

# Wandsworth Lifelong Learning Skills for Life Strategy 2010- 2013

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## Introduction

The Wandsworth Lifelong Learning (WLL) Skills for Life Strategy 2010- 2013 has been prepared by Wandsworth Borough Council's Lifelong Learning Team. It sets out the Council's Skills for Life strategy for the next 3 years. The strategy will be updated annually in response to changing national and local developments, as well as feedback from learners and partners.

## National, regional and local context

In March 2009 the government published a refreshed Skills for Life Strategy, Skills for Life: Changing Lives. Since the launch of the Government's first Skills for Life strategy in 2001 over 5.7 million learners nationally have taken training courses and over 2.8 million learners have achieved nationally recognised qualifications. The strategy has been a huge success but there are still very significant numbers of adults who would benefit from improving their literacy, language and numeracy skills to be able to fully participate in home, work and community life. The Government has set a target of 95% of the working age population to possess functional levels of literacy and numeracy by 2020 (for the purposes of this target the level for functionality has been set at Entry 3 for numeracy and level 1 for literacy). The refreshed Skills for Life strategy has 3 central themes:

- a. focusing Skills for Life on employability, ensuring that the literacy, language and numeracy skills we help people develop will support them to find, stay and progress in work;
  - b. raising demand for literacy, language and particularly numeracy skills among individuals and employers, changing the culture and attitudes to Skills for Life that prevent people from embarking on learning; and
  - c. delivering flexible and responsive Skills for Life provision which meets learner and employer needs, is high quality, delivered in innovative ways and embedded in wider skills provision where that is the best way to meet individual learners' needs.
- (Skills for Life Changing Lives, 2009, page 5)

The current and future Skills for Life work of WLL and partners reflects these themes and targets.

In 2009 the Government published its New Approach to ESOL. This document sets out aims across a wide range of areas including the importance of ESOL in supporting social integration and individual progression. Wandsworth Borough Council have produced 'New Approach to ESOL: Towards an action plan for Wandsworth' in response to this national development. The Skills for Life strategy will take account of, but not duplicate, specific ESOL planning.

The updated WLL Skills for Life strategy will support the ongoing development of a whole organisation approach to Skills for Life and builds on the WLL mission statement:

All Wandsworth residents will have access to a wide range of high quality learning opportunities. Provision will be demand-led, flexible, held at times and in places designed to meet learners' needs. Lifelong Learning will provide attractive and exciting 'first step' opportunities, which make the most of ICT, to encourage those who have not previously been involved in learning. The Lifelong Learning team aims to improve the quality of life, skills and employability of residents in the borough, making Wandsworth a vibrant, prosperous learning community.

Wandsworth is the largest of the inner London boroughs and is largely residential. It has an increasingly ethnically diverse population and a high proportion of young adults aged 20-39.

Skills for Life is currently managed through WLL in partnership with a significant number of providers and other agency partners. There is senior management commitment to Skills for Life in Wandsworth with the Head of Lifelong Learning having strategic leadership. A Curriculum Leadership group made up of key partners meets regularly to drive forward the Skills for Life work in the borough. A new Skills for Life Manager will be recruited in early 2010 to give a strong operational lead to this area of work. The Council had recently signed the Skills Pledge, making a commitment to continuing professional development for Council employees.

The Skills for Life strategy links to a number of other national and organisational strategies and policies, including:

- Every Child Matters
- London LSC Statement of Priorities
- Widening Participation
- Equal Opportunities
- Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy
- Community strategy
- Children's Services and Early Years
- Wandsworth Borough Council Skills Pledge Action Plan
- New Approach to ESOL: Towards an action plan for Wandsworth

### **Working in Partnership**

WLL has a long and successful track record of establishing strategic partnerships with key organisations to be more responsive to the needs of particular individuals or groups of learners. These include large and small providers and support and referral agencies. WLL continues to develop new partnerships in response to emerging learner need. These partnerships take account of key success factors in partnership working such as contracting, clear roles and responsibilities, quality assurance, communication and sharing of resources, training and support.

The main provider partners are: South Thames College, as the largest further Education provider in the borough; Wandsworth Library Service, in particular the Boost programme at Roehampton library and Southfields Community College.

Skills for Life is also delivered at a number of smaller community venues around the borough and in a growing number of schools through the Family Literacy, Language and Numeracy (FLLN) programmes. Some discrete Skills for Life provision is delivered by WLL directly, both for the general public and for council employees.

Collaborative working is essential for both the delivery of Skills for Life and for recruitment and engagement of learners, particularly those from hard to reach groups who are unlikely to self refer. WLL will continue to seek out and develop key community partnerships. This will include a focus on organisations that work with target groups who are currently underrepresented.

### Skills for Life Curriculum Offer

WLL and partners offer a number of courses in literacy, language and numeracy at different levels. These courses take place at a range of times and locations in order to be flexible and responsive to the needs of different learners. A full audit of Skills for Life provision was carried out in January 2010 and identified the following numbers of places available across the borough for Skills for Life Learners:

Literacy 266  
Numeracy 211  
ESOL 634

The majority of both literacy and numeracy provision is at Level 1 and Level 2. Feedback from partners and WLL staff suggests there is unmet need at entry level for literacy and numeracy courses. Most ESOL provision is currently focussed on entry level and there is a need to look at progression routes for these learners. Feedback from partners suggests that there is also still unmet demand for lower level ESOL courses i.e. pre-entry and Entry 1. Borough scale of need data suggests there is an unmet need at all levels but it is necessary to raise demand and engage reluctant learners (see section below on Raising Demand and Engaging learners).

Some provision is group based and some uses a workshop model. There is a comprehensive and successful Family Literacy, Language and Numeracy (FLLN) programme. The FLLN programme continues to expand in response to learner and school demand.

A number of courses offer qualifications. WLL will work with partners to ensure that, where appropriate, every learner who wants to gain a qualification has the opportunity. Where accreditation is not appropriate WLL will embed RARPA (Recognising and recording progression and achievement in non accredited learning) within courses.

The curriculum offer continues to evolve to meet emerging needs. This includes developing provision in new venues that target under represented learner groups.

WLL works to broaden the Skills for Life curriculum offer in response to national developments and there are a number of vocational programmes being delivered by WLL that have Skills for Life as an element of the programme. This includes Personal Best, Train to Gain and Apprenticeships.

WLL will continue develop the curriculum offer including piloting embedded courses, contextualised programmes and linked courses. There has been community interest, for example, in literacy linked to leisure courses such as boxing.

WLL will continue to interpret national Skills for Life related developments as they emerge in order to inform the development of Skills for Life. This will particularly include developments in functional skills during 2010/2011.

### **Learner Entitlement**

WLL is committed to ensuring that all learners have access to learning opportunities that meet their individual learning needs. This includes having the following elements in place:

- Effective advice and guidance on how to improve skills
- Appropriate initial and diagnostic assessment and placement
- An individual learning plan with targets and progress checks
- A personalised learning programme with flexible learning opportunities, including the use of ICT
- Opportunities to gain accreditation where appropriate
- A range of progression pathways

WLL will continue to develop each of these elements including standardising of processes and resources across WLL and partners where appropriate.

### **Raising Demand and Engaging Learners**

WLL recruitment and engagement approaches respond to the fact that adults have many and varied reasons for taking up learning. WLL recognises that equally there are many reasons why adults do not take up learning opportunities, even where they are funded.

WLL engagement and recruitment approaches recognise the practical barriers to learning such as work or family commitments and where possible offer flexible programmes with support mechanisms, such as childcare, in place. Barriers to learning may also include fear about returning to learning where adults may not have been successful in the past. This can be particularly true of Skills for Life where historically there has sometimes been a perceived stigma attached to having poor

English and maths skills. Marketing materials and strategies take into account that many adults need support to see the benefits of brushing up skills. There are large numbers of learners who would benefit from improving their English and maths skills who aren't currently engaged so WLL will work to raise demand through both traditional and innovative promotional and marketing strategies.

WLL uses press, leaflets, fliers and prospectuses to recruit potential learners but equally important is word of mouth, referral from community organisations and outreach work. The WLL's Community Development Officer plays a vital role working with community groups to promote the benefits of adult learning in general and Skills for Life in particular.

There will be development work across the organisation to raise Skills for Life awareness among staff. There will also be increased opportunities for learners on leisure and vocational courses to brush up their English and maths skills through increased awareness of the benefits of brushing up skills and offering flexible learning opportunities.

A Skills for Life brand will be developed that will become recognisable across the borough to attract learners to the service.

WLL will continue to work to engage priority groups for Skills for Life. These include:

- People who do not have a level 2 qualification
- Public sector employees
- The unemployed and those at risk of redundancy
- Members of black and minority ethnic communities
- Men
- People living in deprived wards
- Young People not in education, employment or training
- Adults with learning disabilities and difficulties
- Older people

Tooting, Battersea and Roehampton are priority areas for Skills for Life provision within the borough as these areas show significant deprivation and low levels of educational achievement.

WLL aims to increase numbers of Skills for Life learners in the borough over the next 3 years (subject to funding to support growth). This will support wider WLL strategic objective of increasing the numbers of learners achieving level 2 qualifications.

### **Workforce Development**

WLL has carried out a Training Needs Analysis (TNA) with salaried staff that shows that these staff are appropriately and well qualified. WLL will roll out the TNA with sessional tutors during 2010. Staff are registered with the Institute for Learning (IfL).

There is an ongoing focus on supporting staff with Continuing Professional Development (CPD) planning and access. This includes formal and informal CPD in line with IfL guidelines. There will be further focus on sharing effective practice and peer support.

WLL is working in partnership with Wandsworth Borough Council (WBC) corporate Human Resources to support council employees to improve their English and maths skills. A number of pilot courses have been developed and delivered for different groups of staff including teaching assistants and care workers. Courses are delivered at times and locations to suit staff and organisations needs. Recruitment, retention and achievement have been good. Future development work will include focussing the level and subject of courses based on need, as well as targeting specific groups of staff that would particularly benefit from upskilling.

In 2009 the council made a commitment to upskilling the workforce by signing the Skills Pledge. A Skills Pledge action plan includes significant targets specifically relating to Skills for Life. Broadly these cover:

- Promotion of Skills for Life across departments
- Embed Skills for Life in relevant systems and processes
- Deliver Skills for Life training
- Develop framework for evaluating impact
- Increase union involvement in Skills for Life activities

Specialist Skills for Life staff will continue to work closely with other WBC staff to roll out a comprehensive Skills for Life programme for staff. WBC Skills for Life professional development will continue to be co-ordinated through the Skills for Life steering group that meets quarterly.

### **Quality Assurance and Quality Improvement**

WLL has a number of components in place to support quality improvement in Skills for Life across the organisation. These include:

- Feedback and evaluation from learners
- Assessment moderation
- Observation of teaching and learning
- Self assessment Review (SAR)
- Policies and procedures
- Service Level Agreements with partners
- Shared processes and resources where appropriate

A number of further priorities for development have been identified and will focus on:

- Improved internal verification and moderation

- Schedule of specialist observation of teaching and learning
- Data analysis to inform change
- Target setting at a course level
- Review of recruitment, retention and achievement at a course level

### **Funding Skills for Life Provision**

WLL has had significant success in recent years in securing a diverse range of funding sources to support the development of Skills for Life, in addition to the main LSC ACL and Family Learning grants. There are links to vocational upskilling through Train to Gain and Apprenticeships, support for volunteers through Personal Best and the Neighbourhood Learning in Disadvantaged Community (NLDC) funding supports the learning infrastructure in third sector organisations with a focus on Skills for Life. There is support from the Migrant Fund to target learners and support the development of Learner Advocates.

WLL will continue to seek and secure a wide range of funding streams to provide a sustainable platform for developing a flexible and responsive Skills for Life offer.

## Action points

- Working in Partnership
- Further collaborate with Wandsworth library service to raise demand and offer community based SfL programmes
- Continue to work with South Thames College and Southfields Community College as main provider partners to offer increasingly responsive and flexible programmes
- Extend collaborative work with third sector organisations to engage hard to reach learners and offer localised learning programmes
- Develop partnership working with Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) organisations in the borough, particularly focussing on those supporting priority groups
- Skills for Life Curriculum Offer
- Work with other areas of WLL to pilot embedded, contextualised and linked Skills for Life programmes
- Develop FLLN programmes further using feedback from partners and learners to inform direction
- Review accredited courses and change qualifications offered where appropriate
- Review non-accredited programmes and offer qualifications where appropriate
- Embed RARPA (Recognising and recording progression and achievement in non accredited learning) in non-accredited programmes
- Increase use of ICT on learning programmes, including online and blended learning
- Increase access to online test opportunities
- Target new provision in priority areas identified by WBC, based on indices of deprivation
- Incorporate developments in Functional Skills into curriculum planning as they emerge

- Learner Entitlement
- Review and standardise processes and materials used as part of the learning journey across all Skills for Life learning, including:
  - Skills checks
  - Initial and Diagnostic assessment
  - Individual Learning plan
- Develop and promote learning pathways to support learner progression
- Celebrate success with learner case studies, publicity and events
- Raising Demand and Engaging Learners
- Produce an internal communication strategy for promoting Skills for Life across WBC and within WLL
- Hold Skills for Life awareness raising sessions across the organisation for key staff
- Establish a network of Skills for Life champions across WLL
- Deliver recruiter training to Skills for Life champions
- Offer a regular programme of Skills for Life taster sessions at different locations around the borough
- Use Adult Learners Week as a significant recruitment opportunity
- Develop an external marketing and communications strategy to recruit learners from hard to reach priority groups
- Create a highly visible, recognisable brand for Skills for Life within Wandsworth including marketing and promotional materials
- Workforce Development
- Carry out Training Need Analysis (TNA) of specialist SFL staff and those delivering LLN as part of other programmes to inform CPD planning
- Establish and maintain a SFL CPD programme, ensuring all relevant staff access CPD opportunities
- Set up monitoring system to ensure all SFL staff fulfil the annual Institute for Learning (IfL) CPD requirement

- Work closely with WBC corporate HR to support implementation of the Skills Pledge action plan
- Quality Assurance and Quality Improvement
- Recruit Skills for Life Manager to oversee operational management of SfL
- Introduce framework for identifying and sharing effective practice between SfL teachers
- Formalise cycle of specialist SfL observation of teaching and learning (OTL)
- Train and support SfL co-ordinators to carry specialist SfL OTL
- Support non-specialist staff to embed SfL effective practice in relevant courses including those funded by Train to Gain, Apprenticeships and Personal Best
- Put in place internal verification and/or moderation schedule for SfL programmes
- Train relevant SfL staff in internal verification and/or moderation in line with awarding Body requirements
- Set and monitor targets at course level for recruitment, retention and achievement
- Carry out a twice-yearly review and update of the Skills for Life strategy
- Funding Skills for Life provision
- Continue to seek and secure diverse sources of funding for SfL, in addition to grant funding
- Develop a small team of staff to write bids for funding

## Wandsworth Lifelong Learning Skills for Life strategy

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| Name/job title of originator/author: | Santino Fragola, Head of Lifelong Learning |
| Contact details:                     | sfragola@wandsworth.gov.uk                 |
| Location on system:                  |  |

*If you are using a hard copy of this strategy/policy or looking at it on any website other than Wandsworth Lifelong Learning, please ensure that you have the most recent copy. Check the version number of the copy you are looking at against that of the copy on the Wandsworth Lifelong Learning website. [Link to strategy on website](#)*