

Delivering *Skills for Life*

FACT SHEET 12 – Skills for Life provision within Train to Gain from 2008/09

September 2008

The purpose of this fact sheet is to set out, in one place, the new flexibilities in Skills for Life provision through Train to Gain and what is eligible for funding.

Readership

1 Regional and local Learning and Skills Councils (LSC) involved in Train to Gain and Skills for Life; LSC Audit and Provider Financial Assurance teams; colleges and other providers: senior managers and managers responsible for literacy, ESOL, numeracy and vocational provision through Train to Gain; teachers and tutors of literacy, ESOL, numeracy and vocational programmes through Train to Gain; colleagues in the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED); Quality Improvement Agency (QIA); other colleagues responsible for Train to Gain provision.

Structure

2 The fact sheet has three sections. Section one sets out the context of the Skills for Life strategy and defines adult basic skills qualifications. It states what is eligible for funding through Train to Gain pulling together guidance from 'A plan for growth', the LSC Funding Guidance 2008/09, Mark Haysom's letter to providers in June 2008 and the recently published Train to Gain Additional Flexibilities - version 3. Section two offers answers to frequently asked questions and section three lists the other documents used to draw up this fact sheet which we recommend.

3 This fact sheet has been prepared by the Employee Development team at the National Office of the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) and will be posted on the LSC website (www.lsc.gov.uk). For further clarification providers should, in the first instance, contact their regional or local Learning and Skills Council. Contact information can be found on our website.

Section One: what is Skills for Life and what is eligible for funding through Train to Gain

Skills for Life: the background

- 4 The Skills for Life strategy was launched in 2001 to bring about a focussed approach to raise the basic literacy, English language and numeracy skills of adults in England.
- 5 In 2007 the Government adopted new PSA targets in response to the Leitch review. The Skills for Life Leitch target aims to have “95% of the working age population achieving the basic skills of functional literacy and numeracy by 2020”.
- 6 Functional literacy is defined as level 1, (this includes ESOL provision), and functional numeracy is defined as entry level 3. These levels are considered to be the minimum standards necessary at which an individual is able to function at work and in society in general. These are referred to as the ‘Leitch thresholds’.
- 7 To work towards the Leitch targets the LSC has agreed the following figures with DIUS. These are set out in the PSA delivery plan. From August 2008 until July 2011 (3 years):
 - 597,000 people of working age to achieve a first level 1 or above approved (section 96/97) literacy qualification
 - 390,000 to achieve a first entry level 3 or above approved (section 96/97) numeracy qualification
- 8 Compared to our current delivery, to meet these targets, we will need to maintain literacy/ESOL target bearing provision whilst greatly increasing our numeracy target bearing provision.
- 9 ‘Target bearing’ provision refers to provision that when achieved directly contributes and counts to the Leitch PSA target, ie, literacy and ESOL level 1 and numeracy entry level 3.
- 10 ‘Non target bearing’ refers to provision that does not directly contribute to a Leitch PSA target, for example, all entry levels and level 2 in literacy and ESOL, and entry levels 1 and 2, and levels 1 and 2 in numeracy. However, there are a certain percentage of ‘jumper’ achievements. That is a learner who has been assessed at being below the Leitch thresholds i.e. entry level 3 in literacy, and who ‘jumps’ to achieve a qualification higher than the Leitch threshold, i.e. enrolls on and achieves level 2 in literacy. Such first achievements at these higher levels are also considered to be ‘target bearing’.
- 11 Offering Skills for Life qualifications at the correct level in Train to Gain is key to ensuring we meet the needs of learners.

Skills for Life: the curriculum

- 12 Skills for Life provision covers entry level (which is split into 3 sub-levels: entry level 1, entry level 2, entry level 3), level 1 and level 2, and covers 3 subjects: literacy, numeracy and English language (ESOL – English for Speakers of Other Languages).
- 13 The table below from the recent NAO report on Skills for Life shows what each level is equivalent to as regards the expected skill levels of the individual, and current estimated number of adults lacking these skills:

1 Literacy and numeracy skills affect a person's ability to function in society

Number of adults below the level in 2003 (cumulative)	Entry Level 1	Entry Level 2	Entry Level 3	Level 1	Level 2
Literacy	Not known	1.1 million	1.7 million	5.2 million	17.8 million
Numeracy	Not known	1.7 million	6.8 million	15.0 million	23.8 million

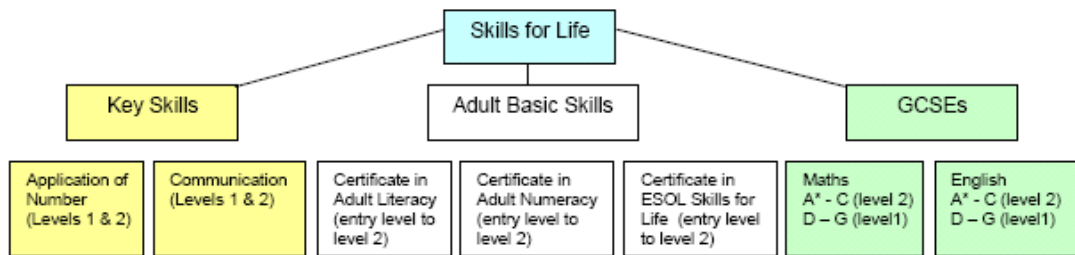
<p>Entry Level 1 is the national school curriculum equivalent for attainment at age 5-7.</p> <p>Adults below Entry Level 1 may not be able to write short messages to family or select floor numbers in lifts.</p>	<p>Entry Level 2 is the national school curriculum equivalent for attainment at age 7-9.</p> <p>Adults with skills below Entry Level 2 may not be able to describe a child's symptoms to a doctor or use a cash point to withdraw cash.</p>	<p>Entry Level 3 is the national school curriculum equivalent for attainment at age 9-11.</p> <p>Adults with skills below Entry Level 3 may not be able to understand price labels on pre-packed food or pay household bills.</p>	<p>Level 1 is equivalent to GCSE grades D-G.</p> <p>Adults with skills below Level 1 may not be able to read bus or train timetables or check the pay and deductions on a wage slip.</p>	<p>Level 2 is equivalent to GCSE grades A*-C.</p> <p>Adults with skills below Level 2 may not be able to compare products and services for the best buy, or work out a household budget.</p>
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Source: Estimates of the number of adults below each level are taken from the Skills for Life Survey: a national needs and impacts survey of literacy, numeracy and ICT skills, Research report 490, Department for Education and Skills, 2003

Note: Entry Level 3 numeracy and Level 1 Literacy are considered the minimum functional levels for adults by Sir Claus Moser's report: A fresh start: improving literacy and numeracy.

14 Skills for Life provision covers 3 different types of approved qualifications:

- Adult Basic Skills (Certificate in Adult Literacy, Certificate in Adult Numeracy and Certificate in English for Speakers of Other Languages Skills for Life);
- GCSEs (in English and Maths);
- and Key skills (in Application of Number and in Communication).



15 Only **Adult Basic Skills** are fundable through Train to Gain funding, although both GCSEs and Key Skills can be offered at full cost to employers should they request these qualifications. Adult Basic Skills only are available because they were developed to specifically meet the needs of adult learners, and are based around the functional application of literacy and numeracy skills, whereas GCSE and Key skills are deemed more appropriate for younger learners.

ESOL for Work

16 ESOL for Work are a new range of ESOL qualifications introduced in October 2007. They do not form part of the Skills for Life family of qualifications and therefore do not count towards the PSA target, but they are fundable through Train to Gain. These qualifications were developed in response to employers to provide more work focused ESOL provision. Whilst currently only available at entry level 3 and level 1 Ministers are keen that employers are offered and use these qualifications where appropriate.

17 Skills for Life fact sheet 10 provides more information on these qualifications and can be found at:

<http://readingroom.lsc.gov.uk/lsc/National/nat-factsheet10esol-for-work.pdf>

Functional Skills

18 Currently a new suite of qualifications 'Functional Skills' in maths and English are being piloted. It is the expectation that these qualifications will replace Key Skills by 2010, with the possibility of also replacing Adult Basic Skills by 2013. This is dependent on the success of the pilots. It is not currently possible to fund the piloted Functional Skills qualifications through Train to Gain, although this is being discussed as part of widening the scope of these pilots.

Initial Assessment

19 The purpose of Skills for Life initial assessment is to identify whether a learner has a need with literacy/ESOL and numeracy – and at what level. In line with the LSC's Statement of Priorities November 2007, 'all providers are expected to offer numeracy assessments for their literacy and language learners, and endeavour to engage them in the most appropriate numeracy provision wherever possible.'

20 It is expected there will be a degree of stretch in the identified learning aim which would result in the learner moving up at least one clear level.

21 The initial assessment documentation and full process must be clearly evidenced for audit purposes. All documentation used as part of the assessment process must be available for inspection by the LSC and Audit as requested.

22 Further guidance to support assessment is currently being developed.

Adult Basic Skills: what is fundable through Train to Gain?

23 All three basic skills subjects are fundable - literacy, numeracy and ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages), as well as the ESOL for Work qualifications.

24 All levels are fundable, that is entry level 1, entry level 2, entry level 3, level 1 and level 2. ESOL for Work are only available at entry level 3 and level 1 (other levels have not yet been developed).

25 Individual learners can be funded to follow both literacy/ESOL and numeracy qualifications. We would not expect a learner to undertake both literacy and ESOL as the curriculum is broadly the same.

26 Those with prior qualifications at NVQ level 2 (or equivalent) or above will be eligible for funding through Train to Gain where they have an identified basic skills need. This need should be identified through assessment and recorded on the Individual Learner Plan.

27 Qualifications can be offered as stand alone/discreet qualifications or linked to gaining a full level 2. Research¹ has also shown an increase in retention and success rates when basic skills qualifications are embedded into vocational qualifications. For more information on embedded delivery please see fact sheet 8 at: <http://readingroom.lsc.gov.uk/Lsc/National/nat-factsheet8-embedded-learning250907.pdf>

¹ National Research and Development Centre for adult literacy and numeracy: Research Report – 'You wouldn't expect a maths teacher to teach plastering...' November 2006

Progression

- 28 Where a learner is identified as needing progression within the Adult Basic Skills qualifications this will be funded. This is the first time progression has been funded through Train to Gain and has been made available in response to provider feedback.
- 29 The LSC will fund progression from entry level 1 up to and including level 2, across all 3 subjects, both target bearing and non target bearing.
- 30 Employers should be encouraged to ensure their employees at least reach the functional literacy (level 1) and numeracy (entry level 3) levels. The LSC will monitor the achievements at these functional levels throughout the year. However, its also important to be aspirational for our learners and encourage progression on to higher level qualifications.

Funding

- 31 Adult Basic Skills literacy and numeracy qualifications are fully funded - entry level will be funded at the same rate as levels 1 and 2. Each entry level is eligible for the full funding amount. They are funded at a rate of £772 (rounded) in 2008/09. Calculated using the DLF formula of:
- $$0.18 \text{ (SLN)} \times 1.5 \text{ (PWF)} \times 2,775 \text{ (£/SLN)} \times 1.03 \text{ (TtG Uplift)} = \text{£}771.73$$
- 32 Skills for Life ESOL is partially subsidised with the expectation that the employer will make a contribution of up to 42.5% in 2008/09, increasing to 47.5% in 2009/10. In 2008/09 they are funded at the rate of £444 with an expected contribution of £328 making total funding £772.
- 33 ESOL for Work qualifications will be available across all regions. They are partially subsidised, with the expectation that the employer makes a contribution of up to 42.5% in 2008/09, increasing to 47.5% in 2009/10. In 2008/09 they are funded at a rate of £547 with an expected contribution of £405 making total funding £952.

Section Two: answers to frequently asked questions

34 What is the difference between Skills for Life and Basic Skills qualifications?

- Skills for Life is the overall term used to describe the qualifications that meet the aims of the Government's strategy. These are Adult Basic Skills (Certificate in Adult Literacy, Certificate in Adult Numeracy and Certificate in English for Speakers of Other Languages Skills for Life); GCSEs (in English and Maths); and Key skills (in Application of Number and in Communication). Basic Skills qualifications are a subset of Skills for Life provision, and are the only qualifications fundable through Train to Gain.

35 Why does Train to Gain only fund Adult Basic Skill qualifications and not GCSE or Key Skills?

- Many adults with literacy and numeracy needs will not have succeeded at school where they would have been working towards obtaining a GCSE/O'level or Key Skill. The adult basic skills qualifications were developed specifically for adults to provide a different type of curriculum and give learners functional literacy and numeracy skills.

36 How have the funding levels for Adult Basic Skills been set?

- In order to fund basic skills at a comparable level to those through learner responsive, the average guided learning hours (glh) across all levels and all subjects, stated by providers on the ILR was taken and the corresponding loadbanded funding rate applied. The average glh was 80 which through the Demand Led Funding formula gives a funding value of £772.

37 Why is ESOL for Work funded at a higher level than Skills for Life ESOL?

- ESOL for Work is a very new qualification and therefore funding is based on the listed rate, which is based on the number of guided learning hours stated by QCA, which is 150 glhs. Funding for Adult Basic Skills qualifications is based on actual delivery and the average guided learning hours (glh), across all levels and all subjects, stated by providers on the ILR, which is 80 glh. Therefore, because of the larger number of glhs stated by QCA, despite not having the Adult Basic Skills higher weighting, this qualification attracts greater funding than Skills for Life ESOL.

38 Will lower level ESOL for Work qualifications be developed?

- QCA is currently reviewing the need for developing entry level 2 ESOL for Work qualifications. If they decide this level should be developed, then it is likely to be available in 2009/10.

39 Can progression be funded for those needing provision higher than the functional levels?

- Where required progression is fundable at all levels, from entry level 1 up to and including level 2. For example, if a learner has achieved their numeracy entry level 3 and needs to progress to numeracy level 1, and indeed beyond this to level 2, this is fundable through Train to Gain. Likewise, if a learner achieves their literacy level 1 they can be funded to go on to the literacy level 2 qualification through Train to Gain. Supporting learners' progression should always be considered in the delivery of learning.

40 Can progression be funded for a learner below the functional levels?

- Yes. A learner achieving entry level 1 can go on and be funded at entry level 2, at entry level 3 and so on. Full funding can be claimed for each level. It is the government's intention that learners are encouraged to progress to at least the Leitch thresholds.

41 Can the same learner be funded for both literacy/ESOL and numeracy?

- Yes. A learner can be funded, through Train to Gain for both numeracy qualifications and literacy/ESOL qualifications, either at the same time or after each other. We do not expect a learner to follow both literacy and ESOL as the curriculum is broadly the same.

42 Will each step of entry level (entry level 1, 2 and 3) receive full funding?

- Yes, each entry level will be funded as a distinct level. For example, in 2008/09 achievement at entry level 1 numeracy will attract funding of £772, if the learner then continues to entry level 2, achievement will attract a further £772 and so on. Each level building new skills to those acquired at the former level.

43 Can the piloted Functional Skills qualifications be delivered through Train to Gain?

- Currently no, although this is being discussed as there is keenness to ensure the adult functional skills pilots are trialled with as many different providers and funding streams as possible. Findings from the current pilot will inform decisions, including whether the pilot could be extended into Train to Gain, and we will update if this changes.

44 What does 'target-bearing' mean?

- 'Target bearing' and 'non target bearing' are terms regularly used in reference to those qualifications that directly count to target and those that don't count towards the Leitch PSA target.
- The LSC will continue to report against the original 2010 target to DIUS, until 2010, but as this has already been reached, we are now working towards the Leitch targets. Therefore the term 'target bearing' refers to those achievements that directly count towards Leitch, that is Literacy and ESOL level 1 and numeracy entry level 3.
- In addition to this there are a proportion of learners known as 'jumpers', those who are assessed below the functional levels but who enrol on to a higher level. These 'jumpers' who have passed the functional level for the first time and achieved a higher level Skills for Life qualification will also count towards the Leitch target.

45 If a learner has achieved a Maths GCSE or O'Level in the past, can they still be funded for a basic skills numeracy qualification through Train to Gain?

- Yes. Regardless of prior qualifications a learner can be funded to follow a basic skills numeracy qualification, **where they have an identified need**. However, often someone who has already achieved at this level or higher in the past, may be better served by 'brush up' type provision rather than a full basic skills qualification. Providers should ensure learners are offered and enrolled on the most appropriate provision to meet the learners' needs.

46 Is there a 6 hours minimum delivery rule for Adult Basic Skills?

- No. However, providers must be mindful of paragraph 527 of the Funding Guidance 2008/09 (see link below) regarding learner hours. The LSC ceased to fund very short Skills for Life courses, 3 and 6 guided learning hours (glhs) and it is the expectation that delivery of an approved qualification that moves learners up a level will require more than 6 glhs. However, a provider may deliver a whole nationally approved Skills for life qualification in less than 9 hours where they can provide evidence that a) learners have identified Skills for Life needs and b) the provision will meet those needs and help the learner to move up a level in under 9glhs. The general rule applies that following assessment learners should be enrolled onto learning aims that reflect their needs, not their existing level of ability.

Section Three: other documents

For further reading a number of recommended documents are listed below with a brief description of what they cover.

Train to Gain Additional Flexibilities 2008/09. A guide for colleges and training providers: version 3

<http://readingroom.lsc.gov.uk/lsc/National/nat-additionalflexibilitiesguidance-jul08.pdf>

- Published in August 2008, this sets out the recent flexibilities agreed with the Department of Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS). It covers all the flexibilities captured in this fact sheet along with many other changes introduced to other curriculum areas.

Train to Gain changes - letter to all colleges and training providers

<http://readingroom.lsc.gov.uk/lsc/National/nat-traintogainchangesletterproviders19thjune-jun08.pdf>

- The precursor to the Additional Flexibilities document, this letter built on 'A plan for growth' and stated the first agreed flexibilities with DIUS in June 2008.

A Plan for Growth

http://readingroom.lsc.gov.uk/Lsc/National/nat-ttg-plan_for_growth.pdf

- Following the Comprehensive Spending Review in 2007/08 this joint DIUS/LSC document sets out detailed actions and investment needed to provide employers and individuals with the skills they need. It includes the earliest flexibilities around Skills for Life, which are also covered in this fact sheet.

Funding Documentation

The LSC has published a series of booklets covering funding and ILR guidance. The full suite is available at:

http://www.lsc.gov.uk/providers/funding-policy/legacy-documents/Furthereducation/Further_Education_Funding_Policy_Documents_2008-09.htm

Below we have listed links to the 4 funding booklets:

LSC Funding Guidance 2008/09 – Funding Principles, Rules and Regulations. Version 2 – 23 June 08

<http://www.lsc.gov.uk/publications/latestdocuments/Detail.htm?id=a43e6994-dc13-4ee9-80db-06ba2d176357>

- Replacing the LSC's *Funding Guidance for Further Education 2007/08*, this document sets out the funding rules for all LSC provision, including Skills for Life.

LSC Funding Guidance 2008/09 – Learner Eligibility Guidance

<http://www.lsc.gov.uk/publications/latestdocuments/Detail.htm?id=c48bab1c-9f55-42b8-bba2-5ce86ebb9dafLSC>

- Sets out the authoritative guidance for learner eligibility to LSC funded provision in 2008/09, including Skills for Life.

LSC Funding Guidance 2008/09 – Funding Formula for 2008/09

http://readingroom.lsc.gov.uk/lsc/National/LSC-P-NAT-080081_FundingFormula.pdf

- A technical reference document setting out the Demand Led Funding formula principles.

LSC Funding Guidance 2008/09 – Funding Rates for 2008/09

http://readingroom.lsc.gov.uk/lsc/National/TtG_Rates_Equivalent_0809.pdf

- Single paged document setting out the Funding Rates in Train to Gain for 2008/09.

Reviewed by



FE Communications Gateway Panel

This document has been previewed by the FE Communications Gateway Panel, an independent group of FE practitioners working to improve and streamline communications between DIUS, DCSF, LSC and FE providers.

The Panel advises Government and its agencies on the best way to communicate with people working in the FE system. It also checks that individual publications are clear, timely, targeted and get the message across effectively.

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