

Skills for Life: The National Strategy for Improving Adult Literacy and Numeracy Skills 'What Works'

Early Findings from the Pathfinder Projects

CRG

***Skills for Life: The National Strategy
for Improving Adult Literacy and
Numeracy Skills
'What Works'
Early Findings from the Pathfinder
Projects***

CRG

The views expressed in this report are the authors' and do not necessarily reflect those of the Department for Education and Skills.

© Queen's Printer 2002. Published with the permission of DfES on behalf of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office. Applications for reproduction should be made in writing to The Crown Copyright Unit, Her Majesty's Stationery Office, St Clements House, 2-16 Colegate, Norwich NR3 1BQ.

ISBN 1 84185 738 6
May 2002

Contents

Executive summary

1 Introduction	1
2 Pathfinder programme elements	6
3 Interest groups	21
4 Prison Service Pathfinder	29
5 What Works – good practice	33
6 Conclusions	37

Appendix I Pathfinder partnership details

Appendix II Topic guides

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In the spring of 2001, what was then DfEE invited proposals for a series of Pathfinder Projects, to trial key elements of the Skills for Life strategy¹ including delivering learning using the new core curricula for literacy and numeracy, delivering learning by teachers who had received intensive training on the new curricula, and entering learners, where appropriate, for the new National Tests at Levels 1 and 2.

Following a competitive bidding process, nine partnerships were successful (Liverpool, Tyne and Wear, Leeds, Nottinghamshire, Birmingham, Cambridgeshire, Isle of Thanet, Gloucestershire and East London), together with a separate Prison Service Pathfinder.

In June 2001, CRG were commissioned to carry out an early-stage evaluation of the Pathfinders - focussing, as the name of the Evaluation Project makes plain, on 'What Works', prior to the national roll-out starting in September 2001.

The work programme for the evaluation included:

- A programme of desk research and early-stage discussions with a variety of 'interested parties' in DfES, HM Prison Service and elsewhere
- Analysis of management information (provided by others) from sources in Pathfinders, awarding bodies, etc
- Face-to-face interviews in all of the Pathfinders with project/ partnership staff, tutors and trainees
- 'Sitting-in' on a number of training sessions
- Attending project meetings and a variety of other discussions, including Prison Service Pathfinder events
- Continuing informal discussions and liaison with DfES, Pathfinder staff, Prison Service and others.

Data was collected between June and September of 2001.

The report stresses that these were very early days indeed for the Pathfinders and some of their experiences should not necessarily be assumed to continue automatically into the roll-out. Nevertheless many of the report's findings are very positive, with much having been achieved by the Pathfinders already – and much information about 'What Works' now available for the broader roll-out

Findings described within the report include:

- Positive reactions to the programme of teacher training from more than 80 per cent of those tutors and mentors taking part in it
- Responses to the National Test being "*much more positive than expected*" from trainees taking tests so far
- Positive views about the National Test have been achieved despite significant 'teething troubles' with the test delivery and administration: these must be avoided if at all possible in the future
- Very encouraging take-up patterns so far, with around 9,000 adults having had some level of involvement with Pathfinder-linked literacy and numeracy support

¹ See "Skills for Life, the National Strategy for Improving Adult Literacy and Numeracy Skills" DfEE 2001.

programmes by December 2001 (including almost 2,000 who had taken the National Test)

- Very varied practice in relation to screening, diagnosis and the National Test. Most tutors endorse the principle (for most trainees) of carrying out structured screening and diagnosis, which leads to a targeted learning plan and testing allowing 'distance travelled' and further learning needs to be measured. More work is needed before all key elements are appropriately in place
- Clearer feedback from screening, diagnosis and National Test processes are seen as essential, to give trainees a clear picture of "*what to do next*"
- A lot of work was done on mapping out current Basic Skills provision within local Pathfinder areas. However, such mapping work was very important in building effective overall patterns of provision: there is likely to be much more provision 'out there' even now than has so far been included in the 'new infrastructure'
- Support from DfES centrally, together with additional resourcing where needed (for example to deliver additional teacher training), and an approach which frequently says "*thank you*" have been valued highly by Pathfinders
- A major success for the Pathfinders has been providing a range of learning environments. In addition to well-established FE provision, there has been an important role for community-based and voluntary sector providers, particularly to support more 'hard to reach' trainees
- A wide range of learning programmes are being delivered through the Pathfinders, designed to respond to the needs of particular client groups. The report notes the potential importance of many different approaches, including those linked to shift work patterns, 'bite-sized' programmes, work with employers, specialist programmes for travelling communities, 'roll on-roll off' programmes, much work linked to ESOL programmes and, in particular, a number of 'covert' programmes where Basic Skills support is provided in association with, for example, family learning initiatives
- The Prison Service Pathfinder experienced particular delays in making a start, but now has achieved a wide range of positive results. Although there will always be challenges to delivering learning within a prison environment, the overall Pathfinder model has proved itself to be effective here too.

The report suggests a number of areas need to be kept under active review during the wider roll-out. These include including monitoring responses from areas where there is less of an established 'infrastructure' than in the Pathfinder areas, noting trainee reactions as more 'disaffected' students tend to be recruited, and assessing institutional performance as increasing numbers of small colleges and smaller training providers become involved. Further work is also suggested to help employers become more actively involved in Basic Skills support, and understand the kinds of priorities important for them.

In terms of specific areas of good practice for the wider roll-out, a range of points are made including:

- Continued attention to identifying as many Basic Skills tutors as possible, then offering them good quality training
- Careful administration of training, so that sufficient notice is given, teachers are appropriately briefed, venues are convenient and accessible, etc
- Providing sufficient resources to allow sessional teachers to be paid to attend training, appropriate cover 'bought-in', etc
- Encouraging local teacher networking to share emerging practice, exchange materials, discuss what is most suited to local needs, etc
- Programmes of continuing support and continuing professional development for

Basic Skills tutors: for a number, it does seem that this has been “*the Cinderella service*” for far too long

- Work to design and embed effective diagnostic and screening tools, which link effectively into structured learning plans, the national curriculum and National Test, and support a clearer understanding of ‘distance travelled’ for trainees and their tutors/mentors
- Making sure quality assurance procedures remain thorough. Although quality assurance is clearly very important for all Basic Skills training provision, smaller providers may not need quite the same scale as larger FE colleges
- Possibly developing new strategies to cope sensitively with individuals who have just restarted learning through Basic Skills programmes, perhaps after many years away from any kind of formal learning at all – even though the learning providers taking part in the evaluation exercise all have established programmes for encouraging progression into additional learning routes.

Many of the report’s recommendations are already being acted upon in the lead up to the roll-out of the new learning infrastructure.

1 Introduction

1.1 In the Spring of 2001, what was then the DfEE invited proposals for a series of Pathfinder Projects whose broad aims were to trial key elements of the Skills for Life strategy². This included:

- the national standards for literacy and numeracy
- delivering learning using the core curricula for literacy and numeracy at each level
- delivering learning by teachers who had received intensive training on the new curricula, and
- entering learners, where appropriate, for the new National Tests at Levels 1 and 2.

1.2 Following a competitive bidding process, nine partnerships were successful (Liverpool, Tyne & Wear, Leeds, Nottinghamshire, Birmingham, Cambridgeshire, Isle of Thanet, Gloucestershire and East London) and work was started to implement Pathfinder Programmes at a local level, following this pattern. Details of these Pathfinder partnerships are given in Appendix I.

A separate Prison Pathfinder was always envisaged at this point: it has proceeded rather differently to the others, and we consider its progress and achievements in Section 4. It was also envisaged that Employment Service would be implementing a series of complementary initiatives from September 2001 onwards, but these are not covered in this evaluation.

1.3 In June 2001, CRG were commissioned to evaluate the Pathfinders – focusing, as the name of the evaluation project makes plain, on ‘What Works’ – before the national roll-out in September 2001.

The key aims for the evaluation have been:

- *‘To provide information on the numbers passing the National Test in various learning environments.’*
- *‘To evaluate the competence of the new Basic Skills infrastructure in a variety of settings in the nine Pathfinder areas.’*

1.4 Other aims have included reviewing in more detail:

- The performance of partnership development and implementation activities (including planning, partnership implementation, promotion etc)
- Teacher training
- Screening
- Diagnostic assessment
- Learning plans

² See “Skills for Life, the National Strategy for Improving Adult Literacy and Numeracy Skills” DfEE 2001

- Programmes
- Quality assurance
- The National Test
- Progression.

1.5 The work programme for the evaluation was planned to be based on a range of elements including:

- **Project inception and desk research:** Early stage discussions took place with a number of individuals at DfES; topic guides and interview schedules were drafted and agreed; a wide range of background material was reviewed and analysed.
- **Analysis of management information:** It was originally hoped that during the evaluation it would be possible to draw on management information collected specifically for the Pathfinders, particularly to address the evaluation objective to '*...provide information on the numbers passing the National Test in various learning environments.*' In practice, delays in making information available arose, but we consider information available up to mid-December in Section 2.
- **Face-to-face interviews with individuals and groups** across all nine Pathfinder Projects, based around agreed topic guides (see Appendix II). Achieved interview totals of interviewees – excluding the Prison Service Pathfinder³ – were as follows (target numbers for each category are given in brackets):

Project/partnership staff: 39 (27)
Tutors: 76⁴ (76)
Trainees: 70 (117)

Interviews took place during June and July 2001, again apart from the Prison Service Pathfinder, where data collection continued until September.

- **Analysis and reporting:** A programme of rolling analysis as data was gathered was carried out, including producing early stage findings which were summarised and presented in an interim report in July 2001. The data collected was overwhelmingly qualitative, gathered through discussions based around the semi-structured topic guides, but various analyses of 'mentions' and other patterns within the data collected are drawn on later in this report, particularly in Section 2.
- **Liaison with DfES and strategic partners:** A very helpful continuing dialogue has been maintained with key individuals at DfES. The research team also attended most of the all-project review meetings, not only to note up-to-date details being presented about fast-moving projects, but to give inputs and respond to questions about the evaluation from Pathfinder staff;

³ Details of the interview programme for the Prison Service Pathfinder are given in Section 4.

⁴ 15 interviews were carried out by telephone, as it was not possible to carry out face-to-face interviews with planned numbers of tutors before the summer break.

attendance at all-project meetings has been very illuminating indeed.

- 1.6 Target numbers of project/partnership staff interviewed were comfortably exceeded, principally because most partnerships suggested it was appropriate to cover a wider range of organisations (including voluntary sector bodies as well as FE colleges and local education authorities) and functions (eg outreach and marketing, as well as co-ordination and planning) than we envisaged.
- 1.7 Although the sample of staff interviewed was never designed to be statistically representative, and should not be seen in this light, we were able to interview individuals with a good cross-section of views, experience and backgrounds.

Amongst tutors and mentors, for example, while 46% had less than five years' experience of working with Basic Skills, 38% had ten years' or more. 40% were working for 15 hours a week or less⁵ in Basic Skills, but 36% were either working full time, or close to it. 56% usually delivered literacy and/or numeracy separately, although for a further 30%, programmes were usually embedded in other programmes (for example family learning) – we return to this point in Section 3.

- 1.8 The training organisations providing us with information had all been working in Basic Skills for some years (none for less than five years). While most were from FE, we also included private sector training providers (28% of the total). Even from within FE we covered several sites which had been set up with 'outreach' or 'community' objectives (perhaps in partnership with local education authorities, libraries or other bodies), with an ethos designed to be very different from 'college-based' provision.
- 1.9 The position was more difficult when it came to interviewing planned numbers of trainees. Inevitably there had to be an element of 'opportunism' in contacting sufficient numbers of trainees within a relatively short period of time, and in several areas it proved impractical to contact the numbers we needed to interview, principally because of the timing of the exercise.

Although considerable assistance was provided by every one of the Pathfinder Projects, there were major challenges in arranging interviews because of the traditional holiday period. Many participating FE colleges do not have programmes at all during the summer months: this made it difficult to speak to significant numbers of trainees, many of whom had left programmes and were not currently in contact with their college or learning provider.

Again, we were able to include a wide variety of backgrounds and circumstances in the trainees we interviewed: only 30% were definitely employed or self-employed, but others had been doing voluntary work,

⁵ It was envisaged from the outset that staff trained through the Pathfinders would be working in Basic Skills for six hours a week or more; a small number were working less than this, usually because they were expected to be doing more teaching/mentoring over coming months.

taking part in a training programme, or had domestic commitments (20%) – as well as those describing themselves as unemployed (33%), before starting on the programme.

- 1.10 **Prison Pathfinder:** The Prison Pathfinder experienced particular difficulties in making early stage progress, including delays in appointing staff and identifying and training enough teachers. This Pathfinder also encountered a range of practical problems including receiving and administering the National Test, and other constraints on making the general progress planned. Despite this, rapid progress started to be made during August and September. We consider the Prison Service Pathfinder specifically in Section 4.
- 1.11 The rest of this report is structured to cover, in Section 2, progress in the key areas of interest identified within the evaluation specification, namely:
- Teacher training
 - Screening
 - Diagnostic assessment
 - Learning plans
 - Programmes including use of the National Curriculum
 - Quality assurance
 - the National Test
 - Progression.
- 1.12 Issues arising for key groups of ‘stakeholders’ are looked at in Section 3. Inevitably, the perspectives of different groups of individuals (eg tutors, trainees, project managers) vary considerably. We also look here at the details of how partnerships were developed and implemented, again noting a number of implications for improving ‘on-the-ground’ performance.

Section 4 focuses on the Prison Pathfinder specifically; Section 5 gives our assessment of ‘What Works?’ and Section 6 draws brief conclusions from the evaluation, bearing in mind that progress being made within local Pathfinders is building and evolving all the time, and the national roll-out is now upon us.

- 1.13 It is worth making a number of broad points at the outset.
- 1.14 **Timescales:** The timescales for the Pathfinders have been very short indeed, and yet there is widespread evidence of good progress being made. We think these achievements are due to many factors, including building onto existing arrangements, which we look at below.

Above all, good progress has been due to the considerable efforts of many enthusiastic and committed people at several different levels, ranging from overall DfES direction and support, through Pathfinder Project management staff, but particularly individual tutors working with learners on-the-ground. Tutors have mainly (there are exceptions) embraced the opportunities offered by the training, curriculum development and National Test elements within the Pathfinder approach, often with considerable energy and

determination.

- 1.15 **Definitions:** The hasty introduction of the Pathfinders and the different starting points for different partnerships have been associated with varying understandings of 'What is a Pathfinder?'. Different styles and emphases are to be expected, particularly when the need to respond to varied local circumstances, client groups and needs was built-in from the outset.

A number of more fundamental examples of diverging understanding have also arisen, however – for example over *defining* learners 'covered' by the Pathfinder. At one extreme (Liverpool being the clearest example), a fairly tightly defined cohort of learners has been screened, trained only by trained tutors, and taken the National Test.

For most other Pathfinders, numbers of trainees 'involved' with the Pathfinder include all those who have been 'touched' by it – perhaps trained by a trained tutor for part of the programme, whether they have taken part in other Pathfinder-supported activities or not – so numbers participating appear much larger.

- 1.16 **Building on existing structures and successes:** Pathfinders have been based (in most cases) on well-established, successfully functioning local partnerships and FE colleges with high recent inspection grades. This has been of crucial importance in achieving good early stage results for the Pathfinders, but we are aware of the argument that *'if it couldn't work here, it couldn't work anywhere'*. More general roll-out may need to give particular attention and support to areas where good existing local infrastructures are less apparent.
- 1.17 **Working with current learners:** Most Pathfinders, understandably, have been working with trainees with whom they were already in contact, and so likely to be fairly 'learning friendly'. In particular, trainees taking part in Pathfinder-linked activities – in most cases – were already committed to taking part in one or more training programmes, and have also taken the crucial step of seeking support for improving their Basic Skills. Clearly we cannot say for certain, but it *may* become progressively more difficult to engage less motivated, perhaps more disaffected individuals, who are not as committed to learning as are current groups.
- 1.18 So again, though the achievements of the Pathfinders are certainly notable, these achievements should not necessarily be projected forwards for the longer-term automatically, with comparable levels of outcomes being assumed for similar levels of input.

2 Pathfinder programme elements

- 2.1 Our data collection programme covered a number of distinct elements within the Pathfinder programmes. The perspectives of different groups of interviewees were sometimes strikingly different as a result of their own varied experiences, objectives and perceptions (we look at this further in Section 3), but a high degree of common ground was certainly apparent.

It is also worth pointing out that the Pathfinders themselves were progressing very rapidly during the data collection programme, so some of the different views were based on what we suspect were straightforward misconceptions, likely to have been resolved subsequently.

Teacher training

- 2.2 Our interview programme took place at a point where most Pathfinders were part-way through the teacher training ‘cascade’. Project management staff had often faced challenges in arranging appropriate training: these included obtaining reliable lists and contact details for teachers, arranging venues, booking ‘lead’ tutors, and so on. Our expectation is that this level of difficulty will *not* be repeated during broader roll-out and continuing delivery phases.
- 2.3 In terms of responses from tutors and mentors, 31% of those we interviewed described the training as ‘excellent’ and a further 50% as ‘good’. Many were very enthusiastic (*‘I liked it all, it was well delivered, right sort of pace, material helpful, gave me new ideas’*). For some tutors, improvements could certainly have been made to training programmes, and suggestions were made about what was seen as very short notice given for training, poor venues, inappropriate (usually *‘too large’*) group numbers, and the need for *‘more time to practise’*. But most of these comments were made from the starting point that the basic approach seemed *‘good’* or better.
- 2.4 We did, however, encounter a minority of tutors who found the training, and perhaps the whole Pathfinder approach including the National Curriculum and the National Test, to be *‘too structured for what my trainees need’* or *‘too patronising for experienced tutors’*. We fully accept that these are honestly expressed opinions – indeed it would be surprising to receive feedback from any training programme which did not have elements like this. We looked for characteristics linking these ‘dissatisfied’ tutors, but there were no obvious patterns. As well as experienced individuals saying *‘it’s far too basic’*, there were new recruits saying *‘it went over my head’*.
- 2.5 Certainly some concerns were triggered by less than ideal administration arrangements: cancelled courses or giving short notice to attend at inconvenient locations led to negative comments about *‘the whole half-baked caper’*; and training in mixed-experience groups sometimes (but by no means always) worked poorly – *‘throwing*

together people who've done it for years with a couple just out of college made it a waste of time'.

Some tutors may, of course, learn better through quite different training routes as compared to most of their colleagues. Working through materials and on-the-job experience *might* encourage a more positive attitude as time goes by. We do need to stress that numbers of complaints were small overall, and our data gives no identifiable patterns amongst those making negative comments. But interviews with project management and college management staff suggested that there *may* be an issue with *some* older tutors, perhaps including a proportion less ready to modify their practice generally (*'even though they certainly ought to – they've been getting away with sloppy performance for years'* in the view of one FE manager).

- 2.6 An ancillary point came in relation to the literacy and numeracy skills of some tutors themselves: (*'A lot of us found Level 2 pretty tough'*). So a certain amount of general personal development for tutors may be needed too. This reinforced a much more general point, however, including views to the effect that *'I hope it's not a one-off'; 'This training event is the first time I've exchanged ideas with people from other learning centres – I'd like to see a lot more of that'; 'We need a steady stream of training and updates if this is going to work'.*

These are points we **do** agree with – training needs to be continued and 'refreshed' over the medium-term at least. Specific areas for further training and development which have already arisen include working with the National Test, mapping current provision onto the National Curriculum, achieving good quality referrals onto programmes, and effective progression afterwards.

- 2.7 As well as liking the training itself (in most instances) several project managers and trainers made a number of positive comments about the Pathfinders more generally. For example, the very fact that formal 'high-profile' training was taking place at all was seen as important (*'Finally raising the profile of Basic Skills: It's been the Cinderella of FE for far too long'*).

Similarly, initial suggestions that part-time lecturers might be less willing to participate in the training were usually resolved rapidly simply by paying them for three days' work to attend the training. Paying sessional teachers to attend training was, as far as we could tell, Pathfinders' general policy. It certainly minimised staffs' reluctance to participate, and contributed to their general enthusiasm for what they experienced – although, as elsewhere, there were 'niggles' about some of the details: *'I'm taking it on trust – I expect to get paid (for going on the training) eventually, but on past performance it could be months away'.*

- 2.8 We asked tutors about the changes they have made (or plan to make) to their classroom practice as result of the training. Bearing in mind that interviews took place, at best, fairly soon after training so there had been little time to make real changes, responses did seem very encouraging. For many tutors, the training tended to reinforce some of the approaches they think are worthwhile already: *'It has endorsed some of the things we already do. It has certainly changed the way I will teach after September. I found the training personally rewarding.'* Specific changes mentioned (multiple responses included) were:
- Mapping teaching onto the new curriculum – 32%
 - Rethinking their approaches and strategies to providing Basic Skills support – 19%
 - More group work – 25%
 - Others (eg experimenting with target skills, greater focus on grammar and structure, re-working learning support plans) – 44%.
- 2.9 12% gave a definite response of *'none'* to the question about changes they had made or were planning. These comments tended to come from teachers unenthusiastic about the training overall, although a number of positive and negative responses did include the understandable observation that *'it's fairly early to say too much for certain.'* We do, though, need to note a minority who said: *'It's pointless; I won't change what I do'*, and made similar comments. But their numbers were small and, paralleling points made in 2.4 and 2.5 above, no particular characteristics seemed to differentiate 'positive' and 'negative' responses.
- 2.10 While most tutors and mentors interviewed were positive about the changes *they* would be making, they did raise a wide range of concerns about the environment within which tutors have to work. *'People being trained are not in a position to make changes. Choosing grade 1 and 2⁶ colleges was a mistake. Small college providers will have real resource problems'. 'Where some people work, there's no CPD⁷ – they might really struggle to make new ideas stick'.*
- 2.11 Amongst broadly positive responses, we do need to enter a note of caution. The tutors taking part in early stage training have often (not always) been Basic Skills specialists, most of whom already have a range of qualifications and experience in these areas. As we point out elsewhere, much Basic Skills training comes as part of other programmes using trainers for whom Basic Skills are **not** their primary area of interest. Later cohorts of teachers taking part in the training **may** be different from the earlier ones.

⁶ These comments refer to the gradings which result from college inspections carried out by the Learning and Skills Council (formerly the Further Education Funding Council). Grade 1 refers to 'outstanding provision which has many strengths and few weaknesses'; grade 2 to 'good provision in which the strengths clearly outweigh the weaknesses'. The point is, we think, a fair one – it may well be much more difficult to get good results as the Pathfinders are rolled out into learning centres which do not have the capabilities and track record of those currently involved. We return to this point in Section 5.

⁷ Continuing professional development.

Screening

- 2.12 Screening and diagnosis turned out to be more complex than we envisaged, and the terms themselves are often used variably, with significant overlap. Students were particularly prone to conflate references to what we took to be ‘screening’, ‘diagnosis’ – and indeed the National Test. Responses from students pointed to no major concerns about the activities they had taken part in (we describe responses to the National Test in more detail in 2.33 below), but our interview numbers were small, there was limited recognition of quite which procedures had been used, and there may well have been a certain amount of ‘care’ in the way tutors introduced assessments and tests⁸.

At least 65% of training providers covered in the data collection programme (particularly those working on Gateway and New Deal programmes) carry out what is, in effect, thorough early stage *diagnosis* with some (often all) trainees, on the assumption that ES will have screened effectively first (although there are different views about how effective this really is).

Similar patterns are often followed by FE colleges dealing with ‘overt’ Basic Skills programmes, ie those clearly promoted as ‘*Improve your writing skills*’ ‘*Maths for the workplace*’ and so on. Students expect to be working on particular aspects of literacy or numeracy, and one or more ‘early stage tests’ are seen as an integral part of this.

- 2.13 In terms of what is more clearly screening, patterns are very varied too. For example, several FE colleges screen **all** their new students, although this is, understandably, done quickly on the expectation that no further Basic Skills support at all will be needed by many of them. There are certainly wide ranges of tools and techniques in use. With learning centres often working, literally, with thousands of learners from many different backgrounds each year, procedures are well-established and – we are assured – effective for local needs.
- 2.14 Specific screening techniques described in our interview programme with tutors and project management staff were dominated by 1:1 assessments (26% of mentions) and various kinds of locally devised screening processes based around training needs analyses, reviews of personal histories and a variety of interview techniques (22% of mentions). Individual tools referred to as actively in use were very varied: Fast-track, ALBSU, Skill Builder and Quick Scan were all mentioned, although none by more than 10% of tutors or programme staff.
- 2.15 As far as we can tell, those with experience of Fast-track and similar tools are mainly positive about their usefulness. Our interviewees usually did not have substantial experience as users, but much higher numbers had either seen demonstrations or knew of the tools in more general terms. Views expressed did, however, include: ‘*It needs*

⁸ And we do need to recognise that anyone particularly resistant to assessment, diagnosis or testing might well have left the programme they were attending, so escaping our sample.

developing a lot more,' 'It's not right for us here yet – we'd have to change things to work around it;' or *'It's a **tool** for the tutor, not a definite answer in itself'.*

- 2.16 74% of tutors suggested that all the trainees they work with are screened in one way or another, and all of the rest indicated that screening took place *'sometimes'* or *'not automatically – but we do it when it's needed'* – albeit using a variety of formal, and often informal, techniques. All tutors reported positive views about the screening processes they are currently using, and most (at least 80%) think students are positive about the screening process too.
- 2.17 The position was somewhat more complex for programmes where Basic Skills are, to some extent, 'covert' or ancillary to the formal objectives of the programme. Examples arise in large numbers of community-based programmes, particularly the large numbers of family learning programmes successfully being promoted, where early stage screening will often be informal and low key, and what is effectively diagnosis introduced 'softly' at a later stage in the programme - perhaps saying something like *'Why don't you have a go at this - it's only a bit of fun'.*

Diagnosis

- 2.18 The principle of accurate, structured diagnosis was typically seen very positively by tutors and project staff, so that subsequent learning plans can be targeted precisely to individuals' current skills, preferences and needs. But, as with screening patterns, many tutors have already evolved a range of individual or organisation-specific approaches, particularly designed to encourage the trainee to point out the areas of interest/concern for him/her.
- 2.19 As with screening, tutors and mentors reported the use of a wide range of tools and techniques, dominated by 'own design' assessment techniques and 'no formal tool' responses (58% of mentions, taken together). Use of a wide range of formal techniques was described, ranging from Target Skills (20% of mentions) through specific dyslexia assessments and others.

Several comments described ways in which the Pathfinders are likely to lead to much more formal and structured approaches. Looking at the whole diagnostic process was described as *'work-in-progress'* and *'an area we know we can improve'* – with appreciable interest in the tools known to be under development by specialist organisations linked to the national roll-out.

Learning plans

- 2.20 All programme management staff and tutors interviewed described ways in which learning plans are drawn up for each student, covering specific aims, targets, plans for long-term qualifications and employment, and other outcomes anticipated from completing the training programmes. At least 45% of tutors expected students to *'participate in drawing up and negotiating the aims in the plan.'* We

inspected several learning plans and a high proportion did seem to be thoughtfully drawn up, relevant to needs and suitably 'owned' by the trainee (although most seem to be kept at learning centres rather than retained by trainees themselves).

- 2.21 A number of the trainees we interviewed responded very positively to questions about their learning plan/action plan too: *'On the first night, an action plan was drawn up. It definitely stated a long-term goal as GCSE maths. We talked through and prepared the plan – I'm very committed to it'*. Unfortunately, it has to be said that 53% of students interviewed responded: 'No,' 'Not to my knowledge' or 'Dunno' to questions about having a formal learning plan.

This pattern was by no means a complete surprise to many tutors, who noted that *'They often forget about them or call them something else'* or *'It's not a big thing for lots of trainees - they get stuck into the programme and forget quite what they signed up for'*. We believe most – if not all – trainees we interviewed probably **do** have learning plans, but there does seem to be a good deal of work to be done before these are truly 'live' in the minds of many trainees.

- 2.22 Again, the format of learning plans varied a good deal, typically reflecting established programmes and *'What seems to work'* locally rather than any specific formula. It seemed to be too early for the Pathfinders to have influenced the structure of learning plans currently – several tutors suggested that learning plans will be adjusted to the National Curriculum, once current efforts to map programmes on to the curriculum have been completed. The logic of a structured diagnosis, leading through a targeted training programme linked to the National Curriculum, onto the National Test, all summarised within an agreed learning plan, is widely accepted.
- 2.23 Again, we suspect that there will be opportunities for tailoring different learning plan designs to local needs. The key challenge however, will be to 'anchor' what is done to the needs of the National Curriculum and the National Test appropriately.

Programmes

- 2.24 Our data collection programme covered tutors, management staff, and trainees from a very wide range of formal and informal training programmes. Because of the timing of data collection (most tutors interviewed had received training very recently, some not at all) discussions about programmes were overwhelmingly about existing programme designs, not those where tutors have, for example, mapped programmes onto the National Curriculum.
- 2.25 Marketing approaches vary, but the importance of good outreach and community-based activities needs to be recognised, particularly for 'hard-to-reach' groups. Inevitably, we were told that people with Basic Skills needs *'Don't read much – don't bother with posters, leaflets and that sort of thing'*. Word of mouth is repeatedly seen as the key, both to favourable and to unfavourable impressions of what is available.

- 2.26 In the key area of how learners are referred onto Basic Skills support programmes, tutors reported a pattern as follows (most important referral process mentioned only):

Already on a programme – referred by learner support	25%
College/learning centre publicity	8%
Careers/Employment Service	13%
Community education	13%
Self-referral	10%
Others (employer referrals, social services, not sure, etc)	31%

- 2.27 College/programme management staff suspected a rather higher proportion (up to 30%) were probably already enrolled on a programme at that learning centre (perhaps being referred by another tutor when Basic Skills issues were identified). Particularly intriguing, however, were responses from students who gave much more prominence to self-referrals (38% of mentions) and advice from tutors, outreach workers and others (33%) and the role of friends (18% of mentions).

These samples were not strictly comparable in the programmes they refer to, of course, but do point to what we think is an important issue – namely the need for potential trainees to have a good deal of ‘ownership’ of the referral process and demonstrate appreciable personal commitment to taking part in an the programmes on offer.

- 2.28 The majority of tutors said they ‘usually’ deliver literacy and numeracy programmes separately (56%), although about 12% seemed to be combining literacy and numeracy programmes. One important distinction, already covered, is between ‘overt’ programmes whose primary stated purpose is to improve individuals’ literacy and/or numeracy skills on the one hand, and ‘covert’ programmes where Basic Skills may be introduced as an ancillary element within childcare, family learning, IT and other programmes.

From the tutors’ responses, it seems that at least about 30% of programmes they deliver are already integrated with other elements in these kinds of ways. Literacy and numeracy are covered in a vast number of vocational programmes too, but usually structured as Key Skills – although there are inevitably overlaps.

- 2.29 For several learning centres, (particularly FE colleges), current levels of programme integration are only the start. There are clear plans to achieve high levels of integration of Basic Skills tuition with all other training routes: (*‘We want to do ourselves out of a job’* said one Basic Skills specialist: ***every training programme should be improving Basic Skills***) – but very much as a means of achieving greater Basic Skills coverage and general levels of achievement.
- 2.30 The structure of programmes supported through the Pathfinders varies extensively too. Partnerships had often sought to be ‘opportunistic’ and respond, for example, to large numbers of refugees within their areas with ESOL courses. Most also chose to develop further initiatives already underway, or planned, designed to bring

Basic Skills programmes to people who need them in ways which are convenient, appealing or at least 'non-threatening'.

- 2.31 Examples include 'bite-size' options allowing individuals to proceed flexibly at their own pace, employer-based learning programmes, short-term 'hit and run' programmes (eg for the homeless), flexible provision suitable for shift workers, good crèche/childcare to support family learning, programmes developed specifically for the travelling community, and much else. We cannot give a rigorous numerical breakdown of all the programmes being supported through the Pathfinders, but the overall picture does seem to us to be a rich and varied one.
- 2.32 This variety seems to be one of the great strengths of the Pathfinders' approaches so far. Any suggestion for more standardisation and uniformity is not borne out by the data we were able to collect. The challenge, we think, is to maintain (and indeed extend) this variety and responsiveness to need – at the same time as benefiting from the greater consistency and improved 'infrastructure' coming from upgraded teacher training, National Curriculum materials and National Test, now very much on offer through the Pathfinders and the subsequent roll-out.

The National Test

- 2.33 A widely identified surprise, not just to the research team but to many partnership members and tutors, has been the positive reaction of trainees and others to the National Test. Because of the timing of the data collection exercise, when the National Test was only just being used for the first time, we had some difficulty in getting clear-cut responses from trainees, a number of whom seem to be, understandably, confusing the National Test with diagnostic instruments and other assessments they had taken part in. Nevertheless we found **no** examples of outright opposition to the National Test from trainees, and gathered a range of positive comments.
- 2.34 The surprises came initially through large numbers of trainees who were prepared to take the Test at all – despite expectations from tutors and others that they '*would run a mile rather than get tested*'. Surprising too was the feedback from trainees that '*it wasn't too bad*'; '*It made me think – I wouldn't mind doing another one*'; '*I quite enjoyed it, it wasn't like the sort of things they forced you to do at school*' and so on.

Even negative responses were often fairly cautious, for example: '*Boring questions; I found it a bit easy*'. These positive reactions have **not** been a response to smooth Test delivery: for many centres, postponements, incorrect Test delivery and other early stage problems have caused major disruptions. It will be essential to avoid repeats here.

- 2.35 Overall, 56% of tutors described themselves as 'positive' towards the National Test at the time of interview, 13% as 'neutral' and 30% as 'negative'. There were no obvious patterns amongst those who

adopted positive as against negative views, but an important trend was for views to become more positive with experience: initial expectations that students would 'resent' testing were not (in the main) borne out in practice, with tutors' views becoming more positive as a result. Equally, 'teething troubles' as Tests were introduced (cancellations, administrative problems, etc) caused many negative views, but these problems were confidently expected to decrease over time by project management staff.

- 2.36 It is important to note that a number of reservations **do** remain, despite these favourable trends. For some tutors, the structure of the literacy Tests (*'No writing'*) gives insufficient evidence about trainees' capabilities in relation to sentence construction and other skills. Several noted *'You have to be fairly literate to handle the numeracy Tests – it can be a bit misleading'*. The levels of linkage between the Test and the curriculum were questioned too: *'I thought they would be closer: you might end up teaching people to pass the Test in ways which aren't all that close to the curriculum, or to what people really need'*.
- 2.37 On the whole, though, most tutors' experiences with the National Test were better than they expected. Several stressed *'I've never been anti-test – it's just that I thought these would be too off-putting to the students'*. Others have found more subtle ways of promoting the test to their students (*'I've been selling the qualification, not the Test; it's quite attractive for people who never got any qualifications at school'*). For a significant number of experienced Basic Skills teachers, the National Test merely formalises and further develops what they have been doing already: *'We test them at the beginning, we test them at the end. Now this gives them something that sounds more important and well thought out (It probably is!) and they should know exactly where they stand at the end of the programme'*.
- 2.38 As on many other occasions throughout this report, we need to point out that early stage trainees may *not* be representative of later cohorts, but – commenting only on the data we have – we do have to say that widely expressed concerns about how Tests would be received, and their potential impact on trainees, have *not* been borne out by experience.
- 2.39 Another interesting factor in the early stage use of the National Test has been interest on the part of some employers. These are very early days, and we identified insufficient evidence from which to draw robust conclusions.⁹ Nevertheless, it seems that some employers *could* be keen to promote widespread use of the National Test amongst their employees, in most cases to identify needs for literacy and numeracy training. In due course, the National Test *could* emerge as a cost-effective means of targeting training and development in areas employers see as vital for effective, safe performance.

At this stage it seems employers' main interests lie in developing in-

⁹ We gained direct evidence about three employers only – one in each of three Pathfinders – although we expect Pathfinder partners to be working with many other employers in different guises. The three were all large-scale employers; one is from the public sector, two from the private sector.

house capabilities for improving literacy and numeracy skills, although there seems no reason why links to 'outside' provision should not be built – either as an alternative, or to supplement targeted in-house provision.

- 2.40 Clearly sensitivities could well arise. The National Test has not been designed as a selection/promotion tool (let alone for demotion/de-selection) and scope for misuse could readily arise. Secondly, it is not clear that employers have a full understanding of what the National Test can and cannot do. Nevertheless, the potential for enthusiastic support from employers for the whole package offered by the Pathfinders is of major interest and, potentially, a source of considerable optimism for what can be achieved. We recommend these developments be the subject of further monitoring and review.

Progression

- 2.41 Colleges and other learning providers (particularly local authority adult/community education programmes, and private sector organisations delivering government-funded adult training programmes) described a range of ways in which they already encourage students to continue in learning and, where appropriate, progress into employment.

Techniques mentioned included:

- Specific advice from careers guidance services (30%)
- Advice from tutors (26%)
- Specific facilities within colleges (13%)
- Continued progression included as part of agreed goals/Learning plans (18%)
- Others – employer support, peer group support, etc (13%).

There were encouraging mentions for opportunities for Pathfinder students to move onto 'mainstream' qualifications (*'I think there's every chance that some will be doing GCSEs next year, maybe 'A' levels at some point – I wouldn't rule out the OU ...'*), although it is too soon to say how effective these links will be in practice. The data we gathered from trainees was less clear-cut, but it does seem that support for effective provision is deemed by most to be there *'if you need it'*.

- 2.42 Progression needs the involvement of trainees too: several tutors indicated actual or potential reluctance to 'move on' – when *'they like it here – the social side's important'* or *'it becomes a comfort-zone sort of thing'*. Even in these circumstances, however, it was noted that *'they're still in learning – which can only be good. They might want to stretch their wings later ...'*
- 2.43 We also looked at follow-up for those who have left programmes early. Following up 'drop-out' students can often be very time-consuming and – particularly if they have gained employment, left the area or plan to enter full-time education – potentially unproductive. Nevertheless, colleges and other training providers described an established range

of techniques for following up non-attenders ranging from 'hard-nosed' formal termination, student services staff personally following up every drop-out, direct links to employers/Employment Service, and various ways in which tutors or college staff will attempt to make direct contact to encourage learning programmes to be re-started.

- 2.44 In effect, though, progression and following up drop-out systems are likely to follow current patterns for some time to come. A number of tutors noted that they may need to do '*something more*' for Basic Skills trainees in future if numbers build up following the roll-out of the National Curriculum and National Test. But many examples of referring-on to vocational courses and other programmes were readily quoted using existing arrangements.

For trainees already within the FE sector, further options (usually at the same college) will routinely be brought to their attention, and we spoke to several trainees for whom GCSEs and other formal qualifications have been identified as training routes they will be following from September 2001 onwards.

- 2.45 It was encouraging to meet a number of genuinely enthusiastic trainees. For one: '*I'm really into it; there's lots of things I want to do now that I've broken the ice*'; on a more practical note, '*I was just doing the odd jobs in the office: things look a lot better now; I might think of doing legal exec. training ...*'. We think there is the possibility that levels of enthusiasm like this could build much further as opportunities become more 'real,' but the timing of the data collection programme was close to the summer break which was clearly having a significant impact on FE college provision in particular.

Several interviewees noted: '*I'll have a think after the summer*' – perhaps coupled with a certain amount of regret about the length of the summer break and the need to fit into term- and academic year-based structures.

- 2.46 Good partnership working means that patterns of progression from one organisation to another (eg voluntary sector to FE college) are developing steadily within Pathfinders, although it is essential to remember that we were collecting data at an early stage in key processes, and performance is uneven. The variety of trainees, programmes and learning centres also makes generalisations difficult.

The key is probably establishing good rapport between tutors and individual trainees, so that 'Progression' (in various guises) can be included within learning plans and facilitated by tutors through established links with organisations most appropriate to individuals' needs.

Management information

- 2.47 As we pointed out in 1.5, it was always envisaged that this project would draw heavily on information, collected by others, from Pathfinder records about general take-up and progress, and data from awarding bodies about the National Test. Key information about

trainees who have taken part in Pathfinders, gathered up to mid-December 2001, is summarised in Tables 1-6 below¹⁰. Tables 3-6 exclude data from the Prison Service Pathfinder.

¹⁰ We are indebted to Tim Scarlett of KPMG for this information.

Table 1: Overall Pathfinder results

	No of course entrants	No of completions	% Completions	Average % of course completed by drop-outs	No entered test	No of test attainments	% Test attainments
Total population	9037	8211	91%	60%	1987	1308	66%

Table 2: Breakdown by region

	No of course entrants	No of completions	% Completions	Average % of course completed by drop-outs	No entered test	Test attainments	% Attainments
North West	564	543	96%	60%	196	166	85%
North East	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	445	321	72%
Yorks & Humberside	169	163	96%	35%	140	93	66%
West Midlands	1322	1123	84%	87%	122	100	82%
East Midlands	1985	1818	91%	59%	105	84	80%
South West	2594	2343	90%	58%	59	28	48%
South East	142	142	100%	0	139	71	51%
East of England	743	674	90%	33%	67	50	75%
London	1518	1405	92%	33%	361	159	44%
Prison Pathfinder	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	353	236	66%

Table 3: Breakdown by provision

	No of course entrants	No of completions	Average % of course completed by drop-outs	% Completions
FE Provision	7935	7179	60%	90%
LEA Provision	228	209	76%	91%
Work-based provision	0	0	0	
Not known	874	823	54%	94%

Table 4: Breakdown by age

Age	No of course entrants	No of completions	Average % of course completed by drop-outs	% Completions
15 and under	193	170	65%	88%
16-20	1520	1349	58%	88%
21-25	978	859	56%	87%
26-30	1049	937	52%	89%
31-40	2404	2173	68%	90%
41-50	1327	1236	59%	93%
51-60	796	755	57%	94%
61 plus	635	602	62%	94%
Not known	135	130	49%	96%

Table 5: Breakdown by gender

	No of course entrants	No of completions	Average % of course completed by drop-outs	% Completions
Male	3466	3133	57%	90%
Female	5571	5078	62%	91%

Table 6: Breakdown by ethnicity

Ethnicity	No of course entrants	No of completions	Average % of course completed by drop-outs	% Completions
Bangladeshi	595	567	33%	95%
Black African	415	368	44%	88%
Black Caribbean	508	462	72%	90%
Black Other	111	93	68%	83%
Chinese	85	82	14%	96%
Indian	110	99	60%	90%
Pakistani	203	181	82%	89%
White	3097	2845	59%	91%
Other Asian	124	116	58%	93%
Other	704	628	59%	89%
Not Known/ Not Provided	3065	2770	63%	89%

- 2.48 We do appreciate the great efforts which have been devoted to collecting, collating and analysing this data – but drawing on it extensively has had to be constrained by the lack of some records altogether (eg no course entrant data from the North East) and questionable breakdowns in some of the returns provided (eg high numbers of ‘not known’ entries in some of the tables).

A fuller picture of attainments will also have to wait for further information to become available: so far, matching National Test results to the learners who took part in Basic Skills Training has been possible in only a minority of cases (although Test results at regional and national levels are reliable, and given in Tables 1 and 2).

- 2.49 Nevertheless, these numbers clearly do give an important picture of many aspects of Pathfinders’ operations, and add a further dimension to several of the issues considered elsewhere in this report including:

- With around 9,000 adults already having had some level of involvement with Basic Skills support programmes through the Pathfinders, we think it clear that the Pathfinders have achieved a great deal in a short period of time, that high levels of underlying need have been confirmed, and a general readiness on the part of large numbers of adults to take part in good quality provision further demonstrated.
- Consistently high levels of completion (91% overall) and an average of 60% course completion by those who dropped out early means that significant benefits have been achieved by a very

high proportion of trainees taking part in the Pathfinder programmes. This is consistent with the qualitative data we gathered about high levels of trainee satisfaction with courses, coupled, in some cases, with personal circumstances (illness, family responsibilities), which can mean proceeding right through to successfully sitting the National Test has to take longer than originally planned.

- We commented in 1.15 about variations in some of the practices adopted by different Pathfinders, including differences in defining which trainees are 'in' the Pathfinders and, perhaps, different practises in relation to test entry. These are very early days (and there were undoubted early stage 'teething troubles' – particularly in relation to National Test administration), but some of these local differences may well account for the variation in figures for test attainments and per cent of course completed by drop-outs.

In our view, no particular approaches to defining 'trainees' or 'completions,' nor deciding when trainees should be entered for tests or other details are necessarily right or wrong, but greater consistency would certainly be helpful – if only to support more effective project monitoring and management.

- Analyses by age and gender show, perhaps predictably, Pathfinder programmes achieving somewhat higher levels of support from adults in the 26-40 year-old age group, and also from women. The key points to note though are, we think, generally good across-the-board performance in recruiting and supporting most categories of adult learners. However, there may be scope for more targeted marketing and provision to encourage greater male participation.
- The analyses of completions by ethnicity show consistently high rates, but there is clearly greater variation in figures for the percentage of the course completed by drop-outs – although it is important to stress that the total numbers of drop-outs so far are small. Our interview data would suggest no particular reasons why different patterns for different ethnic groups should persist.

High completion rates would tend to confirm this, and also confirm the view that the new curriculum and other Pathfinder features work well in ESOL and other settings which can have a differential relevance to different ethnic groups. Nevertheless we do think careful monitoring is called for, and there may be a need to adjust materials, methods or resourcing if current levels of imbalance are maintained.

3 Interest groups

- 3.1 Our data collection programme was structured around discussions with partnership members/managers, tutors/mentors and trainees. We also have indirect evidence about other, potentially important, stakeholders – for example employers (see 2.39).

Understandably the perspectives of different groups are rather different, and there can be appreciable variability within these main groups. We have also been interested to review a number of process issues linked to establishing and developing the Pathfinders so far.

Setting up Pathfinders

- 3.2 We point out in Section 1 that Pathfinders have been implemented on the basis of existing, usually¹¹ well-developed local partnerships, and this has been one of the great strengths of the Pathfinder approach. There were difficulties in meeting a number of early stage targets, for example when there was a delay in recruiting key staff, and several of the partnerships reported various '*stresses and strains*' as the Pathfinder added '*yet another burden to hard-pressed people*'. '*Getting the message through to the people on the ground*' has been a challenge too.

As with other partnership programmes, the need for effective, fully resourced co-ordination and administrative support has certainly been clear. Partners' priorities, circumstances and objectives do not automatically coincide, and assuming good partnership working will 'just happen' has been risky for the Pathfinders, as in many other contexts.

- 3.3 The composition of partnerships varies somewhat too (see Appendix I). Significant Local Education Authority (LEA) and Further Education (FE) sector involvement is, understandably, at the core of all partnerships – with Employment Service (ES) often (not always) included too. Other local authority functions (eg libraries, economic development, social services, leisure) are frequently represented, and indeed at least two partnerships have been developed from what were originally seen as economic development/regeneration initiatives, rather than addressing Basic Skills issues in the first instance.
- 3.4 Coverage of the voluntary sector, community-based organisations, workplace learning and various categories of 'informal' learning is more varied, although very interesting efforts to map out the full range of local Basic Skills provision have usually been made by Pathfinder Projects. Often this is '*turning up quite a bit of provision we never knew existed*', with local providers admitting '*I ought to have known who else was doing things locally – but I didn't*'. Examples of provision tending to '*slip through the net*' came through a rich variety of community-based organisations (for example some focusing on ethnic

¹¹ Less so in Nottinghamshire than elsewhere.

minorities), small (maybe sector-focused) training organisations, and various specialists (for example those providing training for the hard of hearing).

Even now, several Pathfinders '*strongly suspect there's more out there we ought to be involving*' and greater efforts to identify smaller providers (particularly, it seems, those delivering government-funded adult training, for example on contract to ES) may well be called for.

Effective mapping builds opportunities for greater partnership working in the future. We do think this is important if coverage of potential need within local communities is to be maximised, and standards of Basic Skills support improved across-the-board.

- 3.5 A number of partnerships commented unfavourably on the pressures put upon them by DfES. Issues raised covered the extent of the tasks they were expected to carry out, the short timescales, what were deemed '*inconsistencies*' in some of the guidance and requests for information issued, and general '*rush*' and '*hassle*'. DfES decision-making has sometimes been seen as '*a bit late*', '*a bit vague*', '*a bit confusing*'. There certainly have been problems, and we do not wish to underplay them, but we also suspect it has sometimes been convenient to impute responsibility for 'glitches' to DfES and its '*impossible timescales; ever-changing goal-posts.*'

Local factors do seem to have played a part too, perhaps linked to poor communications *within* Partnerships. But however caused, getting information to teachers about training programmes, claiming back costs incurred, notification of deadlines and other issues clearly caused problems and significant irritations to many people.

- 3.6 We do, though, need to record many Pathfinder staffs' broader appreciation of support from DfES, particularly in what were widely seen as '*difficult circumstances for DfES too*'. It has been widely noted that '*they always say thank you*' and '*unusually for civil servants, they ask us what we think and apologise for pushing us too hard.*' When DfES has discussed Pathfinders' concerns, for example in all-project meetings and in 1:1 meetings with individual projects, formal thanks to Pathfinders for their efforts, and apologies for difficulties '*outside our direct control*' have been widely appreciated by project staff. DfES attitudes and approaches have, we believe, played an important part in maintaining commitment and momentum amongst individual Pathfinders.

- 3.7 This is not to understate important critical 'messages' (mainly to DfES) about the need for:

- clearer, quicker decision-making from the centre, particularly about resourcing (a number of providers ended up paying staff before funds were received, causing appreciable short-term stress)
- better local networking/communication
- giving more notice for training

- upgraded communications and dissemination (perhaps including a helpline)
- *much* smoother administration for the National Test – together with longer-term work to develop the National Test, improve awareness of the National Test amongst employers, make sure the certificate (after passing the National Test) *'looks the part'*, and so on.

Above all, the dangers of continuing rapid change and mixed messages were raised by several of the managers we spoke to: *'Let's have some consistency: policies and programmes are always being messed around with – usually just at the time we've got them properly operational on the ground'*.

- 3.8 Discussions with several managers/partners focused on initial intentions to keep three phases within the Pathfinders fairly clearly defined (the three phases were intended to be, roughly, initial preparation including teacher training; delivering the National Curriculum and the National Test; and extension activities).
- 3.9 In practice, distinctions became blurred: typically, teacher training, delivering the National Curriculum and administering the National Test overlapped appreciably – at worst, with the Test being administered before significant training for either tutors or trainees had been delivered. This led to criticism within partnerships of *'unrealistic planning horizons'* but – as far as we can tell – no insuperable longer-term local difficulties.

Training providers and partners

- 3.10 Those organisations closely involved with Pathfinder promotion have, overwhelmingly, considerable experience of Basic Skills provision and work within local partnerships of various kinds. 85% of organisations taking part in our interview programme described more than ten years' involvement with Basic Skills; none reported less than five years' experience.
- 3.11 A wide range of in-house quality assurance procedures was described: 15% of organisations said they already have the BSA quality mark, and the rest were working towards it or *'equivalent accreditations'*. Most (56%) also insist on formal qualifications for tutors and mentors (particularly City & Guilds 9281-3), but many also described in-house programmes, particularly important in the voluntary sector where less formal approaches to outreach and programme delivery are often apparent too.

Understandably, none of the organisations where we carried out interviews were prepared to admit to problems with the training and qualification of Basic Skills support staff. Nevertheless, a number had already identified a wish to *'Do much more training and development of the Basic Skills team'* in what has sometimes been seen as *'a Cinderella part of our operation.'*

- 3.12 For many interviewees within Pathfinders, colleges and other learning

providers, it was important to stress that the Pathfinders are far from 'discrete projects': in large part they build on existing structures, plans and operations. Reasons for partner organisations becoming involved with Pathfinders included *'Getting ahead of the game'* (being well aware that the National roll-out was planned to start later on in the year anyway), *'Give practitioners up-to-date structures and support packages to work with'* and *'Giving Basic Skills a push locally'*. Pathfinder work is expected to enhance and develop existing programmes in ways which are actively welcomed, but likely to be consistent with longer-term plans for developing Basic Skills provision anyway.

- 3.13 Although all partnerships have good representation from a range of local organisations, a number of partners did stress the importance of delivering local Basic Skills support in as broadly-based way as possible. There are concerns that *'It could be all too FE-led'*; *'Making them* (quality assurance requirements) *too restrictive could squeeze out the little guys – but they are the ones closest to the real need'* and so on. We have to say that this seems *not* to be a problem at the moment, but the importance of building genuinely inclusive local partnerships – with specialist providers being appropriately valued - does seem to be important for the future.
- 3.14 The issue of how best to involve the Employment Service was also raised. ES are full partners within most of the partnerships, but early stage experience has usually involved current trainees from FE colleges, community education and community-based training organisations in the first instance, rather than those referred on from ES.

There are exceptions, notably training providers working to ES-linked Gateway contracts, but the numbers of these trainees involved with Pathfinder activities were small at the time of our data collection programme.

No particular problems had arisen in relation to links with Employment Service and ES clients, but we touch on possible challenges for the future in 3.30 below. Clearly those who are 'compelled' – or feel themselves to be compelled – to attend Basic Skills training provision may be less committed than those we interviewed for this evaluation.

Tutors and mentors

- 3.15 The tutors and mentors we interviewed were, overwhelmingly, well-experienced individuals, usually well-qualified in Basic Skills already (City and Guilds 9281-3 certificates were the norm, but there were others). There may be differences when the 'cascade' reaches less experienced staff, or those who see Basic Skills as a relatively small part of their work.
- 3.16 Few tutors and mentors (about 12%) played any part at all in setting up local Pathfinders (or were even aware of them prior to, in particular, hearing about planned training events). There is probably a case for improving communications and giving early stage information about the National Test in particular to tutors and mentors generally as part

of the roll-out. A range of prejudices and misconceptions did arise when the Pathfinders were first launched, although a combination of briefing, training and practical experience seemed to have improved matters steadily after this point.

- 3.17 We have pointed out already that at least 80% of tutors we interviewed were positive about the training they received – if only because *'It gives us a bit more structure, some new material and ideas'* or *'I'm in favour of anything which raises the profile of Basic Skills'*. There were criticisms of the training: *'It's far too restrictive'*; *'The group I was in was too big, very sceptical, not a good experience'*. More general were views like *'It all went pretty well'*; *'I was pleasantly surprised'*.

In general, Pathfinders have resolved initial concerns about 'finding the time' satisfactorily simply by providing the appropriate resources – 'buying in' cover for full-time staff, and paying sessional tutors three full days to attend the training. Most Pathfinders have also 'found' many more active Basic Skills tutors than they expected: additional resources from DfES to allow more training to proceed than planned have been important (and very welcome) in maintaining good momentum within Pathfinders.

- 3.18 Because we were speaking to tutors and mentors at a fairly early stage in the Pathfinders' operations, most accepted they had much more work to do in areas like mapping the new curriculum onto current programmes, and revising lesson plans and supporting materials. Issues like changed screening and diagnosis procedures were very much 'work in progress' too. Again, indications of likely attitudes were generally positive, but there was some way to go before planned changes are anything like embedded in practice.

In particular, results, feedback and print-outs from diagnostic or screening tools under development were seen as *'unclear'*, *'unhelpful'* or *'too vague'* by a range of interviewees: *'One of the printouts said something like 'may have a potential disposition towards dyslexia' – what on earth am I supposed to do with that?'*

- 3.19 We have pointed out already that many tutors and mentors were genuinely surprised by trainees' responses to the National Test. For several, problems of getting Test papers delivered, managing cancellations, and so on, were still fresh in the mind, but we assume these will not reoccur – at least not on the same scale. Even more support for tutors is needed in relation to the National Test. Some were less than clear about which level they should be entering students for, and when they were expected to enter them: *'Should we stretch them with the risk of failing?'*; *'Will we just want numbers through to meet targets?'*
- 3.20 Interviews took place before National Test results had become available, so many questions about what feedback will be given, how certification will be handled, when can unsuccessful candidates re-sit, and related practical points were raised. We assume, however, these will rapidly be resolved.

3.21 The overriding response from tutors and mentors has been positive so far. We do not discount criticisms made by several tutors and mentors interviewed¹², but for the majority the increased attention to Basic Skills has been very welcome (*'Long overdue'*) and the details of what they have experienced so far has been 'OK' or better.

Trainees

- 3.22 We had to be opportunistic in contacting trainees we needed to interview within the work programme timescale. Predominantly, we had to carry out interviews with individuals already attending learning centres – and so they tended to be reasonably well 'engaged' with the learning process already. Nevertheless, the range of trainees we were able to cover was a broad one, ranging from those with severe learning difficulties and personal problems (*'The tutor got me into rehab first; I'm not using so much stuff now, so I can take more classwork in'*), through to those with much higher levels of qualification and employment experience (*'I wanted to make sure my punctuation and grammar were OK for my project write-up'* (for a professional qualification); *'I'm doing fine in work, but I've never been able to write a proper business letter'*).
- 3.23 Poor experiences in school were mentioned specifically by at least 58% of interviewees, with significant proportions admitting to truancy or difficult personal circumstances (*'I was in and out of care; had a lot of home tuition'*) leading to low achievements during compulsory education and, frequently, little attempt to take part in learning activities since. There were certainly exceptions: 27% seemed to have *'got my GCSEs'* or the equivalent, but might then have *'been in lots of dead end jobs'*, *'stuck at home alone apart from the kids'*, or in other ways taking part in little or no learning.
- 3.24 Responses to questions about specific training programmes interviewees had taken part in were complicated by those *'I was sent on by the Jobcentre'* or *'I did bits of an NVQ while I was working behind the counter for Boots'*. Most clearly had not taken part in significant training or learning for some years, and perhaps not since school. This was not always the case, though, the most extreme being someone working towards a formal qualification needing to *'brush up on my punctuation'*.
- 3.25 In terms of the programmes trainees were taking part in at the time of interview, a very wide range was described too, covering formal Basic Skills (*'I want help to do measuring up and work with metric units'*), through to programmes for which Basic Skills elements were very much ancillary to others (*'I came along to meet other mums, give my kids a bit of help with their school work'*).
- 3.26 This was reflected in equally wide ranges of response to questions about *'How did you come to take part in the programme?'*, ranging from *'My own volition, wanted to control the financial side of my business better'* through *'My girlfriend said I ought to come here – she*

¹² See points made in 2.9, 2.36 above – but note that the proportion of negative comments was small overall.

did and said it was OK', to much 'softer' outreach 'I heard there was a group for single mums: I went along: It's brilliant'.

Comparisons with other programmes varied widely too. For many, there was little or nothing they could compare with (*'I've not done any courses, nothing, since school'*). A minority of interviewees, though, were well integrated into (usually) FE structures and were 'keeping going' through a series of programmes – in effect, 'satisfied repeat customers'.

- 3.27 We did hear about a range of concerns based on past, (sometimes distant) experience of trying to take up adult learning opportunities, including *'the College is very off-putting – not friendly at all'; 'If they hadn't come here (community centre) I certainly wouldn't have come along otherwise'; 'I specifically asked for stuff to come in a plain envelope – it came with big stickers for literacy programmes all over it. I didn't take it further for years'.*

Negative experiences of adult learning in the past clearly had held back a number of the trainees we interviewed (and may well be even more important within groups of *potential* learners, not currently taking part in programmes). These barriers seemed to have been overcome, in our small sample of students, by a combination of 'learner-friendly' programmes and learning environments – and, of course, appreciable motivation on the part of students.

- 3.28 The key point, we think, is that learners are so extraordinarily varied that a mix of formal, informal and community education and outreach provision is essential – one of the great strengths of the Pathfinder partnerships being the mix of approaches different members can bring to bear.
- 3.29 In terms of promoting Basic Skills provision more generally, the importance of word of mouth referral certainly needs to be recognised. We point out in 2.27 that this was mentioned as the main source of referral by only 18% of trainees interviewed (as compared with 38% indicating 'self-referral' and 33% mentioning advice from tutors or outreach workers), but there are clearly important roles for friends and relations in confirming and supporting interests in *'doing something'* about Basic Skills. Particularly well motivated individuals will doubtless seek out formal provision anyway, and the influence of various larger-scale programmes (eg through the BBC) was still apparent.

Within communities, however, the importance of *'My friend brought me along'* and locally based opportunities to *'Meet somebody, see if you get on with them, see what it's all about'* came through repeatedly. Several Pathfinders are experimenting with local radio advertising, displays on buses and other promotions. Because the trainees we spoke to had usually been 'in the system' for a while, it was too early to say what impact this will have, but we suspect a range of promotional activities will always be needed with – for a high proportion of trainees – a heavy emphasis on convenient, locally-based representation, and as much support as possible for word of mouth referral and confirmation processes.

- 3.30 In what may be an indication of growing challenges for the future, our interview programme contained a small number (10%) of trainees for whom attendance at programmes was to some extent reluctant. Overall, most of the trainees we spoke to were glad to be taking part in Basic Skills training, but the 'reluctant attenders' group were not: they came without commitment to the programme they were attending, and indicated minimal 'buy-in' either to its contents or the benefits it might bring. In many cases these were referrals from New Deal or taking part in Gateway programmes who had formed the view that *'I was sent'*; or *'My dole gets stopped if I don't turn up'*.
- 3.31 Circumstances here are often very challenging indeed, but need not necessarily be a matter for automatic concern. Teachers seemed to be adjusting programmes somewhat to this lack of commitment, perhaps by actively *'managing their behaviour as well as their learning'* or by trying to do something about specific constraints on effective learning.

We have quoted already an example of a Basic Skills tutor being able to help resolve a drugs-related problem, prior to one individual starting effective learning. But 'difficult' behaviour was certainly apparent: *'A 9 o'clock start isn't on: I don't get up before 11.30'*; *'What's wrong with watching TV all day - there aren't any jobs around here'*.

These *may* be indications of challenges to come as less motivated individuals start to be targeted by Basic Skills programmes, and *may* raise questions about how referrals from ES are to be handled. Perhaps emphasising 'softer' developmental options will work for some (*'You'll find the programme interesting, meet other people'*) rather than a 'harder', quasi-medical model (*'You've got a problem with reading/writing – it needs treating'*).

4 Prison Service Pathfinder

- 4.1 Plans to develop and implement a Prison Service Pathfinder followed, broadly, plans for other Pathfinders during the early part of 2001. The Prison Service Pathfinder has the same main elements as the other Pathfinders – teacher training, use of the National Curriculum and National Test, etc. Staff from the Prison Service Pathfinder have been actively included in more general cross-Pathfinder exchanges of experience (eg all-project meetings), as well as taking part in a wide range of one-to-one discussions with DfES and establishing their own cross-institution arrangements to monitor progress and exchange ideas within the Prison Service itself.
- 4.2 Roots for the interest in promoting a Prison Service Pathfinder are, of course, very much the same as for other Pathfinders. Depending on the institution in question, a significant proportion of prisoners will have appreciable Basic Skills needs – indeed proportions are usually much higher than in the adult population as a whole. As with other Pathfinders, the Prison Service Pathfinder was also able to draw on extensive previous experience within the Service and its education sector providers.¹³ This experience covers teaching Basic Skills through a variety of work-based and family learning programmes, as well as ‘direct’ educational programmes.
- 4.3 Slippage in plans to implement the Prison Service Pathfinder became apparent during the summer of 2001. Reasons included those linked to the particular circumstances and decision-making processes the Prison Service needs to operate within (particularly, of course, those linked to maintaining security). But there were also ‘infrastructure’ constraints which other Pathfinders did not face – notably low existing levels of IT equipment, including no access to e-mail for anyone from the Prison Service Pathfinder until the Autumn of 2001.
- 4.4 This slippage made it difficult to include Prison Service Pathfinder experiences in this ‘What Works’ project, but it was eventually agreed that we should visit two institutions to carry out interviews with management staff, tutors and prisoners taking part in Pathfinder-linked Basic Skills training programmes. In the event, we were able to exceed planned targets somewhat and achieve:
- an initial familiarisation visit, including discussions with the Pathfinder project manager and colleagues, ‘sitting in’ on a Family Learning Project, and discussing Basic Skills issues with tutors and trainees
 - attending a Prison Service Pathfinder management meeting, including discussing experiences with a number of staff responsible for delivering the Pathfinder on the ground in different institutions

¹³ Education provision within prisons is usually ‘contracted out’ to an FE college. For example, Amersham and Wycombe College in the case of Wormwood Scrubs.

- carrying out face-to-face interviews (using the same topic guides used at other Pathfinders – see Appendix II) during September 2001 at two institutions with:

5 project, management and senior tutor staff

9 tutors

28 trainees taking part in a variety of Basic Skills literacy and numeracy programmes.

- 4.5 Again, although we were able to collect much good quality data from the Prison Service Pathfinder – and are particularly grateful to Pathfinder staff for much support and a continuing dialogue on key issues – we do have to stress that we did not interview a statistically representative sample of each of these groups, and never intended to.
- 4.6 Overall, the data we gathered tended to show the Prison Service Pathfinder as something of a microcosm of more general Pathfinder experiences – both positive and negative – but tending to demonstrate even more extreme patterns. To start with, setting up initial financial, managerial and administrative systems was appreciably more complex and experienced even greater delays than elsewhere. This spilled over to delays in getting teachers trained, distributing materials and so on, and influenced several of the comments from tutors we interviewed (*'We got little or no notice about the training and I struggled to make arrangements to go – then the date was changed at the last minute – I ask you!'; 'I haven't been trained – I'm not sure why'*).

The proportion of teachers we interviewed who had taken part in the structured training programme was low (less than 40%), principally because of the timing of the data collection exercise. A more informed judgement could doubtless have been made later in 2001, with further training having taken place since our interviews.

- 4.7 Even so, familiar positive comments from teachers came through at least as strongly as in other Pathfinders, including *'I really like the curriculum materials – better than anything we've ever had before;'' I enjoyed the training and found it helpful, very useful – I haven't seen much resource put into this sort of thing before.'* Prison Service Pathfinder tutors clearly work in somewhat different environments by comparison with colleagues in other Pathfinder programmes, but there was no suggestion of materials and techniques being inappropriate for this, perhaps specialist use – *'although the exercise of pricing up holidays and carpets gets a few laughs every time!'*.
- 4.8 Management staff and tutors have been faced with organisational and administrative challenges in other areas too. The Prison Service Pathfinder seemed to be afflicted at least as much as others by National Test administration and delivery problems; a high proportion of staff are sessional, so that the logistics of training them, distributing new materials and ensuring new practices are embedded in the classroom, can be particularly challenging. Decision making has *not* been as straightforward as in some of the other Pathfinders: some of

the managerial structures can be complex (education staff in prisons may well be employed by a local college, but working to strict Prison Service financial and administrative procedures, so two levels of 'sign-off may be required).

The Prison Service is, understandably, very cautious indeed about bringing IT equipment into prisons, but delays in installing computers caused problems in introducing new assessment procedures as planned. The challenge, we think, is to work with these procedures and structures through appropriately resourced administration and managerial functions, not in any way trying to ignore or circumvent them in this sensitive context.

- 4.9 Operational requirements cannot be ignored in the Prison Service environment. Prisoners can be transferred to other institutions at short notice. Prisoners, either individually or in groups, may be unable to attend planned educational sessions for reasons ranging from visits from lawyers through to whole wings being 'banged-up' for disciplinary or staff shortage reasons. Again though, *in principle*, no insuperable difficulties preventing the implementation of a successful Pathfinder operation were pointed to here – although flexibility in operational details like the 'standard' length of programmes, timing of National Test, and transferability between different centres all seem called for.
- 4.10 Much in parallel with other Pathfinders' experiences, responses from students we interviewed were strongly positive. We were able to gain views from students working at Entry Level 1 and 2 (*'This gives me a chance to learn something - really for the first time, man'*) through to those aiming for Level 2 and beyond (*'I used to be really good with figures – I had to be in (previous employment). I got a bit rusty. This is really helping'*). Prison Service Pathfinder trainees liked the materials they were using, the structure of working in groups rather than individually, and the intensive design of the Pathfinder Programmes (*'I did something like this one afternoon a week a while ago. But you forget things in between the lessons'*).
- 4.11 In drawing conclusions in relation to the Prison Service Pathfinder, it is essential to note how early our data was gathered in the operational life of the Pathfinder. Nevertheless, experiences within the Prison Service Pathfinder so far tended to confirm, first, the relevance of the 'core' Pathfinder model in this environment, with training teachers, systematic assessment/ diagnosis, use of the National Curriculum/National Test and other elements all being valued – perhaps despite a range of administrative challenges individuals have had to face.
- 4.11 However, the Prison Service environment **is** different: decision making tends, inevitably, to be slower and more cautious, and the need for working with the Prison Service, its operational requirements and the prisoners themselves will continue to be resource-intensive and, no doubt, time-consuming. Key recommendations are that active support and appropriate resourcing for internal administration, training tutors, materials, and organising/ managing functions are essential – despite the Pathfinder now delivering significant achievements on the basis of current resourcing patterns.

Continued evolution in practice will be important too, and there is considerable scope for helping staff achieve even better results, for example by introducing greater flexibility in National Test timing, distribution and reporting back arrangements.

5 What Works – good practice

- 5.1 We have structured findings of good practice to follow the pattern of Pathfinder Programme elements used in Section 2 and elsewhere. We have come across a wide range of examples of what we see as good practice, but do need to raise a number of cautionary notes, several of which have been considered before.

Because this ‘What Works?’ project collected data in the very early stages of Pathfinder operations, much experience was based on arrangements already in place well before the Pathfinders came into existence: things may be somewhat different if there is less of an ‘infrastructure’ to build on. Secondly, most trainees participating in Pathfinder programmes up to that point had also been involved with learning already, and attracting less ‘engaged’ individuals might well become progressively more difficult. Further, what has worked well in one location might not work so well elsewhere, and the importance of distinctions between, say, inner city and rural locations does need to be borne in mind.

Having said all of this, we do think there is a very great deal to be learned from the Pathfinders in the more general roll-out now taking place.

Teacher training

- 5.2 First, it was important for Pathfinder staff to look hard to find as many Basic Skills teachers as possible to involve in programmes. This was deceptively difficult – Pathfinders found many more teachers than they initially estimated when they sought out teachers supporting Basic Skills part time, in unusual contexts (e.g. with the hard of hearing) and in the community and voluntary sectors. Even so, it is almost certain that there are many more to be identified, particularly amongst private-sector training providers delivering government-funded adult training programmes.
- 5.3 The ‘cascade’ adopted so far has worked well, but it is essential to give teachers as much notice as possible, use comfortable venues, ensure ‘reasonable’ group sizes, and so on. For sessional or part-time teachers, providing payment to attend training events has usually been important and it will often be necessary to hire-in cover for teachers in most settings to allow them to take part in training events appropriately.
- 5.4 Teachers have responded very well indeed to opportunities to share experiences and practice with colleagues, usually from other learning centres. This should be built into training events anyway, and there is a strong case for arranging opportunities to exchange experiences (and, perhaps materials used) over the medium term to back up the effects of the training.
- 5.5 Many teachers see Basic Skills as *‘the Cinderella of FE’*. One-off training events will not necessarily change this, and serious attention

should be given to much more active personal development, training, mentoring and continuing professional development programmes for all teachers.

Screening

- 5.6 Screening needs to be tailored to the specific programmes and client groups. There is a strong case for routinely screening most students on most courses to see if Basic Skills support may be needed, but this may alienate more 'cautious' learners, particularly those attending programmes for other reasons (particularly family learning and community-based programmes). Systematic screening should probably be the norm, but allowing tutors and programme managers to 'opt-out' if they have concerns about particular student groups.
- 5.7 As for screening tools, many of those currently in use are reported as working well. New tools under development may well work even better, but decisions are probably best made on a centre-by-centre basis. This would be a good topic for teachers to discuss at the more regular exchanges of experiences we recommend above.

Diagnostic assessment

- 5.8 The project has revealed a good deal of overlap between screening and diagnosis. In effect, the first thing students do when starting (or being considered for) some of the programmes being delivered within Pathfinders is to take part in a diagnostic exercise – which, ideally, leads on to a structured, targeted learning plan. This certainly can work well, but only for those who have made a clear decision to '*work on their literacy/ numeracy*'.
- 5.9 When trainees are taking part in training programmes for which Basic Skills are not the main element (or, perhaps, not the main *stated* element) tutors described approaching diagnosis with much more circumspection, maybe part-way through the training programme. Nevertheless, when this has been done sensitively (perhaps by minimising any perceived threats, encouraging trainees to '*have a go*') there have been good results, with trainees welcoming the opportunity to '*see where I stand*' before working on further learning objectives.
- 5.10 Again, many formal and informal diagnostic tools are currently in use, and there seems no reason for insisting on compliance with particular 'official' versions. Nevertheless, tools under development are expected to improve practice appreciably – particularly if their introduction is accompanied by good training and the opportunity for teachers to exchange experiences.
- 5.11 Good feedback from diagnostic instruments – both for the teacher and the trainee – is the key to good performance. Feedback which leaves either party unsure of what strengths/development areas have been identified, or which is seen to use ambiguous or confusing language, will not be welcomed – nor make an effective impact on developing individuals' Basic Skill levels.

Learning plans

- 5.12 A wide range of learning plan formats are in use, and – as with screening and diagnosis – we see no reason for insisting on standardisation. Nevertheless, as programmes are re-worked through mapping onto the National Curriculum, there do seem to be important opportunities for clearly linking areas identified for development through diagnosis, with an appropriately structured learning plan, practical training programmes and, eventually, the National Test.
- 5.13 One area where performance is currently variable is in achieving learner involvement. We interviewed appreciable numbers of trainees who indicated they did not have a learning plan (even though we believed one had been drawn up in almost all cases). Much more attention to achieving both initial ‘buy-in’ and subsequent review against learning plan goals seems called for.

Programmes

- 5.14 Many programmes already work well within Pathfinder areas for delivering good quality Basic Skills support. Work is now taking place to map programmes onto the National Curriculum, and again, local exchanges of views and materials should be actively encouraged.
- 5.15 Good performance will only be achieved if Basic Skills support is much more actively incorporated with other programmes, and the views of Basic Skills specialists who want to ‘*do ourselves out of a job*’ because of high levels of integration should be noted. This high level of integration does, however, depend on continuing training and awareness-raising for non-specialist staff, ranging from tutors who specialise in other subjects, though to student support and marketing/outreach teams.
- 5.16 More generally, the Pathfinders show that imaginative responses to learners’ needs, perceptions and circumstances are necessary – including ‘bite-sized’ programmes, work with employers, ‘roll-on, roll-off’ programmes, specialist programmes (eg linked to ESOL, travelling communities) and making learning available at ‘unusual’ times and places (eg for shift workers).

Quality assurance

- 5.17 Formal accreditations (notably the BSA quality mark) offer important benefits, particularly for the FE sector, and are clearly ‘*the way things are going*’. There is some concern about smaller, less formal learning centres, particularly voluntary and community-based groups who focus particularly on ‘hard-to-reach’ clients. A lack of any quality assurance at all seems indefensible, but there may be scope for insisting that certain basic requirements are met here (accurate student records, training staff, safe premises, etc) without necessarily requiring full accreditation to a national standard.

The National Test

- 5.18 Tutors and others should expect good results from the National Test. The Pathfinders demonstrate that trainees are *not* likely to resist or resent the test in most instances. In some 'sensitive' settings, tutors have found it appropriate to present the test as '*a way of getting a qualification*' and stress its non-threatening nature.
- 5.19 This research was carried out too early for details of feedback, re-sit arrangements and other details to be known by tutors. They will need to be clear on these aspects as soon as possible, to be able to indicate to trainees: '*you'll get results which tell you about ...*' and '*If you're not quite there now, you can have another go in ...*'.
- 5.20 Based on some of the Pathfinders' experiences, we do have to stress the importance of good organisation and administration for the National Test. It is *not* helpful if papers are distributed incorrectly, or at short notice.

Progression

- 5.21 Much good work is already being done to encourage progression within individual institutions. Tutors are attuned to saying '*What do you fancy doing next*' and steering trainees onto GCSEs and many other programmes. Some of the barriers individual trainees face or perceive are being broken down in imaginative ways, perhaps through opportunities to have informal visits to colleges, '*Go along with a friend*' to taster events, much improved childcare support, and much else.
- 5.22 The keys to success seem to centre on careful attention to the kinds of circumstances many trainees find themselves in '*no matter how irrational they seem to officialdom.*' Colleges may have a '*bad reputation*' locally, for reasons which are either outdated or incorrect, or both. But unless these perceptions are recognised, perhaps by offering 'softer' ways of joining in with college activities, or - more likely – through community or voluntary-sector work, key groups may well remain outside learning.

6 Conclusions

- 6.1 The conclusions for this exercise can be drawn quickly and simply: during the initial months of their operations, the Pathfinders achieved a great deal in a short period of time, and offer important lessons to the broader roll-out. Overall, teacher training has worked well, trainees' responses to the National Test have been much more positive than most people had envisaged, and much very good practice has been demonstrated and can be built on.
- 6.2 There have been difficulties which need to be recognised. A minority of teachers have expressed concerns about the training they received, the National Test (and sometimes elements of the National Curriculum) or other aspects of *'The way Basic Skills support is going'*. These are the views of a minority, but do serve as an important reminder that continued attention to improving teacher training and networking, supporting staff throughout the Basic Skills 'infrastructure', building really robust assessment and diagnostic procedures, ensuring effective National Test administration and feedback, and a range of other important details will all need concerted and resource-intensive attention.
- 6.3 Inevitably, at the end of 2001, there is much work only just being started. Programmes have to be mapped onto the National Curriculum; new approaches to screening and diagnosis continue to develop and need careful embedding; and many questions about using the National Test, delivering feedback, and ensuring effective progression, are only now being addressed.

Some of the pointers for effective performance in the future include further attention to effective continuing professional development for tutors, ever more imaginative programme design and delivery, and good local-level partnerships where all providers are appropriately valued.

- 6.4 Because this is very much an early stage assessment of progress made by the Pathfinders, we do recommend that several important issues be monitored specifically as the roll-out progresses. These include noting how programmes are applied within institutions having less of an established Basic Skills 'infrastructure' than most of those involved in Pathfinders (more guidance and support may have to be provided from external sources).

The applicability of programmes to less motivated trainees should also be monitored (revised programmes and/or more support for teachers may be needed). And we think particular attention should be given to understanding the interests of employers in Basic Skills support, and encouraging greater involvement.

- 6.5 As a final point, the research team are very grateful indeed to many people for helping us in this exercise, from within individual Pathfinder partnerships, DfES and elsewhere. We wish them all well in the very challenging but important work they do. The responsibility for any omissions or errors in this report rests firmly with CRG.

Appendix I

Pathfinder partnership details

Partners

Partner & Lead Organisation	Region	Linked colleges/institutes	Existing partnerships
<p>Nottinghamshire Basic Skills Partnership</p> <p>(Lead) Nottinghamshire County Council</p> <p>Inner City and large rural area</p>	East Midlands	<p>West Nottinghamshire College</p> <p>New College Nottingham</p> <p>South Nottingham College</p> <p>Peoples College Nottingham</p> <p>North Nottinghamshire College</p> <p>Broxtowe College</p> <p>Newark and Sherwood College</p>	<p>West Nottingham Learning Partnership</p> <p>North Nottinghamshire Learning Partnership</p> <p>South Yorkshire WEA</p> <p>East Midlands WEA</p> <p>Training Providers Network</p> <p>Nottinghamshire Voluntary Sector Consortium</p> <p>Probation Service</p> <p>Schools and Community Colleges</p> <p>Unions</p> <p>Employment Service</p> <p>Prison Service</p> <p>Employers</p>
<p>Birmingham Core Skills Development Partnership</p> <p>Inner City Regeneration Area</p>	West Midlands	<p>East Birmingham College</p> <p>North Birmingham College</p> <p>South Birmingham College</p>	<p>Birmingham Lifelong Learning Partnership</p> <p>Birmingham Adult Education Service</p> <p>Birmingham LEA</p> <p>Birmingham & Solihull TEC/LSC</p> <p>Employment Service</p> <p>Careers Education Business Partnership</p> <p>Birmingham Voluntary Service Council</p> <p>New Deal Partnership</p> <p>Advantage West Midlands</p> <p>West Midlands Probation Service</p>
<p>Liverpool Lifelong Learning Partnership</p> <p>(Lead) Liverpool Community College</p> <p>Inner City Regeneration Area</p>	North West	<p>Liverpool Community College</p>	<p>Libraries</p> <p>Probation Service</p> <p>LEA – Adult Learning Service</p> <p>Employment Service</p> <p>Career Decisions</p> <p>Parent School Partnership</p> <p>Reach Out – Hope University College</p> <p>Community/Voluntary Sector</p> <p>Trade Union – Bargaining for Skills</p>

<p>Tyne & Wear Local Learning & Skills Council</p> <p>Inner City Regeneration Area</p>	North East	<p>City of Sunderland College</p> <p>Gateshead College</p> <p>Newcastle College</p> <p>South Tyneside College</p>	<p>Learning North East</p> <p>Newcastle ABE</p> <p>NE Employment Training Agency</p> <p>NE Open College Network</p> <p>North Tyneside ABE</p> <p>South Tyneside Adult & Community Education</p> <p>South Tyneside LEA</p> <p>Sunderland LEA</p> <p>Sunderland Widening Participation</p> <p>The Allan Race Partnership</p> <p>TUC Workforce Development Partnership</p> <p>Tyneside TEC</p> <p>Tyneside Careers</p> <p>Tyneside Widening Participation</p>
<p>Leeds Learning Partnership</p> <p>(Lead)</p> <p>Leeds City Council</p> <p>Inner City Regeneration Area</p>	Yorkshire and Humberside	<p>Park Lane College</p> <p>Joseph Priestly College</p> <p>Thomas Danby College</p>	<p>Employment Service</p> <p>Leeds Career Company</p> <p>WEA (vol)</p> <p>Swarthmore Centre (vol)</p> <p>Big Issue (vol)</p> <p>Employers</p> <p>Leeds Voice</p>
<p>Cambridgeshire Learning Partnership</p>	East of England	<p>Cambridgeshire Regional College</p> <p>Huntingdon Regional College</p> <p>The Isle College</p>	<p>Cambridgeshire LEA</p> <p>Cambridgeshire Adult Education Consortium</p> <p>The Ormiston Trust</p> <p>The Traveller Support Team</p> <p>NACRO</p> <p>The IAG Partnership</p> <p>Cambridgeshire Training and Development</p> <p>Cambridgeshire Woman's Resource Centre</p>

<p>Gloucestershire Basic Skills Partnership</p> <p>(Lead) Adult Continuing Education & Training</p> <p>Large Rural Area</p>	South West	<p>Cirencester College Gloucestershire College Hartpury College National Star Centre Royal Forest of Dean College Stroud College Workers' Educational Association Gloucestershire Neighbourhood College</p>	<p>Gloucestershire Learning & Skills Council Gloucestershire Learning Partnership Gloucestershire Federation of Colleges Adult Education Consortia Gloucestershire Family Learning Network Gloucestershire Basic Skills Network Gloucestershire Information, Advice & Guidance Partnership Gloucestershire UFL Hub Gloucestershire EAS & Gloucestershire Surestart Learning City, Town and Community Initiatives TUC/Bargaining for Skills & Employers</p>
<p>Thanet Basic Skills Project</p> <p>(Lead) Thanet College</p> <p>Rural Area</p>	South East	<p>Thanet College</p>	<p>Kent County Council (KCC) Schools Division KCC Community & Adult Education Service East Kent NHS Trust East Kent CVS Kent Maritime Chambers of Commerce East Kent Social Services Thanet Business and Enterprise Centre The Basic Skills Agency</p>
<p>London Boroughs of Hackney, Islington Tower Hamlets & Newham</p> <p>Inner City Large regeneration area</p>	London	<p>Tower Hamlets College Hackney Community College City & Islington College</p>	<p>Major Partnership in East London</p>

Appendix II

Topic guides

Basic Skills 'What Works?' Project for DfES

TOPIC GUIDE 1: Training Providers/Partners

Interviewee
Location/Organisation
Date
Interviewer

Interviewer briefing

Linked to a range of Government priorities to address low levels of adult Basic Skills, nine Pathfinder projects have been set up (in Liverpool, Tyne & Wear, Leeds, Nottinghamshire, Birmingham, Cambridgeshire, Isle of Thanet, Gloucester, East London). Prison Pathfinders may be subsequently added.

The aims of the Pathfinders include:

To test Basic Skills core activities aimed to raise the standards of literacy and numeracy teaching during the period April-August 2001 prior to national roll-out in September 2001.

Aims for the evaluation include:

To evaluate the competence of the new Basic Skills infrastructure in a variety of settings in the nine Pathfinder areas. *(Data specific to the new National Test is also being gathered, but much of this will come through a separate monitoring system being developed).*

The 'core activities' include:

- Area assessment and planning
- Partnership implementation and promotion, including use of local media
- Teacher and mentor training
- Diagnostic testing
- Programme activities:
 - Action Planning
 - The National Standards and core curriculum
 - The National Test
- Local evaluation.

Each project will also be expected to undertake development activities to test possible extensions of the strategy. The following have been suggested:

- Funding employers for the loss of each employee on Basic Skills training
- Intensive training for job seekers as part of the current training process
- Financial and other incentives for individuals to take part in training
- Extending the minimum number of hours that job seekers are permitted to attend courses without loss of benefits
- Involving and training staff from other agencies
- Developing self-help packages that can be made available in venues not normally associated with learning.

<p>It is envisaged that the Pathfinders will be working with over 8,500 learners. Around 60% of the courses/training will be on literacy and 40% on numeracy. 50% of learners are expected to work to entry level, 40% to level 1 and 10% to level 2.</p>

In terms of a 'range of learning environments', the following have been identified:

- College, including outreach provision (colleges involved will have an inspection Grade 1 or 2 for programme area 10, and, preferably, the BSA quality mark)
- Community/voluntary sector
- Family literacy and numeracy projects
- Work-based learning
- learndirect.

It is thought likely that the project will be rolled out from September 2001 in any event. The key function of the evaluation CRG have been commissioned to carry out will, therefore, be to inform and support this roll-out as fully as possible.

Data for the evaluation is being collected through:

- Analysis of monitoring information produced and collated centrally
- Interviews with partners and project staff, tutors and mentors and trainees
- Reviewing local evaluation data, management information, etc
- Working closely with the project steering group; also attending all-project meetings, etc
- Reviewing planning, policy and contextual data.

The CRG office has more background on underlying policies, etc. The project manager for CRG is Richard Gaunt.

Introduction

My name is from CRG. We are an independent research organisation who have been commissioned to look at how the adult Basic Skills pilots have progressed so far, and what lessons can be learnt for the future. We are collecting information about the experiences and perceptions of a range of individuals who have been involved in the pilots. This interview should take no more than 30 minutes. All individual answers will be treated in confidence; there are no right or wrong answers – we are interested in your experiences and how you see things.

Section 1: About you and your organisation

Please describe your/your organisations' role in relation to adult Basic Skills. How long have you/your organisation been working in adult Basic Skills?

What do you normally use in terms of diagnostic assessment, testing and curriculum materials to promote adult Basic Skills development?

What is your position in relation to the Basic Skills Agency quality standard (eg achieved it, working towards it ...)

Which client groups do you normally work with?
What numbers of adult learners do you normally work with?

How are tutors and mentors usually recruited, developed and assessed?

What programmes do you normally adopt to train tutors/mentors?

Section 2: Setting up the pilot

How did you come to be involved in setting up the pilot?

Who else was involved and why?

What did you expect the pilot to achieve in terms of improved adult Basic Skills?

What benefits did you expect your own organisation to achieve from being involved?

What arrangements will be made for internal quality assurance?

What arrangements will be made for external evaluation and monitoring?

Section 3: Project design

What are the key elements/features for the pilot?: Why was it set up in this way? (Prompts: Look at particular approaches to assessment, outreach, use of tests...)

With hindsight, would you change any of the goals/ key elements for the pilot?

What development activities (see page 1) are being tested?

Why were they chosen? How will they be tested?

Section 4: Project operation

How many tutors have been trained?

How was the training delivered?

(Prompt: include was BSA 'train the trainers' programme used? If so, why? How many were trained with this programme?)

How effective was this training process?

(Prompt: include feedback data from tutors and mentors)

What targets do you have in relation to recruiting trainees onto the pilot?

What happens to people who do not attend or drop out?

How are potential trainees referred onto the pilot?

In what proportion of programmes (or for what proportion of students) are literacy and numeracy taught:

- separately?
- together?
- integrated with other programmes?

Where is training delivered?

What initial diagnosis takes place?

(Prompt are fast tracks being used? If so how many students are/ have been screened?

What else is used? How many progress on to programme activities?)

Is the National Test used?

If so, please describe how it is administered, data-monitored, etc

What do you think of the National Test?

What in detail do the training programmes consist of?

(Prompt: what format is used for learning plans? Who 'owns' the learning plans)

How many trainees have entered the programme so far?

How many trainees are still on the programme?

How many trainees have successfully completed the programme?

Have you any evidence so far of the results being achieved? (test scores etc; include subjective views/ perceptions)

What differences to your usual practices are taking place, if any?

What happens to trainees after the programme?

What arrangements are made for progression/ follow-up?

Section 5: Messages to the roll-out

Overall, what seem not to be working so well with your Pathfinder?

If you were to start again, what would you do in the same way/differently?

In terms of more general advice to any national roll-out, what would you suggest to those planning the roll-out nationally?

What would you suggest to those delivering programmes at a local level?

Section 6: Other comments

Are there, please, any other comments at all which should be borne in mind in relation to the pilot so far, how the pilot itself may be developed, and appropriate issues for the roll-out to address?

Basic Skills 'What Works?' Project for DfES

TOPIC GUIDE 2: Tutors and mentors

Interviewee
Location/Organisation
Date
Interviewer

Interviewer briefing

Linked to a range of Government priorities to address low levels of adult Basic Skills, nine Pathfinder projects have been set up (in Liverpool, Tyne & Wear, Leeds, Nottinghamshire, Birmingham, Cambridgeshire, Isle of Thanet, Gloucester, East London). Prison Pathfinders may be subsequently added.

The aims of the Pathfinders include:

To test Basic Skills core activities aimed to raise the standards of literacy and numeracy teaching during the period April-August 2001 prior to national roll-out in September 2001.

Aims for the evaluation include:

To evaluate the competence of the new Basic Skills infrastructure in a variety of settings in the nine Pathfinder areas. *(Data specific to the new National Test is also being gathered, but much of this will come through a separate monitoring system being developed).*

The 'core activities' include:

- Area assessment and planning
- Partnership implementation and promotion, including use of local media
- Teacher and mentor training
- Diagnostic testing
- Programme activities:
 - Action Planning
 - The National Standards and core curriculum
 - The National Test
- Local evaluation.

Each project will also be expected to undertake development activities to test possible extensions of the strategy. The following have been suggested:

- Funding employers for the loss of each employee on Basic Skills training
- Intensive training for job seekers as part of the current training process
- Financial and other incentives for individuals to take part in training
- Extending the minimum number of hours that job seekers are permitted to attend courses without loss of benefits
- Involving and training staff from other agencies
- Developing self-help packages that can be made available in venues not normally associated with learning.

<p>It is envisaged that the Pathfinders will be working with over 8,500 learners. Around 60% of the courses/training will be on literacy and 40% on numeracy. 50% of learners are expected to work to entry level, 40% to level 1 and 10% to level 2.</p>

In terms of a 'range of learning environments', the following have been identified:

- College, including outreach provision (colleges involved will have an inspection Grade 1 or 2 for programme area 10, and, preferably, the BSA quality mark)
- Community/voluntary sector
- Family literacy and numeracy projects
- Work-based learning
- learndirect.

It is thought likely that the project will be rolled out from September 2001 in any event. The key function of the evaluation CRG have been commissioned to carry out will, therefore, be to inform and support this roll-out as fully as possible.

Data for the evaluation is being collected through:

- Analysis of monitoring information produced and collated centrally
- Interviews with partners and project staff, tutors and mentors and trainees
- Reviewing local evaluation data, management information, etc
- Working closely with the project steering group; also attending all-project meetings, etc
- Reviewing planning, policy and contextual data.

The CRG office has more background on underlying policies, etc. The project manager for CRG is Richard Gaunt.

Introduction

My name isfrom CRG. We are an independent research organisation who have been commissioned to look at how the adult Basic Skills pilots have progressed so far, and what lessons can be learnt for the future. We are collecting information about the experiences and perceptions of a range of individuals who have been involved in the pilots. This interview should take no more than 20 minutes. All individual answers will be treated in confidence; there are no right or wrong answers – we are interested in your experiences and how you see things.

Section 1: About you and your organisation

How long have you been working with Basic Skills?
(Prompt: with which organisations? Which client groups)

What roles have you carried out (e.g. tutor, mentor, administrator..)

How many hours a week do you currently work with Basic Skills?

What training/ qualifications relating to Basic Skills did you have before the Pathfinder?

Were you involved in setting up the Pathfinder?
(If so, in what role?)

How effectively do you think the Pathfinder was set up and communicated?

Section 2: Teacher training

What training linked to the Pathfinder have you received?

(Prompt: was BSA's train the trainers programme used?)

How was cascading organised?

What did you think of the training? What was good what could have been better?

What changes have you made to classroom practice as result of the training?

Section 3: Implementing the pathfinder

How are students referred to the programme?

(Prompts: ask for basic details of client group – ages, gender, etc)

What screening takes place; how is it managed/ administered?

What tools are being used? (eg fast track)

What proportion of students are screened?

(Why is this pattern adopted?)

What do students think of the screening process?

What do you think of the screening process?

What diagnostic assessment takes place?
(Which tool is used? How is it used? (eg integrated with other programme elements)

What happens as a result of the diagnostic assessment?

What do students think of the diagnostic assessment?

What do you think of the diagnostic assessment?

What does the learning plan produce?
(What format – what does the learning plan include? etc)

How are students involved in drawing up, reviewing and 'owning' the plan?

How are reluctant students encouraged to turn up and maintain interest?

How are literacy/ numeracy curricula used here?
(Delivered separately/ together/ integrated with other elements...)

Please describe how the programme is delivered in detail

(Include special arrangements for different clients, eg for shift workers, ESOL, 'bite-sized pieces'...)

What feedback is given to students?

How does the programme link to National Basic Skills standards?

How do you use the National Test?

(What do you think of its relevance, effectiveness?)

Overall, what do students think of the programme they took part in?
(Good/ less good elements; what could be improved?)

What you think of the overall programme students take part in?
(Good/ less good elements; what could be improved?)

Section 4: After the programme

How is achievement recognised?

What happens to the learning plan after the programme?

What happens to people who drop out?

What happens to help students continue in learning/ progression into employment?

What aftercare/ 'hand-holding' takes place?

Section 5: Messages to the roll-out

Overall, what seem not to be working so well with your Pathfinder?

If you were to start again, what would you do in the same way/differently?

In terms of more general advice to any national roll-out, what would you suggest to those planning the roll-out nationally?

What would you suggest to those delivering programmes at a local level?

Section 6: Other comments

Are there, please, any other comments at all which should be borne in mind in relation to the pilot so far, how the pilot itself may be developed, and appropriate issues for the roll-out to address?

Thank interviewee and close

Basic Skills 'What Works?' Project for DfES

TOPIC GUIDE 3: Trainees

Interviewee

Location/Organisation

Date

Interviewer

Interviewer briefing

Linked to a range of Government priorities to address low levels of adult Basic Skills, nine Pathfinder projects have been set up (in Liverpool, Tyne & Wear, Leeds, Nottinghamshire, Birmingham, Cambridgeshire, Isle of Thanet, Gloucester, East London). Prison Pathfinders may be subsequently added.

The aims of the Pathfinders include:

To test Basic Skills core activities aimed to raise the standards of literacy and numeracy teaching during the period April-August 2001 prior to national roll-out in September 2001.

Aims for the evaluation include:

To evaluate the competence of the new Basic Skills infrastructure in a variety of settings in the nine Pathfinder areas. *(Data specific to the new National Test is also being gathered, but much of this will come through a separate monitoring system being developed).*

The 'core activities' include:

- Area assessment and planning
- Partnership implementation and promotion, including use of local media
- Teacher and mentor training
- Diagnostic testing
- Programme activities:
 - Action Planning
 - The National Standards and core curriculum
 - The National Test
- Local evaluation.

Each project will also be expected to undertake development activities to test possible extensions of the strategy. The following have been suggested:

- Funding employers for the loss of each employee on Basic Skills training
- Intensive training for job seekers as part of the current training process
- Financial and other incentives for individuals to take part in training
- Extending the minimum number of hours that job seekers are permitted to attend courses without loss of benefits
- Involving and training staff from other agencies
- Developing self-help packages that can be made available in venues not normally associated with learning.

<p>It is envisaged that the Pathfinders will be working with over 8,500 learners. Around 60% of the courses/training will be on literacy and 40% on numeracy. 50% of learners are expected to work to entry level, 40% to level 1 and 10% to level 2.</p>

In terms of a 'range of learning environments', the following have been identified:

- College, including outreach provision (colleges involved will have an inspection Grade 1 or 2 for programme area 10, and, preferably, the BSA quality mark)
- Community/voluntary sector
- Family literacy and numeracy projects
- Work-based learning
- learndirect.

It is thought likely that the project will be rolled out from September 2001 in any event. The key function of the evaluation CRG have been commissioned to carry out will, therefore, be to inform and support this roll-out as fully as possible.

Data for the evaluation is being collected through:

- Analysis of monitoring information produced and collated centrally
- Interviews with partners and project staff, tutors and mentors and trainees
- Reviewing local evaluation data, management information, etc
- Working closely with the project steering group; also attending all-project meetings, etc
- Reviewing planning, policy and contextual data.

The CRG office has more background on underlying policies, etc. The project manager for CRG is Richard Gaunt.

Introduction

My name is from CRG.

We are an independent research organisation and have been commissioned to look at the effectiveness of the training programme (..... name) you are taking part in.

The training will probably be rolled out to all parts of England soon, and we want to know what works well, and what ought to be improved.

All individual answers will be treated in confidence. There are no right or wrong answers – we are interested just in your experiences and how you see things.

Section 1: About you

Please could you tell me a bit about how you got on at school?

(Prompt: age when learning finished; any qualifications; general attitudes to school, etc)

What sort of things have you done for a job?

(Prompts: include kinds of work, numbers of jobs, periods not working...)

Have you done any training or courses since you left school?

(Prompts: formal education, evening classes; employer-led training, self-study...)

Have you done any courses to help you with reading or writing before?

(What were they? What did you think about them?)

Section 2: Joining the programme

What course/ courses are you doing?

(prompts:

- number of courses
- number and names of providers
- are they literacy or numeracy or both – or some other course with a Basic Skills element

What were you doing just before you came on to the programme?

How did you come to be taking part in the programme?

(Prompt: explore referral process – who was involved, what support/ encouragement given...)

Why did you think it would be a good idea to do the programme?

(prompt: in particular, note any references to maintaining or accrediting existing skills)

How easy was it to get started on the programme?

(Prompt: good briefing? what information? views on premises, accessibility, etc....)

Section 3: The programme itself

Have you taken any assessments or tests?

(Which ones? What did you think of them?

Have you taken the National Test? if so: what did you think of it?)

Have you got an action plan?

- How was it drawn up?
- How much of the plan was what you wanted to do; how much was suggested by the tutor?
- How committed do you feel towards completing the action plan?

What happened when you got started on the programme?

Prompts:

- curriculum elements
- literacy/ numeracy/ both
- integrated with other provision
- subjects covered
- materials used
- group work
- assignments.

Which parts have worked well for you?

Which parts have worked less well?

How effective do you think the programme is overall?

(Prompts:

What has gone well,

What could be improved?)

What do you think you have got out of the programme?

What do you think you might do next?

(Prompts:

- further learning
- employment
- further work on literacy/ numeracy.)

Do you know where to go to get more help with training and learning?

(If so, where? Is there any particular help you would need to keep on studying/ learning; get a good job?)

Section 4: Messages to the roll-out

Overall, what seem not to be working so well with the programme?

If you were to start again, what would you do in the same way/differently?

In terms of more general advice to any national roll-out, what would you suggest to those planning the roll-out nationally?

What would you suggest to those delivering programmes at a local level?

Section 5: Other comments

Are there, please, any other comments at all which should be borne in mind in relation to the pilot so far, how the pilot itself may be developed, and appropriate issues for the roll-out to address?