitudinal study of young people.** The new DfES-sponsored project is expected to follow up 15,000 children of 14, including a third from minority ethnic backgrounds, with annual surveys up to age 25. Its twin themes are transition to employment and social cohesion. NRDC aims to include basic skills assessments at appropriate stages in the survey. This will enable a better understanding of the impact of earlier stages in learning, particularly the 14–19 phase, on adult participation and achievement.

### OUTCOMES

The outcomes of research in Programme One will provide resources for further projects in this and other NRDC programmes. They will feed back to government and other agencies the implications for policy development and will offer evidence for the improvement of practice in:

- recruitment and participation, motivation and retention
- more effective strategies for increasing uptake of learning opportunities
- the effectiveness of learning programmes
- engaging employers in work-related and workplace learning
- the development and delivery of work-based learning which can be embedded and transform working practices
- engagement in the labour market and the economic returns to improved literacy, numeracy skills and related knowledge and capacity
- engagement in society, community and family
- the role of literacy, numeracy and language learning in increasing social capital
- accelerating the reduction in the number of adults with low literacy, language and numeracy skills.

## Programme Two

### Participation: agency, motivation and engagement

The word 'ettle' captures our desire to measure a rich version of ... intentional learning orientation. 'Ettle' is a perfectly marvellous word seldom used outside of Scottish literature. As a noun, ettle means ambition or aim. As a verb ... it means to take aim, to inspire, to be ambitious, to direct one's course. The word 'ettle' carries with it a refreshing and (hopefully) incorruptible essence of human agency.

(Bunderson, Martinez & McBride, 1999)

#### 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 need to increase and widen participation in learning throughout life is widely recognised as vital for a healthy economy, culture and society. This is central to **Skills for Life**. The overall picture is one of persistently uneven and unequal patterns of adult participation in education and training. Adults with low levels of literacy, numeracy and English language skills have often been assumed to lack the motivation to improve their skills or to maintain them once achieved. Their learning outside formal learning environments has often been disregarded.

By focusing on the positive ('ettle') rather than the negative aspects of adults' intention to learn (such as 'lack of motivation'), we may come to understand better what draws adults to participate in learning opportunities. Then we can recognise and appreciate those autodidacts and mutually supportive groups of informal learners whose efforts and aspirations to learn outside the classroom have too often been the objects of condescension or have simply gone unnoticed.

Adults are voluntary participants. They have widely varying objectives,

complex lives and commitments, and may learn in patterns that are different from the largely set menus of the 'supply side'. Not all adults recognise any need to participate in learning. Literacy, numeracy and English language are a means to an end in people's lives. Most adults with a fragile grasp of them have learned to cope and compensate. It is often only when a particular demand is placed upon a person at work or in family life – the need to use a computer or to help children learn – that there is motivation to improve. Even then, willingness to engage may not materialise into participation, especially when access to learning opportunities is difficult because providers are not adapted to meeting particular needs, or because transport and other costs are prohibitive.

Understanding the potential for digital technologies will be increasingly important in motivation and access. However, it needs to be closely monitored and researched, so that a digital divide does not simply replicate or even increase existing divisions in learning.

We may also be better able to prepare new teachers and provide better Continuing Professional Development (CPD) for existing teachers of adults, so that they do not over-protect or have low expectations of their students. For example, research at King's College London with primary school teachers has discovered a desire to protect pupils from mathematics on the grounds that the subject is perceived as difficult, unpleasant and produces feelings of shame (Bibby 1999). If adult tutors of numeracy hold such views, how can they inspire, support and challenge their students?

"We enjoyed learning and getting new ideas about job search and courses ... it gave us something to think about outside the home and children. Most of all we have gained confidence and a little assertiveness."

Coare, P and A Thomson (eds.) (1996) *Through the Joy of Learning: diary of 1,000 Adult Learners*. NIACE.

A growing body of research, especially in psychology and learning theory, stresses the importance of motivation and confidence in promoting effective learning. Practical advice emerging from research suggests the importance of setting demanding but achievable goals, broken down into small steps. There have been advances in establishing the ways that motivation and effective learning are tied to the physical structure of the brain, and the way that long-term or 'deep' learning takes place.

While we can start from a firm research basis, we do not begin to know everything we need to know about how to attract new learners and implement learning programmes that motivate learners effectively. There are often gaps between rhetoric and concrete advice because no firm evidence exists. For example, how learning styles relate to the value of a variety of approaches is one area that has potential, but it is open to challenge and in need of research. We also know too little about how best to help learners overcome a demotivating history of failure, or being failed, in formative stages of life.

If the *Skills for Life* targets are to be met, it is critical to discover the extent to which current provision motivates people and how providers can respond to the complex needs of potential learners.

## AIMS

- To inform demand-led strategies for attracting new learners.** In order that 1.5 million adults can have significantly improved their literacy and numeracy by 2007, learning needs to become more compelling for people who may currently feel it is 'not for them', or who encounter external barriers. The education and training system – the 'supply side' – needs to understand better what motivates or inspires adults of all ages to engage in learning, so that learning opportunities can be shaped to reflect these factors.
- To reconceptualise demand for learning.** NRDC will take forward and test new approaches to reconceptualising intentional learning, which expand the construct beyond the social and cognitive to include the conative and affective, and examine the importance of the relationships between all of these for increasing agency and active participation in learning.
- To deepen understanding of motivation and persistence in learning literacy, numeracy and English language, and the key factors that determine who stays and who drops out of provision.** Programmes will take account of the diversity of learners, their purposes, needs and expectations; their circumstances, cultures and learning histories. We will investigate the balance of external and personal factors that affect persistence.
- To prioritise research and development on numeracy and mathematical/financial literacy as a critical national educational priority.** While literacy, numeracy and ESOL are all important to NRDC's work, numeracy has emerged as the area of greatest need in population studies. There is evidence that numeracy and mathematical and financial literacy are increasingly in demand, and at increasingly sophisticated levels, in the workplace and in daily life. NRDC will focus on how to overcome barriers to learning numbers and maths for adults. We will address key issues arising from both the national survey of needs commissioned by ABSSU (2002), and the 14–19 Maths Inquiry (2003). We will undertake research on the connection between financial literacy and the wider adult literacy, language and numeracy agenda.
- To enable informed estimates of demand for ICT skills,** particularly in the workplace, to enable providers to offer effective, relevant and technologically up-to-date learning programmes.

## Research in Programme Two includes:

### 1 | Adult Learners' Lives.

This programme of concerted studies of adult learners follows people in their everyday lives, at home, at work and in the classroom. The research will complement and enhance the longitudinal studies and databases examined in Programme One and will contribute evidence to Programmes Three and Four about the nature of effective teaching and learning and the issues for professionals implementing *Skills for Life*. The methodology will enable a strong focus on motivation and persistence, examining the links between basic skills difficulties and social issues such as:

- homelessness, poverty, community participation, physical and mental health, disability, discrimination, family violence and unemployment
- strategies that adults with poor basic skills use to function effectively, and the significance of literacy, language and numeracy in their lives
- learners' perceptions, notions of identity, experiences of the learning opportunities directed at them, and motivation to attend and persist with learning, in the context of their circumstances and way of life
- approaches most likely to increase participation in basic skills programmes
- guidance from teacher-researchers on how to integrate research with practice.

#### OUTCOMES

- guidance on effective strategies for attracting new learners and stimulating demand
- reports on the social and economic effects of participation
- reports on literacy, numeracy and English language demands and uses in specific workplaces, communities and other settings and how they are changing
- strategies for impact, generalising the local nature of findings
- recommendations for professional development
- implications for practice.

### 2 | 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, and other school drop-outs with poor literacy, numeracy and English language skills. We aim 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
- whether this, in turn, will significantly reduce subsequent offending, unemployment or uptake of benefits.

#### OUTCOMES

- a literacy and numeracy curriculum and practitioner training strategy focused on 16 to 19 year-olds who have offended or are socially excluded
- analysis of the effectiveness of the curriculum, using findings to improve future development
- evidence for the role of literacy, numeracy and ESOL in the prevention of social exclusion among young people.

### 3 | Making numeracy meaningful.

This study investigates the relationship between the numeracy taught in learning environments and learners' practices in numeracy and mathematical literacy in their everyday lives. Financial literacy will also be a focus. It tests the hypothesis that adults will be able to function more efficiently, and progress at work and in society, because they are able to study on numeracy programmes that use their own contexts and purposes.

#### OUTCOMES

- findings that help dismantle internal and external barriers to participation
- findings that inform adult numeracy provision
- findings that help learners connect what they are taught with their everyday lives
- evidence to inform teacher development programmes.

## Programme Three

### Effective teaching and learning

There is no reason to assume that reading must be learned in a traditional classroom or that learning moves along a smooth path with measureable amounts of knowledge absorbed over a specific time period, or that there is one way of learning or even a best way ... It is important to have a sense of the different ways in which people learn to read and also to acquire ways of finding out how well someone actually reads.

(Herbert Kohl, 1974)

"I did maths today. It is opening up a new world for me as I always believed I was stupid ... today my tutor taught me how to identify a twenty four hour clock ... I am also beginning to use a calculator and lose my fear of it. Each time I go I come away feeling I want the class to carry on all day. Maybe one day I'll know enough to sit my GCSE in maths."

Coare, P and A Thomson (eds.) [1996] *Through the Joy of Learning: diary of 1,000 Adult Learners*. NIACE.

#### KEY QUESTIONS

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

It is a **Skills for Life** priority to encourage progress and achievement among post-16 learners of adult literacy, numeracy and ESOL. Although there is a great deal of research and theory about how people learn, it is largely derived from studying children and school-based learning. In learning beyond 16, much less is known in general, and about adult literacy, numeracy and ESOL in particular. Pedagogy is an even less well-developed field for research.

The nature and effectiveness of learning and teaching are sensitive to curriculum development and assessment regimes. Research is needed on the impact of developments in assessment and curricula on pedagogy and learners' progress and attainment, at all levels of need. A particular focus is needed on learners below level 1, and those who are developing their skills in other vocational or community-based programmes of learning.

The programme will seek 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.

- **Groups of learners** will include: young people emerging from initial education; learners on vocational

programmes; people with learning difficulties; employees; people with sensory or physical disabilities; people with specific learning disabilities; people with mental health problems; offenders and ex-offenders; families (unemployed people); employees; older learners and those from ethnic minority groups including refugees and asylum seekers.

- **Sites of formal learning** will include FE colleges, LEA-based provision, voluntary sector initiatives, **Jobcentre Plus**, work-based learning, **learnirect** centres, prisons and young offenders' institutions, and the workplace.
- **Informal provision** will include learning at work, at home and in the community, including sport and leisure facilities. There will be a particular focus on young people, identifying critical success factors and resources for good practice.

#### AIMS

The programme aims to answer the questions: 'what is effective practice?', 'what makes a difference?', 'what works?', and 'how can learning programmes better meet learners' purposes?'. The research will reach across the key area of **Skills for Life** and create synergy across studies.

The programme will be designed to provide outcomes that can be developed into effective guidance for teachers and others who support teaching and learning. We will address the over-arching research questions by focusing on these central aspects of post-16 education and training:

- **Learning.** This will include learners' cognitive processes, characteristics, perceptions, abilities, knowledge, skills, experience and attitudes, including motivation and patterns of participation. It will ask how learners learn and progress, particularly from entry to level 1. The programme will focus on theoretical and practical issues, including learning styles; the role of learners of other languages; time needed to learn; and the impact of ICT. It will ask how the use and practice of literacy, numeracy and ESOL – within and following programmes – can be encouraged so that people maintain and develop their skills.
  - **Teaching.** This will include teaching methods and their theoretical underpinning; teaching styles, the use of technologies and other teaching resources; teachers' perceptions and orientation (e.g. skills-based or liberal-humanistic approaches); and the particular learning needs and patterns of adults. Research questions include: whether teaching should be intensive or spread out over a longer period; how much teaching is required to make useful learning gains; how to make effective use of ICT in teaching; and the role of learners of other languages in teaching.
  - **The learning environment.** This will include formal and informal learning opportunities; organisation of provision (e.g. according to levels or types of learners); timing, frequency and pattern of scheduling; and technologies and learning resources.
  - **Curriculum.** This will include the *Skills for Life* learning infrastructure and curriculum content: both the balance between skills-based and knowledge- or meaning- based approaches; and the effectiveness of discrete provision compared with contextualised and embedded learning. The learning materials to support the variety of approaches and teaching and learning strategies also need investigation.
  - **Assessment.** This will include the initial assessment of learners' needs and purposes to ensure they are offered appropriate learning programmes; the role and effectiveness of formative and summative assessment methods and instruments. Central questions are: how are progress and achievements recognised and measured?; how do tests, formative and summative assessment, impact on motivation?; and can these be developed to capture the whole literacy, numeracy and ESOL curriculum? The research will include international comparisons and consideration of the impact of online assessment methods.
  - **ICT and learning.** Work will include analysis of the capacity of the current system to support learners in developing ICT skills, especially at entry level and levels 1 and 2. Providers include FE colleges, **Ufi/learndirect** centres, UK Online centres, BBC learning centres, foyers, armed forces training centres, prisons and a range of others in the adult community learning sector. We will seek to create an overview of the workforce that supports adult ICT learners, including issues of capacity, skills, qualifications, and development and support needs. Drawing on work NRDC has already carried out, we will develop guidelines covering the design and development of effective e-learning and e-assessment resources and pedagogy to support *Skills for Life* learners.
- The framework set out above encompasses a vast range of potential research. Priorities will be established according to the following principles:
- domains and population groups with particular problems or scale of need that are of particular concern to policy makers and practitioners
  - knowledge gained from practitioners' experience and 'professional wisdom' on 'sticking points': places in a learning pathway where learners are known to have difficulty progressing and where teachers need clear evidence on what helps learners through their difficulties
  - critical questions identified by researchers or practitioners from theory and/or existing empirical evidence that can be practically addressed
  - the need to provide new evidence from robust research design and methods to inform teaching and learning practice in useful and timely ways.

## Research in Programme Three includes:

### 1 | What makes a difference?

A series of related observational studies in each of the key subject areas of *Skills for Life* will be undertaken:

- Reading
- Writing
- Numeracy
- ESOL, literacy and numeracy for speakers of other languages.

These linked studies will use observation techniques and other interventions in a variety of educational work-based and community settings to produce reliable, quantifiable evidence. The studies will aim to improve programme design, teaching and learning strategies and application of theory and techniques. While the subject areas are interconnected in teaching, learning and everyday life, there remains a need to study each one separately whilst still ensuring their interconnection. We will build a core methodology applied in common, with adjustments to reflect the characteristics of each subject area.

Research areas will include: time needed for substantial progress; the effectiveness of intensive versus longer programmes; the balance of group and individual learning; heterogeneous versus homogenous groups; managing and supporting groups with a wide range of achievements and purposes; which teaching strategies are effective in which circumstances; how the cultural dimensions and the context of learners' lives can best be accommodated; the role of learners' of other languages; how to build learners' self-confidence and self-sufficiency; how to plan, work towards and measure very small steps in learning; assessment of progress and achievement.

The **'what makes a difference?'** studies will address issues of transferability and the constraints on generalisability of findings to other contexts.

### 2 | ICT in adult literacy, numeracy and ESOL

A related **'what makes a difference?'** study to develop effective ICT-based teaching and learning strategies. The study will use a series of trials, and identify effective design guidelines for ICT-based teaching for adult literacy, numeracy and ESOL. Building on NRDC's initial work, it will offer a rigorous evaluation of strategies and work towards stronger theoretical underpinning, as well as empirical and evaluative evidence.

### 3 | The relationship between teaching and learning

This project will use an integrated approach, and analysis of large-scale qualitative data, to offer a depth of understanding to the data from quantitative studies.

This study is part of the Adult Learners' Lives project. It investigates the ways in which factors related to provision (institutional factors, and teachers' beliefs, intentions and 'input' to learning opportunities) interface with factors related to the learners (uses and learning of literacy, numeracy and ESOL in home, community and workplace settings, purposes for learning, issues of identity, informal learning practices, and perceptions and uptake of learning opportunities). The study has a special focus on the linguistic characteristics of the spoken and written texts involved in these processes.

The general data collected about learners' lives (including their literacy and numeracy practices, informal learning, communities of practice, beliefs and perceptions) will be supplemented by investigation of the following aspects of pedagogic practice:

- 'input': teachers' pedagogic intentions and practice
- 'uptake': learners' responses to these practices, and their sense of what they are gaining from the learning opportunities
- classroom interaction
- teachers' beliefs about literacy and numeracy, learning and teaching
- assessment measures used, including measures of progress already collected by the institution
- the institutional context of the provision explored in depth in Programme Five.



#### 4 | How can the national 'crisis' in numeracy be addressed in the post-16 population?

All the *Skills for Life* domains are important. However, numeracy is emerging as a particularly challenging area for research and development because of:

- the scale of need in the adult population
- the need to develop provision and teacher capacity
- the growing demand for numeracy skills in the workplace, and the need for individuals to cope with growing financial and technical applications of number
- the unpopularity of numeracy and maths subjects from a young age, which translates into reluctance to engage in or value maths as a skill among adults
- the relationship of numeracy to maths and mathematical literacy.

#### 5 | Contextualising literacy, numeracy and ESOL across the vocational curriculum.

This research and development will build on work started by NIACE in 2002 and underpin the development of learning materials. NRDC will work with the DfES Standards Unit, the Learning and Skills Council, Sector Skills Council, the TUC and other stakeholders. This project will identify and develop good practice in contextualising literacy, numeracy and ESOL in vocational programmes. Engaging employers' responsiveness will be a priority. Writing, numeracy and ICT as core vocational skills will be important elements of the research.

#### 6 | Assessment

What is most effective in the assessment of progress and achievement in both accredited and non-accredited literacy, numeracy and ESOL provision? What is the role of reading and writing formative assessment in the teaching/learning process?

#### 7 | Literacy and numeracy in families: rethinking pedagogy.

The Centre's work aims to build on existing NRDC research, to produce a descriptive language for how families engage with literacy practices. This will be developed into a conceptual framework of family practices and a pedagogical model for literacy, numeracy and ESOL in family and community settings.

#### 8 | Learning styles

We will examine the role, effectiveness and potential of learning styles, theory and approaches in relation to adult literacy, language and numeracy to enhance and enrich teaching and learning strategies and improve motivation, progress, and achievement.

#### OUTCOMES

Programme Three will produce over the five years of this strategy, a range of clear evidence and advice to practitioners and policy makers:

- better evidence both of general strategies for effective teaching and learning in adult literacy, language and numeracy and of how these can help to generate better outcomes for learners
- subject-specific evidence of the correlation between different pedagogical practices and learners' progress. This will focus on numeracy, reading, writing, ESOL and ICT, and will have a strong generalisability to a range of locations, transformed into useful strategies for practice and clear advice for policy makers
- a stronger theoretical, methodological and observational basis for further research in effective practice in teaching and learning in adult literacy and numeracy
- enhanced systemic capacity for undertaking such research and for developing it into practical teaching and learning products, strategies and policies
- clear advice for teacher training and professional development to ensure effective practice is spread across the *Skills for Life* workforce.

## Programme Four

### Professional development and the *Skills for Life* workforce

#### 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 programmes?

*Skills for Life* has set out a challenging new 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 *Skills for Life* workforce encompasses a wide range of professionals. Newly defined qualifications appropriate to their roles range from level 2 to level 5 on the National Qualifications Framework (NQF). The framework of qualifications put in place during 2002/03 requires support and development to ensure successful implementation. Some new programmes have run in 2002/03 at level 4 in literacy and numeracy teaching, with some initial developments at level 3 and a national pilot programme at level 2. The new ESOL qualifications are to be implemented from September 2003.

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. Development activity needs to

encompass the needs of specialist teachers of literacy, numeracy and ESOL, key skills teachers, the needs of those working with learners with specific learning disabilities, with learning difficulties, or with physical/sensory disabilities, and needs of staff supporting learners within discrete and embedded provision, including subject and vocational teachers.

There is an acute need in the field for development activity to build capacity, to embed the new qualifications, and to identify and share good practice.

#### AIMS

- To build capacity and to develop a fully professional workforce with a recognised career structure that is sustainable for the longer term. A particular focus will be the research and development of effective practice in teacher education.
- To collaborate in strategic development work with key national bodies, to contribute to the establishment, implementation and development of provision offering the new qualifications. Key partners will include:
  - ABSSU
  - the Standards Unit at the DfES
  - LSC
  - OFSTED and ALI
  - FENTO and its successor body
  - QCA
  - BSA
  - UCET
  - the awarding bodies.

"Thanks to ... an excellent tutor ... and the friendly support of my fellow-students I successfully completed an English course at my local community college. I am proud of my achievement and I intend to go on to pursue all my ambitions."

## Research, development and networks in Programme Four include:

- an NRDC fund to be allocated for regionally-based research or development projects, from groups led by practitioners. We will invite bids on priority topics from all the nine English regions each year, and up to five projects will be funded, selected on grounds of quality
- evaluation and dissemination of good practice from a range of new ITE programmes at NQF level 4 in literacy, numeracy and ESOL based in HEIs and those based in FE and elsewhere, accredited by awarding bodies
- integration of inclusive approaches to learners in ITE programmes for teachers of all subjects
- 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
- investigation of the characteristics of effective teacher training in adult literacy, numeracy and ESOL, and of the pedagogy of teacher training programmes
- promotion and support of postgraduate provision, including diplomas, masters degrees and doctorates
- promotion and effective sharing of developments in literacy, numeracy and ESOL initial teacher education, offering cohesive support nationally, together with local and regional networks
- strengthening of cross-sector links and partnerships with key regional change agents to facilitate the embedding of the new qualifications, with a particular focus on numeracy
- expansion of the team of teacher-researchers, further development of models of support for their progress and evaluation of the teacher-researcher strategy
- development and support of new qualification programmes at NQF levels 2 and 3
- opportunities for enquiry-based study built into

professional development courses at all levels, and study opportunities developed using distance/open/online learning models to improve access for practitioners based in different locations and with different working routines.

### OUTCOMES

Alongside research reports that identify effective practice in teacher education, by 2007 NRDC will have made a significant contribution to well-embedded comprehensive provision nationally, offering:

- postgraduate programmes for literacy, numeracy and ESOL teachers and curriculum managers – level 5
- professional development in leadership and management – levels 4 and 5
- opportunities for teachers to participate in research programmes as 'teacher-researchers' – levels 4 and 5
- opportunities for experienced teachers to develop as teacher-trainers to contribute to both ITE and CPD – levels 4 and 5
- full programmes of ITE for specialist teachers of literacy, numeracy and ESOL – level 4
- literacy, numeracy and ESOL awareness and understanding fully integrated into all post-16 ITE programmes
- modular programmes of CPD for existing staff, for both discrete and embedded provision – levels 3 and 4
- programmes for those training to deliver literacy, numeracy or ESOL support – level 3
- programmes for those involved in supporting individual learners in a variety of contexts – level 2.

All the above outcomes will demonstrate the extent of their impact on learning opportunities for the **Skills for Life** workforce, and for learners.

## Programme Five

### The context and infrastructure for *Skills for Life*

#### 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 context in which literacy, numeracy and ESOL learning takes place, and the systems, structures and policy initiatives that support that learning, have the potential to impact powerfully on its effectiveness. We know that some types of organisation or setting can attract or deter some groups of learners. We know that some approaches to funding can encourage or discourage the involvement of providers. But there is a lack of systematic evidence on how mechanisms for planning, funding and organising support for learners impact upon different groups in different contexts. This programme will seek to synthesise what is known, including an international comparative dimension, and commission new work to fill important gaps.

NRDC has already completed two studies that look at learning in particular milieus – community-focused provision and a specialist college for adults with physical impairments. Two more are under way studying workplaces and young offenders' programmes. The ethnographic study is also collecting a large amount of data across different contexts. While much of the work of NRDC will help to illuminate the impact of systems and structures in this way, there is a need for a set of research projects that take the organisational dimension as their key focus. The examination of the impact of systems

and structures will require a consistent approach to the measurement of outcomes, and an understanding of individual learners' differing needs drawn from NRDC's other programmes.

A better understanding of the influence of the learning infrastructure is important, because its impact on learners can be critical, and because the capacity to change structures and systems is one of the key initiatives available to policy makers. It is relatively easier, through policy, to change the supply side levers on learning provision than to change those that operate on the demand side. The *Skills for Life* strategy represents a concerted attempt to work on both in a planned way. We will seek to improve the effectiveness of policy and practice by helping to identify which policy, infrastructure and funding initiatives are likely to prove effective and cost effective – and, equally importantly, to identify those that are not.

#### AIMS

The overall aim of this programme is to increase understanding of how the policies, systems and structures through which learning is planned, delivered and evaluated impact upon learning for different groups of learners. The programme will draw on international comparative approaches, learning from different contexts about:

- the impact on providers of a range of policy initiatives such as *Success for All*, *Successful Participation for All*; *Widening Adult Participation* and the emerging SSCs, and the interface of these policies with *Skills for Life*
- the impact of planning and funding approaches (e.g. outcome or provision based) on provider behaviour, policy

and learning opportunities, and outcomes for learners

- the impact of different types of organisation on the engagement and participation of basic skills learners (by type is meant organisational size, purpose, structure, forms and function)
- the impact of organisational setting, including outreach work (work/community-based basic skills learning), and the impact of the internal arrangements and systems on effective delivery
- the costs of provision in different organisational types and settings, and delivered in different ways; the cost-effectiveness of different approaches, including partnership and inter-agency working, in relation to different groups of learners
- the influence of different forms of financial support for learners (e.g. fee remission or help with indirect costs such as childcare and transport) on initial engagement, retention and success; the influence of financial and other incentives to learners in educational, work and voluntary settings on initial engagement, retention and success
- the influence of incentives to other stakeholders, particularly employers, on learners' engagement and success
- the impact of arrangements for performance management of and by providers (e.g. inspection, performance indicators, targets and provider review, and providers' own strategies) for improving performance in both discrete and contextualised provision.

## Research in Programme Five

### Research projects in this programme are likely to focus on:

- **The costs of effective provision.** We will work with a range of stakeholders to identify more clearly the cost implications of effective provision for different groups of learners. There is a need, for example, to establish when programmes with a richer mix of inputs, such as double staffing, are appropriate; to identify the circumstances in which outreach provision is both essential and more expensive; and to identify the full cost of workplace basic skills programmes.
- **Working with employers and the skills agenda.** The employer training pilots promise to provide an effective way of engaging employers and low-skilled employees with learning. We will seek to build on these pilots and other work to increase the understanding of effective ways of working with employees with basic skills needs.
- **The optimum pattern of providers.** Strategic Area Reviews will be looking at local patterns of provision, assessing their inclusiveness and comprehensiveness. We will seek to advise those supporting and developing the provider infrastructure on how to maximise the effectiveness of their arrangements.
- **Evaluating the learner's perspective.** This study will review the impact of the *Skills for Life* learning infrastructure and its application, offering advice to policy makers and practitioners and paving the way to revisions of the learning infrastructure in 2007.
- **Support and guidance for learners.** There is a growing understanding of the influence of financial circumstances on engagement with learning in general, but not enough research focused on basic skills. Equally, while many would agree that information and guidance is crucial to engaging learners, there is little understanding of what is effective practice or how best to provide it.
- **Reflecting the needs of learners in rural and urban communities.** It is generally agreed that there is a need to recognise the very different circumstances of different parts of the country when planning delivery

of basic skills provision. There is a particular need to explore further the needs of rural areas, where pockets of severe deprivation exist in otherwise affluent areas. NRDC will investigate provision and learner engagement in seven key rural areas, with a focus on meeting economic and social needs.

- **Identifying critical initiatives.** There is much anecdotal evidence that individuals can be persuaded to re-engage with learning through apparently unrelated activities such as adult recreational programmes, informal learning or family learning. We will explore whether useful patterns exist, through a reverse tracer study that starts with successful adult basic skills learners and traces back to find critical incidents that help explain their re-engagement. This study will complement work by the BSA.
- **Monitoring and evaluating progress.** There is a clear need to identify the extent to which specific policy initiatives, or the *Skills for Life* programme as a whole, achieve desired outcomes. An important strand of NRDC work will be to identify how valid and reliable measures of progress, which support rather than distort good practice, can be developed.

### OUTCOMES

#### The programme will be designed to generate research outcomes that can be used to:

- inform guidance for providers and planners about learning infrastructures
- provide evidence of how the context and infrastructure of adult literacy, language and numeracy provision impact on learners' progress
- identify clear advice to policy makers and managers of provider institutions on strategies to improve measurable achievement and other indicators of learners' outcomes through changes in infrastructure
- present evidence of how the variety of current performance measures are impacting on provision.



# **NRDC's strategy for 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, we must influence the development of **Skills for Life** policy and maximise the impact of our research and development on practice and, through this, on learning outcomes.

Influence and impact require active communication with those who can help us achieve good results. While dissemination of information is an important part of this process it is, of itself, not sufficient. We must work with a wide range of partners to maximise our effectiveness, transforming evidence to make it accessible and routinely used.

Under this strategy, each research and development project initiated by NRDC will identify at the planning stage how the evidence and advice it generates will be disseminated, engage relevant practice and policy communities and have impact on learners. Additional funding will be allocated as necessary to enable this communication and impact activity to be carried out for projects previously approved without a specific budget, through reallocation from the overall communication and impact budget and as part of centre-wide activity.

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## Aims

- to support the strategy of establishing NRDC as an international centre of excellence in adult literacy, numeracy and ESOL within five years
- to develop channels of communication with policy makers, effective adult literacy, numeracy and ESOL practitioners, learners and at all appropriate stages, employers and other stakeholders
- to establish the credibility of NRDC as a key player in our field, and ensure our activities reach professionals working directly with learners
- to ensure that our research and development programmes reflect learners' needs, so as to maximise its relevance, usefulness and impact
- to work with networks of adult literacy, numeracy and ESOL organisations and practitioners to transform our research and development evidence, communicate it effectively, and work for its integration into the everyday activities of our community
- to contribute to (and, where appropriate, organise and lead) strategic debate about adult teaching and learning, to promote NRDC's aim to be a national and international centre of expertise and excellence
- to work with other organisations to build up a resource of information on effective practice and policy interventions
- to communicate effectively with our stakeholders through an appropriate range of media.

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## Underlying principles

- For NRDC, 'impact' must be broadly conceived, encompassing all our activities to establish and spread effective practice in support of the **Skills for Life** strategy.
- Impact is an iterative process and must be integrated into all stages of our research and development programmes. It is *not* a linear activity centred on results.
- To compete successfully for attention and maximise impact, communication must be active, imaginative and persistent; merely making research available in the hope that it will rub off on practice is unlikely to work.
- Practitioners and policy makers, and their networks of influence, are central to impact. Peers are the most effective change agents.
- Communication and impact are resource intensive. Therefore, we must ensure that such resources are provided for individual projects and the overall programme. These resources must be used effectively to maximise our interaction with key stakeholders and other opinion formers.

- We must balance responding to the swift pace of the policy agenda with longer-term accumulation of evidence on effective practice.
- Impact comes not just from ‘successful’ projects. Other activities, research findings that no change is needed, and unexpected outcomes may be just as valuable. These need to be actively communicated.

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## Stakeholder constituencies

### Key stakeholder groups include:

- policy organisations, including government agencies in England
- planning and funding organisations
- practitioners and their organisations
- employers and unions
- government departments and key organisations in Northern Ireland, Wales and Scotland
- the national and international research and development communities (including those within the NRDC consortium)
- campaigning bodies
- adult learning providers and infrastructure organisations
- trainers of adult literacy, numeracy and ESOL teachers
- learners and their organisations
- specialist media
- the general public.

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## Communication flows

Effective communication, influence and impact involves not just the transmission of messages, but listening to the whole range of stakeholders. Information and analysis must flow:

- **inward:** so that we learn from all stakeholder groups how to engage their interest and support; and so that they help to shape research priorities, choice of projects, conduct of research and how research findings are transformed and communicated
- **outward:** so that we engage with the right people in

the right way at the right times; to ensure that we contribute to policy development; and so that research and development findings have the maximum impact

- **internally:** so that projects, partners and individual researchers share in the development of theory, research methods, etc., with a view to building capacity and enhancing the quality of our research.

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## Working for impact

The current evidence base on ‘what works’ in achieving impact from research and development in adult literacy, numeracy and ESOL is limited. NRDC is working to develop this evidence base through sustained and targeted communication of high-quality research. We are also undertaking literature reviews, discussing effective approaches within the Centre and with partner organisations, and contributing to public debate.

Influencing policy and practice is a highly complex process, involving forces that we and others need to operate on, or at least to influence:

- promotion, by researchers and change agents such as NRDC and partner organisations, of research evidence and research use
- meeting demand from policy makers and practitioners who want reliable evidence on ‘what works’ (and how/why); evidence needs to address whether as well as how to change things
- facilitation by a range of change agents, mediators and opinion formers
- control of access to resources and support for implementation, by both individual and organisational gatekeepers
- overcoming the resistance and inertia of organisations and individuals that may inhibit the adoption of evidence-informed policy and practice
- addressing time constraints and overcoming initiative overload.



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## Constraints on impact

- The world of post-16 learning is complex and fast-changing.
- High-quality research and development, validated through peer and merit reviewing, is essential. It is not, however, sufficient for impact on either policy development or the evolution of practice.
- Policy makers are under different pressures and work to shorter timescales than the research community. They are likely to be more receptive to research that addresses current policy issues and offers succinct, clear-cut advice.
- Practitioners and their managers tend to look for neatly packaged solutions to defined problems. Research realities are messier.
- Generalising from the immediate research context across varied teaching settings is difficult for researchers, change agents and policy makers alike. It must be a conscious, active process. Practitioners also have to consider whether the ideas and findings in question would work in their context.
- Engaging and sustaining the commitment of the widest possible range of partners over the long term is demanding of time, money, energy and intellectual capital.

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## Key tactical approaches

- Work proactively with research, policy and practice communities to develop better understanding of how/where research can have impact.
- Work with relevant stakeholders to integrate impact throughout individual research and development programmes and projects, from problem identification to embedding evidence into everyday life.
- 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 ABSSU, BSA, LSDA 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.
- Expand subject and other programme networks to cover wider groups of stakeholders over time.
- Support training and development for the research community on how best to present and communicate research and research findings, how to engage productively with practitioners, influencing and persuading them about the value of research messages for improving their practice.

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## Communication plan

Methods of communication need to be carefully designed so that they are appropriate for the target audiences, are well timed and foster active engagement.

### Publications

A suite of nested publication formats, with a common design style, will increase in number as the Centre develops and we have more research and development programmes and projects. All will be available on the website and in print. All will be free. They will include:

- a newsletter – **NRDC News** – published eight times a year
- short **Research Review** and **Research Summary** bulletins – usually two pages of A4, designed for policy and practice audiences
- **Research Reports** – full reports on individual research projects, including complete references
- **Work in Progress** – briefings on particular projects and research themes, emailed to interested parties and downloadable from the website.

In addition, the Centre and individual researchers will publish fully peer-reviewed books (monographs, collections of essays and edited conference proceedings) for research and specialist practitioner/policy audiences. These will be priced publications, published through a high-quality academic publisher in the normal way.

Individual researchers and groups will also publish articles in peer-reviewed journals as part of the normal process of development of research theory and practice. These will be designed both to support the Centre's strategy and to meet the requirements of the Research Assessment Exercise for university researchers. They will be publicised through NRDC News and the website.

#### **Website development**

The website at [www.nrdc.org.uk](http://www.nrdc.org.uk) will act as:

- a focal point for those seeking information about NRDC
- a resource for all those interested in adult literacy, numeracy and ESOL, offering access to our publications and information archives
- a conduit for communication with us and as the platform for discussion forums, as well as providing links to other organisations active in the field of adult literacy, numeracy and ESOL.

The site will build over time to provide access to information on all our activities, including research and development programmes, publications, online discussion forums, an archive of relevant research, and listings of relevant events.

#### **Conferences, expert seminars, networks and email groups**

Conferences, seminars and 'virtual' exchanges of ideas and information are an important strand of our communication and impact strategy. A wide range of events and activities both for individual projects and the Centre as a whole will be needed to reach different stakeholder groups. Particular focus is placed on working with existing regional and subject networks to connect researchers, developers and practitioners.

NRDC also organises the annual *Skills for Life* conferences on behalf of ABSSU. Held in November, these provide a forum for more than 1,000 practitioners, researchers and policy makers to share policy developments, research findings and emerging themes.

Although the focus of activity will change over the five years, communicating research and development findings will be a strong theme throughout.

#### **National archive of research**

NRDC intends to build up a national archive of research in the field of adult literacy, numeracy and ESOL learning. This will include the best available evidence of effective practice – what works for whom and in what circumstances.

This will be a priority for the latter part of the strategy.

#### **Teacher training resource**

Through the national networks, this resource will facilitate the exchange of materials developing from new qualification programmes. It will be less a physical collection than a series of links to the extensive regional collections, several of which are already available online.

This facility will also store materials from the development and evaluation programmes where appropriate.





**NRDC's strategy  
for engaging  
practitioners  
in research and  
development**

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## Why and for what purpose?

- Engaging practitioners in research will ensure that the work is relevant and geared to the needs of adult learners, and that its value is recognised by teachers. It will increase the sense of ownership of and commitment to the research itself, and to teacher development and other policy and practice proposals based on the research.
- Involving tutors and managers in conducting the research will contribute to their professional development. Wherever possible, practitioner research activities will be credited toward recognised professional qualifications.
- Working closely with practitioners will enable NRDC to engage learners where possible in our research and development.
- Learners, tutors and managers have important contributions to make at each decision stage of the research process: aims, methodologies, data collection, interpretation, dissemination. They will be most affected by the outcomes of the research, and by the processes of data collection.
- Learners, tutors and managers are likely to be well situated to collect and interpret many forms of data, since they are colleagues and peers of those whose views are being sought.

All projects funded by NRDC will be required to state in their proposals how they will engage practitioners in the stages of the research process and to include appropriate support for this in their budgets. Operational plans will monitor the activities and outcomes of practitioner engagement.

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## Aims and approach

To maximise practitioner engagement and to embed a research culture in the field, NRDC's practical strategy aims to balance three perspectives:

- the professional development interests and expertise of practitioners
- the interests of providers and the wider field of practice
- the interests and priorities of the academic and policy research communities.

The models of support adopted by NRDC will take account of these perspectives. From the pilot experience of the first year of our programmes, it is evident that provider organisations and individual practitioners are over-stretched in many directions. It is hard for organisations to prioritise research and to release staff for research activities, even when cover is paid. Practitioners with existing research skills, and appropriate training opportunities for developing such skills are thin on the ground.

The evaluation project undertaken in 2002/03 has outlined four types of approach to practitioner engagement in the research process. These have all been used in educational contexts in the UK and elsewhere.

- **Apprenticeship approach:** practitioners attached to external research projects, working in their own or other organisations. (Model 1)
- **Practitioners carrying out small-scale projects** as part of professional development courses. (Model 2)
- **Practitioner research group projects and networks with stand-alone funding**, supported by expert research consultants. (Model 3)
- **Whole-institution approach**, where a research expert is attached to a provider organisation, working in situ with selected members of staff on a project chosen by the organisation and participating staff because it is relevant to their goals and interests. (Model 4).

In 2002/03, NRDC piloted variations on the apprenticeship approach. Practitioner engagement follows the rhythms, aims and ethos of funded research rather than professional development needs or organisational priorities. This approach can be good for 'first step' research experience. It is highly structured and offers a sense of contributing to a bigger research effort and awareness of ongoing research. However, it does not address the needs of provider organisations.

During the next stage, our strategy will be to develop the apprenticeship model further, retaining its flexibility and putting in place supports to maximise institutional involvement and professional development opportunities (including a revised version of the Teacher Fellowship programme). We will also trial model 2 through the Programme Four project on Postgraduate Diplomas/Masters courses, and model 3 by establishing a further capacity-building project linking a limited number of Practitioner Research Group projects supported by expert research consultants.

We shall train teacher-researchers to undertake research into adult basic skills in their institution/networks, especially action-research with a reflective practice enquiry focus.

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## Our strategy

To promote the teacher-researcher concept to encourage greater involvement of teachers, all new NRDC projects will be required to clarify their plans for contributing to capacity building through the development and activity of teacher-researchers.

# The NRDC Advisory Group

NRDC is guided by an external group of advisers from policy, practice, employment and research. The role of the Advisory Group is to support and guide the Centre, to enable us to achieve the goals set out in this strategy and to help us to maximise the impact of our 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.

## Terms of reference

- to guide and support the Centre in achieving the goals set out in our **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 the Centre's work engages policy makers, practitioners and learners in the Centre's work
- to comment on the frameworks for evaluating the Centre'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*.



## Glossary

<b>ABSSU</b>	Adult Basic Skills Strategy Unit
<b>ALI</b>	Adult Learning Inspectorate
<b>AoC</b>	Association of Colleges
<b>BECTA</b>	British Educational Communications and Technology Agency
<b>BSA</b>	Basic Skills Agency
<b>CPD</b>	Continuing Professional Development
<b>DfES</b>	Department for Education and Skills
<b>DTI</b>	Department of Trade and Industry
<b>DWP</b>	Department for Work and Pensions
<b>ESOL</b>	English for Speakers of Other Languages
<b>ESRC</b>	Economic and Social Research Council
<b>FE</b>	Further Education
<b>FENTO</b>	Further Education National Trainign Organisation
<b>ICT</b>	Information and Communications Technology
<b>ITE</b>	Initial Teacher Education
<b>LEA</b>	Local Education Authority
<b>LGA</b>	Local Government Agency
<b>LLLU</b>	London Language and Literacy Unit
<b>LSC</b>	Learning and Skills Council
<b>LSDA</b>	Learning and Skills Development Agency
<b>NATECLA</b>	National Association for Teaching of English and other Community Languages to Adults
<b>NERF</b>	National Education Research Forum
<b>NHSU</b>	National Health Service University
<b>NIACE</b>	National Institute of Adult Continuing Education
<b>NQF</b>	National Qualifications Framework
<b>NRDC</b>	National Research and Development Centre for Adult Literacy and Numeracy
<b>Ofsted</b>	Office for Standards in Education
<b>PGCE</b>	Postgraduate Certificate in Education
<b>TUC</b>	Trades Union Council
<b>SSDA</b>	Sector Skills Development Agency
<b>SSC</b>	Sector Skills Council
<b>RaPAL</b>	Research and Practice in Adult Literacy
<b>RDA</b>	Regional Development Agency
<b>QCA</b>	Qualifications and Curriculum Authority
<b>UCET</b>	Universities Council for the Education of Teachers
<b>Ufi</b>	University for Industry
<b>WBL</b>	Work Based Learning

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### **List of Consortium partners:**

- Institute of Education, University of London\*
- Lancaster University
- The University of Nottingham
- The University of Sheffield
- East London Pathfinder
- Liverpool Lifelong Learning Partnership
- Basic Skills Agency
- Learning and Skills Development Agency
- London Language and Literacy Unit, South Bank University
- National Institute of Adult Continuing Education
- King's College, University of London

\*NRDC is one of six centres which comprise the Bedford Group for Lifecourse and Statistical Studies at the Institute of Education. [www.ioe.ac.uk/bedfordgroup](http://www.ioe.ac.uk/bedfordgroup)

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