

## Curriculum Organisation and Management

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## Foreword

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### THE FURTHER EDUCATION FUNDING COUNCIL



The Basic Skills Quality Initiative Team

The *Basic Skills Quality Initiative* is a major programme of staff and organisational development that forms part of the Council's overall response to raising standards. The initiative includes three specific elements. First, a package of materials designed for use by managers and lead practitioners. Four units of material include: *Teaching, Learning and Students' Achievements*; *Guidance and Support: Curriculum Organisation and Management*; and *Quality Assurance and Staff Development*. Second, funding for providers to employ trained facilitators to help providers make effective use of the materials and support them in addressing key issues. Third, the opportunity for one thousand members of staff to attend a training event designed to focus on the strategic and operational management of basic skills. The three elements of the *Basic Skills Quality Initiative* comprise a comprehensive and innovative package of support.

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

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

The initiative was steered by four consultants: Teresa Bergin, Pat Hood, Liz Lawson and Sheila Leever. Thanks are due also to the Council's inspectors who guided and contributed to the work: Stuart McCoy, Carol Tennyson and William Lewis. Colleagues from the Council's Quality Improvement Unit – Emer Clarke, Mary Kelly, Kathryn O'Regan, Andrew Lambe, Gillian Blake and Claire Wood – provided support and expertise throughout. Jillian Peach designed the materials and Ray Oram provided technical advice.

At the heart of effective management is a clear commitment to providing a high-quality learning experience for students. Managers in successful organisations recognise the importance of developing an environment which values staff and students and is designed to maximise their opportunities for success. The concept of inclusive learning which emphasises the importance of the match between each learner's needs, the programmes offered and the learning environment is a key element of a well-managed organisation. Managers need to give careful thought to the development of mission statements, policies, structures and procedures to provide an organisational framework which will help staff to understand their roles and responsibilities in helping students to succeed.

Careful analysis of the educational needs of people in the organisation's catchment area helps managers to identify the range of programmes they should offer and the arrangements they need to make to ensure that students are able to attend at times that suit their lifestyles, work and family commitments. Many organisations work effectively with other external agencies to identify the educational needs of the local community. This joint work is particularly important when trying to attract into education people who have low levels of achievement in basic skills and do not perceive education to be relevant to their needs. If organisations are to be successful in recruiting these 'hard to reach' students they need to devise innovative and creative programmes which will be of interest and relevance to them and will address their basic skills needs without making this the stated aim of the programme.

Many organisations are now recognising the importance of effective co-ordination of their basic skills provision and are making changes to the management structure to ensure that this

happens. As tuition in basic skills is provided across the organisation by many different departments or sections, senior managers are increasingly aware of the importance of having a senior postholder who has overall responsibility for ensuring the coherence and quality of the provision.

As in other curriculum areas, an important element of effective management is the setting of targets for performance and developing action plans to help staff and students to achieve successful outcomes. The process of target setting is particularly complex in basic skills, mainly because the achievement of qualifications is not the only indicator of students' success. Successful organisations work in collaboration with their auditors and management information officers to devise ways of recording information about students' achievements. The availability of centrally held, accurate statistical data is as essential for the effective management of basic skills provision as it is for any other curriculum area.

Managers need to ensure that teachers, including those who work in settings away from the main base, have easy access to good-quality learning resources. Effective basic skills provision requires resources that are carefully matched to the needs of learners. Basic skills students often have low self-esteem and little confidence. The opportunity to learn in high-quality accommodation, easily accessible to them, encourages them to engage and continue with their studies. The deployment of staff is equally important for effective provision. Basic skills is a demanding subject area to teach. It requires skilled teachers and support staff who are effectively managed. The quality of learning resources, staffing and accommodation provided for basic skills reflects the value ascribed to this work by providers.



Curriculum organisation and management in basic skills should:

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





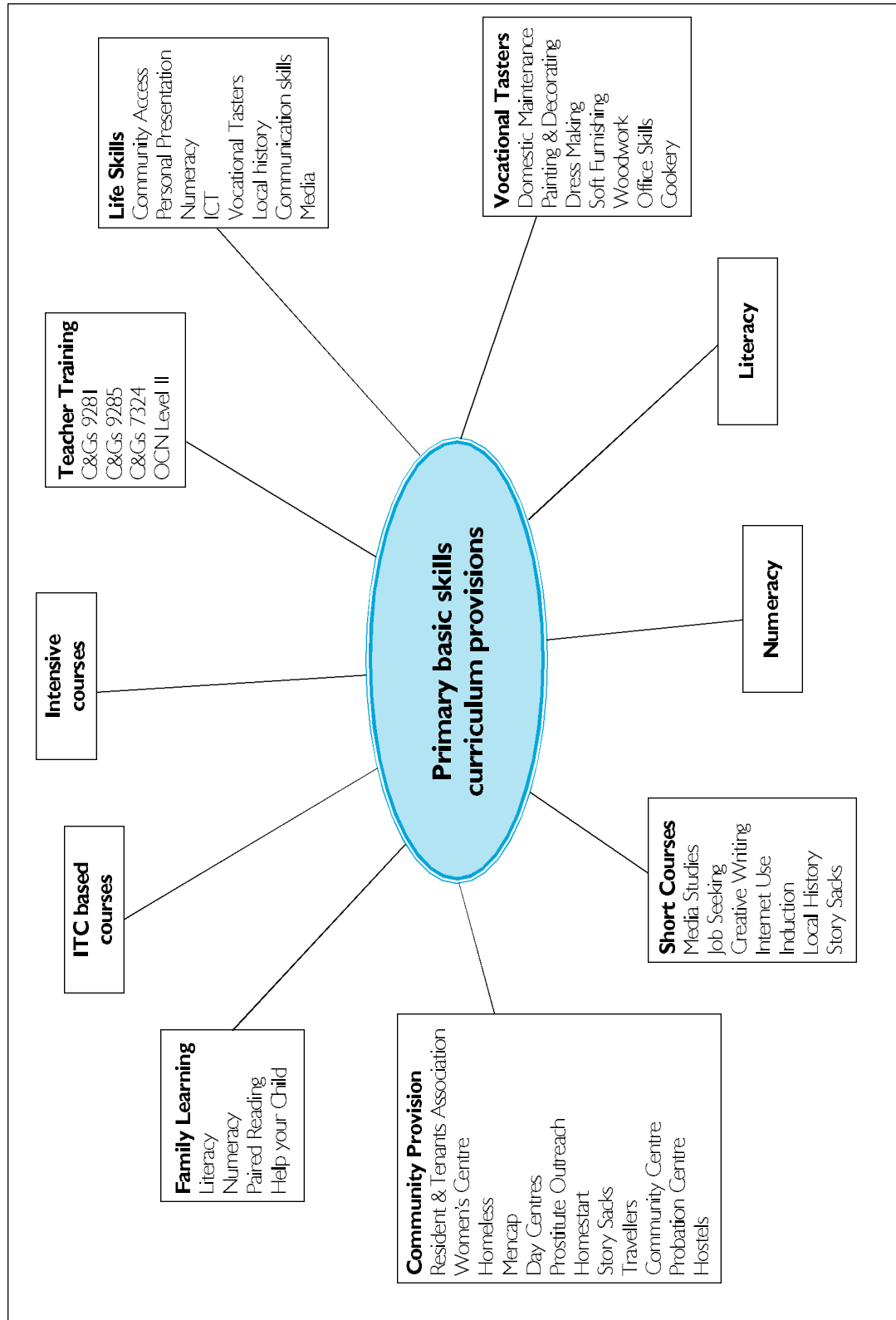
The key principle underlying all aspects of effective basic skills provision is the extent of the match between the learner and the curriculum offer: the degree of its match to the learner's needs and personal objectives. It is essential that the match takes full account of the learner's objectives and personal aims as well as his or her basic skills needs. If the focus of provision is on the needs only, the evidence is that the learner is less inclined to come forward, or, if he or she does come forward, that they are less likely to sustain their programme of study and succeed. Effective providers have recognised this and, as a result, there is a more diverse range of provision for this group of learners than for any other. It is noticeable that the diversity is increasing rather than decreasing, as initiatives to widen participation bring in groups previously reluctant to take part in further education.

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



# Example 1

Basic Skills Quality Initiative Overview of one provider's basic skills programme.



## Example 2



This example shows how one college developed programmes at entry and level 1 with an emphasis on basic and key skills. The background to the work, how it began the development of an inclusive approach and students' comments on the programmes are all illustrated.

### Background

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

David Blunkett: The Learning Age (DfEE)

*"Learning is central to economic success and social cohesion.*

*Widening Participation means increasing access to learning and providing opportunities for success and progression to a much wider cross-section of the population than now. All those who are not fulfilling their potential or who have underachieved in the past must be drawn into successful learning."*

Helena Kennedy: Learning Works: Widening Participation in FE

*"...A fully inclusive college would enrol and support effectively all learners, identify individual learning requirements and make sure these learning requirements are met. It would match the learning environment to the student rather than expecting the student to fit in to whatever happens to be available."*

Professor John Tomlinson CBE: Inclusive Learning

### Planning

Tomlinson's report on Inclusive Learning stressed the importance of the development of an appropriate learning environment in order to increase access to FE provision. This was supported by the Dearing Report, which highlighted the need to develop a range of entry level programmes and subsequently the Kennedy Report on widening participation. It was felt that the development of the Entry and Foundation Level programmes in this college would not only enhance but also further enrich the existing curriculum and reflect a continued commitment to widening participation. The following section describes the work we did to develop foundation level programmes.

A foundation working group was established; members included the director of curriculum and the relevant section heads, curriculum managers and co-ordinators responsible for entry and level 1 programmes. The remit of the group included an examination of the following areas/issues:

- current entry/foundation provision
- current/potential pathways and progression routes
- accreditation
- support
- implications for other programme areas and services.

### An inclusive approach

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

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

The first stage of the process was to identify the range of entry and foundation level programmes, which had been developed across the college.

One outcome of this work was the decision to develop a modular foundation programme. This raised the following issues and concerns:

- ownership/management – curriculum hours and staffing
- tutorial and pastoral support issues
- co-ordination.

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

- a foundation programme co-ordinator was appointed, accountable to the section head for humanities, maths, science and foundation studies; responsible for the day to day co-ordination of the programme
- appropriate modules were identified and/or developed by each section, the management of which remained the responsibility of the relevant section head
- three personal tutors were identified to be responsible for tutorial/pastoral support.



Students who have as their primary learning goal the acquisition of basic skills require courses which respond to an increasing range of diverse needs, including:

- number, communication, ICT, at a range of levels and within a range of contexts
- a need to feel part of the whole organisation and an ability to exercise their right to all the college facilities
- a need to be recognised as an individual with learning needs in addition to number, communication and ICT, e.g. personal skills, career development etc.

This may require a complementary range of accreditation which could be customised to a student's needs including:

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

Within the foundation programme which we developed, all students follow a core programme of basic maths and English (information technology is soon to be added). Students identify their learning goals and negotiate an individual learning programme, choosing from a range of vocational options.

The foundation programme has the following features:

- small groups
- option choices which may be changed each term
- continuous assessment
- the opportunity for students to study for a range of national awards
- progression to more advanced programmes such as; GCSEs, NVQ Level 1 or 2 and/or GNVQs.



## Example 2 (continued)

### Students' comments on the new programmes

The following student comments were included on the self-assessment sheets during the first end of term review:

#### My best day was...

"starting college"

"when I began to make friends at college"

"induction day at the college"

#### What has gone well?

- **Socially**

"meeting new people who were kind on the induction day"

"I have made a lot of good mates, not only in my group but most of the college"

"I have met lots of friends"

- **Academically**

"I am now better at maths"

"English. I think I have improved in spelling and attendance"

"I have improved many skills such as handwriting, computing, English and science"

#### My greatest achievement this term was...

"learning to use the Internet"

"doing a sponsored 10 mile walk for the children's Christmas party"

"my English – I am doing much better than I ever thought I would".

An open evening was also arranged at the end of term when students had an opportunity to display their work. Guests included parents, carers, support workers, members of the local pupil referral unit and of course all students were invited.

## Example 3



The documentation given here shows how another college modularised its basic skills provision.

There has been a shift in the focus of our basic skills work in recent years towards more vocational and focused provision. This reflects FEFC requirements, the growth of key skills/learning support and the desire to see basic skills provision as part of a coherent college programme with in-built opportunities for students to progress to more advanced level programmes.

Students were also requesting:

- the chance to prepare themselves for vocational opportunities: more work-related programmes, better defined progression routes to mainstream FE
- more focused, intensive learning opportunities – often on specific subjects. This was a departure from traditional ABE provision, which tended to avoid defining learning contexts too specifically.

At the same time basic skills managers saw this as a chance to provide more practical subjects (e.g. woodwork or DIY skills) with a whole range of back-up materials to support the basic skills needs of students in those subjects.

The following modules were developed:

VOCATIONAL	OTHER
job search	spelling
health and hygiene	grammar
health and safety	punctuation
woodwork	creative writing
plumbing	health and fitness
	making sense of the media
	English for deaf people
	local history

OCN accreditation was flexible enough for us to be able to write our own modules or units, and to accommodate both the interests of the learners and their basic skills needs, in the subject. The modules have been gathered together into a loose affiliation of units called 'Preparation for Vocational Study'. All the units which were piloted, were requested by students and by the local community during a door-to-door needs analysis survey, which formed an important part of our planning.

At the start of the year, we re-allocated resources from "general purpose" literacy, numeracy and IT groups to fund pilot studies of the first few groups. Response from students was extremely positive, and take-up was high.

## Example 3 (continued)

The following issues emerged:

- subject tutors need to liaise with literacy and numeracy tutors to facilitate continuity
- all tutors were on a steep learning curve with new styles of accreditation.

Now, tutors may integrate 2 or 3 separate accreditation routes, in a single basic skills group, almost as a matter of course. But at the time, this was quite a demanding proposition.

Outcomes from the modularisation included:

- increased choice for students and increased flexibility of the curriculum offered; students or client organisations could opt for specific modules, or short courses, or they could pick and mix a range of options
- new modules could be added relatively easily to the curriculum, as new suggestions were made and units were devised and piloted
- an increase in accreditation routes (many attached to short-term course rates) inevitably led to improvements in success rates
- students' motivation increased as they recognised the relevance of their learning e.g. in practical subjects, and there was a corresponding improvement in retention
- students who study a more focused learning programme (especially on short-course modules) are able to complete quicker. This means that time-scales are shorter than in traditional basic skills provision, thus increasing value for money
- more traditional style of teaching associated with some courses (spelling, punctuation, grammar). This was welcomed by students who favoured a more traditional way of working.

## Example 4



In this example, the ways in which one adult education service organised its basic skills provision are explained.

### Basic skills provision

The adult education service offers different types of basic skills provision. Nearly all of the work is primary basic skills:

- basic skills year-round roll-on/roll-off group provision
- basic skills year-round roll-on/roll-off workshop provision
- family literacy/family numeracy – mainly in schools using mainstream basic skills staff
- linked skills courses, e.g. basic skills with IT
- specific basic skills, e.g. for deaf students using BSL
- short intensive courses
- summer schools
- community partnership courses
- pre-vocational short courses
- support for students in other curriculum areas.

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

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

An important aspect of this adult education provision is the network of flexible learning and guidance workshops (FLAG). A description of the FLAG workshop follows the table showing the basic skills course titles offered across the city.

**Basic skills courses using common course outlines**

	<b>Pre-entry</b>	<b>Entry</b>	<b>Level 1</b>
English skills	Accredited and Non-accredited	Accredited and Non-accredited	Accredited and Non-accredited
Reading		Accredited and Non-accredited	Accredited and Non-accredited
Writing		Accredited and Non-accredited	Accredited and Non-accredited
Spelling		Non-accredited	Non-accredited
Literacy with computers	Non-accredited	Accredited and Non-accredited	Accredited and Non-accredited
Creative writing			Accredited and Non-accredited
Access to GCSE			
Family literacy		Accredited and Non-accredited	Accredited and Non-accredited
English for deaf adults		Accredited and Non-accredited	Accredited and Non-accredited
Maths skills in everyday life	Accredited and Non-accredited	Accredited and Non-accredited	Accredited and Non-accredited
Maths skills			Accredited
Family numeracy		Accredited and Non-accredited	Accredited and Non-accredited

### **Flexible learning and guidance workshop**

The FLAG (Flexible Learning and Guidance) basic skills workshop is situated in the Adult Learning Centre which is above the shops and market hall in the centre of a large public housing estate. The immediate locality has the lowest adult literacy rates in the area. The centre offers a range of courses for adults. FLAG is part of the basic skills provision in the centre and offers programmes from pre-entry level to level 2, through groups, workshops and 1:1 dyslexia support, short basic skills courses, linked courses and summer schools. The local FE college also has an outreach workshop on the premises to which students can progress. The FLAG workshop has good access by lift and the crèche is close by. The provision has the following features:

- the workshop offers basic skills for students at level 1 and 2 who are ready to progress to a more independent style of learning
- it provides a route for progression from entry level provision on the premises and from neighbourhood classes in the locality
- it offers support to students on other courses in the centre where they can negotiate an individual basic skills learning plan and attend flexibly to fit in with their other study and personal commitments
- students can use the resources knowing that they are exclusively for the use of basic skills students and appropriate for their purpose
- the workshop is always staffed with basic skills trained specialists
- some of the main employers in the area operate shift patterns and students need easily accessible and flexible basic skills provision. Students who cannot attend at regular class times have the option of completing much of their work away from the centre and coming in for a one-to-one session with a basic skills tutor at a time to suit them.



## Example 5

Basic Skills Quality Initiative

Another college developed its provision of basic skills in the community through study centres.

### DISCs

DISC stands for Drop-in Study Centre. It is a centre where people can come to improve their basic skills in a relaxed, friendly atmosphere at a time and pace that suits them. The college currently has 10 DISCs across the city and there are another four planned in the near future. There are more than 1000 ABE students enrolled across the DISCs and approximately 95% of the college's delivery of ABE is via DISC provision. Each DISC operates using standardised systems for assessment, programme planning and review. A similar programme is on offer in each DISC and this includes three levels of support:

- basic reading, writing and maths skills
- brushing up English and maths skills ready to progress to other courses or employment
- improving basic skills while studying higher level courses.

DISCs cater for a number of different student groups, including primary basic skills, learning support, disaffected youth, New Deal. The level ranges from entry to level 1, and support for students studying more advanced programmes. All tutors have undergone specialist training, including nationally recognised certificates in basic skills. As students have individual programmes of work, the style of teaching is individualised within the DISC. The tutor on duty at any one time is supporting students working towards a number of aims and at various levels. It is therefore crucial that tutors manage their time effectively within drop-in sessions in order to meet the needs of all students attending the session.

Students can enrol in DISC at any time during the year. Last year 4 DISCs were also open throughout the summer. Students can book an appointment for an informal induction and assessment either through student services or directly with DISC. Students attend DISC until they feel they have achieved their aims. This can vary from three weeks up to three years, depending on the level of skill at entry, the level of course the student aims to move on to, or the level or length of course the student is already attending.

DISC style of provision was developed because:

- each student's needs are different
- students can work at their own pace and level
- it is roll-on: students won't miss the starting point (September)
- many people do not learn effectively in groups
- groups form early on so that integrating newcomers can be difficult
- they offer a flexible service: programmes are designed to meet individual student needs.





**Parameters of DISC provision** – how does your workshop provision compare?

**1 Referral**

- Trained reception staff designated to DISC
- Direct phone line
- Can by-pass Student Services

**2 Initial assessment**

- Half-hour interview for all students
- Appointment booked within a week
- Staff carry out initial assessment as part of teaching duties
- Level of programme identified
- Starting point identified
- Timetable agreed
- Style of learning explained
- Rights and responsibilities discussed

**3 Management**

- 1 DISC manager (teaches 17 out of 23 hours)
- English and maths co-ordinators

**4 Staffing**

- 1 associate lecturer, 6 part time tutors
- 72 teaching hours per week, 20 hours designated administration

**5 Accreditation**

- 15 different awards at entry level, level 1 and level 2

**6 Resources**

- High-profile room on the ground floor
- Space tutorial room, office
- Reception area



## Example 5 (continued)

### 7 Materials

- Developed in-house because there were insufficient published materials of an appropriate standard and quality to cater for the range of students and their needs

### 8 Support systems

- Termly review (students' satisfaction)
- Work plan 4-6 week
- Personal tutor system

### 9 Monitoring and analysis

- Enrolment – monitored weekly
- Attendance – monitored weekly against target
- Retention – letters sent after 2 weeks non-attendance, withdrawn after 4 weeks, strategies learnt, and last year retention was 89%
- Student profile – analyse data termly
- Achievement – expectations of team that **all** students will successfully complete an award
- Ensure students on courses leading to the right awards
- Measure against target
- Achievement at this centre last year was 67%
- Destination and progression monitored and analysed via review process

In one college, teachers have integrated people with a hearing impairment into mainstream basic skills provision. However, student feedback and self-assessment reviews highlighted inadequacies in this provision for some students. Further evidence came from initial assessment and diagnosis of deaf students' difficulties, and by evaluation of their achievements.

### **Developing a course in English for deaf people**

We realised that many British Sign Language (BSL) users – particularly those who have been profoundly deaf from birth – have little or no grounding in English grammar and syntax, and needed a teaching approach similar to that used in the teaching of English for Speakers of Other Languages. In liaison with colleagues who provide BSL training, and through links with the local Deaf Society, we identified a number of potential students who would benefit from more intensive and focussed provision than basic skills tutors could traditionally offer. It was decided to pilot a course specifically for discrete groups of deaf students, and to create, through the Open College Network, an award for this provision.

The course is in three parts:

- Reading for Deaf People
- Writing for Deaf People
- Communication for Deaf People

The content includes vocabulary, language extension, grammar, syntax and spelling, as well as wider communication skills: body language, eye contact etc. Learning does, as much as possible, focus on everyday contexts: applying for jobs, attending interviews, reading maps, writing straightforward messages and using appropriate interpersonal skills when communicating with others.

Students' motivation and attendance at these sessions has been extremely high. The overall attendance rate has been 75%, a 10% increase on the attendance of deaf students in previous years. Students have enjoyed being involved at the planning stages and have responded positively to having a course designed, for their specific learning styles and needs. The students have enjoyed the social aspects of their discrete group.

The students realise that they are supporting the learning of BSL by the volunteer signers, who in turn are supporting the students learning English; this mutual support and empowerment is an important feature of the innovation.



## Example 7

One adult education service developed the following course for pre-entry level basic skills.

### Pre-entry level basic skills

The course is intended for students who have learning difficulties and are not yet ready to join a basic skills or adult basic education class. It is designed to meet the needs of a diverse group of learners but there are two main groups which are often identified at interview, during initial assessment or in the early sessions of the course:

- learners with reasonable writing skills but with reading abilities significantly inferior to their writing skills
- learners with entry or pre-entry level skills in reading, but with a significantly lower level of ability in writing skills.

The course is designed to help students:

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

The preparation of the room, in particular the arrangements of chairs and tables, is a key starting point for any session of the pre-entry level class. The seating is arranged to make students feel comfortable and at ease. Equipment, such as computers, cassette recording machines and video recorders, is easily accessible.

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

- work at their own pace
- have choice and flexibility in how they work in class – individually, in pairs, in small groups and occasionally in whole class work
- have access to a wide range of learning materials designed to meet the different needs, interests and aptitudes of learners
- use technical aids, in particular computers, cassette recorders and video
- each session is evaluated and a record kept.

Each student has an individual learning plan which consists of long-term aims and short-term targets negotiated with the tutor. Targets are set for each half term and at the end of this period they are reviewed and progress is evaluated. The students are actively involved in the evaluation of what they have done and learnt.

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

### Basic skills for asylum seekers

In May 1999 college staff were approached by the City Council with a view to providing basic language provision for some of the Kosovan people who had been recently housed and supported by the Council. It was agreed that as part of our summer school provision we would run two summer schools specifically for Kosovans.

Issues to bear in mind when organising similar provision:

- identify teaching staff with suitable teaching experience before the end of the summer term and involve them in every stage of the planning
- identify target group:
  - the number of learners you are catering for
  - the nationalities you are serving and languages represented
  - the age of the learners
  - the gender mix
  - disabilities and facilities you have to support such learners
  - the social and economic background of the learners

All these points will affect group dynamics
- other agencies:
  - link with other agencies dealing with the learners and have a small planning group to take things forward
- identify appropriate accommodation:
  - it must be accessible for your target group
  - ideally it should provide good IT facilities with technical backup
  - as it is all day provision, there should be canteen facilities or other means of providing lunch and snacks
  - crèche or childcare may be necessary

Choose your venue carefully, particularly with regard to

- costs:
  - travel costs to and from the venue
  - transport costs for visits
  - entrance fees, etc.
  - resources: you can't assume learners have any basic materials such as paper and pens
  - additional resources: for example, second language dictionaries.

It is important to meet potential learners and distribute general publicity approximately 6 weeks before the course is due to begin, and then:

- take time to assess their language levels across the core skills of reading, writing, listening and speaking
- give them a clear idea of a typical day and the things they can expect to learn during the course. Some learners may expect a different, more formal course than the one you have designed. An interpreter would be very useful here
- set aside a day before the course begins to complete enrolment forms and other documentation.

When designing the curriculum:

- have very clear objectives and be realistic about what is achievable in a short space of time
- aim to have a mixture of informal and formal activities throughout the day
- incorporate visits and visiting speakers
- remember it is a summer school; be creative and have fun!



**Here are some ideas you may find useful when planning similar provision:**

- firstly, draw up a negotiated group learning contract to establish the ground rules and explain the co-operative ethos of the course. Encourage as much input from the learners as possible. Interpreters would be particularly helpful here
- have a theme running throughout the course to provide a sense of continuity, e.g. the city
- if facilities are available, design appropriate ICT tasks to link with the main theme, e.g. making labels and captions for displays
- have a balance of informal and formal activities, e.g. visits, grammar work, ICT, art work and photography
- use work in pairs and group work as well as individual work to provide variety and social interaction (note – many learners will be unused to working with others in situations that are not formal)
- relate language content to real life situations, e.g. work on language for getting the bus then go off and use it the same day
- plan visits in advance to enhance learning. Again, learners can use newly acquired language in real situations. Make use of outside resources, e.g. education officer at an art gallery
- use games to aid learning and have fun
- give learners the opportunity to recognise their own achievements and evaluate the course
- near the end of the course, provide guidance and information about further study opportunities.



## Example 9

Basic Skills Quality Initiative

The following examples illustrate specific short courses which have been designed for students wishing to develop their basic skills at a residential college for adults. A number of the courses are run over three days and have around ten hours of class contact time plus access to the library and learning resource centre and computer facilities at the college as well as evening workshops in basic skills. Although the courses are residential, the ideas they incorporate will translate to other settings.

Many students may be attending college for the first time and, in line with the college ethos, every effort is made to provide a positive and supportive learning environment. Adult returners may have few, if any, formal qualifications and their experience of school may have been negative. Residential short courses facilitate intensive learning and the progress students can make in a limited time should not be underestimated. All the students attending these courses are encouraged to identify future learning aspirations and guidance is available not only on the courses available in this college but on appropriate courses at other colleges and training centres.



### Getting the most out of reading

The primary learning goal is to develop reading and note-making skills

The course introduces students to effective reading strategies and note-making techniques appropriate to the learning styles. It also provides opportunities to consider individual interests and to identify reading sources. The basic skills and key skills developed during this course are:

Reading strategies – skimming, scanning and note-making techniques including linear styles and mind mapping. All the courses are designed to encourage students to take up further learning opportunities. This course will contribute to their preparation for further study.

#### Programme

#### Wednesday

12.00 noon	<b>Arrival/room allocation</b>
2.00 – 2.40 pm	<b>Course introduction</b>
3.00 – 4.30 pm	<b>Identifying what we read and why</b> <b>Individual needs analysis</b>

#### Thursday

9.30 – 12.30 pm	<b>Reading strategies and introduction to library</b>
2.00 – 4.30 pm	<b>Note-making techniques</b>

#### Friday

9.30 – 12.00 noon	<b>Portfolio building</b> <b>Assessing the skills we have learned</b> <b>Action planning for progression</b>
12.00 – 12.30 pm	<b>Course evaluation</b>



## Example 9 (continued)

### Writing with confidence

The primary learning goal is to develop spelling strategies and punctuation skills. The course is designed to:

- identify different methods of improving spelling and punctuation
- introduce learning styles and provide the opportunity for individuals to explore different strategies
- develop relaxation techniques which encourage confidence and creativity and to provide opportunities for writing.

The key skills developed during this course are:

- communication skills
- improving own performance.

### Programme

#### Monday

10.30 am	<b>Arrival/room allocation</b>
11.15 – 12.00 noon	<b>Welcome to College</b>
2.00 – 4.30 pm	<b>Review of course details and individual needs analysis including learning styles</b>

#### Tuesday

9.30 – 10.30 am	<b>Relaxation for writing</b>
11.00 – 12.30 pm	<b>Spelling strategies, techniques to try</b>
2.00 – 4.00 pm	<b>Punctuation skills and writing workshops</b>

#### Wednesday

9.30 – 11.00 am	<b>Portfolio building</b>
11.20 – 12.00 noon	<b>Action plan for future goals</b>
12.00 – 12.30 pm	<b>Course evaluation</b>

This example shows how a college organised a family learning programme.

### Family literacy programme

From a pilot project in 1997 we devised a family literacy programme to run in schools with the parents of the children at those schools. The general aim was to improve the literacy environment in the home by:

- working on the literacy skills of the parents
- showing parents how to support their children's learning
- closing the gap between home and school.

We launched the family programme at a conference which was attended by local schools and family centres. The number of venues where we offer this programme has grown to 30, including travellers' sites. All parents on these courses are offered the opportunity to study for award and progression to other courses (mainly caring courses or GCSEs). The locations range from rural schools to inner city schools. Since 1996 we have delivered family literacy (and more recently family numeracy) in partnerships with both the city and the county LEAs. These courses are funded through the Standards Fund and are match-funded by the LEAs. Schools are selected on the basis of SATs results and free school meals numbers.

The programmes last from 18 to 20 weeks. Initially the children are taught separately by a seconded school teacher and the parents are taught separately by a literacy tutor. The parents and children then work together with the teacher and the tutor. Each school has crèche provision to support the parents with pre-school aged children, and all the classes are timed to coincide with school hours.

All parents are offered the opportunity to study forwards in communication skills, ICT skills, personal skills and first aid. In most cases the children and adults make progress and achieve their aims. Last year the children and parents all received their certificates at presentation events covered by the media. Bids have been submitted to run the same number of courses again and to include a pilot project for family literacy for families for when English is a second language.

Family learning courses, have also been delivered in other venues such as, family centres, community groups, travellers' sites. The curriculum for these courses is tailored to the needs of each group. Some groups choose for example, to focus on making story-sacks or on learning through play. The course times, days and length are negotiated by the learners. We have also piloted a paired reading course called Reading Pals. The course teaches an able reader to support a less able reader.

The able reader could be a parent, carer, volunteer, older child or support worker who would attend a training course and work alongside a child. We are offering Reading Pals in 12 venues including primary schools, a 6th form college, libraries and reading clubs. We are also devising a companion course called Number Pals.



## Example 10 (continued)

Basic Skills Quality Initiative

Feedback from students involved in a family learning programme.

*'Hi Ben!*

*I thought I'd write and tell you that things have been brilliant since I last saw you. I am a full-time student and I am really in my element. I have become a student Rep. and am also a parent governor for Elmtree School. I absolutely love learning, and am trying really hard.*

*You were a real inspiration to me, and you really made me feel better about myself.*

*Thanks Ben, you're a very special person.'*

*'The atmosphere on the course has been great. Everyone has got on so well, it was a bit strange at first because nobody knew anybody else. But we all made an effort and worked together well as a group.*

*I have really enjoyed this course because I know that at the end of the course I'll have a few certificates to show for what I have done. Maggie our course tutor has been great.'*

*'I have more patience with my daughter and stop and listen to her.'*

*'At the start of the course I didn't think that I would get much out of it. Now I am more confident and how it helped me remember how to spell words that I forget how to spell.'*

*'This course has made me more confident in working with my daughter Lauren with her homework and also with Aimee's future schoolwork. I do hope the course will carry on as we all want to go further and have more qualifications at the end of it, and be able to get a good job in the future.'*



What is the rationale underpinning the structure of your basic skills provision?



How well does the range of provision match identified needs?



What is the balance between separate specialist provision and basic skills work provided through other learning goals?



How well do the various elements fit together?  
Are there any gaps? Are there any duplications?



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

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

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

The examples which follow show how three colleges have tackled the process of managing significant change in order to increase the scope and effectiveness of basic skills work as part of their response to local priorities and the recommendations of the Moser report.

## Example 1



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

The college recognised that for change and development to be effective it is necessary for them to be built into the strategic plan and operational objectives of the college and for them to match the college's mission statement. The mission statement expresses the commitment of the college to serve the educational, cultural, social and economic needs of the local community. The local community has three specific postal code areas where there is high unemployment and where there are a high number requiring basic literacy skills.

The college's operational objectives for 2000-2001 include the following:

- the BSA Quality standard will be retained
- the college's basic skills strategic response to the Moser report will be implemented
- basic skills summer schools will be run in partnership with other providers
- a skills centre will be developed to support students' learning.

The college uses its labour market information to identify client groups where participation continues to be low. A significant number of these client groups have basic skills needs. As well as providing its own portfolio of basic skills programmes the college works in collaboration with other community partners and other colleges to develop a co-ordinated approach to the provision of basic skills programmes through the Lifelong Partnership sub-group. For developments to be successful they need the support of senior managers. The strategic plan clearly identifies the agenda and the priorities of the college over the next twelve months and all activity within the college should relate to this. The strategy is only effective when accompanied by an action plan that is clear in terms of its objectives and how they will be achieved. It is important that individuals are clear about their responsibilities, the way in which they will evaluate their work and the managers to whom they will provide feedback.

The following describes the steps undertaken in the development of new basic skills provision in this college.



## Example 1 (continued)

### Indicators of the need for change:

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

### Developing clear objectives

The team teaching basic skills across college established the following objectives:

- to work with the whole course team, not just the teacher in the lesson that they were supporting
- to develop the awareness of basic skills in course teams
- to develop the skills of vocational teachers in preparing materials that are appropriate for the basic skills level of the group and individuals within it
- to help teachers incorporate opportunities for the development and practice of basic skills in the curriculum
- to help vocational staff develop the skills needed to work effectively with students of differing levels of ability in the same group.



### **Gaining the support of senior management**

The team put forward a proposal for the principalship outlining the following:

- the way in which the proposal met national objectives outlined in the Moser report
- concerns that the college was not meeting the basic skills needs of its students as effectively as it might
- evidence for the success of the new approach based on the experience of staff involved in a similar pilot undertaken as part of the development of inclusive learning
- possible ways in which the proposal might be funded
- clear objectives
- possible ways in which the proposal might be implemented.

As a result, further discussion took place with the principal, a presentation was made to the senior management team and the proposals were included in the year's operational objectives of the strategic plan.

As a result of backing from senior management, resources were found for the following:

- a new post of basic skills co-ordinator for cross-college work
- a number of hours (approximately 4 per week) for basic skills teachers to work directly with vocational teachers in order to develop their skills
- staff development time to enable basic skills teachers to develop the interpersonal skills needed for their new role.



## Example 1 (continued)

### Implementing the plan

Having secured senior managers' support and the necessary resources it was also important to inform and involve other key staff across the college. In order to do so the team:

- ran a session for middle managers
- produced written guidelines regarding the approach to be adopted
- visited faculty management teams to discuss issues
- involved course tutors from the beginning, prior to the start of the September term.

### Managing the new initiative

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

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

## Example 2



This example shows how another college raised understanding and awareness of basic and key skills by identifying expected levels of capability and matching them to entry requirements for all its levels of provision, from pre-foundation to higher education.

The college's prime catchment area is an educationally low achieving metropolitan borough. As part of the development of a new curriculum model managers decided to identify and map the level of competence in basic skills students needed to have on entry to the programmes offered in the college. The purpose of this was to:

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

Reasons for adopting a new framework:

- the reduction of programme hours to meet efficiency drives had resulted in many programmes – particularly NVQs – dropping communications and, as a result, opportunities to develop students' literacy skills were reduced
- the only means of addressing literacy needs was through the learning support service where students were referred after assessment. Though take-up was reasonably good, it was generally felt that most students needed to improve their literacy and numeracy skills for successful progression to the next level and that the time available was not sufficient
- some curriculum areas were not adhering to the college policy for screening their students – to identify their levels of basic skills
- specialist staff, available for mainstream delivery of key/basic skills, were a scarce resource
- movement away from the servicing model for communications and application of number as an 'add on' to full-time and substantial part-time programmes
- to improve basic skills delivery and access for those who were in most need
- to raise the awareness of teaching staff that poor literacy and numeracy skills affect achievement and retention
- to encourage staff to recognise the baseline requirements in numeracy and literacy of their vocational programmes, and that taking on students who performed well below baseline expectations would be detrimental to both students and staff.



## Example 2 (continued)

### Determining and matching entry levels through “levelling”

Levelling is based on the philosophy that students should be placed on suitable primary qualifications and develop literacy/communications, numeracy/maths skills at a level that meets the needs of the individual and those of their primary learning qualification. The concept of a continuum of ten levels is seen as complementary to the new national standards for basic skills. The college aims to provide a series of levels ranging from entry level to level 5; to devise assessments that would identify performance and be user-friendly to vocational staff; and to provide schemes of work to meet programme requirements for the agreed starting levels.

The levels and their descriptors needed to:

- provide sufficient information for staff
- be identifiable with the range of students and programmes in the college
- deliver skills that are evident throughout all programmes.

Based on the above points, it was agreed that **communication** would be the common element in all programmes.

As part of a staff development programme, curriculum managers were asked to match all the programmes they offered to the given levels. The section leaders then took the matching exercise to their individual programme teams and further adjustments to the match between programme levels were made.

### Points raised from the levelling exercise

- the levelled framework and the processes which needed to be applied for numeracy/maths and IT with links to Key Skills were seen as the most appropriate common theme. Even though many programmes did not include Key Skills, it was recognised that they may need to be mapped to varying levels of Key Skills in the future
- more levels may be needed, particularly for the lower levels
- staff involved in teaching programmes over two years, e.g. GNVQ Advanced, recognised that, realistically, many students came in at one level lower than that required but should be performing at the appropriate level by year two
- there was recognition that the development of reading and writing skills did not currently form part of some programmes
- staff who worked with discrete groups of adult students in basic skills, felt the qualifications they offered spanned a range of levels and that different levels were accommodated in any one class. What was most useful to them was information about the vocational qualifications that could be accessed by their students, depending on their literacy levels.

### Operational arrangements

- the common timetable for the college must be known by staff well in advance when preparing for the following year
- identification of priorities. Levels 5 – 7 were chosen by section leaders and senior managers, because these levels contained the most full time students on the associated vocational programmes
- different qualifications needed to be taught at the same time for it to be successful, e.g. GCSE English taught at the same time as pre-GCSE English
- to improve efficiency, students from different disciplines needed to be grouped together for communication/literacy and numeracy/maths
- assessments had to be developed to enable staff to screen and place their students at the appropriate level of underpinning Key Skills – vocational staff were involved in the development of the assessments
- the criteria for Levels 5 – 7 were linked to Key Skills including application of number, and basic skills were supported through the underpinning Key Skills sessions
- all teaching and supporting staff need to understand the purpose and use of the Levelling Table. In addition, the importance of basic skills/key skills needs to be emphasised
- staff co-opted from vocational areas to teach the programmes at the different levels needed to develop their basic skills teaching methods.

## Example 2 (continued)

**Table showing levels of provision**

	<b>Level Descriptor</b>
1.	Can copy a few words; write own name; recognises some social sight words/symbols; remember people and venues.
2.	Can write some words from memory; recognises the alphabet and simple numbers; recalls significant events.
3.	Can write simple sentences; read simple text; tell the time; follow page numbers in a book; simple addition.
4.	Can read and understand simple text; write the date; write short pieces with some support; uses a calculator for basic calculations; adds, subtracts, uses number bonds to 20; uses simple multiplication and division for estimation.
5.	Can convey general meaning in writing; presents simple diagrams; read and understand longer text and tackle unfamiliar words when reading; create a folder of work with some support; is able to calculate at a basic level for estimation purposes.
6.	Can describe events in writing adequately; conveys meaning using complex sentences; spells all common words and subject terminology; uses grammar accurately, e.g. subject verb; can proof read to a reasonable standard.
7.	Can express feelings and opinions in extended formats; extract meaning from complex text; interprets and analyses information from text, charts and diagrams; sets own learning goals; is fully conversant with all forms of punctuation; provides oral and written arguments.
8.	Can write confidently and is able to convey ideas with depth and subtlety; reads, understands and responds to specialised language; competently selects and extracts relevant information from a wide range of reference material; assimilates technical instructions and can apply without support.
9.	Can convey ideas and experiences with written fluency in complex situations; can select appropriate style, structure and tone; extracts accurate information under pressure; use problem solving techniques to solve complex problems.
10.	Can organise complex tasks and convey their meaning to appropriate audiences in both written and oral forms; can analyse data from different sources and use this to form logical arguments in clear and well presented formats.

The idea for the above table was taken from 'Criteria for the Assessment of English Language' Language and Literacy Unit South Bank University. In future, the levels will need to be carefully matched to the basic skills national standards.

## Example 3



This example shows how a college set out to reach new students by setting up an 'adult college'.

The establishment of an 'Adult College' in this college was undertaken to ensure that the needs of marginalised learners would be championed across the curriculum and that new curricula could be developed. In structural terms it created a small but senior team able to drive strategic thinking and developmental processes. It is a new dimension of the college's management approach to basic skills provision and its impact is still evolving. However, the following changes are in evidence:

- a remit of the adult college is to identify ways in which the college can meet the basic skills requirements of people whose basic skills requirements it does not currently meet
- the FEFC Non-Schedule 2 pilot, has facilitated the development of programmes designed to address basic skills needs without putting learners off by requiring them to study for a qualification. Many learners have already enrolled on programmes in the community which build on their interest in sport, craft and music whilst at the same time incorporating workshops on basic skills, ESOL, IT and progression planning.
- this, combined with progression data, is likely to affect curriculum planning by demonstrating that the route to learning for many excluded adults is in informal settings, through opportunities to sample skills or to take part in unaccredited activities which develop basic skills informally at first, sometimes over an extended period of time.
- with the college's continuing development of its internal inspection regime, the adult college has been able to influence the criteria used for the internal inspection of basic skills provision, particularly in respect of vocational provision where basic skills learning is embedded within vocational learning. This is of particular importance for teachers who are not basic skills specialists but are heavily involved in helping learners to develop the basic skills they need for their vocational programmes.
- a cross-college basic skills development group has been set up in the last term. The aim of the group is to bring together the college's explicit strategy and action plan for the specific requirements of learners with basic skills needs. The aim of the group is to ensure that a programme of entry-level basic skills is available in accessible locations at accessible times, and that the strategy of delivering basic skills within other programmes continues to be developed and increased. The adult college will be important in this planning process.

The following extract is taken from the adult college's operating handbook, and illustrates some of the cross-curricular thinking and activities arising from its early work.



## Example 3 (continued)

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

### **The broad purpose of the adult college is to find ways of reaching adults who have a learning need but don't see the college as the place for them**

Operationally this breaks down into addressing two distinct types of non-participants, though there is considerable overlap:

- **The survivors**

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

Some of the barriers are: bad prior experience, poverty, child care, low levels of basic skills, disaffection, no confidence as formal learners, no coherent vocational impulse, no sense that education could help solve any of life's problems, lots of alternative problem-solving strategies appear to be just as effective and quicker, no idea of how to make an action plan, no knowledge of what's available for them, often practical day to day life issues are the motivating force.

- **The surfers**

Those who are not experiencing social and educational exclusion and have the range of adult learning requirements, and who simply think of colleges as teenage schools targeting young people's vocational and educational needs.

### **Core educational approaches are:**

#### **'within-ness' and 'more-than-ness'**

- in common with everyone else at the college, a learner-centred approach
- **taking learning to learners:** outreach with a progression imperative; hard-to-reach learners can make the first leap in outreach contexts but the overall aim is **progression**
- **evidence of demand** as driver of planning and resourcing; identifying new recruitment strategies for the survivors and the surfers



- **taking learning to learners:** programme-building around learners' interests as the first step towards motivating them towards being able to reach external standards
- **quality assurance:** maintaining quality while identifying new ways to measure the quality of non-standard and less formal learning
- **developing teachers** who share some of the experiences of learners; enabling teachers to be learners
- developing and measuring **small steps of progression**
- working with college schools to **co-evolve the 'more-than-ness'**
- **matching costs of work** with hard-to-reach adults with unit cost imperatives
- identifying key organisational issues arising out of each outreach model.

### Proposals for measuring the effectiveness of the adult college

As a new corporate strategy, the effectiveness of the adult college remains to be measured.

In the first year, effectiveness in reaching hitherto excluded groups many of whom will have basic skills needs, will be measured as follows:

- by analysing the increase in the total numbers of learners entering in 2000-2001 with identified basic skills needs compared with college totals in 1998-99
- by analysing the increase in the total numbers of learners taking part in learning on college sites compared with 98-99 totals and the increase in total numbers of fee-remitted learners in outreach provision compared with college total for previous year
- by comparing participation data for the adult college with geographical and demographic participation data at the time of Widening Participation research carried out in 1998-99
- by analysing retention, achievement and progression totals and percentages from initial adult college provision
- through qualitative reports and evaluations from adult college courses, teachers and learners and from partner organisations in the community
- through formative and summative evaluation of adult college activity, targeting specific target groups: refugees and asylum seekers, homeless people, people addicted to drugs or alcohol, people living in social housing, particularly housing associations and large estates, adults living in supported housing, unemployed people, low-paid workers, ex-offenders and adults at risk of re-offending, adults with mental illnesses, users of community resources and social services.

### Example 3 (continued)

Effectiveness in meeting their basic skills needs will be measured by:

- setting and reaching retention, achievement and progression targets for all adult college provision
- tracking and recording progress of learners who have left adult college provision
- redefining and articulating progression outcomes, particularly in relation to time scales, for adults who have significant basic skills needs and for whom it might take several years of relatively informal learning before a more formal outcome is sought.

In the longer term it is expected that the main impact of the adult college, in conjunction with other initiatives, will be to lead to a need for the college to develop progression routes for learners who have come to learning via outreach and basic skills routes. This may lead to a need to refine and develop the flexibility of pre-vocational and entry-level provision in each school and to the introduction of general vocational foundation courses as well as more academic foundation and pre-access learning opportunities. The effectiveness of this will be measured in quantitative terms through comparing numbers of people initially assessed as having basic skills requirements, and their eventual achievement in the college, with similar data for previous years. It is also expected that the adult college will contribute to ongoing improvements in retention and achievement rates particularly at levels 1 and 2, through the development of responsive models for learners with basic skills requirements.



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



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



How central to your overall provision is basic skills?  
How can you help to move it from the periphery  
to the centre?



Does your range of provision meet the needs of all  
the adults with basic skills needs in your catchment area?



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## Policies and statements of principle

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

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

Most providers take as their starting point mission statements which articulate their commitment to the community they serve and the contribution they wish to make to its success.

## Example I

'Releasing individual and community potential by providing education and training of the highest quality.'

'To contribute to individual, local and regional development and prosperity by working in partnership with others to deliver quality education and training.'



## Example 2

A county community education service includes in its mission statement the core values to which it is committed in order to give priority to those who have the greatest need.

### **Mission statement**

'offering high quality learning opportunities locally throughout the county'

### **Core values**

- widening participation
- targeting learning opportunities towards those with the greatest educational, social and personal needs
- helping individuals achieve their personal, educational and employment goals
- contributing to community development programmes in targeted areas of the county
- promoting equality of opportunity and equality of regard in all aspects of its work
- developing as a listening and learning organisation
- working in partnerships internally and externally.

Mission statements are used to set out the long-term view of an organisation's purpose. The statement will need to be regularly reviewed to make sure it is still relevant and still reflects a viable purpose, but its aim is to provide constancy of purpose and a starting point for the more detailed planning processes which will follow. As well as a statement of overall mission, some providers ask each team within the organisation to produce its own mission statement, aligned to the overarching one but more relevant to their purpose and work. The example which follows shows one college's mission statement, and the more detailed mission developed by the basic skills team.

### **The college mission statement**

'to be a world class college  
transforming the lives of people  
and communities'

### **Basic skills team mission statement**

'to widen participation in education and improve achievement levels of individuals and communities by providing high quality, flexible and accessible basic skills and key skills development opportunities to support learners in achieving their own goals, whether these are to:

- progress confidently into and through education and training
- successfully complete their studies at the college
- gain and/or maintain employability
- enhance the capacity to cope to their satisfaction in 'everyday life'.



## Example 3 (continued)

The same college has the following policy statement about its basic skills provision.

### College curriculum policy statement

The college has four over-arching policy statements which relate to the curriculum it offers. The delivery and continuing development of such curriculum relies heavily on review, evaluation and planning supported by the processes of continuous improvement. Policies will be evaluated annually as part of the college's self-assessment process and will be reviewed by the corporation every twelve months.

### Curriculum policy

This key document sets out the seven principles which the college views as essential in ensuring that our students experience a high-quality curriculum that supports inclusive lifelong learning, achievement and success. The characteristics of this curriculum are founded upon a number of principles which shape its development:

- **access:** provided in a variety of ways and locations, and at a range of levels
- **flexibility:** to match the living and working patterns, the availability and the convenience of learners
- **coherence:** both at the level of providing a responsive curriculum portfolio and at the level of the individual programme of learning
- **achievement and progression:** which supports, challenges and inspires all learners to realise their individual potential
- **relevance:** to the needs of learners, employers and communities, and to the economic, and social regeneration needs of the region
- **innovation:** continuously generated in both content and delivery, maximising the contribution of people's talent and technology's capability
- **excellence:** making learning opportunities of the highest quality and at the leading edge of best practice nationally and internationally.

### Curriculum principles

These build on the curriculum policy statement, dealing in more detail with each of the seven principles and giving guidance as to how each might be achieved. This is one example from the seven:



### **Flexibility**

The college will develop, monitor and review its curriculum to allow learning to take place in ways which match the living and working patterns, availability and convenience of its customers by:

- designing learning opportunities in modular formats
- providing unitised assessment and accreditation to complement the modular curriculum and to improve motivation and minimise wastage
- implementing a timetable which maximises choice and minimises duplication, facilitating a range of attendance patterns
- continuing to build year long entry and exit points to the curriculum
- providing opportunities for students to learn in a variety of ways which match their preferred learning styles and lifestyles
- increasing the number of hours per day and the number of days per week when learning opportunities are available
- maximising investment in new technology to provide access to self-paced, distance learning resources in a supportive context.

### **Curriculum entitlement**

This sets out the college's commitment to deliver key entitlements that are fundamental to the student experience.

### **Curriculum themes**

This outlines a list of priority themes for the college's curriculum. Alongside each theme is a named member of the senior management team responsible for or linking with the respective theme.



### Example 3 (continued)

Basic Skills Quality Initiative

A sample page from the same college's curriculum entitlement document is shown below.

Entitlement	Performance indicator	By whom	Links with	Action
Careers education and guidance	Quality standards based on Career Mark	Student Services	Careers guidance Initial assessment Elements of careers education, i.e. BEST programme	
Key skills	Key skills policy in place with quality standards and targets	Key skills working group Key skills managers Basic skills managers Additional support managers	Delivery of key skills and basic skills assessment via key skills centres and in curriculum support for staff with material, advice and staff development	Standards to be updated
Basic skills	National benchmarks	Basic skills managers	Delivery of basic skills and assessment via centres in curriculum Support for staff with materials, advice and staff development	Particular scrutiny in inspection regime Variable according to programme/individual need
Excellence in teaching and learning		Campus-based teaching and learning forum	Advice Information Staff development	Advisory teacher roles to be established
ICT		ICT strategy group	Strategic direction and co-ordination Access to projects Advice on implementation	

Another college stipulates that the following key principles for its primary basic skills provision are to be applied consistently across all types of courses – full-time basic skills, vocational tasters, community-based provision, school-based provision, employer-based provision, intensive courses, internet-based modules.

### Key principles

- all decisions regarding changes to current content are the result of negotiating with learners and staff
- all new modules are piloted for a year before being adopted more widely
- all new modules are linked to achievement and progression
- all new modules are flexible enough for use in a range of differing contexts and with different client groups, e.g. travellers, NHS employees
- all new courses are subject to formal internal validation procedures
- all courses are subject to formal and informal termly reviews, which feed into the self-assessment report
- all courses will provide induction and progress reviews for learners
- all staff and students will contribute to the curriculum review process
- annual audits of teaching styles will help to steer and promote teaching methods
- manager/s will observe all tutors systematically as part of quality assurance process
- all basic skills managers will be basic skills practitioners.



## Example 5

An adult education service sets out guiding principles for all its community-based basic skills provision. An extract follows.

A **student-centred approach** is the basis of teaching and learning at all stages of contact with potential and actual students in 1:1, workshops, groups, short courses, family literacy and numeracy projects, ICT with basic skills and other linked courses, summer schools, intensive basic skills courses and other short courses.

A **student-centred approach to the management of the session** means that the teacher:

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

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

- in welcoming students the teacher creates a relaxed atmosphere and offers guidance on what to do so that the students do not feel uncomfortable on arrival
- the teacher ensures students understand how things operate, to dispel any uncertainty e.g. break times
- the teacher encourages students to have a sense of ownership of the room
- the teacher ensures that the space is arranged to encourage positive interaction
- the furniture is appropriate for adults and arranged to suit the session
- displays and resources are appropriate, accessible, meaningful and up-to-date
- the timing of sessions is arranged with students' needs in mind.

A **student-centred approach to the teaching room** means that it is:

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

A **student-centred approach to buildings** means that as many potential barriers as possible are eliminated so that the building is:

- in the community and conveniently located for students
- welcoming, with staff available to guide and assist students
- acceptable and appropriate for adult students
- well-known locally, and clearly signposted and advertised.

This section considers the changing ways providers see basic skills provision within their organisation: where it sits in their systems and the priority they give to it. In the past, some providers have seen it as the key element in their work. Others saw it as bolt-on provision which they needed to offer, particularly in the context of widening participation.

More providers are now moving towards a genuinely inclusive approach and recognise the fundamental impact that basic skills can have on individual development and success. Increasingly, providers are taking a 'whole-college' stance on basic skills, and take the provision into account in all curricular and organisational decisions.

## Example 1

This is the approach followed by one college working in an inner-city area with high levels of disadvantaged learners, mainly adults, who are high in motivation but low in confidence. The college has adopted a 'whole-college' strategy for basic skills which sets out to make basic skills provision invisible, integrated and – interestingly – intrusive.

### A whole-college strategy for basic skills

Basic skills should be **invisible** in that providers like us would not be able to attract and retain learners if the curriculum offer was identifiable as the three Rs of Reading, 'Riting and 'Rithmetic. Such provision would patronise them. Instead we play to the vocational aspirations of learners by placing them appropriately in the subject of their choice. We then tuck into that provision assessment of the learner's basic skills needs and the tuition they require, as part of their vocational programme. This approach captures the second feature of a 'whole-college' strategy, namely that basic skills are fully **integrated** into the main learning programme.

The third key feature is probably the most important. Basic skills work needs to be **intrusive** in that all aspects of organisational life – curriculum planning and review, and all the management functions including finance, staffing, sites – need to be interrogated from a basic skills standpoint to answer the question: are access, success and progress of learners served well by this?



## Example 1 (continued)

The aspects of its organisation which have to be adjusted to enable its commitment to a 'whole college' strategy to become a reality are set out below.

### Whole college approach: Areas of significant change

#### Students

- Student/community profile data
- Admissions handbook (competencies)
- Range of provision, connected and progressive
- Mix in student group population
- The extent of unitised accreditation
- Curriculum mapping exercise
- Student-centredness
- Student survey results
- Connecting strategies (between programmes; between levels)
- Hardship fund
- Curriculum/social issues.

#### Systems

- Strategic responsibility of named Governor
- Indications of intent in Strategic Plan
- Accommodation strategy
- Tracking systems
- Year-on-year programme development record
- Planning regimes for relevance
- Successes
- Closeness of audit process to programme management
- Quality procedures designed to advantage learners
- Policies, procedures and practices for Equal Opportunities
- Childcare
- Diagnosis of learning support needs
- Timing of classes.

#### Staff

- Multi-disciplinary nature of teams
- New tribes – study buddies, learning facilitators
- Principal = lead person on Equality
- Connection of experts across teams, levels and disciplines
- Attitude
- Ownership of staff recruitment
- Designing ladders down and across
- Mix of staff/profile/plan
- Annual staff development plan
- Bi-lingual interpreters.

#### Sites

- All accessible (nearly)
- Everywhereness
- Events participation
- Who knows about us
- Where else we are
- 'surround them with grandeur'
- Fit for purpose
- Fit for context
- Deconstruction of discrete provision into mainstream
- Franchising locations.

One of the outcomes of the college's review processes was the identification of shortcomings in some vocational areas where the students' response to basic skills provision was not as positive as the college had hoped. The college therefore decided to strengthen its 'whole college' strategy in these areas by integrating basic skills development more effectively with the vocational provision. It designed a project intended to provide a stronger framework for basic skills work. The project specification which follows gives the rationale for the project as well as an outline plan and intended outcomes.

### **Project specification for integration of basic skills development in vocational courses**

#### **Background and context of the project**

In spite of much good practice in the college, two main concerns with regard to basic skills provision have emerged from self-inspection, self-assessment and 'peer perusal' exercises undertaken by the college:

- unsatisfactory retention and achievement in language and communication skills and numeracy/maths in some vocational areas, particularly NVQ crafts and catering
- frequent early drop-out and difficulty in accessing the vocational curriculum for students on the college's Initial Training Course (pre-NVQ).

The college identified the need for the development of an integrated framework for teaching basic skills within the vocational context to improve retention, achievement and progression.

The college established two strands to address this need:

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

#### **Intended outcomes**

The intended outcome was a successful model of integrated skills development. We worked with consultants with expertise in this area and worked with both key skills specialists and vocational course teams to develop a model which addresses both strands. The aim of such development was to embed an effective model of basic skills delivery within the college.



## Example 2 (continued)

Outcomes included:

- a working cross-curricular model for integration, with identified components that can be replicated
- exemplars of good practice in:
  - using initial/diagnostic assessment to target skills teaching
  - course delivery
  - assignments
  - teaching and learning materials
  - effective ways of basic skills specialists working with vocational tutors
- greater acknowledgement and increase in effectiveness of the use of basic skills specialists.

Indicators of the model's effectiveness consisted of:

- increase in achievement based on:
  - projected improvement from initial screening/assessment
  - improvement between initial, intermediate and end of course assignments
  - comparisons with predicted grades/achievement
- improvement in student satisfaction and participation based on attendance and views of students and staff
- improved retention, completion and progression, with particular reference to students initially causing concern and those whose reasons for leaving tend to be dissatisfaction or sense of 'mismatch' with the course.

Monitoring the above indicators was part of initial and final review meetings of course teams and included the use of peer teaching observation. Evidence of impact included recording of tutor and peer observations, individual learning programmes, assessed assignments, student responses and anything additional determined at initial planning meetings. The project involved initial staff development sessions, follow-up sessions with course teams, staged implementation and continuing evaluation and revision of implementation.



Provision may have developed piecemeal in colleges in response to various internal and external demands, and for historical reasons may sit in several different management areas, reflecting the origins of the provision. For example, many colleges have basic skills provision in adult education sections, and in basic education and in learning support, with little or no contact or exchange of good practice between them. The positive effects of effectively co-ordinated provision are now becoming clear: the importance of a consistent approach to basic skills, with the benefits that it brings to both learners and college staff, for example, in terms of the quality of the learner experience, improved access to and availability of resources, the development of more comprehensive provision, including entry and progression routes, and a general increase in energy, efficiency and effectiveness.

As a result, many colleges are now considering changes to the management structure of basic skills provision. Implementing such a change is seen as a way of removing some of the barriers that currently impede learners. If students are to acquire the necessary competence to achieve their goals, basic skills provision needs to be effectively integrated into the programme of study the students are following. Providing a curriculum structure that enables this to happen is complex and takes time, but many colleges are now well into the process of significant change and development.



## Example 1

This shows the process followed by one college, setting out the rationale for a college-wide restructuring which encompasses the development of basic skills provision across the college.

### **Policy: The four key principles of provision**

1. Basic skills provision will be provided:
  - through discrete provision
  - through learning support
  - through vocational programmes
  - through specialist provision targeted at academic and vocational students.
2. Basic skills provision will be co-ordinated centrally by a single named individual.
3. Basic skills provision will be available to all students who need to improve their literacy and numeracy levels.
4. Basic skills provision will form part of each student's individual learning programme. It will not be 'add-on' or presented to students as a requirement over and above their chosen programme of study.

### **Essential criteria for implementing the basic skills policy**

- appropriate initial assessment that identifies the literacy and numeracy levels of students
- the ability to match the literacy and numeracy requirements of the chosen programme with the literacy and numeracy levels of the student and provide an individual learning programme that will enable the student to make the necessary improvements
- a college-wide curriculum framework that will enable students to access appropriate literacy and numeracy programmes without restricting their ability to participate in their vocational/general programme
- the facility/resources to provide the required levels of tuition in basic skills (including staff with the appropriate skills and experience to teach basic skills).

### Principles for developing a curriculum framework for basic skills

- the framework must be college wide and must be adopted by all curriculum areas of the college
- the curriculum framework must enable all students to receive appropriate levels of instruction and support. The vocational and/or general curriculum areas must plan their provision on this basis
- there will be a college-wide common timetable structure, setting out common blocks of time and common module lengths in order to enable basic skills modules to be integrated into the individual programmes of students
- basic skills modules will be 'levelled' to enable students to enter and progress at a level and pace that meets their individual needs.

### Key questions for developing an appropriate structure

In order to determine the structure for basic skills provision, the following questions need to be addressed by the college:

- what is the identified need/demand for basic skills provision and what could it be?
- does the current structure enable students to access basic skills provision at a level that meets their needs and the requirements of their chosen programme of study?
- what is the current take-up rate of students of basic skills provision?
- how is basic skills provision currently delivered?
- who currently delivers basic skills provision?
- does the current teaching of basic skills reflect the content and requirements of the student's vocational programme?
- is attendance at basic skills sessions a requirement for students or is it voluntary?
- what effect are the basic skills levels of students having on the retention and achievement rates of curriculum areas across the college?
- if discrete basic skills provision is offered, what are the progression trends of students? Is there a clear progression route from discrete provision to mainstream provision?

Using the answers to these questions as a starting point, the college needs to:

- consider the most effective curriculum structure to facilitate the college-wide delivery of basic skills provision
- set out a plan for implementing the curriculum structure
- identify key roles and responsibilities
- communicate the plan and associated requirements to all staff.

### **Structuring basic skills provision – how it worked in practice**

The organisation is a large, inner city, multi-sited college of FE offering provision in all ten of the FEFC programme areas. Following an analysis of the college's ability to develop inclusive learning, the senior management team (SMT) identified a need to change the curriculum framework and structure of the college in order to meet the individual needs of students more effectively. In particular, the SMT identified that students' basic skills were not being sufficiently improved during their time at college and this was having a significant effect on college-wide retention and achievement rates.

The SMT set out a new curriculum framework for the college, which involved establishing Central Curriculum Services (CCS). This provision was to provide:

- co-ordination and management of the initial assessment process for all full time and substantive (more than 6 hours per week) part time students
- management and delivery of basic skills provision
- management and delivery of the underpinning requirements for key skills
- management and delivery of generic foundation level programmes
- management and delivery of learning support.

Central curriculum services were to be phased in over a three year period with a gradual shift away from 'ownership' of students by the departments. Implementation was preceded by an eight-month planning stage.

The initial planning stage involved:

- establishing a college-wide timetable
- identifying the process for implementing a college-wide initial assessment system
- setting out provision that would enable the college to respond to needs identified through the initial assessment
- setting out levels of literacy and numeracy skills that would enable students to access provision at an appropriate starting point

- determining how central curriculum services would operate on a day to day basis
- identifying resource requirements and appointing staff
- developing and implementing a college-wide staff development programme.

In the first year of operation the CCS facility was used by a considerable number of students. However, the departmental structure still existed and this was proving to be a barrier to the implementation of the three-year plan. In particular, CCS was viewed by some departments as a 'service' or 'add-on' to their departmental courses. In order to address these issues, the college undertook a detailed analysis of the organisational structure of the college. The outcome of this activity was to eliminate the departmental structure and to focus attention on smaller units of curriculum delivery (sections).

The responsibility for curriculum delivery became campus based with each campus having a director for teaching and learning. This director leads a campus management team consisting of heads of curriculum and a campus registrar. There is a head of curriculum on each of the campuses responsible for CCS.

Within the new structure, section leaders continue to provide direct management of the delivery of teaching and learning to students. They focus on specific vocational or generic curriculum areas and line-manage teaching and learning support teams.

This new structure enabled the college to ensure that:

- programme timetabling was based on a common college framework and managed by the campus management team
- resources were shifted to enable a better match between demand and provision
- students became 'college' students rather than 'departmental' students
- the student had a core timetable made up from the provision offered by CCS; vocational and/or general programmes were timetabled around this core rather than the reverse which had been the situation prior to the restructuring.



## Example 2

This example shows how one college went about re-structuring its part-time provision for adults in order to improve retention and achievement.

The original basic skills provision at the college was organised on a traditional basis according to subject and level. Students were assessed before entry and then offered an appropriate class according to the result of their assessment. This meant that the majority of students attended for only two hours a week, or four hours if they requested both numeracy and literacy. Although each student had an individual learning plan, there was a predominance of class teaching. Detailed evaluation of basic skills provision for part-time adult students showed that:

- time-tabling constraints prevented students getting their class contact entitlement
- retention was poor although numbers in classes remained consistently high due to the frequent turnover of students
- many students who remained on courses had poor attendance records
- poor retention was followed by low achievement levels
- focus on individual need was limited
- there was an attitude growing amongst staff that 'this is what basic skills students are like, so do not expect too much'.

Given that adults with basic skills needs did frequently experience difficulty in sustaining a course of study, it was felt that the fault lay not with the students but to a large extent with the structure and framework of the provision. An action plan was drawn up by the sector manager and programme leader responsible for adult basic skills in order to:

- offer flexible provision with an entitlement of four hours per student
- change the classes to workshops to accommodate all students from entry to pre-GCSE level
- provide staff development for the adult basic skills team on the effective use of individual learning plans, planning of individual learning programmes and workshop management
- offer a wider, more appropriate range of qualification aims.



As a result of the action plan, adult basic skills was restructured. Numbers of students requesting literacy and/or numeracy over the previous two years were analysed and, as a result, three joint literacy/numeracy workshops were set up with two additional literacy and one additional numeracy workshop. Workshops were spread across the week, mornings, afternoons and evenings, with a view to making further adjustments if the take up was poor at particular times. In the first year of workshop provision, retention rose by 40% and attendance improved considerably.

Attendance improved because students felt they could arrive late or leave early if they needed to do so without disrupting a class and so attended workshops on those occasions when they may have decided to miss a class. The workshops have also provided a clearer focus for the individual learner and their particular needs. Workshops have provided an increased opportunity for students to use ILT and a range of additional resources which class teaching did not provide. The workshops have given students a greater opportunity to become responsible for their own learning and to voice their own preferences as to how they wish to learn and as a result they have stayed and made greater progress.

It would be naïve to think that all the issues around basic skills for adults have been resolved by the work done so far. There are still difficulties to be overcome; for example, inadequacies in recognising and recording students' achievements and the failure of externally validated achievements to increase at the same rate as improvements in retention.



## Example 3

This example shows how another college is seeking to redevelop its provision in the context of a merger.

### Background

- the college was formed from the merger of four colleges within the city, each with its distinctive culture and structure of provision
- priority was given to linking basic skills provision for students with learning difficulties and disabilities, key skills and vocational provision
- the need to build on existing good practice was recognised while embedding a consistent standard in the quality of provision across the college.

The college decided to host a conference looking at the Moser report and stimulating debate about basic skills across the community. This considered:

DfEE/FEFC actions on basic skills, including:

- improving income for provision
- significantly increasing student numbers
- inspection of literacy and numeracy, wherever it occurs
- non-schedule 2 pilots.

College actions on basic skills, including:

- audit of provision
- preparing for Q mark
- extending family literacy and numeracy provision
- UFI pilot
- work-place learning
- increased use of IT
- action plan, with lifelong learning partners.

The conference raised a number of issues for the college to consider, including:

- accreditation pathways
- internal partnerships with vocational and academic staff
- the need to continue to seek new community and voluntary partners with innovative, imaginative ideas
- better links with employment services
- the need for a better career structure for basic skills staff.



### Creating the new structure

Since the creation of the faculty organisational model, the faculty covering foundation programmes, basic skills, ESOL and key skills had some inherent problems, including:

- different interpretations of programmes covered
- different operational approaches in merged colleges
- anomalies in staffing and management arrangements
- opportunities arising from imminent staff retirements/changes.

The college proposed that the faculty was refocused as the faculty of basic education. These proposals sought to:

- clarify the role and scope of the faculty of basic education
- provide a framework for the basic skills curriculum, the curriculum delivery process, accreditation and curriculum entitlement for programmes at level 1 and below, ESOL and key skills
- generate and sustain the organisational capacity to respond to and lead on local, regional and national developments in areas such as the Moser Report, Curriculum 2000, widening participation, social inclusion and regeneration activities.

The college intended to establish a consistent approach to providing discrete programmes in basic skills and the basic skills elements of vocational programmes. Students are entitled to high quality delivery of basic skills and this is reflected in the FEFC initiative to inspect basic skills wherever they are being delivered.

This will be facilitated by:

- a group-wide approach to the development and delivery of basic skills in order to ensure consistency and coherence and to raise standards
- a support/development group to take forward in the college the basic skills curriculum and qualification framework being developed nationally
- a training and development programme for college staff, potential staff and volunteers to raise awareness, develop skills and improve quality.

A new post has been created to lead the development, co-ordination and delivery of basic skills. The postholder is responsible for the planning of discrete basic skills programmes, family vocational learning, family literacy and numeracy, and the quality assurance of basic skills within programmes across the college. Co-ordination and management of programmes on and off campus is supported by a network of programme managers and co-ordinators.



## Prompt Questions for Element 1



How central to your overall provision is basic skills?  
How can you help to move it from the periphery  
to the centre?



What priority does your organisation give to basic skills?



What other structures or approaches could you consider  
to improve the effectiveness of your provision?



How is your provision structured to ensure access,  
success and progress?



## Planning

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

- a review of the previous year and the current position (late summer into autumn)
- development of an outline organisational budget and operating plan for the next academic year (winter into spring)
- more detailed planning and development work at programme/departmental/functional level (summer)
- approval of the year's strategic plan in July; needs analysis to prepare for next cycle of planning.

The following examples illustrate various elements in the planning cycle, firstly looking at basic skills within the context of the overall process for planning and setting objectives, and secondly looking more specifically at planning within basic skills. Although as it happens, both sets of illustrations come from colleges, other providers will find they cover familiar ground.

## Example 1

The extracts here come from a college that has recently undergone a substantial merger, leading to the development of a new structure designed to ensure effective delivery of services to learners. The basic skills provision is housed in the directorate of foundation and key skills.

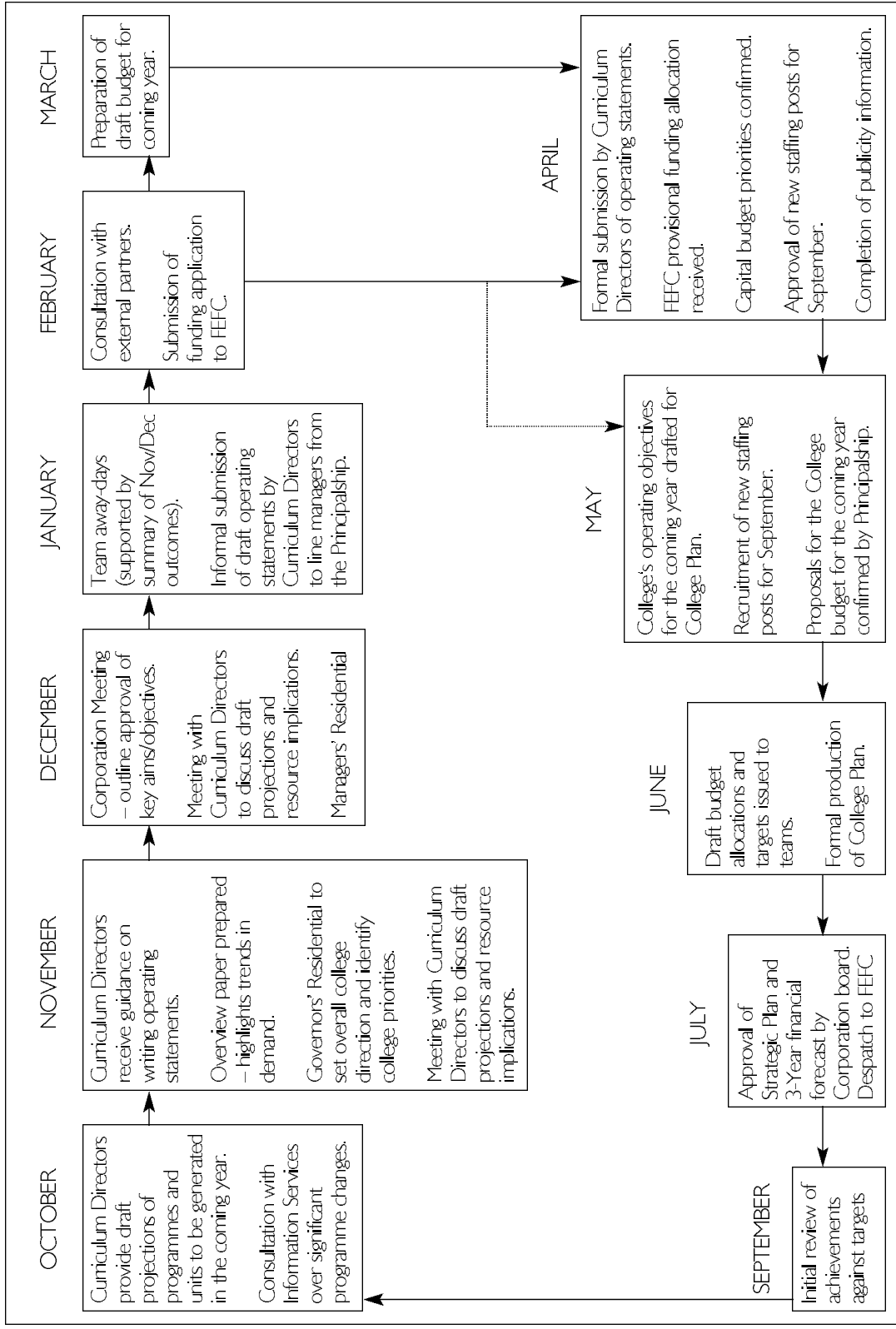
What follows shows:

1. the college's strategic planning cycle
2. an extract from its operating statement for the year
3. an extract from the operating statement for the foundation and key skills directorate: basic skills team



# Example 1

Basic Skills Quality Initiative College strategic planning cycle



# Example I (continued)

Extract from operating statement

College performance indicators	Objectives	Responsibility	Resource Requirements	Monitoring and Review
Widen access to participation and achievement and to maintain adequacy and sufficiency of provision	<p>Increase our students with learning difficulties and disabilities by a further 10% on both discrete and integrated provision</p> <p>Increase our retention rate for part-time learners to 87%</p> <p>Implement a college-wide coherent and consistent learning support and learning development service through the Directorate of Students and Learning</p> <p>Implement an integrated threshold guidance service with specialist counselling and diagnosis including core skills diagnosis and on-going support through the Directorate of Students and Learning</p>	<p>Additional Needs Manager in collaboration with Director of Students and Learning and Curriculum Directors</p> <p>Curriculum Directors in collaboration with Director of Quality</p> <p>Director of Students and Learning with other Curriculum Directors</p> <p>Director of Students and Learning</p>	<p>Staffing resources and equipment needs within planned expenditure</p> <p>Existing staffing resources</p> <p>Staffing and revenue within planned expenditure</p> <p>Existing staffing resources</p>	<p>Additional Needs Manager reporting to the Principal and Chair of Governors</p> <p>The Director of Quality reporting to the Principal</p> <p>Deputy Principal reporting to the Principal</p> <p>The Deputy Principal</p>



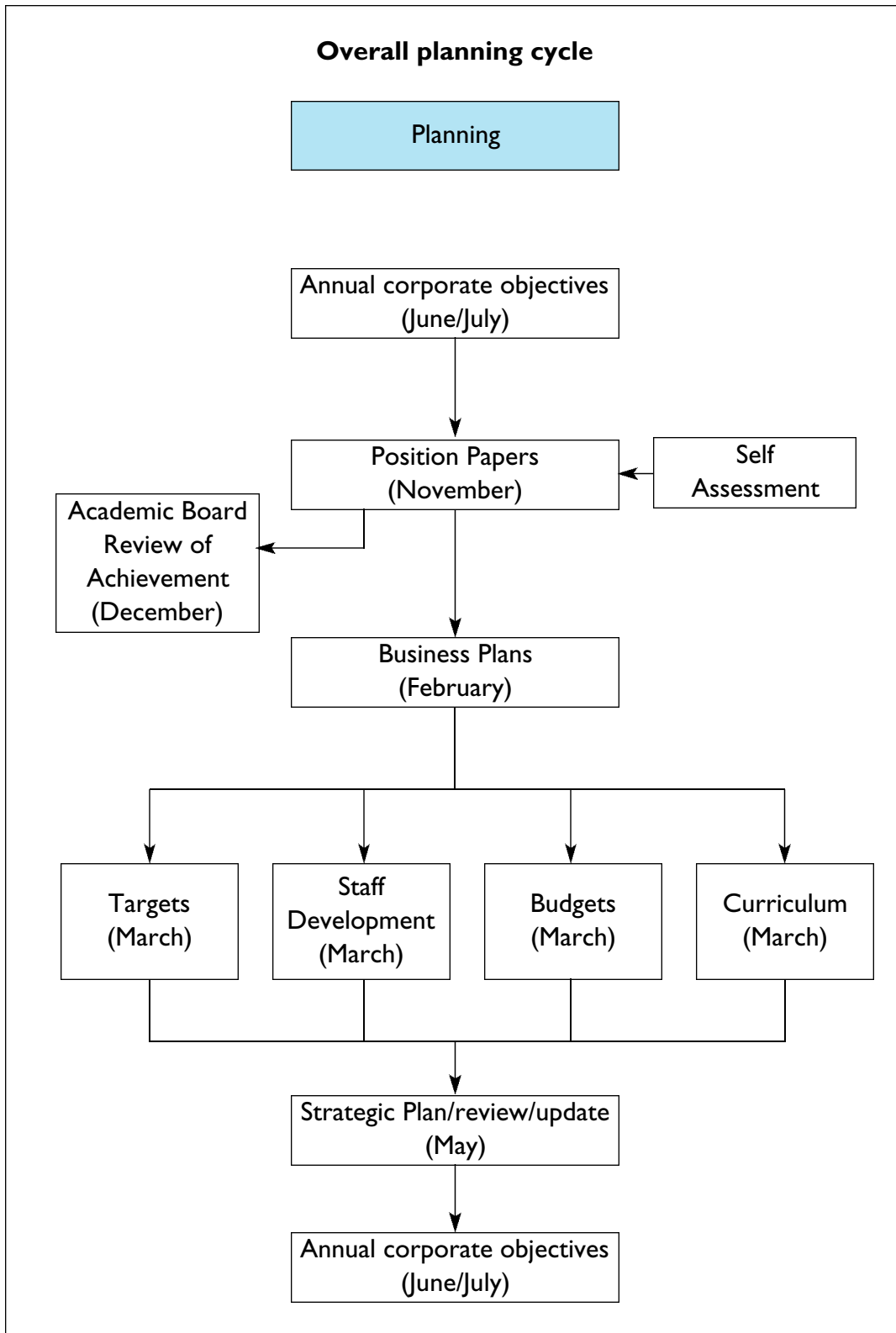
## Example 1 (continued)

Basic Skills Quality Initiative Foundation and key skills directorate – operating statement

Team: Basic skills OBJECTIVES and RESPONSIBILITIES PROFILE – some sample entries								
Team objectives	Responsibility of	With whom	Completion date	Related to which College P.I.?	Review date	Comments/Action	Final review	
Deliver basic skills learning programmes resulting in 30,000 units (i.e. 10% growth)	(programme managers)	Line manager Teaching staff	End of academic year	One	Christmas and Easter	10% growth possible in key areas – tied to growth funding, or Family Learning initiatives.	July next year	
Enrol 900 students (i.e. 10% growth)	(programme managers)	Line manager Teaching staff	End of academic year	Two	Easter & end of summer term		July next year	
Improve retention	(programme managers)	Designated teaching staff	End of academic year	Two	Easter & end of summer term		July next year	
Widen access	(programme managers)	Designated teaching staff	End of academic year	Two	Every half term	Target = 100% increase of venues	July next year	
Improved Information Systems	Designated manager and admin support workers	College I.S. staff	By next summer	Six		New database needed New links with college central systems	September next year	
More staff development	Designated manager	College staff development manager	Throughout year	Five	End of year	Programme of events to be designed and advertised	July next year	

## Example 2

The college in this example completed its merger some time ago and now has a well-established planning cycle.





## Example 2 (continued)

The planning model for basic skills is similar to that used for all other curriculum areas within the college, but there are two significant differences:

- **the needs analysis stage is not done by the college alone;** it is done in collaboration with the other organisations and agencies within the area involved in making basic skills provision
- **the provision does not 'fit' into a discrete curriculum section.** All curriculum sections need to address the development of their students' basic skills. Therefore all areas contribute to the planning of basic skills, and one person or team then brings it together and shapes it into a plan.

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

### Overview

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

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

### Key assumptions of the model

The planning model is based on the following key assumptions:

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



## Example 2 (continued)



Basic skills planning model (for details of how targets are set, see 'target-setting' section that follows this example)

Stage	Planning stage	Responsibility	Vehicle	Staff involved	Associated activity
1. (May/June)	Needs analysis undertaken by the Lifelong Learning Partnership	LLP Deputy Principal	Community skills Audit and existing Authority data	External consultants CS TEC/RDA	Board of Governors review college Mission
2. (Jul)	Borough-wide targets for improving basic skills levels developed and agreed by members of the Partnership	LLP Deputy Principal	LLP Strategic Plan	LLP working group on basic skills	Adoption of targets by Board of Governors
3. (September)	Borough-wide targets considered and the level of contribution that can be delivered by the college determined and agreed	SMT Basic skills manager		Section leaders Marketing CS Threshold	
4. (September)	Annual corporate objectives (for following year) set	SMT	College annual planning guidelines	Curriculum and business managers	Board of Governors review annual PIs
5. (October)	Review of existing provision within the college including a review of retention and achievement trends, recruitment trends, range of provision progression and destination trends, student feedback and teaching/learning audit.	Basic skills manager Curriculum section Leaders	Teaching and learning audit Annual Programme Review	Teaching and support staff	Academic Board review of performance
6. (November)	Production of position papers and annual self-assessment including targets (for following year) and action plan	Curriculum section leaders	Position paper and action plan	All staff	Board of Governors review of performance
7. (January)	College-wide targets (for following year) produced	SMT		Curriculum and business managers Board of Governors	Board of Governors target setting/approval
8. (April)	College annual business plans produced	SMT	Business plans	Curriculum and business managers	Budget proposals prepared and received
9. (April)	Annual staff development plan, quality improvement plan and budget produced	Staff development manager Director of quality and performance Director of finance			
10. (June)	Strategic plan update	Deputy Principal SMT		SMT	Board of Governors approve strategic plan and set budget



## Example 2 (continued)

### Making the plan work – commentary

The planning model has been in place for four years at the college. Each year has seen a revision of the process either to improve the model or to accommodate additional requirements made of the college by external funding agencies. In relation to basic skills, the most significant development has been the introduction of the Lifelong Learning Partnership and the structure/focus this has provided to the planning process within the college.

Developing basic skills provision is a college priority and this must be reflected in the planning process – not just for dedicated basic skills curriculum areas but for all curriculum sections. The process for producing position papers has been used to encourage all curriculum areas to consider and plan for those students who will need help to improve their basic skills. For example, all sections must address the range and effectiveness of entry level provision, the identification of basic skills levels, the provision of literacy and numeracy teaching and the subsequent staff development requirements that addressing these issues will require. The template for the production of the position paper is amended each year to take account of the annual corporate objectives. This way, all curriculum and business support areas can consider their contribution to the achievement of the college's objectives and targets.

Over the past four years, a number of issues have arisen regarding the planning model, which are summarised below. These issues can be used as both a list of potential pitfalls and a list of essential requirements for making the plan work:

- a Communications Strategy must be designed, agreed and implemented as part of the planning process
- briefings for all staff are essential. Everyone must understand their role and contribution to the process
- a single definition of basic skills should be agreed and communicated across the college
- time must be found for liaison, developing strategies and writing plans
- action plans, once written and agreed, must be monitored. Staff need to consider their own action plans as 'live' working documents
- the planning process must be directly related to the resource allocation process.

As with planning in other curriculum areas, the process of action planning in basic skills involves the setting of targets for performance. In any action plan, the **outcomes** tell us what the provider hopes to achieve, the **actions** tell us how it hopes to achieve it, and the **targets** tell us how it will measure its progress towards its goals and how it will know when it has achieved them. Setting targets requires thorough knowledge of current performance levels together with an understanding of what can realistically be achieved in terms of improvements, year-on-year.

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

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

## Example

The example which follows shows how a college goes about setting targets. It sets out the college's quantitative approach to effective target setting across the three different forms of provision it offers.

### Target setting for basic skills provision

Within the college, basic skills provision is provided to students through three routes:

- discrete provision: provision where students attend college or college venues in the community primarily to follow programmes in basic skills
- central provision: discrete sessions in literacy and numeracy below level 2, provided for students who are following vocational courses
- learning support: provision offered to students on an individual referral or 'drop-in' basis.

Target setting for each of the above has to be done separately, using different performance indicators, measures and benchmarks.

### Process for setting targets

#### I. Discrete provision

Discrete provision is organised by one college section. Each year, all college sections are required to complete a position paper within which they set their targets for the next two years. All staff within the section are involved in the preparation of the position paper, which forms the basis of the planning cycle within the college.

#### Key influences

The discrete provision has a number of key influences, which have to be considered when setting targets. These are as follows:

- past and current performance
- the level of provision within the locality
- known local developments (such as Single Regeneration Budget projects and New Deal for the community initiatives)
- developments in government schemes (New Deal/TEC)
- use and availability of community venues
- the range and availability of progression opportunities
- some national benchmarking data
- self-assessment outcomes.

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

## Target setting for basic skills provision

Target		Current Performance	2000/2001	2001/2002
1.	Recruitment (total)	298	350	380
2.	Recruitment (projects)	52	110	170
3.	Retention	72%	75%	78%
4.	Achievement	51%	65%	72%
5.	Attendance	61%	65%	72%
6.	Average class size	6	8	8
7.	Recruitment to community venues	107	170	230
8.	Number of community venues used	16	14	10
9.	Progression	47%	50%	65%
10.	Teaching and learning grade profile compared with national average	-15%	-5%	+10%
11.	Self-assessment grade	3	3	2

### Explanatory notes

- 1. Recruitment:** The total number of students recruited to discrete programmes. Includes students recruited to government and local projects.
- 2. Recruitment (projects):** The total number of students recruited to projects and schemes such as those funded by the TEC, SRB and the ESF.
- 3. Retention:** The percentage of students who complete their programme within the agreed timescale.
- 4. Achievement:** The number of students who achieve. In setting this target, close consideration must be given to the nature of the achievement. If the student is not following a nationally recognised qualification but is aiming to achieve the primary learning goal (PLG) set out on their individual learning plan (ILP), then there must be evidence that:
  - the PLG is appropriate and relevant (based on initial screening and assessment)
  - the student has achieved their PLG (based on assessment).
 (See unit 2 for more consideration of this issue.)

- 5. Attendance:** The average number of attendances at all discrete sessions for basic skills, excluding tutorials.
- 6. Average class size:** The average class size for all discrete sessions for basic skills excluding tutorials.
- 7. Recruitment to community venues:** The total number of students, including students recruited to specific project based provision, recruited to sessions held in community venues.
- 8. The number of community venues used:** The college has a strategy to reduce the number of community venues used and to focus provision at community venues that can be developed to provide a better level of resources.
- 9. Progression:** The number of students who progress to a higher level of provision (including mainstream entry and foundation programmes).
- 10. Teaching and learning grade profile:** Observation of teaching sessions takes place for all staff. The profile of grades awarded across the section is mapped against national averages (from the Chief Inspector's Annual Report).
- 11. Self-assessment grade:** The annual self-assessment grade awarded by the college quality team to the section (based on their own self-assessment in their position paper).

### 2. Central provision

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

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

### Key influences

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

- past and current performance
- recruitment patterns for full time and substantive part-time students (over 6 hours per week), including New Deal, TEC and ESF provision
- the current and projected number of foundation and entry level students in the college as a whole
- the outcomes of initial assessment.

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

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

**Explanatory notes**

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

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

**3. Learning support**

Learning support is provided to those students who wish to receive additional individual tuition and support. Many students require additional support in basic skills. The learning support team is required to complete an annual position paper within which they set their targets for the next two years.

**Key influences**

- past and current performance
- the outcome of initial screening and assessment.

## Example (continued)

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

Target		Current performance	2000/2001	2001/2002
1.	Take-up	64%	70%	80%
2.	Attendance	64%	70%	75%
3.	Teaching and learning grade profile	0%	+5%	+10%

### Explanatory notes

1. **Take-up:** The percentage of the number of students who have been identified, through initial screening and assessment as requiring **additional** support (over and above that offered through the central provision), who actually take up learning support.
2. **Attendance:** The average attendance across a 12-month period.
3. **Teaching and learning grade profile:** Observation of teaching sessions takes place for all staff. The profile of grades awarded across the provision is mapped against national averages (from the Chief Inspector's Annual Report).

Consideration is currently being given to setting retention and achievement targets. Until this year, they have been considered difficult to set and measure because of the impact of other factors. However, it has been agreed that they will be set in the coming year, either against students' mainstream course or goal, or by measuring distance travelled.



■

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

■

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

■

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

■

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

■

What targets do you set for basic skills provision?  
Who sets them? Who approves them? How do you ensure they are SMART targets?

■

How far do they fit with overall college targets?  
If they are different, what is the reason for this?

■

What benchmarks are used in setting targets?

■



## Element 3: Managing Information and Budgets

### Management information systems

As noted in the 'target setting' section, the collection and interpretation of data in the area of basic skills still poses considerable problems for many providers, especially colleges that have extensive, diverse and/or widely dispersed provision. However, many colleges have been successful in managing statistical and other information in this curriculum area, and in enabling their managers to use the information to shape and improve provision so as to increase the individual learner's opportunities for success. The pre-requisite for accurate and reliable information is effective register practice. Where providers employ a large number of part-time staff, who sometimes work only one or two hours a week in distant or non-traditional locations, this is not always easy to achieve.

One issue relating to data in this area for many of the larger providers is how to ensure that centrally held data matches that held by the manager of the basic skills provision. This involves a consideration of the reliability of the central data system; the extent to which it sees its role as giving support to curriculum managers; and the level of understanding and confidence that managers and staff have in the central system's definitions, data and procedures.

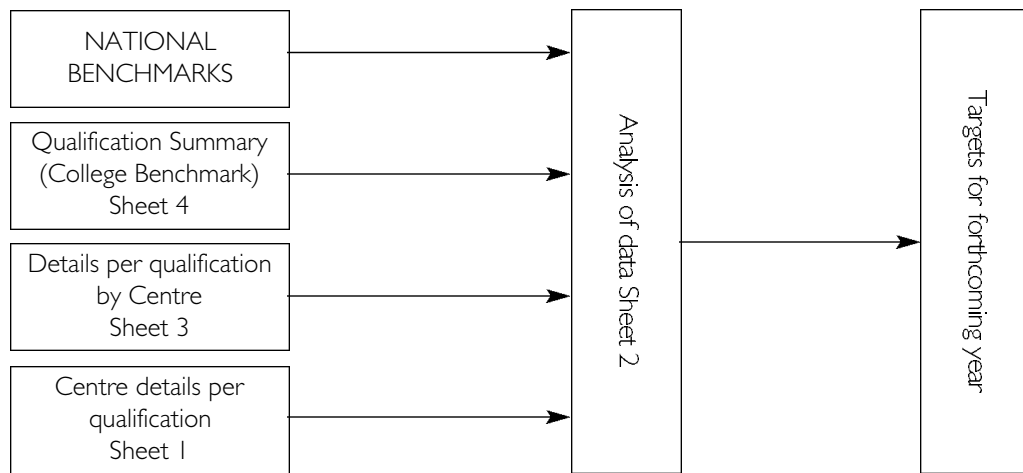
Further information on reporting of students' retention and achievements can be found in unit 1 and unit 4.

The example which follows illustrates one college's use of the central management information system supplemented by their own data. This allows each centre to analyse its own performance in some detail, but also to compare global performance with other centres as well as performance in each qualification with the performance of the basic skills provision as a whole.

## Example I (continued)

### Data

- data on enrolment, retention and achievement are kept by course teams/centres and by the faculty as a whole
- raw data are extracted from college information systems centrally and distributed to course teams via the faculty management team
- data are analysed at course team and faculty level
- data are recorded and analysed using a standardised format across the whole faculty
- data are analysed throughout the year with a final analysis in June/July
- data can be analysed by centre or qualification
- retention and achievement are analysed against national and college benchmarks for the previous year
- analysis is carried out at course team level, curriculum group level and faculty level
- reasons for increases and decreases in retention and achievement are identified, recorded as part of the self-assessment process and action taken as appropriate
- targets are then set for the forthcoming year based on the analysis
- reasons for non-achievement are classified and trends addressed at course team and faculty level.



### Attachments

- each centre receives raw data on enrolment, retention and achievement (sample sheet 1)
- each centre analyses data in more detail, e.g. non-achievers (sample sheet 2)
- performance centre by centre collated to allow comparisons (sample sheet 3)
- qualification summary (sample sheet 4).

# Example I (continued)

Sample sheet I – performance of centre A



Basic Skills Quality Initiative

Qualifications	Gross enrolment	Net enrolment	Retention %	Partial achievement of completers %		Full achievement of completers %		Achievement of completers (full & partial) %	
				%	No.	%	No.	%	No.
OCN English Entry	51	48	94	19	9	44	21	63	30
OCN English Level 1	53	45	85	24	11	60	27	84	38
OCN Maths Entry	20	15	75	16	2	53	8	66	10
OCN Maths Level 1	21	20	95	50	10	20	4	74	14
C&G Numeracy 1	53	43	81	N/A	N/A	69	30	69	30
C&G Numeracy 2	41	39	95	N/A	N/A	72	28	72	28
C&G Numeracy 3	18	15	88	N/A	N/A	80	12	80	12
C&G Numeracy 4	2	1	50	N/A	N/A	0	0	0	0
RSA English Language	30	29	97	N/A	N/A	69	20	69	20
Wordpower Entry	15	15	100	N/A	N/A	73	11	73	11
Wordpower Level 1									
Wordpower Level 2									
Numberpower Entry	4	4	100	N/A	N/A	100	4	100	4



## Example 1 (continued)

Basic Skills Quality Initiative Sample sheet 2: Analysis of non-achievers – Centre A

		Number of enrolments returning on alternative qualifications 1999/00 (all curriculum areas)											
		Number continuing in basic skills 1999/00											
		Number returning on same qualification 1999/00											
		Partial Achievement											
Reasons for non-achievement	Total	13	9	3	1	25	11	9	0	4			
	Other												
	Unknown												
	Gateway					2							
	Failed exam	1		1				3					
	Left exam early/ didn't turn up							1					
	Insufficient attendance			2			2			1			
	Late start (post Feb.)	3	4			8	4	1					
	Chose not to enter	5	3			3	2	1		2			
	Not ready to enter	4	2		1	12	3	2		1			
Total number not achieving		13	9	3	1	25	11	9	0	4	N/A	N/A	
QUALIFICATION		C&G Numeracy Stage 1	C&G Numeracy Stage 2	C&G Numeracy Stage 3	C&G Numeracy Stage 4	OCN English Entry/Level 1	OCN Maths Entry/Level 1	RSA English Language Stage 1	Numberpower Foundation	Wordpower Foundation	Wordpower Stage 1	Wordpower Stage 2	



Centre	OCN English Level 1 (across all centres)				
	Gross enrolment	Net enrolment	Retention %	Achievement of completers (full & partial) %	
A	154	93	60	73	68
B	73	48	66	63	30
C	59	43	73	65	28
D	55	39	71	41	16
E	46	29	63	45	13
F	63	47	75	43	20
G	69	48	70	44	21
H	47	37	79	46	17
I	32	20	63	60	12
J	52	41	79	54	22
K	51	38	75	45	17
L	20	15	75	80	12
M	48	36	75	50	18
N	58	34	59	50	17
O	54	44	81	45	20
P	35	27	77	59	16
Q	71	58	82	50	29
R	60	43	72	53	23
S	46	41	89	46	19
T	46	34	74	41	14
<b>Total</b>	<b>1139</b>	<b>815</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>32</b>

Qualification aim	Qualification summary – all centres			
	Gross	Expected completers	Retention %	Achievement %
C&G Numeracy Stage 1	405	309	76	63
C&G Numeracy Stage 2	312	334	85	64
C&G Numeracy Stage 3	178	160	90	61
C&G Numeracy Stage 4	28	25	89	59
Open College English	1139	815	72	53
Open College Maths	786	532	68	59
RSA English Language St.1	88	79	91	76
Numberpower Foundation	4	4	100	80
Wordpower Foundation	36	34	94	87
Wordpower Stage 1	18	16	88	86
Wordpower Stage 2	3	3	86	66
RSA Spell test	44	38	78	65



## Example 2

One college has devised the following system for recording achievement on non-externally accredited programmes.

The college receives FEFC funding for students who are not working for an external award by registering these students against a general literacy or numeracy code at a specified level (e.g. entry, level 1, level 2, level 3), for a maximum of 3 years at entry level and 2 years at each of the other levels.

### Rationale for general codes

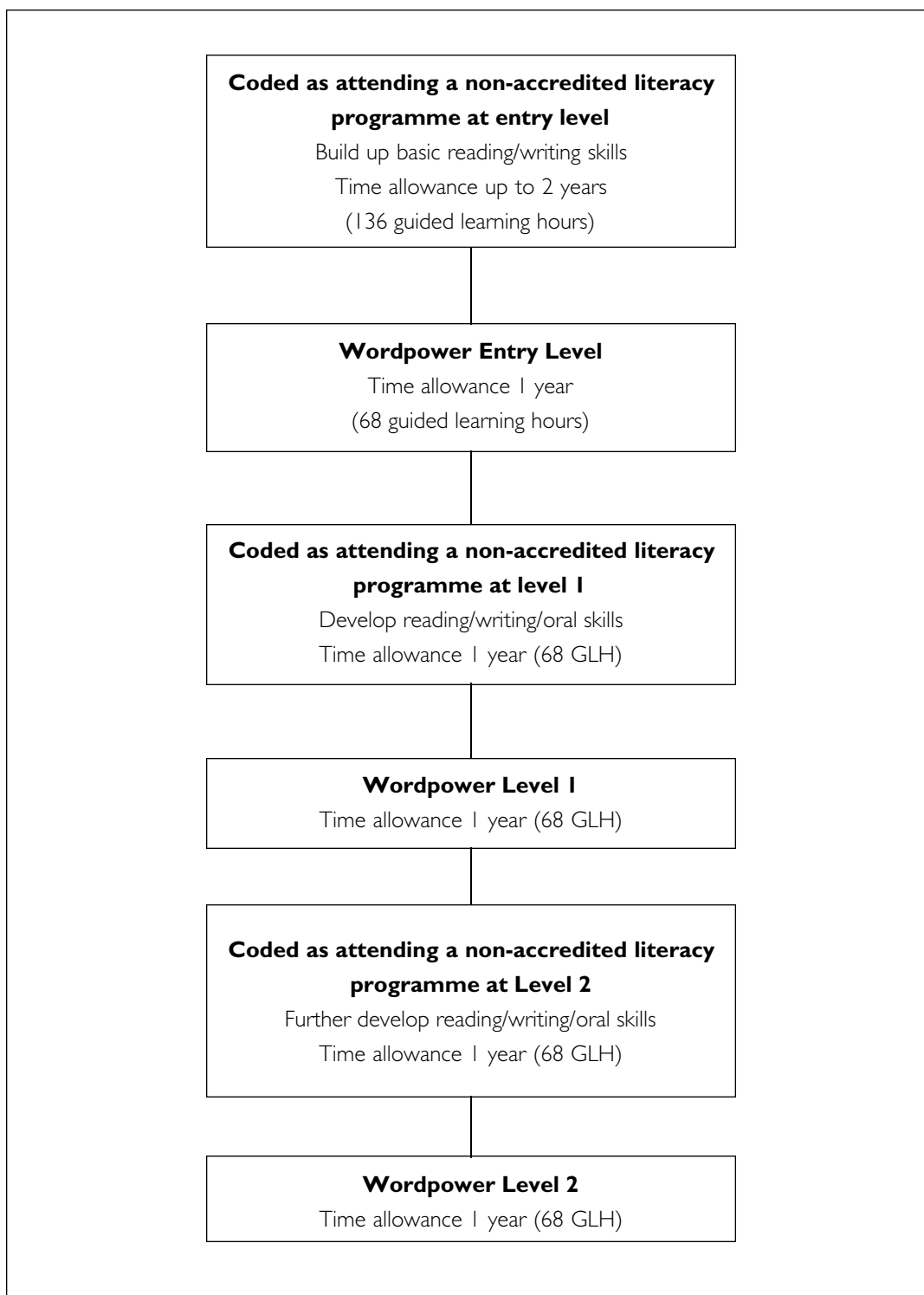
These codes offer the opportunity to provide learning programmes for two groups of students:

- (i) Those who do not want to work for an external award, but have primary learning goals linked to their own personal needs, e.g.:
  - gain promotion at work
  - successfully apply for a new job
  - pass the entrance exam for another career
  - help their children with their school work
  - read and do other activities such as play board games with their children
  - cope with the literacy/numeracy needs of their daily lives (as defined by the student)
  - pass the driving test.
- (ii) Students who need more than a year to progress from a pre-entry level of skill to an entry level qualification:
  - a student who has successfully completed entry level Wordpower may need more than 1 year of attending 2-hour a week sessions before reaching level 1.

Students who later decide to work for an external award can move their registration between non-accreditation codes and accreditation codes as outlined below.



An example of a student's progression route in literacy may therefore be as follows:



## Example 2 (continued)

Students can select their accreditation options at any stage in their programme.

All students initially enrol against a non-external accreditation code at a specified level.

Students may:

(i) stay on this code for 68 Guided Learning Hours

or,

(ii) decide at any stage to work for an external award. If it is anticipated that the award will be achieved within the original 68 guided learning hours, the enrolment is amended to reallocate the guided learning hours to the accreditation code. This reallocation takes place when the students actually register for the award.

(iii) if it is anticipated that a further period of guided learning hours will be needed to achieve the external award, then the student re-enrols on the non-accreditation code and, on registration for the external award, the hours are reallocated.

This ensures that no student is double funded for the same guided learning hours.

**Note:** whatever the combination of awards and personal goals selected by a student, no student can enrol for:

- more than 3 years on entry level programmes
- more than 2 years on level 1 programmes
- more than 2 years on level 2 programmes
- more than 2 years on level 3 programmes.

This allows for those whose progression is slow; it also prevents a student staying on any level for an indefinite period by enrolling in consecutive years on similar programmes at the same level.

### **The system is flexible**

The system allows the curriculum to be designed to meet the learner's needs and not for the learner to be forced into a pre-designed curriculum.

## Example 3



This example shows how one college chose to handle its data management system for additional support. It decided to develop its own system, based on Access spreadsheets and simple programming within a database linked to the college information system, rather than purchase an off-the-shelf package.

This approach:

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

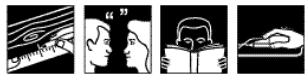
The programme manages data in a progressive way, in the following sequence:

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

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

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

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



### Example 3 (continued)

Basic Skills Quality Initiative Sample page 1 from database

Reason code	Reason	Assessment hrs	Assessment cost per hr	Assessment cost	Person responsible for assessments
DysASS	Dyslexia assessment only	5	£39.90	£199.50	Dyslexia co-ordinator
DyscalASS	Dyscalculia assessment only	1.5	£36.90	£55.35	Dyscalculia co-ordinator
DysFA	Dyslexia - full assessment	2.5	£36.90	£92.25	Dyslexia co-ordinator
DysSA	Dyslexia/dyscalculia - short assessment	1	£36.90	£36.90	Dyslexia co-ordinator
DysSR	Dyslexia SELF REFERRAL	0	£0.00	£0.00	Dyslexia co-ordinator
DysTF	Transferred assessment (dyslexia)	0	£0.00	£0.00	Dyslexia co-ordinator
Ed Psy	Educational psychology assessment	5	£50.00	£250.00	Dyslexia co-ordinator
HI	Hearing impairment	5	£36.90	£184.50	HI co-ordinator
Inv.	Invigilating extra time in exams	0	£0.00	£0.00	Course team
L/N	Literacy/numeracy support need	1	£36.90	£36.90	Course team
LD/EBD	Learning or emotional/behavioural difficulty	2	£36.90	£73.80	School of supported learning staff team
Opt	Optometrist assessment	2	£35.00	£70.00	Dyslexia/VI co-ordinator
PhyD	Physical disability	3	£36.90	£110.70	SSL staff team
VI	Visual impairment	3	£36.90	£110.70	VI co-ordinator

### Example 3 (continued)



Basic Skills Quality Initiative

Sample page 2 from database showing internal costings for administration as well as other costs

Support Summary Code	Support	Cost/hr	Printing costs	Admin hrs	Admin cost	Admin cost per hr
Am/Nt	Amanuensis/hotetaker	£14.00	£0.00	1	£12.00	£12.00
AT/Coun	Additional tutorial/counselling	£36.90	£0.00	1	£12.00	£12.00
Comm	Communicator/hotetaker	£14.00	£0.00	15	£180.00	£12.00
CR	Course-related literacy/numeracy (6 students/gp)	£6.15	£0.35	1	£12.00	£12.00
CR 1:1	Intensive (1:1) literacy/numeracy support	£36.00	£0.35	1	£12.00	£12.00
Dys 1:1	1:1 dyslexia/intensive lit and num support	£36.90	£0.35	1	£12.00	£12.00
Dys/L (Gp)	Small group dyslexia or language difficulty	£12.00	£0.00	2	£24.00	£12.00
DysASS	Assessment only	£0.00	£0.00	0	£0.00	£12.00
Ed Psy Ass	Assessment only from Ed Psych	£0.00	£0.00	1	£12.00	£12.00
Ed Psy Supp	Support from Ed Psych 1:1	£50.00	£0.00	3	£36.00	£12.00
Equip Dep	Equipment depreciation (total cost in hrs column)	£1.00	£0.00	1	£12.00	£12.00
Equip H	Equipment hire (total cost in hrs column)	£1.00	£0.00	2	£24.00	£12.00
ESOL (Gp)	ESOL Group Workshop (6 students/gp)	£6.15	£0.35	1	£12.00	£12.00
ESOL 1:1	ESOL 1:1 Support	£36.90	£0.35	1	£12.00	£12.00
Invig. Tutor	Invigilating Exams by AS tutor/extra time 1:1	£36.90	£0.00	0	£0.00	£12.00
Invig. Gp	Invigilating Exams by AS tutor in group 1:3	£12.30	£0.00	1	£12.00	£12.00
KS D Staff	D Staffing for literacy and numeracy (gp of 6)	£6.15	£0.35	1	£12.00	£12.00
Lit/Num Gp	Double-staffed lit/num group (6 students/gp)	£12.30	£0.35	1	£12.00	£12.00
LSA/Ena	LSA/Enabler support	£10.50	£0.00	15	£180.00	£12.00
Rev	Attendance at school statement reviews	£25.00	£0.00	1	£12.00	£12.00
Sm Gp (a)	Smaller group size (A)	£1.70	£0.00	1	£12.00	£12.00
Sp Th	Specialist language/speech therapy 1:1	£32.00	£0.00	2	£24.00	£12.00
Sp Ther (Gp)	Specialist language/speech therapy (group)	£12.00	£0.00	3	£36.00	£12.00
T of B	Teacher of the blind	£33.00	£0.00	3	£36.00	£12.00
T of D	Teacher of the deaf	£33.00	£0.00	3	£36.00	£12.00

A number of providers are now looking creatively at the resourcing models they use to see how they can be used more imaginatively to support strategic goals and objectives. Developing a resource allocation model for basic skills is a complex issue. Organisations and corporations remain committed to the principle of equity of access to resources, irrespective of curriculum or programme area. However, where the low level of basic skills across all curriculum areas is having a significant impact on both retention and achievement rates and the overall quality of learner experience, then this is something that requires a strong corporate response.

## Example 1

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

The college has recognised that the way that resources are distributed can be a key element in shifting perceptions and developing provision. Too big or too quick a shift may damage other

provision by starving it of the resources it needs. However, a planned and incremental shift will enable curriculum areas to manage the changes to their courses and curriculum that will provide the basic skills teaching needed by so many of their learners. The example sets out the way the college is working to establish a resource model that will support and promote basic skills provision.

### A resource allocation model for basic skills

The following resource allocation model for basic skills is being developed as part of a review of the process for resource allocation within the college.

#### Identification of the need to review resource allocation systems

As part of the review of the strategic plan, the college identified a number of key barriers to delivering the objectives set out within the plan.

- The overall structure of the curriculum did not enable access at appropriate levels for the cohort of potential students the college wished to attract.

Measure: Growth targets at entry and foundation level

Where curriculum sections had clear progression routes and a curriculum structure that enabled access at foundation/entry level, growth targets were being achieved. Where sections relied on entry/foundation level provision being offered by other curriculum areas either within the college or by the school sector, growth targets were not being met.

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

Measure: Initial screening for basic skills against skill level requirements for the programme of study.

Initial screening identified significant numbers of students with literacy and numeracy skill levels below that generally required to commence the programme. Hence, the improvement in skill levels required by these students was considerably in excess of the average for the programme. Further, students were expected to take up the additional support required in their own time.

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

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

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

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

## Example 1 (continued)

Measure: Take-up and attendance rates on learning support programmes did not match with the numbers of students requiring support; student and staff feedback suggested that the notion of support was not attractive (perception was that it was 'remedial', was 'bolt-on', and was not an essential requirement of the programme); student and staff feedback highlighted concerns about the quality of the teaching and the ability of staff to teach literacy and numeracy at level 1 in a way which was vocationally relevant.

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

### Previous model

Budgets were devolved to managers throughout the college. With the exception of permanent staffing (the largest budget heading) budget setting was zero-based. Each year, business plans were prepared by the heads of curriculum and cross-college managers. The business plans were based on position papers which were also completed each year by all curriculum and business support sections across the college. Managers prepared budget bids based on the following:

- planned activity
- utilisation of full time and associate staff against planned activity
- part-time staff
- consumable requirements
- capital (IT) requirements
- capital (non IT) requirements
- non-capital project requirements
- equipment requirements.

The budget bids were considered by the director of finance and estates and the senior manager for curriculum and quality. The criteria for assessing bids were as follows:

- the past performance of the area in relation to targets set (targets are set annually for income including non-FEFC income, retention, achievement and student recruitment)
- the current and proposed contribution of the area to the college's corporate objectives
- proposed developments and new initiatives
- the total resources available to the college, as detailed in the three year financial forecast.

The recommendations of the director of finance and estates and the senior manager for curriculum and quality were translated into an annual budget for presentation and approval by the senior management team and board of governors.



### New resource allocation model – issues for consideration

1. Will the model encourage the development of basic skills provision across the college as a whole?
2. Will the model support year-on-year improvements in retention and achievement rates across the college as a whole?
3. Will the model encourage the curriculum sections to develop foundation and entry level provision?
4. Will the model enable the college to maintain the current scope and range of provision across all levels?
5. Will the model allow for flexibility in responding to local and national initiatives whilst providing stability for planning and development within the college as a whole?

### The new model

The college task group formulated three options.

#### Option one

**Summary:** All curriculum and learning support budget allocations are set to a formula which is based in principle on the FEFC funding methodology but sets college weightings to an area of provision and to a specific activity. This would enable annual objectives to translate directly to the resource allocation.

**Strengths:**

- the college would be able to prioritise basic skills provision by giving it an attractive weighting in order to encourage curriculum areas to promote and develop provision
- the college could set steers for the development of foundation level provision
- in setting targets for improvements in retention and achievement, sections would need to consider the basic skills levels of their students – and the extent to which they need to be improved – in order for achievement targets to be met.

**Weaknesses:**

- does not link resource allocation to quality standards
- would need two to three years to measure the effectiveness of the model
- the model could, in some curriculum areas, have a negative effect on provision for students whose levels of literacy and numeracy are above level 2.

## Example 1 (continued)

### Option two

Summary: The resource allocation to curriculum sections is weighted. The weighting is based on the following:

- levels of qualifications on entry
- screening for basic skills
- students receiving basic skills provision throughout the course of their studies
- achievements
- staff development activity undertaken by sections.

Strengths: • would focus curriculum teams on the process of identifying basic skills needs and the process of improving basic skills

- would result in a better match between the needs of the student and the programme they are offered
- encourages and promotes the development of individual learning plans (ILPs)
- encourages curriculum sections to place a greater emphasis on reviewing students' progress.

Weaknesses: • quite difficult to administer – budgets would have to be calculated on an ongoing basis throughout the year which would be difficult for sections in terms of planning and organising their day-to-day activities

- may place a considerable additional administrative burden on teaching staff.

### Option three

**Summary:** The resources to deliver basic skills provision to students on mainstream provision are top-sliced from the annual budget for curriculum delivery and allocated to the central college-wide curriculum co-ordinator for basic skills. She can either use the allocation to make central provision or re-allocate the budget to the curriculum sections if they meet the criteria (BSA Quality Standards) for offering basic skills provision themselves. The allocation to curriculum sections is based on FEFC methodology with a higher weighting on achievement.

**Strengths:**

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

**Weaknesses:**

- would take 12 to 18 months to measure the effectiveness
- would need to be planned for 12 months before implementation in order to allow curriculum sections to adjust their curriculum provision accordingly.

### Conclusions

The task group recommended that the college adopted Option Three above.

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

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



## Prompt Questions for Element 3



How could you improve your systems for recording information?



How do you decide what data should be recorded?



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



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



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

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

However, there is still often an unexplained gap between identified need and the numbers participating in basic skills courses. Providers and other organisations within the community often work productively together to explore the reasons for the low level of response, and to consider how to increase participation. It is clear that planning of provision needs to review the level of demand and how to increase it, as well as the level of need and how to meet it. The examples which follow describe some approaches to needs analysis.



## Example 1

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

### Community skills audit

#### Background

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

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

Some initial research had shown that local residents did not consider that they needed to improve their basic skills – they were far more concerned with improving other skills that they felt would make them more employable. There was a general perception that they had the underpinning knowledge and skills to undertake skills training at quite a high level. This perception was not matched in practice; a large proportion commenced programmes of vocational training only to find that they were unable to cope with the requirements of the course. Often their response was to drop out. Research undertaken within the college showed that those at risk of dropping out often rejected the offer of support to improve their basic skills levels, preferring to shift their emphasis to different forms of vocational skills training.

#### Response

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

### The skills audit

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

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

### Summary of key findings in relation to basic skills

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

- a large proportion identified their basic skills to be in need of improvement, though few would consider following a programme of study that only sought to improve their basic skills.

**There was a general belief that their basic skills would automatically improve if they followed any vocational or other programme.**

- many saw a stigma attached to basic skills provision and identified such provision as being for people who had difficulty with learning. Generally, respondents did not identify themselves as having difficulty with learning. They did identify themselves as lacking in vocational skills but did not link this weakness to a weakness with basic skills
- in relation to employment, a significantly large proportion saw their lack of IT skills as being a greater barrier than a lack of basic skills
- most respondents were aware of the adult education opportunities available to them. A number had participated or were participating in some form of learning experience. Of these, the majority had selected programmes they considered to be 'vocational' rather than general.
- when asked how they would acquire the skills necessary for 'work', the majority indicated that this would take place through on-the-job experience. Both the employed and the unemployed believed that training took place once they had secured employment, not before. Those who were employed were able to give examples of the type and range of training they received. None identified basic skills training.

### Recommendations

Following the production of the skills audit, the local partnership considered the findings and set out a list of recommendations. These (in summary) are as follows:

- to review current provision and to consider the emphasis given to particular sessions. Rather than promoting discrete basic skills provision, to promote the link between basic skills and the skills required for work, and the relationship between vocational access provision and the delivery of basic skills provision
- to provide a new portfolio of provision which focuses on combining the following:
  - work-related skills
  - IT skills
  - basic skills
  - language skills.



- to combine existing resources, particularly between the authority and the college and to develop a single agency within the borough for the development and promotion of basic skills provision. In particular, to combine resources in order to provide fewer but better resourced access points. To concentrate on giving access points a work related and professional image. In addition, to streamline advice and guidance services across the borough in order to promote a single basic skills strategy.

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

### **Outcome**

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

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

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

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



## Example 2

This example details how one college conducted a survey into the educational needs on a local housing estate.

### Education as regeneration

The area comprises 600 properties, built in the late 1960s/early 1970s. It is a traditional white, working class housing estate, with severe economic, social and environmental difficulties. There are high levels of local disaffection and high unemployment.

The main activities of one of the residents' associations have been to encourage local people to get involved in improving the estate and in building relations with service providers, including the council and the police.

The college worked closely with the council's area co-ordinator (local development worker) and two local residents' groups, who felt that education was a key feature of the regeneration of the area. There were also concerns about the lack of educational opportunities in the area, and the lack of parental involvement in their children's education.

Funding was obtained for a survey and questionnaire, to be distributed by local residents to schools, community centres, local shops and houses on the estate. Volunteers were recruited from amongst the local community to devise, compile, conduct and analyse this survey. The survey's purpose was to:

- involve local residents in conducting a survey into educational needs on a housing estate with high levels of deprivation and a high proportion of long-term unemployed people
- promote education in the community.

The college provided training for the volunteers: a 30-hour OCN-accredited course in Conducting Surveys and Questionnaires. This accreditation was tailored to their specific needs and characteristics. The college appointed a part-time worker to recruit and support volunteers, deliver training, provide publicity and liaise with local residents and organisations.

Formal liaison took the form of regular steering group meetings with residents and community development workers, but much valuable work was done informally, at lunch clubs, mother and toddler groups and the local summer Fun Day.

#### The range of local contacts used:

- city council
- local colleges
- local head teachers of all schools
- local community police
- community association
- local newspaper
- local radio
- community groups' admin. support worker
- local community development workers
- youth workers
- housing workers – sheltered accommodation
- Lifelong Learning development officer.

Partnership with community development workers, who shared the aim of empowering members of the local community, helped to ensure that the learning process was owned and directed locally. The use of flexible qualifications and the identification of relevant progression routes helped to motivate students. The provision of childcare also involved local people, providing them with experience and employment.

Local deprivation, neglect and the consequent despondency of local residents were identified as key factors in the original bid for funding. This disaffection was acknowledged in the long-term objective of the project: to encourage a greater educational culture in the local community.

The project really only scratched the surface of these deep-rooted problems. Yet there were several promising indications of a growing confidence, community spirit and momentum:

- the recruitment of new members to the Residents' Association during the project
- the growing confidence of Residents' Association members (e.g. in local radio appearances)
- two key members of the Residents' Association found work after the project
- the tangible contribution which the project made to the local summer Fun Day
- the genuine sense of collaboration and good will amongst mothers and children in compiling and distributing questionnaires together
- a new mother and toddler group has been started as a direct spin-off of the project's initiatives
- the keenness to undertake further training - in 'committee-meeting skills/Residents' Association Training', which was provided as a direct follow-up.



## Example 2 (continued)

Basic Skills Quality Initiative

Pilot programmes suggested and planned for particular groups

	<b>Men</b>	<b>Young people</b>	<b>Lone parents</b>	<b>Older people</b>
<b>What</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 'Ground Force'               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– landscaping</li> <li>– IT/design</li> <li>– environmental issues</li> </ul> </li> <li>• 'Changing Rooms'               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– design</li> <li>– techniques</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Introduction to the Web</li> <li>• Welfare/housing/benefits</li> <li>• Running your own business</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 'Robot Wars'</li> <li>• Sport</li> <li>• Fitness training</li> <li>• Music/music technology</li> <li>• Motorcycle maintenance</li> </ul>	<p>Childcare to support access to existing provision</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Personal safety</li> <li>• Home security</li> <li>• Crime prevention</li> </ul>
<b>Where</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pubs</li> <li>• Supermarkets</li> <li>• Markets</li> <li>• Community Centres</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Football grounds</li> <li>• Local garages</li> <li>• Youth clubs</li> <li>• Mobile Workshop</li> <li>• Fairham C.C.</li> <li>• Mobile DJ rigs</li> <li>• Karate Centres</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pubs</li> <li>• Supermarkets</li> <li>• Markets</li> <li>• Community Centres</li> </ul>	
<b>How/when</b>		Young people as mentors, tutors		



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



What are your priority areas for increasing participation?



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



## Element 2: Collaborative Working

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

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

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

The provision of basic skills through partnerships with other local groups and organisations is more likely to be effective if the basic skills provider develops a strategy with clear criteria about the range and type of partners with which it wishes to work. Effective partnerships also need to have a clear purpose and agreement about the roles of participants and the basic skills outcomes for the learners.

One provider notes that the strongest partnerships are 'those where we work with agencies which are operating in a different field

to us, for example, housing, but which share similar goals, such as the promotion of social well being and economic independence and which share with us a clear view of the benefits of joint working'.

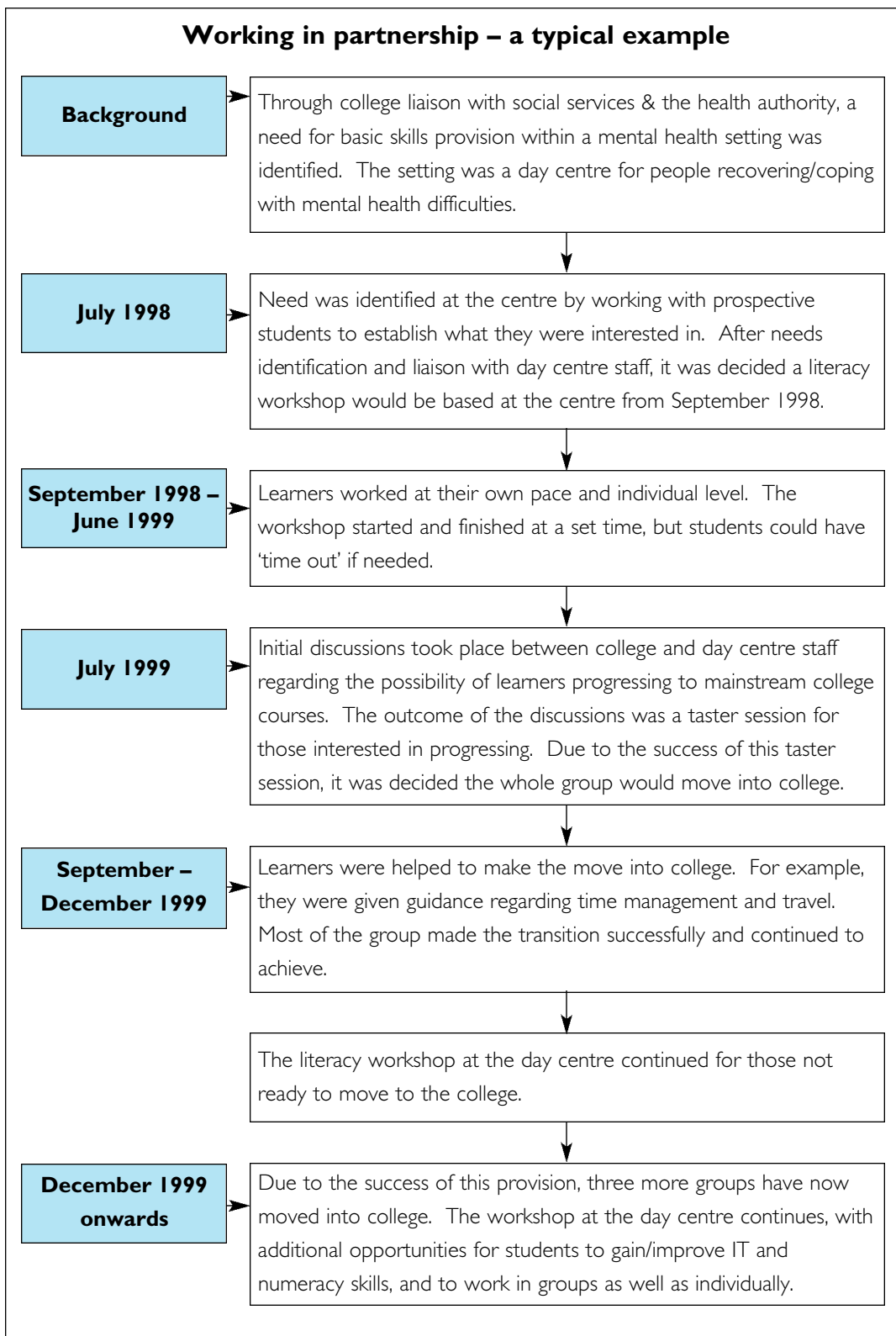
Another identifies the following principles for effective collaboration:

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

## Example 1



The flowchart below shows a typical sequence of events in the joint development of provision, in this case for adults with mental health difficulties.





## Example 2

This example shows how a family numeracy project running in inner-city primary schools was established.

### Family numeracy project

This project was designed to consolidate, integrate and extend delivery of numeracy to parents.

The project was a partnership between:

- the adult education service
- the school improvement service
- participating schools
- the council education department early years division.

It was initiated by the basic skills curriculum manager. The target group was parents of children aged 3 to 5, selected and invited by the school. The schools approached the learners because they had most knowledge of parents and children who could benefit. The school approached the families of children with poor attainment in numeracy. A workshop was arranged to stimulate parents to work through numeracy activities with children and give them the opportunity to talk to adult education staff and teachers from the schools. Parents were actively encouraged to join the pilot course. The parents' own numeracy skills varied; some had poor numeracy skills, others felt that they needed to acquire the skills to support their child's numeracy.

An overview support group was established for the project comprising representatives from the three LEA departments – Adult Education, Schools Improvement and Early Years. A working group comprising staff from the school and tutors from the adult education service working on the project was also established.

The support group identified the following strategies for success:

- establish appropriate funding
- select committed schools, with appropriate catchment, suitable accommodation and enthusiastic staff
- arrange adequate administrative support
- recognise that this has to be a whole school project with school heads, senior staff and governors demonstrating commitment
- ensure tutors are experienced and effective in delivering parent education and numeracy in community settings



- arrange direct control of a budget by the steering group – easily accessible and responsive to prioritised needs
- build progression advice and mechanisms into the exit strategy
- train staff in the systems for monitoring
- build in adequate time for planning and evaluation by students and the delivery team.

The project had the following outcomes:

- increased numeracy skills and interest in numeracy for parents and children
- commitment to future learning
- greater involvement by parents in their children's education
- greater confidence of parents in their children's school
- stronger links between the parent education curriculum and the basic skills curriculum within the adult education organisation
- a project which can be transferred to other schools
- family learning can be extended after the project in the same venue with minimal expense.

Teachers found that it is more difficult to recruit parents whose own numeracy skills are poor. The numeracy skills of the parent have to run ahead of the support they give to their child. This is obvious to parents – 'I can't teach him if I don't know it myself'. Those recruiting have to be very clear about the purpose of the course – or different components of the course – and their target group. They need to be very explicit about this when advertising or approaching prospective students. A course aimed at parents with poor numeracy skills has to be very carefully structured so that the parent's learning leads the way and that the process of passing on the skill to the children reinforces their learning. If the sequence is wrong, the parent's confidence can be undermined.



## Example 3

This example gives details of how a number of post-16 providers worked together to provide summer schools.

### Basic skills summer schools

The participating organisations in the basic skills summer schools were the adult education service, three sixth form colleges and two general further education colleges.

Managers with responsibility for basic skills in the participating organisations came together and identified those aspects of the project where co-operation would be particularly beneficial:

- accreditation
- advertising
- information distribution and gathering.

It was decided that the summer school would have two strands – youth and adult. The youth strand would involve two organisations and the adult strand five. Having reached a decision to work in partnership, the organisations involved decided to appoint jointly funded co-ordinators.

The main priority at the outset was advertising the summer school to establish and publicise each organisation's interpretation of the common theme 'Test the Water' in a way which recognised the strengths of each organisation within the co-operative nature of the project. Staffing and the day-to-day running of provision at different venues were the responsibility of each of the organisations involved.

Student evaluation forms from all centres were very positive. Some examples from end of course evaluation follow:

'I now feel ready to do GNVQ next year.'

'The course was too short, but I have found it very valuable.'

'Going to visit the other centre to find out about training was good.'

'My children couldn't believe that I'd done my writing on the computer and even used the Internet.'

All completing students had clear progression plans ranging from volunteering in community radio, GCSE English, a cabinet-making course, a pre-nursing course and local employment with an airport company to the extension of their basic skills programmes. Of the eleven students at one centre, eight entered and successfully achieved basic skills accreditation a month after completing the intensive course.

**The project shows that factors affecting the success of the partnerships were:**

- committed, qualified staff who work well with counterparts in other organisations
- fair and transparent financial arrangements
- clear roles established for programme leaders, taking account of their skills and interests, in the division of co-ordinating functions across the project
- a lead practitioner/s to give hands-on practical advice to less experienced basic skills staff across venues and to encourage an experimental approach
- a shared explicit emphasis on basic skills acquisition linked to a clear framework for assessing progress using imaginative, relevant contexts
- a general theme to bring the strands together and provide a way of manifesting this shared interest, for example through a residential where students can share their learning in practical ways – presenting products, e.g. videos, news sheets, books, plays – giving students a goal and a sense of achievement as well as extending learning (e.g. oral skills)
- local interpretation of the theme to allow different organisations to make the learning experience relevant to their students
- a respect for the differences, a recognition of the similarities and an interest in the work of partnership organisations, together with a willingness to maintain the link over time.



## Example 4

Many basic skills providers have been working with employers for several years to develop basic skills programmes linked to the specific needs of their employees. The following is from an Adult Education Service which describes one example of a basic skills programme provided on an employer's premises.

The adult education service has a specialised unit which delivers external training. The partnership is between this unit and an international company with a national network of outlets.

The unit was approached by the company to deliver basic skills sessions to their employees because of the relative proximity of their headquarters and the profile of the unit in the community. The learners were identified by the company. Managers had discovered that low levels of literacy and numeracy made staff less effective. Staff needed basic literacy and numeracy skills to complete tasks successfully. Staff training was not fully effective because of employees' difficulties with literacy and numeracy. There were patterns of high absenteeism and high staff turn-over. Staff needed to improve their basic skills to be able to benefit from health and safety training and repair and maintenance training.

The project was endorsed at managerial and supervisory levels. Employees were actively encouraged to participate. A basic skills course was set up on the company's premises taught by adult education service tutors. The course was timed to coincide with shift changes to facilitate attendance, and employees were allowed some time off work to attend.

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

### **The partners found that the following factors contributed to the success of the project:**

- management commitment – the company identified the need and fully supported the training. The practical benefits to the company were understood and accepted at management level.
- the tutors were able to tailor the course to meet the needs of the company and the employees
- the course was delivered on the company's premises in work time
- there was investment in the writing and production of quality materials
- progression advice was built into the exit strategy for the course
- there was joint planning and evaluation between the unit and the company
- the employees were consistently given feedback on their progress.

### Outcomes of the project

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



## Example 5

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

### Community development network

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

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

- women returners
- ethnic minority groups
- working class males
- black males
- EFL/ESOL students
- refugees
- homeless people
- people with mental health problems
- ex-offenders
- drug users
- rural communities
- single mothers
- carers
- disaffected youth.

Many of these non-traditional learners have low levels of basic skills. Approximately 60% of school leavers have below-average levels of basic skills.

#### Criteria for selecting partner organisations

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

### General criteria

A partner organisation should:

- be able to demonstrate management competence, either real or potential, in finance, general management and basic survival techniques
- be able to demonstrate successful performance against quality standards, including an ability to raise achievement
- be able to provide satisfactory business references if required, both for the partner organisation and 'affiliated' bodies
- deliver provision which is relevant to the college's strategic priorities and expertise
- be of sufficient critical mass to make their in-house administration effective
- be the sole deliverer of the franchised provision, i.e. not sub-contracted
- deliver provision within the college's local recruitment area, subject to the outcomes of the consultation to FEFC Circular 99/39.

### Specific criteria

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

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

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

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

### Setting priorities

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

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

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

2. Programmes must be accredited, or have as their objective progression to a course which prepares students for entry to accredited courses.
3. The partner's ability to resource the programme (i.e. contracting appropriate staff and providing other relevant materials and equipment) is discussed. The programme proposal form asks for 'trainer's qualifications'. It also asks for information on the experience prospective tutors have of working with similar groups – e.g. their experience of working with students with additional needs, basic skills needs, learning difficulties and disabilities, etc.
4. The college's ability to assure the quality of the programme through one of its curriculum areas is also paramount. The capacity of the partner organisation to deliver or engage in a partnership with the college will dictate whether we work with them or not.
5. An organisation's administrative and financial systems and their equipment should be adequate. If not, the college will provide their own staff to deliver the programme and offer the necessary support. We will also enable the group to build their capacity to manage the systems and processes in the future. We shall also provide support with bids to access extra funding – for example, for childcare and equipment.
6. If the programme is being delivered directly by the college, then staff employed by the college will be selected with appropriate knowledge. The community development team has a bank of community tutors who are deployed on a regular basis.

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

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

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



### Key factors for prioritising primary basic skills provision

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

- socio-economic data for the region – e.g. labour market information, demographic trends
- Basic Skills Agency benchmark information on the scale of need in different areas of England
- government initiatives: Widening Participation; Inclusive Learning
- funding and 'alternative' funding potential
- market research
- competition from other providers
- data from the college's information services on viability of provision (enrolment, retention, achievement)
- college budget information
- the college's audit of current provision – who we already provide for, and where
- the college mission
- specific college policies, e.g. on Curriculum, Quality Assurance
- SWOT analysis – the college's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats
- audit of available teaching staff – experience, skills, attitudes, etc. (gender, race, etc. needed to match the targeted student group)
- analysis of student questionnaires
- initial assessment of prospective new learners
- adequacy of suitable venues, access for those with mobility difficulties
- geographic distance for staff, students to travel
- specialist resources needed for specific subject areas
- motivation of identified target student groups
- existing networks (communication, workplace, shared interests, shared leisure time, etc.) within targeted student groups
- achievement/progression opportunities for targeted student groups.



## Example 5 (continued)

### Sample checklist

You need to check:

- training accommodation
- training equipment
- access for people with mobility difficulties
- organisation policy and structure (please attach copy)
- financial viability, i.e. organisation in existence over 3 years (please attach copy of accounts)
- equal opportunities policy (please attach)
- health and safety procedures
- fire certificate (please attach copy)
- public liability insurance (please attach copy)
- employer liability insurance (please attach copy)
- childcare facilities
- business references.

Issues of double funding

(This could come from ESF: FEFC: DTI: New Deal: Employment Services etc.)

- do they receive any FEFC funding from any other colleges?
- do trainees reside and work in the UK?
- are your target students employed?
- are all the students over 16?
- is the training open?

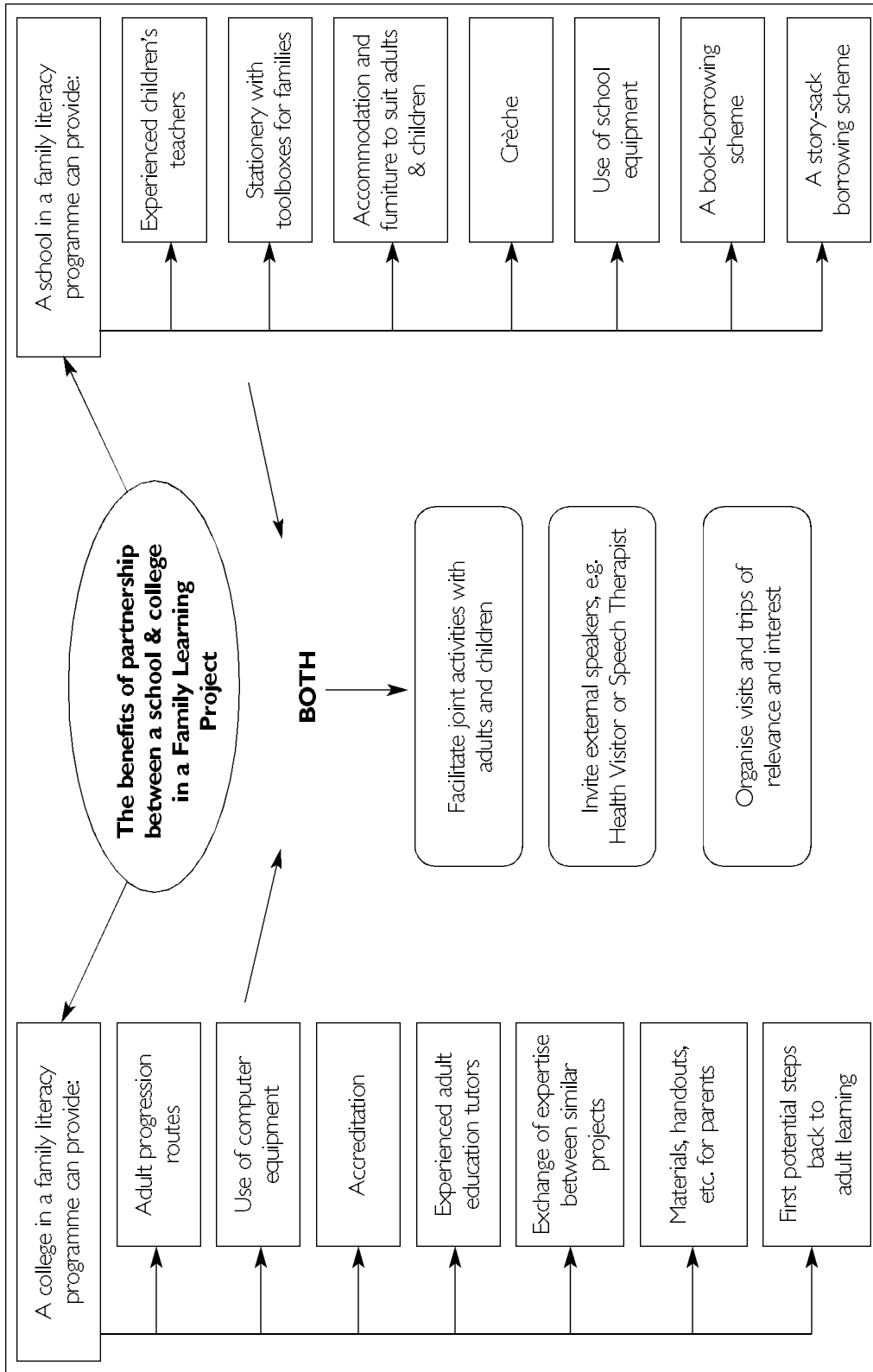
### Does the programme:

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

### Does the organisation:

- have Awarding Body validation?
- employ staff with relevant experience and qualifications in the teaching of basic skills?
- employ staff with relevant experience and qualifications in terms of the specific nature and characteristics of the client group?

**School and College Partnership**





## Prompt Questions for Element 2



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



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



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



## Element 3: Reaching the ‘Hard-to-reach’



Basic Skills Quality Initiative

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

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

### Example 1

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

### **Marketing and recruitment for the adult college**

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

During the first term of operation, the following roles have emerged for the adult college in developing provision for basic skills learners:

- to develop through action research with partner organisations in the community a model for identifying the education and training requirements of potential learners who would not choose to come to college, but who can be identified as missing out on social and employment opportunities due to lack of confidence, low self-esteem, poor basic skills, poverty and prior negative experience or failure in education
- to secure the resources for and deliver provision in outreach and college centres, which respond to the needs of this target group
- to develop provision which reaches learners where they are, and which enables effective learning in contexts which are motivating and comfortable for people for whom the idea of education is de-motivating and not initially attractive. This might mean addressing basic skills issues around an informal sports programme, health and basic education issues around a cookery programme, basic and IT skills in the informal atmosphere of the pub or ESOL issues around a sewing skills course for refugee women whose urgent need is to make clothes and curtains
- to have an impact on general college curriculum planning and delivery for basic skills learners, in order to further develop the college's responsiveness to learners most vulnerable to failure because of poor basic skills.

### **Methods and examples of innovative marketing and recruitment**

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

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

Since people tend to go to community organisations which can offer them advice, help and resources, it makes sense for the adult college to go to these organisations and jointly identify with them and their users, how educational resources can help in the short and longer term.

Examples are as follows:

- working with the local Refugee Network, the adult college identified a group of newly-arrived Somali women asylum-seekers. Rather than assuming that they would want ESOL classes, we asked them what they would like to do. They said they would like to learn basic sewing skills, with donated fabrics, so that they could make summer clothes and curtains for their temporary accommodation, which they would not be able to afford to buy but which are basic essentials before being able to focus on what to do next. The resultant educational programme provides the sewing skills and donated fabrics, with language support and advice and guidance built in so that each woman can plan her next educational step with the college
- a local housing association had an idea that some of their tenants would be highly motivated by an internet connection and through learning some basic computer skills, together with basic skills tailored to their requirements. As non-educationalists, they were unsure as to how to make this into a viable learning opportunity. The adult college was able to help them plan a flexible learning programme, which is now being taken up not only by younger unemployed and disaffected adults but also by older learners for whom lack of basic skills had contributed to a lifetime of feeling excluded
- a hostel for homeless and displaced people wanted an educational programme which they could build around their highly popular sports coaching/motivational programme. The adult college helped plan and deliver a basic skills/study skills/ESOL workshop programme which all participants on the sports programme are encouraged to attend
- two women with strong feelings about the need to offer opportunities for people to learn literacy skills in the community negotiated the free use of the local church hall. They then approached the adult college to see if they could get some curriculum support and a whiteboard. Their original intention was to run the group on a voluntary basis. It is now likely that the adult college will fund the group, provide the quality control and curriculum support but will very much benefit from the fact that the group has arisen organically out of a community-defined need. From this position it is intended to build in some discussion about progression opportunities for learners, perhaps to more advanced basic skills provision initially.

The common denominator in these few examples from the range of marketing and recruitment activities undertaken by the adult college in its first term is flexibility and responsiveness to community-identified need. With clear and flexible progression targets in mind, the greatest challenge is in finding ways to fund the flexibility of delivery which is frequently essential with these target groups of excluded learners for whom poor basic skills make formal learning difficult and often slow.

### Principles underlying effective partnership provision

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

- partnerships need to contain development opportunities for all the organisations involved (the housing association benefited from the educational expertise of the adult college, and the adult college benefited from the housing association's skill and experience in working with the community)
- franchised partnerships frequently do not cover the costs of outreach work with learners who have basic skills needs and may be disaffected. With these target groups, typically only 20 or 30% of the people contacted informally will achieve measurable educational outcomes or progress immediately in that funding year. The adult college is currently developing models of partnership in the form of service level agreements, which depart from the franchise model. These will devolve the responsibility of the employer to the partnership organisation, fund the work at the level it needs to be funded in order to enable progression and progress, and leave responsibility for curriculum planning, management and delivery with the college
- partnerships with community organisations need to be clear and flexible. Educational outreach work is labour-intensive and it can take some time before specific educational courses develop from it. Senior managers need to understand this
- flexibility and clarity about the objectives of each partner
- putting learners' needs first and asking not telling
- listening
- assuming that anything is possible even if the funding methodology does not immediately allow the kind of provision which is required for this group
- saying no clearly when something is not possible, and going on to find the next-best solution
- formal service-level agreements specifying responsibility for curriculum, monitoring, evaluation, advice and guidance, health and safety and employers' liability
- using every opportunity to educate and be educated about the impact that the lack of basic skills has on the lives of people.



## Example 2



In this example a project was set up involving a college and a school to provide alternative education for those who have rejected school or been rejected by it.

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

The College Transition Programme was established some five years ago and is a key part of KS4. The students work on basic and key skills, vocational tasters, self-awareness and confidence, as well as building up a portfolio for awards and undertaking work experience. By year 11 students are spending 40% of their time in college, 40% on work experience and 20% at the project concentrating on the planning, review and management of this experience.

The year 10 programme has 2 main objectives:

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

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

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

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

The students have full access to all college services and educational guidance interviews are arranged for individual students to help them plan their progression. The students achieve at a range of levels. The joint programme has been running for five years and progression into further education continues to improve.



# Prompt Questions for Element 3



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



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



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





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

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



## Example 1

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

The ICT strategy links directly to the College's 'Strategic Plan 2000 – 2002' through such strategies identified in the plan as:

- identifying an extensive learning area for basic skills and key skills provision
- ensuring that a new unitised curriculum framework is in place to provide breadth and depth opportunities for all learners
- appointing Champions throughout the college and implementing other changes that are needed to ensure that the strategy penetrates all curriculum areas
- widening participation in learning and improving the quality of learning as a direct consequence of increased use of ICT in curriculum delivery
- developing a variety of learning opportunities to match the needs of a wide diversity of potential students
- developing innovative partnerships that break down barriers to learning and encourage disaffected and non-traditional learners to participate
- identifying minimum standards of appearance and function of all learning zones, and matching spaces to the specific type of learning strategy being employed

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

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

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

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

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

The college is currently delivering, via the intranet, simple text based information such as induction procedures and the student handbook, and advanced features of Office 2000 are used in some areas of the College to produce gapped handouts, etc.

Lecture notes and assignment outlines are currently accessible via the college intranet, and Learning and Resource Centre staff can 'bookmark' and catalogue appropriate websites that students and staff use regularly for research.



All staff are encouraged to ensure that the curriculum on offer is free from racial or sexual stereotyping and prejudice and shall seek to influence external bodies to provide syllabuses, examinations and other materials equally free from such prejudices.

The College sees the enrichment of traditional delivery methods through the use of multimedia, internet, light projection and electronic whiteboards as a high priority, and intends to develop four 'Multimedia Theatres' in the following areas:

- Key Skills Centre
- Optimum Centre
- Technology
- Art and Design.

All tutors will be trained on the use of interactive whiteboards by April 2001, and 'usage targets' will be set for curriculum areas.

**Strategic objectives:**

- to exploit ILT to increase participation rates among members of groups who are under-represented in post-16 provision by an agreed percentage by July 2002
- to provide remote access to materials and online resources to part-time students, adult returners and workplace students in Small to Medium Enterprises (SMEs) by September 2001
- to exploit ICT to increase student retention and achievement among such groups by an agreed percentage by July 2002
- to use ICT to create a flexible, learner-centred and learner-supported curriculum
- to provide new opportunities to learn in new ways and times that students want
- to provide opportunities for staff to design and deliver courses which match the requirements of students.

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

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

## Example 1 (continued)

### Staff development

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

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

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

Specific objectives for training are:

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

## Example 2



The next example is provision made in a large, urban, further education college which has set up an extensive resource bank for home-produced and commercially-available materials, with an appropriate management structure and the necessary administrative support. The college has provided two flow charts, one

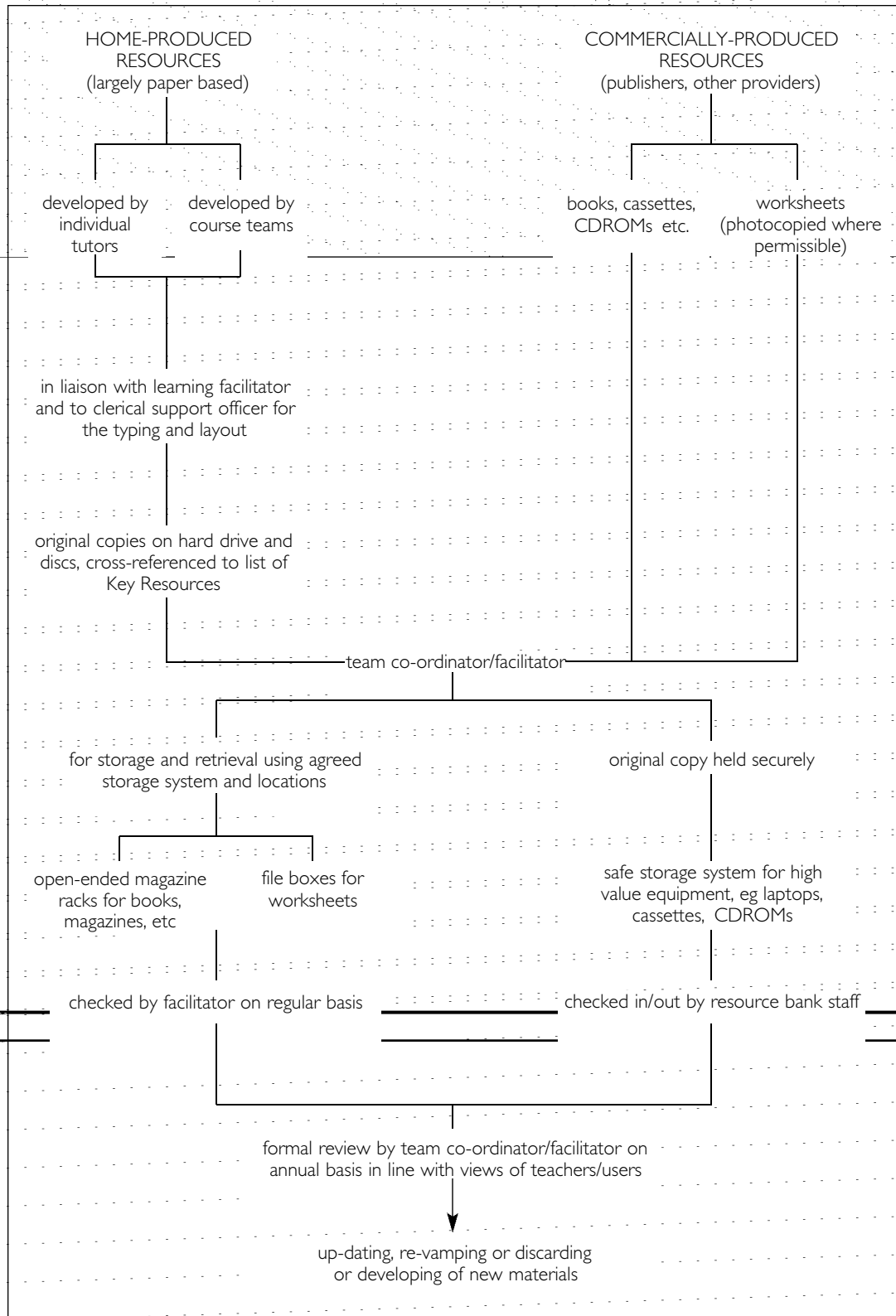
illustrating the way it pulls together its materials into a resource bank, managed by a learning facilitator with the support of a clerical officer.

The second flowchart shows the process a learner follows in order to access the IT-based materials independently. The final extract shows the resource catalogue: its structure and sample pages.



# Example 2 (continued)

A college resource bank



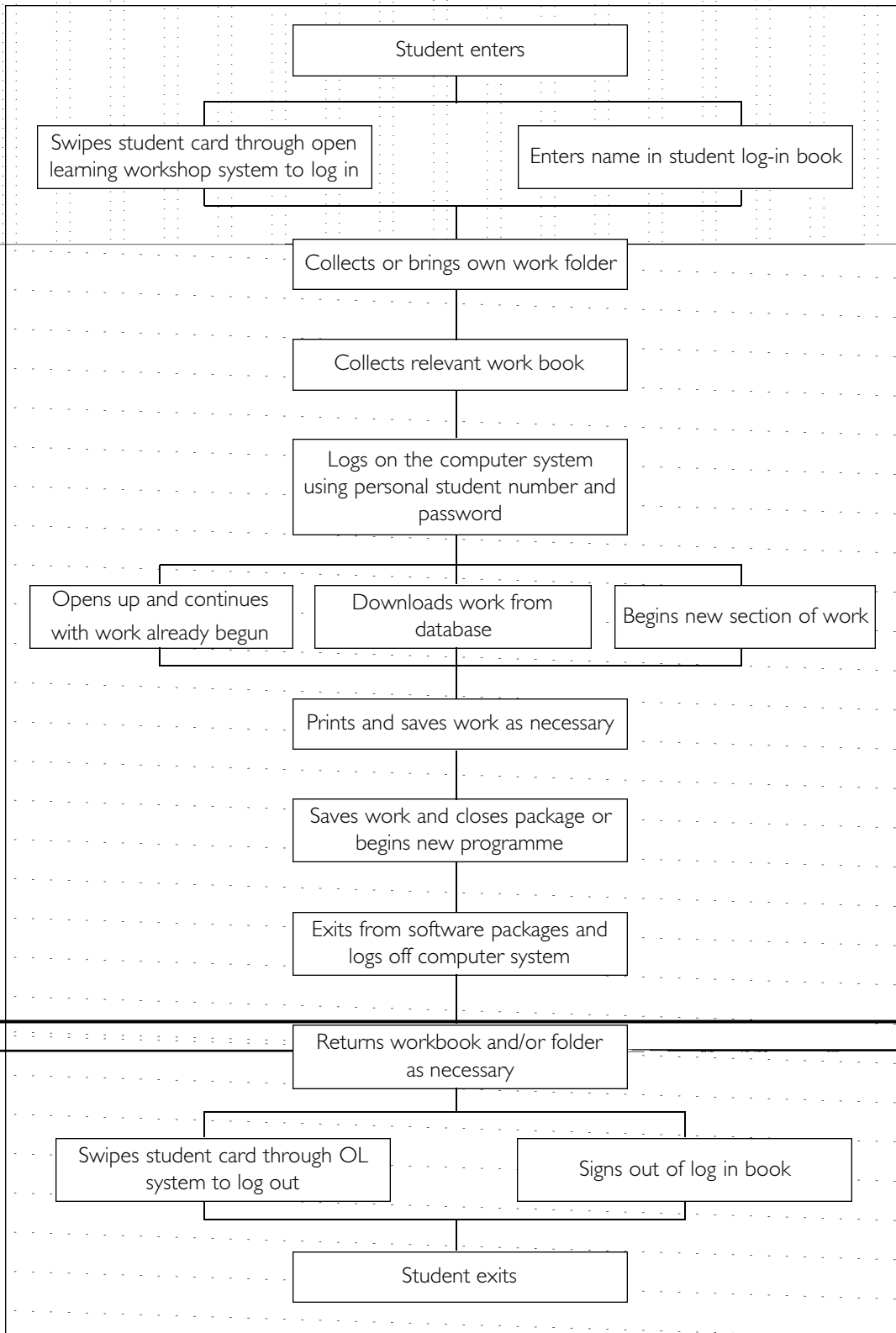


## Example 2 (continued)



Basic Skills Quality Initiative

Student access to ICT-based materials in the open learning workshop. Tutor support is available at all times.





## Example 2 (continued)

Extract from resource catalogue

Writing	Resources available in key areas	Publisher/Author	Photocopiable
<p><b>Key areas</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Forms</li> <li>Notes – Messages – Cards informal – C.V.</li> <li>Letters formal/informal</li> <li>Formal writing – reports – memos</li> </ul>	Form Filling At Work	A..... B..... C.....	
	Self Access Form Filling	D.....	
	English Skills – Written	home grown	
	Communication Module	E.....	✓
	Self Access Series Formal Letters 1	F.....	
	Formal Letters 2	F.....	✓
	Writing Cards	G.....	✓
	Writing Cheques	G.....	✓
	Writing Short Notes and Letters	G.....	✓
	Writing Letters	home grown	
	Better Letters	H.....	
	Practise Your Business English		
	English (informal/formal letters)		
	Just The Job		
Practice Your CV Writ			
Writing Success			
Lets Writ			
Left T			
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This shows the approach adopted by an adult education service. In general terms, the larger the provider and the more centralised the provision, the more extensive and varied the resource bank it is able to establish and maintain. But smaller or more dispersed providers also find ways of supporting provision. The example shows how one adult education service supports its work in outlying centres and reviews its resources.

Many tutors teaching one or two-hour sessions a week in a community centre or school may have very little in the way of resources or storage facilities. For this reason, the following materials have been suggested as suitable for a basic skills tutor box. They have been chosen because they are available, authentic, cheap, up-to-date and not too heavy to carry. They also all meet the criteria for such resources in that they are: adult, accessible and appropriate.

### Basic skills tutor box

#### Literacy:

1. a map of the area and further afield
2. examples of formal and informal letters
3. a range of forms at different levels of complexity
4. a calendar or diary
5. local bus or train timetables
6. a recent copy of a newspaper
7. a couple of magazines and/or catalogues
8. photographs or postcards
9. recipes
10. a menu from a takeaway
11. sets of instructions
12. brochures on DIY, healthy living, etc.
13. What's On? (tourist or TV information)
14. dictionaries – at least two different types
15. a selection of graded readers
16. information about accreditation
17. set of social signs.

#### Numeracy:

1. a number square
2. a metric conversion chart
3. basic kit – ruler, pencils, pens
4. basic metric equipment – thermometer, measuring jug, stopwatch
5. couple of calculators
6. hole punch, stapler
7. squared paper
8. clock
9. real money.

### Example 3 (continued)

In a typical literacy or numeracy session, appropriate learning resources are set out at individual computer workstations situated along two walls of the room or drawn into the central area/s where students work at banks of tables. Students are encouraged to choose for themselves from the storage and display cupboards, shelves or boxes. They also bring in their own materials from home, e.g. specialist magazines or leaflets. Graded readers, audiocassettes and videos are available for students to borrow. Resources that can be borrowed are signed in and out in a book kept for this purpose and clearly marked. Materials that cannot be borrowed are labelled 'For reference only' or 'Please leave in the learning centre'.

All basic skills teachers have keys to their local centres where learning resources are held. New resources are clearly displayed to catch the eyes both of learners and teachers. At one centre, teachers' attention is drawn to a 'Resource of the Month', which may be something they have not tried before or not used recently. This is displayed prominently at the side of the room.

Additional equipment or resources are available on request from the main base. Standard equipment and resources are transported to community sites in one of the minibuses by a driver/support worker. This includes laptop computers, printers and workbooks. Resources are transported and stored in boxes for open access to learners. Additional resources can be ordered on a proforma by the tutor in advance and can be delivered if required. These resources would include scanner, digital camera, whiteboard, overhead projector, video, etc. Support is available from the subject area for specialist equipment, practice exam papers or resources.

**Checklist for monitoring and improving resources:**

- at the regular group tutor meetings basic skills tutors are invited to list any new learning materials they have reviewed which they would like to use with their students
- newly-acquired learning resources are listed in seasonal newsletters circulated to all tutors working for the organisation. At subsequent meetings new resources are shared and evaluated, and their possible uses discussed. New materials are also exhibited at volunteer tutor meetings. Review sheets are used by both tutors and students to comment on new resources
- specific resources which may be needed to support individual students are noted by tutors on end-of-term reports
- when visiting groups out in the community, basic skills advisers are told about lost or old resources which need replacing; these are noted on the checklist for visits. Area managers also have a section on their quality checklist which asks about the appropriateness of resources for the level and needs of the learners
- regular audits take place on a geographical basis in order to keep track of where resources are and if they need replacing. Materials and equipment that are felt to be out-of-date or of poor quality are regularly discarded.



How do you ensure that your resources are effectively catalogued and stored?



How do you provide easy access to them?



What is your process for reviewing and improving resources?



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





## Element 2: Staffing

### Staffing in colleges

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

#### Example 1

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

#### Strategy for staffing basic skills

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

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

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

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

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

## Example 2



Two person-specifications follow, one for a basic skills team leader and one for a basic skills tutor. These show how this college identifies the characteristics they are looking for in these two roles.

### Person-specification for a basic skills team leader

The successful candidate will have a range of the following qualities:

#### SKILLS:

ESSENTIALS	DESIRABLES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>effective communication</li> <li>ability to work on own initiative and to deadlines</li> <li>forward thinking and well informed.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>experience in developing new courses</li> <li>expertise in working with adults.</li> </ul>

#### KNOWLEDGE:

ESSENTIALS	DESIRABLES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>awareness and understanding of pertinent, current educational initiatives, especially in basic skills</li> <li>the needs of adults returning to learning.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>appropriate training for increasing community provision</li> <li>local influence and sway.</li> </ul>

#### QUALIFICATIONS:

ESSENTIALS	DESIRABLES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>teaching qualification</li> <li>academic or professional qualification (Degree or equivalent)</li> <li>specialist qualification in teaching basic skills</li> <li>driving licence.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>D32/33</li> </ul>

#### EXPERIENCE:

ESSENTIALS	DESIRABLES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>working with adults returning to learning</li> <li>working with external agencies</li> <li>developing appropriate materials.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>working with a variety of community projects</li> <li>implementing relevant qualifications</li> </ul>

#### QUALITIES:

ESSENTIALS	DESIRABLES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>professional corporate approach</li> <li>flexibility, adaptability</li> <li>able to respond rapidly to customers' needs</li> <li>able to contribute to a team of professionals.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>energetic</li> <li>focused</li> <li>sense of humour</li> <li>diplomatic when necessary.</li> </ul>

## Example 2 (continued)

### Person-specification for a basic skills teacher

The successful candidate will have a range of the following qualities:

#### SKILLS:

ESSENTIALS	DESIRABLES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a team player</li> <li>working to deadlines under pressure</li> <li>forward thinking and well informed.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>able to work on own initiative.</li> </ul>

#### KNOWLEDGE:

ESSENTIALS	DESIRABLES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>awareness and understanding of pertinent, current basic skills initiatives</li> <li>the needs of adults returning to learning.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>funding implications.</li> </ul>

#### QUALIFICATIONS:

ESSENTIALS	DESIRABLES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>specialist qualification in teaching basic skills</li> <li>general teaching qualification.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>D32/33</li> <li>academic or professional qualification (Degree or equivalent).</li> </ul>

#### EXPERIENCE:

ESSENTIALS	DESIRABLES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>working with adults having basic skills needs</li> <li>developing and delivering appropriate courses.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>wide range of work with adults at a variety of levels.</li> </ul>

#### QUALITIES:

ESSENTIALS	DESIRABLES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>professional but caring approach</li> <li>a learner-centred philosophy</li> <li>able to work with a team with diverse experiences and qualities.</li> <li>commitment and adaptability to changing circumstances and new ideas.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>focused</li> <li>energetic</li> <li>empathetic and patient.</li> </ul>



## Example 3



Each adult education service will shape and staff its basic skills provision to reflect its other structures and the nature of the area and client group it serves. The approach to staffing structures followed by an adult education service in a large rural county is set out below. Of particular interest is its use of external tutors.

### Overall staffing

The basic skills service is led by the director of student services and a curriculum manager, supported by two project workers, one for family learning and one for special needs.

The basic skills service has full-time equivalent posts for area advisers who:

- are experienced in a wide range of work
- are authorised to recruit, support and train tutors and volunteers
- are able to select and maintain resources
- understand funding matters and arrange classes and courses accordingly
- liaise with centre and other managers, undertake administration and support administrative staff
- attend team meetings and training events.

### External tutors

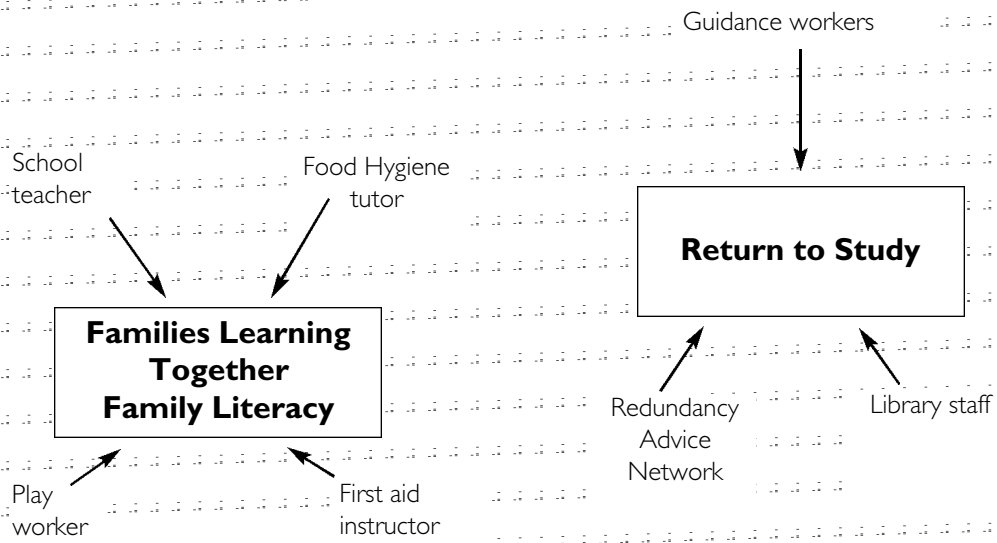
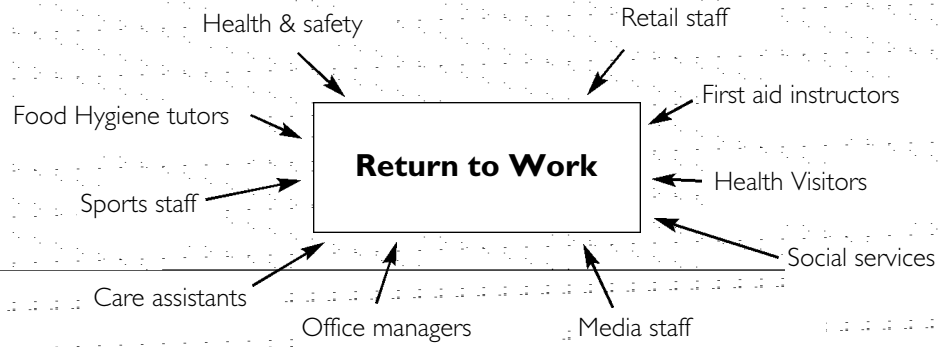
Teaching is done by a large number of part-time tutors, supported by volunteers. An unusual feature of the provision is the extensive use made of external tutors who bring with them additional vocational or academic expertise needed by particular groups. The benefit for learners is that they:

- feel valued by their contribution
- have instant access to expert information and guidance
- are able to ask questions that they would hesitate to raise in other settings
- apply their learning to 'real life' settings relevant to their needs and interests
- enjoy an extra dimension to their learning.



### Example 3 (continued)

Examples of how external tutors contribute to basic skills courses for particular interest groups



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

- **curriculum support facilitator:** providing additional support to a range of learners using the basic skills learning resource centre, both on a 1:1 basis and in small groups; helping with the diagnostic assessment of learners' needs; liaising with course tutors across the college in relation to the support needs of their learners; maintaining learner records
- **learning facilitator:** overseeing production of home-produced materials; managing and maintaining resources; monitoring usage; checking and/or setting up equipment for learners or teachers to use; providing first-line support to learners using computers or other equipment
- **personal or support tutor:** providing additional tutorial support for all basic skills learners; on hand to answer queries and provide guidance and help; following up non-attendance at teachers' request, enquiring about absences; checking that teachers are keeping progress reports and learner records up to date
- **administrator/reception desk:** acting as a point of contact for staff or learners, or for people wanting to contact them; some record-keeping; some ordering; helping to produce and/or maintain learning resources; contacting staff and learners regarding

timetable changes; helping to maintain effectiveness of teaching staff and managers

- **volunteer tutor:** perhaps working 1:1 in workplace or community settings, or on providers' premises, but increasingly supporting basic skills teachers as they work with their groups, either working with one learner with particular needs or moving around the group assisting where necessary.

Support staff with a broader role also make significant contributions to basic skills provisions:

- **cr che staff:** enabling providers to offer free or reduced-cost child-care for parents/carers, in an environment they can be sure will be stimulating and secure
- **classroom assistants:** working with family literacy or family learning programmes alongside basic skills tutors and mainstream early years teachers; allowing time for an increased range of learning activities for the early years child; often providing learners with access to another adult who may be a parent and is not 'the teacher'.



## Prompt Questions for Element 2



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



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



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



How do you review the roles played by support staff and teaching staff?





While the quality and experience of staff clearly have a direct and all-important impact on the experience of the learner, so does accommodation, in both direct and indirect ways. Minimum standards need to be agreed, for example, for sufficient chairs and tables, adequate heating and lighting. However, the minimum standard is not good enough: all learners, and especially basic skills ones, are sensitive to the implications of poor accommodation and what it says about the priority given by an organisation to their learning needs. As one provider puts it, 'making do is not good enough for these learners'.

## College accommodation

Providers are increasingly recognising the benefits of having a suite of rooms or an area dedicated to a specific aspect of the curriculum, and this is just as necessary for basic skills as for any other curriculum area. The 'main base' for basic skills should provide a good location for administrative and management functions, a central resource base and areas for teaching and learning, the last two perhaps combined in learning workshops or a resource-based teaching centre.

### Example 1

One provider specifies what is needed in a main teaching base as follows.

#### Specification for teaching base

- teaching and learning area(s) with appropriate equipment, space and display facilities
- a resource bank, accessible to both staff and students
- privacy, when needed, for both staff and student interviews
- office space and storage areas
- desks for staff, including 'hotdesks' for occasional part-time or visiting teachers
- photocopier
- access to telephones and IT facilities

and if possible:

- a social area for students and staff, with refreshment facilities and toilets
- parking nearby
- crèche facilities.



## Example 2

The following list is used by one provider to identify the factors which need to be checked to ensure accommodation is fit for purpose.

*optimum space utilisation:* the space recommended for the number of students and the range of activities

For example, current guidance from the FEFC is:

Room type	Area per student workplace (m <sup>2</sup> )
Teaching in informal groups	1.0
Teaching with demonstration facilities	2.5
Resource-based learning rooms	2.5

*lighting:* a rough rule of thumb – area of windows should be 1/10 of floor area

*ventilation:* rough rule of thumb – area of opening windows should be 1/20 of floor area, but remember to make additional allowances for rooms housing computers

*IT/electrical provision:* adequate to meet demands safely

*heating:* how adequate, how responsive is it?

*glare:* curtains, blinds or solar control film on south-facing windows

*access for disabled users:* including lifts, doors, non-slip flooring, etc.

*security:* especially in the evenings

the full range of *statutory requirements* including fire-precautions, first aid.

### Example 3



Some providers give guidance to staff on how to create an attractive working environment. The following is an example of the guidance provided by one college.

Display screens/pinboards should be used to promote and display students' work as well as providing opportunities to display health and safety notices and general information.

Rooms should be provided with a whiteboard and OHP screen. Ensure localised electrical power supply to prevent trailing cables.

Internal finishes to floors, walls and ceilings should be functional, easily maintained and fit in with any general maintenance policy provision for the building.

Perimeter and island benching should be used for siting computers and ancillary equipment. Provision should be made for their use by disabled persons.

Security is also an essential requirement. The following should be provided to match the requirements of the location:

- intruder detection system linked to general building system
- security bars to windows and high-grade security locks to doors.

#### Summary

- ensure finishes, materials and systems comply with the general building maintenance policy so that accommodation can be integrated into the planned maintenance system, if appropriate
- keep it simple. Environment can be enhanced throughout with appropriate use of colours, layout and items such as plants, display material, moveable screening and furniture.



## Example 4

One college's main site provision, split between the adult learning zone and the adult learning workshop dedicated to basic skills, is described in the following table and diagram.

	Learning Zone	Learning Workshop
Activity	teacher-facilitated	teacher-led
Room size	50 x 12 metres	12 x 5 metres
General work stations	90	15
PC work stations	45	4
TV/Video	2	1
Audio equipment	0	1
Resources	Free photocopying Basic Skills intranet Whole college intranet Internet Magazines/journals Library section	Basic Skills specific Paper and CD ROM Video/audio
Staffing	Specialist tutors learning resource facilitators additional support facilitators Adult guidance team	Specialist tutors Additional support facilitators

In addition to the workspace learning environment, the college thinks it is important to provide a range of appropriate social spaces for different groups of learners.

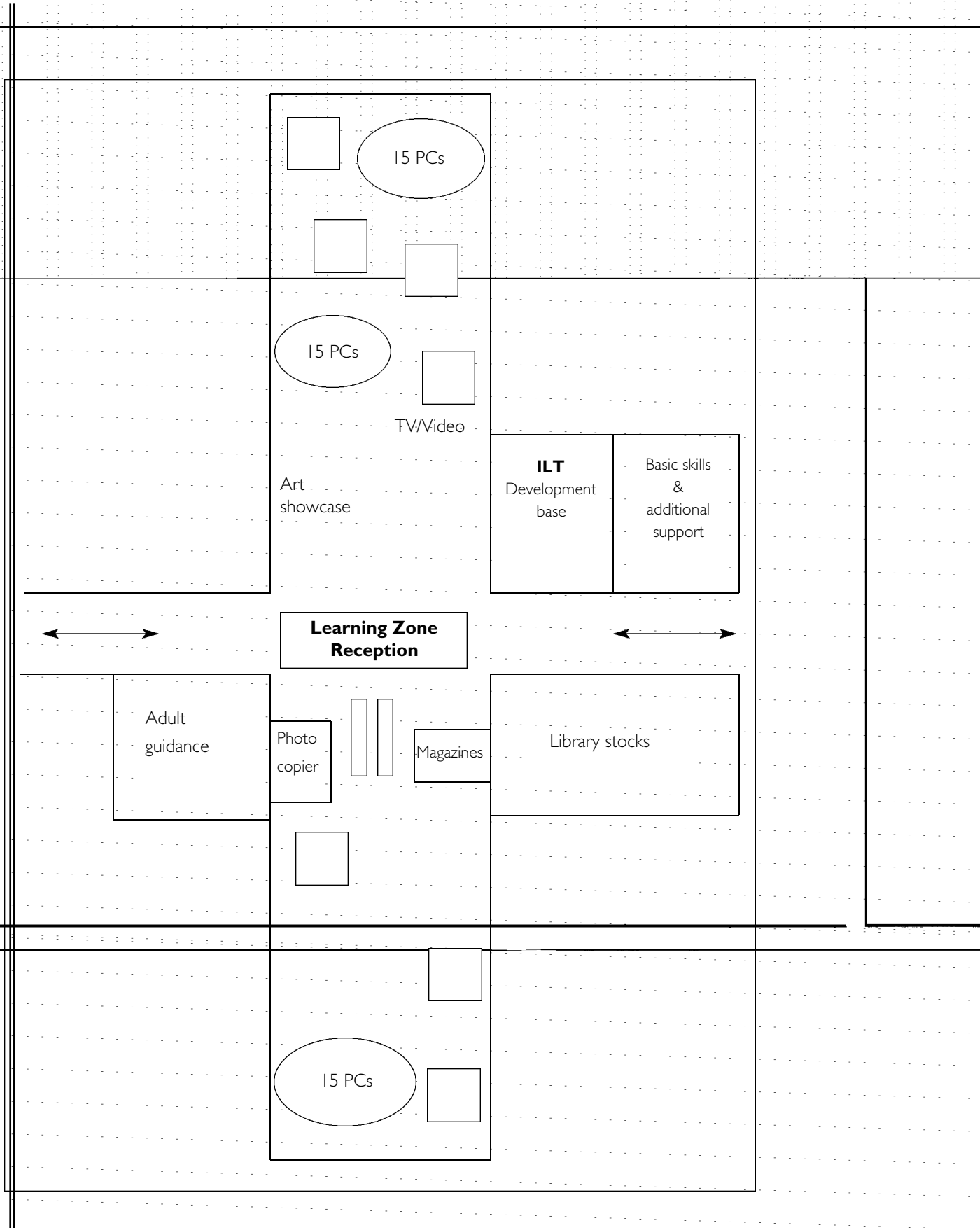


# Example 4 (continued)



Plan of adult learning zone

Basic Skills Quality Initiative





## Example 5

Another college uses the following guiding principles when deciding on the accommodation to be used for basic skills classes.

### The layout must be FLEXIBLE:

- it needs to accommodate easily different levels, different subjects, both group and individual work, assessment as well as teaching, and the use of IT
- it needs to be responsive to different students' needs, both individuals and the diverse range of groups now accessing provision
- it needs to accommodate different styles of teaching and the different strengths of the various course teams.

### What is needed in the base:

- sufficient space: at least 50m<sup>2</sup> open space
- separate areas for groups, individuals and initial interviews/induction
- a secure place to keep 'confidential' material
- area for staff (administrators, teachers, course team leaders) to do their work
- a welcome desk
- screens for display publicity/for greater confidentiality/for the OHP.
- tea/coffee
- direct phone line
- photocopier
- modular desk system so that they can be re-arranged
- computers
- storage: carousel, trays and filing cabinets.

### What it needs to be:

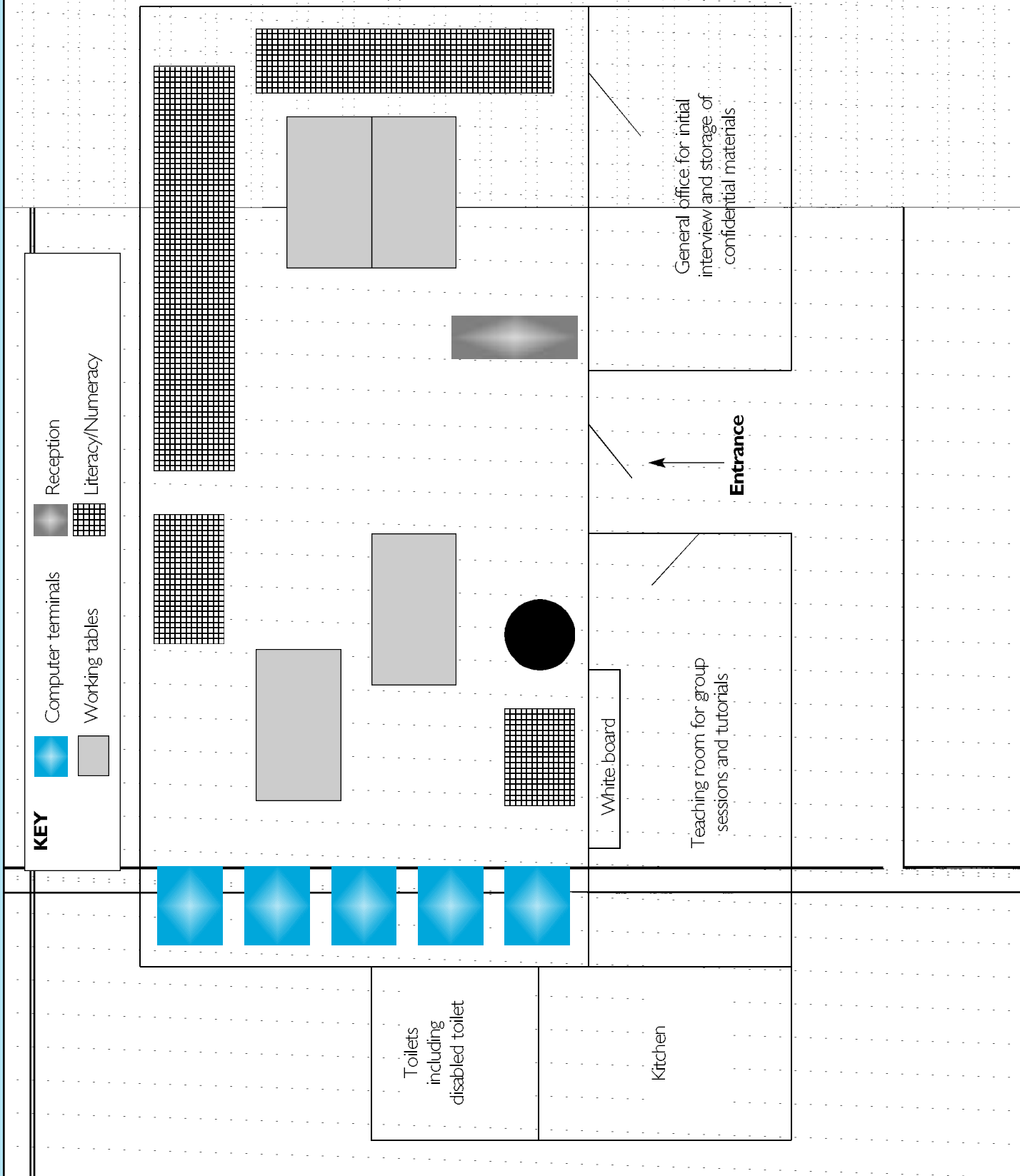
- **open:** nothing inaccessible, behind closed doors
- **friendly:** welcoming for those dropping in
- **attractive:** good standard of décor

# Example 5 (continued)



Basic Skills Quality Initiative

The following is a diagram of a basic skills area in the college.



Many providers hold their basic skills courses in community locations well away from the main college or training centre. The benefits of community locations for learners are:

- more easily accessible classes
- less travelling for them to do
- in an area that is familiar to them
- not as daunting in appearance as a large college or training centre
- not as daunting in terms of the numbers of people around.

## Example 1

One adult education service uses the following extensive range of community locations for most of its basic skills provision:

- local schools, largely for daytime and evening sessions, also for family literacy groups
  - youth and community centres
  - village halls
  - community centres
  - local libraries – often when the library is not open to the public
  - community care settings, e.g. drug rehab centre, bail hostels, single mothers hostels
  - women’s refuge centres
  - voluntary organisations.
- } daytime, evening and weekend sessions

It also makes use of accommodation provided by a range of employers, largely for courses developing ‘return to work’ skills, including literacy and numeracy, and some vocational preparation. Typical locations used are listed below.

- supermarkets,
- health centres
- local offices, e.g. council offices, large employers, business centres
- hotels, public houses, leisure centres
- NHS hospitals, private hospitals, care and nursing homes
- local theatre, museum.

The use of these locations brings further benefits in addition to those listed above. These include:

- appropriate and often well-equipped training rooms, usually free of charge
- the benefits of working alongside employers/organisations
- exchange of expertise between basic skills staff and the host organisation; some joint teaching
- learners gaining up-to-date information and confidence
- increased awareness among the employers of basic skills needs
- evidence of increased efficiency for employers
- employees who feel valued and increase their skills.

### Example 2

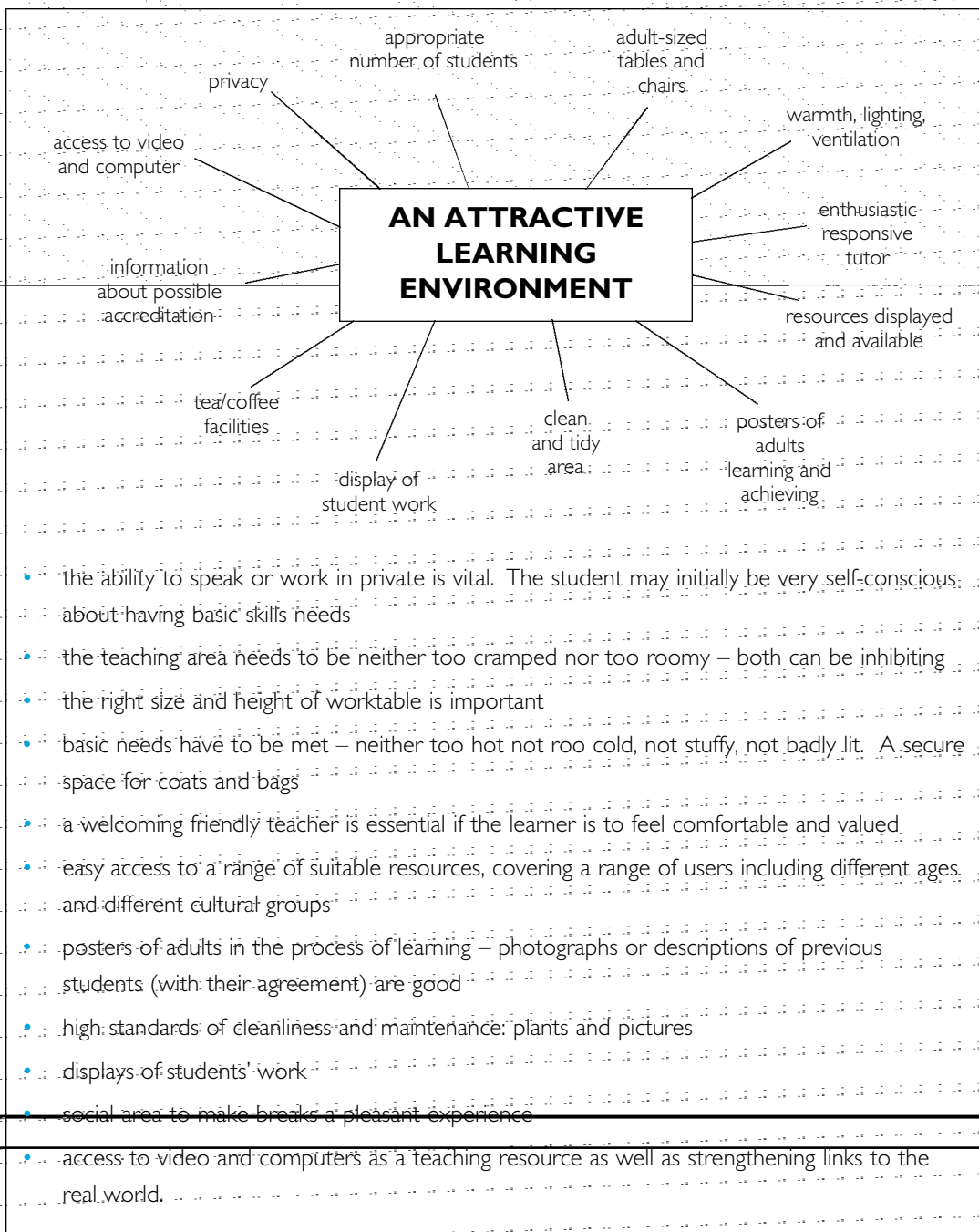
Another provider uses locations in community centres, and the basic skills provision is shaped to reflect the characteristics of the centre.

- three of the community centres have childcare on site and provision is targeted at women returners
- one centre is in an inner city area with a significant population from ethnic minority groups; the community centre houses a number of voluntary community groups which are active in the area. The provision is matched to their activities and ESOL is taught alongside basic skills work
- one centre is a town-centre youth club, which makes it attractive and accessible to many young adults not in education or employment. The college's town-centre learning shop offers advice and guidance, as well as basic skills provision.



### Example 3

Another provider describes the features that students and staff agree are important in creating an attractive and effective environment for adult learners in community venues.





While there are undoubtedly considerable benefits from using locations away from the main base, there is a downside as well, particularly where the provision is located in community bases. While they may be non-threatening and convenient, the standard of accommodation available is not always satisfactory, and providers sometimes have to weigh the merits of housing provision in a particular locality against the adverse effects of 'making do' with substandard accommodation.

## Example 1

A provider gives the following example of the adverse effect inappropriate accommodation can have on the success of provision. It is clear in this example that the disadvantages of the accommodation provided generally outweighed the benefits of the location.

### Community-based provision

A house was made available on an estate in a needy area. The location was good – known to local residents and not intimidating to approach. Crèche facilities were made available in one downstairs room, and another was used for interviews. Kitchen and toilet facilities were on hand. However, the teaching rooms were small, as these were originally bedrooms, and it was not a large house. There was not enough space, the teacher could not move around a group, and the chairs and tables could not be re-arranged. Although the centre was well used because of its location, numbers and teaching methods were severely restricted.



## Example 2

Another provider sets out the following minimum requirements for the locations it uses away from main base.

### Requirements for locations

- meeting health and safety requirements
- suitably located for the target group in mind
- reasonable transport: bus routes, car parking
- security of premises and of students/staff
- good state of decoration
- adequate and suitable furniture, e.g. not infant furniture in a school
- PCs available or capacity for at least 6 laptops
- refreshments available on site

## Example 3

A number of providers also use a more formal checklist designed to record the suitability of a particular site. This might cover the state of the building, heating and lighting; toilets, emergency arrangements including the availability of a first-aider; machinery and equipment; insurance; and health and safety matters, including for example risk assessment. Here is a simple risk assessment summary used by one provider:

### Risk assessment summary: Room C1

1. trailing cables
2. VDU
3. heavy items
4. changes in floor levels
5. moving machinery
6. OHP and screen
7. Other – please specify

.....



## Example 4



An increasingly significant area of basic skills provision goes under the heading of family learning or family literacy programmes. Here parents and children work together for at least some of the time on literacy, numeracy and learning.

In one LEA, family learning takes place in primary schools. The children and parents work together within a suitable space in the school. Where possible, separate accommodation is available when children and parents are working separately. The quality of the space varies from school to school, ranging from a suitably equipped or purpose-built family room, a disused classroom to spaces within the library or assembly hall area. The accommodation must be fit for the purpose and of an appropriate standard.

A typical family learning room might contain:

- a play area used by the pre-school children whose parents are attending the session. These children are cared for by a qualified crèche-worker. This could be separate from the main family learning room
- accommodation for small, informal friendly groups. The tables and fittings can easily be re-arranged for various approaches to learning, e.g. practical activities, work with the children, demonstrations, adults working together – giving the flexibility needed to adapt to the dynamics of various groups
- refreshment facilities – important for breaking down barriers and helping children develop social skills. They are often used for 'messy' practical activities, e.g. baking, painting, or activities involving sand or water.

The following list indicates the questions which need to be asked in planning family learning provision in schools.

- is there a room big enough and is it always available?
- has a risk assessment been completed?
- is there a safe play area for young children?
- are there any adult-sized chairs and tables?
- is there any access to a kettle, crockery and washing-up facilities?

It is easier to justify the expense of significantly upgrading accommodation on a main site, where there is a high volume of usage. One college provider has been able to redesign its basic skills workshop so that it is now purpose built.

### Basic skills workshop

- teaching area for those working on literacy/English and numeracy/Maths, catering for groups of up to 10 or easily re-arranged for smaller group work
- areas for students to work individually
- computers to support the teaching and learning of basic skills as well as the development of IT skills
- a welcoming reception area
- an office and resource base
- a comfortable seating area with daily newspapers and magazines
- notice boards and display screens
- storage around the edge of the room for resources and for students work folders.

Basic skills providers are at least as committed as other providers to improving the quality of the accommodation they are able to offer their students. One provider states that they wish to offer learners what they call 'an elegant environment'. They go on to say: 'That may sound pompous, but we regard it as the opposite of the "we'll just make do with this" mentality'.

## Example 6



While such wholesale changes are rarely feasible where provision is in centres away from the main base, and especially where the premises are owned by others, it is often possible to make some improvements. One provider suggests the following relatively easy strategies to deal with shortcomings in accommodation.

### Strategies for improvement of accommodation

- insufficient privacy/too large and open an area?
  - use display screens or bookshelves to create smaller spaces, or use a corner of the room rather than the whole area
- poor signage/room tucked away?
  - bring your own signs (colour text if possible) and blu-tak them up to help students find their way
- no reception staff?
  - put a greeting or smiley face on a flipchart or board to ease students in and let them know they have reached the right room
- wrong 'atmosphere'?
  - bring a couple of posters and display items from the resource box to give it a basic skills and business-like feel
- cleanliness?
  - a tactful word with the centre head very much in order here!

## Example 7

The following example indicates the significant changes that were achieved in accommodation following successful lobbying for extra funding.

### Effective lobbying to improve the learning environment

After lobbying a local primary school in a Single Regeneration Budget (SRB) area, a classroom was made available for basic skills use. When first visited, child-sized tables and chairs were the only furniture apart from beanbags and a bookcase full of children's books. Children's work was displayed on the walls. There were sacks of sand for the sandpit and dolls' house in a corner.

Changes had to be made to the room to make it appropriate for basic skills classes.

SRB funding provided adult-sized tables and chairs and a flip chart easel. The school agreed to move out the child-sized chairs and tables and to remove the children's work from the walls. New backing paper was put up and posters and leaflets pinned to the walls to form a relevant display. Coffee and tea facilities were made available in one corner of the room.

Signs were put up to help students to find the teaching area quickly. The blackboard was cleaned of all previous markings and a welcome sign displayed.

SRB funding was also used to provide an OHP, a video and two computers.

## Prompt Questions for Element 3



How do you ensure that your learners and your staff are in accommodation that is at least as good as that available to other students and staff?



What actions do you take to develop the basic skills teaching areas as specialist resource areas?



What advice do you give to teachers to help them create attractive and stimulating learning environments?

