

THE MOSER REPORT

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1.1 Something like one adult in five in this country is not functionally literate and far more people have problems with numeracy. This is a shocking situation and a sad reflection on past decades of schooling. It is one of the reasons for relatively low productivity in our economy, and it cramps the lives of millions of people. We owe it to them to remedy at public expense the shortcomings of the past. To do so should be a priority for Government, and for all those, in the business world or elsewhere, who can help.
- 1.2 At present all too little is done. The teaching of basic skills to adults is often marginalised, remaining something of a Cinderella service. In fact it needs to become a key part in the strategy for Lifelong Learning and for national renewal generally. In this report we propose a wide-ranging National Strategy, which could halve the levels of functional illiteracy and innumeracy in about a decade, and make major progress by 2005, our key target year.

THE SCALE OF THE PROBLEM

- 1.3 The following facts help to bring home the scale of the problem.
 - Some 7 million adults in England - one in five adults - if given the alphabetical index to the Yellow Pages, cannot locate the page reference for plumbers. That is an example of functional illiteracy. It means that one in five adults has less literacy than is expected of an 11-year-old child. These figures – based on official surveys – are inevitably estimates, and may be a little on the high side: but the order of magnitude is certainly right.
 - One in sixteen adults, if shown the poster in Figure A, cannot say where the concert is being held.
- 1.4 The situation for numeracy is both worse and more confusing because the tests are weaker and the evidence is controversial. Estimates of the percentage of adults having some numeracy problems range from 30% to 50%. We regard 40% as a reasonable figure to have in mind in this report. But we also adopt a division often used (even if arbitrary) between “low” and “very low” numeracy, the latter category being those with very severe difficulties. On this basis something like one in five adults have very low numeracy. The following are survey findings about numeracy:
 - one in three adults in this country cannot calculate the area of a room that is 21 × 14 feet, even with the aid of a calculator;
 - one in four adults cannot calculate the change they should get out of £2 when they buy the goods displayed in Figure B.
- 1.5 What is clear from research is that very limited numeracy can be as serious as poor literacy for the individual, in certain jobs and indeed for the economy.

Figure A

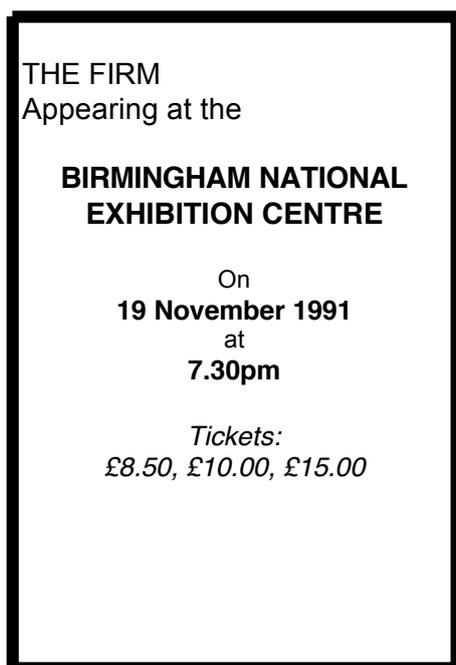


Figure B



- 1.6 In short, for many people limited basic skills mean serious disadvantages - at work (in fact many are unemployed), and in limiting much of what a full life can offer. Limited skills are also a brake on the economy, one of the factors – as research has repeatedly shown – underlying the nation’s relatively poor productivity compared with much of Europe. Table 1.1 shows some relevant comparisons*.

Table 1.1

Percentage of adults with low literacy and low numeracy
(identical questions in all countries)

	<u>Literacy</u>	<u>Numeracy</u>
Germany	12%	7%
Canada	17%	17%
Britain	23%	23%

Source: *Adult Literacy in Britain*, ONS, 1997

- 1.7 The scale of the problem is enormous, and there is much evidence to show how it relates to other social issues. One fact will suffice to illustrate the point: some 60% of people in prison suffer from functional illiteracy and/or innumeracy.

* These figures relate to Level 1 as defined in the International Adult Literacy Survey (OECD). Definitions of levels are explained in Annex A.

THE CAUSES

- 1.8 The situation has come about from home circumstances and, above all, from poor schooling. Certainly, a major part of the problem goes back to past education, the fact that over the years millions of children have left school with poor basic skills. Fortunately, this school problem is now being tackled through the National Strategies for Literacy and Numeracy. These reforms are crucial, but it will inevitably take decades before they have affected all the adult population. We therefore need major help in basic skills for today's adults.
- 1.9 Some of the provision already available for adults is excellent, with dedicated teachers and imaginative programmes. But the provision varies from area to area, in quality and in quantity: there simply is not enough provision of study programmes to meet the need. Nor has there been a coherent and consistent set of national standards to guarantee quality in what is taught, how it is taught and in the qualifications that are awarded at the end. Most of the teachers are part-time with little access to training, and the system of inspection needs co-ordination.
- 1.10 There are inevitably problems of motivation among prospective learners. Of the estimated 7 million adults who are functionally illiterate or innumerate, only about 250,000 are taking part in a relevant course of study. This is partly because people with difficulties are often understandably reluctant to acknowledge, or are unaware, that they have a problem; or that it matters or indeed that there are ways of tackling it. Moreover, few employers take a constructive approach to advancing basic skills in their workforce.
- 1.11 Programmes of study are insufficiently publicised, and are often not accessible enough to encourage potential learners to take part. Nor do they generally seem inviting. We attempt in this report to find a set of changes that can genuinely produce more attractive offerings for those who want to improve their basic skills.

A NATIONAL STRATEGY

- 1.12 We need a Fresh Start available and attractive for millions of people. With this in mind, we propose a National Strategy for Adult Basic Skills with ten main elements.
- National targets
 - An entitlement to learn
 - Guidance, assessment and publicity
 - Better opportunities for learning
 - Quality
 - A new curriculum
 - A new system of qualifications
 - Teacher training and improved inspection
 - The benefits of new technology
 - Planning of delivery

NATIONAL TARGETS

- 1.13 The targets should be both ambitious and realistic. We propose that by 2010 the aim should be to reduce by half the number of functionally illiterate adults of working age. This means lifting some 3.5 million adults out of functional illiteracy over this period, and a similar number for numeracy. A decade is a long way off, and we make recommendations for 2005 as a crucial intermediate target year, with significant improvements by then.
- 1.14 A key objective must be to encourage and help younger people, and we suggest that by 2010, the aim should be that 95% of 19 year olds would have adequate levels of literacy and 90% adequate levels of numeracy.
- 1.15 The system of provision we recommend below will make it possible to achieve the proposed targets only if each year from 2002 on average 450,000 people pass the threshold for literacy, and a similar number for numeracy. This compares with, say, less than 70,000 a year under present arrangements.
- 1.16 To get a flow of 450,000 people to cross the key threshold, the total number enrolled needs to increase from the 500,000 planned for 2002 to some 750,000 by 2005. The University for Industry will play an important role in this, and the targets will only be achievable if employers generally agree to play their part.
- 1.17 As indicated above, the targets need to have staging posts between now and a decade hence. To make sense of these targets, the Government will have to undertake a baseline survey. Then the targets will be achievable if the Government is willing to give them high priority in funding.

AN ENTITLEMENT TO LEARN

- 1.18 The targets will be hard to reach unless people who want to improve their basic skills are entitled, free of charge, to all aspects of the necessary teaching and study programmes. There is already free full-time education up to 19, and – for those who qualify – highly subsidised higher education. It is only right that those who missed out early in life should have free access to acquiring the basic tools necessary for their lives.
- 1.19 Every citizen with worries about literacy or numeracy should have a clear entitlement to a choice of opportunities for learning, and indeed access to a wide variety of study programmes.
- 1.20 Individual Learning Accounts, which are part of Government programmes, can usefully be brought into play as an incentive for learners.

GUIDANCE, ASSESSMENT AND PUBLICITY

- 1.21 The principle of entitlement is very important. Individuals with basic skills problems should be entitled to free confidential assessment, whether they are employed or unemployed.

- 1.22 All unemployed people without GCSE/O-Level, and others signing on for social benefits, should be entitled to a simple assessment test when they first sign on. If they have basic skills problems, they should be advised on appropriate courses; whether they then decide to participate is, of course, up to them.
- 1.23 High quality guidance and information on basic skills courses need to be freely available to all potential learners. Furthermore, to ensure that learners get on to appropriate courses, it is essential that, however they arrive there, they have had an assessment recording the skills with which they enter the programme.
- 1.24 Persuasive and wide-ranging publicity is important, and we are encouraged by the commitment of the BBC in this area. The recommendations we make build on this, and also set out a wide role for broadcasters and the media generally. We envisage a continuous high-profile campaign.

BETTER OPPORTUNITIES FOR LEARNING

- 1.25 The scale of opportunities available to those who wish to learn needs to be enlarged. The basic problem is that courses are insufficiently intensive and there are not enough of them that offer easy access. Moreover, what is available in a particular area or institution seems quite a lottery.
- 1.26 Typically, basic skills learners are taught for 2-4 hours a week. For most learners, this is too little and explains why only about a third achieve their learning objectives. Research suggests that more intensive programmes increase the success rate of basic skills learners, and that longer periods of study are necessary for those with the weakest skills. We must ensure that such opportunities are widely available.
- 1.27 There should be a wide diversity of places and programmes in which people can access learning. All forms of provision need to be expanded, especially those that can reach adults at present felt - however wrongly - to be out of reach. Unless community-based provision is enormously expanded, we will not be able to reach hundreds of thousands of people who have real needs but don't want to go to a college. The role of voluntary organisations and community schools is crucial. All types of places – whether libraries, arts centres, supermarkets or sports centres – could be brought into play.
- 1.28 The New Deals have a crucial role to play in making sure that unemployed people get the opportunity to improve basic skills, and we make recommendations aimed at this role. Similarly, we know that many students in colleges of further education require additional support with basic skills in order to cope with the demands of their courses. We propose a substantial expansion in this support.
- 1.29 Family literacy, involving parents and children together, has proved a particularly encouraging way of helping many parents to improve their own literacy. This too needs expansion. We envisage that the Basic Skills Agency should develop its work in this area.
- 1.30 The most encouraging new vehicle for promoting basic skills is the University for Industry. This will use mainly interactive electronic teaching material delivered on

computer screens, either on-line or by CD ROM, with guidance from a face-to-face teacher. The Ufl will work through some 2,000 franchised centres throughout the country, and will also be accessed from homes and workplaces. There is funding for the Ufl to support free education in basic skills for 200,000 learners by 2003.

- 1.31 Perhaps the most radical change relates to the key role employers have in promoting basic skills. They need to demand more skill of their employees and to do more to help their employees to acquire it. We propose a number of specific measures:
- basic skills education at the workplace should be publicly funded on the same basis as anywhere else, for example in colleges. This includes basic skills education through the University for Industry;
 - a Workplace Basic Skills Development Fund should be established to provide seed funding for employers to set up basic skills programmes and to get free advice on how to organise effective basic skills courses at the workplace;
 - employers wishing to gain Investors in People should have effective arrangements for diagnosing and handling problems of basic skills;
 - a 'pledge' scheme for companies should be introduced so that they can indicate their support for the National Strategy;
 - union representatives should be involved in the handling of basic skills issues.
- 1.32 A very important problem is how to ensure that busy employees have enough time for intensive study to overcome literacy, numeracy or language problems. This means that there should be adequate provision and government funding for day release.

QUALITY

- 1.33 But we need not only enough provision, but provision of such good quality that it will lift peoples' competence in a clear and demonstrable way, and be a positive attraction for students. Four elements are essential for ensuring high quality:
- clear, unambiguous national quality standards;
 - a well-defined curriculum;
 - a credible set of qualifications;
 - a new system of teacher training and inspection.

A NEW CURRICULUM

- 1.34 We emphasise the need for a core curriculum that recognises the fact that different adult learners have hugely different motivations for learning. Some want it for a particular job or for work in general, others to follow a sport, to read the news, to help in working on DIY or to prepare for other forms of learning later in life. The materials through which different people learn must be addressed to their specific interests.
- 1.35 In all these pursuits there is a high common factor. All require the skills that are the basic building blocks of reading, writing and the use of numbers: for example

comprehension, punctuation, spelling, addition, subtraction, multiplication and division. The core curriculum for adults, as for school-children, needs to cover these common elements. We propose that a basic skills curriculum, based on well-defined standards, be developed jointly by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA), the Standards and Effectiveness Unit (SEU) and the Basic Skills Agency (BSA).

A NEW SYSTEM OF QUALIFICATIONS

- 1.36 It is also vital that we have qualifications which are credible indicators of a person's literacy and numeracy. Unless the qualifications are credible, they cannot do the job that is needed. One of the reasons why basic skills education has not developed as it should is that so many existing qualifications lack credibility. The key criterion in planning for a new system of qualifications is that they should be attractive to potential learners, and positively useful to them in their work, in seeking and getting jobs, and in moving on to further learning.
- 1.37 The new system of qualifications we propose will be based on the new curriculum and on uniform standards of skill. It will be available at a number of levels, and it can be taken in 'bite-size' chunks. Ready access for the learner is crucial. Coursework-assessed qualifications, strictly based on new national standards, will be offered by a number of awarding bodies, and in addition we recommend a single test-assessed qualification at Level 1 and at Level 2, named the National Literacy Test and the National Numeracy Test. The key point is that, whatever the assessment route, it should be based on the proposed standards of curricula, teaching and so forth.

TEACHER TRAINING AND INSPECTION

- 1.38 Without enough good teachers there is little hope of achieving the proposed targets. At present, too many teachers teach part-time, and some are inadequately prepared. To achieve our aims, many more teachers will need to be trained to teach for the new curriculum. We shall require over 15,000 full-time equivalent teachers in this area, compared with under 4,000 at present. Teacher training programmes will have to be commensurate. And a new qualification for teachers should be developed jointly by QCA, the Further Education National Training Organisation (FENTO) the BSA and others.
- 1.39 Quality control also depends on proper monitoring of teaching. Basic skills education is currently in the hands of three separate inspectorates – the Further Education Funding Council Inspectorate, the Training Standards Council and OFSTED. At present the standards demanded by these bodies are insufficiently rigorous, and there should be a new common framework of inspection. This should be based on new nationally determined standards which all basic skills programmes will be required to meet to qualify for funding.

THE BENEFITS OF NEW TECHNOLOGY

- 1.40 Information and communications technologies (ICT) are a powerful tool in the process of raising levels of literacy and numeracy. New technology offers a new start for adults, with computers and multimedia software providing attractive ways of learning. The Web enables access to the best materials and the most exciting learning opportunities. The Internet and digital TV technology can reach into the home, to motivate and teach adults who will not join programmes in traditional centres of learning. Learners who use ICT for basic skills double the value of their study time, and acquire keyboard and other computing skills as they improve their reading, writing or use of numbers.
- 1.41 So ICT needs to be a staple of basic skills programmes. Learners need access to fast, modern computers. There must be an improved range of software programs suitable for these learners, with clear quality criteria for content and use. Programme providers will also need staff skilled in the best use of ICT.

PLANNING OF DELIVERY

- 1.42 Ultimately the Government must be responsible for the achievement of the National Strategy. But this cannot be achieved without being translated into local targets and local action plans. At present local action is fragmented, partly due to the many funding sources involved. Provision in colleges is mainly financed by the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC), but there is also provision by Local Education Authorities (in institutes and community institutions) and by Training and Enterprise Councils (in colleges and private training providers). To deal with this confusion, which applies also to other forms of post-16 education and training, the Government is proposing Local Learning Partnerships. To achieve the National Strategy proposed in this report, these partnerships should have a key, indeed early, responsibility for improving adult basic skills. They should therefore be required to produce 3-year action plans for adult basic skills education. These plans should be developed with help from the Basic Skills Agency, which would also advise on the plans when submitted to the Secretary of State for approval.
- 1.43 At national level there should be a National Adult Basic Skills Strategy Group, chaired by a Minister, to oversee and advise on all aspects of the National Strategy. The Basic Skills Agency would continue to promote and disseminate good practice. It would also work closely with QCA and the DfEE's Standards and Effectiveness Unit in developing curricula and qualifications, and with FENTO on the training and certification of teachers.

FUNDING

- 1.44 The task is considerable and it cannot be accomplished unless the Government allocates the necessary resources. We set out in the report our best estimate of what resources might be needed – specifically by 2005 - to reduce the number of adults with poor basic skills as dramatically as we hope. Many of our recommendations are cost-neutral and quite a few do not impact on public expenditure. But of those that do, the funding called for is directly related to the increase in learners which is central to the proposed strategy. We hope that our argument for a major transformation will convince those with the power to translate it into reality.

Now is the time for a Fresh Start.

THE MOSER GROUP REPORT

RECOMMENDATIONS

A National Strategy and a National Target

RECOMMENDATION 1 – A National Basic Skills Strategy for Adults

The Government should launch a National Strategy to reduce the number of adults with low levels of basic skills.

RECOMMENDATION 2 - National Targets

- (i) As part of the National Strategy, the Government should commit itself to the virtual elimination of functional illiteracy and innumeracy.
- (ii) In addition to the accepted participation target for 2002, the Government should set specific basic skills targets for adults and for young people to be achieved by 2005 and 2010, on the scale proposed in the new National Strategy.

Increasing Participation

RECOMMENDATION 3 – A National Campaign

There should be a continuous high profile promotion campaign, with clear segmentation for different groups of learners, to be devised by a new Adult Basic Skills Promotion Task Force. This should be set up in 2000.

Entitlement

RECOMMENDATION 4 - Entitlement

- (i) All adults with basic skills below Level 2 should be entitled to a confidential assessment of their skills on demand, access to high quality information, advice and guidance, and access to a variety of programmes of study – all free of charge.
- (ii) People who have successfully completed basic skills courses should be a priority target for the first million Individual Learning Accounts funded from TEC resources to help them progress.
- (iii) The Government should consider how, in the long term, Individual Learning Accounts can be most effectively used to motivate these learners.

Expanding and Improving Opportunities

RECOMMENDATION 5 - Programmes for the Unemployed

- (i) The Government should:
 - (a) ensure that the basic skills of all New Deal clients are assessed soon after they make contact with their Personal Adviser, and that intensive basic skills courses are offered early on to those with basic skills at Entry Level or below;
 - (b) ensure that all claimants for benefit are entitled to assessment of basic skills and offered effective provision to improve their skills if below Level 2.
- (ii) The New Deal Task Force should be asked urgently to ensure that clients with basic skills below Level 2, on options other than the education and training option, get access to basic skills support.
- (iii) Training should be provided for all Personal Advisers so that they can identify basic skills needs and encourage the take-up of basic skills opportunities where this is necessary.

RECOMMENDATION 6 – Workplace Programmes

- (i) The Government should set up a Workplace Basic Skills Development Fund. This would provide seed funding for companies to set up basic skills programmes either in the workplace or at a local institution such as a college or adult education centre.
- (ii) Up to a fixed budget limit, the Government should finance the wage cost of day release for up to 13 weeks for people with basic skills below Level 1.
- (iii) The revised *Investors in People* guidance should include a requirement for companies to have effective arrangements for assessing and dealing with basic skills difficulties.
- (iv) Training for basic skills at the workplace should be funded on a par with funding of such programmes in FE Colleges.
- (v) A ‘pledge’ scheme for companies should be introduced to allow them to indicate their support for raising standards of basic skills among adults.

RECOMMENDATION 7 – Trade Unions

- (i) Unions should provide basic skills programmes for their members based on the new National Strategy.
- (ii) Unions should work with the TUC to train and develop “union learning representatives”, who should support and advise learners and work with employers on the development of basic skills provision in the workplace.
- (iii) Unions should be encouraged to submit bids to the Union Learning Fund, and the Workplace Basic Skills Development Fund, for the development of basic skills programmes.

RECOMMENDATION 8 – The University for Industry

In pursuing its commitment to making basic skills a priority, the Ufi should:

- (i) ensure that learners undertaking courses below Level 2 through Ufi-endorsed programmes should have access to, and guidance on, basic skills help available;
- (ii) ensure that in working towards its targets for basic skills support in the workplace and elsewhere materials, tutor support and qualifications meet the quality standards we propose;
- (iii) commission multimedia basic skills products, on-line learning and digital TV programmes, to provide for adults with basic skills needs through learning centres and at home.

RECOMMENDATION 9 – Community Based Programmes

Local Basic Skills Action Plans should specifically include community based provision to meet increased local need, for which particular resources should be identified. The Secretary of State should take account of the adequacy of such community-based provision in approving local Adult Basic Skills Action Plans.

RECOMMENDATION 10 – Basic Skills Support in Colleges

- (i) As soon as possible, and no later than 2002, all providers funded by FEFC should, as a requirement of funding, be required to assess all appropriate students enrolling and offer additional support.
- (ii) By 2002 all students assessed as requiring additional support with basic skills in colleges should be able to take up this help.

RECOMMENDATION 11 – Family-Based Programmes

- (i) All infant and primary schools in educationally disadvantaged areas should have family literacy and numeracy programmes by 2002;
- (ii) the Basic Skills Agency should continue to develop and evaluate new models of family literacy and family numeracy programmes.

Quality

RECOMMENDATION 12 – Quality Assurance

By 2002 all basic skills programmes should be required to meet a new nationally determined framework of standards in order to qualify for funding.

RECOMMENDATION 13 – Inspection

The three inspection agencies, FEFC, OFSTED and TSC, should work together on a common inspection framework based on clear and transparent standards and consistent with the proposed national quality framework.

RECOMMENDATION 14 – Teacher Training

- (i) All new staff and volunteers should undertake recognised initial training in teaching literacy and numeracy to adults.
- (ii) The BSA and the new Further Education National Training Organisation (FENTO) and others should work together to produce new qualifications for teaching basic skills to adults.
- (iii) By 2005 all teachers of basic skills should have this qualification or an equivalent.
- (iv) Diploma courses in teaching basic skills to adults should be established in University Education Departments.
- (v) Intensive courses for teachers to become familiar with the new curriculum should be mounted.

RECOMMENDATION 15 – Use of Information and Communication Technology

In view of the importance of Information and Communication Technology in basic skills learning programmes, the DfEE should ensure, in collaboration with relevant bodies, that such programmes receive all the necessary advice and support.

Core Curriculum and Qualifications

RECOMMENDATION 16 - Core Curriculum and Qualifications

- (i) There should be a new national basic skills curriculum for adults, with well-defined standards of skill at Entry Level, Level 1 and Level 2.
- (ii) Only basic skills qualifications based on this new curriculum should be funded from the public purse. Whether assessed by coursework, test or a mixture of both they should use a common set of standards laid down by QCA.
- (iii) Existing qualifications should be revised to meet these new national standards.
- (iv) Existing qualifications based exclusively on tests should be replaced by a new National Literacy Test and a new National Numeracy Test both available at Levels 1 and 2.

Delivery of the Strategy

RECOMMENDATION 17 - Local Partnerships

- (i) Implementing the National Strategy locally should be the responsibility of the local Lifelong Learning Partnerships. These would include representatives of those concerned with adult basic skills. Their composition would be submitted to the Secretary of State for guidance.
- (ii) Each Partnership should be required to submit an Action Plan for the approval of the Secretary of State.

National Co-ordination

RECOMMENDATION 18 - National Co-ordination

A new National Adult Basic Skills Strategy Group, with Ministerial chairmanship, should be established by the Secretary of State to oversee the implementation of the National Strategy. It should be supported by a Technical Implementation Sub-Committee.

RECOMMENDATION 19 – Role of the Basic Skills Agency

The role and responsibility of the Basic Skills Agency should be revised so that, building on its present responsibilities, it can:

- (i) advise each Partnership on their Action Plan;
- (ii) promote and disseminate good practice;
- (iii) coordinate and promote the professional development of teachers;
- (iv) promote basic skills nationally;
- (v) assess progress against targets;
- (vi) report to the Secretary of State each year on progress towards meeting the national target.

Funding

RECOMMENDATION 20 - Funding

- (i) A priority for the Technical Implementation Sub-Committee should be to produce more definitive estimates of all the costs involved in the National Strategy, refining the broad estimates made here.
- (ii) The FEFC, TECs and other major funding bodies should modify their funding mechanisms to provide incentives for providers to increase the scale of adult basic skills provision.
- (iii) The FEFC should increase the entry units for basic skills to encourage outreach work, and to account for the requirement of institutions to assess all appropriate students.

Further Research and Development

RECOMMENDATION 21 - Research

The Department for Education and Employment should ensure that a research programme is set up to provide a systematic basis for the proposed strategy, including continuous monitoring of action plans. This should be done in collaboration with the Basic Skills Agency.