

# **Essential Skills for Health and Social Care**

Workplace Literacy, Language and Numeracy

## **Awareness Pack**

While it is a key priority that line managers and supervisors are aware of the impact that literacy, language and numeracy have on the health and social care workplace if the organisation is to achieve a sustainable, embedded approach to meeting these 'skills for life' needs, the pack is for use by everyone in an organisation from line managers to union representatives and workers.

This pack is designed so that the sections can be copied and used independently as required. You are welcome to copy the pack and use it to help in promoting and embedding skills for life in the workplace and there are some blank spaces for you to fill in workplace or local information. If you do use it, UNISON would appreciate acknowledgement. If you adapt it, please mention that it is adapted from the UNISON document.

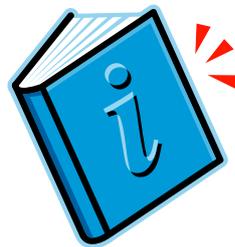
Thank you, and we wish you success in this very worthwhile cause.

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### What are 'Skills for Life'?

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### Who needs skills for life?



### Some statistics

Better to ask 'Who doesn't?!'

Research for the DfES published in 2003 found that in England around 7 million adults have basic literacy, numeracy and/or language needs. In addition to this, people who already have GCSEs or equivalent qualifications in English and maths often find they are 'rusty' when they come up against new tasks.

Whether at home or in the workplace we can all face difficulties around formal writing, spoken or written communications, and maths calculations. It depends what we are expected to do and, in the workplace, whether our employers have ensured we have the training and confidence to do it.

Of course, it also helps if others communicate using plain English!

- The Moser Report (1999) found that 1 in 7 working people have literacy, language or numeracy needs
- The Basic Skills Agency (2003) estimate that 23% of adults in Britain have poor literacy, language or numeracy skills
- Research by NIACE showed that the health and social care employees who have serious difficulties with literacy, language and numeracy mirror the general population (14% for literacy; 46% for numeracy)

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**Why is it an issue in the workplace?**

**The impact on health and social care**



The DfES research showed that 3.5m people in the workplace have basic literacy, language or numeracy needs. Problems at work often arise because these skills for life needs have not been recognised. Many major employers know that skills for life needs create wastage, reduce profits, can lead to poor quality of work, complaints from customers and service users, and high staff turnover. Workplace health and safety is also seriously compromised if people don’t fully understand safety notices and instructions for using equipment.

Employers in health and social care need to ensure **all** employees can develop their abilities to the full. In the past it has often been assumed that all staff have the communication and maths skills they require, even when job roles change and new tasks are added. When an organisation is responsible for the health care and well-being of vulnerable people, mistakes can have serious consequences for service users and members of staff alike. Drugs miscalculations, for example, can result in accidental harm to the service user, and lead to damaging publicity and/or disciplinary action.

**Quick number challenge!**  
Based on the percentages in the table, how many people in your organisation have skills for life needs?

Having to struggle with spelling, writing, reading, and/or maths on a daily basis is not a matter for blame and shame, but a problem to be shared and overcome. We are all challenged to different degrees when faced with different tasks, and much of the problem lies in the way we were taught.

Skills Levels: Health/Social care	Prevalence in health and social care sub-sample	Prevalence in the population
Literacy - Entry level 1 or below	14%	16%
Literacy – level 1 and above	87%	84%
Numeracy - Entry level or below	46%	46%
Numeracy – level 1 or above	53%	53%
English not first language	8%	7%

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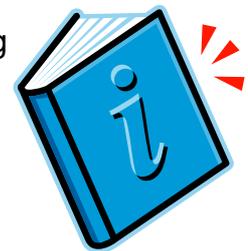
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## Why do many of us struggle with these skills?

### Learning Styles

Did you know that we all have our particular 'learning styles'? Different individuals learn best from different activities and methods of teaching.

- Some people learn best by **seeing** the information e.g. having diagrams and charts, or drawing their own picture, or using colour to highlight important information. They also tend to feel OK about reading information.
- Others remember things best by **hearing** information, so they easily remember spoken information and conversations. They may remember radio items better than ones on TV and prefer speaking on the phone to communicating in writing.
- Very many people learn best by **doing** the thing they are learning about, including moving around. They enjoy being shown how to do something then trying it themselves.



### Dyslexia and Dyscalculia

The term **Dyslexia** covers range of conditions that relate to spelling, language and literacy. People with 'dyslexic tendencies' find it extremely difficult to make sense of letters or symbols on a page, and spelling is often a particular challenge. They may also have difficulties with calculations.

The impact of dyslexia is different for each individual. It is not related to intelligence, and can occur in severe, moderate or mild forms. People with dyslexia have their individual profiles of strengths and weakness. These include talents such as: creativity; thinking laterally and making unexpected connections; being able to see the 'big picture'; good visual spatial skills and being able to think easily in 3D; problem solving skills; good verbal and social skills. But many people with dyslexia say they were labelled as stupid, lazy or rebellious at school because no-one recognised the problem.

**Dyscalculia** has been officially defined as "A condition that affects the ability to acquire arithmetical skills." The experience of many adults who left school some years ago is that individual learning styles were rarely catered for and dyslexia and dyscalculia were not properly understood. It is hardly surprising that many of us did not learn as much as we wish we had from schooldays, or that adults with bad memories of school hesitate to sign up for classes that can help!

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## **Why has it felt difficult to address skills for life issues in the past?**

### **Facing up to fears and breaking down the barriers**

People have fears about acknowledging they struggle with spelling, writing, reading, and/or maths. The fears almost certainly started in their schooldays. They may have been picked on by other students, or 'put down' by teachers - or even family members - because of their difficulties. The more this happens, the less they want to try, for fear of feeling a failure.

These fears spill over into adult life and often come to the fore in the workplace. But the longer it has gone on the harder it can be to ask for help.



### **What else puts employees off getting help with skills for life?**

Among the reasons why people don't seek help may be one or more of the following:

- **Embarrassment** - feeling ashamed if our skills for life are not what they would like them to be.
- **Lack of information** – not knowing where, and how, to get support – or that it exists at all!
- **Distance** – classes are often too far away for those of us without our own transport.
- **Past experiences** – struggling at school and feeling a failure can put us off trying any further learning.
- **Friends and family** – worrying about being 'different' because adult learning is a new idea in our circle of friends or family.
- **Time** – having too many work and family commitments to take extra time out for learning
- **Money** – the belief that it would need money for classes, books, travel, childcare and other expenses.

## Why has it felt difficult to address skills for life issues in the past?

... managers and supervisors have fears too! ...

Relatively few line managers or supervisors are trained to identify where their staff have difficulties with skills for life in undertaking daily tasks. Even fewer have had training to help them address the issue.

So even if managers and supervisors recognise that someone has a problem with their communications or maths skills, many do not have the knowledge and confidence to talk to the individual about it. This is often because they are aware of the fear and embarrassment that the member of staff is likely to feel, and because they haven't known what help might be available if they do start a discussion about it.



Added to this is the fact that a manager or supervisor may struggle with certain aspects of their own skills for life, and the issue may feel a bit too close to home!

If managers have not had the benefit of some awareness training around skills for life, it is easy enough for them to misinterpret repeated mistakes or lapses in following instructions correctly as misconduct, and deal with it as a disciplinary, instead of a skills/training need.

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### How do people manage to disguise skills for life needs?

#### Coping Strategies

Different people have different 'coping strategies'.

They find ingenious ways to hide the fact that they struggle with these essential skills – and in work involving caring for people they are often among the star employees!

While this enables the individual to deny to themselves and others that they are struggling with these areas of their work, it also makes it difficult for anyone else to recognise the problems or do anything to help.

#### Some common coping strategies

- **Memorising** the colour, look or shape of things needed in their jobs – e.g. cleaning materials, type of medication.
- **Avoiding** situations where they feel their skills might let them down – e.g. not applying for promotion, leaving the job if it changes, getting others to fill in forms, 'losing' their glasses, storming out of a situation where their skills are put under pressure.
- **Counter-action** to create the impression they don't have a problem – e.g. carrying a newspaper
- **Denying there is a problem** - Often involves younger people who have recently left school



## What do the unions say about skills for life?

### Vital for learning opportunities

Speaking for all its member unions, the Trades Union Congress (TUC) says

*“Skills for Life are the skills that we all need to be able to do our jobs, run a home, manage our money and enjoy a social life. That includes the ability to read, write, speak English and use maths. Unions are pushing these skills to employers as vital for the learning opportunities of workers, their careers and the efficiency of businesses and services.”*



Unions want more members to become Union Learning Representatives (ULRs), and many employers want to encourage this. ULRs get five days training and have a legal right reasonable to time off to undertake their duties.

ULRs can do additional training to enable them to support work colleagues with skills for life issues. Even if they haven't done the extra training they may be many people's preferred first port of call in talking about getting help with their skills for life. ULRs have made a big difference to the success of skills for life workplace learning around the UK.

UNISON, the public services union, has a long-standing partnership with the Workers' Education Association, and more recently set up a specialist health and social care e-learning organisation, CareConnect Learn. These training providers have developed a range of Skills for Life, personal development and progression courses for workers in the health and social care sectors. The courses for members and potential members if they are run in partnership with employers. They should be run during working hours. (contact your UNISON Branch for details of any local agreements, or UNISON Direct on 0845 355 0845 if you don't know how to contact the union locally).

Other courses are available to members free of charge but in their own time if there is no learning partnership agreement with employers.

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**So what's to be done about skills for life ...?****Solutions ... at national level**

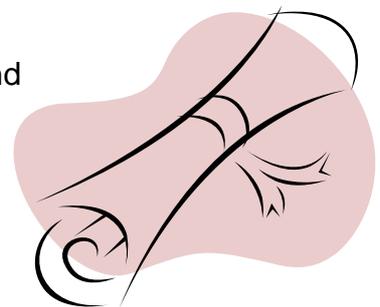
By 2007 the government's aim is that 1.5 million adults who had no previous qualifications in English or maths will have -

- received training and support to raise their literacy, language and numeracy skills and
- achieved national qualifications equivalent to GCSE English and maths (e.g. National Adult Certificates in Literacy and Numeracy)

To achieve this the government are providing funding and support for employees and employers to access free skills for life needs assessments and work-based learning to improve people's skills for life and help them gain qualifications if they want to.

In the past, adults' reluctance to seek help with these skills has been reinforced (in some cases) by the quality of teaching they have received; by the materials that have been used and by the kinds of learning environment provided. In recent years the government has put a great deal of work and money into raising the quality of teaching; in researching the best ways of providing support; and in producing materials that respect the learners as valued individuals. It has been found that teaching skills for life using people's jobs and workplaces as the focus for learning has proved most successful. For this reason employers are urged to develop skills for life strategies to encourage employees to seek support with skills for life needs.

A new national qualification – the Certificate in Adult Literacy and Numeracy – has been introduced. This is an 'official' alternative to GCSEs in math and English and learners can practice as many times as they like before deciding to take the actual test.



## What's to be done about skills for life ...?

### Solutions ... at organisational level

Not only can employers and unions do a great deal to break down the barriers that prevent employees seeking skills for life support, but they can actively encourage them to do so.

They can do this by:

- Making it a key part of their workforce development policy to address skills for life needs
- Undertaking an organisational skills needs analysis and identifying the skills for life needs required to perform specific job roles
- Raising everyone's awareness about skills for life and its relevance to personal development and service delivery
- Training supervisors and managers so they can recognise needs and guide people towards specialist support – as well as providing support in the workplace
- Developing an employer/union workplace learning partnership agreement to support workplace learning/skills for life
- Providing equality of access to release time for learning for all staff
- Developing a 'delivery partnership' with a high quality training provider who understands the health and social care sector and can teach people using job-related materials and tasks
- Encouraging staff to prepare for and sit the Adult Certificates in Literacy and/or Numeracy
- Providing access to information, advice and guidance for people to progress beyond obtaining skills for life qualifications.
- Encouraging union members to become Union Learning Representatives and working closely with them on skills for life and other workforce development and lifelong learning programmes.
- Adopting a plain English policy for all their written communications for staff, for service users and the public, and check their existing documents against the 'Plain English' standards.



## What's to be done about skills for life ...?

### Solutions ... at a personal level

If you want to brush up your literacy, language or numeracy skills and get a nationally recognised qualification there are a number of people you could talk to in the workplace or outside.



- You could try your line manager, perhaps during a supervision or appraisal meeting, or ask for a quick word at some other suitable time.
- You could also speak to someone you feel comfortable with in your organisation's training department.
- You can speak to a **Union Learning Representative** if you know one, or if you are a union member, talk to your workplace Steward or Branch Secretary.

The first thing that any of these people can help you with is to organise a 'skills check' (often known as initial assessment) to confirm what sort of particular support you need. This would involve a meeting - in work time - with an experienced skills for life tutor, who will use some questions that have been specially designed for the purpose. If you think you may have dyslexia this skills check will help to identify it.

A key part of a good tutor's job is to build your confidence and explain things as you go along. You will agree with the tutor a suitable time and place to run through the skills check. It should take no more than three hours.

The tutor will be able to tell you what sort of learning programme should best suit you and help with arrangements for you to start if you decide you want to. The tutor will also be able to advise you if you could sit the tests for a Adult Certificates in Literacy and Numeracy without too much work!

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#### Solutions ... at a personal level

If you prefer not to talk to anyone at work you could phone:

- Your nearest FE college
- Move-On (a government funded national organisation promoting skills for life) general enquiries on (01223) 478291
- Learndirect (a government sponsored national learning organisation) on 0800 100 900

and ask for advice on how to get a skills for life assessment. If you take this option you may need to do the assessment in your own time.

If you have access to the internet you can test your own skills level by logging on to [www.move-on.org.uk](http://www.move-on.org.uk).

Click on to 'Test your skills' and a message will tell you to 'click here' to launch the mini-test.

You can choose the Numeracy mini-test (click on the N) or the Literacy mini-test (click on the L) – or both. They take you through a short series of sample questions.



You can stop at any point, and no-one else needs to be involved or know your results if you don't want to tell them. It's a good way of finding out your skills levels and what areas you might need help with. If you find you need support you could follow the advice above to take your next step towards support and that qualification.

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### **What are my employers doing about Skills for Life?**

[Insert your organisation's/local authority's name here.  
Give explanation of pilot/workplace policy/scheme.]





## Some skills for Life Practice Questions and Awareness Exercises

1. Look at your own job description or that of one of your staff, and against each task describe the literacy, language and numeracy elements that each task requires.

(Can be done as a group exercise in a training session with a sample JD)

2. If you were earning £12 per hour and your boss cut your wage by £3 per hour you would be earning:

- A. A quarter of what you earned before
- B. Half of what you earned before
- C. Three quarters of what you earned before
- D. A third of what you earned before

3. With the opposite hand to the one you normally write with, copy down the sentence below on a piece of paper. What do you find?

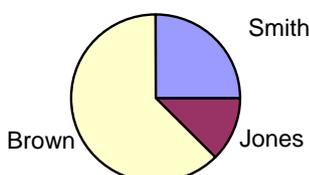
*“This exercise is designed to make the participants realise how much concentration is required if the writer is unaccustomed to writing.”*

4. Try this ‘mirror reading’ exercise which is designed to provide insight into how some people experience written tasks.

eb ot eud saw thgierf ehT .dray gnippihs eht ni yad lamsid dna dloc a saw tl  
deymsid flesmih dnuof reenignE feihC eht naitsabeS .ylesicerp ma03.8 ta dereviled  
.ynapmoc egaluah eht yb niaga detnioppasid gnieb ta

Imagine what it would be like to have difficulties with reading English, then need to read a care plan or a new instruction and try to understand what it means.

5. The pie chart represents votes cast in a local election. 240 people voted in all. How many votes did Smith get?



6. A TV set cost £300. The price has been reduced by 25% in a sale. What is the sale price of the TV?

7. Eighty people work in a nursing home. 20% of them work full-time. How many work part-time?

- |   |    |                          |
|---|----|--------------------------|
| A | 70 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| B | 16 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| C | 50 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| D | 64 | <input type="checkbox"/> |

8. Which of the following sentences is not punctuated correctly?

- |   |  |                          |
|---|--|--------------------------|
| A | You know, something is definitely working.       | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| B | My friends joining the gym class.                | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| C | I'm using my new found confidence level at work. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| D | Trainers' meetings are once every six weeks.     | <input type="checkbox"/> |

9. For a recipe, Sam must measure out 15 fluid ounces of milk. His jug measures in millilitres, to the nearest 5 millilitres (1 fluid ounce = 28.4 millilitres). How many millilitres of milk should Sam use?

- |   |       |                          |
|---|-------|--------------------------|
| A | 400ml | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| B | 410ml | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| C | 415ml | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| D | 425ml | <input type="checkbox"/> |

10. The tank of a car holds 12 gallons of petrol. There are 4.55 litres in one gallon. How many litres does the tank hold, to the nearest full litre? \_\_\_\_\_ litres

11. A painting weighs 794 grams. Its frame weighs 2389 grams. Estimate the weight of the painting as a fraction of the total weight. \_\_\_\_\_

**Answers to Skills for Life questions and exercises**

1. Exercise - no answer needed
2. c.
3. Exercise only - no answer needed
4. It was a cold and dismal day in the shipping yard. The freight was due to be delivered at 8.30am precisely. Sebastian the Chief Engineer found himself dismayed at being disappointed again by the haulage company.
5. 60 votes
6. £225
7. 64
8. B
9. D
10. 55
11.  $\frac{1}{4}$

**Useful contacts for Skills for Life**

Subject	Agency/Organisation	Contact details
General information on the government's Skills Strategy and specific skills for life resources	DfES website	<a href="http://www.dfes.gov.uk">www.dfes.gov.uk</a> also <a href="http://www.dfes.gov.uk/get-on">www.dfes.gov.uk/get-on</a> <a href="http://www.dfes.gov.uk/readwriteplus">www.dfes.gov.uk/readwriteplus</a>
For information and advice about courses	Learndirect free helpline	0800 100 900
For a range of information, useful resources and access to literacy and numeracy mini-tests and practice tests for the Certificates in Adult Literacy and Numeracy	Move-On website	<a href="http://www.move-on.org.uk">www.move-on.org.uk</a>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Signposting to Information Advice and Guidance Services for adults;</li> <li>• Advice about funding available for Skills for Life;</li> <li>• Information and advice about the 'Train to Gain' (the National Employer Training Programme);</li> <li>• Lists of approved local skills for life training providers;</li> </ul>	<p>[Name of your local Learning &amp; Skills Council].</p> <p>Ask for Skills for Life lead and/or Health and Social Care lead.</p>	<p>0845 019 ****</p> <p>Or <a href="http://www.lsc.gov.uk">www.lsc.gov.uk</a>, click on 'Local view'.</p>
For a range of reports and resources on skills for life	<p>Basic Skills Agency</p> <p>NIACE</p>	<p><a href="http://www.basicsskills.co.uk">www.basicsskills.co.uk</a></p> <p><a href="http://www.niace.org.uk">www.niace.org.uk</a></p>

## Skills for Life Learners' stories

### Linda

Linda is an Office Manager working for an independent sector social care provider. She had been a care worker, and was promoted to a managerial post within the company on the strength of her practical abilities, skills and knowledge. Her literacy and numeracy skills had not been tested in this role in the way they now were.

Her current job involves preparing guidance for care staff about individual service users' care needs, as set out by social workers in their care plans. When new people are referred to the company they are accompanied by the social workers' care notes, which often use technical medical terms. Linda has to formulate the notes into her own words and make it clear to care staff what is wrong and what the client needs. Linda observed that the terms used may be well understood within the social work profession, but, as with all jargon, may not convey the desired meaning to those outside of those circles. In addition, some of the care plans that Linda has received have been *"appallingly written with very poor grammar"*. Linda lacked confidence around this part of her job, which she was anxious to do well.

She attended a skills for life course which had been specially written for the social care sector in Cumbria. It integrated practical work-related training with literacy. She wanted to boost her confidence, and her manager thought the course presented an opportunity for Linda to do this.

Before starting the course Linda had felt a bit anxious. She had completed an NVQ in retail management prior to the course, but this had involved very little written work.

*"it was such a long time since I'd been at school ..."*

In spite of these anxieties she had soon felt at ease. The tutor had been very skilful in creating an atmosphere of solidarity within the course group and Linda never felt awkward or uncomfortable.

Her account of the course demonstrates the extent to which it dealt with practical issues that arise day to day at work.

*"It could have been daunting – paperwork etc – but it was good ... every session you learned so much that you had taken for granted – it was an eye-opener. I know now – 'stop and think about what I'm doing, and how.'"*

She particularly enjoyed group work in which people shared ideas and built on them. People had supported each other, recognising their different strengths and weaknesses.

*"we helped each other where people felt stronger in some areas than others."*

Linda was very clear that her confidence at work had increased as a result of the course. It had improved her skills in terms of identifying key information from case histories, letters and care plans. Linda had also improved her spelling, which pleased her, and she is much more confident about communicating with service users' relatives and other callers.

Linda feels there are a range of areas where her work has improved, and where she is able to use her time more effectively.

*"I think I'm achieving more – saving time. Writing letters and memos etc I used to draft it on paper – don't have to do that now. I do it straight onto the computer. That's how it's worked for me."*

Linda now has more confidence in what she is writing and thinks about it more carefully as she goes along. She has also found that the course helped her with reading and interpreting the social workers' notes – one of the key areas where she had felt particularly responsible and that had been problematic.

*"When I'm doing my care plans I'm thinking more and reading it back and wondering how somebody else would interpret it."*

When she first started working with the company Linda had lacked confidence to admit to people the things she did not know. She now has confidence to seek out information beforehand, or if she has not got it, to admit this, and

*"take it on the chin – I don't get fazed!"*

She believes that some of the learning is having a 'ripple effect' in her workplace.

*"I'm passing on advice to other people, for example about how to record things and explaining the consequences that could follow by putting something that's not quite right. People are usually all right about it. Maybe some senior care workers might be less willing to listen..."*

Linda says she noticed a difference in how she feels about herself. She had used to 'put herself down' when she didn't need to, but now she says

*"I think my work's getting better. I have confidence again. If you're confident you will stride forward won't you?"*

Things are changing outside of work as well. Her daughter has just been sitting for her SATS and Linda talked to her about some of the techniques for spelling.

*"She was quite chuffed with that. She knew some of them already, but others she didn't. We sat down together and she enjoyed that – both learning at the same time!"*

Linda achieved her Certificate at Level 2 and would like to do a more advance English course.

## Eileen

Eileen is a care worker supporting people with learning disabilities. She had moved a lot as a child from one home to another and talked about having had 'fear (of education) instilled in her from childhood'

*"As a child I was told I was a dunce ... I was never at a school long enough... there was no help to help you catch up ... You know those hats they used to make dunces wear? I was stood in a corner and made to wear that hat."*

She had also been belittled by work colleagues for her problems with writing, although they may not have realised how much it had hurt.

*"People don't realise what a struggle it is and what you're going through. I asked one (colleague) how you spell 'urine'. She wrote 'piss'. She thought I wouldn't know the difference and she was trying to make me look stupid."*

Eileen described some of her evasion and coping activities in the workplace, which included

*"running away all the time (from writing at work) and making excuses – just to get away from picking up that pen!"*

Early experiences of education had not only deprived Eileen of self-esteem, but had also set up major barriers to learning in later life. Through the Essential Skills (skills for life) pilot, Eileen discovered that she has dyslexia, which is helped when she is able to read from coloured paper.

Eileen's manager had attended a skills for life awareness training course where she had been introduced to a 'skills check' form that could be completed with staff in supervision or appraisal meetings. Eileen described how the manager had gone through the questions and ticked the boxes with her and another work colleague.

This had shown up a number of areas where Eileen had anxieties in connection with paperwork. The manager's attitude at this stage was plainly very important.

*"We were treated with respect, not made to feel silly."*

Consequently, when the manager had talked about the pilot and the opportunity to do the course during work she was willing to try it in spite of her earlier bad experiences of learning. Initial feelings of anxiety and terror about doing the course were soon dispelled.

*"At the first session I was terrified (but the tutor) was so warm with us – and there was laughter! ... (there's) the anxiousness of knowing you're going to learn – but that it's not like it was when you were children ..."*

Paperwork which Eileen is familiar with in the workplace was used as learning material, which was helpful, and the tutor made a big difference.

*"(She) has given me a confidence I never had as a child ... I've learned more in the these last few weeks than I ever did as a child ..."*

There was a lot of emphasis on the support gained from the group itself, which she felt worked really well together.

Eileen feels much more confident both at work and in life more generally. She has had follow-up support and encouragement from managers, who recognise what she has achieved.

*"I am getting more confident at work... my writing was atrocious, I was told to practice and now I'm practising all the time. And my managers are praising me all the time - they noticed the change after just a few weeks!"*

Eileen has talked to work colleagues about the course –

*"They've said they admire me for going."*

I asked what she would say to colleagues about doing the course if any of them were struggling with reading, writing or spelling.

*"Go and do it! It would be the saddest thing in their life if they didn't do it and the happiest thing if they did. It builds up your self-esteem ....If I saw anyone else struggling I wouldn't hesitate to tell them what it was like, and what we've done."*

Eileen wants to see how far she can go with her new-found confidence, and she wants to tell other people how important the skills for life course can be to them.

*"I've got a thirst for learning now... I want to help other people like us to step forward ... without the course I would have led my whole life thinking I was that dumb person."*

Eileen's manager says that she has moved from being someone who always felt in need of help to being the first to help others. She has taken a new member of staff, newly arrived from Eastern Europe, under her wing and explains things to and supports him with his English.

Eileen plans to take a second block of literacy classes and sit the National Test.

(Interviews with learners conducted in 2006 by Brenda Weston, UNISON Open College, Project Manager, Essential Skills for Health and Social Care.)