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Association of Colleges

# Basic Skills Quality Initiative Training and development programme 2001-2003

End of project report

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# Foreword

The Basic Skills Quality Initiative (BSQI) has been a major area of focus for the standards fund since it was established by the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) in 1999. The initiative was the FEFC's response to the Moser Report and inspectorate findings. When *Skills for Life* was published in March 2001, we worked with partners including the Association of Colleges to re-focus BSQI and ensure it supported the national strategy. We continue to do this, most recently through announcing the LSC's *Skills for Life Quality Initiative*, which provides a continuum of career and professional development opportunities through the leadership and management programme and the programme of professional development for teachers.

The BSQI Training and Development Programme, delivered on our behalf by the Association of Colleges, has been a key part of BSQI. The role of managers in improving the quality of literacy, numeracy and language provision is crucial.

The programme provided an opportunity for groups of managers to take part in a residential training event that included updates on national developments, advice on action planning and not least an opportunity to network and share good practice with others in the sector. As confirmed in this report, over 1800 members of staff from over 800 LSC-funded providers have taken part over the past three years and the feedback from participants is that the events have been valued.

Our thanks to the Association of Colleges' project team for their hard work and commitment and to all the participants for the knowledge and enthusiasm they brought to the events.

The challenge for all in the sector is to continue the drive for improvement, working locally, regionally and nationally to deliver the targets in *Skills for Life*. Nationally the LSC will continue to work with the Adult Basic Skills Strategy Unit and key project partners like the Association of Colleges to meet this aim.

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# Introduction and background

The report by the Moser group, *Improving Literacy and Numeracy: A Fresh Start*, which was published in 1998, highlighted the fact that 7 million adults in England had problems with literacy and numeracy. Tackling this became a Government priority.

In March 2001, the Prime Minister launched *Skills for Life*: a national strategy to improve adult literacy and numeracy.

To implement the strategy the Government has set an interim Public Service Agreement (PSA) target of 750,000 learners who will have improved their literacy or numeracy skills by 2004.

This target has been revised to 1.5 million adults who will have improved their literacy and numeracy skills by 2007. An initial target (since updated) was set with the aim of reducing the number of adults with numeracy needs by 750,000 by 2004.

Different public bodies picked up the challenge of trying to meet the need for a 100% increase in current literacy and numeracy provision, among them the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC).

In 1999-2000 the FEFC committed £350,000 to establishing the Basic Skills Quality Initiative (BSQI) and to the early stages of gathering current practice material from providers. In April 2001 the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) came into being and continued to fund the initiative, in the light of a mission that clearly states its commitment to improving the literacy and numeracy skills of adults. A further £3.5 million was subsequently allocated to support the BSQI.

There were a range of motivations for change. Basic skills, as it was then, while a very significant component of many colleges' curriculum, was not always given the prominence or recognition it deserved. Many staff were working on a part-time basis, often to meet the needs of the part-time delivery of the subject, and it was impossible to do initial teacher training which majored on basic skills. There was a view that staffing should be offered a professional route into this complex area of delivery and that basic skills should gain greater recognition as a very significant and important area of learning.

As well as the Moser group's findings the FEFC took into account what had been learned from the inspection of numeracy and literacy in colleges in setting up the BSQI. Inspection showed that, although the overall quality of literacy and numeracy provision nationally was satisfactory, there was too little excellent or very good teaching. In 1999-2000, 62% of all lessons inspected in colleges were awarded a grade 1 or grade 2.

During the same period 51% of literacy lessons and 46% of numeracy lessons received grades 1 or 2. In particular there was too little exciting and imaginative teaching of basic skills. There was also not enough information on what constitutes good practice and how it could be replicated in other provisions.

As might be expected in the light of the small number of outstanding grades awarded in inspections, too little of the work that was going on in literacy and numeracy was particularly innovative or creative. Many examples, however, of sound and effective work were identified, carried out by capable but often overstretched staff. Examples of good practice included the employment of all qualified staff, all staff receiving an induction, staff development programmes, basic skills teaching staff vacancies not covered by other college staff with light timetables, lesson observations to ensure and promote quality, and the variety of teaching styles used. Almost all the examples of good practice identified focused, however, on what colleges and teachers do, not on how much learners' basic skills improve as a result.

With this in mind, and building on established good practice from the successful Inclusive Learning Quality Initiative, the FEFC established a three-stage project designed to improve adult literacy and numeracy skills and to help in meeting the PSA target. English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) was included in the project at a later stage.

The initial aims of the BSQI were to:

- Increase the numbers of learners participating in literacy and numeracy courses
- Improve the standards and quality of literacy and numeracy provision
- Improve the experience of learners
- Improve retention and achievement rates for literacy and numeracy learners
- Improve people's capacity to work and progress in education and employment

There were three stages to the initiative:

- The production of the BSQI materials
- The recruitment and training of facilitators
- The training and development programme

Together these stages were intended to enable providers to work individually and on their own behalf to develop their capacity to deliver high-quality basic skills provision.

The BSQI materials were available both in printed form and on the internet.

# The AoC process

Their prime purpose was to help providers think about the processes and issues they needed to work through in order to raise the quality of their literacy and numeracy provision. Twenty-eight providers contributed to them. The materials were organised into four units:

1. Teaching, learning and students' achievements
2. Guidance and support
3. Curriculum organisation and management
4. Quality assurance and staff development

More detailed information on the materials may be found on page 25 of this report.

The second stage of the BSQI involved the recruitment and training of more than 100 facilitators with specialist knowledge of literacy and numeracy. Their role was to help providers to use the materials. Again, more detailed information on facilitators and their role may be found on page 25.

Lastly, teams of managers and lead practitioners had the opportunity of benefiting from attendance at a residential training and development event which focused on the structure, resourcing and management of literacy and numeracy provision. The Chief Inspector's Annual Report, *Quality and Standards in Further Education in England 1999-2000* had indicated that one of the most significant weaknesses in the provision of literacy and numeracy was the failure to coordinate it effectively. Provision often lacked coherence, strategic planning and leadership. There were deficiencies in the use of management information, targets and performance criteria. Few colleges prepared effective self-assessment reports on literacy and numeracy. In 1999-2000 48% of colleges assessed their basic skills provision at grade 1 or 2 in their self-assessment reports. In contrast inspectors judged 24% of the provision to be grade 1 or grade 2. The area was particularly difficult to benchmark nationally because of the vagaries of some of the awards on offer at the time, the concentration on individual learning plans and the fact that many learners were reluctant to take tests, accredited awards or examinations.

The three strands of the BSQI were run separately. It was decided that the training and development programme for managers should be put out to tender. The Association of Colleges (AoC) submitted a successful bid to carry out the work in November 2000.

## Background

The AoC was given a remit, within *Skills for Life*, to work with the Adult Basic Skills Strategy Unit (ABSSU) to support the development of literacy, numeracy and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) across the country within the Basic Skills Quality Initiative.

The AoC has extensive and successful experience of managing national projects, including some that have been funded from the Standards Fund. These projects have involved many different partners, and have included providers, such as external institutions, which are additional to the further education sector.

The AoC sought to become involved in the BSQI in order to make a difference to the college sector as a whole. Literacy, numeracy and ESOL make up a significant proportion of the programmes offered in the sector colleges, as they also do in other providers. Provision includes literacy, numeracy and ESOL taught in discrete classes. It also, with increasing frequency, includes these subjects taught as an essential component of vocational programmes. Students learning to become, for example, caterers, hairdressers, engineers and plumbers, are able to develop appropriate literacy, numeracy and language skills alongside and at the same time as vocational ones.

## Project management and administration

Experience of running large national projects had shown the AoC the benefits of strong and stable management and administration. The AoC was concerned throughout the course of the BSQI training and development programme to take steps to ensure that it ran smoothly, and successfully delivered its intended outcomes.

To this end a senior member of the AoC's staff acted as project director. The project director from the outset regarded it as essential to the successful running of the project to a) take a hands-on approach and b):

- Hold regular meetings with the project manager and project administrator to discuss planning arrangements and monitor progress
- Attend a sample of residential events and one-day events to assure the quality of delivery and to ensure that the events were meeting the needs of participants as fully as possible
- Have frequent contact with FEFC and then with LSC national office staff to discuss the progress of the project, with regular monitoring meetings. As part of its contract with the national LSC, the AoC submitted regular reports outlining the progress made. The project director also attended regular meetings to discuss the progress made, the next steps, and to resolve any queries or difficulties that had arisen
- Carry out appropriate research with providers and relevant organisations such as with the staff, contract managers and the Prisoners Learning and Skills Unit (PLSU) for the prisons' work

These activities represented a substantial but well-justified investment of time.

A consultant with extensive experience of teaching, managing and inspecting literacy, numeracy and ESOL provision acted as lead consultant for the project, assisting and supporting the project director and acting as lead tutor for many of the events.

A full-time administrator was appointed to work on the BSQI project. The administrator's work included publicising all events, negotiations with conference venues, handling bookings, and providing on-site support at each event. The administrator also acted as a point of contact for the project manager and tutors. The same administrator was employed throughout the life of the project, which led to her becoming a valuable source of knowledge and expertise.

The overall analysis of the event administration, the quality of the venues and the on-site support from the administrator was overwhelmingly positive, with over 98% of participants commenting that the administration of the events was good or very good. When asked for additional comments, nearly all participants in their evaluations commented appreciatively on the administration of the events; making comments such as:

- "An extremely well-organised event"
- "A very well-managed series"
- "Efficient and effective staff"
- "Very professional and helpful administrative support"

## The team of tutors

The AoC's aim was to maintain a relatively small and coherent team of tutors throughout the series of training and development events. It was felt important to have tutors who would be able to respond flexibly to delegates with widely differing knowledge, experience and practices. It therefore put together a team of senior consultants with experience in teaching, managing and inspecting numeracy, literacy and ESOL. Their backgrounds included work in adult and community and work-based learning as well as in further education colleges. The group of consultants was augmented by senior practitioners from colleges that had received high grades at inspection in these areas of work. Pen portraits of the director, consultants, college practitioners and the administrator who worked on the project are included at Annex B.

The tutor team initially consisted of five core members. In order to cope with the strict schedule of events and the tight timescales imposed, the team was quickly expanded. The final tutor team consisted of 18 members.

Despite being dispersed throughout the country the tutors nonetheless developed a strong sense of team working. This was fostered by the team meetings held at the start and at the end of each day of events alongside the initial briefings held at the beginning of the project.

The tutors received positive feedback throughout the series of events, with individual 'home' tutors (those running the groups the delegates spent most time in) being singled out for comment:

- "Thought provoking input from tutor"
- "Excellent supportive tutor with clear understanding of the issue"
- "Excellent tutor – valued advice and guidance as well as the support given"
- "As a facilitator, she was excellent and kept us on task"
- "Superb facilitation – ability to listen, keep focused, vast experience and knowledge"
- "Very well motivated tutor who succeeded in motivating us and leading highly relevant discussions"

## Assuring the quality of the training and development programme

During the events, a meeting was held at the end of each day with the tutors, the director and the administrator to discuss the event, and modifications that could be adopted, or any suggestions about approach. This resulted in a fairly frequent refining of the programme to ensure that it fully met the needs of participants. The modifications were generally minor but the length of the series of events did allow the whole team to develop considerable expertise in the running of residential training events.

Additionally, regular meetings were held by the director and administrator to update the programme. The practical logistics of ensuring materials were prepared and despatched on time required effective planning particularly as some of the series ran at a rate of almost one event per week. Meetings were also held on a regular basis that included the lead tutor.

Another crucial aspect of our approach was to ensure that in the first series colleges, and in the later series, all providers were kept up to date with the overall progress of the project and were clear about how to take part.

The approach used was predominantly through the Association of Colleges's bulletin, briefing papers and website, together with personal letters either to delegates or through other organisations such as local LSCs. The Prisoners Learning and Skills Unit (PLSU) were particularly helpful in contacting prisons, and in supporting our invitations to senior prison staff to attend the series of events in June and July 2002. This additional support and the prominence given to this actively helped to encourage attendance. In addition to briefings about the BSQI management training and development events, regular information was also provided on other strands of activity on literacy, numeracy and language to try to ensure that it was clear what else was taking place and how BSQI complemented other activities.

## The BSQI residential training and development programmes

The AoC won the tender to manage the BSQI residential training and development programmes for managers on behalf of the FEFC in November 2000. The programme also started in November 2000, with four pilot events. Following these events, it was agreed that the AoC would publicise and deliver a further training and development programme, for up to 400 staff, between January and April 2001. The programme was to consist of eight events held at venues in different parts of the country, to promote access for the greatest number of participants. The first series was heavily over subscribed with not all colleges managing to gain a place. Allocation was made strictly on a first-come, first-served basis.

The AoC was keen to ensure that the training and development programme matched both the needs and expectations of the delegates. Although the programme for all subsequent events closely followed the model of the four pilot events held in November and December 2000, meetings were held at the close of each event in the new series to review the programme and study feedback from delegates. Comments from participants were discussed in detail and the programme amended where necessary.

Following the establishment of the LSC, BSQI continued as a priority within the Learning and Skills Standards Fund. Funding was made available for further residential training and development programmes in 2001/02 and 2002/03.

The project was also broadened to include providers of literacy, numeracy and ESOL from independent specialist colleges and work-based learning (WBL) providers, in addition to FE colleges and Adult and Community Learning (ACL) providers. Between November 2000 and March 2003, more than 1800 staff from almost 800 organisations attended the 41 residential events. This total far exceeded the original target of 1000 staff set by the FEFC in 2000.

The project director considered that literacy, numeracy and ESOL in prisons was an area that deserved special recognition. A separate strand of the programme, which drew on lessons learned from running these residential events, was developed for prisons and young offenders' institutions. This comprised six residential events. Information on this programme can be found on page 23.

## The 2001-2002 residential programme

Building on previous information published by the FEFC in *Council News* and FEFC circulars, the AoC publicised the programme extensively through its network of contacts with providers. In particular, the *AoC Briefing*, a well-established bulletin that goes to all AoC members, was used to increase awareness of the initiative.

The events were open to all institutions funded by the FEFC to provide literacy and numeracy programmes. The target group of staff consisted of a senior manager, an operational manager and a lead practitioner. Part of the rationale of the programme was to encourage providers to work in teams, for this reason providers were not booked on events unless they were able to send at least two people. Separate events were held for sector colleges and external institutions, as their experiences and concerns tended to differ.

The programme for this first series of events was designed around that of the four pilot events.

Due to the overwhelming response from delegates, places on all eight events were filled within a matter of weeks. A waiting list was created containing some 100 organisations still wishing to attend. The AoC approached the LSC to discuss the need for further training. The LSC agreed to extend the initiative for a further year, until the end of March 2002, to offer opportunities for more providers to attend an event.

Notwithstanding this overwhelming demand, in April 2001 the LSC invited the AoC to carry out research into the non-acceptance of places on events and/or of LSC funding offered to providers under the BSQI. The LSC was concerned that amongst the providers that had not accepted there was a lack of information about the level of potential interest or need. Fifty-four providers had formally declined to take part in the initiative; a further 54 did not respond to the LSC's offer. The LSC wished to establish what need for support existed amongst the non-accepting providers. This could potentially lead to a provision of support for them through particular training events or other forms of activity.

The results of the research were encouraging. They showed that:

- Information about the BSQI funding was reaching providers; only a very small proportion gave lack of awareness as a reason for not responding to the offer of funding. Of these several later attended events
- There was an informed and growing interest in sixth form colleges in providing numeracy and literacy provision
- Small or non-existent provision was the main reason for many institutions' decline of funding; the formula on which the offer was based was the size of the institution and not the size of basic skills provision
- Local LSCs were establishing their role in promoting and providing information about the BSQI

# The training model for the residential events

## The 2002-2003 residential programme

The programme for 2002-2003 was modified to take account of the extension of the BSQI to include ESOL, and to include work-based learning providers. It also directly supported priorities in the national strategy *Skills for Life*, the LSC's national delivery plan, and guidance on good practice from ABSSU, OFSTED and the Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI).

Consideration was given to the feedback received from delegates at the first series of events. The need for attendance from a senior manager, if participants were to gain maximum benefit from the events, had been highlighted repeatedly. It was suggested by many participants that compressing the event into two full days, instead of spreading the programme over three days, would attract more senior managers, as it often proved difficult to release senior staff for three days. The AoC took these comments back to the LSC, who agreed to reduce the length of the events, whilst preserving the majority of their original content. To reflect changes in the handling of funding and the planning of provision, representatives from both the national and local LSCs were included in the team of presenters, as was a senior representative of the Adult Basic Skills Strategy Unit (ABSSU).

The 2002-03 programme of events was therefore organised to provide two-day training and development residential. As with the earlier series of events, teams of two or at most three delegates from LSC-funded providers were invited to each event. As with earlier events, the target audience was staff working at middle and senior management level, for example, curriculum managers, quality managers, and programme managers. These events were open to all providers of literacy, numeracy and ESOL funded by the LSC, including providers of work-based learning. The events had a regional focus, reflecting the nine government regions; three further events were held at the end of this series for those providers who had been unable to attend any of the previous events.

Each of the 41 events was designed to include:

- Updates on the various national initiatives and overall strategy in literacy, numeracy and language
- Information and guidance on the support available through the BSQI for improvement programmes; the BSQI materials were central to the training activity and were the focus for review and planning by providers, preparing staff to work with the materials and with their facilitator back on site at their organisation
- Input on specific areas of difficulty in literacy and numeracy provision and on relevant good practice, as identified by inspection
- Workshops helping providers to review their provision and develop strategies for bringing about improvements in specified areas
- Time for providers to develop their own quality management programme, working in their own team and with others in their peer group; the focus throughout the programme was on strategies for improving literacy and numeracy provision

## Residential learning

The residential experience was a significant feature of the training model. The residential events not only provided extended time for team working and networking with other providers, but also encouraged a clear focus on the curriculum issues at the heart of the events. For managers to take two or three days out of their organisation is rare. It is even rarer for them to do so to attend events with a focus on self-criticism and innovation in relation to the curriculum for literacy, numeracy and ESOL. The collective sense of purpose developed during the events was tangible and resulted in high levels of productivity. It was not unusual to see teams of staff working on their action plans in the hotel, surrounded by their BSQI folders, late into the night.

## Teams of staff with senior managers

The training plan for the three-day day events was based on the premise that in order to secure change across an organisation, it was essential to involve the senior management in the reviewing process and at the first stages of planning. The evaluations of events showed that the inclusion of a senior manager in the reviewing and planning process was a critical factor in being able to implement the plan effectively in an organisation. The evaluations from organisations which had not included a senior manager frequently included a comment that their planning had been limited because of the levels of the positions held by team members.

The inclusion in each team of staff representing different levels in the organisation enabled each provider to review all their provision comprehensively in the light of the structure of the whole organisation. There were additional learning outcomes for some participants who were unaware of either the activities or the needs of other areas of their organisation. The team approach also increased the probability that the action plan would be implemented, as there were several members of staff to support each other in taking it forward in the organisation.

## Group work

Another feature of the training model was the use of two different groupings of participants. The first was 'home groups', consisting of 10 to 12 participants, in which teams of staff from an organisation were placed with teams from other similar organisations. Sixth form colleges, FE colleges, ACL providers and WBL providers were as far as possible grouped to reflect their own settings and contexts. At many events, it was possible to maximise networking opportunities by arranging for regional or sub-regional groupings.

The model was based on the need for participants to move into different types of groups during the residential events. In the earlier events, the home groups were supplemented by 'focus' groups, in which participants worked on a common priority for development. In the later events, these focus groups became local LSC area groups, mixing together different types of providers funded by the same LSC. This allowed discussion of local issues and of progress towards targets in local delivery plans.

## Action planning

In the residential events providers were led through a structured review process, leading to the writing or revision of their BSQI action plan. The stages of this process were set out as the 'six stage process for quality improvement'. The six stages were:

1. Initial review
2. Analysing the outcomes of review
3. Target-setting
4. Action planning
5. Reviewing progress
6. Evaluation

Each of the stages was presented in a plenary session and was then worked on in home groups. The format of the event allowed time to be given to ensuring that participants understood all the stages, and that in particular the four stages leading up to writing the action plan were worked through in detail. Action planning was a key element of the training model. Many participants reported that it was the first time that they had been helped to write an action plan. They welcomed the opportunity to work on a document that they could take away from the event and start to use straight away in their organisations.

Throughout all of the events, the mixture of short presentations followed by longer group sessions to explore issues and strategies in detail was welcomed by providers.

## Stage 1: Initial review – establishing the big picture

# 1

Participants were asked to bring their most recent self-assessment report and notes on the areas they had identified with colleagues as being the priority for development. At all times during the events they were asked to look at not only discrete provision of literacy, numeracy and, in the later stages of the project, ESOL, but also at all the situations where literacy and numeracy teaching occurred, including where it was part of the provision in other curriculum areas. This review of 'the big picture' frequently raised questions that providers had not previously considered. The most common of these related to looking at the management and quality of their provision across the whole organisation.

## Stage 2: Analysing the outcomes of review

# 2

Strong emphasis was placed on analysing the outcomes of review as an important stage in the planning process. If it was not completed well it was unlikely that the action plan would be effective in raising quality. Providers were asked to look critically at the picture they now had of their numeracy, literacy and ESOL provision and to identify and prioritise areas for improvement. There was a tendency for participants to state weaknesses in general terms, such as 'poor initial assessment'. They were encouraged to look closely at their weaknesses so that they were then able to identify precisely what it was they were trying to achieve and what targets for improvement should be set. The analysis of the outcomes of review frequently raised questions about how to ensure consistency of quality across an organisation, the links between different sections of the organisation such as key skills, basic skills and learning support, and links with the teaching of literacy and numeracy in all curriculum areas. How well providers were able to complete stages one and two of the six stage process depended on the composition of their team. Teams which had representation of senior and middle management level stated in their evaluation how useful this had been.

## Stage 3: Target setting (linked to stage 4)

# 3

A strong message of the events was the importance of writing SMART targets which had as a measurable outcome improvement in provision for the learner. Providers had great difficulty with this. A common tendency was to write actions as targets. Several participants saw writing a policy as a target in itself. Tutors worked with the organisational teams to help them to identify what they were trying to achieve for the learner instead of writing a series of actions which they would be able to tick off as having taken place but would not be able to state what impact this would have had on the learner's experience. An additional stage in the process was introduced to help participants to be clear about what they were trying to achieve. After identifying a weakness participants were asked to state the aim of anything they proposed to do in terms of the experience of the learner. This encouraged discussion of why any action was proposed and what measurable outcome was hoped for before a SMART target was set.



# Main messages from the events

## Stage 4: Action planning

Emphasis was placed on the importance of ensuring that the actions planned would lead to the achievement of the targets that had been set. Participants were also encouraged to check that the persons identified as responsible for carrying out actions would have the necessary time, authority and resources and that the timescales selected were realistic. The action plan format required participants to consider the resources required, use of the BSQI facilitator and materials and to cost the plan. Participants were not always able to complete fully the section on the BSQI resources until they had been allocated a facilitator by the LSC and had had more time to study the materials. The costings also could not always be completed without consultation.

4

## Stage 5: Reviewing progress

The importance of regular reviews to check that progress was being made and the importance of analysing the reasons for lack of progress in any area were emphasised. Milestone and dates against the proposed actions were identified to ensure that the plan remained on target.

5

## Stage 6: Evaluation

Participants were required to state in the plan how the achievement of the target would be evaluated, by whom and when. If achievement against the target could not be evaluated then the target was not SMART. The evaluation should consider whether the targets had delivered a benefit for the learners and whether there had been an increase in the number of learners and their achievements. The final part in the process was for participants to evaluate what had been learned from the process and what they would do differently next time.

6

## The process of writing and presenting action plans

Participants were given considerable support in writing their action plans. General issues, such as what constituted good practice and the actions that were likely to lead to good practice were discussed in detail in the home groups, following plenary presentations. On the final day all organisational teams formally presented their outline plans to other teams and a tutor with whom they had not worked with before at the event. The aim of this was for each team to be able to refine their plans in the light of constructive comments from colleagues based on the principles of action planning discussed throughout the event.

At the end of each event participants were asked to complete an evaluation form (see annex C). The main messages arising from an analysis of the forms are given below for the different phases of the BSQI.

## Residential events for managers in 2001-02

Overall, the comments received on evaluation forms were very positive. A significant number of participants stated that they had found the events inspirational and the most useful they had ever attended funded by FEFC or LSC.

## The benefits of team-working

Participants commented that a major benefit of the events was the opportunity they provided for staff with different roles within an organisation to work together without interruption on their literacy, numeracy and ESOL action plan. The outcomes were particularly positive when a senior manager was present throughout the event and took responsibility for leading the development on return to the organisation. Many participants commented positively on the value of having the 'ear' of a senior manager and time away from other duties to focus on the organisation's literacy, numeracy and ESOL provision. Prior to the events, senior managers had not always been aware of the detail of the work of the literacy, numeracy and language (ESOL). Many had not previously thought about the implications for the organisation of delivering literacy, numeracy and ESOL across the whole curriculum.

## Action planning

Participants valued the tuition they were given on action planning. Although many of them had written an action plan prior to the event, several pointed out that it was the first time they had ever been taught how to do it, and several teams rewrote theirs as a result. They went away with a clearer understanding of the characteristics of a good action plan and recognition of the time it takes to develop one. They appreciated the need to see action plans as working documents rather than as plans written merely to satisfy external organisations. Several participants had arranged to present the action plan to other senior managers and governors on their return from the event. Some had decided to set up cross-college groups to see the action plans through.

Teams commented that they found it very difficult to be clear about what they were aiming to achieve and to write SMART targets, that is, targets that were specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-bound. The tutor's input was needed to help them to clarify their weaknesses and be clear about what they were aiming to do. Comments at recall events and later events showed that they had found the process of identifying SMART targets useful in pushing change in their organisations and that they were looking to future events for support in tightening up their later development plans.

The events helped to raise awareness of the need to develop an action plan for literacy and numeracy that encompassed all three strands of the work, that is, primary literacy and numeracy programmes, support for literacy and numeracy provided through learning support, and support for literacy and numeracy provided as part of a vocational or academic programme.

### Impact on management structures and resources

Providers welcomed the opportunity to do some 'hard thinking', particularly about the resources and management structures needed to support effective literacy and numeracy provision. Discussing such issues with similar organisations proved to be very beneficial and it was later reported that some of the contacts made on the early events were maintained. For some providers, the events provided a catalyst for change that has had a major impact on their provision.

The events highlighted the need to foster a more coherent approach to the management of literacy and numeracy across the college. Several providers made plans to restructure their literacy and numeracy provision and allocated responsibility for the overview of the provision to a senior manager. Considerable thought was given to staffing structures and the ratio of full-time, part-time and fractional posts needed for successful provision.

### Networking

Many participants commented on the excellent opportunities for networking provided by the events. They also appreciated the opportunities to hear about the national context in which the provision of literacy, numeracy and ESOL was developing.

### Key areas of concern which organisations were tackling in their action plans:

A number of common concerns emerged from the action plans being drawn up or refined during the events. These were:

- Expanding provision to meet local and hence national targets
- The integration of literacy and numeracy teaching into all vocational areas, with the attendant need for increasing the numbers of staff able to provide the teaching and giving them suitable training. There are currently insufficient teachers available
- The best means of ensuring consistency of quality across the whole organisation – this applied to geographically widespread rural community provision as well as large further education colleges
- The management of provision to enable time to be allocated to initial and diagnostic assessment and reviews

- Dealing with specific weaknesses relating to initial assessment, such as, the selection of suitable packages; implementing initial assessment across a whole organisation; and, using the results of initial assessment to plan learning programmes
- The development of useful and detailed individual learning plans
- Increasing the range of teaching and learning strategies used
- Developing systems for recording data so that the statistics generated accurately reflected the provision

### Messages from the two-day regional quality and capacity events: October 2002 – March 2003

Feedback on these events was positive and much the same as that from earlier ones. Providers confirmed that they valued the time the events gave them to work together in teams and to develop and refine their action plans. Deriving the greatest benefit were those who attended at as early a stage as possible in their cycle of self-assessment and development planning.

The two-day events laid greater emphasis than earlier ones upon the *Common Inspection Framework* and on a detailed consideration of its application to literacy, numeracy and ESOL provision.

### Key concerns

Again, these were similar to those identified by participants in the first cycle of events. With the growth in the teaching of literacy, numeracy and, to some extent, ESOL as an integrated part of vocational and academic courses the question of recording activity and of funding was uppermost in many participants' minds. Common concerns were:

#### Capacity building and links with local LSCs

- Variation in the level of understanding of literacy, numeracy and language (ESOL) by local LSCs
- The existence of funding for BSQI development not known to some local LSC representatives
- Little consultation with providers on how the targets were set either for the whole local LSC or for individual providers
- Little meaningful mapping of provision to plan where expansion was needed
- Funding promotes competition which is often unhelpful to the learner and leads to duplication of provision in some places and gaps in others

# One-day events

## WBL providers

- Framework requirements which often stipulated achievement of key skills at level 2 meant that providers were turning away the neediest learners because they would not achieve or they would not be able to get funding for them

## Other comments

- Too much time spent on trying to sort out data systems and not on quality improvement or capacity building; clarity urgently needed on funding and coding that is easily understood by MIS managers and that is recognised by the software used
- Continuing concern about the tests; they are not a measure of literacy, simply a reading test
- Need for training in differentiation and teaching strategies

## Overall

- The BSQI had been one catalyst for change but here had also been strong influences from the *Common Inspection Framework* (CIF), the requirement to meet the targets, and curriculum and diagnostic assessment training
- There was a need for a pause in the rate of change to allow providers to consolidate what had been happening over the past 2 years
- In later events there were also increasing comments on the following features which could hinder the organisation's own development work:
  - Frustration over the lack of allocation of a facilitator
  - Frustration over the delays in the delivery of assessments and materials that backed up the learning infrastructure
  - Frustration over the delays and lack of clarity surrounding the new teacher qualifications, in particular frustration over the withdrawal of funding for the City & Guilds 9281 series before anything else was put in its place at a time when the providers were planning widespread training of vocational tutors
  - Frustration over the lack of recognition in the targets of the gains made by learners moving through the entry level stages
  - Concern that the push for the targets will mean that learners who are not likely to achieve one of the certificates which count towards the target will be excluded from provision
  - Frustration that difficulties in recruiting appropriately qualified and experienced tutors and co-ordinators were preventing the implementation of their action plans
  - Frustration over the lack of clarity on coding and funding, particularly the use of a single code for the whole of entry level
  - Concern about the alignment of basic and key skills

## Recall events (2002)

In response to feedback received from delegates, a series of nine recall events was held in the period from January to March 2002, one in each government region. The events were attended by 326 delegates from 285 providers. They provided an update on the national context for the development of literacy, numeracy and ESOL provision, an opportunity for providers to share experience of their involvement in the BSQI to date, to review their progress and plan for further improvements in this provision.

The programme also included presentations on the interim findings from Pathfinder Projects, the new arrangements for inspecting literacy, numeracy and ESOL, and the LSC approaches to quality improvement. The events were restricted to those providers who had attended a previous BSQI residential training and development event, and attendance was prioritised within providers' own regions. The Adult Basic Skills Strategy Unit provided an update on the national strategy, and received and commented on the feedback from the group sessions.

## Developing good practice events (2003)

As part of the BSQI project, the AoC was invited by the national LSC to organise a series of one-day events in March and April 2003. These were the last events organised under the BSQI framework, pending its re-launch as the Skills for Life Quality Initiative. There were five events, three for work-based learning (WBL) providers and two for adult and community learning (ACL) providers. In the previous series of nine residentials, feedback from tutors and participants indicated that these two groups of providers had generally a greater need than colleagues in FE colleges for further help with quality improvement strategies.

Each event provided information about the current guidance about good practice in literacy, numeracy and ESOL, and updates on current practice from case study material. Each provider was asked to send one delegate, preferably from management level, to attend. The events were planned to build on the work done during the two-day residentials, and focused on the key theme of 'embedded' provision. This was explored within the contexts of guidance from the inspectorate and exemplar case studies drawn from the BSQI experience. The programme consisted of three presentations and two group sessions.

The aims of the events were to:

- Provide guidance on the ALI approach to inspections of literacy, numeracy and ESOL provision in the contexts of WBL and ACL
- Enable participants to learn from current practice through case study presentations
- Consider relevant published exemplar material from the BSQI
- Share experience of effective strategies for the development of literacy, numeracy and ESOL

# Prison education events

The events were attended by a total of 57 managers. Feedback was positive with 50% of participants rating the events as 'very informative' and 91% as informative or very informative.

Comments from participants included;

"I enjoyed the event. I can take away an action plan and targets for improvement."

"Lots of useful information. The aims of the event were met."

"Thank you for an informative and relevant event."

"Very enjoyable and also thought-provoking."

"The tutors were excellent and there were good guidelines on good practice."

Managers and staff of literacy and numeracy programmes in prisons had not been eligible to attend the events organised for colleges and other providers during 2001-02. The AoC was, however, aware that many prisoners had difficulties with literacy and numeracy and that challenging targets for achievements had been set by the PLSU of the DfES. A separate strand of the BSQI training and development programme was designed and delivered to staff in prisons through six events in June and July 2002, at venues in London and the North, Midlands and South of England.

These events were the first of their kind for the prison education service. As with earlier events for colleges and others, the presence of senior staff was seen to be important. The target group for the events was therefore heads of inmate activities or heads of regimes, education managers, and literacy, numeracy and ESOL co-ordinators. The events were designed to enable prisons to bring about significant improvements in their capacity to develop and manage high-quality basic skills provision by:

- Raising awareness of what constitutes high quality in all aspects of literacy and numeracy provision, including structures, processes and curriculum framework
- Helping prisons identify areas of basic skills which need improvement and strategies for bringing about the improvements they wish to make
- Helping prison education services identify ways of making the most effective use of the BSQI materials
- Enabling each organisational team to begin, consolidate or further develop the process of review and action planning
- Providing opportunities for developing an effective team approach to raising the quality of basic skills provision within each prison

Two hundred and sixty delegates, from 101 establishments took part in the programme, which was adapted from the successful BSQI training and development events. Forty-four of the prisons sent teams of three or more participants. A number of staff from the PLSU attended parts of the programme and participated in groups.

The events were based on a model known to be successful, with which the tutors were familiar and confident. The programme started with an introduction to the aims of the event and a resume of the BSQI. Delegates were told that the work with prisons was a major aspect of the BSQI and it was set clearly within the context of the programme. Participants then received information on the national context for improving literacy and numeracy, and on the role, remit and work of the PLSU. Participants then worked in their home groups, focusing on their own organisations. They reviewed and planned for improvement in basic skills provision. In the final major session of the programme, the teams of participants presented their plans to other teams in a small group.

# Other BSQI strands of activity

It was clear that the group assembled, that included senior staff responsible to the Home Office, education staff responsible to the DfES and education deliverers responsible for the education contract, had never had the opportunity to plan and work together on literacy, numeracy and language (ESOL) before.

During the event, participants had opportunities to consider their provision in the areas covered by the BSQI materials. They worked with the materials and developed their familiarity with them. Time was allocated for each team to reflect on the implications for their organisation of the issues that are raised. An experienced tutor led each home group.

The Director of curriculum and quality and the small team of consultants who planned and delivered the events were enthusiastic about the work and committed to its success. They welcomed and enjoyed the challenge of working with a new group of participants. The team of tutors at each event comprised four knowledgeable and experienced consultants, supported by the director of curriculum and quality at the AoC, who acted as chair. The administrator, who had organised all of the events, was present at each of them.

The events were particularly successful, with participants rating them highly. Only three of the 260 participants found the events to be uninformative.

A major contribution to the success of the events was the careful and detailed consultation and information gathering which took place in the planning phase. As a result of this planning, very few changes were made to the programme as the events took place. Tutors were well briefed. The manager and staff of the PLSU were supportive and helpful in gaining the support of potential participants, taking part in the invitation process and contributing to the events.

## Participants' views on the events

Participants particularly valued the home groups, where they could work with other members of their team and also share ideas and information with other teams. They welcomed the positive focus on action planning which started from where they were and resulted in an action plan which they could take back to their establishments. They also appreciated what they perceived to be the well-informed support of the tutors.

Those participants who benefited most from attending an event had a senior manager as part of their team, had read the invitation letter and came to the event with a genuine desire to improve their provision.

Participants rated the venues and the administrative arrangements for the events very highly.

The BSQI training and development programme was one of three strands comprising the BSQI. An outline of the other two strands is provided below, with a focus on how they were integrated successfully with the programme.

## Strand 1 – the BSQI materials

### 1

During 2000-2001, the BSQI organised the production of a set of staff and organisational development materials. The materials were drawn from 28 providers with current good practice and were selected to represent the range of providers funded by the FEFC.

The prime purpose of the materials was to help providers think about the processes involved in raising the quality and capacity of their basic skills provision. The materials were not meant to represent complete documents; rather, they were extracts and samples. A significant feature of the early residential events was to introduce providers to the published materials and to explain how they could be used. Though participants in later events also found them useful, it was acknowledged that they did not take account of the new literacy and numeracy curricula.

In 2001 the materials were revised to make them appropriate for use by work-based learning providers and some additional material was added. These revised materials were published in December 2001 and distributed to those work-based learning providers of literacy, numeracy and language (ESOL) funded by the national LSC, and to others on request.

## Strand 2 – facilitators

### 2

Strand two of the BSQI involved the training of facilitators to support providers in the use of the materials. Since the summer of 2000, more than 150 facilitators have worked on the BSQI. They had previously completed a briefing, training and assessment event designed to familiarise them with the materials and to prepare them to support providers in using the materials to improve their literacy, numeracy and language (ESOL) provision.

It was expected that the facilitators would encounter providers at varying stages in the development of a high-quality approach to basic literacy, numeracy and language (ESOL). The facilitators' role included helping providers to review provision, and giving advice on effective improvement planning.

Funding was made available to providers to purchase the services of a facilitator and to release staff to work on achieving the aims of the BSQI. Facilitators were assigned to more than 550 providers of literacy, numeracy and ESOL. They reported that they found it more effective to work with providers who had attended a BSQI residential event than with those that had not. In 2002-2003, the funding within the Learning and Skills Standards Fund was changed so that it was no longer ring-fenced for the use of specific activities such as the use of the BSQI facilitators although it was still potentially available through the Local Standards Fund. Facilitators have reported that their use by providers reduced significantly during 2002.

# Examples of good practice influenced by the BSQI

The following examples show some of the ways in which development of practice in different types of organisation has been influenced by the BSQI.

## Rodbaston College

A small specialist college providing land-based training was awarded a grade 1 for basic skills in its Ofsted inspection in March 2002. Five years earlier it had had almost no provision of this kind, though demand was clearly there.

For example, in 2001-02:

- 73% of the student population was recruited from areas with a population who have numeracy skills below the national average
- 67% of the student population was recruited from areas with a population who have literacy skills below the national average
- 90% of students were assessed at below level 2

With the above student profile in mind the college needed to develop an action plan that encompassed a whole college approach. The action plan could only work if it had the support of senior management and was developed around the college strategic plan.

The college made good use of the BSQI. One of the most beneficial parts was the 3 day training event which the section manager for basic skills, a basic skills tutor and the senior director responsible for curriculum development attended. Without the support from senior managers basic skills could not have been developed throughout the organisation. Over the 3 days the team decided on what was needed to embed basic skills throughout the organisation. They included strategic planning, quality assurance and the coordination of numeracy and literacy training in their discussions and began their action plan.

Staff training was also seen as important. Subsequently, all teaching staff were encouraged to attend training towards the City and Guilds 9281/2 Initial Certificate in Teaching Basic Skills. All support assistants are required to achieve this award as part of their conditions of employment. On achievement of the qualification all staff receive a financial incentive as part of the teachers pay initiative.

Staff development sessions were supported through BSQI funding, and the college's BSQI facilitator assisted with training sessions for vocational tutors. These sessions included basic skills awareness raising, mapping basic skills into vocational activities, producing schemes of work and lesson plans showing how basic skills would be taught, teaching techniques to include differentiated practice and preparing appropriate teaching materials.

## The Cathedral Centre

The Cathedral Centre is a large voluntary sector college providing adult education and training in Bradford. It lays strong emphasis on inclusive learning and has large numbers of learners with numeracy, literacy and language needs, often linked to other types of difficulty. Many of its staff, including teachers, support workers and volunteers, work on a cross-curriculum basis and have experience of teaching or supporting basic skills. The Cathedral Centre was awarded accredited status in 2001. It has used the BSQI to maintain and enhance the already good quality of its provision through removing barriers to learning.

A team of senior staff and practitioners attended an early three-day BSQI residential event. The event set the initiative in context, and also paved the way for strong collaboration across all curriculum areas, especially the vocational ones. It allowed the Cathedral Centre's staff to hear about good practice in other organisations and to network with other providers. It also set the scene for developing a coherent, detailed and realistic basic skills action plan. The action plan showed clearly the ways in which the BSQI materials and the time of the BSQI facilitator would be used.

Managers and staff, helped by the facilitator, used the materials to help them review current processes. They used Teaching, Learning and Students Achievements to help them bring about improvements in assessment and the setting of learning goals. Curriculum Organisation and Management was used to help bring about an effective and coordinated approach to literacy and numeracy provision across all curriculum areas, in particular the sections on curriculum management and on positioning basic skills in the organisation.

The Cathedral Centre made good use of its facilitator in other ways, in commenting on the action plan and in helping with the planning and delivery of training. The facilitator was seen as an advocate for positive change, a catalyst for establishing a realistic and coherent action plan, and as a critical friend.

Overall, staff at the Cathedral Centre assessed the impact on the organisation of BSQI in all of its aspects as follows:

- It gave literacy, numeracy and language an even higher profile than it had already had
- It provided support for the training and development of staff
- It helped to break down barriers within the organisation around the integration of numeracy and literacy into vocational areas
- It laid the foundations for a realistic and coherent action plan
- It fostered team working in the area of basic skills

## Wigan and Leigh College

This is a large tertiary college which has seen a large increase in adult and community provision over the last few years, including primary adult basic education, family learning provision, literacy and numeracy support for students on vocational programmes, and work-place numeracy and literacy.

The college saw the BSQI as a means of raising the profile of literacy and numeracy provision amongst staff at all levels. A vice-principal, the basic skills manager and the manager of the flexible learning centre attended one of the three-day residential events. It gave them the opportunity to identify areas for development, to prioritise them and to start their action plan.

The large number of areas the college identified for development included:

- The mainstreaming of numeracy and literacy provision
- A coherent approach to delivering numeracy and literacy below level 2
- Restructuring where necessary of staffing
- Promoting ownership of numeracy and literacy training in faculties
- The integration of basic skills with key skills
- The expansion of literacy and numeracy provision in the community
- The use of ICT in delivering literacy and numeracy
- The use of **learnirect** to deliver literacy and numeracy

Back in the college they took steps to raise the profile of literacy and numeracy. They organised a staff development event for all staff involved in providing literacy and numeracy training, to give them the opportunity of commenting on and adding to the action plan. There was also a staff development session for each faculty. They also organised a presentation to the learning committee that would have the job of approving and monitoring the plan. They arranged a presentation to the governing body and the academic board on the key actions they proposed.

The college's facilitator had knowledge and experience that contributed to the realisation of the action plan, including the use of ICT in curriculum delivery, and an understanding of issues relating to the delivery of numeracy and literacy in the workplace. The facilitator worked with the social inclusion team and with the staff of the in-house drop-in study centre to improve aspects of the provision of numeracy and literacy.

The college also used the BSQI materials to develop an individual learning plan for the whole college. The pro forma was designed to be used to record screening results for basic and key skills. The materials were also used as a basis for staff development for the whole college on the use of individual learning plans and initial screening.

## Sandwell College

Sandwell College is a large inner-city college of further education operating from a number of sites. It is in an area of the West Midlands where there are high levels of deprivation. The expansion and improvement of numeracy, literacy and language provision in the college was identified as a priority, as demand exceeded provision. In particular, the college wished to tackle:

- The structure of basic skills provision and responsibility for it across the college
- Skills shortages amongst staff
- The integration of numeracy and literacy into vocational training
- The quality of teaching and learning
- Retention, achievement, attendance and tracking

All in all, the impact on the college was considerable. Firstly, four staff attended a three-day event, not all of whom had a particular commitment to developing numeracy and literacy. All found the event useful in helping them to focus on quality improvement. It gave them the time to look at the reality and effectiveness of their existing action plan. Also, as one member of the team put it, 'it challenged our complacency'.

The college then made use of the BSQI materials in all faculties to underpin staff training aimed at improving the quality of teaching and learning, in conjunction with a programme of lesson observations. This also helped to raise the profile of numeracy and literacy throughout the college.

The college's facilitator worked at several levels. At managerial level she acted as an advocate for change, and as a critical friend, and through this contributed to the development of a realistic and coherent basic skills action plan. At the operational level the independent view and external experience of the facilitator was appreciated. She worked with curriculum teams on the integration of numeracy and literacy into vocational areas. She also provided an input to developing strategies for improving attendance, retention and achievement on numeracy and literacy provision. She also worked with the numeracy and literacy coordinator on documentation for recording the data needed to judge effectiveness and value added.

## Runshaw College

A medium-sized college in Lancashire, it has received good or outstanding grades at inspection for almost all of its provision.

Managers found attendance at the residential event the most useful part of their BSQI work. It gave them the opportunity to clarify their action plan, to ensure that targets were SMART, and to sit down and think. On their return to college they were able to communicate their vision and enthusiasm for improvement to the whole management and numeracy and literacy team.

Each of the four volumes of the BSQI materials was reviewed by a middle manager and papers summarising the review were circulated. The managers identified the sections of the materials that they felt would be most useful to staff involved in seeing through the action plan. They also worked with the facilitator to identify other useful elements. The facilitator also attended meetings to review and monitor the action plan.

Staff of the college felt that the BSQI had had a positive impact on their work. It helped them to:

- Start to customise teaching and learning standards
- Develop more short modules
- Introduce a strategy for raising the aspirations and expectations of learners
- Improve documentation
- Review staffing
- Start to develop more reliable data

## Oaklands College

This is a large college offering numeracy and literacy to a good standard, as assessed by inspection, in the community and in the work place, in discrete classes, through support, and integrated into the curriculum.

Members of the college became involved in the BSQI at an early stage. Before attending the residential event for managers they set up a BSQI steering group and agreed goals for the training. The event was useful in so far as it allowed them to focus on their work without distraction, to evaluate critically their provision, to learn from other people, and to write their action plan. The action plan focused on improving teaching and learning, developing collaborative provision, and improving and assuring quality, with particular reference to integrated numeracy and literacy.

As with other colleges, the facilitator provided a fresh eye and took on the role of critical friend. The facilitator also helped the college to set and keep to deadlines.

Good use was made of the BSQI materials, with the emphasis on adaptation rather than adoption.

The impact on the college of the BSQI was judged to be considerable. The initiative:

- Raised the profile of numeracy and literacy
- Gave key staff time to reflect on their practice
- Supported the implementation of:
  - numeracy and literacy in local communities
  - the new numeracy and literacy curriculum
  - basic skills brokerage
  - preparation for a resubmission for granting of the BSA Kitemark

## The Mary Ward Centre

This is a small external institution offering education to adults. It has made considerable progress in introducing literacy and numeracy support for its learners through its involvement with the various aspects of the BSQI. Staff particularly appreciated the support they received from their facilitator. She helped them to identify students' learning support needs, and to consider how they might be met by changing classroom practice. She also worked through their action plans with them, helping them to identify weaknesses and how these might be remedied.

## Oldham Lifelong Learning

Oldham Lifelong Learning provides adult and community learning, managed to find the time for two senior staff to attend a residential event. They commented that this gave them a valuable opportunity to plan without interruption, and to refine their self-assessment report. They also appreciated the opportunity the event gave for discussion with staff from similar organisations outside of the North West, and to gain information from people working in the field of numeracy, literacy and ESOL at national level.

## BSQI and practice in the prison service

Considerable benefit from the residential events was felt by staff in prisons. Most of their work was in home groups. This gave them a rare opportunity to talk and plan at length with colleagues and to network and discuss curriculum matters with practitioners and managers from other institutions, with people from outside the prison service, and with the tutors and guest speakers working on the events.

More specifically, representatives from a number of prisons used their time at the events to improve on plans into which a considerable amount of time had already gone. For example:

## HMP Pentonville

Staff from HMP Pentonville used the time at the event to refine their plans for developing literacy and numeracy provision at levels 1 and 2 in the prison, and for



ensuring that prisoners had access to a core curriculum. The plans have now been implemented. Staff commented particularly on the value of having the opportunity for uninterrupted discussion and planning time. They also appreciated being able to work in a spacious and relatively private environment.

### HMP Wormwood Scrubs

The staff that attended the event were able to reassess the work they had done on preparing for the BSA Kitemark and to strengthen the targets they had set themselves.

Other representatives drew inspiration from the opportunities for networking and discussion offered by the events:

### HMP Frankland

HMP Frankland is an adult male high security prison. Prisoners are generally with the prison for a substantial period and many have literacy and numeracy needs. Its education manager and its basic skills co-ordinator used the time at the BSQI residential event to draw on information from representatives of other organisations on their literacy and numeracy provision and to refine an existing action plan. With this work as a starting point they have since sought and been granted substantial funding from a charitable trust to set up a well-equipped key skills workshop, named 'Widgets'. They have also moved forward with plans to integrate literacy and numeracy training with work, linked to a national vocational qualification in catering for prisoners who work in the kitchens, and through a workshop in which prisoners will blend learning with refurbishing hearing aids for a charity.

### HMP North Sea Camp

Staff also commented on the value of networking and discussion. They had been able to use information gained to strengthen their self-assessment processes and report. They also felt better prepared to implement the new literacy and numeracy standards.

Staff from several prisons benefited from attending the residential events in teams consisting of staff from different disciplines, who otherwise had little opportunity to undergo training together.

### HMP Manchester

This team of staff included a prison officer. Its members were able to discuss the impact of regime requirements on prisoners' allocation to and attendance at education activities. The prison officer gained a greater knowledge of the needs of education staff and of the prisoners with whom they worked. He was able to use this to good effect on his return.

### HMP Belmarsh

A head of inmate activities formed part of the team from this organisation. During the event, the team members were able to gain a good understanding of each other's work. Staff commented later that the result of the discussion of plans for the education department ensured that there was increased understanding at a senior level of the conditions under which prisoners received education. This subsequently helped to increase participation in learning and raise levels of attendance at lessons.

The events were also attended by representatives from the enterprise and supply and the sales and marketing divisions of the prison service. They are particularly concerned with prisoners in the workplace. This was the first opportunity for joint training with education staff that had been offered to them. One representative commented that attendance at an event had been 'a catalyst for appreciating what good work had gone on over the years'.

Since the events were held there has been progress in moving towards supporting the implementation of key skills and literacy and numeracy training in workshops. The enterprise and supply service has set up a basic and key skills panel, with representatives from the PLSU and from Custody to Work, which deals with resettlement. The panel's remit is to examine the relationship between employment and education provision. A recent area for discussion has been aspects of the Common Inspection Framework. The panel has been exploring with the Adult Learning Inspectorate how quality in the workshops in regard to education can be developed.

# Acknowledgments

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Judith Norrington	<i>Director of Curriculum and Quality and Project Director</i>
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# Pen portraits of project team

## Judith Norrington

Judith Norrington has been director of curriculum and quality at the Association of Colleges since its creation in 1996. Previously she held a similar post at the Association for Colleges, which she joined at its inception in 1993.

Judith writes policy documents, reports and consultation responses on behalf of the Association on a wide range of curriculum and quality issues and has surveyed the sector on a range of areas to inform college practice, including inspection, Curriculum 2000, awarding bodies' costs, HE in FE and Performance Review. She leads on 14-19 curriculum policy developments for the Association. She has worked recently both on those learners who are able to benefit from current qualifications and the 51% of learners who are not reaching government benchmarks at 16. Judith leads on basic skills issues and is actively involved in a range of project work to support the sector. She lobbies on behalf of the sector on curriculum and quality issues and represents AoC on many national committees and advisory groups including LSC, DfES, Guidance Council, awarding bodies, Ufi, QCA, and steering groups for some national research projects. She was recently a member of Mike Tomlinson's reference group as part of the inquiry into A Level Standards, is now a member of two sub-groups and is also a member of the QCA Examinations Taskforce. She has directed a range of national projects including the Inclusive Learning Quality Initiative for the FEFC, 'Managing for Success' for the ABSSU and work on key skills, learning mentors and work-based learning.

## Siobhan Bird

Siobhan is the lead administrator for the LSC-funded Basic Skills Quality Initiative, providing support and arranging training events for staff from colleges and external institutions. She started at the Association of Colleges in January 2001 to set-up and run the administration of the BSQI project. She joined the association from the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development where she was a conference co-ordinator.

## Stuart McCoy

Stuart works as an independent consultant, and was lead consultant for the BSQI training and development programme for the AoC. Formerly, a full-time inspector with FEFC specialising in literacy, numeracy and ESOL; co-author of *Basic Education: Curriculum Area Survey (1998)*; author of *Basic Skills Summer Schools (1999)*, *Basic Education: Making a Difference (1999)*, and *Evaluation of Awards for Literacy, Numeracy and ESOL (1999)*. Stuart is an associate inspector with Ofsted and the ALI. He is a college governor. He was a member of the BSQI steering group and co-editor of the BSQI materials. He was co-author of the first draft of the ABSSU publication *Success in adult literacy, numeracy and ESOL provision (2002)*. Previous experience as deputy principal of a GFE college, including management of prison education and work-based learning programmes, post-16 adviser in an LEA and development officer with the Further Education Unit (now LSDA). Stuart has been a member of numerous national advisory committees and a verifier and chief assessor for awarding bodies.

## Matthew Griffiths

Matthew works as an independent consultant and lead the prison education BSQI work. Formerly, a full-time inspector with FEFC; particular responsibility for basic education and provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities; joint lead for national survey of provision for basic skills and provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities; co-author of *Good Practice Guide for teachers of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities*. Previously, national director of education at MENCAP; he led the development for the FEU/MENCAP of the curriculum framework Learning for Life; and led work for the World Health Organisation.

# Pen portraits of tutor team

## Marie Allen

Marie is head of faculty of adult basic education at Liverpool Community College. She started her career as a maths teacher in a secondary school. After a career break, she returned as a volunteer tutor for basic skills and then a part-time and full-time lecturer in the college. She helped to establish the network of Drop-In Study Centres across the city for students with basic skills needs. Marie manages a large team of full-time and part-time staff in a diverse faculty that was awarded a grade 1 for its basic skills provision in February 2000. She is also an associate inspector with the ALI, specialising in literacy and numeracy provision.

## Peter Bainbridge

Peter works as an independent consultant. He has spent over thirty years in a wide range of education and training jobs and was, until recently, an FEFC senior inspector in the south west region. Prior to that, Peter was a specialist inspector for basic skills, adult and community education. Before joining the inspectorate he was an LEA Director of Education. Earlier in his career he was a community education worker, secondary school teacher, polytechnic senior lecturer and head of an LEA community education service. He was adviser to the Association of Metropolitan Authorities community education group.

## Teresa Bergin

Director of quality for the National Open College Network; responsible for managing the development and quality assurance of national qualifications. Consultant to FEFC on stage 1 of the BSQI; member of the BSQI steering group; editor of the draft materials; and tutor on the BSQI training of facilitators. Previously, director of the Merseyside Open College Network; experienced as a teacher of basic skills.

## Christine Crompton

Christine works as an independent consultant. She was formerly a full-time FEFC inspector. Formerly an education adviser with north west government regional office, working on TVEI, TEC and SRB programmes; also regional lead on GNVQ development and FE/HE links. Previous roles include FE/HE inspector with Liverpool LEA, including work on the development of open learning provision and Drop-In Study Centre provision, the equal opportunities training programme and oversight of prison education. Also, a teacher and manager in a large FE college, with responsibility for open and distance learning development; and 3 years' experience as a college governor.

## Rose Gittins

A freelance educational consultant with 22 years experience in the post-16 sector, 12 years as a manager and 6 years in a SMT position. She has taught dedicated basic skills, support for vocational courses, family literacy/numeracy and work-based learning in a variety of settings and delivered C&G 7306/7, 9282/3/5, 7323/4.

A consultant for the BSA and has written training materials for the Core Curriculum, Family Learning and Diagnostic Assessment teacher training initiatives. She is currently co-ordinating the roll out of the Core Curriculum training in the north of England. Also, Rose has designed and delivered customised training for a range of ACL, FE and LEA providers, and written basic skills entry level qualifications for two awarding bodies.

A LSDA consultant advising and supporting ACL providers through the process of self-assessment and development planning. A BSQI facilitator and has successfully prepared basic skills action plans and co-ordinated applications for BSA Quality Mark and IIP.

## Charlie Henry

An OFSTED additional inspector for Special Education Needs and a registered Associate Inspector for the ALI. Charlie Henry has expertise that spans educational psychology, assessment and advice for learners including dyslexia and areas of learning difficulty including emotional and behavioural difficulties and the autistic spectrum, consultancy with further education and specialist colleges. Previously FEFC lead and team inspector for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, Inclusive Learning Facilitator, Deputy Head of LEA Support Service, Manager of non-maintained provision for learners with visual impairment.

## Pat Hood

Pat Hood worked as a lead consultant on FEFC Basic Skills Quality Initiative, supporting colleges and editing materials. For three years she managed the FEFC Inclusive Learning Quality Initiative on behalf of the AoC. Pat was a member of the FEFC Basic Education National Survey Team. Formerly, she was adviser/writer to the FEFC Tomlinson Committee and is a part-time registered inspector. Previously, a member of the NIACE advisory group; member of the QCA forum on Fair Assessment; member of the SKILL national executive council; senior manager with the FEU; LEA inspector; senior manager in FE colleges.

## Myra Joyce

Education consultant and part-time inspector. Lead tutor in the training of inclusive learning facilitators and institution co-ordinators. Formerly a full-time inspector covering humanities and programme area 10 including ESOL and provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and all cross college areas. Myra was previously head of a continuing education department and vice-principal at a college. Teaching experience includes English, communication skills, ESOL and provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

## Teresa Kelly

Currently deputy principal (Curriculum & quality) at Sandwell College in the West Midlands. She started teaching in 1974 in special schools in Birmingham and moved into FE in 1977 as a course director for students with severe learning difficulties. Teresa has held a variety of teaching and management posts within the sector, including client services, head of department and director of corporate strategy. She became deputy principal in 1998. A part time FEFC registered inspector for basic skills and an inclusive learning facilitator, she has also been involved in phase one of the Basic Skills and Inclusive Learning Initiatives.

## Sheila Leever

Now retired, Sheila was one of the lead consultants on BSQI and ILQI. Sheila Leever has worked as a consultant to a number of national organisations, including AoC, LSDA and DfEE, as well as a range of colleges. Until 1998, she was FEFC Senior Inspector for the Northern region and Yorkshire and Humberside. Before that, she worked for four years as an organisational development manager for ICI and held various management roles in FE. Her last college role was vice principal; her first role in further education was adult literacy co-ordinator for Hertfordshire.

## Sheila Morton

Now a consultant, Sheila was formerly vice principal of Northern College [Beacon College]. A member of South Yorkshire LSC Basic Skills Strategy Group and Chair of Barnsley Basic Skills Consortium, Sheila contributed to the preparation of materials for the Basic Skills Quality Initiative. She is former chair of South Yorkshire Open College Network. With experience in schools, community education, local authorities, FE colleges and adult residential learning. Her research interests lie in widening participation.

## Angela O'Donoghue

Angela O'Donoghue has been Principal at Brooke House, The Sixth Form College in London since its opening in 2002. Previously, she was director of curriculum at Wigan & Leigh College for three and a half years. Prior to that she was head of faculty of engineering, construction and science at Liverpool Community College.

Angela has extensive experience of working with basic skills, students with learning difficulties and disabilities, and student support, in addition to experience of managing adult and community work in outreach settings.

Angela has always been involved in developmental work across the sector. She was involved in the Inclusive Learning Quality Initiative, in Phase 1 (developing materials) and then as a facilitator and trainer, in the development of the use of ICT/ILT within curriculum delivery and in development of the Basic Skills Quality Initiative.

Angela has experience of basic skills as both a practitioner and as a strategic manager. She brought both perspectives to the Quality Initiative. Her current role and her work as a curriculum director gave her the opportunity to implement the strategic decisions required in order to take forward the Government's agenda of improving the basic skills of the country and improving standards of basic skills delivery and achievement.

## Jan Smith

Jan works at Sheffield Hallam University, co-ordinating and teaching on college-based education management courses and on post-16 education courses. She has worked as a teacher and manager in further, adult and community education in seven different post-compulsory organisations. Previous teaching experience includes basic education, teaching 'second-chance' learners, adults with learning difficulties, and speakers of other languages. She is a part-time inspector, specialising in basic skills, and has worked as a consultant for the FEFC as a member of the Basic Education National Survey Team. Jan was also a member of the Inclusive Learning Quality consortium, looking at accreditation issues. Her research interests are in widening participation and in the curriculum experience of non-traditional learners.

## Carol Tennyson

Carol works as an independent consultant, and was lead tutor for some of the BSQI training and development events. Formerly, a full-time inspector with FEFC; particular responsibility for basic education and provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities; joint lead for national survey of provision for basic skills and provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities; co-author of the *FEFC Good Practice Guide for teachers of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities*; member of the BSQI steering group and co-editor of the BSQI materials. She was previously an inspector/adviser for Nottinghamshire LEA; project researcher for the FEU leading to the publication of *Transition to Adulthood* (1987).

## Jane Ward

Jane Ward joined NIACE as regional agent for the North West in September 2001. Previously, she worked for over 18 years in adult and community education delivering, developing and managing literacy and numeracy, and other provision for adult learners. One specialist area of interest for Jane is good practice in the development and delivery of basic skills provision in the workplace and diverse adult education and community based contexts. She has also worked on effective recruitment strategies, staff training, development of innovative curriculum content and delivery methods, assessment and appropriate quality assurance methods. Jane managed basic skills provision for one of the providers that contributed materials to stage 1 of the BSQI and is also a BSQI facilitator. She is now researching workplace basic skills provision at Sheffield University.

## Janet Woods

Janet works as an independent consultant. She contributed to the BSQI materials in stage 1 of the initiative with Oaklands College; involved in editing some BSQI draft materials; also works as a BSQI facilitator and contributed to the training of BSQI facilitators. Most of her consultancy work is with colleges in developing basic skills provision and the development of quality assurance for a range of providers. Janet formerly was the basic skills manager at Oaklands College and has 18 years of experience as a lead practitioner in the basic skills curriculum area.

# Evaluation form and statistics

## LSC Basic Skills Quality Initiative

Training and development event

### Feedback form

The Association values your feedback and would be very grateful if you would let us have your views about the event. Please hand in your completed feedback form at the end of the event, or return it by post to Siobhan Bird, at Association of Colleges, 5th Floor, Centre Point, 103 New Oxford Street, London, WC1A 1RG, or by fax to 020 7827 4650.

#### How informative and useful did you find the event?

Very	Quite	Not very	Not at all
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

#### How appropriate was the duration of the event?

Too long	About right	Too short
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

#### How well did the event match your expectations?

Very well	Quite well	Not very well	Not at all
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

#### Which session did you find most useful? And why?

Plenary sessions	Home groups	ABSSU	LSC	Area groups/LLSC
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

#### Which session did you find least useful? And why?

Plenary sessions	Home groups	ABSSU	LSC	Area groups/LLSC
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

#### How effectively was the event administered?

Very well	Quite well	Not very well	Not at all
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

#### How convenient is the location?

Very	Quite	Not very	Not at all
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

#### How would you rate the conference facilities at the venue?

Very good	Good	Adequate	Not very good	Unsatisfactory
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

#### How was the quality and service of food and refreshments?

Very good	Good	Adequate	Not very good	Unsatisfactory
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

#### Would you like to make any additional comments about the event?

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#### Name (optional):

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*Thank you for completing this form. Your contribution is appreciated.*

Feedback forms were given to each attending delegate as part of their delegate pack. These forms were then collected at the end of each event and collated. All comments received through this feedback were discussed with the tutor team and action decided.

Of the 1828 people that attended, 1463 forms were received, a response total of 80%.

Statistics from all events is collated and shown below:

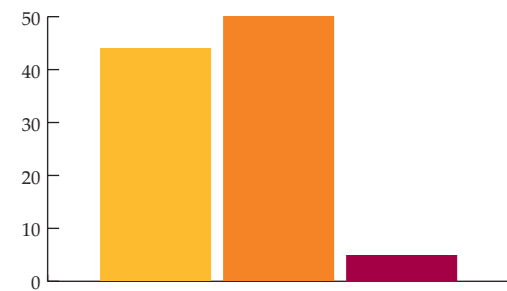
**1) How useful/informative did you find the event?**

Very	Quite	Not very
854	569	36
58%	39%	2%



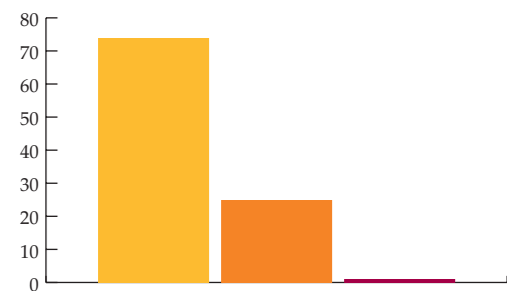
**2) How well did the event meet your expectations?**

Very	Quite	Not very
644	729	70
44%	50%	5%



**3) How effectively was the event administered?**

Very	Quite	Not very
1082	362	10
74%	25%	1%



The same questions were asked at of those delegates attending the one-day events. Statistics were compiled from the 266 responses received (shown below):

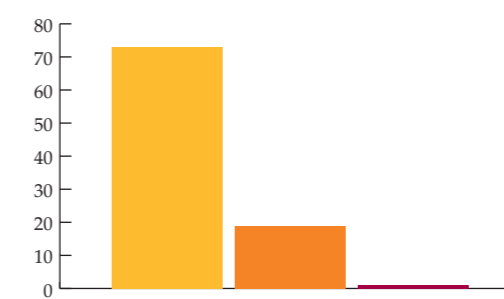
**1) How useful/informative did you find the event?**

Very	Quite	Not very
151	103	9
57%	39%	3%



**2) How effectively was the event administered?**

Very	Quite	Not very
195	51	2
73%	19%	1%



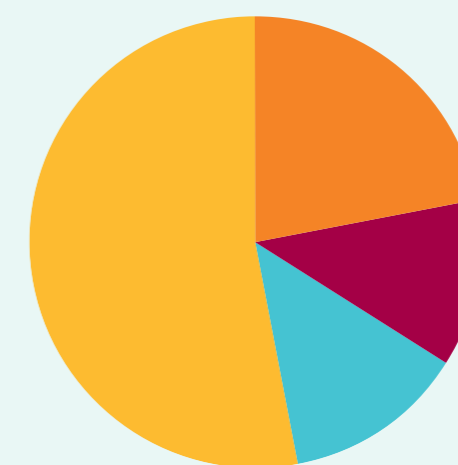
# Event schedule

Date	Location	Delegates	Organisations
<b>2001</b>			
5-7 February	London	43	17
13-15 February	Sheffield	49	18
19-21 February	London	47	17
28 February-2 March	Birmingham	54	21
6-8 March	London	51	19
12-14 March	Sheffield	50	19
27-29 March	Birmingham	50	20
2-4 April	Sheffield	60	24
4-6 June	London	17	7
19-21 June	Chester	37	16
25-27 June	Bath	51	18
2-4 July	Dudley	47	17
9-11 July	London	45	18
16-18 July	Sheffield	58	22
17-19 September	London	31	13
2-4 October	Bath	28	10
8-10 October	Leeds	22	9
15-17 October	Stratford-upon-Avon	21	10
29-31 October	London	40	19
5-7 November	Leeds	37	14
26-28 November	Leeds	44	18
3-5 December	London	46	19
10-12 December	Stratford-upon-Avon	65	26
<b>2002</b>			
*24 January	Bristol	27	23
*29 January	Chester	50	44
*5 February	Newcastle-upon-Tyne	28	22
*12 February	Leeds	38	33
*26 February	Coventry	36	34
*6 March	London	48	44
*7 March	London	44	41
*12 March	Peterborough	29	27
*19 March	Newmarket	26	23
28 February-1 March	London	44	23
20-21 March	London	46	20
10-11 June	Birmingham	41	18
13-14 June	Leeds	48	21
20-21 June	London	42	16
25-26 June	London	48	17

1-2 July	Liverpool	49	20
9-10 July	Exeter	32	13
8-9 October	London	40	20
28-29 October	Leeds	38	20
5-6 November	London	32	16
25-26 November	Leeds	41	21
3-4 December	Birmingham	45	26
10-11 December	London	40	21
<b>2003</b>			
21-22 January	London	34	17
28-29 January	Birmingham	31	16
5-6 February	Leeds	46	24
4-5 March	London	49	28
11-12 March	Birmingham	36	22
18-19 March	Leeds	53	27
*25 March	London	15	15
*26 March	London	21	21
*1 April	Leeds	14	13
*2 April	Liverpool	12	10
*8 April	Birmingham	18	15

\* denotes one-day events

Organisation type	Number attended	Percentage
Sector Colleges	426	53%
Adult and Community learning providers	178	22%
Work-based learning providers	92	12%
Prison Education	101	13%





# www.aoc.co.uk

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