



**SKILLS FOR LIFE**

## **WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT?**

A guide for HR managers looking for a practical approach to improving productivity and competitiveness by addressing basic skills needs in the workplace.

The Learning and Skills Council will provide 100% funding of the cost of training for Skills for Life needs for all Greater Merseyside businesses, irrespective of size or industry sector, and individuals. Skills for Life, the Government's strategy for improving basic adult literacy and numeracy focuses specifically on skills such as:

- Reading and understanding
- Calculating and measuring
- Understanding work-related signs
- Using statistical data
- Communication
- English for speakers of other languages
- Information and communication technology (ICT)

The Learning and Skills Council is committed to ensure that basic skills training is available free of charge to all those that need it. As CBI Director-General Digby Jones pointed out:

“Good basic skills are needed every day at work – even for the simplest tasks such as recording telephone messages and numbers. Many businesses do not realise that some of their employees may have problems with literacy and numeracy. People often hide it. But poor basic skills matter. They can lead to resistance to change, poor communication within the company or with customers, or a high rate of wastage”.

(Skills for Life – Make it your business Department for Education and Skills, 2004)

We recognise the importance of integrating basic skills with other job-specific training and providing flexible delivery at a time and place to suit employers and learners.

The emphasis of this Guide is to offer HR professionals practical suggestions on getting the 'buy-in' from senior and line managers necessary to addressing the specific operational needs of their own workforce. It is also designed to complement the generic Skills for Life National Employer Toolkit, produced by the Department for Education and Skills. The guide includes materials developed by HoLD Limited ([www.hold-uk.com](http://www.hold-uk.com)). Further information on the support available to Greater Merseyside businesses is detailed in the Information Appendix or visit:

[www.theskillworks.co.uk/basics](http://www.theskillworks.co.uk/basics)

**THE GUIDE HAS FIVE PRINCIPAL SECTIONS: PAGE**



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This document has been set in Swiss at 12 point. This is the minimum font size recommended, by the Royal National Institute for the Blind and The British Dyslexia Association, which estimates that 10% of the UK workforce may be dyslexic.

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## CONFRONTING THE ISSUE

### THE REGIONAL CONTEXT

Of the 23 million working adults in England, approximately three million have poor levels of literacy and nine million poor levels of numeracy.

The Greater Merseyside region is one of the UK's economic hotspots, with sustained jobs growth three times the national average. Unemployment has fallen to under 4%. Over £3 billion of construction and infrastructure projects are planned throughout Merseyside up to 2008, when Liverpool becomes European Capital of Culture.

- 51,000 new jobs will be created by 2010
- Almost half of the new jobs will be in retail, hospitality, leisure, finance and other professional services
- Replacement demand is estimated to be three times the number of new jobs
- There will be continued growth in higher skill level jobs and a decline in unskilled occupations

This growth depends on a multi-skilled and flexible workforce and indeed the region has some of the most productive workers in Europe. But we cannot afford to be complacent if local businesses are going to take maximum advantage of their opportunities. For example, consider that in Greater Merseyside:

- Under 50% of 16-year-old school leavers have the minimum 5 GCSE A\* - C that the CBI believes is the minimum standard for employability
- 80% of the 2020 workforce is of working age now
- Over 22% of all adults of working age have no qualifications at all – the worst area in England

For the average Merseyside business this is likely to mean that one in seven of its employees have no qualifications. It is inevitable that this will affect productivity and reduce our national and international competitive potential.

Simply informing senior and line managers of these facts may help to attract their attention to the need to develop fundamental skills of reading, writing, using numbers, speaking English and even ICT.

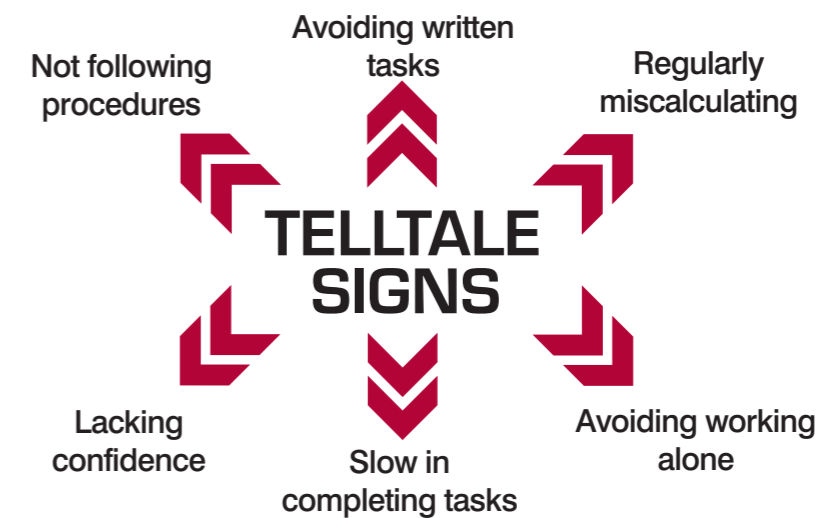
For most managers, however, the scale of the national and even regional issues is not something they can address. In the paragraphs following, three ways are set out of helping line managers to appreciate the links between the operations under their control and the basic skills levels commonly needed by staff.

## IDENTIFYING THE TELLTALE SIGNS

It is often difficult to recognise that underperformance and human error in the workplace can be the consequences of basic skills issues among staff. Operational problems are usually attributed to ineffective procedures and management focus is often on minimising the likelihood of errors occurring and mitigating the impact on the organisation if they do occur.

However, systematically looking for the signals of Skills for Life needs can give management an additional weapon in the armoury. It may be far more cost-effective to brush up specific basic skills needed to do the job, than to implement additional monitoring processes, involving further supervisory or managerial time.

Some of the main Telltale Signs are:



Managers can usually spot these signals and begin the process of identifying individual development needs.

For numerous businesses, there is an increasing need to retain older members of the workforce and upskill them for the future. For many individuals, their experience on the job over the years may disguise a lack of core skills (perhaps low levels of reading skills, or a limited ability to calculate or measure) which could be holding them back from contributing and achieving more.

## RECOGNISING THE FEAR CYCLE

The national and regional statistics strongly indicate that most businesses will have employees who have basic literacy, numeracy and ICT needs. This is the result of a problem neglected for decades, which will take time to sort out. Employees are often afraid to admit they struggle in the basics for fear of ridicule, being treated differently or even possibly losing their jobs.

Millions are trapped in the Fear Cycle



This Guide provides some ideas and guidance on driving activities to address the potential stigma attached to the Skills for Life Fear Cycle. Many businesses have enlisted the support of trade unions, finding that trade union learning representatives have the trust of fellow workers and can provide the confidence and assistance needed (contact details are provided in the Information Appendix 4).

Integration of basic skills training into standard company training procedures is often the preferred option for many companies. These can start from induction courses, basic health and safety training through to customer care and supervisor programmes.

Conventional barriers to engaging in training also need to be addressed. These can range from provision of a suitable learning environment on-site, dealing with shift patterns and replacement cover, childcare and disability issues.

Short 'taster' sessions have also been used with success to encourage staff to re-engage in the learning process. One Merseyside initiative was developed from one mother's experience of not being able to help with her 11-year old's homework.

## SNAPSHOT SKILLS CHECKS


Businesses routinely test resources, such as equipment and machinery, to check that they are functioning as required but often fail to check human resources with the same rigour.

Skills for Life Skill Checks can help to assess levels of general workplace skills to ensure individuals are up to the levels needed for them to perform as required in current and for future potential.

The **Snapshot Skills Checks** below are a mix of Level 1 and Level 2 skills – the level expected of 16 year-old school leavers (see Information Appendix 1). They are designed to help managers check whether staff could answer these questions with ease or whether they feel their skills are somewhat rusty.

A company makes 80 delivery journeys in one week. The journeys cover 4800 miles altogether.

What is the average journey distance?



**Answer:**  **miles**

**MONTHLY REPORT**

Our customer satisfaction ratings went up this month - its the first time in 6 months! I have congratulated the team

In which word would you put an apostrophe? **Answer:**

**MENU**

ONION RINGS	£1.50
SOUP OF THE DAY	£2.00
PATE AND TOAST	£2.50
GARLIC BREAD	£1.30
PRAWN COCKTAIL	£3.50
MUSSELS	£4.00
CHILDREN UNDER 5 HALF PRICE	

A family of four order their starters... they ask for

- 2 garlic breads
- Onion rings (for their 4 year old) and
- 1 prawn cocktail

How much do their starters cost in total? **Answer:**

You start work at 8 o'clock in the morning and you...

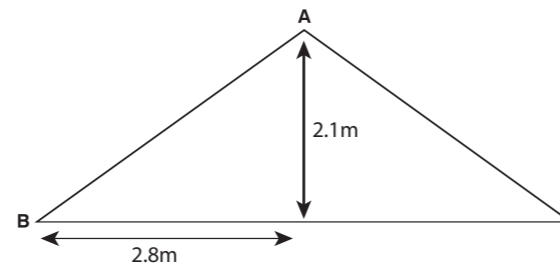
- work for 4 hours before lunch
- have 1 hour for lunch
- work for 4 hours after lunch



What time do you finish?

Answer:

Below is a diagram of a pitched roof.



What is the length of the common rafter AB?

Answer:

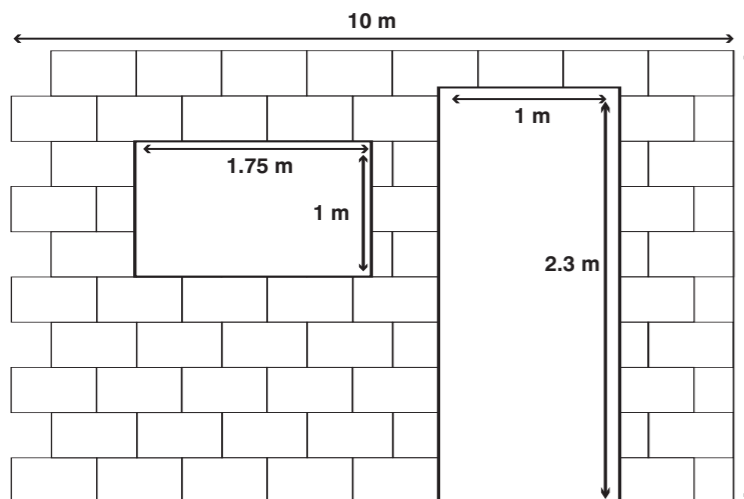


Image not to scale

Each brick measures  
(L) 215mm x  
(W) 102.5mm x (H) 65 mm

How many bricks are  
needed to build this wall?

Answer:

The storage record shows used and spare capacity.

What percentage of the total space is taken by the green labels?

Answer:

%

STORAGE RECORD: UNIT 4	
Green Labels	15
Red Labels	12
Blue Labels	27
Orange Labels	8
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>62</b>
Spare capacity	38 units



This van has a storage capacity of 20 cubic metres (M<sup>3</sup>)

How many packages measuring 1m x 0.5m x 0.5m can be transported?

Answer:

Answers to the questions can be found on [www.theskillworks.co.uk/basics](http://www.theskillworks.co.uk/basics)

Very commonly, managers will accept that some of the questions are tough and are surprised that these represent "basic" skills. If colleagues can be persuaded to assess themselves in private, a mini test is available on the Move On website [www.move-on.org.uk/testyourskills.asp](http://www.move-on.org.uk/testyourskills.asp)

Line managers also often require reassurance that literacy and numeracy is mapped against real world occupational needs. Skills for Life training providers have access to materials that have been developed for a very wide range of occupational areas, using language and examples that are familiar to the learner. It is often practical and effective to utilise a company's own materials (see Information Appendix 3 for Good Practice guidelines).



## ENGAGING MANAGERS

### GETTING MANAGERS ON BOARD

At the LSC's Skills at Work conference held at Anfield in June 2005, the HR team from Merseytravel set out the importance of getting managers on board as an essential step in the successful implementation of a Skills for Life programme.

Merseytravel is a high profile public service provider operating an extensive rail, bus, tunnel and ferry network across Merseyside. After identifying the need (one in four staff were identified as having some basic skills needs), the organisation began a two-year engagement strategy, designed to address the basic skills requirements in order to increase operational efficiency (see Information Appendix 4 for details of how to obtain a copy of the case study). The key stages in engaging the management team were:

- Obtaining senior management commitment from the outset – at Merseytravel the CEO accepted the role of championing Skills for Life
- Explaining what Skills for Life is and what it is not
- Identifying 'what is in it' for the management team
- Persuading managers to take the initial assessment and national test themselves

Productive discussions about training can sometimes be difficult to organise, especially as colleagues are usually stretched to achieve targets and KPIs, often with insufficient time and resources.

To achieve a constructive dialogue between senior and line management and the HR team, two basic methods are outlined: informal discussions and structured approach. Both approaches assume that managers are at least prepared to confront the issue of basic skills (the use of the Telltale Signs and Snapshot Skills Checks may be useful in stimulating interest). However, there is often considerable scepticism as to the prevalence of basic skills gaps and therefore the priority to finding solutions.

## INFORMAL DISCUSSIONS

This approach is useful in smaller organisations, or in organisations where managers often work in isolation from each other, do not meet regularly and have insufficient time to discuss complex issues. Since the everyday focus is usually on getting routine tasks completed, meeting deadlines and hitting targets, the informal approach builds from a discussion of operational issues seen from the line management perspective and then explores the effectiveness of staff development to address issues raised.

The [Informal Discussion Tool](#) on page 11 may be useful when preparing for ad hoc meetings with line managers and to introduce the appropriate 'leading questions'.

Adapting the tool to reflect an individual organisation's operational context and the creation of more relevant 'leading questions' should encourage specific development needs in operational areas to emerge in discussion.

When drawing conclusions for further action, training needs identified should be linked back to the operational issues raised. This tends to leave line managers concentrating on their expectations for improved performance following training, rather than on the training itself.

INFORMAL DISCUSSION

OPERATIONAL ISSUES	LEADING QUESTIONS	POSSIBLE DEVELOPMENT NEEDS
Carrying out routine tasks	Do you have anyone who needs close supervision?	Training in procedures Reading skills Basic maths
Maintaining equipment & tools	Are they working correctly? Are they used correctly?	Equipment usage training Health and safety training
Repeated problems in routine procedures	Does your workforce use instruction?	Reading skills Listening skills
Wastage or errors	Any trends emerging amongst individuals or groups?	Equipment usage training Basic maths
Increasing pace of work/ meeting deadlines	Any particularly slow workers?	Coaching Training in procedures
Improving customer satisfaction	Are members of staff comfortable when dealing with customers?	Customer care training Listening skills Training in procedures
Encouraging individual responsibility/ promotion	Any potential supervisors or managers?	Supervisor training Report-writing skills

STRUCTURED APPROACH

Although line managers are best placed to see development needs of individual staff, they often need help in recognising basic skills issues. The HR team therefore is normally responsible for leading this discussion. Again, the approach seeks to establish the link to line managers' primary concerns while addressing the key questions. Should we support our staff in brushing-up on the basics? What direct benefit is there likely to be to a department and the business as a whole? Discussion of basic skills training requirements can be pre-arranged in organisations where line managers meet on a regular basis.

The tool **Operational Efficiency - Skills needs** set out on page 13 may be of help in setting the agenda, provoking discussion and noting any development needs agreed.

The left-hand column shows some of the signs that there are probable basic (Skills for Life) needs in the workplace, while the right-hand column shows indicators that these problems do not exist or have been overcome. The central column can be completed with an outline of the skills the workforce might need to address these problems.

Discussion of basic skills with line managers is often more productive if concrete issues are addressed, such as:

- The operational and financial cost when staff are slow in performance, need to repeat tasks or create wastage through errors
- How are lost operational costs captured and linked to individual or team performance?
- Potential savings if staff were quicker, more confident and got everything right first time with no wastage
- The cost of poor performance compared to potential savings resulting from effective coaching or training
- The financial impact of a given improvement in KPIs
- The cost of investing in staff development

OPERATIONAL EFFICIENCY - SKILLS NEEDS

SIGNALS OF PROBLEMS	SKILLS NEEDS	MEASURES OF SUCCESS
Some staff struggle to read instructions		People read and understand most things (instructions, notices, warning signs)
There are people who avoid reading		Staff largely follow our procedures and instructions
Some staff rarely write anything		All staff can write as well as needed
Reports, notes and message writing can be very slow – some staff take 2 – 3 times longer than others		Reports and notes are always written clearly and on time. Messages are accurate
We keep having to remind our staff how to behave towards our customers		People are confident speakers. The feedback from our customers supports this
Some people are reluctant to mix with others		We have a strong sense of co-operation and teamwork
There are some staff who routinely look to others for support		We rarely have to 'fire-fight'. Staff always their initiative and need minimal supervision
Staff make mistakes in calculating and weighing		Most staff can measure and count correctly. We have very little wastage

OPERATIONAL EFFICIENCY - SKILLS NEEDS

SIGNALS OF PROBLEMS	SKILLS NEEDS	MEASURES OF SUCCESS
It's always the same people who do the figure work or handle the money		None of our staff are afraid to work with numbers or money
We would improve performance if we helped staff whose first language is not English		Staff who speak another first language understand and express themselves well in English
We've assumed the staff are confident with ICT		We have always recruited people who have the basic ICT skills we need
Our staff are scared to admit that they need to brush-up on their skills		Our staff would tell us if they felt they needed any new skills or extra training



## GETTING OFF THE MARK

### THE FAST TRACK – KICK START

Management teams that have begun to identify some of the **Telltale Signs** and believe that a business that can benefit from addressing Skills for Life might consider the **Kick Start** approach. This approach questions the presumption that all employees are comfortable with the everyday skills we use – reading, speaking, writing, calculating, measuring.

**Kick Start** aims for short-term impact and achievement of some immediate learning successes, which can then be used to:

- Acknowledge that the **Fear Cycle** exists in the workplace
- Demonstrate management commitment to retraining and developing those who are keen to learn
- Encourage other staff to learn

How it works is to invite staff, directly or through line managers, supervisors or TUC learning representatives, to kick start their own progression. Some success has been observed through polling staff to identify their own development needs. Focus groups have also been used with effect.

Individual employees can implement this process themselves using the **Skills Planner** on page 16, which may be adapted to specific businesses.

### THE SKILLS PLANNER

- Take a look at yourself
- Note your 'rusty' skills – and new ones for you
- Say what you want to do

START HERE

### PERFORMANCE SCALE

WHERE DO YOU SEE YOURSELF ON THIS PERFORMANCE SCALE?

<b>EXCELLENT</b>	
<b>COULD DO BETTER</b>	

MARK THE SCALE

2

LOOK AT WHERE YOU'VE MARKED YOURSELF ON THE SCALE. WHAT'S STOPPING YOU BEING AT THE TOP OR CLOSER TO 'EXCELLENT'?

HAVE A LOOK AT THE SKILLS BOX BELOW

- THE SKILLS SHOWN IN THE BOX RELATE TO YOUR CURRENT JOB AND
- WHAT YOU MIGHT BE DOING NEXT YEAR

3

	RUSTY	NEW
<b>READING</b>		
Hygiene / health and safety signs notices		
Equipment instructions		
Procedures		
<b>WRITING</b>		
Quality sheets		
Accident reports		
Delivery notes		
<b>CALCULATING &amp; MEASURING</b>		
Weighing		
Number of items		
Dimensions for packaging		
Delivery schedules		
<b>SPEAKING</b>		
Confidently		
Improving English		

**TICK ANY SKILLS** WHERE YOU FEEL A BIT RUSTY, OR ANY WHICH WOULD BE NEW FOR YOU

4

### WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO DO TO MOVE YOURSELF UP THE SCALE?

- Have some coaching on the job?
- Do some training with others?
- Learn on your own?
- Something else?

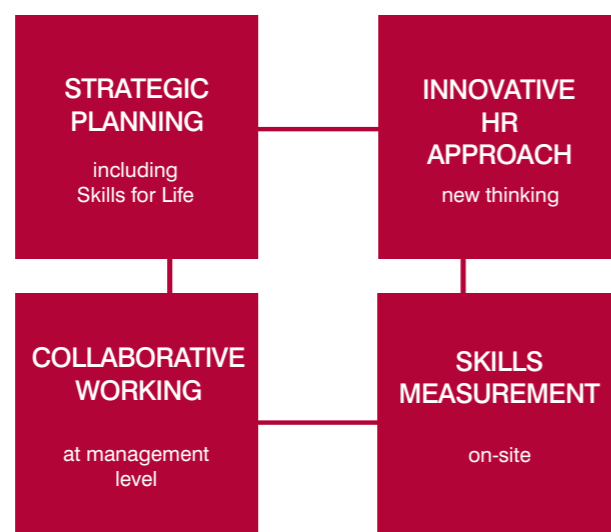
**TALK TO YOUR MANAGER, SUPERVISOR OR TUC LEARNING REPRESENTATIVE**

## STRATEGIC EMBEDDING

Many businesses which have begun to address the basic skills needs of their workforce, or have piloted Skills for Life projects, look to 'embed' the learning process in the company's mainstream training programmes. While the impetus for addressing Skills for Life needs has often come from the HR team, moving forward beyond initial pilots and projects often proves to be a slow process when driven primarily from the HR department. This guide has outlined a process to engage line managers to:

- See the signals of Skills for Life needs
- Check basic skills needs
- Estimate the impact of poor skills on performance

Strategic embedding develops collaboration between supervisors, line managers and the HR team. The absolute commitment of directors and senior management is vital to the recognition that addressing Skills for Life needs is not just doing standard training needs analysis, or even acknowledging that some staff need to brush up on the basics, but that the overall performance of the company can be significantly improved and the return on training investment monitored.



There are four elements to the dynamic process within the strategic approach which generates support from the top and the development of closer, collaborative working between operational line managers and HR.

This strategic approach can be developed from any starting point, depending on:

- The degree of innovation within the HR development process
- The relationship between operational managers and the HR team
- The effectiveness of your current process in measuring the impact of training

## ON-SITE ACTION

The 'Embedded Illustration' combines the four elements of the strategic approach and shows how this is linked to practical implementation in the workplace.

STRATEGIC INPUT	EXAMPLES OF OPERATIONAL ACTION
<b>STRATEGIC PLANNING</b> Evidence of Skills for Life needs  Evidence of the impact on performance	Poor reading of instructions Faulty measurements Inaccurate message taking  Wastage - raw materials - packaging - labour - delivery - customer relations
<b>INNOVATIVE HR APPROACH</b> 'Combined perspective' thinking sessions by line managers, supervisors and HR	Line manager/supervisor observes basic skills need and gives on the job short training
<b>COLLABORATIVE WORKING</b> Effective multi-site communication process	HR team arrange training for individual and checks if any others need it too  Delivery ideally on-site
<b>SKILLS MEASUREMENT</b> Observation of Skills for Life 'signals' on-site  Evidence of the impact of training on performance	The supervisor observes the difference in performance and confirms the lack of wastage  Informs strategic thinking



## SPECIAL SITUATIONS

### ENGLISH FOR SPEAKERS OF OTHER LANGUAGES

This is usually known by the acronym ESOL. These Skills for Life qualifications are designed to support learners for whom English is not their first language. They are available for adult learners over the age of 16 and the Learning and Skills Council will fund training for all those who are entitled to UK residency, including those from the countries of the enlarged EU of 25 member states. ESOL learners may also include those from settled communities, refugees, migrant workers and partners and spouses of learners.

*It is estimated that, of the seven million adults in England who have difficulties with literacy and numeracy, around one to one and a half million have a first language other than English.*

Merseyside has been a major beneficiary of the wealth of cultural experience and diversity contributed by those whose first language is not English. In the run up to the 2008 Capital of Culture and with the current boom in construction, many employers are increasingly turning to non-native English speakers who have the capability to help them grow their businesses.

Within all these groups the needs of learners will vary considerably depending on their individual background; their aspirations, education, language, literacy and aptitude for learning languages. Even within one teaching group, these backgrounds may span a wide continuum, ranging from those with little education or employment experience at one end to highly skilled and educated professionals at the other. *ESOL learners, unlike many adults with literacy difficulties, often perceive themselves as successful and are very keen to learn.*

ESOL learning is conducted in English and the core curriculum is organised sequentially by level across four skills: speaking, listening, reading and writing. While native English speakers usually combine the skills of listening and speaking, it is very common for ESOL learners to be able to understand more than they can say. Teaching activities are normally designed to develop each skill and through real communication activities, the two skills are integrated.

*One issue frequently encountered is the cultural differences of ESOL learners. Formal and informal modes of address or writing, for example, may cause communication difficulties even among those with technically highly proficient English.*

ESOL qualifications are flexible: each qualification is organised in units to allow learners to achieve at a different level in the different modes (speaking and listening, reading and writing), or to build up units towards achieving a full qualification. Units achieved are valid for three years. At levels 1 and 2, the reading unit for ESOL Skills for Life qualifications will be the adult literacy test.

*Work based training delivery can provide employers of non-native English-speaking staff with an effective way of increasing productivity and reducing downtime and wastage. Attendees do not need to be from a common linguistic or educational background.* The LSC's ESOL training providers will work with employers to develop a programme based on individual occupations and each learner's specific requirements. Courses (as for other Skills for Life programmes) can often be built around the specific workplace literature and occupational language.

## SMARTEN UP YOUR CASUAL LABOUR

Many Greater Merseyside businesses are dependent on seasonal or casual labour. Ideally, when recruiting casual labour most employers are looking for staff who will hit the ground running and be low maintenance.

This means selecting people who can fit into their roles quickly: people who have the core skills needed for the jobs, or who can pick up those skills rapidly.

The Core Skills diagram below contains the most common 'core skills' needed in casual roles. The additional skills issues for speakers of languages other than English are dealt with on page 19.



In engaging casual labour, a screening approach can be used to identify any skills development needs in otherwise acceptable candidates.

The most effective way of screening is to embed the activity into your routine processes for selection. The **Casual Labour Recruitment** tool is designed to assist in detecting Skills for Life needs. The tool is in two parts:

- Mapping casual labour skills requirements
- Looking for the signals of Skills for Life needs

The Skills Map for casual labour aims to assist in gaining a clear understanding of what core skills are needed for the job being recruited. The map should show those skills appropriate to the specific working environment, modifying and adding other skills appropriate to your working environment.

During the recruitment and selection process the completed Skills Map can be used as a guide to identifying any core skills that need to be developed, either for individuals or for groups.

SKILLS MAP	
<b>CUSTOMER CARE</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Listening</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Speaking</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Telephone calls</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Giving information</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Taking orders</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/></li> <li><input type="checkbox"/></li> </ul>	<b>CALCULATING / INTERPRETING</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Activities</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Materials</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Time / temperature</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Bills / invoices</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Money / change</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Maps / directions</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/></li> <li><input type="checkbox"/></li> </ul>
<b>READING &amp; UNDERSTANDING</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Instructions</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Schedules</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Messages</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Plans</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Health and safety signs / notices</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/></li> <li><input type="checkbox"/></li> </ul>	<b>WRITING AND USING COMPUTERS</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Notes</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Timesheets</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Timetables</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Bookings</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Reports</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/></li> <li><input type="checkbox"/></li> </ul>
<input type="checkbox"/> English for speakers of other languages	



## INFORMATION APPENDIX

### 1 NATIONAL SKILLS FRAMEWORK

The second part of the tool provides prompts to recognise signals of basic skills needs during the selection process, based on the Skills Map. Modify the checklists below and use them during each stage of the engagement process to identify possible Skills for Life development needs.

Skills needs can be addressed: candidates who otherwise fit in can brush up their rusty skills. The Skills for Life training attaches to the individual and your casual labour is eligible for 100% funding.

STAGES	WHAT TO LOOK FOR
1. Application Form / Letter	<input type="checkbox"/> Spelling errors and inaccuracies in dates <input type="checkbox"/> Immature handwriting <input type="checkbox"/> Mixed lower and upper case letters <input type="checkbox"/> Incomplete information <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
2. Interview / Meeting	<input type="checkbox"/> Misunderstanding of questions <input type="checkbox"/> Vague replies <input type="checkbox"/> Incorrect use of words and language <input type="checkbox"/> Reluctance to write <input type="checkbox"/> Poor time-keeping <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
3. Testing	<input type="checkbox"/> Tasks omitted or not tackled fully <input type="checkbox"/> Avoidance of tasks <input type="checkbox"/> Lack of comprehension <input type="checkbox"/> Finishing tasks too quickly or very slowly <input type="checkbox"/> Inconsistency between results of written and active tasks <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>

NATIONAL CURRICULUM	BASIC SKILLS	KEY SKILLS	NVQ
Postgraduate		Level 5	Level 5
Graduate		Level 4	Level 4
A-Levels		Level 3	Level 3
GCSE A*-C	Level 2	Level 2	Level 2
GCSE D-G	Level 1	Level 1	Level 1
NC Level 3	Entry 3		
NC Level 2	Entry 2		Entry
NC Level 1	Entry 1		

## INFORMATION APPENDIX

### 2 INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Most businesses recognise that the skills required to access information and communication technologies (ICT) are becoming just as important as traditional 'basic skills'. ICT training is also often a major motivator for staff to develop literacy, numeracy and language skills.

The 2003 White Paper '21st Century Skills – Realising Our Potential' made a commitment to recognise ICT within the Skills for Life strategy.

Research carried out for the DfES ([www.dfes.gov.uk/readwriteplus/Research](http://www.dfes.gov.uk/readwriteplus/Research)) indicated that while many respondents had a relatively high level of awareness of ICT applications and terminology, awareness was not always accompanied by good practical skills.

15% of the sample had never used a computer and slightly fewer than half achieved Level 1 or above in the practical assessment. Respondents with good ICT skills tended to earn more money than those with less good ICT skills and those employed in routine or semi-routine occupations were much more likely to have entry or lower level ICT skills than those employed as managers or professionals.

The connection between frequency of use and ability was weakest among those employed in more routine occupations. The majority of frequent users in these occupations had entry or lower level practical skills, suggesting that they may either:

- Use the computer for a very limited range of tasks, or
- Make a lot of mistakes when they use computers

The highest levels of ICT skills were achieved by those working in the finance and 'newer' business sectors. **The survey concluded that probably only one in ten adults have Level 2 or above practical skills.**

ICT training requirements in the workplace can therefore be integrated into a central position in a Skills for Life programme. Businesses may find that individuals may be susceptible to recognising and admitting to the existence of the **Fear Cycle** through a desire to improve ICT skills.

## INFORMATION APPENDIX

### 3 GOOD PRACTICE MODEL

Good practice guidelines for work place learning have been drawn up based upon the shared experiences of Liverpool Community College and Blackburn College. Although the Skills for Life development work (specifically in the delivery of ESOL programmes) in each college was of necessity carried out separately, good practice was shared informally throughout the process and the experiences gained, were used to draw up guidelines. They are intended both as an initial starting point when considering setting up workplace learning but also as an aide mémoire throughout the development of workplace learning. For further information please visit [www.talent.ac.uk](http://www.talent.ac.uk)

For the purposes of this document, the guidelines have been lightly edited to remove specific references to ESOL.

#### 1 Contact

- Identify a named contact / co-ordinator to take responsibility for all aspects of the activity
- Use and build on any existing community contacts or trade union links
- Avoid use of unsolicited flyers, letters as these are not effective
- Make personal contact with employers to set up discussions about employer / employee workplace learning needs
- Ensure that the person making the initial contact is:
  - Trained / experienced in workplace learning issues
  - Sensitive to employer / employee needs
  - Confident and flexible in approach
  - Clear about the range and limitations of possible provision
- Establish with the employer the specific workplace learning needs
- Follow up initial contact with written information about what the provider can offer
- Expect to make several visits to employer to establish working relationship
- Ensure that liaison between the employer and provider continues throughout the development and setting up of the course
- Offer a customised course, which will benefit both the organisation and the employee
- Involve trade union representatives from the outset, if the workplace is unionised
- Inform the employer of the course costs even if these will be met through LSC / other funds in order to establish the course value

## 2 Setting up

- Identify with the employer (and the trade union representative if appropriate) a suitable time / venue for the course
- Ensure that risk assessment is completed for any course held off the provider's site
- Establish whether the employer is prepared to let employees attend the course in work-time
- Ask employer to identify potential learners
- Hold focus group with potential learners where possible to establish their learning needs
- Use both employer and employee identified needs to inform the curriculum content of the course
- Ask for access to workplace 'literature' (signage / health and safety documents / instructions etc.) normally encountered by the learners
- Ensure that the general content of the course is agreed and understood by the employer / employees prior to the course start
- Identify tutors who are:
  - Able to relate to workplace learning needs
  - Flexible and creative in approach
  - Aware of cultural issues
  - Able to maintain ongoing liaison with employers / trade union representatives and employees to ensure constant course review
- Aim to deliver a short, pilot course where possible to confirm the relevance of course content and delivery style

## 3 Review and Development

- Review pilot course and adapt follow – on course to incorporate additional identified needs

## 4 Ensuring Quality

- Offer courses mapped to the national curriculum standards
- Ensure the programme is incorporated into the company's strategic plan, if one exists
- Ensure that procedures to evaluate the impact and relevance of the project are in place
- Ensure that the provider's quality procedures are applied to workplace course delivery

## 5 Ten Key Point Summary of Good Practice When Planning Work Place Provision

The Skills for Life Provider should:

- Identify a named contact / co-ordinator to take responsibility for all aspects of the activity
- Agree a meeting schedule with representation from provider, employer, and trades unions to discuss all aspects of the programme
- Agree processes and administration, including those required by external funding sources
- Contribute to the internal marketing and promotion of the programme
- Provide contextualised, individual and customised organisational communication needs analysis
- Provide job skills audit
- Negotiate flexible and adaptable scheduling of programmes to fit with work pressures and workers' shift patterns
- Deliver on an organisation's premises where appropriate
- Respond to demand and growth
- Provide evidence of the programme meeting individuals', organisations' and stakeholders' objectives and priorities

## INFORMATION APPENDIX

### 4 FURTHER INFORMATION AND CONTACTS

<a href="http://www.basic-skills.org.uk">www.basic-skills.org.uk</a>	News and information about the City & Guilds Skills for Life qualifications.
<a href="http://www.dfes.gov.uk/readwriteplus">www.dfes.gov.uk/readwriteplus</a>	DfES information about the Skills for Life strategy for individuals, employers and providers. Materials for teachers and learners can be downloaded from the site as well as ordering publications and latest news and events.
<a href="http://www.learndirect.co.uk">www.learndirect.co.uk</a>	Information on the network of over 1,350 learndirect centres and online courses including Skills for Life programmes to brush up word, number and ESOL skills.
<a href="http://www.lsc.gov.uk">www.lsc.gov.uk</a>	The LSC is responsible for planning and funding vocational education and training including Skills for Life.
<a href="http://www.lsc.gov.uk/merseyside">www.lsc.gov.uk/merseyside</a>	The local LSC covering Halton, Knowsley, Liverpool, Sefton, St Helens and Wirral.
<a href="http://www.learningservices.org.uk/northwest">www.learningservices.org.uk/northwest</a>	TUC Learning Services supports the union role in workplace learning and skills. Information on TUC learning representatives.
<a href="http://www.lifelonglearninguk.org">www.lifelonglearninguk.org</a>	Lifelong Learning (formerly FENTO) is the sector skills council established by employers to lead the professional development of all those who work in the field of lifelong learning.
<a href="http://www.sflqi.org.uk">www.sflqi.org.uk</a>	LSC Quality Initiative website focusing on professionalising the workforce and supporting organisations to move towards a whole organisation approach to Skills for Life.
<a href="http://www.move-on.org.uk">www.move-on.org.uk</a>	Move On is a national project aiming to reach new learners who don't see themselves as needing help with their basic skills. Get On at work is a practical approach that offers an effective solution to meeting organisational improvements and business objectives. Site features mini tests for literacy and numeracy.

<a href="http://www.nrdc.org.uk">www.nrdc.org.uk</a>	The national centre dedicated to research and development on adult literacy, language and numeracy established as part of Skills for Life, and aims to improve practice and inform policy through the generation of knowledge, by creating a strong research culture and by developing professional practice.
<a href="http://www.niace.org.uk">www.niace.org.uk</a>	NIACE (The National Institute of Adult Continuing Education – England and Wales) is a non-governmental organisation working for more and different adult learners.
<a href="http://www.qca.org.uk">www.qca.org.uk</a>	The Qualifications and Curriculum Authority leads developments in curriculum, assessments, examinations and qualifications.