

Sunderland Skills Support Project

Skills for Life

In 2001 the Government launched *Skills for Life*, the national strategy for improving adult literacy, language and numeracy skills. Up to 7 million adults in England need help to improve their skills for life - studies have found that one in five adults has difficulty locating the page for 'plumbers' in the Yellow Pages using the alphabetical index, and one in three adults cannot calculate the area of a room measuring 21x14 feet.

As part of the *Skills for Life* strategy the Government outlined its commitment to raising the quality of teaching and learning in adult literacy, language and numeracy provision. A new framework of qualifications was developed for those who teach and support adult learners. The new qualifications recognise the discrete roles, responsibilities and skills needs required by those who teach and support adult skills for life, and they are structured to promote clear pathways for progression and personal development.

Free training for a wide range of organisations

The project is administered by City of Sunderland Adult and Community Learning, on behalf of the Basic Skills Strategy Sub-group of the Sunderland Learning Partnership. The aim of the project is to upgrade the skills of staff and volunteers who may encounter adults with basic skills needs through provision of the City and Guilds 9295 Level 2 Certificate in Adult Learner Support.

What is on offer?

A free and flexible learning programme which offers the Certificate in Adult Learner Support (see overleaf for details), delivered to suit the needs of your organisation. The programme can be delivered at a venue of your choice, at a

time that is suitable to your operational needs. The project is open to staff and volunteers from a range of organisations, including statutory bodies, commercial businesses and the voluntary and community sector. Enquiries are also welcomed from individuals.

Courses are designed to suit 10-12 participants, and can be run with a minimum of 8 candidates. The project will run until the end of 2006.



What are the benefits?

The project offers free personal development opportunities to build the skills of staff in your organisation.

Front-line staff who have participated in the course have reported increased awareness of customers' needs, more confidence when giving advice and support, and a more empathetic approach when dealing with customers and service users. The support

techniques learned on the course help participants to support adult learners - this is relevant to the work of many front-line staff, for example when they help customers to fill in forms or calculate payments.



City and Guilds 9295 Certificate in Adult Learner Support

Component	Content and skills developed
Unit 1 This can be taken as a stand-alone qualification Duration: 20 guided learning hours	Awareness raising module that will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help you to develop an understanding of the impact on personal, social and working life of poor literacy, numeracy or language skills, and the strategies to address these • Provide the skills and understanding needed to improve personal performance, allowing you the to formally and informally identify potential adult learners, and refer them to appropriate local provision.
Unit 2 Duration: 20 guided learning hours plus 8 hours of practical placement	An introduction to support within the learning environment. It will help you to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop an understanding of the characteristics of adult learners and the learning process • Improve your communication skills as you support learners during your placement • Understand how learners with learning difficulties can be supported
Units 3, 4 or 5 (Literacy, Numeracy or ESOL – English for Speakers of Other Languages) Duration: 20 guided learning hours	Candidates choose to specialise in Literacy, Numeracy or ESOL, and are given an introduction to the core curricula documents and strategies used in these specialist teaching areas. You will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflect on and develop your own literacy, language or numeracy skills • Practice the skills that learners will be developing • Become familiarised with examples of specialist teaching resources and support techniques

Project Achievements

Since it began in 2004, over 200 people have accessed City and Guilds learning opportunities through this project. More than 25 courses have run in a variety of local venues, including libraries, community centres and recipient organisation workplaces. Over 100 people have achieved the Unit 1 qualification, whilst many others await their results. Over 80% of beneficiaries are female! At the end of 2004, the Adult Learning Inspectorate gave the skills support project a grade 2 rating of “good”.

Organisations and agencies that have taken part in the project include the City of Sunderland Libraries, Bridge Education and Training, Surestart, Plains Farm and Humbledon Community Initiative, Social Services, Workers’ Education Association and Services for Young People. Carol Smith, from Bridge Education and Training, states: “Participation in the course has definitely benefited our organisation ... it has given our staff and volunteers greater awareness of the issues faced by students prior to their learning experience. Those who took part in Unit 1 have gained a wider knowledge of the skills for life support structures ... which has resulted in positive impacts for both our students and for the project overall”.

How has the skills support project benefited past learners?

“Before I took the course I didn’t realise the sheer number of people who have difficulty reading and writing — I look back in horror at all the customers I incorrectly assumed were lazy because they made me fill in their forms. Now I can recognise people with learning needs I can offer them appropriate advice and support”.

“Taking the course has taught me specialist support techniques that I will be able to use in my job as an outreach worker, and in my capacity as a volunteer. Since I finished the course I have encouraged many people to take advantage of the basic skills learning provision in Sunderland”.

For more information, please contact:

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