

get on local government

The GO Local Government Award: guidance for local authorities about the award and how to achieve it

The award is sponsored by
the Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA)
and the Skills for Life Strategy Unit of the Department
for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS)



Foreword

Get On Local Government

The Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA) has been leading a major national campaign, entitled **Get On Local Government**, that aims to raise the demand among local authority employers to take a more proactive, sustained and strategic approach to workplace literacy, language and numeracy (Skills for Life).

The **GO Local Government Award** was designed as a methodology to support local authorities in taking a whole organisation approach to embedding Skills for Life corporately within their workforce planning and other strategic structures, with the aim of moving this crucial agenda forward, engaging all relevant partners in the process.

The Award sets Skills for Life within a national quality framework that works towards a comprehensive and cohesive skills pathway for all employees. It enables those authorities gaining the award to celebrate their success through national recognition as exemplar authorities, as well as by maximising their potential in CPA and LiP, so ensuring they are well placed to serve the needs of their local communities.

Literacy, language and numeracy is the fundamental core to the Skills Pledge recommended in the Leitch Review of Skills.

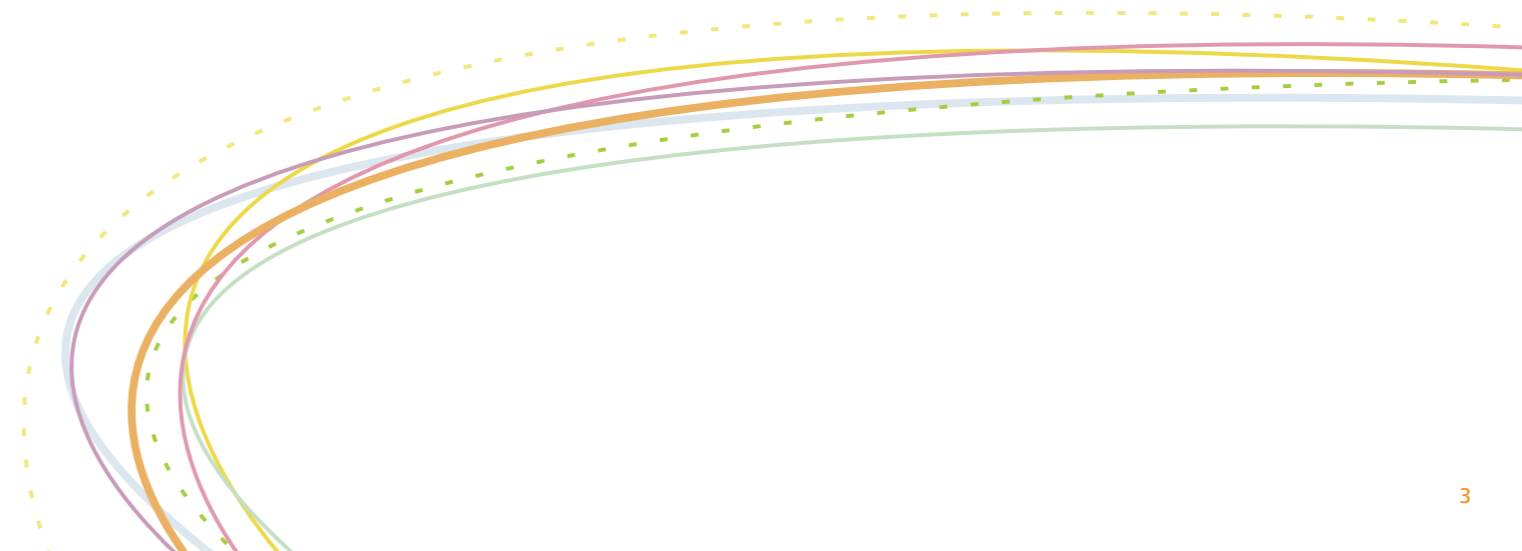
I firmly believe our sector welcomes the Leitch challenge and that local government employers should lead the way in driving up the ambition of individuals and employers to raise skills to level 2 and beyond.

I am delighted to recommend and endorse the **GO Local Government Award**.

Lucy de Groot

Executive Director, IDeA

January 2008



What do we mean by Skills for Life?

In 2001, in response to the 1999 Moser Report, *A Fresh Start: improving literacy and numeracy*, the government launched its *Skills for Life: the national strategy for improving adult literacy and numeracy skills*. Copies of this strategy can be obtained through DfES Publications. Call 0845 60 555 60 quoting reference SFLLN.

Moser identified that one in five adults has literacy skills below level 2 and that one in four has low-level numeracy skills. The aim of the national strategy is to reduce the number of adults in England with literacy, language and numeracy needs so as:

- to increase self-confidence
- to improve people's lives by reducing social exclusion
- to break cycles of deprivation in families
- to improve skills gaps in the labour market
- to enhance business performance
- to facilitate the development of a qualified workforce able to compete in a global market
- to enable the adult workforce to become flexible and adapt to changing technological and work environments.

Skills for Life sets out challenging national targets for improvements in literacy, language and numeracy. It also provides diagnostic assessment for adults, addressing quality, raising standards in the provision of teaching and learning opportunities, working to provide appropriate guidance for adults on progression routes and on-going career development once they have begun to look at their skills needs, and ensuring a seamless transition to and from Skills for Life provision and other courses.

Skills for Life identifies priority groups where the strategy can have a significant impact. Public sector employees, one such group, are categorised as those working in:

- central government
- local government
- the armed forces
- the National Health Service.

The national definition

By Skills for Life we mean:

The ability to read, write and speak in English, and to use mathematics at a level necessary to function at work and in society in general.

Basic Skills Agency

Skills for Life and local government

As part of its commitment to partnership working and to enable the delivery of local government targets, the IDeA is working closely with the Skills for Life Strategy Unit of DIUS at both strategic and operational levels.

The *Skills for Life strategy for local government* was launched in 2005 and is being implemented throughout England using the methodology of this award.

The IDeA has developed the **GO Local Government Award** as part of the national local government strategy to enable authorities to demonstrate their commitment to the strategy and to working with employees at all levels so as to positively address the Skills for Life needs of their workforce.

What is a GO Local Government Award authority?

The IDeA will run the award scheme to identify and accredit those authorities that sign up to Skills for Life and who work with their staff to ensure that everyone has the opportunity not only to improve his or her skills to level 2 (and beyond) but also to gain national literacy and numeracy qualifications, recognised by all employers. For clarification, by 'level 2' we mean equivalent to NVQ level 2 or five GCSEs at grades A to C.

To facilitate the implementation of Skills for Life activity the IDeA will expect authorities actively to engage with their unions, strategically and at operational level. Success in achieving the award will be dependant on this condition being met and evidenced.

I would like to commend the hard work and dedication of IDeA, the Improvement and Development Agency, in helping local authorities to come so far so quickly and for helping to make Skills for Life a part of the culture of local authorities. With so many people employed by local authorities the 'Get On' awards, in encouraging people to gain Skills for Life and a first full level 2 qualification, are highly significant. So I congratulate and thank you for your work to transform skills in this country and I am certain that your success will inspire others to follow in your footsteps. Together we can ensure the future prosperity of our country for ourselves, our families and for generations to come.

Phil Hope, Minister for Skills
March 2007

Link to the Skills Pledge

The final report of the Treasury commissioned Leitch review of skills, *Prosperity for all in the global economy: world-class skills*, was published in December 2006.

The review recommended that the UK commit to becoming a world leader in skills by 2020, benchmarked against the upper quartile of the OECD. This means a doubling of attainment at most levels.

Stretching objectives for 2020 from the review include:

- 95 per cent of adults to achieve the basic skills of functional literacy and numeracy, an increase from levels of 85 per cent literacy and 79 per cent numeracy in 2005
- exceeding 90 per cent of adults qualified to at least level 2, an increase from 69 per cent in 2005. A commitment to go further and achieve 95 per cent as soon as possible
- shifting the balance of intermediate skills from level 2 to level 3 by improving the esteem, quantity and quality of intermediate skills. This requires 1.9 million additional level 3 attainments over the period and a boost in the number of apprentices to 500,000 a year
- exceeding 40 per cent of adults qualified to level 4 and above, up from 29 per cent in 2005, with a commitment to continue progression.

Principles

The principles of shared responsibility and a focus on economically valuable skills underpin the delivery of what Leitch calls a *raised ambition*:

Shared responsibility

Employers, individuals and the government must increase action and investment. Employers and individuals should contribute most where they derive the greatest private returns. Government investment must focus on market failures, ensuring a basic platform of skills for all, targeting help where it is needed most.

Focus on economically valuable skills

Skill developments must provide real returns for individuals, employers and society. Wherever possible, skills should be portable to deliver mobility in the labour market for individuals and employers.

Lord Leitch recommended the launch of a new pledge in which employers would voluntarily commit to train all eligible employees up to level 2 in the workplace. There is to be a review of progress of employer delivery in 2010. If the improvement rate is insufficient, central government will introduce a statutory entitlement to workplace training at level 2 in consultation with employers and unions.

The IDeA are leading on the development of the Skills Pledge for the local government sector, of which the **GO Local Government Award** will form the core and be a fundamental and integral stage. By signing-up to the GO Award you will be taking the first steps to your wider Skills Pledge.

How do we proceed?

To enable authorities to achieve the **GO Local Government Award** we have broken down the process into four stages

Stage 1

As a local authority in England, you will notify the IDeA's Skills for Life team that you have commenced, or are intending to commence, working actively in the Skills for Life arena with your workforce.

An officer will be nominated within your authority to take responsibility for representing you in all aspects of planning and delivery and for bringing on board relevant partners. This officer will have sufficient status to be able to work in a cross-authority role and be supported by the corporate management team and elected members.

Stage 2

You will publicly sign-up to working towards the **GO Local Government Award**. It is expected that the chief executive and one of your elected members together will sign the initial commitment on behalf of your authority.

It is intended that such commitment will be on-going and continue regardless of changes in elected membership and personnel within your authority. There is an expectation that nominated officers will be replaced should they leave or change role to ensure continuity.

In signing up to the award, the authority agrees to work co-operatively with all the unions within its organisation not only in the design of the entire strategy but also operationally in the identification of employees with Skills for Life needs and provision of learning opportunities.

In return, you will receive a certificate signed by the IDeA to record your commitment to Skills for Life in your workforce (including your contracted-in workforce). This certificate should be displayed so that employees and members of the visiting can see it and know about the commitment that has been made.

An officer from the IDeA will support you not only in the identification of issues and their development at both strategic and operational planning levels, but also in signposting you towards the support that will enable you to address Skills for Life.

Stage 3

You will produce an action plan and submit it to the IDeA for approval by their panel within nine months of signing your stage 2 commitment document. Once the action plan is approved you will begin to implement it.

We have produced a *GO Local Government Award: action plan* booklet to help you design your action plan.

To achieve the full **GO Local Government Award**, the following criteria must be met in full and take account of contracted-in staff.

Whole organisation approach

Planning and delivery will involve your whole authority and include union representation. For example, this may be through a steering group, or be a fixed agenda item on corporate management team meetings.

Learning opportunities for your workforce will be available to everyone who has Skills for Life needs, not limited to a few departments or teams.

Working towards the development of a strategy for the authority

Using the national local government Skills for Life strategy 2005-2007 as a basis, your authority will either develop its own freestanding strategy linked to the council business and other plans, or incorporate and embed Skills for Life within its other plans, including its workforce development plan. The authority's unions will be actively involved in this process.

The aim is for Skills for Life to be considered and addressed at all stages in the planning processes and for there to be cohesion throughout your authority. You might wish to extend your plan at this stage to take on the wider Skills Pledge.

Developing staff within the organisation to support Skills for Life (e.g. supervisors, mentors, union learning reps, human resources)

The IDeA recognises that capacity to deliver Skills for Life courses nationally is an issue and that models of delivery will vary from area to area. It views the relevant up-skilling of local government staff as a way to address this issue and to empower authorities to deliver in ways that are best suited to their workforce.

To achieve the award, authorities will enable a range of in-house staff to work towards the Lifelong Learning UK standards as they relate to Skills for Life. Initially, it is anticipated that identified staff will undertake the whole or first module of the level 2 qualification to enable them to work appropriately with staff who have Skills for Life needs. In the long term, some training and development staff may work towards and achieve the level 4 teaching qualification. Authorities are also expected to support delivery of relevant awareness-raising sessions across their organisations so that all managers are enabled to support the Skills for Life needs of their staff teams.

The IDeA believes that the role of union learning representatives is crucial and will expect existing and new reps to be offered opportunities to undertake training in the initial phases in recognition of the unique position they hold and access to employees they have that can actively support Skills for Life development.

Appropriate identification of staff with Skills for Life needs

Your authority will develop systems to be able to carry out initial screening and formal diagnostic assessment of staff.

This identification will be carried out in a positive and non-threatening way and be incorporated into the organisation's induction and performance management processes.

Flexibility in delivery of Skills for Life offer in the workplace

To achieve the award, authorities must demonstrate that staff with Skills for Life needs are not penalised in any way. This will include them being given opportunities to access provision during their working day without being required to make time up or losing income.

The long-term plan will be for staff to have choices in attending local colleges to access courses, attending courses run by private training providers, attending courses provided by the unions, accessing courses online through Learn Direct and the Move On Up independent learner route (on- or off-site) and accessing courses within their workplace. Courses will be available during daytime and evenings in recognition of flexible working and shift patterns.

The range of Skills for Life courses provided by the unions will also be available to employees as part of the flexible provision offer.

Skills for Life staff development offer forms part of wider staff development programme with IAG and progression routes identified and mapped

An award authority will regard Skills for Life as an integrated aspect of its wider staff development offer. It will be able to offer appropriate sign-posting to staff from Skills for Life provision to other courses both internally and externally to its organisation.

A long-term aim would be for the authority to consider IAG (information, advice and guidance) accreditation to ensure quality (e.g. through the Guidance Accreditation Board Matrix Standard).

Stage 4

The IDeA will design and put in place a peer assessment process through which all criteria can be evidenced as having been met so that the full award can then be issued. The designated peer assessor will visit your authority to assess achievement, after which your authority will be recommended for the full award. Until this process is developed and embedded, a panel of IDeA Skills for Life specialists will take on the role of assessing action plans.

The IDeA will host a gala celebration event at the end of each financial year where full award certificates will be presented to those authorities that have met the criteria and have become award winners. This does not prevent you from inviting your partners and members of staff to your own event and inviting along the press to publicise your work and good practice.

The **GO Local Government Award** is something for you to celebrate, something of which you should be rightly proud. It indicates the high value you place on your workforce and proves that you are committed to the development of their needs. In turn, it helps the IDeA to support the meeting of the local government targets within the government's national Skills for Life strategy.

You will be able to display your award within your authority and be able to use the campaign logo on your headed paper, in adverts, and on other material.

The award is renewable on a two yearly cycle and the IDeA will continue to work with your authority after the award has been gained, facilitating regular monitoring visits through the peer assessment process to ensure that standards are maintained.



What happens if our action plan isn't approved?

Although we will work with you from the moment you notify us of your interest in Skills for Life, your plan may not be approved at its first submission, especially if this area of work is new to you. We have to be rigorous in our approval procedures both to maintain the quality and credibility of the award and to ensure parity across both large and small authorities.

Throughout the process, we are determined to be flexible and understanding of the different needs of local government workforces across England. If your action plan isn't approved initially, you will be given full feedback from your assessor who will agree a timetable for any changes required. On going support will then enable you to maintain momentum, allowing you to continue addressing this area of work.

If you agree the recommendations made a new commitment certificate will be issued for a further agreed period so that you can continue to develop your new action plan and start its implementation. If you don't submit an action plan within nine months of making your formal commitment, or if agreement on further action to get the action plan approved cannot be reached, your membership of the **GO Local Government Award** Scheme ends and you will have to remove any displays and references to it.

How much does the scheme cost?

The **GO Local Government Award** scheme is free of charge.

Finding out more

The details of the current Skills for Life contact can be found on www.idea.gov.uk/skillsforlife

Useful information

The following publications and websites will be of interest to authorities that aim to work towards award status.

From the Improvement and Development Agency by calling 020 7296 6600

Get On Local Government – the national Skills for Life strategy for local government in England 2005 – 2007

Skills for Life and local government booklet

Skills for Life business benefits booklet

Customised employer toolkit

Skills for Life Champions booklet

Phase 1 DVD

Phase 2 DVD

Phase 3 DVD

From DfES Publications by calling 0845 602 2260

A Fresh Start – improving literacy and numeracy.

The report of the working party chaired by Sir Claus Moser. 1999 Ref. CMBS 1

Skills for Life – the national strategy for improving adult literacy and numeracy skills 2001 Ref. SFLLN

Skills for Life – focus on delivery to 2007 2003 Ref. SFLNS2

Delivering Skills for Life – working with other agencies 2003 Ref. WALP

Skills for Life – improving literacy and numeracy at work 2003 Ref. SFL WPL

Building the bridges – what works in the workplace 2003 Ref. SFL building bridges.

Benefit your business 2003 SFL EMP BBL

Using public procurement to enable contracted-in staff to access basic skills training within government departments 2003 Ref. SFL/Procurement

ESOL pathfinder – working with employers 2004 Ref. ESOLPWWE

From Investors in People UK by calling 020 7467 1900

Skills for Life and Investors in People – working together to improve organisational effectiveness 2007

Prosperity for all in the global economy – world class skills 2006 HMSO

Websites

The Improvement and Development Agency
www.idea.gov.uk/skillsforlife

Skills for Life Strategy Unit
www.dfes.gov.uk/readwriteplus

Basic Skills Agency (merged with NIACE in 2007)
www.niace.org.uk

Campaign for Learning
www.campaignforlearning.org.uk

Investors in People UK www.investorsinpeople.co.uk

The Network for Workplace Literacy, Language and Numeracy www.thenetwork.co.uk

Asset Skills www.assetskills.org

Move On Up www.move-on.org.uk

National Institute for Adult and Continuing Learning (NIACE) www.niace.org.uk

TUC (Union Learn) www.unionlearn.org.uk

UNISON www.unison.org.uk

Learndirect business www.learndirect-business.co.uk

LSC head office (Coventry) www.lsc.gov.uk

Business in the Community www.bitc.org.uk

Skills for Business Network www.ssda.org.uk



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Role of the IDeA

The IDeA works for local government improvement so councils can serve people and places better.

We use experienced councillors and senior officers, known as peers, who support and challenge councils to improve themselves.

We enable councils to share good practice through the national Beacons Scheme and regional local government networks. The best ideas are put on this website.

Our leadership academy programmes help councillors become better leaders who can balance the diverse demands of people living in the same community.

The IDeA also promotes the development of local government's management and workforce. We advise councils on improving customer service and value for money. We help councils work through local partnerships to tackle local priorities such as health, children's services and economic development.

The IDeA is owned by the Local Government Association and belongs to local government. Together we lead local government improvement.