Learning at work: strategies for widening adult participation in learning below Level 2 via the workplace

a scoping study

Peter Bates, Will Hunt and Jim Hillage
## Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acknowledgements</th>
<th>3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Executive summary</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statistical evidence on participation in learning</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constraints to learning in the workplace</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A typology of the influences on workplace learning</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Further research issues</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Introduction</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1 Aims and objectives</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 Methodology</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3 Parameters of the scope</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4 Report structure</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Issues concerning widening participation and learning in the workplace</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1 Types of learning</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 Learning at work</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3 Widening participation</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4 The public policy context</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5 Key points</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 The statistical evidence on workplace learning</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1 National Adult Learning Survey (NALS) 2002</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2 Pathways in Adult Learning Survey (PALS) 2003</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3 Labour Force Survey</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4 Key points</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Constraints to learning in the workplace</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1 Restrictors to workplace learners</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2 Employer and employment-related barriers to workplace learning</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3 Restrictors and barriers to employee demand</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4 Key points</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Developing a typology of the influences on workplace learning</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1 Factors influencing workplace learning</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2 Interventions promoting a widening of participation in learning below Level 2</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3 Key points</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Workplace learning facilitators</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.1 Employee brokers or learning champions</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.2 Promotion and marketing</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.3 Flexible content and capacity</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.4 Other methods of supporting learning outside the workplace and/or outside work time</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.5 Methods of supporting employer needs</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.6 Increasing learning or widening participation</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.7 Key points</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Key themes and future issues</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Appendix A: Example of national initiatives supporting the widening of participation in learning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Appendix A: Example of national initiatives supporting the widening of participation in learning</th>
<th>44</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A.1 Employer Training Pilots</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A.2 Ufi/Learndirect</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A.3 Investors in People</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A.4 Adult Learners’ Week</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A.5 Initiatives to promote workplace literacy and numeracy skills learning 45

Appendix B: Examples of individual initiatives to promote workplace learning 47

B.1 NHS Estates and Facilities Directorate work-based tutor 47
B.2 Passport to Learning 47
B.3 Learning on the Move (the Learning Bus) 48
B.4 Cumbria Care 49
B.5 High and Mighty 50
B.6 Skillscentre:mk 50
B.7 Tesco Learning Centre 51
B.8 NHS Learning Accounts 52
B.9 Careconnect 52
B.10 Get On And Learn 52
B.11 TOTAL3 (Training Open To All Learners) 54
B.12 Rotherham Learning Network 55
B.13 First Bus Learning Centre, Orpington 55
B.14 Read On Write Away! – ROWA! 56
B.15 Blackburn with Darwen Taxi Drivers’ Scheme 57

References 58
Acknowledgements

We would like to acknowledge the support provided by Darshan Sachdev, Research Manager, Centre for Demand for Learning, who commissioned this study on behalf of the Learning and Skills Development Agency (LSDA). We would also like to extend our thanks to other LSDA colleagues, including Maria Hughes, Research Manager, Centre for Vocational Learning, Skills and Work; Rosie Zwart, researcher; Jamal Mohammed, administrator, Centre for Demand for Learning; and Nick Sweeney for the final copy-editing. The authors would also like to acknowledge the editorial contributions of Gill Howd and Polly Green at the Institute for Employment Studies. Thanks are also due to Janet Ryland of the Learning and Skills Council (LSC), Sue Batt and the team at the Workplace Basic Skills Network, Iain Murray (TUC) and the regional directors of the LSDA and the Skills for Life Strategy Unit (who provided support in obtaining case study contacts) and the project advisory group and seminar participants. The members of the advisory group and other expert seminar participants were:

Sharon Simpson Asset Skills
Victoria Gill CIPD
Tony Uden Independent consultant
Edmund Waite Institute of Education
Janet Ryland LSC National Office
Richard Marsh LSC National Office
Sue Yeomans LSC National Office
Peter Coady LSC National Office
Maria Hughes LSDA
Christine Jude NHSU
Ian Gittens NHSU
Ann Hansen NIACE
Dr Alison Fuller Southampton University
Iain Murray TUC
Anne Faulkner Ufi
Sheila Kearney Ufi/Learndirect
Tony Chandler Unison
Dr Alan Brown University of Warwick
Prof. Ewart Keep University of Warwick

Finally, we would also like to thank all the scoping and case study participants who contributed to this study. Any errors and omissions in the report, however, are those of the primary author.
Executive summary

Introduction

This report details the findings of a scoping study into initiatives, methods and approaches designed to encourage a widening of adult participation in learning via the workplace below Level 2. It presents:

- the statistical evidence on participation in learning
- a typology of the constraints to workplace learning
- a typology of the factors supporting workplace learning, and its relationship to the constraints identified
- areas and issues in which there is a need for further research.

Methodology

Following an initial scoping phase (March to April 2005) designed to define the parameters of the project, the study involved a review of literature and qualitative interviews with a series of stakeholders responsible for supporting workplace learning (April to June). An expert seminar was held in July 2005 to discuss the conclusions of this scoping study and highlight areas for further research.

Parameters

The focus of this study is on approaches and initiatives aimed at widening participation in learning via the workplace among adults in employment. As such, it does not cover schemes aimed at 14-19 year olds, adult and community learning initiatives or welfare-to-work programmes. Although the role of informal learning in the workplace is commented on here, the qualitative component of this study mainly focuses on formal learning interventions.

Statistical evidence on participation in learning

Examination of statistical evidence showed that general participation in learning and work-related education and training activities is very much determined by an individual’s demographic, educational, socio-economic and employment characteristics. A review of the findings from several national surveys suggests that a number of adult groups have lower than average rates of engagement in learning. These groups include those who:

- have no formal qualifications
- have literacy and numeracy skills difficulties
- are living in deprived areas
- have low incomes
- are from certain minority ethnic groups
- are not in employment, or work in lower level occupations.

Constraints to learning in the workplace

A review of the literature identified a range of constraints that discourage learning in the workplace. These fall into four broad groups:
• **employer restrictors** — factors limiting the overall employer demand for learning in the workplace, the most notable of which is the lack of employer need for higher level skills, which in turn leads to a lack of interest in education and training

• **employee restrictors** — factors limiting the overall employee demand for workplace learning, including a lack of employee incentive to learn, eg due to poor progression prospects, low additional financial returns associated with lower level vocational qualifications

• **employer and/or employment barriers** — dispositional or resource constraints related to workplace learning, eg lack of support from line managers and difficulties in organising staff release

• **employee barriers** — general dispositional or resource barriers related to employees more generally, eg negative school experiences.

### A typology of the influences on workplace learning

This study has developed a typology of factors that influence workplace learning and arise from the interaction between the two dimensions of supply-demand, and facilitator-driver. The four groups that result are:

• **demand-side drivers** — policies directly or indirectly influencing the desire for employers or employees to engage in learning, and include licence to practise and similar legislation, corporate policies and quality standards (such as Investors in People)

• **demand-side facilitators** — initiatives or other interventions aimed at encouraging or facilitating the implementation of workplace learning activities, including development of employee brokers - or learning champions - promoting and marketing activities, financial incentives and information, advice and guidance

• **supply-side drivers** — policies directly or indirectly influencing the desire for education and training providers to support workplace learning, eg national targets in literacy and numeracy

• **supply-side facilitators** — initiatives or other interventions aimed at supporting the assessment, delivery or accreditation of workplace learning, eg developing embedded and contextualised content, use of blended learning and e-learning, and the creation of dedicated learning spaces (such as learning centres).

In addition to these four groups, employer brokerage is identified as a ‘market facilitator’ matching the needs of employers with appropriately tailored supply-side provisions.

Relating this typology to the typology of constraints, it emerges that drivers are predominantly aimed at tackling workplace learning restrictors, while facilitators aim to tackle workplace learning barriers.

### Further research issues

In terms of further research, although much is known about both the constraints to widening participation in learning below Level 2 via the workplace, and the various approaches adopted to deal with those constraints, there is still a need to:

• **understand learning drivers** — more focus may be needed on how the demand for learning can be increased through encouraging employer and employee demand for higher skills, facilitating change in work practices or developing the personal development skills of managers
• understand methods of supporting informal learning — a need to understand approaches to promoting informal learning in the workplace, and improving the quality of such learning

• understand the needs of providers — a need to further understand the supply-side issues related to promoting workplace learning, and to consider how to address the skills needs of providers engaged in the delivery of workplace learning

• gather evaluative evidence — a need for more evaluative evidence that examines the effectiveness of the various approaches to widening participation.
1 Introduction

1.1 Aims and objectives

This report sets out the findings of a scoping study conducted between March and August 2005 into strategies aimed at widening participation in learning below Level 2. The purposes of the study were twofold, to:

- provide a brief overview of the initiatives and approaches aimed at widening participation in adult learning below Level 2 via the workplace
- highlight areas where there may be a need for further research.

This study did not aim to produce an exhaustive list of activities or approaches to widening participation in adult learning below Level 2 via the workplace, but rather to highlight some key issues and approaches (eg through developing a typology of interventions), and to consider where there may be broad gaps in the research in this field that merit further investigation. To this end, the report sets out:

- a background summary of issues related to learning in the workplace and widening participation in learning
- the statistical evidence on workplace learning participation
- a review of the factors restricting (or acting as barriers to) learning in the workplace
- a typology of factors that encourage workplace learning
- an account of the methods, approaches or interventions used to facilitate workplace learning
- key issues for further analysis raised in the literature and through wider consultations.

1.2 Methodology

The research methodology was based on four phases.

- **Scoping phase** (March to April 2005) — This phase involved a call for information to LSDA regional directors, the Learning and Skills Council (LSC), the Adult Basic Skills Strategy Unit (now the Skills for Life Strategy Unit) and the Workplace Basic Skills Network for examples of initiatives designed to promote learning below Level 2 in the workplace. The phase also involved scoping interviews with key stakeholders, selected to represent the views of organisations responsible for supporting workplace learning (including the LSC, LSDA and TUC) to identify examples of key initiatives and other ‘grey literature’ on workplace learning. In this stage, the parameters of the study were established through consultation with the project advisory group.

- **Literature and data-gathering phase** (April to May 2005) — In this phase, literature on workplace learning was identified and gathered through online journal databases (eg Web or Science), Sussex University library searches and internet searches, and through recommendations from the advisory group.

- **Fieldwork interview phase** (May to June 2005) — In the third phase, telephone interviews were carried out with stakeholders responsible for initiatives supporting workplace learning (including union learning representatives, learning project coordinators and training providers). The initiatives were selected to cover a broad range of sectors, unionised and non-unionised workplaces, large organisations and small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).
• **Expert seminar** — An expert seminar, attended by members of the advisory group and representatives from other organisations involved in or having an interest in or view on learning in the workplace, and organised by the LSDA was held in July 2005 to discuss the conclusions of the scoping study, and to highlight areas for future research.

In practice, there was some degree of overlap in the timing of the first three phases (eg to work around the timetables of both interviewees and researchers) but the dates in brackets highlight when the bulk of the activities took place.

**Case studies**

The qualitative element of this study was based on 17 examples of initiatives and/or organisations responsible for supporting learning below Level 2 via the workplace. This consisted of 15 organisation- or sector-based initiatives (summarised in Appendix B) and two further interviews with education and training providers in the transport and construction sectors. In most cases, the information was derived from telephone interviews with project coordinators, or people with similar strategic responsibilities. In a couple of instances, however, the initiative had already been evaluated, or was the subject of a considerable amount of secondary literature. In these cases, respondents referred us to those evaluations.

**Case study selection**

The majority of the initiatives were identified through consultation with LSDA regional directors and regional directors of the Skills for Life Strategy Unit, the Workplace Basic Skills Network and LSC National Office. The LSC placed a call for information, which led to the development of new leads from several local LSCs.

From these leads, the aim was to identify a range of workplace initiatives that supported learning below Level 2 across a number of sectors: construction, health, care, transport and retailing. The sectors were chosen following an analysis of labour market information, including skills and training data related to those industries, based on data from the 2003 Labour Force Survey and National Employers Skills Survey (Hogarth and Wilson 2004), and a review of work-based learning data, eg Individualised Learner Records (ILRs), produced by the LSDA. The final sector selection was established through consultation with the advisory group.

The aim of taking this sectoral approach was to ensure that the coverage of initiatives was spread across establishments of varying size, public and private sectors, and unionised and non-unionised workplaces. In addition, the data suggested that employee characteristics and work patterns would vary according to the sector in question, for example in the use of shift-work, mobile working (by transport workers) and part-time work.

**1.3 Parameters of the scope**

During the scoping phase, there was a clear need to define the parameters of the study across a number of key dimensions.

- **Employment status** — The scope identified a series of schemes and initiatives designed to promote learning as part of broader employment generation activities, eg welfare-to-work programmes and return to work initiatives. It was decided that the inclusion of these initiatives would expand the parameters of the scope too far and, as they were already known to be the subject of an ongoing systematic
literature review (for the Department for Work and Pensions), they were excluded from the study. It also excludes initiatives aimed at adult and community learning.

- **Adult status** — The focus of the scoping study was on initiatives and approaches aimed at adults in employment rather than young people (eg 14-19 year olds). This was mainly because it was felt that there was a different set of issues involved in getting adults, who may already have considerable work experience, engaged in further learning when compared with issues pertaining to young people.

- **Sectors** — To ensure some variety in the types of initiatives reviewed, it was decided to focus the fieldwork in the third phase of the study on a few key sectors: retailing and distribution, construction, transport, care, and health. These were selected because evidence from the National Employers Skills Survey and the Labour Force Survey suggested that they had a mix of unionised and non-unionised workplaces, different propensities to offer work-related education and training, different demographic mixes and different levels of small- and medium-sized enterprise penetration.

- **Formal and informal learning** — Although the study examines the literature on informal learning in workplace learning (see section 2), due to the difficulties in capturing such evidence, the qualitative (fieldwork) component of this study mainly focuses on formal learning interventions.

- **Widening participation** — The focus of the study is on initiatives or interventions that encourage new learning by employees (or groups of employees, eg defined through occupations) who have previously disengaged from learning, and do not hold qualifications at Level 2 or above.

## 1.4 Report structure

The remainder of this report is structured as follows.

- **Section 2** reviews the debate concerning formal and informal learning, learning in the workplace and widening participation through workplace learning. It also considers the role of government in promoting workplace learning and the recent policy context.

- **Section 3** examines the statistical evidence on widening participation through workplace learning from the 2002 National Adult Learning Survey (Fitzgerald et al. 2003), the 2003 Pathways in Adult Learning Survey (Snape et al. 2004) and Labour Force Survey (2004).

- **Section 4** reviews the reasons why learning may be restricted in organisations, and the barriers to learning at work.

- **Section 5** develops a typology of workplace learning, and considers its relevance to widening participation in learning below Level 2.

- **Section 6** reports on the initiatives, methods and approaches used to encourage learning in the workplace.

- **Section 7** concludes by drawing out the key themes in the research and identifying some potential gaps for possible future research.

- **Appendix A** summarises some of the national initiatives aimed at encouraging or widening participation in learning at work.

- **Appendix B** provides more detailed examples of other initiatives (including sectoral and employer-based ones) aimed at encouraging or widening participation in learning at work.
2 Issues concerning widening participation and learning in the workplace

This section provides a contextual summary of the literature and recent policy developments related to workplace learning and widening participation.

- It begins by examining the dimensions of learning: the distinctions between formal, non-formal and informal learning, and the problems associated with its measurement and research.
- The second subsection continues to consider the diversity of learning at work, and explores a typology of workplace learning developed by Hodkinson and Hodkinson (2004).
- Subsection 2.3 briefly notes the debate surrounding widening participation, and the role of workplace learning.
- The final subsection concludes by reviewing the policy context, which underpins recent developments in workplace learning below Level 2.

2.1 Types of learning

A central theme within the literature on learning is the recognition that learning activities can be defined according to a continuum ranging from the informal to the formal (for a full discussion see Colley et al. 2003). The European Commission (2001) defines the three types of learning as follows.

- **Formal learning** — Learning typically provided by an education or training institution, structured (in terms of learning objectives, learning time or learning support) and leading to certification. Formal learning is intentional from the learner's perspective.

- **Non-formal learning** — Learning not provided by an education or training institution and typically not leading to certification. It is, however, structured (in terms of learning objectives, learning time or learning support). Non-formal learning is also intentional from the learner's perspective.

- **Informal learning** — Learning resulting from daily life activities related to work, family or leisure. It is not structured (in terms of learning objectives, learning time or learning support) and typically does not lead to certification. Informal learning may be intentional but in most cases it is non-intentional (or incidental, or random).

Developing the concept of a learning continuum, the Small Business Council (2003) emphasises the distinctions between formal and informal learning, and their relation to different forms of work-related education or training (Table 1).
Table 1: Continuum of learning activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of formality</th>
<th>Type of learning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Formal learning</td>
<td>long-term, taught courses with a high off-the-job content, leading to a recognised qualification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>short-term courses/seminars/events with a high off-the-job content, leading to a recognised qualification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>short-term courses/seminars/events with a high off-the-job content, not leading to qualifications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>in-house, off-the-job learning and training events</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>on-the-job demonstration by experienced workers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>working on the job, while being overseen by more experienced workers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>self-directed learning, at or away from the work place</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal learning</td>
<td>experimental learning: acquired through performance of routine working practices</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: SBC 2003

Problems with researching informal learning

The practice of identifying and codifying the activities forming part of the informal end of the learning continuum is not a simple one. Eraut (2004) proposes three reasons why informal learning activities are difficult to observe and research.

- Informal learning is largely invisible, because much of it is either taken for granted or not recognised as learning, and therefore respondents often lack awareness of their own learning.
- The knowledge obtained through informal learning is either tacit or regarded as part of a person’s general capability, rather than something that has been learned.
- Discourse on learning is dominated by codified, prepositional knowledge, so people often find it difficult to describe more complex aspects of their work or the nature of their expertise. (p249)

Finally, Eraut suggests that most people still equate learning with more formal education and training, and assume that work and learning are two separate activities. In view of the complexities surrounding the recognition of informal learning, while the role of informal learning is recognised, much of this study's focus is on approaches that aim to promote formal methods of learning, eg through supporting education and training at work.

2.2 Learning at work

There are numerous definitions of ‘workplace learning’. NIACE (1999) defines it as:

that learning which derives its purpose from the context of employment. It should address the needs and interests of a variety of stakeholders including employees, potential employees, employers and government.

NIACE suggests that it is a process of learning that enables individuals, employers and organisations to respond to the changing nature of economic activity, contribute to improved efficiency and productivity in employment, and meet the personal and career development needs of individuals.

The Australian National Training Authority (ANTA 2002) defines workplace learning as:
learning or training undertaken in the workplace, usually on the job, including on-the-job training under normal operational conditions, and on-site training, which is conducted away from the work process (eg in a training room).

In both instances, implicit within the definitions, learning yields a work-specific outcome. In this study, however, we believe that it is necessary to draw the distinction between workplace learning and learning via the workplace. The latter is taken to include:

- workplace learning that relates to non-vocational 1 learning activities that are promoted in the workplace
- any other learning activity that may be promoted through the workplace.

Finally, the term workplace needs to be clarified. In some circumstances, such as those found in the transport sector, the term needs to be broadened to include not just the premises of the employing establishment (eg depots) but also the locations in which employees find themselves as a result of their (eg mobile) employment.

How does learning take place at work?

A further question to ask is: how does learning take place at work, and in what form does it occur? An attempt to develop a typology of workplace learning is presented by Hodkinson and Hodkinson (2004, p261). Although the authors stress that their model does not cover all aspects of workplace learning, and that workplace learning is so complex that ‘no one theory, at least none yet fully developed, can adequately deal with all its aspects’, the model provides a useful reminder of the complexity of workplace learning and its elements. Their model draws a distinction between learning in the workplace that is intentional/planned and that which is unintentional/unplanned, and also differentiates between the extent to which the learning relates to that which is known by others or entirely new. This gives rise to a typology of six types of learning based on two dimensions (Table 2).

- Learning that which others know – intentional/planned includes what may be described as formal learning, eg through educational institutions.
- Learning that which others know – unintentional/unplanned involves socialisation into a community of practice (eg apprenticeship situations).
- Development of existing capabilities – planned/intended involves deliberately attempting to learn from others (eg by observation, working in teams).
- Development of existing capabilities – unintentional/unplanned focuses on unplanned improvement of ongoing practice.
- Learning that which is new – intentional/planned includes formal learning and relates in part to the management of change. This form of learning may involve bringing in external facilitators (with prior experience of the ‘new’) as well as planning through internal activities.
- Learning that which is new – unintentional/unplanned relates to unplanned learning of something not previously done.

---

1 Vocational learning is here defined as learning that is work-specific, while non-vocational learning is used to describe ‘leisure/general interest’ learning, as well as numeracy, literacy, language and general Information Technology (IT) related learning.
Table 2: Dimensions to learning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Intentional/planned</th>
<th>Unintentional/unplanned</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Learning that which is already known to others</td>
<td>planned learning of that which others know (e.g., formal training, learning in educational settings)</td>
<td>socialisation into existing community of practice (e.g., learning through working with more experienced peers).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development of existing capabilities</td>
<td>planned/intended learning to refine existing capabilities (reflection on actions)</td>
<td>unplanned improvement of ongoing practice (learning by doing)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning that which is new to the workplace</td>
<td>planned intended learning to do that which has not been done before (e.g., management of change and innovation)</td>
<td>unplanned learning of something that has not already been done (learning as a problem-solving activity to address new challenges)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: based on Hodkinson and Hodkinson 2004

A point to note is that most education and training initiatives aimed at promoting learning, by definition, fall within the ‘planned’ dimension. These also form the main focus of workplace learning initiatives examined in this study. Some exist that attempt to establish an environment promoting knowledge-sharing between employees, e.g., development of ‘learning communities’ within NHS trusts (see Horne et al. 2003), the development of online communities of practice (e.g., Winkelen 2003) and the role of apprenticeships in learning and development. The literature on these themes, however, is often concerned with higher level learning activities, activities to develop professional groups or, as in the case of apprenticeships, those that focus on younger workers.

2.3 Widening participation

The case for widening participation in education, rather than simply increasing it, has in recent years been the subject of national reviews by Kennedy (1997), Fryer (1997) and Dearing (1997). Kennedy identified a series of target groups for widening participation based on their skill levels, educational background, demographic group or socio-economic characteristics. These people included older workers (and other older people), unskilled or semi-skilled workers, people with poor literacy and numeracy skills and people with no or low qualifications.

The Kennedy report also identified a number of adult groups as having low levels of participation, including ex-offenders and probation clients, lone parents, long-term unemployed people, people working in small- and medium-sized enterprises, certain minority ethnic groups and people with disabilities or learning difficulties. Any one of the above groups could, according to the author, potentially be deemed as hard-to-reach and may therefore be under-represented in education and training.

More recently, the LSC (2003) has defined the term widening participation in terms of a process in which:

education and training providers successfully adapt their programmes and ways of working to meet the learning needs and aspirations of individuals and groups whose experiences or circumstances inhibit participation.

The LSC suggests that this process involves three elements:

1. attracting and engaging learners
2. identifying appropriate programmes
appropriate support for learners during their programmes and securing achievement.

Widening participation in workplace learning

Two potential issues arise from the specific focus on workplace learning. The first is that widening participation (as defined above) often relates to the context of participation within education and training, rather than any form of learning per se. Learning represents a wider process of cognitive and social development, of which education or training (means of delivering learning outcomes) is but a part. It is, therefore, necessary to consider whether there are groups less likely to ‘participate in learning’, or who have less access to ‘high-quality’ learning opportunities, and whether these groups are similar to those who do not participate in education or training activities more generally.

The second issue is that in a workplace context it may not necessarily make sense to define widening participation purely in terms of demographic characteristics. Workplace learning, and the barriers to such learning, could relate equally to occupational groups, industrial sectors, enterprise size or the nature of the employment relationship, eg self-employment, contractors and agency staff, part-time work and temporary work.

2.4 The public policy context

This subsection considers the public policy context that has affected the market for workplace learning in recent years. Government policy related to workplace education and training in England is outlined in the government’s skills strategy White Papers, published in 2003 and 2005, and the earlier reforms of the further education system, outlined in the White Paper and discussion documents, Learning to Succeed (DfES 1999) and Success for All (DfES 2002). In addition to these attempts to develop the national education and training framework, new employment legislation, including that setting minimum qualification standards in some sectors, have also acted as drivers for work-based skills development. The range of initiatives supported over the past five years aims to develop the market for education and training through the following:

- increasing the demand for workplace learning
  - raising minimum skill standards in some sectors and occupations through explicit or implicit licence to practise, such as Level 2 site licences in the construction sector or the establishment of minimum quality standards in the care sector, implying that a proportion of staff need to be qualified to a certain level (eg Level 2)
  - removing cost barriers to training among employers by offering subsidised education and training (eg Employer Training Pilots and National Employer Training Programme)
  - removing cost barriers associated with individual education and training (eg Level 2 entitlements, skills for life fee remission)
  - promoting and marketing workplace learning among employees by supporting the development of union learning representatives

- improving the responsiveness of supply
  - improving the relevance of education and training provision at a sectoral level, eg through developing partnerships between Sector Skills Councils, employers and other education and training stakeholders; the creation of Sector Skills Agreements; and the establishment of Skills Academies
  - developing a flexible learning infrastructure, eg through the promotion of e-learning, establishment of Ufi/Learndirect (see Appendix A.2); developing credit-based unitised
methods of assessment under the QCA’s Framework for Achievement and the support of union-based learning initiatives via the Union Learning Fund (ULF)

- promoting the drive within the FE sector to develop a workplace training capacity through the establishment of national learning and achievement targets

- stimulating the workings of the education and training market
  - improving information advice and guidance (IAG) for employers, and supporting employers through brokerage, eg Business Link and individual initiatives such as Employer Training Pilots (ETPs)

- institutional reforms
  - aiming at developing a coherent policy towards regional and sectoral workplace development, eg the establishment of the LSC in place of Training and Enterprise Councils, and the Skills for Business Network (Sector Skills Councils and the Sector Skills Development Agency) in place of the National Training Organisations.

In addition to the policies that aim to influence the market for education and training, demand may be influenced indirectly through a range of policies that affect the general labour market conditions or the skills needed within it. Three examples of policies that have the potential to influence, indirectly, workplace education and training needs are:

- health and safety legislation — placing a duty of care responsibility on employers, which may in turn encourage employers to invest in relevant training activities
- national minimum wage — which may increase the demand for a more skilled workforce by raising the costs of employing low-skilled workers
- best value — in local government, the shift in policy from compulsory competitive tendering (which emphasised costs as the main criterion for awarding contracts) to best value, which also considered other factors, such as quality, with the theoretical potential of raising the demand for higher skilled workers.

Public policy and widening participation in learning below Level 2

In the context of this study, the question that presents itself is how (and to what extent) has government policy acted as a driver for widening participation in learning below Level 2?

The emphasis of the skills strategy has been on improving the workings of the education and training market (ie stimulating demand for training and improving supply). With the exception of licence to practise, and similar minimum qualifications and quality standards legislation – such as those in the care sector – the approach towards promoting workplace learning is essentially a voluntarist one (on the part of both employer and employee), in which demand for workplace learning is seen to be constrained by resource barriers or information shortfalls. Many of the solutions have, therefore, focused on the removal of these barriers, eg through training subsidies, developing IAG and improving the supply side.

The extent to which the focus of policy is on widening participation in learning below Level 2 is mixed. In response to employer demand, government policies and targets have predominantly focused on Level 2 and higher-level attainment, often with a desire to improve business productivity and competitiveness. Legislation in the construction and care sectors, mentioned above, promotes Level 2 and 3 accreditation, while the extension of Modern Apprenticeships to adults also focuses on these higher levels. The two exceptions to this are:

- skills for life (literacy and numeracy), which have been promoted through fee remission, the establishment of national targets, national development of
embedded learning materials and other promotional activities (see Appendix A.5 for more details)

- support for union-based initiatives, in which the learning activities are frequently focused on more general Entry Level educational activities (including IT training and non-vocational education).

Finally it should be recognised that, while policies on widening participation stress the role of the workplace, widening participation in learning below Level 2 is also a feature of wider adult and community-based learning activities and welfare-to-work initiatives beyond the scope of this study.

2.5 Key points

This section examined the definitions and parameters of learning, the issue of widening participation, and the role of public policy in the promotion of workplace learning.

- **Defining learning** — Learning activities can be defined according to a continuum that ranges from informal learning to the formal. It is also possible to distinguish between planned and unplanned learning and the learning of what is known by others - as opposed to learning what is new. Most of the initiatives identified in this study relate to projects or programmes aiming to develop formal and planned learning.

- **Widening participation** — In the educational context, the term widening participation is usually used to describe a series of target groups, eg based on their skill levels, educational background, demographic group or socio-economic characteristics. In the workplace context, factors such as occupational grouping and employment status may also influence participation in learning.

- **Public policy** — In recent years, public policy has aimed to develop the market for education and training through increasing the demand for workplace learning (eg Employer Training Pilots), improving the responsiveness of supply (eg supporting e-learning), stimulating the workings of the education and training market and creating the learning infrastructure (eg through the LSC and Skills for Business Network).
3 The statistical evidence on workplace learning

This section considers some of the available statistical evidence on participation in learning (in the workplace or otherwise) and, more specifically, the evidence relating to (formal) learning in the workplace, with a view to developing a clearer picture of the characteristics of non-learners. It provides an overview of the:

- demographic characteristics of people engaged in learning in general, and workplace education or training in particular
- relationship between current engagement in learning and prior educational experience
- economic characteristics, employment relationships and occupational factors determining engagement in learning or workplace education and training
- factors supporting people into learning, who have not had recent experience of learning
- types of education and training opportunities commonly offered to employees with a high level of previous educational attainment (or in higher level occupations), compared with those offered to employees who do not hold formal qualifications (or who are in lower skilled occupational groups).

As section 2 has highlighted, the parameters of learning are too broad to be adequately captured through quantitative measurement. The focus of available data is, inevitably, often on education and training activities (eg in the case of the Labour Force Survey) or planned learning, both taught learning and self-directed learning, as covered by the 2002 National Adult Learning Survey (Fitzgerald et al. 2003) and 2003 Pathways in Adult Learning Survey (Snape et al. 2004).

3.1 National Adult Learning Survey (NALS) 2002

In the context of national surveys, one of the most inclusive definitions of learning available is that adopted by this survey, which makes the following distinction between taught learning and self-directed learning.

- **Taught learning** is taken to include courses designed to lead to a qualification or improve skills, instructions or tuition (eg in driving, playing musical instruments, etc), evening classes, learning involving individuals working on their own from a package of materials provided by an employer and learning supported by a college, commercial organisation or other training provider.
- **Self-directed learning** involves supervised training while doing a job, time spent keeping up to date with developments in the learner’s work or profession, deliberately trying to improve knowledge about anything or teaching oneself a skill without taking part in a taught course.

Fitzgerald et al. 2003, p18

In their review of the findings from NALS 2002, Fitzgerald et al. report that there is still considerable disparity in participation levels across certain socio-demographic groups. The survey found that rates of participation in learning were considerably lower than average among:

- older people (only 28% of those aged 70 and over were engaged in some learning)
- individuals with no formal qualifications (29% compared to 94% of those with NVQ Level 4 or 5 or equivalent qualifications)
respondents who had literacy and numeracy skills difficulties (52% compared to 83% among respondents without such difficulties)

- adults living in the most deprived areas (67%)
- people on low incomes (55% of adults earning below £10,400 reported participating in some learning, compared to 92% of respondents with a household income of over £31,200).

The authors also report that participation in learning is closely linked to employment circumstances. Paid workers had the highest levels of engagement in learning (89% of full-time employees, 81% of part-time employees and 86% of the self-employed had done some learning). Among people who were unemployed, just over two-thirds (68%) participated in learning, while those who were economically inactive had the lowest rates of learning participation. The figures range from just over 50%, for those looking after the family or retired, to 40% among those unable to work due to a health problem or disability.

3.2 Pathways in Adult Learning Survey (PALS) 2003

This represented a longitudinal follow-up of the National Adult Learning Survey (NALS) 2001. Together the surveys have been used by Snape et al. (2004) to identify four groups:

- **long-term learners** — participants in learning in both samples (58% of the PALS sample) - 29% of this group had highest qualification levels below Level 2 in 2001
- **lapsed learners** — participants in learning in NALS but had stopped learning at PALS 2003 (11% of PALS sample) - 47% of the group had highest qualification levels below Level 2 in 2001
- **new learners** — not participants in learning in NALS, but were engaged in some learning in PALS 2003 (10% of PALS sample) - over half (52%) of this group had highest qualification levels below Level 2 in 2001
- **non-learners** — people who had not participated in any learning in the five years covered by the two surveys - three-quarters of this group had highest qualification levels below Level 2 in the NALS.

The authors found that those who continued their engagement in learning activities across both periods were more likely to have left education after the age of 19, be economically active and to be in managerial or professional occupations. They were also more likely to be engaged in a spread of learning activities (taught and self-directed, as well as vocational and non-vocational).

Based on a sample of those who have had some experience of paid work, 65% of people who have not engaged in any episode of learning over the two surveys were in routine and manual occupations, while under one-fifth (18%) of this group were employed in managerial and professional occupations.

**Motives for vocational learning**

Employer compulsion had a limited role in promoting new learning, with around 8% of long-term and new learners reporting that they engaged in taught learning because of employer compulsion. However, employer encouragement and practical support were seen to have a key role in encouraging people back into learning (new learners):

- over half of new learners doing job-related skills courses suggested that they were encouraged by their employer to do so
- 61% of all learners, and 81% of new learners, said that they did job-related skills courses during their work time.
The authors also found that 78% of taught learners had used some form of IAG when deciding about taking courses for the first time since the NALS survey. New learners were more likely than long-term learners to have used informal intermediaries, eg friends, relatives and colleagues (37% of new learners compared to 24% of long-term ones).

### 3.3 Labour Force Survey

The Labour Force Survey (LFS) is a quarterly survey of around 130,000 individuals, across 60,000 households in the UK. The survey collects data on work-related education or training undertaken by respondents over a 13-week period from the date of interview. The survey evidence, from spring 2004, suggests a close association between the socio-economic groups identified in NALS 2002 as non-participants in learning, and those identified in the LFS as non-participants in work-based education or training. The factors appearing to have the strongest impact on the propensity to receive work-related education or training include:

- **previous educational experience** — Those with the lowest levels of educational attainment are also the least likely to participate in work-related education or training. Only 11% of people employed who had no qualifications reported receiving training in the past 13 weeks, compared to 42% of degree holders.

- **occupation** — People working in process, plant and machine operative occupations were the least likely to receive work-related education or training (16%). This was followed by elementary occupations (17%) and skilled trade occupations (21%). These figures compare with 46% of professionals who report receiving work-related education and training.

- **age** — Older workers, especially those beyond the state retirement age, are the least likely to engage in work-related training. Only 9% of people in employment and aged 65 and over, and 20% of those aged 55 to 64, report having received work-related education and training.

- **ethnicity** — Bangladeshi workers were the least likely to have engaged in work-based education or training (14%, compared to 30% among white British workers).

- **sex** — Women are more likely to claim to have undertaken work-related education and training than men (32% compared to 25%).

#### What methods are used for learning?

The Labour Force Survey also asks questions about the types of delivery methods used. The data suggests that people working in:

- professional occupations were the most likely to report that training took the form of conferences, seminars or workshops (88% of professional workers who had received training in the past four weeks reported on this method of delivery, compared to 49% of process, plant and machine operatives, and 57% of those working in elementary occupations)

- elementary occupations were the least likely to report using the internet or CD-ROMs for training (17%, compared to an average of 34% of learners)

In other words, not only are individuals employed in low-skilled occupational groups less likely to participate in work-related education or training, but those who do participate are less likely to have taken part in interactive activities such as workshops, and more likely to have received standardised tuition, through television and video materials, for example.
3.4 Key points

This section reviewed the evidence from three national surveys on learning and work-related education or training: the National Adult Learning Survey, Pathways in Adult Learning Survey and Labour Force Survey.

Excluded groups

Looking at those excluded from learning, the 2002 National Adult Learning Survey (Fitzgerald et al. 2003) suggests that a number of key adult groups have lower than average rates of participation in learning. These groups include people:

- with no formal qualifications
- with literacy and numeracy skills difficulties
- on low incomes, or working in elementary occupations.

Confirming these results, the Labour Force Survey (2004) suggests that the people least likely to receive work-related education and training are:

- those with the lowest levels of educational attainment
- people working in process, plant and machinery occupations, or elementary occupations
- older workers (especially those beyond the state retirement age)
- some ethnic minority groups (especially Bangladeshi employees).

Role of the workplace in encouraging new learning

Evidence from the 2003 Pathways in Adult Learning Survey (Snape et al. 2003) highlighted the role of the workplace in encouraging new learning. The survey found that, while compulsion from employers is a minor factor in encouraging the take-up of job-related skills courses, encouragement from employers supported with information, advice and guidance, is a more significant factor.
4 Constraints to learning in the workplace

In this section, the attention focuses on factors limiting the level of learning encouraged in the workplace. The section draws a distinction between factors restricting the overall demand for (formal) workplace learning ('restrictors') and those inhibiting the take-up of workplace learning (barriers).

- Subsection 4.1 reviews the employer-based restrictors to workplace learning that exist in general, as well as those related specifically to the promotion of learning to groups most likely to be excluded from formal learning opportunities (including people working in smaller enterprises, or in lower skilled occupational groups).
- The employer (and employment-related) barriers to widening participation in workplace learning are explored in subsection 4.2.
- The final subsection concludes by outlining the employee perspective and it considers why some employees, seen as ‘hard-to-reach’, may choose not to engage in formal work-related learning activities, and why employees who wish to do so may face barriers to such learning.

4.1 Restrictors to workplace learners

There is strong evidence to suggest that formal learning encouraged in the workplace (through education and training) is often restricted by the demands, views and perceptions of employers, rather than any substantive barrier to access. These ‘restrictors’ to work-related education or training are summarised below.

1) Employee training is not the main purpose of organisations
First, workforce training and widening participation in learning are not among the primary concerns of most organisations. Keep (1999), for example, has noted that the first-order decisions of employers usually concern product and marketing strategies, while strategies concerning work organisation, job design and people management are second-order issues. The author suggests that most employers would only be inclined to provide training that offered business benefits, and that such training is usually job-specific. Workplace education and training are derived from a need for skills and are not usually promoted for their own sake.

2) Employers may not see the need for formal workplace training
Many employers do not believe that formal workplace training is necessary. In their review of training among small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), Kitching and Blackburn (2002) found that over half (52%) of SMEs reported that they had no need for training, while only 43% reported a barrier to training. Employers who suggested that there was no real need for training reported that they were able to meet their skills requirements either through recruitment or through prior training. The authors found that a great majority of SMEs were indifferent to participation in government initiatives, as most felt them to be irrelevant to their training needs, or did not perceive a need for training from any source.

3) Employers may rely upon more informal methods of learning
As noted earlier, a large proportion of learning in the workplace is informal, and informal approaches to learning (eg ‘learning by doing’) may be preferred by many employers. Although it is difficult to quantify the effects of informal learning, Dobbs (2000) concluded that 70% of what employees know about their jobs had been learned informally from co-workers, while a survey by Felstead et al. (2004) found respondents believed that learning by doing was the ‘most effective means of improving work performance’, with 90% agreeing they had picked up most of their skills through on-the-job experience. Although this applied to all types of worker, it was of particular relevance to those lower down the
occupational hierarchy. A number of authors (see Ridoutt et al. 2002) have suggested reasons why SMEs in particular have a tendency to focus on informal learning practices as follows.

- There is unlikely to be a training division or visiting training unit, as might be observed in larger organisations. Consequently, there may not be a structured, formal approach to the promotion of employee development.
- In smaller organisations, there is less likely to be a strict demarcation of roles and responsibilities, eg workers are more likely to have to fill in for colleagues who are absent. This means that employees develop new skills through learning by doing, eg by taking on additional work responsibilities while covering for other staff members.
- Staff will be known to one another and the hierarchy is relatively flat. This allows informal learning to be initiated and sustained on an ad hoc and unstructured basis.

Hughes et al. (2002) and Doyle and Hughes (2004) also stress the role of informal approaches to learning in supporting SMEs. These reports highlight that for many smaller establishments, there may be a greater preference among employers for coaching support, than for formal training. When formal training does take place, the emphasis is often on training a few employees and encouraging those employees to pass that knowledge on to their co-workers, ie cascading methods.

4) When training is encouraged it is usually offered to those in higher-level occupations
From the employer perspective, there may be a greater willingness to provide support to employees within higher occupational groups (eg managers and professionals) as they are more likely to be concentrated in jobs that require high-level skills. Hillage et al. (2005, p28), in their review of the Employer Training Pilots (ETPs), found that the main reason employers participating in ETPs did not provide training to lower skilled workers, prior to the employer’s engagement in the initiative, is that they believed that ‘employees learn from experience/each other’ (p28).

5) Training, job design and progression
Often, limited progression routes and work design will restrict the amount of training offered to staff. In their study of learning within the health sector, Rainbird et al. (1999) concluded that job design and the absence of job progression routes reduce the willingness of employers to fund training. Rainbird and Munro (2004), meanwhile, have demonstrated how the subcontracting of labour in the health sector had restricted the options for internal development and progression, such as progression by cleaning staff to health care assistants.

6) Employers who support education and training may have unrealistic expectations of the time taken or amount needed
When education and training are offered to employees, there may be an unrealistic expectation of the time it takes for the learners to achieve their goals. The time required to develop literacy and numeracy skills, in particular, can often be underestimated. Employers may expect improvements in skills without allocating realistic time for learners to achieve them (Mikulecky and Lloyd 1993).

Wider constraints on learning

Work design and the management of work are primary determinants of the level of learning, formal or otherwise, in the workplace. Eraut et al. (2000) note that managers indirectly impact on learning through the allocation of work, as role models, and by creating and sustaining a microculture that supports learning from peers, subordinates and
outsiders, as well as their direct encouragement through advice, appraisal and feedback. Eraut (2004) outlines a triangular relationship between work challenge, support and confidence:

If there is neither a challenge, nor sufficient support to encourage a person to seek out and respond to a challenge then confidence declines and with it the motivation to learn.

(p270)

In the case of many employees working in elementary occupations, not only are they offered little by way of formal training, but also they may experience few opportunities for wider (informal) learning.

Workplace culture and the broader attitude of organisations to learning are also important. Unwin and Fuller (2003) have highlighted how learning in the workplace is influenced by whether organisations adopt expansive or restrictive approaches to workforce development. In an expansive learning environment, learning is seen to be ‘creative, dynamic and constantly evolving’ (p16), skills are distributed widely through the organisation (as opposed to restricted to some employees) and managers enable rather than control.

4.2 Employer and employment-related barriers to workplace learning

Leaving to one side for the moment the factors that restrict the level of demand for education and training in the workplace, both the literature review and the fieldwork undertaken for this study also highlighted a series of other dispositional and resource-related barriers to formal learning in the workplace. Some of the most commonly cited barriers to delivering workplace education and training are reported below.

1) There may be a lack of support from line managers
Even where organisations have a commitment to employee development, a lack of support from managers or line managers in encouraging formal learning was seen to be a barrier to employee participation in workplace education or training activities. Case study respondents felt that this was either due to competing pressures experienced by some managers (ie the focus on delivering goods or services against that of developing staff) or because there were skills needs among managers themselves (particularly in the case of literacy and numeracy), which acted as barriers to the wider promotion of learning among their staff.

2) It may be difficult to organise staff release
Difficulty in organising staff release was cited as a major barrier to delivering education and training courses during work time. This was seen as particularly true in small- and medium-sized enterprises, workplaces with staff shortages, in situations where employees were answerable to more than one manager, or among occupational groups seen as critical to the operation of the business. Rainbird and Munro (2004) found that cleaners employed by hospitals were often answerable to both their line manager and the senior member of staff where they performed the cleaning. This meant that getting time off for learning was something that had to be negotiated through two lines of management.

3) The workplace is not always a suitable location to deliver off-the-job training or education
Many work locations were not considered suitable for supporting workplace learning. In the care and retailing sectors, for example, small- and medium-sized enterprises often did not possess suitable spaces for education or training activities, while in construction, there were clear practical barriers to delivering education courses on site.
4) It is difficult to establish regular education and off-the-job training provision around shift-work
Many employees (e.g., those in the care and public transport sectors) are employed on a shift-work basis. Organisers of structured education programmes found that it was often very difficult to deliver courses around changing shift patterns.

4.3 Restrictors and barriers to employee demand

In addition to the propensity of employers to offer and encourage workplace education and training, the constraints on employees, in accepting or seeking such offers, also need to be considered. Among potential learners the literature suggests that there is often a series of dispositional, resource and information barriers to the take-up of education and training provision (e.g., see Hillage and Aston 2001):

- Dispositional factors may include a negative view of formal learning (e.g., due to prior learning experiences, as well as issues surrounding confidence, stigma (in terms of literacy and numeracy skills) and complacency.
- Resource factors (in the work context) include a lack of time to engage in non-compulsory training activities.
- Information barriers include a general lack of awareness of available learning opportunities, own needs and the market demand for skills.

McGivney (1993) has stressed that there is no single factor that explains non-participation. Instead, non-participants may experience a number of obstacles, rather than one or two that are easy to overcome.

In addition, as in the case of employers, it does not necessarily follow that the removal of these obstacles will lead to the take-up of formal education or training offers. There are at least two reasons why employees may not have a desire to participate in additional work-related education and training.

- There may be few financial returns or new employment progression routes associated with gaining vocational qualifications below Level 2 (see Dearden et al. 2000) and thus few economic incentives to seek such qualifications.
- As Level 2 (and some Level 3) provision is accessible to people with no formal qualifications, there is often little incentive to study at Level 1 prior to participation in higher-level learning.

In the fieldwork interviews, it was suggested that in some sectors (e.g., in construction, where a site licence requires Level 2 accreditation), workers would not necessarily see any rationale for working towards Level 1, as it had no marketable benefit.

4.4 Key points

This section outlined a typology of learning constraints based on ‘restrictors’, factors that limit the demand to engage in learning, and the barriers that inhibit the amount of learning conducted in the workplace.

From the perspective of the employer, the range of restrictors on formal learning includes a lack of demand for higher-level skills and a reliance upon more informal methods of learning.
Also from the employer and employment perspective, a number of learning barriers were reported, including a lack of support from line managers, difficulties in organising staff release, problems in finding suitable locations to deliver training or education, and difficulty in establishing regular provision around shift-work.

From the potential learner’s perspective, a lack of suitable progression routes and insufficient financial incentives for taking up lower level vocational qualifications may act as barriers to taking up such courses, while a series of dispositional (e.g. confidence), resource and information barriers remain to be tackled.
5 Developing a typology of the influences on workplace learning

In this section, a typology of the factors that promote workplace learning is presented. The section begins by distinguishing between drivers of workplace learning and facilitators of learning, before considering the supply and demand aspects of learning. From these components, a generalised four-point typology of workplace learning initiatives has been derived. The section concludes by relating the evidence (from the case studies and literature review) on widening participation in learning below Level 2 to the typology that has been developed.

5.1 Factors influencing workplace learning

The typology of factors influencing workplace learning draws a distinction between ‘drivers and facilitators’ and ‘demand and supply’.

Drivers and facilitators

Drivers are defined here as policies or other interventions that create the climate or environment in which workplace learning is viewed as desirable, while facilitators are defined as specific actions or interventions that make learning possible. In short, drivers may be seen as having some influence on the factors that act as restrictors to workplace learning, while facilitators are actions that support the removal of barriers to learning.

In reality, the distinction is less than precise, and what may appear as a driver in some instances could act as a facilitator on other occasions. Funding, for example, may be viewed as a supply-side driver because it is an ingredient of capacity building, a response to increased demand for workplace education and training services. However, if the availability of funding is manipulated to encourage education and training providers to shift their policy towards targeting workplace learners, e.g. in preference to other provision, then it may be viewed as a driver.

Demand and supply

The second distinction is drawn between demand-side interventions and supply-side ones. Demand-side interventions are those that directly or indirectly have an impact on the desire for employers or employees to engage in learning (e.g. legislation, promotion and marketing, etc). Supply-side interventions, meanwhile, are those that enable or support the offer of education or training in the workplace (e.g. development of e-learning and course content development).

Although it is suggested here that many interventions are either concerned with promoting the demand for workplace education or training, or with responding to such demand by encouraging supply, the role of employer brokerage (section 6.2) is an exception, as it represents an intermediation process that both stimulates demand and informs the tailoring of appropriate supply-side solutions. In this regard, employer brokerage may be seen as an act of market facilitation.

A typology of workplace learning interventions

Drawing together the above, a typology of workplace learning interventions can be derived, comprising four groups:
- **demand-side drivers** — policies directly or indirectly influencing the desire for employers or employees to engage in learning
- **supply-side drivers** — policies directly or indirectly influencing the desire for education and training providers to support workplace learning
- **demand-side facilitators** — initiatives or other interventions aimed at encouraging or facilitating the implementation of workplace learning activities
- **supply-side facilitators** — initiatives or other interventions aimed at supporting the assessment, delivery or accreditation of workplace learning.

These four groups, and examples of actions that fall within them, are summarised in Figure 1.

**Figure 1: Interventions that promote workplace learning**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Drivers</th>
<th>Facilitators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Licence to practise</td>
<td>Employee brokerage/learning champions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labour market policy</td>
<td>Financial support (eg ETPs/fee remission)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public procurement policy</td>
<td>Promotion and marketing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corporate policies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality standards and benchmarks</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National learning and achievement targets</td>
<td>Funding (eg through LSC, ULF, ESF and employee development schemes)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Flexible capacity building (eg through e-learning, credit-based qualifications, embedded learning materials)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**5.2 Interventions promoting a widening of participation in learning below Level 2**

This subsection considers the factors that may promote a widening of participation in learning below Level 2, in the context of the typology outlined above.

The study found a greater number of examples of facilitators than it did drivers. Notable examples of drivers (all demand-side ones) that emerged included:

- **licence to practise and similar legislation** — eg related to minimum qualification standards in the construction and care sectors
- **corporate policies** — eg the development of the Skills Escalator in the NHS, which is designed to set clearly defined progression routes through the NHS based on educational attainment
- **quality standards** — eg Investors in People (see Appendix A, at A.3).

Several respondents suggested that legislation setting qualification standards in the construction and care sectors had a positive effect on the demand for literacy and numeracy courses, as these skills needs are highlighted during the assessment process to register for Level 2 courses, or are discovered during the Level 2 courses themselves. In terms of the literature, evidence on the take-up of ETPs among the care sector employers
(eg Hillage et al. 2005) may also be indicative of the role of legislation in supporting workplace education and training.

Little evidence has been found during this study, however, that relates to how other demand-side drivers (eg quality standards) have encouraged a widening of participation in learning below Level 2. Examples such as Investors in People and, in the health sector, the Skills Escalator, were cited during the scoping phase of the research as potential drivers, but little independent evaluative research has been undertaken.

Among the supply-side drivers, national targets in skills for life represent a government intervention that may potentially promote workplace learning below Level 2, through encouraging the education and training sector to develop literacy and numeracy provision. The success of national targets could be reviewed in terms of the success of the education and training sector in meeting those targets, but beyond that, little research evidence was found that related to other methods of incentivising or compelling the sector to promote workplace learning below Level 2. Indeed, with the exception of skills for life learning, much of the emphasis of targets and incentives is on education and training at Level 2 and above.

The facilitators of workplace learning identified in this study (and explored in more detail in section 6) included demand-side facilitators such as:

- **employee brokerage and learning champions** — aimed at promoting and encouraging learning among employees
- **financial support** — eg fee remission for skills for life learners and subsidies for employers in the form of ETPs
- **marketing and promotional activities** — both national and initiative-specific and aimed at increasing the demand for learning among both employers and employees.

While on the supply-side, facilitators included:

- **funding** — eg from the Union Learning Fund, the Learning and Skills Council and the European Social Fund (these enable workplace organisations and the education sector to develop workplace learning initiatives and provision) or employee development schemes, which offer financial support for employees to take up education provision outside the workplace
- **flexible capacity building** — ie through the development of infrastructure and content necessary for the provision and assessment of workplace learning, eg development of e-learning, credit-based assessment, appropriate learning venues (learning centres) and employer learning networks etc.

In terms of market facilitation, the role of employer brokerage (eg in the context of ETPs) was seen as a key facilitator in encouraging hard-to-reach employers to take up formal learning provision.

### 5.3 Key points

In this section, a typology of factors that influence workplace learning was developed based on two dimensions: ‘supply/demand’ and ‘drivers/facilitators’. The drivers are policies or interventions that directly or indirectly influence the desire for employers and employees to engage in learning, or the desire of education and training providers to support it. Examples of drivers may include licences to practise legislation and national qualification targets. Facilitators are initiatives or other interventions aimed at supporting
the implementation of workplace learning activities, eg union learning representatives and flexible learning provision. As such, drivers attempt to address the ‘restrictors’ to learning, while facilitators aim to overcome learning barriers. Within this framework, employer brokerage may be seen as an act of market facilitation, which supports the tailoring of demand to supply.
6 Workplace learning facilitators

This section reviews in more detail some of the facilitators aimed at widening participation in learning below Level 2. Subsection 6.1 begins by examining the importance of employee brokers or learning champions in encouraging learning engagement within organisations. The second subsection examines the other demand-side facilitators related to the general promotion and marketing of learning in the workplace, and reports on some of the main methods of marketing and promotion identified in the case studies, while the third subsection focuses on some of the supply-side facilitators related to ‘developing flexibility and capacity’. Within this context, this section examines the:

- importance of flexible learning arrangements
- use of e-learning and blended learning
- need to create embedded and contextualised materials
- role of learning centres in creating learning spaces.

Subsection 6.4 highlights examples of how employers and employee organisations support learning that takes place outside the workplace, e.g. through employee development schemes, while subsection 6.5 reviews two methods of supporting employers: employer brokerage and financial incentives. The final subsection concludes by considering the relationship between activities that facilitate a widening of participation in workplace learning below Level 2, and activities that promoting workplace learning more generally.

6.1 Employee brokers or learning champions

All the initiatives reviewed for this study relied on some form of personal contact and face-to-face promotion to encourage employee engagement in education and training. The importance of personal contacts (including work colleagues, managers and supervisors) in promoting learning is also very well documented in the literature. Aldridge and Tuckett (2002), for example, report that word-of-mouth through work colleagues, family and friends is the most common method by which individuals find out about learning opportunities, while Hawthorn et al. (2002) report that employers play an important part in the provision of IAG for learning to those in hard-to-reach groups.

Unfortunately, evidence suggests that those people who have been the most disengaged from education are also those least likely to be within the work and social networks needed to support and promote learning. A review of research by Taylor and Cameron (2002) has highlighted how individuals with the lowest levels of involvement in education are also the least likely to be in contact with the informal intermediaries that are able to offer advice or encouragement to pursue further learning, and they may thus be hindered by their immediate relationships and circumstances.

For these reasons, the development of employee brokers or learning champions within the workplace was seen as a key element to widening participation in many of the projects reviewed. From the perspective of employees, learning champions can raise the demand for learning by offering information, advice and guidance as well as moral support and encouragement, while from the employers’ perspective, managers may see the business advantage in developing their staff to act as mentors or work-based assessors (Taylor 2001). Although the majority of the examples of learning champions identified in this study were union-based ones, there were a couple of notable examples that related to the development of managers and other employees.

Case study example 1: Promoting literacy and numeracy skills awareness among managers. At High and Mighty (an SME clothes retailing chain), managers are informed of
literacy and numeracy skills issues as part of the organisation’s HR policy. If they identify employees who have literacy or numeracy needs support, they either signpost employees to formal provision or seek to support them through mentoring them informally, e.g. through reading or other learning activities during lunch breaks and periods when the store is quiet (see Appendix B, B.5 for further details).

**Case study example 2: Developing the capacity of staff to act as learning champions.** The former NHSU had recently supported a programme for the NHS Estates and Facilities Directorate, to establish ‘workplace tutors’. The course was aimed at employees in a number of occupations (including catering, laundry and cleaning) considered to be the role models (e.g. supervisors or other colleagues) for their particular areas of expertise. The Level 2 accredited course was designed to help these people develop the skills required to mentor and support their fellow workers (see Appendix B, B.1 for further details).

**Union learning representatives**

A key element of the TUC’s lifelong learning strategy is the development of union learning representatives. Under the Employment Act 2002, union learning representatives have the right in workplaces with union recognition to have reasonable time off to promote learning activities in the workplace. In 2005, the network of union learning representatives had grown to almost 12,000, and they were responsible for bringing 67,000 people into learning. The development of the union academy is intended to boost the role of union learning representatives, and aims to assist 22,000 representatives by 2010, helping 250,000 people into learning each year.

The range of activities undertaken by learning representatives includes:

- identifying learning and training needs of other employees
- providing information, advice and guidance about learning opportunities
- arranging learning or training
- negotiating employee learning agreements
- promoting learning and training
- consulting or working with employers to develop learning activities.

**Widening participation among ‘hard-to-reach’ learners**

A review by Payne (2001) highlights how union learning representatives are seen as having a closer relationship with, and better access to, workers least likely to participate in learning, than some managers. The three key reasons for this (suggested in both the fieldwork and literature review for this study) are as follows.

- Learning representatives have credibility among their peers, as many of them have themselves used union-supported activities to engage in education for the first time since leaving school, with one-third of representatives having themselves recently taken literacy or numeracy courses (TUC 2004).
- Union representatives are often chosen from a broad range of occupational groups and backgrounds, and therefore have closer access to the colleagues to whom they are trying to promote learning – UNISON, for example, noting that 67% of their representatives are women and 50% earn less than £11,000 per year (UNISON 2004).
- Employees may be more willing to reveal learning needs to union learning representatives than to their employers, particularly in circumstances in which there is a poor history of industrial relations, or there is an expectation that the employee should be fully competent in that skill, and therefore a fear that disclosure would adversely affect progression in the organisation.
Evaluative evidence on the role of union learning representatives

One of the few independent studies to consider the role of union learning representatives, is the Campaign for Learning’s EQUAL project. This research suggests that union learning representatives were:

- most appropriate for increasing participation among non-traditional learners and people with literacy and numeracy skills needs (Campaign for Learning 2005)
- seen as an effective way of reaching the demand for learning when they are highly visible and work independently of the management or HR function (Campaign for Learning 2004).

In terms of their role in offering information, advice and guidance on learning opportunities, the Campaign for Learning research suggests that in organisations where information, advice and guidance was provided by both professional organisations and learning representatives, the latter had the greater impact in raising participation in learning activities (Campaign for Learning 2004).

6.2 Promotion and marketing

Marketing and promotion were regarded in the case studies as key elements in stimulating demand for learning among hard-to-reach learners and employers. This subsection briefly highlights nine methods that were adopted by learning project coordinators and training providers to promote and encourage workplace learning activities, including:

- use of word-of-mouth and the development of personal relationships with employers and employees (all types of scheme)
- the coordination of provision with wider HR activities (organisation-specific schemes)
- coordinating with organisational change (organisation-specific schemes)
- use of referrals from managers (organisation-specific or union-supported schemes)
- linking with company initiatives or wider learning events (organisation-specific or union-supported schemes)
- newsletters, flyers and posters (all types of scheme)
- offer of tasters and short courses (all types of scheme)
- use of ICT as a hook (all types of scheme)
- developing a demand-led (employee-focused) approach (all types of scheme).

As noted above, the selection of method was often determined by whether the initiative was union-led or led by an education or training provider, and whether it supported learning in one organisation or many.

1) Use of word-of-mouth and the development of personal relationships with employers and employees

The central message emerging from the case study interviews is that personal contact and word-of-mouth (especially from people who are respected and trusted by the employer or learner) are the most successful methods of recruiting those considered hard-to-reach. The recognition of the role of personal communication in marketing has been central to the encouragement of learning champions (discussed in more detail in section 6.1).

2) The coordination of provision with wider HR activities

Several of the single employer learning centre-based initiatives (reviewed in more detail in section 6.3) highlighted the value of linking promotional activities with the activities of the organisation’s HR function more generally. Although the need to remain independent of management was viewed by union-led initiatives as a precondition for successful
engagement, these centres often worked with employers in supporting literacy, numeracy and IT skills. It was common practice, therefore, to promote the (non-vocational) learning facilities or initiatives, offered through the workplace, during the induction process for new employees, or during other company-organised training events.

3) Coordinating with organisational change
Organisational change was often seen as a key stimulus to employer-led training and development. It also provided opportunities for wider skills development.

Case study example 3: Supporting occupational change. Passport to Learning found that a move towards a computerised customer service system led to demand among staff for wider IT training. Working in partnership with a local training provider, Passport to Learning offered staff affected by this change half-day courses in IT skills (see Appendix B, B.2 for further details).

4) Use of referrals from managers
In union learning and learning centre-supported establishments, managers who identify literacy or numeracy needs among their staff (e.g. during induction, their day-to-day work, tests for promotion or annual appraisals) would often signpost the employee to the learning centres for further support.

5) Linking with company initiatives or wider learning events
In some cases it was possible to link the promotion of learning to wider national or local learning events, such as Learning at Work Day, or to other company initiatives.

Case study example 4: Linking with national IT initiatives. In Passport to Learning, the employer had taken part in the DTI Computers for Home initiative (offering tax-free computer purchases to employees), which led to many of the employees who purchased machines indicating that they also wanted IT training.

6) Newsletters, flyers and posters
The use of paper-based promotional materials was also very common. Interviewees noted, however, the need for high production values, and for the material to be personalised (e.g. highlight case studies of successful outcomes and use photographs of places etc with which the employee is familiar).

7) Offer of tasters and short courses
Taster courses and short courses were often seen as a means of initiating engagement in learning among those considered hard-to-reach. In some cases, the participation in leisure-based activities developed into longer term interest in developing literacy and numeracy skills.

Case study example 5: Use of leisure-based courses to encourage further learning. Cumbria Care originally offered courses to care sector employees in leisure-based activities, such as aromatherapy. The courses offered a forum for people to discuss openly issues related to literacy and numeracy needs, and this led to progression onto skills for life related courses (see Appendix B, B.4 for further details).

8) Use of ICT as a hook
The use of ICT as a ‘hook into learning’ was a common theme across projects. In some cases, the desire to acquire ICT skills was a strong motivator among employees to learn, while in other cases the availability of online services was used a way of encouraging employees to make use of learning centres.
Case study example 6: Attracting learners through interaction with ICT. A training provider in the logistics sector had established a paperless portfolio package for assessing skills in the logistics sector. By demonstrating the training material to potential learners via a laptop, it was possible to develop a greater degree of interaction than through paper-based material, which in turn stimulated the level of interest among employees.

Case study example 7: Using ICT to attract employees into a learning space. In Tesco, a learning centre with internet access was made available to staff at all hours. This allowed employees to use the facilities for general purposes, outside their working hours, thus making staff familiar with the learning environment, and encouraging the future take-up of learning (see Appendix B, B.7 for further details).

9) Developing a demand-led (employee-focused) approach
In many of the union-supported initiatives, the emphasis was generally on education (including non-vocational learning and skills for life) rather than vocational or job-specific training. Non-vocational courses were usually offered after canvassing potential learners about their interests.

Case study example 8: Canvassing potential learners. The Tesco Learning Centre, and Passport to Learn use union learning representatives to canvass employees about their learning interests. The union learning representatives or project coordinators then establish courses based on the preferences expressed.

Case study example 9: Compromising between employee and employer interests. The Blackburn with Darwen Taxi Drivers project established taster courses based on subjects chosen by both the taxi drivers and their employers. The taxi drivers were keen to learn about self-defence, while the employers were more concerned with customer service skills. The project therefore developed tasters that offered both self-defence training and training in customer service skills (see Appendix B, B.15 for further details).

6.3 Flexible content and capacity

Among the supply-side drivers identified in this study, the development of flexible content and capacity was seen as crucial. The notion of flexibility is usually taken to cover two dimensions.

1) Flexible practical arrangements
This relates to how education and training provision is designed and delivered, where it is delivered and (if relevant) how it is assessed. Issues related to flexible arrangements usually cover:

- start and end times, including roll-on/roll-off provision
- the location of courses and learning activities
- deadlines and programme structures
- the methods of delivery (online, blended learning, modularisation, bite-sized courses)
- the timing of courses, including the provision of courses outside the academic calendar
- methods of assessment (cumulative recognition of formal and informal learning, recognition of prior learning and experiential learning).
2) Flexible content
The second aspect of flexibility relates to the content of the training, and the extent to which it has been adapted to suit the needs of the learners and employer. Content flexibility may often require providers to:

- develop bespoke education and training materials
- work with employers to develop programmes
- use embedded and contextualised material.

Case study example 10: Flexible delivery through workshops. Skills for life tutors for the First Bus Learning Centre found that offering structured weekly courses to learners proved problematic because of the nature of shift-work in the organisation. The tutors therefore decided to adapt their provision by providing workshops and drop-ins that learners could access around their work patterns (see Appendix B, B.13 for further details).

Use of blended learning and e-learning

The term e-learning has been defined to cover ‘the delivery and administration of learning opportunities and support via computer, networked and web-based technology to help individual performance and development’ (Pollard and Hillage 2001, p2); blended learning involves the combination of face-to-face teaching and learning with the use of e-learning materials. These methods are often seen as offering flexible ways of promoting learning to people with non-standard work patterns (e.g. shift-workers, people working non-standard hours, etc). Among the case study participants, the most commonly cited source for e-learning courses was Ufi/Learndirect (see Appendix A, A.2).

In a research study in 2000, conducted by the Marchmont Observatory for the south west suggests e-learning skills need to be an embedded rather than a distinct approach, and that learning providers need to reduce the divisions between e-learning and conventional training methods. They continue to propose that blended learning is the preferred approach, and that learning providers should offer a range of learning options as part of the tools available for learning. This view is supported by the work of de Freitas and Attewell (n-d) who argue that blended approaches have notable benefits over pure online learning in terms of increased motivation of learners, better learner retention and reinforcement of shared and collaborative learning objectives.

Evidence on the role of e-learning in widening below Level 2 participation
Despite the fact that several case study examples – e.g Careconnect (see Appendix B, B.9) and Tesco Learning Centre (see Appendix B, B.7) – stressed the role of e-learning both in promoting and delivering learning opportunities to hard-to-reach adults, with the exception of work commissioned by the DfES and Ufi (e.g Tyers and Sinclair 2004), there appears to be very little research that considers the role of e-learning in promoting a widening of participation in workplace learning below Level 2 (see Englebright and Sheldrake 2003 for a review of the more general literature available).

Information technology was seen by the case studies as a ‘novel’ hook to encourage people back into education, a subject for study, a medium for assessment and mode of learning delivery. However, many of those interviewed stressed that learners using information technology need support in their learning. Exclusively online courses were not always suitable for those who had not been in education for some time due to the lack of human interaction, personal support and encouragement. Marchmont Observatory (2000) stresses the need for some learner support (whether online or in person). It notes that the quality of support for learners is central to recruitment, retention and achievement, particularly among learners who may lack motivation or experience in learning. It is
especially important for roll-on/roll-off provision to overcome isolation, provide feedback, help with technological problems and promote social interaction.

**Case study example 11: Blended learning.** Cumbria Care uses a blend of online and paper-based learning courses (including Learndirect and Learn ECDL). This mix of methods was seen as particularly suitable for engaging part-time staff and women with families and/or more than one job (see Appendix B, B.4 for further details).

**Create relevant materials**

The need to develop education and training materials that are relevant and have an immediacy with the learner or workplace environment, was stressed in both the fieldwork for this study and the literature review. The importance of involving employers in the design of work-specific training provision is highlighted by Taylor (2001), who identifies a number of good practice steps to improve engagement, including:

- allowing employers to have an input in planning the content of learning programmes run by local providers to ensure that programmes are in tune with local business needs (see also section 6.5)
- working with training providers to ensure that learners have prior knowledge of the job and are equipped with essential skills from the start.

**Contextualised materials and embedded learning**

In terms of teaching below Level 2, some of the most common types of provision encountered in this study were those supporting literacy and numeracy skills. The need for contextualised or embedded teaching and assessment material was identified both by fieldwork respondents for the study and the wider literature. Contextualising material, e.g. by using paperwork related to the employing organisation, was often seen as a means of improving the relevance of the material to students (thus improving motivation) and a method of reducing the stigma associated with taking literacy and numeracy skills courses. In one case, a respondent reported that some potential Level 2 learners were discouraged from taking up courses when informed of the need to develop their literacy and numeracy skills, which they did not associate with their main aim of achieving a vocational Level 2 qualification.

Embedded literacy and numeracy courses can take many forms. The NIACE (2004) Learning from Experience project identified three models of embedded literacy and numeracy teaching:

- **fully integrated model** — literacy and numeracy skills integrated fully into the learning activity or subject matter, and delivered throughout the whole activity
- **sandwich model** — literacy and numeracy skills delivered in a discrete part of the time allowed for the whole activity or course, but contextualised to the main subject area
- **overlapping circles model** — combines the fully integrated and sandwich models — some of the literacy and numeracy skills work may not be contextualised and is not embedded, while other elements will be.

A recent initiative to develop embedded literacy and numeracy skills materials is outlined in Appendix A, A.5.

**Case study example 12: Use of contextualised learning materials.** Get On And Learn, an initiative to promote literacy and numeracy, will often seek to use paperwork provided by the employing establishment as a learning resource. The familiarity of work-related
materials to the learners is regarded as important in promoting relevance and motivation through context-specific learning (see Appendix B, B.10 for further details).

Create dedicated learning spaces

In section 4, it was suggested that a common barrier to promoting formal off-the-job learning in the workplace is the lack of a suitable location. The development of dedicated learning spaces such as learning centres has therefore been a central element of many of the initiatives that were reviewed for this study. It also represents a key component of the TUC’s lifelong learning agenda (ie the Supported Learning Venue Strategy) and the Ufi’s strategies for promoting workplace learning.

The learning centres covered in this scoping study varied in type, size and purpose. Some centres acted as a focal point for taught courses, while others were used to provide access to learning materials and computer terminals or to offer information, advice and guidance. Research by the TUC on union-supported learning centres suggests that in 2002/03 union workplace learning centres had assisted over 4,000 learners across nearly 8,000 courses. Around 60% of these learners were in the 35-55 age group, and groups that were traditionally hard-to-reach (Clough 2004).

Learning centres, SMEs and mobile workers

Although many of the examples of workplace learning centres that were identified for this study related to union-supported initiatives in larger organisations, there were a few examples of learner centres being established to promote education and training among smaller establishments or among mobile workers (eg taxi drivers and road haulage workers).

Case study example 13: Mobile learning centres. To promote learning to road haulage workers, a training provider in the logistics sector used a ‘learning lorry’, containing course materials and offering information, advice and guidance on course provision. The advantages of using mobile centres are twofold: first, they can be taken to areas in which their potential learners may congregate – eg quarries, drop-off points and travel cafés, and second, they can enable the broker to approach employees directly (outside the employer’s premises) if employers act as a barrier to the promotion of learning.

Case study example 14: Learning centres for multiple employers. Milton Keynes College established the Skills centre:mk learning centre in a shopping arcade to provide learning services to local retailers and the wider public. The centre offers a range of short courses geared towards the retail sector, including customer service, sales skills, manual handling, and health and safety (see Appendix B, B.6 for further details).

Evidence on the role of learning centres in promoting workplace learning

Evidence on the role of learning centres in promoting workplace learning is fragmented, as is the evidence on barriers to developing and operating such centres, and the impact of these centres on learning within the workplace. Additionally, such evidence is usually based on qualitative perspectives. Qualitative studies often focus on illustrating the working of individual learning centres rather than drawing out cross-study comparisons. Part of the reason for this may be that the success of learning centres cannot be disaggregated from other issues, such as employer commitment, the role of support staff (including learning representatives) and the partnerships with local education and other education or training providers. Clough (2004), for example, suggests that the sustainability of learning centres may depend on a number of factors, including the level of support provided by the employer – eg employers paying for connectivity, allowing staff to attend taster sessions, providing some paid time off and granting union learning representatives time to carry out their role.
A recent study that reviews the role of learning centres on widening participation in learning is the Campaign for Learning (2004) Making Learning Work evaluation. Their research suggests that learning centres can support non-traditional learners in overcoming the social and psychological barriers associated with learning, and can also help foster a positive culture of learning in organisations.

6.4 Other methods of supporting learning outside the workplace and/or outside work time

In some instances, the workplace may not always be suited to the delivery of learning, or employers may not feel that there is any tangible benefit related to the demand for learning among their employees. This may be particularly true in the case of small- and medium-sized enterprises, where there may be a lack of suitable venues for taught learning activities, and in the case of learning that is not necessarily job-specific. In these instances, the workplace may still have a role in supporting learning, through being a conduit for information, advice and guidance, acting as a location for assessment and identification of learner needs, or by funding learning activities outside the workplace.

Case study example 15: Supporting and funding external provision through work. In the Passport to Learning initiative, it was not always possible to offer some courses during work time or on work premises. The union would therefore offer learners support in finding the right course at a local college and, on some occasions, a bursary to cover the cost of study.

Case study example 16: Identifying literacy and numeracy skills needs through workplace assessment. A training provider in the construction sector offered workers in the industry computer-based literacy and numeracy assessment in the workplace. If literacy or numeracy needs were identified, it was not always possible or practical to offer learning on site. Consequently, learners would be encouraged to enrol at a local college.

Employee development schemes

The most common form of employer support for non-vocational training (both within and outside the workplace) is an employee development scheme. An employee development scheme is a fund that pays for employees to take part in learning that may not be directly related to their jobs. This may include personal, academic and leisure interests ranging from a hobby or sport to the chance to improve literacy and numeracy skills, or to academic qualifications, including degrees. The aim is to help employees develop their career or personal interests, broaden their transferable skills and, more generally, to encourage staff to return to learning.

One of the earliest employee development schemes, the Ford Employee Development and Assistance Programme (Ford EDAP) was pioneered by Ford Motor Company and the unions in Ford in 1987. It supported employees on a range of educational and learning activities, mainly on site but also outside working hours.

Although employee development schemes cover a broad range of initiatives, Spencer (2005) suggests that these interventions usually fall within one of three categories:

- **single scheme** — where one organisation develops its own scheme for its own employees, sometimes similar to the Ford EDAP model
- **coordinated scheme** — where several companies work together to set up a scheme, under common management, to cover all their employees
multi-scheme — where one body, such as the Learning and Skills Council, supports a group of employers in designing their own schemes, and provides ongoing support through advice and network meetings.

Research on employee development schemes by Firth and Goffey (1998) suggested that they can be particularly effective in building enthusiasm for learning among lower occupational groups, people with low levels of educational attainment or those with literacy or numeracy skills needs.

6.5 Methods of supporting employer needs

Many of the issues discussed so far (eg the need for flexible delivery, contextualised and embedded ‘workplace-specific’ material, face-to-face promotion etc) are as relevant to engaging employers as they are to engaging employees. This section concludes by outlining some additional approaches that are specific to encouraging employers to increase and widen the opportunities for participation in learning.

1) Employer brokerage
Supporting employers with information, advice and guidance on education and training may be one of the most successful means of attracting hard-to-reach employers. In their evaluation of the Employer Training Pilots (ETPs), Hillage et al. (2005) found that such employers were more likely to be attracted to the pilots because of the help provided in identifying training needs, and the help in linking training to business needs, than the ‘easy-to-reach’ employers. The importance attached to help in identifying training needs was particularly acute among smaller establishments: 24% of the smallest employers would not have taken part without this help, compared to 11% of the largest. The authors conclude that this is clear evidence of the value of brokerage in encouraging participation. The case study reconfirmed this, and identified two elements to successful brokering.

- **Make the business case** — There is a need to ensure that education and training is directly relevant to an employer’s business objective. A training provider working in the logistics sector, for example, highlighted how they would encourage employers to take up training courses on vehicle maintenance by demonstrating to them the potential fuel savings that such training could offer.

- **Offer companies wider business advice and support** — By offering wider business advice and support (particularly to small- and medium-sized enterprises), it may be possible to develop a close relationship with companies, which in turn leads to the opportunity to identify and support their training needs. A respondent supporting learning in the construction sector highlighted how they offered small- and medium-sized construction companies additional business support, eg guidance on public sector tendering processes, as well as support for training.

2) Financial incentives
The offer of free or subsidised training to employers, or supporting employers through wage compensation, were seen as two methods of overcoming the cost and staff release barriers noted in section 4. As such, financial incentives are a key component of the ETPs and the proposed successor, the National Employer Training Programme.

The evaluation of ETPs (Hillage et al. 2005) highlights how financial incentives have a key role in promoting training to employers. The study reported that 80% of hard-to-reach employers (and 92% of easy-to-reach employers) were attracted to free or subsidised training, while 56% of hard-to-reach employers (and 62% of easy-to-reach ones) were

---

2 Defined as those who had no previous involvement in national training initiatives (eg NVQs and Modern Apprenticeships), or relations with business support agencies (LSC and Business Link) or training providers.
attracted by wage compensation. Qualitative evidence from the study suggests that the issue of wage compensation is important at the margins. Some large companies argued that wage compensation helps bolster the business case for involvement in training, while in smaller organisations (e.g., care homes), wage compensation was used to pay part-time staff for work-release. However, the research concluded that after initial engagement in training, issues of flexibility and quality of delivery were of more significant concern to employers.

6.6 Increasing learning or widening participation

Having reviewed many of the factors facilitating workplace learning in this section (and factors driving workplace learning in the previous section), it is worth considering the extent to which these factors widen participation in learning below Level 2, or whether they are aimed at learning more generally. In attempting to scope these activities we note the following.

- A large proportion of learning activities are not characterised in terms of NVQ equivalents. Often, education and training activities are seen in terms of the needs of occupational groups, which are rarely mapped consciously onto the NVQ framework.
- Initiatives that promote (accredited) learning often support a range of education and training courses from Entry Level (e.g., skills for life learning) to Level 2 and 3 vocational courses. The methods by which these courses were developed or promoted by these learning initiatives did not generally distinguish between courses below Level 2 and courses at Level 2 or above.
- Many learning initiatives are open to the whole of an organisation’s workforce, rather than specific widening participation groups. Widening participation occurs because the initiative operates in a sector or organisation that employs a large proportion of hard-to-reach employees, but the initiatives themselves are not always restricted to those who might be classified as hard-to-reach, or who lack qualifications at Level 2 or above. In the case of literacy or numeracy, for example, individuals may exhibit a ‘spiky profile’ of skills and have a need to ‘brush up’ their skills, despite their having acquired Level 2 qualifications, obtained through their schooling many years ago. Consequently, many initiatives are as much about increasing the levels of learning undertaken more generally, as they are about widening participation in learning below Level 2.

A final factor which should be noted here is the need to distinguish between the broad range of workplace learning activities that may already be in place, and interventions aimed at widening participation in learning below Level 2. The examples of workplace learning initiatives reviewed for this study were mainly concerned with promoting skills for life (including IT skills) or general (non-vocational) education, rather than supporting job-specific learning. In most cases, it was not suggested that the learners were disengaged from all forms of learning before taking part in these initiatives, as employees had some access to job-specific learning (e.g., through induction courses) or would have learned how to perform their work through informal learning. These interventions, therefore, may be viewed in terms of their role in improving the scope and quality of education and (formal) learning, as much as widening participation in learning, defined in its most general sense.

6.7 Key points

This section reviewed in more detail some of the methods and approaches adopted to facilitate the widening of participation in learning below Level 2 via the workplace, including:
• developing employee brokers or learning champions (eg union learning representatives)
• promotion and marketing (eg use of newsletters, flyers and posters, use of tasters and short courses, and the development of employee-focused learning activities)
• developing flexibility and capacity (eg flexible learning arrangements, embedded and contextualised content, using blended and e-learning and the development of learning centres)
• methods of supporting employer needs (information, advice and guidance and provision of financial incentives)
• other methods of supporting learning outside the workplace and/or work-time (including the role of employee development schemes).
7 Key themes and future issues

This section draws out some of the key themes from this research, and considers their implications for further research.

1) Learning that is taking place at work
Although there was strong evidence of a wide range of learning activities in the workplace, participation was segmented, and concentrated on:

- existing learners, often those with relatively high qualifications or in higher level occupations
- organisations where learning is more embedded in the workplace, e.g., organisations with a learning infrastructure (budget, appraisals, whole-organisational training plan, etc) and/or learning culture (management support expansive, work organisation etc) — generally larger workplaces
- formal learning arrangements (these are more generally associated with larger organisations, while evidence suggests that small- and medium-sized enterprises rely more on informal arrangements)
- occupations and workplaces for which formal demonstrations of competence are required to perform the task, e.g., skilled or professional occupations, where health and safety is a concern etc
- sectors in which licence to practise legislation defines training requirements
- younger people who have low educational attainment and little labour market experience.

2) Understanding the learning drivers
The study reviewed the literature that suggests that learning is not a primary concern for most employers, but rather a means to an end. Many of the initiatives and interventions discussed in the work, however, aim at removing employer barriers to participation, i.e., act as learning facilitators. More focus may need to be given to how we can increase the demand for learning through encouraging employer demand for higher skills and employer engagement with the learning agenda, i.e., developing the learning drivers.

3) Tackling employee barriers
From the employee perspective, many of the initiatives aim at overcoming the perceived barriers to learning, and assume that the removal of these barriers will encourage learning, for example:

- marketing existing opportunities aims to overcome lack of information about what is available
- using learning champions (e.g., union learning representatives) to provide information and overcoming dispositional barriers.

Additionally, providers aim to remove practical and dispositional barriers to learning by:

- developing flexible provision
- making the content more relevant
- delivering at a time and location that makes it easily assessable.

The role of learning champions was a key ingredient in the widening participation strategies within many of the initiatives reviewed. The SSCs’ proposal to launch ‘sector skills ambassadors’ and the establishment of the TUC’s Union Academy may offer new
opportunities for research into the methods of supporting, nurturing and developing learning champions.

More attention may also need to be given to methods of increasing demand from employees who would otherwise not wish to pursue further learning (e.g., investigating why there are low returns for some qualifications).

4) Informal learning
It is generally acknowledged that informal learning plays a critical role in employee development, but (almost by definition):

- we have little means of measuring it, or knowing how ‘participation in informal learning’ is widened, and the quality improved
- we know little about the balance and relationship between the formal and informal, and the degree to which interventions that encourage formal learning lead to additional levels of informal learning
- there may be difficulty in assessing the skills gains that arise from informal learning, or measuring their impact on individual productivity
- we do not know much about the balance and relationship between the two and the relative advantages of either in terms of skill gain.

5) The needs of providers
This study did not focus specifically on the needs of providers in delivering workplace learning. There is a further need to:

- understand the perceptions of some of those involved in workforce development who have not yet been included in the evidence base – Business Link, SSCs, education and training providers
- assess how the skill needs of work-based learning (WBL) providers can be addressed.

6) Evaluative evidence
Finally, the study found a general lack of evaluative evidence to help determine the comparative effectiveness of the various approaches to widening participation. There is a need to assess:

- the degree to which various initiatives promote skills development, rather than accredit what is already known
- the extent to which different initiatives or interventions have increased (and widened) participation in learning, i.e., estimates of the numbers of learners supported through various forms of workplace learning initiatives, and in what types of organisation learners are being supported
- the factors that determine the sustainability and further development of workplace learning initiatives
- the delivery methods successful in the promotion of workplace learning below Level 2, e.g., the role of e-learning in widening participation
- the extent to which various initiatives encourage lifelong learning, rather than one-off learning episodes, and the ingredients necessary to encourage learning progression.

In short, although it is possible to identify many examples of how participation in learning below Level 2 has been promoted via the workplace, there are few attempts to quantify the overall effects of these interventions.
Appendix A: Example of national initiatives supporting the widening of participation in learning

This appendix summarises some of the national initiatives aimed at supporting a widening of participation in workplace learning, including:

- Employer Training Pilots
- Ufi/Learndirect
- Investors in People
- Adult Learners’ Week
- National literacy and numeracy skills campaigns and initiatives.

A.1 Employer Training Pilots

Piloted in the UK from September 2002, the Employer Training Pilots (ETPs) aimed to test various models of supporting work-related adult learning, for workers without a Level 2 qualification, based on four elements:

- free tuition and accreditation for employees without literacy and numeracy skills or a Level 2 qualification to work towards a recognised qualification up to Level 2, or literacy and numeracy skills qualification
- support for paid time off for employees without a Level 2 qualification or who have literacy and numeracy skills needs – the pilots tested two options: 35 hours (five days) and 70 hours (10 days) of paid leave to study in each year of the project
- employers’ compensation for the replacement labour costs incurred while allowing staff to take time off work to train. This included the wage costs of staff who take time off, as well as the costs of recruiting temporary staff to replace employees during their period of study
- information, advice and guidance for employers and employees.

A.2 Ufi/Learndirect

Ufi/Learndirect was established in 1998 to encourage wider participation in learning through innovative use of ICT, backed by learner support and guidance. Under the brand name Learndirect in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, it offers a package to learners that includes a range of online learning, online learning support and telephone-based information and advice on courses and careers information. Since its establishment, Learndirect has:

- created a network of over 2,000 centres across England, Wales and Northern Ireland supported by 110 ‘hubs’
- enrolled more than 1.5 million people on nearly 3 million courses covering ICT, skills for life, business and management, and job-specific skills.

The Ufi annual survey of learners (Ufi Ltd 2002) suggests an increasing trend line for Learndirect learners ‘accessing their Learndirect learning at work’, which has risen from 6% in the winter of 2001/02, to 9% in both winters 2002/03 and 2003/04, to the latest result: 13% in winter 2004/05.

The same research indicates that in winter 2004/05, 55% of all Learndirect learners were in employment and 13% were seeking work. Of Learndirect learners at pre-Level 2 when they registered, 44% were in employment and 18% were seeking work.
A.3 Investors in People

Investors in People is the national standard which sets out a level of good practice for training and development. The standard was developed in 1990 by the National Training Task Force, in partnership with leading national businesses, and personnel and employee organisations, including the Confederation of British Industry (CBI), TUC and the Institute of Personnel and Development.

The Investors in People (IiP) standard is based on three key principles:

- developing strategies to improve the performance of the organisation
- taking action to improve the performance of the organisation
- evaluating the impact on the performance of the organisation.

In 2003, the National Employers Skills Survey (Hogarth and Wilson 2004) reported that approximately 16% of establishments stated that they had attained the IiP standard. In keeping with other available evidence of IiP accreditation, larger establishments were more likely to report its attainment.

A.4 Adult Learners’ Week

Adult Learners’ Week is an annual event designed to market and promote adult learning, including workplace learning initiatives. Coordinated by NIACE, the event has core funding from the European Social Fund, the Department for Education and Skills, and Learndirect. Adult Learners’ Week (ALW) activities include:

- national and regional award ceremonies and conferences
- Learning at Work Day, Cultural Diversity Day and Silver Surfers’ Day
- a wide range of events at a regional and local level, organised by, for example, colleges, libraries, museums, businesses and voluntary sector groups.

There has been a national helpline available in support of ALW every year. The English helpline now uses the national Learndirect helpline number, with separate lines for Wales and Scotland.

A.5 Initiatives to promote workplace literacy and numeracy skills learning

1) Simple mistakes campaign (part of the Get On initiative)

Through a national advertising campaign backed with IAG support from Learndirect, Get On aimed to raise awareness of literacy and numeracy skills issues, reduce the stigma attached to English and maths skills needs, and motivate adults to take action to improve their skills. In March 2003, the initiative specifically drew its attention to employers through a national press campaign with the slogan, ‘Simple mistakes can cost businesses money’, in which marketing was backed by employer-targeted information, advice and guidance on literacy and numeracy skills issues. The campaign was supported by:

- a freephone advice line
- workplace literacy and numeracy skills advisers working through local LSCs
- free resources and materials for use in the workplace.
2) Get on at Work initiative (part of the Move On campaign)
While traditional literacy and numeracy skills provision focuses predominantly on Entry Level learners, the Move On campaign aims to support individuals who may need to brush up on their literacy or numeracy skills. Move On therefore offers learners:

- skills check or test taster
- brush-up course that covers literacy and numeracy skills
- entry to the national literacy or numeracy tests at Level 1 or 2
- IAG to support progression to other courses.

The Get on at Work initiative is the workplace equivalent of Move On. The difference in branding was adopted as the phrase ‘Move On’ was regarded as lacking in suitability when used in a workplace context, due to its connotations with labour turnover.

3) Embedded literacy and numeracy skills materials initiative
In 2003, the Adult Learning Inspectorate raised concerns that there:

is still a shortage of good learning materials. Too often, teaching relies on poorly copied worksheets, which have apparently been selected at random, have little relevance to learners' needs or interests and are not marked.

Adult Learning Inspectorate (p6), quoted in CfBT 2003 (p12)

The Adult Basic Skills Strategy Unit (now the Skills for Life Strategy Unit) commissioned CfBT to develop embedded learning materials, related to literacy, language and numeracy skills in a number of vocational areas, ranging from catering, health care, horticulture and retail. Material for other sectors including construction and transport are scheduled for development in 2006.
Appendix B: Examples of individual initiatives to promote workplace learning

This appendix outlines 15 of the organisation-based or sector-based initiatives that informed the main sections of the report.

B.1 NHS Estates and Facilities Directorate work-based tutor

The former NHSU recently supported a programme for the NHS Estates and Facilities Directorate to establish ‘workplace tutors’ (Aldridge et al. 2005). The course was aimed at employees who were considered to be the role models (e.g. supervisors or other colleagues) for their particular areas of expertise, and was designed to help these people develop the skills required to mentor and support their fellow workers.

Learning outcomes
The course aims to develop knowledge and skills seen as instrumental to workplace tutoring:

- good verbal and non-verbal communication skills
- knowledge of barriers to learning
- knowledge about accessing further learning
- understanding of skills for life and health needs.

Delivery
The first pilot was delivered in the workplace to five learners (from catering, housekeeping and laundry) over five, three-hour sessions. Feedback from the learners at the end of each session was then used to alter the material in order to make it more user-friendly and relevant.

Partnership
The project was a result of a partnership between the former NHSU Widening Participation Unit and the School of Corporate Development at Newcastle College, supported by the Northumberland, Tyne and Wear Strategic Health Authority, Unison and Edexel.

B.2 Passport to Learning

Passport to Learning (P2L) is an employer-union partnership established to promote education and learning among staff at Southern Railway. Originally established in 2002, through support from the Union Learning Fund, P2L is now part of a wider network of Rail Union Learning Programme initiatives.

Demand-led learning
The activities offered through P2L focus on education and learning rather than on training. The courses cover a range of subject matters including skills for life, IT skills and beginner-level languages. The courses offered are strictly demand-led and are based on feedback from a number of sources.

- Union learning representatives have canvassed colleagues to identify the learning activities that employees would like to pursue.
- Employees may raise skills needs with union learning representatives or management, e.g. requests for IT training.
- HR or line management may signpost employees with skills needs (e.g. literacy or numeracy) to P2L.
Marketing and promoting learning
The project is supported by union learning representatives employed across all grades and representing a mix of demographic groups. The union learning representatives are central to the promotion of P2L’s activities. In addition, the programme uses a number of other mechanisms to encourage learning:

- promoting the project during employee induction
- linking with other company training provision
- regular staff briefing e-mails
- using newsletters, flyers and posters
- linking with wider company initiatives, e.g. offering IT training to support the Southern Rail Computers for Homes DTI initiative
- feedback and referrals from managers.

B.3 Learning on the Move (the Learning Bus)

Learning on the Move is an initiative operating in Metroline bus stations in the Greater London area. Aimed at supporting lifelong learning, the project promotes education opportunities to Metroline employees and their families, through the use of ‘the Learning Bus’ and two learning centres at Potters Bar and Holloway. Launched in 2002, the Learning Bus has primarily been delivering basic computer skills courses, but other courses available include:

- reading and writing
- reading and writing for speakers of foreign languages
- basic Spanish and French
- Sign language.

The project has supported staff from all levels (managers, drivers, engineers, canteen staff, mechanics, trainers etc) through over 700 accredited courses.

Partners
The project works through a partnership between the union, the employer, the local college and other public agencies:

- Metroline — providing the bus, the driver and the running costs (petrol etc)
- College of North East London (CONEL) — providing equipment and tutoring support e.g. computers, software, three tutors, and also helping train newly appointed union learning representatives
- DfES — helping provide a major part of the original funding for refurbishment of the bus, publicity and a project worker
- The Transport and General Workers’ Union (TGWU) — encouraging members to engage in learning through union learning representatives in each of the garages
- The Southern and Regional Trades Union Congress (SERTUC) — supporting a learning needs analysis, promoting learning by garage staff, liaising with CONEL for training union learning representatives and providing specialist support for union learning representatives
- Transport for London — raising awareness of the benefits of lifelong learning elsewhere in the transport sector.

Delivery
Each of the learning centres in North London is equipped with 10 computers and managed by a learning representative. The Learning Bus is also equipped with 10 computers and a server, and is staffed by a tutor from CONEL six days a week while the bus is taken to each
of six garages for one day a week each. The learning centres are open from 10am to 4pm each day, which allows staff to use the centre around their shifts. Shifts may also be arranged so that workers from a number of garages can attend the same course.

Promotion
Promotion of learning services is achieved through a number of methods, including:

- use of space provided by the employer eg posters and plasma screens in each of the garages
- leaflets and newsletters
- contact with any of the two union learning representatives in every garage.

Surveys are also conducted in order to gauge interest in courses and to see what people want. This, combined with feedback from union learning representatives’ contact with employees, means that the project can work in collaboration with CONEL to accommodate what people want.

B.4 Cumbria Care

Cumbria Care is a union-based project in the care sector that aims to provide education and training to care workers employed by the local authority. The project is organised by UNISON union representatives and is funded through the TUC.

The project has supported approximately 80 learners over the past couple of years across a range of literacy, numeracy and/or basic IT skills-related courses.

Getting started
The project began by offering courses to union members in leisure-based activities such as aromatherapy. The original project generated further interest in a wide range of other learning activities, and through the forum that the project had created, employees began to openly discuss issues concerning literacy and numeracy. Also, care sector managers had raised concerns regarding the impact of poor literacy and numeracy on NVQ achievement. In response to the demands both of employees and of management, a learning centre was established with the support of UNISON and a project worker from the TUC.

Promotion
Employees are informed of the project on entering employment with the local authority (through induction courses). The centre is also promoted using leaflets, posters, word-of-mouth and the support of union learning representatives. Contact with the project is usually made through one of the six union learning representatives who work in the area. Learners initially discuss with a tutor what they believe their needs are. At this stage a Learndirect diagnostic tool may be used to assess an appropriate level of training.

Flexible delivery
The project works with the colleges and Learndirect to help learners achieve a Level 1 or Level 2 Move On qualification in adult numeracy and adult literacy certificate. It also offers CLAIT and European Computer Driving Licence (ECDL) basic computer courses.

Learning is delivered flexibly through online methods, supported by an online tutor. These delivery methods, combined with a certain amount of flexibility in terms of deadlines etc have been designed to engage hard-to-reach groups such as low-paid female workers, part-time staff, and women with families and/or more than one job.
B.5 High and Mighty

High and Mighty is a family-owned SME retailer in the clothing sector.

HR policy
Literacy and numeracy skills issues awareness forms part of the company's HR policy. As it is a small organisation, however, skills needs are often identified through day-to-day working, for example, through inaccurately completed paperwork, forms etc.

Learning and mentoring
If necessary, an external training course might be used to support employees, and in such cases the course would be delivered by an external provider for employees in their own time. Funding is usually through the LSC. However, it has been more common for staff to be supported in the workplace, e.g. through the provision of reading materials and through informal reading sessions organised during lunch breaks and quiet periods.

B.6 Skillscentre:mk

Skillscentre:mk is a learning centre set up in the shopping centre, ‘thecentre:mk’. Since November 2003, Skillscentre:mk has offered a range of accredited courses to workers in the retail sector or people interested in starting a career in the sector. The project is a partnership organised and run by thecentre:mk in conjunction with Milton Keynes College and funded by LSC Milton Keynes, Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire.

The learning centre has a computer room equipped with 10 computers and a training room located elsewhere in thecentre:mk. The project is supported by two full-time staff, who manage and administer the project, and nine tutors who teach on the project part-time. Since the learning centre opened in 2003, it is estimated that there have been approximately 1,000 enrolments on courses (although some people have enrolled on several courses).

Responding to the needs of the retail sector
The project was developed in response to a recognised training gap in the retail sector. Courses range from short courses, e.g. related to customer service, sales skills, manual handling, health and safety etc, to essential skills, through to longer term NVQs in retail. Many of the courses are designed to be taken in bite-sized chunks. The need to support short-term courses in the retail sector was seen as critical because:

- employers are often reluctant to release staff over long periods of time
- employees often move
- employment tenures are often short.

Engaging learners
The project engages in a range of promotional activities in order to attract learners. These include:

- advertisements in local media
- posters
- leaflets and flyers
- mail shots
- newsletters in thecentre:mk (300 employers)
- targeted calls and face-to-face drop-ins.
However, the most successful form of promotion for the project was considered to have been by word-of-mouth.

**Delivery**
There are a number of factors that the project believes are crucial to the successful engagement and support of learners:

- **location** — the location of the centre has helped in giving ease of access to their key client group
- **tutor support** — although the centre is able to offer a variety of modes of learning, it has found that tutor-based learning is central to supporting learners with low levels of prior academic achievement and/or learners who have not engaged in learning for many years
- **small-group teaching** — small class sizes at the centre have helped create an informal atmosphere, which appeals to people who may have had negative experiences within formal education in the past.

**B.7 Tesco Learning Centre**

Tesco Learning Centre (Hatfield) is one of two learning centres set up in Tesco warehouse and distribution centres. There are approximately 500 workers (mainly drivers and warehouse workers) based on site. The centre was established with the support of USDAW and Tesco. It is organised with the support of a full-time learning centre manager, a network of union learning representatives and a steering group that includes union learning representatives and employer representatives (meeting once a month). Tutor support is provided by the local college.

**Encouraging learning in the workplace**
Approximately 250 people have enrolled in 360 courses to date, with approximately 46 completions of courses since January 2005. Courses are primarily demand-led and cover a range of subjects varying from guitar lessons and Spanish, to essential skills, ESOL and basic IT skills (eg CLAIT). Some courses lead to OCN accreditation. The length of courses varies from around eight to 12 weeks, and they are open to employees and their families.

**Promotion**
Union learning representatives are used to gauge interest in possible course options, while other forms of promotion include leaflets, flyers, and a bi-monthly newsletter that goes out with employees’ wage slips.

Also, the project runs taster sessions and occasionally takes learning activities down to the canteen area in order to get people engaged in what is going on. Another successful method of getting people involved in learning has been through letting people use the learning centre to access the internet and e-mails during normal opening times (from 9am to 5pm), during break-times and between shifts.

**Funding learning**
Although many courses are paid for partly by learners and carried out in learners’ own time, some funding is available from other sources, and some concessions have been made by the employer. For example, ESOL and essential skills are funded by the LSC. In these cases, the employer has also agreed a 50:50 paid time-off arrangement for courses, for up to eight hours a year per employee. In one particular case, where an ESOL course was tailored to incorporate company health and safety information, the employer offered staff release during work time.
The NHS Learning Accounts scheme offers financial support to help staff with no professional qualifications gain new knowledge and skills. It is administered by Workforce Development Confederations (WDCs), who may offer this support to private contractors and social care staff as well as to those directly employed by the NHS. Since April 2003, staff can benefit from Learning Accounts if employed in the NHS by a private contractor or if employed by a partner organisation in social care, though relatively few seem to have done so. The scheme aims to:

- target the promotion of Learning Accounts to individuals and groups who have not taken up their entitlement
- promote learning programmes likely to interest the target groups, give confidence in learning and encourage further progression
- provide advice and information through a Learning Account adviser.

A key aim is to open up progression routes to ‘non-traditional’ learners, leading to a better trained workforce for the NHS as a whole, and an increased supply into professional training. In line with local circumstances, each of the five areas has adopted different objectives and, to some extent, different approaches, within the overall framework of the pilot (additional source: Aldridge et al. 2005).

Established in 2002, Careconnect Learning is the UNISON health and social care sector hub within Ufi, offering a range of training courses to people who work in hospitals, care homes and other social care workplaces in different parts of England. The initiative uses a number of delivery methods including blended learning, e-learning at an online centre and distance learning.

**Use of ICT**
The use of ICT has a number of advantages.

- **ICT as a hook** — ICT is used as a ‘hook’ to encourage people into learning. An initial literacy and numeracy skills assessment is often conducted as part of a basic computer course, which appeals to workers, followed by a more detailed assessment and development of an individual learning plan.
- **ICT in workplace delivery** — In some Careconnect Learning projects, delivery of literacy and numeracy skills training took place in the workplace using laptop computers and online learning materials (Eborall 2004).
- **ICT and SMEs** — The use of e-learning is popular among SMEs in the care sector for induction training.

**Overview**
Get On And Learn (GOAL) is delivered by YMCA Training in the Norfolk area, and aims to improve the literacy and numeracy vocational skills of adults aged 22 and over. It is jointly funded by LSC Norfolk and the European Social Fund (ESF). The project is aimed at people in employment (although it does support unemployed people in some instances) who have been non-learners for the past three years and who operate below Level 2. The project is also aimed at disadvantaged areas of Norwich and Great Yarmouth.
GOAL is set in the employment context and is delivered primarily in the workplace, although there is the option of using one of the training centres based in Norwich and Great Yarmouth. The project operates mainly in the care and retail sectors, though not exclusively. Take-up in the care sector has been positive, partly as YMCA Training also offers vocational qualifications in this sector. These qualifications are in high demand due to legislative requirements within the care sector.

The current project followed two previous projects, LAW and BEST, with approximately 30-40 people signing up to GOAL since it was established in 2004, and over 100 learners taking part in the previous two projects.

Assessing needs
An organisational needs analysis is carried out, plus an initial assessment of individuals’ needs, usually within the workplace. Following the assessment, training is customised to the needs of learners and their employers, e.g. the training programme may be customised to take into account any areas or job roles for which the employer might wish to see development.

Delivery

- Learning is usually undertaken in the workplace with groups of three or four learners.
- Material is contextualised, e.g. paperwork used in the employing establishment is used in materials for learning in order to improve its relevance to the learner.
- Learning is predominantly taught rather than self-directed.

Accreditation
Accreditation takes the form of a nationally recognised qualification in literacy and numeracy skills (at Entry Level and Levels 1 and 2). This is assessed through a national literacy and numeracy skills test carried out in the training centre, which is usually conducted online so that it is possible to get immediate feedback.

Promotion
Learners are usually reached through employers. Employer marketing is conducted through a mail shot, followed by a telephone call or face-to-face meeting. In terms of the success of promotion, it was suggested that face-to-face approaches are the most productive. Mail shots are seen as less effective as they are easy for employers to overlook or ignore.

Outcomes
Courses are usually accredited externally. However, in cases where individual learners did not wish to seek accreditation, e.g. due to dispositional factors such as fear of failure, poor school experiences etc, they often receive an in-house certificate on completing the course.

Barriers that the project and learners faced

- Employers cannot always see the direct benefit of improving employees’ literacy and numeracy skills if they are not necessary for the job.
- It is not always possible for the employer to release the employees for time to train due to staffing constraints. This was seen as being particularly true in the care sector.
- Employer demand can act as a constraint. Some employers are more willing to release staff for vocational training (at Level 2 or above) than for literacy and numeracy skills needs.
- Time constraints faced by employees was seen as a barrier to learning.
Lack of confidence in potential learners was also reported as a potential barrier to employees taking up or completing training. In the retail sector, the amount of movement of employees between jobs was seen as a barrier to people completing training. Also, as the project was directed towards SMEs, the small size of some establishments could mean that it was less easy to release three or four members of staff at a time for training.

However, it was suggested that in most cases, once employers were engaged, they were generally committed to releasing staff for training. Employer evaluations at the end of courses have highlighted improved confidence levels of staff.

B.11 TOTAL3 (Training Open To All Learners)

Overview
TOTAL3 is a project delivered by YMCA Training. It is jointly funded by LSC Norfolk and the ESF. The project is aimed at improving the employability skills of people aged 22 and over without a Level 2 qualification. It is aimed at SMEs in a variety of sectors including retail and administration. The scheme helps learners to work towards achieving a Level 2 qualification, and offers additional training for literacy and numeracy skills needs. The project started in 2004 and follows on from the TOTAL1 and TOTAL2 projects.

Delivery
Learning is delivered in the workplace and usually takes the form of one-to-one tuition and assessment by a learning adviser. Additional training and key skills training can be delivered in the training centre based in Norwich.

Accreditation
The project aims to help learners work towards accreditation through the City and Guilds awarding body. Assessment is through a portfolio, which is assessed internally and verified externally.

Promotion
The training is marketed to employers with a mail shot followed by a telephone call, or by dropping in to the establishment to engage employers face-to-face. It was suggested that the second of these methods had been most successful in this and the previous project. It has been relatively easy to engage employers because the training is seen as vocational, in contrast to difficulties experienced in engaging employers with stand-alone literacy and numeracy skills training.

Outcomes
It was suggested that around 70% of learners left the previous project with an accredited outcome, and that – aside from the benefits of a nationally recognised qualification – there have been benefits for learners in increased confidence. This often translates into benefits to the employer of enhanced confidence and performance in the employees’ job roles. It was also reported that learners may often go on to do a higher-level qualification.

Barriers

• Although it was suggested that retention was generally very good, sometimes learners might drop out due to a move from one employer to another. This was seen as a possible characteristic of the retail sector.
• While employers were often happy for a learning adviser to come in and do teaching and assessment, they were sometimes not so keen to give up employees’ time for other activities, such as portfolio building.

B.12 Rotherham Learning Network

Rotherham Learning Network (RLN) is an engagement project aimed at encouraging adults back into education. The project, established in 2003, is focused on engagement, referral and progression. Project engagement activities are aimed at developing interest in learning and putting employers and employees into contact with the appropriate courses through RLN’s network of training providers.

Generating interest in learning

Much of the network’s activity is based on offering taster courses to employers or employees. These courses range from work-related themes such as ICT or first aid to recreational activities such as gardening or holiday Spanish. This range of subjects is designed to generate initial interest in learning, while flexible delivery of taster courses allows them to be delivered at work, during working hours. The courses are designed to be informal to appeal to people who may have been dissuaded from learning due to negative past experiences in education.

A wide range of promotional activities has been employed by the project in order to promote interest in these courses. These have included:

• advertising through posters and promotional literature outside RLN’s city centre premises
• mail shots
• face-to-face promotion in the street
• promotional stalls and activities at events and during Adult Learners’ Week
• face-to-face marketing with employers.

B.13 First Bus Learning Centre, Orpington

The First Bus Learning Centre at Orpington garage was established with the support of the union, management and tutors from Orpington College to promote literacy and numeracy skills learning in the workplace. The employer provided the venue and support services, while Orpington College purchased teaching equipment and supplied tutors, with the support of funding from the LSC.

The centre predominantly delivers courses related to basic numeracy and literacy, ESOL and IT skills. Between November 2003 and December 2004, approximately 58 workers enrolled on 73 basic literacy and numeracy courses, and a further 35 enrolments were made on literacy and numeracy courses in the early part of 2005.

Adjusting to delivery in the transport sector

Once established, workers from the garage showed considerable interest in learning activities, and so structured classes were organised. Due to shift-work, however, this arrangement was not a success. Orpington College quickly learned from this experience and decided to opt for a more flexible approach. It employed three staff with experience in delivering literacy, numeracy and ESOL to support literacy and numeracy skills workshops and drop-ins. More recently, one tutor has been employed who can cover all three of these areas and also basic IT skills. This enables the centre to offer tutoring support to learners at times that fit around the employees’ shifts.
Use of individual action plans
As people used the learning centre around their shifts, it was important to organise learning to make the most of the learners’ time. This is aided by the development of individual action plans for each learner. Individual action plans are seen to be key to the learning arrangement as they establish clear learning aims in an otherwise flexible delivery mechanism.

Dealing with out-of-hours shifts
Where learners’ shifts do not fit in with the normal opening hours of the learning centre, the tutors’ contract with the college allows for a certain amount of flexibility in out-of-hours teaching. The two union learning representatives at the garage may also negotiate with the employer to arrange for shifts to be swapped.

Funding
The employer covers the cost of supplying the room and related expenses, while initial funding for equipment and tutoring was supplied by the LSC. Further funding has been accessed through the ESF to help cover costs and pay for additional activities, such as taster courses in recreational activities aimed at promoting the learning centre.

B.14 Read On Write Away! – ROWA!

ROWA! began as a community literacy partnership initiative aimed at raising levels of literacy and numeracy skills across Derbyshire and the City of Derby. Established for over eight years, the project has worked with communities, families and schools to improve literacy and numeracy skills for people of all ages. With the advent of the skills for life strategy, and increased interest and funding for adult and workplace literacy and numeracy skills, ROWA! established a dedicated workplace basic skills section, which attempts to engage employers in delivering learning in the workplace. In 2003/04 ROWA! assisted 800 adults in gaining national accreditation and worked with a further 2,500 on first steps learning (ROWA! Website www.rowa.co.uk).

Partnership working and funding
ROWA! works with a wide range of partnership organisations. Core funding comes from Derbyshire County Council, Derby City Council, the Basic Skills Agency, the LSC and the Adult Literacy Trust. Although Derbyshire County Council is the host organisation and provides the premises, ROWA! is an independent partnership, helping the initiative to be responsive and flexible. The project draws funds from a number of sources, including the ESF.

To support workplace learning, ROWA! works with a number of employer and union organisations, an example of which is the workplace learning course developed for staff at Rolls Royce. The course, which was supported by the union at Rolls Royce, was a dual-accredited course incorporating IT skills and essential skills delivered by ROWA! On site in a union learning centre.

Responsive delivery
ROWA! has taken several steps aimed at developing responsiveness to workplace demands, for example:

- employment of a permanent tutor (to reduce time between an employer’s expression of interest and course delivery)
- job skills and training needs analysis
- individual interviews and assessments for employees
- training customised to employer and individuals needs
training offered on site, with other facilities available (with learning centres set up in two double-decker buses and a lorry).

B.15 Blackburn with Darwen Taxi Drivers’ Scheme

Background

- Blackburn with Darwen has around 20 taxi firms, who together employ approximately 700 people.
- Employment in the sector is divided between private hire vehicles (the majority of which are run by self-employed people contracted to larger companies) and the council-controlled Hackney carriages (black cabs).
- The majority of drivers are men aged 25 to 55, and a high proportion are from Asian backgrounds.

The project
Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council’s Lifelong Learning Service identified taxi drivers as a group of individuals who face multiple barriers to learning. In 2001, as a result of conversations with taxi drivers about their barriers to learning, the council decided to offer a Taxi Drivers’ Learning Dinner.

- Recruitment — All taxi drivers were invited to attend the dinner through personal visits by council officers, who were familiar to the taxi drivers due to their contact regarding taxi licensing. In addition, some of the enthusiastic drivers acted as learning champions and helped promote the scheme to their friends and colleagues.
- Tasters — Before the dinner, drivers and employers were asked about their learning interests. A large proportion of drivers were interested in self-defence, while managers showed an interest in customer service skills. Taster courses on self-defence and avoiding confrontation were established.

The success of the dinner project led to the establishment of two further pilots: a pre-licence training programme for new drivers, covering health and safety, basic mechanical knowledge and customer care, and a longer self-defence course, delivered in taxi depots.

With additional funding from the Adult and Community Learning Fund (through the Basic Skills Agency) and support from LSC Lancashire’s Local Initiatives Fund, the project aims to develop further, and to involve 350 new drivers over the next two years. The new features of the project include the assessment of literacy and numeracy skills and ESOL among drivers, development of embedded literacy and numeracy skills programmes, and the development of learning champions within taxi firms.
References


Devenport H, Patel H and Hartley T (2004). The story so far... Driving Futures, Building Learning Communities of Taxi Drivers in Blackburn with Darwen. Lancashire: LSC Lancashire.


Unwin L and Fuller A (2003). Expanding learning in the workplace: Making more of individual and organisational potential. Leicester: NIACE.