



Quality
Improvement
Agency

Skills for Life Improvement Programme



**Improving Quality through a Whole
Organisation Approach to Skills for Life**

When it became clear that functional skills qualifications would replace key skills, **Training Plus Merseyside** worked intensively to develop a whole organisation approach to Skills for Life that would enable them to respond to this change effectively.

Through their participation in the Improvement Programme, all staff in the organisation became involved in Skills for Life quality improvement, from strategic planning to new processes and resources. Activities carried out by the team included developing:

- a new 'sign-up' process that allows Skills for Life staff to share learners' LLN progress profiles with vocational assessors and requires assessors to set targets that include literacy, language and numeracy
- new learner records that allow assessors to monitor and record how well learners are mastering LLN skills in a vocational context
- a new delivery model so that Skills for Life teachers can, where required, team-teach with vocational teachers and work collaboratively to embed LLN skills in vocational delivery.

A staged implementation of functional skills was planned. As a result, Training Plus Merseyside has taken part in the functional skills pilots and has recently been awarded 'lead provider' status to deliver one of the new Diplomas, including functional skills.

By adopting a whole organisation approach to Skills for Life, the company has focused on every developing aspect of curriculum support and delivery. In this way a potentially disruptive change has been turned into an exciting new opportunity.



Key messages

- Reflect on why a whole organisation approach to Skills for Life will benefit learners/potential learners in your organisation.
- Link the need to improve the quality of teaching and learning to the development of a whole organisation approach to Skills for Life.
- Place Skills for Life at the heart of quality improvement planning, even if your organisation is already 'good' or 'excellent'.
- Think carefully about the impact that changes in policy and/or funding could have on your learners and the LLN support you need to offer them.

Identifying priorities for strategic planning

A detailed audit of activities enabled senior management teams to identify and agree strategic priorities for development that will later become priorities in the Skills for Life strategy.

Training Plus Merseyside began to implement their Skills for Life strategy in 2006. In order to plan their Skills for Life quality improvement strategically, the company carried out a thorough audit of their provision, covering all departments and involving the whole staff team. In their first year on the Improvement Programme, they achieved a wide range of outcomes that included developing:

- a team teaching model to deliver embedded literacy, language and numeracy
- learning activities and resources to support learners to improve their LLN skills in vocational sessions
- vocational schemes of work and session plans including Skills for Life
- a peer observation model to develop the quality of embedded LLN support
- Skills for Life data monitoring systems (i.e. number of times learners sit key skills tests).

In the following year, Training Plus Merseyside brought their management team together to carry out a second audit of Skills for Life across the organisation. The team used the Skills for Life Health Check and relevant data to identify strengths and areas for improvement. Areas for improvement (on sticky notes) were developed into a spider diagram and then placed into categories to inform strategic planning for the coming year. Development areas for 2007/08 included:

- quality assuring the embedding of LLN into teaching and learning
- supporting Skills for Life teachers to monitor vocational targets
- recording LLN targets, progress and achievements
- improving LLN target setting and review processes (through partnership between Skills for Life teachers and NVQ assessors)
- ensuring learners understand their LLN progress in training and the workplace.

Key messages

- Ensure the senior management team drives the development of a whole organisation approach to Skills for Life.
- Use all existing documentation and known quality information as well as the Skills for Life Health Check to audit current provision.
- Involve people from across the organisation in the auditing process.
- Collate key priorities from the auditing activities to inform strategic planning.