

Skills for Life: Changing Lives (A United Kingdom Viewpoint)

Source : UK Dept of Business, Innovation and Skills Report on Skills for Life.

Foreword

We can only succeed in a rapidly changing world and create a society in which everyone has the opportunity to realise their full potential if we invest in our nation's skills. Beyond today's global slowdown lies a world of new opportunities for which we must prepare. Although the months ahead will be tough, the coming decade offers vast new opportunities for Britain. Research consistently shows that a skilled workforce is a productive workforce, better able to respond to the challenges and opportunities posed by ever greater competition, technological change and new markets. Equally, we know what a powerful driver of social mobility skills can be. By supporting adults to improve their skills, we give them an opportunity to change their lives and those of their families. The Government's continued commitment to Skills for Life underpins all of our ambitions for our nation's economy and our society. That is because good literacy, language and numeracy skills underpin almost everything we do in our daily lives – at work and at home.

Summary

We have set ourselves the ambition to become a world leader in skills by 2020, benchmarked against the upper quartile of OECD countries.

For Skills for Life, this means ensuring that 95 per cent of the working-age population possesses at least functional levels of literacy at level 1 and numeracy at entry level 3. We want to make real progress towards that ambition by 2011, and have set a Public Service Agreement (PSA) target that between 2008 and 2011 we want:

- a. 597,000 people of working age to achieve a first level 1 or above literacy qualification; and
- b. 390,000 to achieve a first entry level 3 or above numeracy qualification.

2. These 2011 targets differ from previous Skills for Life targets in that they are focused on helping adults to reach a minimum 'threshold' level of literacy and numeracy, rather than on moving up a level and achieving a first qualification.

3. The Government has also established separate measures for literacy and numeracy for the first time, recognising the importance of each discipline in its own right – and the particular importance of making progress on numeracy.

4. Although it is too early to report formally on progress against the 2011 PSA target, the number of adults obtaining their first functional literacy and numeracy qualifications is increasing year on year:

- a. 215,000 adults achieved their first level 1 or above literacy or English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) qualification in 2006/07, compared to 42,000 in 2002/03; and
- b. 84,000 adults achieved their first entry level 3 or above numeracy qualification in 2006/07, compared to 3,000 in 2002/03.

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