

# Better basic skills: better business

A guide for learning providers





**L&W** LEARNING AND  
WORK INSTITUTE

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**Forum for Adult Learning NI**

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# About this guide

Adult education, learning and skills providers are familiar with the longstanding national challenge of poor adult basic skills, and many providers use their Adult Education Budget funding to offer English and maths classes for adults. In recent years, there has been a focus on supporting unemployed adults to achieve the good literacy and numeracy skills which employers expect. However, with high rates of employment, many adults with basic literacy and/or numeracy needs are already in work. Participation rates in literacy and numeracy classes are falling. The workplace offers a valuable, yet under-exploited, setting in which these skills needs can be addressed.

## Who is this guide for?

This guide aims to help providers work more effectively in partnership with employers, making use of the Adult Education Budget to develop basic skills provision for people in work. It will help providers make the business case to employers on the of supporting basic skills training for their employees. It contains information, tips and guidance to help basic skills providers who are new to working with employers. It is also relevant for providers already working with employers and looking for further guidance and examples of effective practice.

## How was the guide developed?

This guide has been developed by Learning and Work Institute following extensive research and sector engagement. These activities included a review of research evidence on workplace

basic skills provision, interviews with a range of providers and employers, and workshops with providers and experts to develop and also review the content.

## How should this guide be used?

Each section provides guidance on key issues in workplace basic skills, and these can be consulted as required. The information in the guide could be used in a number of ways, for example:

- When responding to a request by an employer for basic skills training in the workplace
- To inform internal planning and development of employer engagement and business development
- As part of internal professional learning and development for staff who may be involved in promoting or delivering basic skills provision for employers



# What are basic skills?

Providers are, of course, familiar with the national challenge of poor basic skills, and already run provision to help adults develop the skills they need for life and for work. This section looks specifically at the issues in relation to basic skills for people in work.

## What are basic skills?

Basic skills are the ability to read, write and speak in English and use maths in everyday life. Skills needed to use basic technology such as phones, laptops, tablets and computers to carry out a range of everyday activities are increasingly considered as basic skills, and are especially relevant at work.

The problem of low basic skills is widespread in England and an estimated 9 million adults of working age have low literacy or numeracy skills or both (more than a quarter of adults aged 16-65). These 9 million people struggle with day to day tasks at home and at work. They might, for example, struggle to estimate how much petrol is left in the petrol tank from a sight of the gauge, or not be able to fully understand instructions on a bottle of aspirin.<sup>1</sup> In addition, an estimated 5.4 million of working adults are currently without basic digital skills yet the government estimates that 90% of all jobs will require some element of digital skills within 20 years.<sup>2</sup>

People with low basic skills are a diverse group. More than 5 million adults with low levels of English and maths are in work, many have other qualifications and around one in ten of all university students in England have numeracy or literacy levels below level 2.<sup>3</sup>

11.7 million people in the UK are estimated to be without the digital skills needed for everyday life.<sup>4</sup> That includes being unable to undertake basic activities such as turning on a device, connecting to Wi-Fi and opening an app, or lacking the ability to use the Internet to its full advantage.

## Basic skills in the workplace

Without confidence in basic English, maths and digital skills, individuals struggle with day to day tasks at work. They may be reluctant to adapt to new ways of working, especially if this involves training courses that assume confidence in basic skills. They may be held back from applying for promotional opportunities they may otherwise be suited to. The problem can be unseen as workers adopt coping strategies such as relying on colleagues, avoiding tasks or taking longer than usual to check and re-check emails, reports or data.

*"In the modern workplace limitations to employees' numeracy and literacy are masked by the use of ICT interventions, such as software packages that help with account management, and templates for written correspondence."*

1 Kuczera, M, Field, S. and Windisch, H.C. (2016), Building Skills for All: A Review of England. Policy Insights From the Survey Of Adult Skills. Paris: OECD

2 [www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-digital-strategy](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-digital-strategy)

3 Kuczera, M, Field, S. and Windisch, H.C. (2016), Building Skills for All: A Review of England. Policy Insights From the Survey Of Adult Skills. Paris: OECD

When consulted, employers reveal concerns about basic skills, for instance, National Numeracy estimates that 68% of employers are concerned about their employees' ability to sense-check numbers.<sup>5</sup>

Such concerns are an opportunity for providers to discuss the issue of basic skills with employers, and identify ways of working with employers to engage learners in the workplace.





# Funding to support basic skills

The government recognises the issue of poor basic skills and the impact on individuals and the British economy. There is a statutory entitlement to fully funded provision for adults up to and including level 2 in English and maths, providing the Adult Education Budget (AEB) criteria are met.<sup>6</sup> From 1 August 2020, an additional statutory entitlement will fully fund specified digital skills qualifications for adults, aged 19+, with no or low digital skills. This will ensure adults, aged 19 and over, can study for specified qualifications in basic digital skills free of charge to get the skills and capabilities they need to get on in life and work.

The AEB aims to engage adults and provide the skills and learning they need to progress into work or equip them for an apprenticeship or other learning. It enables more flexible tailored programmes of learning to be made available, which may or may not require a qualification, to help eligible learners engage in learning, build confidence, and/or enhance their wellbeing.

In August 2019, around half the AEB was devolved to six combined mayoral authority areas and the Greater London authority to support increased flexibility for these combined authorities to decide on learning programmes to meet local needs and priorities alongside legal entitlements.<sup>7</sup> A mixed system is in place as AEB funding in non-devolved areas will continue to be the responsibility of the ESFA.<sup>8</sup> These changes in funding for adult learning open up more opportunities for providers to offer learning for workplace learners, tailored to local commissioners' priorities.

L&W's adult participation survey (2019) found that employer investment in skills in the UK is low compared with other advanced economies; between 2009/10 and 2018/19 government spending on adult learning in England (excluding apprenticeships) fell by 47%. The survey also finds that, 'nearly two out of five (38%) non-learners say that nothing is preventing them from doing so, which potentially indicates that learning is not something they have considered or that they feel would be of value for them'. Raising awareness of this issue with employers and their workforce can therefore help increase participation in learning and reach people in workplaces who urgently need to build their confidence and update their skills.

<sup>6</sup> [www.gov.uk/government/publications/qualifications-getting-approval-for-funding/legal-entitlements-and-qualification-eligibility-principles-within-in-the-adult-education-budget](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/qualifications-getting-approval-for-funding/legal-entitlements-and-qualification-eligibility-principles-within-in-the-adult-education-budget)

<sup>7</sup> [www.gov.uk/guidance/adult-education-budget-aeb-devolution](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/adult-education-budget-aeb-devolution)

<sup>8</sup> [www.gov.uk/government/publications/adult-education-budget-aeb-funding-rules-2019-to-2020](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/adult-education-budget-aeb-funding-rules-2019-to-2020)

# 4

# The benefits for business

There is a strong case for employers to invest in basic skills. British industry is dynamic – changing as a result of Brexit, digital growth and automation. Workers increasingly need to adapt to take on board new information and ways of working, but many people lack the confidence in their basic skills to keep pace. The traditional concept of a 'job for life' has diminished and been replaced by a 'life of jobs'. As a result, there is a growing need for people to upskill and retrain throughout their working lives in response to economic and technological changes.

"Unless we increase the proportion of our workforce who seek upskilling opportunities, which are proven to boost their economic resilience and productivity, the risk of mass unemployment is more severe. There are approximately 10 million jobs at risk of being lost due to automation. There are 1.4 million unemployed people in the UK and approximately 4.6 million people who are both low-skilled and low-paid. Evidence produced by the Social Mobility Commission shows that it is low-skilled workers who are least likely to take up training opportunities despite being most at risk of redundancy."

McKnight, A et al. Low pay and in-work poverty: preventative measures and preventative approaches Evidence Review. European Commission. May 2016

According to L&W's annual participation survey report (2019), the benefits of learning for individuals are wide ranging and include improvements in subject knowledge and the skills needed for current jobs; improvements in self-confidence; enjoyment from learning more; and feeling more confident at work as a result. It finds that learning has helped people to be more productive at work or to produce work of a higher quality. Other work-related benefits include greater job security and satisfaction, securing a new job or promotion, and improving working relationships

**The British Army** delivers English and maths to all soldiers who join the Army without qualifications through the service's 10 Army Education Centres. Recruits to the army must have a minimum of Functional Skills Entry Level 2 in English and maths

However, adults are often reluctant to admit difficulties and to ask for help. They may have a range of barriers that prevent engagement with learning, including a lack of awareness, not knowing where to go and who to talk to. In the workplace, people may also worry about admitting to poor basic skills and adopt coping strategies rather than ask for help because of the fear of losing their jobs, not being promoted or being seen as ineffective by colleagues and managers. Many people, from store managers to delivery drivers, do not see a need to learn new skills, despite the opportunities they afford. According to OECD analysis, this lack of awareness about the need for training is particularly acute among workers in occupations that are very likely to experience large changes as a result of digitalisation.<sup>9</sup>

To become motivated to invest in upskilling, individuals and businesses need to recognise the benefits of learning the skills to adapt for digitalisation, and understand the risks of holding back.<sup>10</sup> Poor basic skills impact on business and there are significant benefits for employers to invest in their workforce and ensure staff have the confidence to do their jobs efficiently and effectively.

Benefits to business of improving employees' basic skills and include:

- ✓ improve compliance with regulations
- ✓ improve performance and productivity
- ✓ improve efficiency
- ✓ improve accuracy and quality
- ✓ increase profits
- ✓ improve communication
- ✓ develop good customer relations
- ✓ improve recruitment
- ✓ improve staff morale
- ✓ retain staff
- ✓ reduce wastage
- ✓ reduce errors and the risk of reputational damage
- ✓ reduce the risk of online security issues.



<sup>9</sup> OECD (2019) Building Skills for All in England: Enhancing the Basic Skills of People in Work

<sup>10</sup> Orlick, J (2018) Delivering digital skills: A guide to preparing the workforce for an inclusive digital economy. Readie and Nesta report



# Getting started

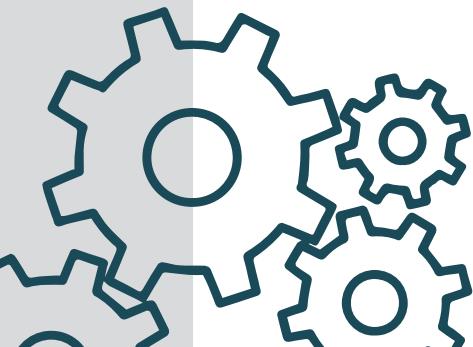
Providers can engage learners in the workplace through a variety of positive and innovative activities that recognise the different motivation of adults and the varying needs of employers. Recognising the issue of basic skills in the organisation's training and development strategy will increase its impact, but support for basic skills can also be informal and voluntary.



**Work out a delivery model that suits employers and employees.** Engage with leaders and managers from all levels to secure their commitment and work out a model of learning that fits with the business' needs. Consider employees and their work/life balance. For instance, if employers want classes after work, employees may be too tired to learn or have other domestic responsibilities that prevent them from getting involved.

**Motivate people from all parts of the organisation to get involved.** Sometimes poor basic skills can be a hidden problem as people develop coping strategies; the associated stigma can also deter employees from signing up for training. It's important to break down these sorts of barriers and build provision through positive messaging and be careful not to make assumptions based on someone's job role. You can try informal approaches such as open days, tasters, roadshows, onsite surgeries, newsletters and posters. Recruiting ambassadors and working with union learning reps can help champion the value of learning and encourage more reluctant learners to participate.

**Embed basic skills in the employer's existing systems for employee development.** Including basic skills as part of the organisation's training and development plans can reduce any stigma and ensure training is pitched at the right level and is therefore more effective. Consider a learning needs analysis to gather information on current skill levels and areas for development in one department or throughout the organisation.



**Make a confidentiality agreement.** Your independence from the employer can alleviate any fears that some employees may have about losing their jobs or admitting to difficulties with basic skills to a manager or employer. It's also important for people to know that any details of their individual progress or information shared with a teacher will not be divulged to their employer.

**Offer initial assessment free of charge.** This can help you find out about learners, their job-roles, the employer's facilities and the support available. Although providers will need to resource the initial assessment, offering it free of charge may be useful to persuade employers to set up courses'

**Adapt your initial and diagnostic assessment process** to suit the employer's facilities and the requirements of the employees. For example, if you use online tools such as BKSb or Skills Forward, this may not be possible if computers are not available. Make sure you have a good mix of assessment tasks and discussion to help you plan a programme to allow for individual requirements – including specific additional support needs. Where possible, assessments should be tailored for the workplace using authentic tasks – for example, completing a form or writing an email. You can use the assessment process to build confidence, find out learners' expectations and their motivation to learn.



"We also interview everybody so we understand more holistically what people's backgrounds are, what learning they've already done, what their ambition is and where they want to get to and then we feed all that back to the employer so that they've got a better understanding of their own workforce in terms of their skills development."

(Provider)

Getting assessment right is critical at all stages of the learning journey as it continues to inform planning and learning. The Education and Training Foundation has produced effective practice guidelines for assessment and tracking in maths and English.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>11</sup> [www.et-foundation.co.uk/supporting/support-practitioners/mathss-and-english/effective-practice-guidelines/](http://www.et-foundation.co.uk/supporting/support-practitioners/mathss-and-english/effective-practice-guidelines/)



# 6

# Adopt a flexible approach

Basic skills provision may start in one area of the organisation but lead to working with a different group of employees in another area of the business. Or it can begin with focusing on digital skills, which are often more apparent, and can lead to other courses to support English and/or maths.



"You ask that particular employer first of all who's interested in doing training, what their specific job roles are and what that entails within their roles, what training does that business require and what skills gaps do they have? You can check their level of education and then from there you can kind of build a case and be able to distinguish and determine what that employer needs and then from there see what training they require then, obviously, that will help to boost the confidence of the employer and also the staff that they have."

(Provider)

You can identify training needs at employee, departmental or organisational level. To plan in the short, medium and long term, you can use the information gathered from initial assessment and/or a Training Needs Analysis to inform the type and level of training required to address existing issues and help tailor programmes to organisational objectives.



"The haulage company, at the beginning when we first started, a lot of their non-English speaking drivers were getting lost. So, we needed to work with them to improve their basic English skills, but also, we ended up working with those who are staffing the radio, to improve their language skills and communicating with the drivers as well."

(Provider)

A joint steering committee can facilitate everyone to work together and develop the best ways to encourage engagement, retention and achievement. This approach also supports sustainability if key individuals move on. It may be appropriate to evaluate workplace activities separately to mainstream provision as learner feedback may be quite different for off-site

workplace learning. You can use observations, interviews and questionnaires to evaluate impact and anticipate future shortfalls or problems. Feedback from supervisors and middle managers will be useful to gather different perspectives on what works well and what needs to be refined, developed or changed.





# Co-create a work-based curriculum for basic skills

Any model of learning must fit with business needs so both parties must recognise each other's requirements and constraints. It's important to consider all aspects of delivery and how it can best support employees but also fit into the working practices of the employer.

"It's always been a challenge to find a suitable time slot to fit with an employer and the learners. This can be different in different sectors, as well as for different sizes of employer. For example, in domiciliary care the middle of the day is usually suitable; everyone in the team is busy doing home visits in the mornings, to get people up and out of bed and then there'll be more home visits later on to prepare meals and settle people for the night."

(Provider)

It can help to work out a learning agreement that includes details of the partnership in terms of venue, resources, staffing and how employees will be recruited and what records will be kept and who has access. Agree whether time to learn will be fully or partly in paid work time and offer good initial planning and consultancy support. It may be possible to negotiate a financial contribution if the employer's needs require additional curriculum development work to provide a bespoke offer. Adult Education Budget funding can be used to support delivery, but providers will need to consider how any extra development time can be resourced.

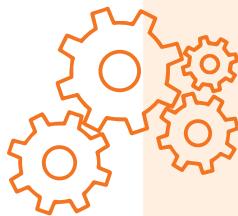
Tailoring provision to meet employers' needs will be critical to success but this does not necessarily require every course to be written from scratch. A generic scheme of learning can be adapted to include the specific skills that employers and employees want included. You can design a curriculum that incorporates generic employability skills such as teamwork, problem-solving, resilience and the ability to work under pressure. These can easily be built into a maths or English curriculum and the subject content for Functional Skills can be adapted for delivery in a range of occupational contexts. For example, 'read and respond to a text' or 'skim and scan for information' can utilise workplace texts. Planning, punctuation and proof-reading are all skills that can be contextualised for generic and specific workplaces. Learning skills to handle information and data can utilise tables, diagrams, charts and graphs from the workplace.

"We'll meet an employer, who will run a series of care homes, or childcare places, or they'll be part of a multi-academy trust, and therefore we will work within that group of organisations to deliver a range of things, including basic skills. So, we'll put together a package of things that they want."

(Provider)



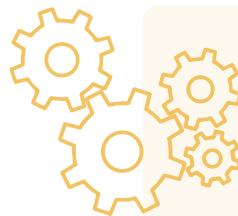
# 8 Tips for success



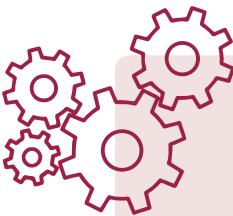
**Reach out to the businesses in your community and improve your networks.** Utilise existing business networks such as LEPs and Chambers of Commerce to make links and build relationships with local employers. Hold community engagement activities such as business breakfasts, employer awards, open days and celebrations so that employers and their representative organisations can get to know your provision and you can get an insight into needs of employers in your locality. Invite employers to speak to and/or mentor learners, join relevant meetings, become more involved in any vocational or employability provision and support with governance.



**Adopt a co-ordinated, consistent approach** to utilise existing relationships and avoid duplication or confusion between different departments. Keep a record of feedback from employers so that any contact can be shared with different teams across your organisation. This can also help with cross-selling opportunities to employers who may have initially enquired about apprenticeships but a skills scan may show the business has other needs. An account manager can be an effective way to provide a single point of contact for the employer to liaise with.



**Promote workforce basic skills as good for business** – productivity and profit. Identifying employer motivation is key so that marketing basic skills is in line with this and promotes the value of upskilling. Address employer assumptions that staff are more likely to switch jobs once having taken part in training – in contrast, the evidence suggests that training staff promotes better staff retention. Set out the benefits of improved basic skills (see section 4).<sup>12</sup>

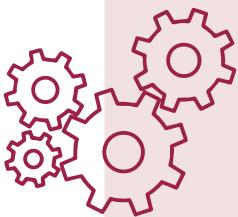


**Listen to what employers want and build relationships with employers over time.** Statistics suggest there will be employees with low levels of basic skills in most workplaces, but employers may feel they have robust recruitment processes to prevent this and do not perceive any basic skills issues. Start by asking about the problems they need help solving and listen to what the employer says they want, and then shape delivery to meet their availability and their company priorities. You can build trust by starting in more obvious domains such as digital if new online systems have been adopted, or language needs for employees from overseas, and expand the curriculum over time.

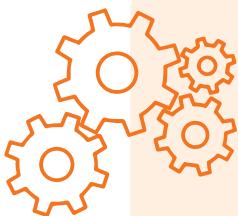
<sup>12</sup> NDRC (2003) *The benefits to employers of raising workforce basic skills levels: a review of the literature*.



**Motivate and raise the aspirations of workplace learners** with an emphasis on building confidence and self-esteem. Incorporate signposting to higher level learning to encourage lifelong learning and progression. Recognise and celebrate success through certificates, award ceremonies, learner of the month, articles in company newsletters and the appraisal/review process.



**Embed provision into existing workplace systems, processes and staff development.** Integrating basic skills means this learning is more likely to be accepted by the workforce and avoids stigma or side-lining of provision. This should also help to raise the profile of basic skills training as part and parcel of wider staff development. Gain an understanding of working patterns such as shift work, part-time workers and those who work off-site. Prospective learners also need to know what they're signing up to, so be clear about course requirements and the commitment expected from learners.



**Manage expectations and agree both employer and employee contributions.** Be clear about the national entitlement and provide accurate insight about what you can and can't deliver using the available funding. Consider unit-based awards that match employers' needs and non-regulated provision. Ensure that operational managers and supervisors are engaged in the process so they positively support engagement. Consider the scope for online and blended learning.



**Work with unions and union learning reps** to set up provision or find those in the employer organisation who are keen to develop themselves and others. Then use them to help sell the benefits to their colleagues.



**Work with JCP** to develop basic skills provision for claimants to help their progression into work or their progress in work. In-work conditionality is the term for claimants of Universal Credit – the benefit for people who are out of work, and who are in work but with low earnings – who will be expected to seek to earn the equivalent of at least 35 hours a week on the minimum wage or make efforts to increase their income. This could affect around one million people when it is rolled out. This will provide opportunities for learning providers to set up basic skills courses with JCP work coaches working with claimants who are in work and looking to increase their income.





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# Employer examples

Work with employers to develop a whole organisation approach to improving basic skills so that everyone, at every level, understands the issues and is committed to supporting staff. Providers can offer practical help such as:

- ✓ facilitating the use of authentic workplace texts and graphical information to develop literacy and numeracy skills to help employees transfer learning to their job roles
- ✓ ensuring the workplace has a policy for clear written communication that uses language that is accessible for everyone
- ✓ advising how to support non-native speakers by understanding their particular barriers to learning and communication.

Providers can also support fairness and equality in access to learning. Employers often focus training on those with the highest skill levels and you can help them to adopt a fairer policy to redress this balance. There are 4.6 million people in low-skilled, low paid work who are less likely to take-up training opportunities that will improve their chances to increase their productivity and develop resilience, who may benefit from basic skills provision.

The European Commission states that under-utilisation of skills is widespread in British industry; it has a negative impact on individuals' health and well-being and damages their longer-term employment prospects.<sup>13</sup> It is also wasteful and limits economic growth and prosperity. Improving basic skills in the workplace and helping employers to recognise and untap the skills of their employees can address this issue, leading to higher levels of employee satisfaction and a more productive workplace.

"British workers are less likely to seek adult learning opportunities than international competitors, and British employers have historically underinvested in upskilling and training. The low-skilled and low-paid are much less likely to seek adult learning opportunities. Without reversing this situation, it is likely we will see skills shortage vacancies increase in number, productivity continue to stall, and we risk destabilising the strong employment rate we currently enjoy."

The Future of Work: A vision for the national retraining scheme Part III: Building a workforce for the future. The Centre for Social Justice, 2019

<sup>13</sup> European Commission & ICF (2015) *An in-depth analysis of adult learning policies and their effectiveness in Europe*

Encourage employers to note any changes in staff behaviour such as increased confidence to contribute to meetings, or readiness to take on new tasks, when they are evaluating learning provision and carrying out staff appraisals. Support the organisation to encourage lifelong learning – and the benefits this brings to individuals – through establishing an appropriate

structure for advice and guidance, assessment, support and progression to higher level learning, including opportunities in your own provision. Signpost people to online learning so they can improve their skills in their own time to make greater progress with their learning, but first ensure they have the digital skills and the opportunities to go online.





# Employer examples

## Essex County Council Adult and Community Learning

The business development team and Functional Skills Co-ordinator work together to engage new employers. The Council's Skills Unit maps skills and engages with employers to identify need across the county. This information is shared with Essex ACL's business development team. If new businesses are set up in areas where a need has been identified, or in areas where a need is anticipated, the provider will approach them. This is working particularly well in disadvantaged areas. They also use a 'snowball' approach whereby employers who have already engaged with provision for their apprentices are encouraged to deliver sessions including basic skills, across the organisation to non-apprentice staff.

When an employer approaches the provider, having identified a need among their staff, they will often request that the provider focus the course on this skills gap to enable employees to better perform their role. Essex ACL is then able to tailor the course to the needs of that group and to the specific workplace. This bespoke approach is a key element of the provider offer.

Essex ACL finds that framing provision in terms of how it will enable employees to build on their Continuing Professional Development (CPD), and better perform their role, is an effective approach to employee engagement. 'It's about identifying the job role of the person and seeing where their needs are.' For example, when working with Teaching Assistants, the provider emphasises how it will better enable them to support the children they work with, on a daily basis. They also make sure that potential learners are aware that they will gain a qualification at the end of the course.

Their top tips are:

- Flexible approach to delivery, including blended learning, to meet individuals' learning needs and support learner progression
- Framing provision in terms of how it will help the learner to progress in their specific job role is key to effective engagement of staff
- Proactive approaches to employers and tailored provision to address identified skills gaps/specific learning needs promotes employer engagement with basic skills



## Hounslow Adult and Community Learning

Hounslow Adult and Community Learning has worked with a variety of employers in the borough to deliver Functional Skills in English and maths, primarily in response to individual employer requests from employers or employer partners. They worked with Union learning representatives from a bus company in the area to deliver Functional Skills English and maths using a blended approach of distance learning and face to face tutorials. Union learning representatives worked in different garages across the borough but were released one day a month for union activities.

The provider found that for employers, releasing staff can be one of the most difficult aspects of engaging with workplace learning and '*everyone needs to go a bit beyond what they would normally do, in order for it to actually happen.*' In partnership with six other West London local authority adult and community learning providers and at least two employers from each borough, Hounslow has recently been successful in their bid for the Department for Education's Flexible Learning Fund. The West London Blended Learning Project will work together to develop a platform where each provider can post and share online content and then trial different approaches to blended learning. The aim is for 700 learners to achieve qualifications using a blended approach, through some form of partnership with their employer.

*'I really think that in a borough like Hounslow where a lot of people are doing shift work, low skilled, low paid work, balancing caring responsibilities as well that we will need a more flexible approach to involve employers and a blended learning approach would work best.'*

Their top tips are:

- Close working with the employer to plan the provision
- Commitment from the employer to ensure paid time off for staff to attend learning during their working day is key to maintain the engagement of learners.



## Unison

Unison represents staff delivering public services from within both the public and private sector and is one of the largest trade unions in the UK. Union learning representatives (ULRs) promote learning in the workplace by negotiating with employers and offering support and encouragement to staff to get back into or maintain learning, by celebrating learning achievements and by running non-formal literacy and numeracy schemes. A key element of the ULR role is to develop links and collaborate with both employers and local providers.

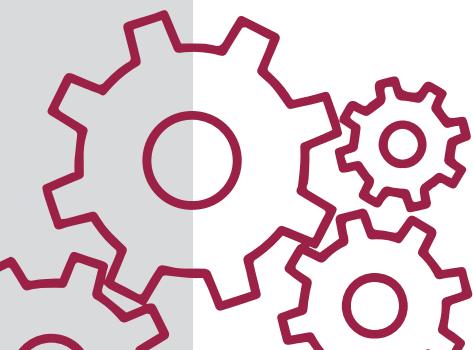
ULRs run a range of informal sessions in workplaces which are often aimed at encouraging employees with low levels of basic skills into learning. They also deliver work-specific support around literacy, numeracy and digital skills. Examples include numeracy workshops for teaching assistants and health workers and literacy workshops (around formal letter-writing techniques) for employees in the energy sector. ULRs also run surgeries to promote learning whereby potential learners can talk to them about learning and how to make that happen.

Their top tips are:

- The ULR is ideally placed to encourage a joined-up approach to workplace learning as they can work closely with employers, providers and employees/potential learners.

This enables every stakeholder to feel that they are being listened to, valued and given opportunities

- Informal group sessions which promote social learning using a light touch approach are very effective for learner engagement. These sessions give potential learners the opportunity to reflect on their own position and think about the steps they would like to take to develop their skills in a relaxed, low pressure environment.



## Employers providing their own basic skills support

**The British Army** delivers English and maths to all soldiers who join the Army without qualifications, through the Service's 10 Army Education Centres. Recruits to the Army must have a minimum of Functional Skills Entry Level 2 in English and maths. The requirement for speaking and listening skills is Level 1. About 40% of new recruits to the Army will not have gained qualifications above Entry Level 3 prior to joining the Army. All soldiers must reach Entry Level 3 English and maths prior to leaving basic training. Recruits undertake Functional Skills training in English and maths alongside their initial 14-week soldier training before moving on to specialist trade training for their chosen job role.

Top tips include:

- Whole organisational approach to delivery of basic skills.
- Mandatory learning and linking achievement in learning to promotions ensures high levels of engagement.

**Jewish Care** is the largest health and social care charity for the UK's Jewish community and provides one to one support in literacy for care staff who do not have a Level 1 or above literacy qualification. This is usually for one hour a week (early mornings or weekends) to fit around shift patterns and the charity uses its own staff and volunteers.

Top tips are:

- The learner-led approach as employees can self-refer
- Context-specific content of lessons
- The non-formal approach allows greater flexibility to design learning content and delivery methods to suit the needs of individual learners.

**Transport for London (TfL)** has its own basic skills team within its Learning and Development Service, the Learning Zone. It offers various Functional Skills English, maths and digital qualifications, depending on the learners' level and their reason for engagement. Sessions last 2 hours and run three times weekly so that employees can attend at suitable times outside of work. Staff can self-refer, be signposted by a union learning rep or by their managers through Performance and Development discussions.

Top tips are:

- Flexible provision that suits varying shift patterns.
- Formal and informal opportunities for staff to improve basic skills.

For more details go to: [www.learningandwork.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/WBS-Case-Studies.pdf](http://www.learningandwork.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/WBS-Case-Studies.pdf)





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