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for adult literacy and numeracy

Enhancing Literacy and Numeracy

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6 July 2011

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Where are we now?

- Over 10 years since launch of Skills for Life
- Coalition government - continued funding for adult literacy and numeracy
- Nov 2010 Skills for Strategic Growth, review of delivery methods
- Context of economic constraints all around

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Current BIS review

- Drawing on a range of evidence, including that from Ofsted and NIACE
- Project board, practitioner group and series of stakeholder workshops
- Review of research literature
- Skills for Life survey 2010
- BIS due to report on review progress in autumn 2011

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Themes in the research review

Review comprises six themes:

- economic, personal and social returns to learning
- quality and effectiveness of provision
- number of learning hours needed for skills gain
- learner persistence
- skills' retention and loss
- literacy and numeracy skills needs

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Scope of the research review

- a review of ALN evaluation and research literature.
- English-language and UK-based sources published from 2000 onwards.
- Scope: literacy and numeracy (not ESOL); 19+
- Rationale: Where is the evidence robust? Where are the evidence gaps?

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Some examples of what we know from research

- That gaining lit and num skills in adulthood has positive effects on earnings and employment.
- That participation in adult lit and num provision has a positive personal and social impact on individuals.

We know less about:

- economic impact of ALN interventions
- how social and personal outcomes are related to learning outcomes.

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We also know that…

- SfL contributed to a substantial increase in enrolment, completion and achievement
- Numeracy learners made progress, literacy learners made progress with reading, but not writing.
- Embedding works except where a single teacher has dual responsibility for teaching vocational skills and ALN.

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…and that…

- Short workplace programmes have not been shown to lead to substantial improvements in literacy in the short term.
- However, learners who participate voluntarily, and who use their literacy at work and in everyday life, continue to improve their skills and are more likely to engage in further education and training.
- Workplace basic skills courses reach a different profile of learners – more men, more older people, and more people who have not previously engaged in learning.

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and also that…

- Adult literacy and numeracy teachers need to have both good generic and good subject specific teaching skills.
- Learner progress in literacy is greater where teachers have qualified teacher status.
- Learner progress in numeracy is greater where teachers are qualified in maths to Level 3 or above.
- Benefits for learners are associated with teachers who work full-time; however the proportion of sessional teachers in the workforce is rising.

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NRDC research publications can be found at:

www.nrdc.org.uk