

Supporting progression for learners working at Entry Level, including those working at Entry 1 and Entry 2

The approach to this study has taken three forms:

- 1 A review of key studies on progression, including those that emerged from a wider adult education context such as *Catching Confidence*, Eldred, Dutton, Snowden and Ward NIACE (2005) and in the NRDC reports and Effective Practice Studies.
- 2 A review of a regional North East Task Force report: *Supporting Progression: Good Practice and Critical Success Factors in Supporting Progression from informal or non-accredited first steps learning to more formal training with access to Skills for Life qualifications*, collated by the NIACE Regional (North-East and Yorkshire and Humberside) Coordinator for Skills for Life, Jan Novitsky, which explores a range of practical strategies in place for providers in the North-East and Yorkshire and Humberside to support learner progression.
- 3 Specific interviews leading to case studies on the strategies that organisations currently use. Newcastle, Liverpool Community and Park Lane colleges have large cohorts of Entry Level learners and have provided us with detailed interviews for case studies. Other providers providing case studies are the Northern Literacy Trust, Yeovil College and Barnfield College. The six providers include those that support offenders, providing bridging activity for hard-to-reach learners as well as those in the workplace and in a range of community-based activities.

Much of the background research outlined above had not focused on the specific areas needed for this exercise. Research tended to cover either the nature of progress made or the lack of it in specific acquisition of skills such as reading, as in the NRDC studies, or on the movement from unaccredited to accredited learning. It also included consideration of the key strategies used in RARPA. Another area of well-documented research has been the nature of the disadvantage for adults with skills levels at the lower end of Entry Level, previously discussed in the background research report on Stop 1 of the Teacher Route and in our response to the NRDC.

The aim of our research is to gather strategies and materials in use to track and encourage progression for learners working at Entry 1 and Entry 2. The relative absence of developed strategies for this was highlighted by the Adult Learning Inspectorate in the 2005 annual report of the chief inspector; in commenting on how NRDC:

'... has shown that real disadvantage is concentrated among those whose capabilities are at or below Entry Level 2. There appears to be a case for concentrating future efforts on this relatively small group of acutely disadvantaged people, offering potential for a more precise targeted approach, and below the level at which most of those who have benefited from the programme so far are working.'

The North East Regional Task Force study – *Supporting Progression* – identifies the need for clear ladders of progression for learners, and focused again on the chief inspector’s report for the year 2004/05 on adult and community learning:

‘There continue to be few coherent learning programmes that encourage progression . . . progression rates are poorly connected and unclear.’ (p. 5)

A summary of strategies and materials in use

The *Catching Confidence* study explored the development and use of visual, interactive tools to capture changes in confidence in a range of different environments. It explored the relationship of growth of feelings of self-worth and self-assurance with actual progress.

The North East Regional Task Force study – *Supporting Progression* – provided a valuable overview of elements of practice across a range of projects and providers for this purpose.

The working group that produced the report identified a series of ‘critical success factors’, taking into account available qualitative research, the ALI good practice database and views of practitioners in the field:

- key individuals who motivate, advise and enthuse learners to progress (e.g. union learning reps, learning champions, family members, tutorial supporters and IAG advisers)
- good initial and ongoing information, advice and guidance
- curriculum design and models that acknowledge adults’ starting points and support needs, including embedded Skills for Life approaches
- pedagogy that develops independent learning and an enjoyment in learning, and responds to identified needs and interests
- recognising and recording progress and achievement (RARPA)
- entitlements to literacy, language and numeracy support and qualifications
- support mechanisms that help people overcome obstacles, such as providing childcare, help with travel and finances
- partnership planning of appropriate pathways, with Skills for Life a clear element of progression pathways
- celebration of achievement and ready availability of case studies
- incentives.

(Taken from *Supporting Progression*, June 2006, p. 6)

A checklist was developed as part of this study. Some of the good practice criteria identified there might seem to have particular value in supporting progression at Entry Level. For instance:

- Do tutors have access to suitable materials about progression?
- Do learners have access to case studies of learners who have made progress?
- Do learners have access to transitional support when crossing courses or providers?
- Do learners have access to post-exit support?
- Are there any data-sharing arrangements between providers to document and provide feedback on progression?

Other factors identified as encouraging progression included **the use of IAG or Connexions staff as part of exit or progression interviews**. This strategy is commented on in the Newcastle and other case studies that follow later in this summary.

Group visits to new sites, organisations and programmes used as **bridging activities** were regarded as valuable. **'Taster' activities** tended to be used most frequently for learners moving into programmes where the development of their literacy and numeracy skills would take place within other vocational, pre-vocational or adult education activities.

The *Supporting Progression* study highlights the practice by some colleges of holding **progression days** at the end of blocks of teaching so that learners can discuss and are shown a range of possibilities. Lewisham College has developed **progression pathways**. The college uses the Learning Journey metaphor, with the college seen as a gateway, 'not a destination' (*Supporting Progression*, p. 12). As part of the North East Task Force study, certain materials to support teachers to help learners' progress were devised and are attached as appendices to this summary. These were developed using the guidance of Northumbria University. The materials include a 'What next?' generic leaflet and the Learning Line, identifying key points in the learner's process and experience. The Learning Journey metaphor developed through the LSDA study was adopted by a number of providers where learners are encouraged to discuss their progress and changing perceptions using the language of a journey.

Encouraging independence in learning has been identified by a number of studies, and the ownership of learning is enshrined in guidance on Skills for Life good practice and interactive inspection guides. The North East Task Force group produced a 'Top tips for supporting independent learning'. Although applicable to all learning, this provides a useful framework for teachers to plan to build specific strategies into their teaching and learning in literacy and numeracy.

A strategy in use, and identified as successful in some areas, was the process of **developing pathways between providers** as well as within organisations. Sheffield and Leicestershire learning partnerships had carried out some work that identified the different stages of programmes on offer in a variety of organisations and made this information available through a database and, in the case of Sheffield, a leaflet.

Most important of all, of course, and a crucial factor in encouraging progression, is the nature of the teaching and learning. **Small, meaningful chunks of learning, understood and shared with the learner** were seen as an important element in retaining and motivating learners. The Bynner and Parsons study highlights the need for learning to be connected closely to the wider concerns and social, economic and personal context of the learner.

Celebrating success by a variety of methods including case studies, newsletters, local press and celebratory events was identified as a powerful tool in building self-esteem and motivation for learners.

The **value of accreditation** did not feature highly at this level and is an area requiring further exploration.

Collecting current case studies

In order to establish in more depth how this range of materials and strategies are used in Skills for Life provision, and to gain a picture of the nature and extent of existing methods for tracking learner progress, a checklist has been devised to structure interviews with case study organisations:

Checklist for case study interviews on Entry 1/Entry 2 progression strategies and materials

Questions focusing on the following topics:

- Background/description of the provision
 - 1 The proportion and estimated numbers of the Skills for Life cohort working at Entry 1 and Entry 2 – proportions at each level compared to Entry 3 and Levels 1 and 2
 - 2 The split between literacy and numeracy
 - 3 Proportion of ESOL provision at Entry 1/Entry 2 (not because we are planning to address ESOL but just to inform the research)
 - 4 The models of delivery – workshop flexible enrolment – defined start and finish – groups for specific purposes e.g. offenders, E2E, etc.
 - 5 The range of levels in the cohort in which learners working at Entry 1 and Entry 2 are taught
 - 6 The length of time they have been in provision
 - 7 Typical attendance patterns
 - 8 The qualifications offered at Entry 1 and Entry 2
 - 9 Any comparisons between progression to Entry 3 of those who have taken Entry 2 qualifications and those who have not
 - 10 Numbers and/or percentage of those progressing Entry 1 to Entry 2 and Entry 2 to Entry 3 in Skills for Life and to other forms of learning.

- Materials and strategies to encourage progression
 - 1 Methods in use for tracking progress of learning made over an agreed period (paper, electronic, etc.)
 - 2 Use of any of the following, with details/examples:
 - Identifying longer-term goals as part of induction
 - Planning for progression with learner early in the programme
 - End of programme progress interviews
 - Bridging activities – visits, talks, buddies from a higher/different programme
 - Celebratory event – awards event
 - Newsletter
 - Student writing display
 - Photos, other visual images
 - Learner case studies
 - Record of achievement
 - Any others?
 - 3 Use of the kind of activities reflected in the Learning Journey metaphor (LSDA study 2002)
 - Group discussions on the Learning Journey

- Cartoons, pictures, etc.
 - What happens next? Sheets containing ideas of possible progression
 - Time line activities linked to aims
 - Tasters of qualifications
- 4 Next step provision and activities
 - Childcare, travel costs, support staff working alongside vocational or adult education staff
 - Other issues?
 - 5 Open questions to establish what the provider feels are the main factors that encourage progression and what they see as barriers to progression.

In order to achieve both range and depth of findings, six case studies have been collected.

1 Liverpool Community College

Background

The college offers provision on five main sites and fourteen community DISCs (drop in study centres). They have a total target of 4,000 enrolments across literacy and numeracy.

An estimated 60% of learners are working at Entry 3 and Level 1; 10% of literacy learners are working between Entry 1 and Entry 2; 20% of numeracy learners are working between Entry 1 and Entry 2. ESOL learners are managed by separate curriculum managers and figures for these learners were not available.

Each main centre of the college specialises in different vocational areas; learners attending these centres are usually in the 16–19 cohort. They are often being supported in the underpinning skills for a specific vocational course e.g. catering, hairdressing or construction. They may attend provision as a group such as an Entry Level retail course. If numbers are viable, groups will be at individual curriculum levels but more often are a mix of two levels e.g. Entry 1 and 2. There is some availability for roll-on, roll-off enrolment, but in the main, start and end dates reflect vocational course activity.

For 16- to 19-year-olds at Entry 2 and 3, a 'full-time' programme is offered of twelve hours plus, consisting of four hours literacy and numeracy accompanied by options of vocational tasters. It is possible to provide a more intensive literacy and/or numeracy course for those whose skills need more development.

Adults are more likely to attend one of the community DISCs, or the main site that offers business courses. Again discrete groups at a specific level will depend on numbers available at any one time. Learners are encouraged to attend for four hours per week – once for a two-hour group session and a further 'drop in' session to consolidate individual skills development.

Learners have a possible maximum of two years at any one level, working first towards a college certificate, followed by working towards an externally recognised qualification. The progress of individuals is regularly reviewed and appropriate advice and guidance is provided about options for further skills development/maintenance in other areas of the college or externally.

There is a long history within the college of offering external accreditation to all learners. Learners are made aware of these opportunities from advertising at pre-entry, through initial assessment and induction, and ongoing in review, etc.

The college offers City and Guilds qualifications at Entry 1–3 using the assignments option rather than short tasks and portfolio presentation, as managers feel that this offers a more rigorous and manageable assessment process. There is a split of at least 80:20 between City and Guilds and college certification at Entry Level.

All those enrolling below Entry 3 would normally gain external qualifications at lower levels before progressing to Entry 3, so no comparison can be made between progression to Entry 3 of those who have taken an Entry 2 qualification and those who have not. It is recognised that not all learners will necessarily progress from lower entry levels, as other developmental skills might be needed.

Curriculum managers keep detailed records of achievement of all learners on spreadsheets (details of this to follow) to ensure that progression is monitored carefully from year to year – and to stop the recirculation of learners across a very widespread provision. There is an ‘exit’ strategy of advice and guidance for those learners who it is felt have reached a plateau.

Teachers and learners use ILPs to track progress within the academic year, and those who might progress from level to level will be recorded via enrolment on relevant course codes.

The 16–19 cohort takes part in a personal tutorial system that includes two progress reports per year. Skills for Life teachers comment on effort, motivation, aptitude etc, as well as the more ‘informal’ formative assessment that takes place regularly and is logged on ILPs. A range of progression activities is delivered through the tutorial curriculum. There are plans to develop a compulsory PSE curriculum for Entry Level learners from September 2009. This will be made optional for learners at Level 1 and 2.

Learners have access to all the usual support services including crèche, travel costs and support staff. Group learning assistants are provided to support behavioural issues and some double staffing is available.

Key factors that encourage progression are identified as:

- manageable, chunked learning, ensuring underpinning skills are developed
- tutorial support that enables the learner to consider wider options.

2 Newcastle College: Skills booster course

Background

The college has developed a ‘Skills booster’ course for the past two years, for 16- to 19-year-old learners. The target group is applicants for GCSE English/maths, who are initially assessed as working below Level 1. They are offered an intensive twelve-hour course. This is currently made up of four hours of English, maths and IT over two days.

- In 2005/2006, nine learners enrolled in a mixed group.
- In 2006/2007, twenty-six learners enrolled – fourteen in an Entry 3–L1 group and twelve in an Entry 1–3 group. This second group is the focus of the rest of this study.

Generally, 10% of the college provision comprises Entry 1–Entry 2; there has been a substantial reduction of provision offered at this level over the past couple of years ‘in line with DfES requirements’, split roughly between 50% working on literacy and 50% working on numeracy.

Skills booster learners re-enrol each term, and attendance, performance and behaviour are closely monitored by staff to ensure places in the group in the following term. There is the potential for them to attend for the full year. The first term tends to focus on the achievement of the targets identified on the ILP, linked with an emphasis on behaviour management and learning how to learn. There is an opportunity to take qualifications in terms two and three, where these are appropriate.

The 2005/06 cohort had come initially for GCSE English and/or maths prior to referral to the skills booster course, but all learners progressed on to other courses that they felt were more relevant to them. Using Connexions as an important element of progression planning for these learners opened up options they had not previously considered. Staff felt that the distance learners had travelled, and the skills they had developed facilitated this widening of choice.

For this year’s cohort, this group of twelve was split between five learners working at Entry 2 literacy and seven working at Entry 3 literacy. One of these has already achieved Level 1 in literacy, which is the appropriate requirement to join an apprenticeship computer course within college, and he is planning to progress to this.

All the learners attend very regularly and yet only some of the group are entitled to EMA. For both literacy and numeracy, they have a one-hour group activity followed by an hour lunch break and then a further three hours of small group and one-to-one learning as appropriate, with a short break mid-way. Provision is given by a literacy and/or numeracy specialist with the same support worker, who has had Skills for Life training, attending every session to provide continuity. Staff feel that this double staffing supports engagement in learning and provides learners with a more ‘intimate’ or intensive approach to education than previously experienced. Specialist support is also available where appropriate.

No data was available on progression from level to level as this is the first full year of working with learners at this level. All learners have detailed paper-based ILPs, which record initial aims, levels at initial assessment and targets at curriculum focus level. These are informally reviewed regularly on an individual basis. The record of work identifies next steps as well as learner achievement and should be completed by learner and teacher for each session. Because these learners have originally come to college for GCSE English/ maths, longer term goals are initially identified, but staff feel it important to revisit these as skills develop.

Opportunities for encouraging learners to access college student services and consider a range of progression options are built into the course; visits from Connexions Service are planned for spring term. Teachers arrange for students to infill into courses they may want to progress onto, for a

taster session. This group negotiated use of the sports hall during the lunch break independently from their tutors. Staff plan extra-curricula activities such as visits during the year. Learners will take part in the existing celebration of achievement event already established for the department.

There was little opportunity for the display of students' work, etc., given the availability of rooms, but they are encouraged to use external opportunities such as the NIACE writing project.

Due to the newness of the course, no case studies currently exist, and as enrolment is via those wishing to access GCSE, little marketing is needed for this year. There are plans to increase to over fifty learners next year, so the use of case studies may form part of a marketing strategy in the future. Records of achievement are not used as staff feel it important to establish a difference between school and college provision. Staff do not use specific resources to raise progression issues as they consider that this cohort possibly know where they want to go, but are unclear about where they currently are.

When shown examples of possible resources, they were particularly interested in the Learning Line and the 'What next?' paper. They felt that learning journey discussions were possibly not so relevant to this group, given their lack of 'life experience'.

Staff intend to build in more contact with parents to assist them to see progression to GCSE as only one of a number of options.

The initial hour of group activity for both English and maths is seen as very important for developing skills. It is planned to be interactive and fun, using whiteboards etc., encouraging peer support, developing speaking and listening skills, mental maths etc. It provides learners with an opportunity to recognise how they can progress between levels and promotes confidence in a range of areas.

3 Northern Learning Trust

Background

Northern Learning Trust is an independent registered charity. The organisation works with people who would not necessarily consider joining more formal courses, going to where they are, and offering support in very small groups and on a one-to-one basis.

Their aim is to help people achieve the confidence, self-esteem and basic qualifications to move into more formal education. Wherever possible, learning will lead to external accreditation. They currently deliver in Newcastle, Gateshead, Sunderland and Northumberland, with further plans for County Durham, and work with more than 500 individuals each year to improve their basic skills.

Discussion on progression strategies was with Eileen Nichol, a Skills for Life teacher who has been working in the Wansbeck region of Northumberland, and latterly with learners in Newcastle. Statistics on proportion and estimated numbers were not available at the time of discussion but will be provided later.

The provision in Newcastle was split equally in demand for literacy and numeracy, whereas in Wansbeck there was more demand for numeracy. It was felt in Wansbeck that learners wanted 1:1 support in numeracy but could 'cope' in a literacy group. Initial assessments showed that the majority of learners were at Entry 3 in literacy and at Entry 2 in numeracy.

A specific pilot to support parents to understand the Child Trust Fund has been set up. However these workshops are not drawing in lower level learners.

ESOL learners, who have poor speaking and listening skills, are attracted to a group that is run on school premises, has a crèche available and learners are given one-to-one support. The range of levels on the course is Entry 2–L2. Nevertheless, progression from this group to other providers is proving difficult as the crèche support offered is not always replicated in other areas, so learners are reluctant/unable to move on.

The provision in Wansbeck encouraged lower level learners, and some were reported as working towards pre-entry milestones. It was felt that group work was not appropriate and delivery was largely one-to-one. There was a mix of very regular attendees and those whose attendance was more intermittent.

Intensive methods of supporting attendance were used. The teacher interviewed contacted some learners 15 minutes before the session to remind them. This was particularly effective, for instance for a 15-year-old learner, possibly because he had difficulty with reading time – but when contacted he would attend. One 50-year-old employed man progressed from being unable to write his name to Entry 3 over a two-year period. His aim was to be able to cope with work qualifications, such as health and safety and first aid, which he had successfully achieved. However the tutor's perception was that he was not interested in gaining a qualification in literacy or numeracy.

AQA qualifications were offered at Entry 1 and 2, as in the tutor's opinion they provided 'mini-steps' for learners to achieve. Younger learners were particularly interested in achieving certificates, whereas older learners were more intent on attending to cope more effectively with life. The teacher felt that these older learners were concerned about the stigma around lower level qualifications. Some were content to progress through Entry Level and then attend more 'formal' provision in college to achieve Level 1 and 2 qualifications.

Sessions for learners working at lower levels normally lasted one to one and a half hours because work was carried out largely one-to-one and was fairly intensive. There was felt to be no benefit in extending a session further than this, but learners were encouraged to attend two sessions per week if possible.

Materials and strategies to encourage progression

Basic Skills Agency initial assessment and a further diagnostic assessment, where appropriate, is used to inform ILPs. These identify two to three short-term goals that can hopefully be achieved over three to four sessions (e.g. Entry 1 literacy: know the letters of the alphabet, differentiate between vowels and consonants).

These goals are reviewed regularly. The outcome of each short-term goal is recorded as 'emerging, consolidating, achieved'. If met, new goals are set; if not achieved, fresh goals, with a different focus on the same curriculum elements, will be set. They are short and sharp so that the learner can see what they want to do and how they are progressing.

Individual learning plans also identify long-term goals (e.g. achievement of qualification at the next level). There is also space on the ILP for learners to note the context in which they will be able to apply the skills they are developing (*'I need to be better at this skill so I can . . .'* – and then the option to contextualise to work, family, everyday life, education and training, hobbies and interests, any other). The session plan is used to identify progress in learning, and teachers use this to encourage learners to reflect on achievements, along with comparison of work over a period of weeks to show progress. Achievements outside of the session are also discussed and recorded at review.

Teachers encourage and arrange visits to other providers to show what else is available; stress is placed on the importance of learners moving on to other more formal provision to show that their time with the trust has been beneficial in developing skills and confidence. Attendance certificates and endorsements from Skillswise, etc., are used to encourage learners to recognise progress; celebration events tend to be organised by other partners rather than the trust. Learners are encouraged to keep a file of their achievements, including certificates gained, to take with them.

Support from peers, parents and other support groups is enlisted to aid progression. In one particular project, support workers are used to encourage learners to attend. Lack of childcare, travel costs etc. are seen as posing a potential barrier.

The interviewee identified one barrier: the possibility of partners not wanting learners to make progress. This is countered by ensuring that the learners realise they are valued, and helping them to build confidence and assertiveness. This involves encouraging learners to consider how they view themselves and being positive about their own self-esteem. Teachers encourage them to value their own unique worth (e.g. mother of large family who has very good organisational skills).

4 Park Lane College, Leeds

The learners and the organisation of provision

Park Lane College is one of the country's largest further education colleges. It operates from a city centre site with a substantial community provision, encompassing 15 sites. The college has 1,542 learners on literacy and numeracy provision, and 1,513 in ESOL classes. In its last Ofsted report, it was awarded a grade one in adult learning and it is this area in which much Skills for Life is managed.

The college offers a range of provision:

- programmes leading to Levels 1 and 2 literacy or numeracy qualifications as part of preparation or support for other qualifications, such as learning support assistants' qualifications and Cache programmes, and progression to full Level 2 and Level 3 NVQs
- Pre-GCSE programmes
- Family learning
- An 'Esteem' programme for learners in bail hostels

- Skills for Companies – customised workplace Skills for Life provision
- Skills for Life community-based 'Return to learn' groups.

The breakdown of the cohort by level in 2004–05 by enrolments was:

- of 1,560 numeracy enrolments
 - 790 at Entry Level
 - 524 at Level 1
 - 246 at Level 2
- of 2,007 literacy enrolments
 - 1,044 at Entry Level
 - 659 at Level 1
 - 254 at Level 2.

Although ESOL enrolments are broken down into the three levels at entry where there are three qualification aim codes, the coordinator feels that the one qualification aim code motivates against tracking the levels in this way for literacy and numeracy enrolments. The complexity of spiky profiles, and identifying the exact point at which a learner reaches a new level was thought to be less marked for ESOL learners where there was a greater focus on consolidation at one level before progressing to the next.

The length of programmes and models of delivery vary according to learner requirements. The college starts learners on an extended diagnostic starter course of ten hours, prior to moving to a programme with a nationally recognised learning goal. In some cases, the ten-hour programme is used to top up literacy and numeracy skills prior to qualification following an embedded learning programme. Learners can progress from a ten-hour code to programmes of 30 to 60 hours. Learners can pursue individually negotiated programmes of greater length and can attend multiple sessions a week. In these cases, learners frequently follow mixed programmes, e.g. IT, literacy and numeracy. Courses delivered in specific workplace contexts tend to be shorter. Where possible in larger centres, groups working at specific levels had been introduced, but the individual attendance preferences and availability of learners tended to limit this.

There is an ethos of rigorous monitoring of learner progress and review of time spent on programme in line with the learner's requirements. The college is prepared to support a learner over an extended period where progress, including lateral progress, is being made, recognising that a proportion of learners have complex and long-term difficulties that may not have been diagnosed previously, such as dyslexia and dyspraxia.

A recent college case study produced for the learning partnership involves a learner in provision for eight years who has moved from Entry Level to GCSE and to work.

Accreditation

An assignment-based accreditation has been used and found 'quite successful', but is now considered to be increasingly limited because of the static collection of assignments, which are felt to restrict tutors' responsiveness to the interests of learners. As a result, they have started to use an alternative awarding body that has an individually generated facility. The coordinator reports that this is challenging for tutors but a more flexible response to learners.

Encouraging learner progression

Learner case studies and celebratory events are used to encourage learners. The college makes crèche places available, although demand outstrips supply.

The emphasis in the provision is to support tutors to keep a constant focus on the results of diagnostic and formative assessment, and the learner's goals. The learner's progression is described as the focus of tutor activity at all points in the learning programme, re-enforced through team meetings. Where learners have more than one weekly attendance, the various tutors involved share strategies for teaching and learning. Progression issues are discussed regularly in staff quality circles. An ethos has developed of encouraging self-belief in learners to supportively push them 'on and out'. There is a consciousness of the need to support learners as they access the next stage, and a recognition that specific support needs for dyslexia, for instance, need to follow the learner to the next stage of their learning journey.

5 Yeovil College

Background

The college has described their provision as ranging from Entry 1 through to Level 2. The minority of learners are working at Entry 1 and the largest cohort of literacy and numeracy learners are working at Levels 1 and 2.

	Literacy	Numeracy	ESOL
Entry 1	14	0	76
Entry 2	33	7	42
Entry 3	31	23	39
Level 1	50	58	29
Level 2	71	69	35

The **models of delivery** most in use currently, for adults working in mainstream literacy and numeracy provision, are workshops with flexible enrolments and groups with defined start and finish. The college runs groups for specific purposes e.g. offenders and E2E learners, etc.

Next year, roll-on roll-off, flexible enrolment is planned in which 40-hour and 72-hour programmes will be provided for the whole Entry Level cohort. The provision will involve groups rather than workshops with a range of teaching strategies, including a focus on group work where appropriate. The point was made that nearly 100% of learners at Entry 1 and Entry 2 within the college had general learning difficulties rather than specific difficulties such as dyslexia or dyscalculia.

Learners with more general learning difficulties are enrolled on full-time three-year courses in the supported learning area, and tend to be aged between 16 and 19. This provision is funded entirely through basic skills funding. The programme includes two Skills for Life workshops per week, and a range of pre-vocational options together with life skills for the rest of the week. The programme has Skills for Life fully embedded but visible in every aspect of it. Each learner's ILP reflects the

Skills for Life outcomes as well as the vocational ones. The provision caters for learners with literacy and numeracy skills levels from Milestone 5 through to Level 1.

The organisation of levels of provision for literacy and numeracy learners in general varies between the main campus and the surrounding rural settings. On the main campus there are Entry Level learners working in groups. However, some Entry learners are included in groups targeted towards Level 1 and Level 2 learners if it is not possible for them to attend the Entry Level group. This culture is historical and the curriculum leader is aware that changes could be made. The college has an extensive rural provision and owing to the volume of student numbers, it is impossible to segment the learners into groups by level. In fact many of these groups will cater for learners not only at all levels but in a mix of curriculum areas as well. This is the only way such provision is viable and is therefore driven by the business case.

Within the college, ESOL is a relatively new and fast-growing provision, and a different culture exists here probably due to the fact that there is a critical mass of learners available at each level at the same time, so that the provision can be organised by level into Entry 1, 2 and 3. This arrangement is considered to be working well.

The length of time learners have been in provision

Many of the learners at Entry 1 and Entry 2 have been in provision for a number of years. An exit strategy has just been developed and will be implemented during the summer term. There will be links made with other providers for signposting learners to progression routes.

City and Guilds **accreditation** is offered to everyone. Teachers agree that this is not always suitable for all learners and would prefer to broaden the offer. They would much prefer to offer a portfolio route combined with a test. They feel that such a route is more thorough and gives learners an opportunity to develop wider skills rather than opting for the task-based assessment. It was agreed that as the Skills for Supported Learning programme offers OCN units at Entry Level, these could also be offered in the rest of the provision.

Strategies and materials for supporting progression

Progression is discussed at pre-enrolment. The administrator who takes all first line enquiries has an NVQ 3 in IAG, and as the college has a Next Steps contract, she offers IAG at this stage.

Teachers are clear that 'progression is part of the package'. Comments such as 'you can't write the ILP without discussing progression' illustrate this. There used to be routine visits to each group from the college's adult guidance worker, but this post has been vacant for some time. Apart from the administrator who has an NVQ 3 in IAG, there are two other members of staff within the centre who have NVQ 4s. An outcome of the meeting was that in the medium term, the curriculum leader would invite these members of staff to visit the groups to promote opportunities. In the longer term, the aim will be to offer the teaching staff the opportunity to take an NVQ 3 in IAG. The teaching staff admitted that they didn't know what opportunities were available with other providers and that they would like to have this information. The college has just been awarded some additional funding linked to the Aim Higher project and will now consider the use of some of it to enhance this area of service.

The School of Supported Learning has end-of-programme progression interviews built into every learner's programme through the Connexions service. Other activities in use to motivate learners to progress include:

- newsletter
- student writing displays
- photos and other visual images
- learner case studies
- records of achievement.

For 16- to 19-year-olds, other strategies in use include discussion groups, cartoons and pictures, and 'what happens next?' approaches.

Additional views on progression

There was a feeling that many learners working at Entry 3 were already on other courses or had come with the aim in mind to develop skills so that they could take up specific progression opportunities once they had the necessary skills.

There was consideration of the view that the marketing strategy might need to be reviewed as the college is very successful at engaging learners working at Levels 1 and 2 but had recruited far fewer at Entry Level. All agreed that the qualification offer was appealing to all learners.

There was also a request for research into what percentage of learners operating at below Entry 3 had overall learning difficulties.

6 Supporting progression for Entry Level learners: Barnfield College

Barnfield College is a 'beacon college' in the East of England, with a substantial Skills for Life provision including ESOL. Apart from those on personalised community development learning courses, all learners are expected to be working towards a national qualification.

Programme organisation

Within the adult community education services departments (ACES North and South), Entry Level learners are grouped wherever possible into separate literacy and numeracy classes and into Entry 1/Entry 2 and Entry 3/Level 2 groups, although numbers and location means that this is not always possible. Tutors feel that effective teaching and learning is much easier when the learners are grouped this way. An intensive programme offers 15 hours per week for 31 weeks, leading to qualifications in literacy, numeracy and IT. Previously this course had learners at a wide range of levels and was delivered in workshop style. The current course had learners at Entry 2 and Entry 3 only, and the tutors found the intensive provision, together with the increased opportunities for whole group teaching, to be very effective.

Individual learning plans

The tutor team considered effective short-term target setting and regular reviews to be very important for learner achievement and motivation. Longer-term goals and purposes for learning were recorded on individual learning plans and also reviewed regularly.

Although progression and achievement were monitored by tutors, and information provided to the course team leaders and senior management team, it was acknowledged that the current qualification aims, which do not differentiate between achievement at the different levels within entry, made monitoring achievement at a programme level more difficult.

The full-time pathfinder courses for young people aged 16–18 with learning difficulties have introduced paperless ILPs. Many of these young people are working at milestones but some are working at Entry 1 and Entry 2. Digital Blue, a simple video recording and transfer package, is used to record evidence of achievement of individual goals and progression, and import it into the ILP. It is hoped to introduce this technology into ACES in the near future.

Encouraging progression and celebrating success

The team identified the following as activities that support and celebrate success and encourage progression:

- displays of learners' work and class magazines
- joining in with other college activities such as the 'Round the World Festival'
- case studies from former learners who have now progressed
- inviting back former learners to talk about their success, and the courses or other opportunities they have moved on to
- regular input from IAG staff to groups through individual appointments and drop in sessions
- regular awards ceremonies with guest speakers.

Implications for the Move Up development of resources and strategies to support learner progression

Four distinct areas of development are highlighted by this study:

- 1 The Move Up contribution to collating and promoting strategies for increasing learner progression, in particular the development of organisational and learner case studies
 - Adaptation of existing tools and guidance on encouraging progression to be incorporated into a teacher briefing session plan, training the trainers materials, to be accessible on the Move Up Teacher Route.
 - Case studies linked to the range of strategies showcased
 - Work with the LSC to encourage provision of separate qualification aim codes at Entry 1, Entry 2 and Entry 3 in literacy and numeracy qualifications
 - Case studies exploring good practice in tracking learner progress within and across Entry Level.
- 2 The development of sample Entry 1 and Entry 2 'learning chunks' to promote flexible and targeted delivery, in line with the findings of the NRDC Effective Practice Studies
 - Learning chunks developed across a wide range of skills and contexts, available through the Move Up teacher route, and their use promoted through practical activities in teacher training development and delivery
 - Explanation and linkage of these with the Entry 3 learning chunks in development.

- 3 A unit for teachers on supporting strategies for the development of independent learners, including portfolio building and involving practical resources for use with learners.
- 4 Promoting a greater awareness of the value of accreditation at Entry 1 and 2 in motivating learners to progress.
 - Case studies linking accreditation and the growth in learner confidence and progression with a specific focus on workplace progression
 - Completion of sample learner motivational activities, and suggested uses of these for the Move Up Teacher Route.