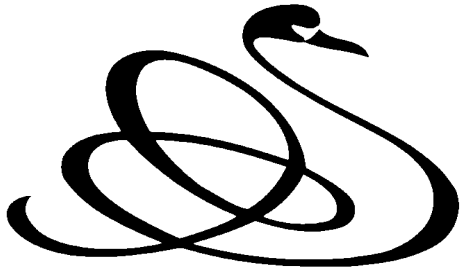


York Consulting

**Learning and Skills Council
Greater Manchester**

**Evaluation of the North West Skills for Life
Professional Development Project**

February 2005



York Consulting

Originated by: Helen Thomas.....

Dated: 16th February 2005.....

Reviewed by: Kerry Marwood.....

Dated: 18th February 2005.....

LSC Greater Manchester
**Evaluation of the North West Skills for Life
Professional Development Project**

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Annex 1 – Methodology

Annex 2 – NW SfL PDP Objectives

1 INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

Introduction

1.1 York Consulting Limited (YCL) was commissioned to provide consultancy support to the North West Skills for Life Professional Development Project (PDP) in November 2004. The aim of the project was three-fold:

- to produce a paper which pulls together relevant existing regional research related to the capacity and capability of providers;
- to evaluate the North West Skills for Life Professional Development Project and make recommendations for Phase Two of the project;
- to develop a draft North West Skills for Life strategy for professional development (2005-2008) with the specific aim of improving the capacity and capability of providers.

1.2 This paper provides the evaluation findings from the research undertaken by YCL between December 2004 and February 2005. The objective was to consult with a broad range of stakeholders to consider the context, key achievements and impacts to date, and identify priorities for the future. The methodology is presented in **Annex 1**, but the key features were:

- consultations with PDP Manager, PDU Managers and local LSC Skills for Life Managers in the North West;
- workshops with PDP Management Team and the NW Skills for Life Managers team (including the ABSSU Regional Director);
- postal/email survey of PDU Core Teams, practitioners, stakeholders etc. (75 received – 34% response rate);
- telephone consultations with strategic stakeholders.

- 1.3 The project, funded by the North West Development Agency (NWDA) with match funding from the five local Learning and Skills Councils (LLSCs), was set a quantitative target of supporting around 600 Skills for Life professionals in undertaking the Level 3 and 4 qualifications, and 250 people with the Unit 1 of the Level 2 or full Level 2 qualification. (The PDP Manager reports that this figure is close to being achieved). However, the evaluation has not focused on a review of success against numerical targets.
- 1.4 The research design took a broadly qualitative approach asking respondents to consider the core achievements and impacts of the PDP in relation to its initial remit and objectives (see **Annex 2**). It also asked participants to identify areas which require future support in terms of developing the capacity and capability of the Skills for Life workforce. In addition, consideration was also given to the context of the NW SfL PDP, and how it fits with related strategies at a regional and sub-regional level to support the quality agenda.
- 1.5 The approach taken focused on qualitative perceptions of progress against the original objectives, rather than measurement of quantitative outputs. This was because the objectives set out for the PDP are mostly visionary statements, rather than being clear measurable goals.

Context

- 1.6 The North West Skills for Life Professional Development project is set in the wider context of Skills for Life, the national strategy for adult literacy, language and numeracy. Two core strands of the national strategy aim to increase provider capacity and improve quality of delivery, in order to meet the needs of basic skills learners. These are:
- **ensuring capacity:** Increasing the capacity of provision by securing sufficient funding, attracting new staff into the sector and coordinating planning and delivery to meet learners' needs;
 - **raising standards:** Improving the quality of teaching in literacy, numeracy and English for speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) provision through the national teaching, learning and assessment infrastructure (*this links to the capability agenda*).

- 1.7 The implementation of the strategy has resulted in a dramatic increase of activity within the basic skills sector. This activity has created both opportunities and obstacles for those seeking to progress the basic skills agenda.
- 1.8 Opportunities arise as a wider range of strategic and operational partners are now involved in the delivery of basic skills than ever before. There are much greater levels of awareness among partner organisations of the extent and impact of poor basic skills in the UK. In addition, these partners have greater access to funding for basic skills activity, and have been set challenging targets to deliver.
- 1.9 However, obstacles are also created by the demands that the delivery of the Skills for Life agenda places on experienced basic skills practitioners (traditionally a part time, partly professionalised workforce).
- 1.10 The basic skills agenda also has increasingly significant implications for other practitioners not involved in 'traditional' adult basic skills provision. The publication of the 14-19 Education and Skills White Paper (February 2005) places achievement in maths and english at the heart of the reforms. This has significant consequences for school teachers, college lecturers and vocational tutors alike, as the basic skills agenda becomes integral to achievement in the new general and specialised Diplomas.
- 1.11 The work undertaken to develop the standards, qualifications and quality in basic skills provides a further challenge for providers and their partners to embed these new frameworks into strategic plans. In addition a degree of confusion is caused by the range of players involved in the agenda, in terms of responsibilities in taking the work forward.
- 1.12 The role of the PDP and other "supply" side initiatives, such as the Quality Initiative, are therefore critical for the effective delivery of national strategy. There is clear evidence that demand for learning has been stimulated through the national strategy, but difficulties remain in meeting that demand (and reaching latent demand) because of:
- the new professional requirements for practitioners (the national qualifications framework);

- staff shortages in some geographical and subject areas;
- shortage of sector specialists, for example in providing workplace basic skills, provision in prisons, working with long term unemployed (Jobcentre Plus providers) and voluntary and community organisations;
- inconsistent standards of teaching materials, provider management and networking opportunities;
- some reluctance to change;
- a shortage of funding to pay salaries equating to those in the school sector and a shortage of funding for 'development' and informal learning.

The Role of the Professional Development Project

1.13 The North West Skills for Life Professional Development Project was established by in September 2003, funded by the NWDA with match funding provided by the five sub-regional LSCs. The initial project was set up to operate for two years, until August 2005.

1.14 The objectives for the NW SfL PDP were agreed between the NWDA, the ABSSU Regional Director and the local LSCs. The ten objectives identified for the project are provided in detail within **Annex 2**, and have an overarching remit to:

*“add(ing) coherence and co-ordination to develop the **capacity** (volume) and **capability** (quality) of the basic skills workforce”¹*

1.15 **Capacity** is defined as the **number of people** employed in the Skills for Life workforce. This includes not only those who deliver *dedicated* basic skills learning, but also those who *embed* the delivery of basic skills in the context of a subject specialism.

¹ Proposal to the NWDA for the North West Skills for Life Capacity Building Project

1.16 **Capability** is defined as the ability of the Skills for Life workforce to deliver basic skills in accordance with the national standards. In essence, it focuses on developing the number of people who are appropriately qualified to Level 2, 3 or 4 to deliver language, literacy and numeracy in the context in which they teach.

1.17 The broad aim of the project is to raise the skills of the SfL workforce by:

- supporting the delivery of the FENTO qualifications at Levels 2, 3 and 4;
- developing a regional profile of professional development requirements.

1.18 The project has implemented a regional infrastructure designed to support the professional development of the Skills for Life workforce. Planning and decision-making takes place through specific groups, namely the:

- Steering Group (chaired by the NW Regional ABSSU Director);
- Professional Development Team (PDT); and
- Professional Development Unit Management Group.

1.19 The Learning and Skills Development Agency (LSDA) was appointed as the managing agent for the contract, employing the regional PDP manager and a regional project officer. Professional Development Units were established in each of the five sub-regions.

1.20 It was recognised from the outset that significant variances existed between the five sub-regions in terms of existing structures and developments, and that the infrastructure required to meet these aims had to be driven from the local level. The allocation of resource was divided according to the local LSC targets, and the local LSCs were responsible for appointing an appropriate manager. The human resource for each area is:

- 0.5 PDU Manager Cheshire & Warrington;
- 0.5 PDU Manager Cumbria;
- 1 fulltime PDU Manager Lancashire;
- 1.75 PDU Managers Greater Manchester;
- 1 fulltime PDU Manager Greater Merseyside.

- 1.21 The selection and placement of the PDU Managers was decided by the local LSCs, which has resulted in variances in terms of support structures and additional resource committed to the project. For example, some PDU Managers are based within the local Learning and Skills Council; others, by choice, work from home, and others are housed either within a Learning Partnership or a key local provider. This variance in 'placement' does have an impact on the level of administrative support received by PDU Managers.
- 1.22 Each sub-region has established a range of networks, or tapped into existing networks to raise the profile of professional development amongst Skills for Life providers. These have been developed responding to local structures already in place. Each PDU has a Core Team with representatives from all key provider sectors; however, other groups supported by the PDUs vary, depending on what was in place and what has had to be developed from scratch.
- 1.23 The PDP has a responsibility to both LSC and non-LSC funded providers. Therefore whilst it receives match funding from the local LSCs, it is not formerly part of LSC structures that support providers in all of the sub-regions. There are therefore perceptions that whilst the PDUs work effectively at an operational level, they are not currently embedded within local LSCs strategies for provider support in each of the sub-regions. This is not a criticism of the PDU Managers, more a factor of how the project fits within regional and local structures.

Quality Initiative

- 1.24 At the same time as the NW PDP developed, the national Quality Initiative 2003/04 was also being rolled out, aimed at supporting the development of quality in teaching and learning standards in basic skills provision. There are clearly opportunities for mutual support between the two projects. Both focus on raising the 'quality' of basic skills provision, albeit through different mechanisms and levels of support
- 1.25 The report focuses on the achievements of the PDP in terms of its impact on the capacity and capability of the Skills for Life workforce. The remainder of the report is structured as follows:

- **Section 2** provides the context and background to the Professional Development Project and the sub-regional Professional Development Units (PDUs);
- **Section 3** highlights the key achievements and barriers to date;
- **Section 4** examines the perceived impact and added value of the PDP;
- **Section 5** identifies improvements and potential future developments.

2 ACHIEVEMENTS, IMPACT AND ADDED VALUE

KEY POINTS

The key **achievements** (outputs) identified are:

- Infrastructure;
- Materials;
- Establishing a progression route (training).

There is a real sense that the **promotion of the qualifications through the infrastructure established has driven forward the message on professional development** and raised the awareness of senior management to the importance of staff development.

The **materials developed have been a key factor in addressing the gaps** identified for providers and individual tutors delivering the qualifications, and are proving to be a valuable tool in the classroom.

Comments on the **value of the training delivered** include, *“The staff development and training events we have been through have been pitched at the right levels and are just what we needed to do.”*

The key **impacts** (outcomes) identified are:

- Coherence and Coordination;
- Awareness of the Requirements;
- Influencing Demand and Supply of the Qualifications;
- Quality of Provision of the Qualifications;
- Improvements in Teaching Standards.

The coordinated approach has been important in **establishing a regional structure** to support professional development. However, there is a sense that the PDP is less well coordinated strategically with other organisations and initiatives aimed at supporting providers, for example Support for Success, and the Skills for Life Quality Initiative at the sub-regional and regional level.

There is a sense that in most areas, **much work has been done with FE**. ... a key area for future development is further working with providers such as WBL, voluntary and community providers, specialist colleges, Jobcentre Plus

and prisons and probation.

Both PDU Managers and those consulted through the research indicated that the **PDU**s had had most influence over demand for the Level 4 qualifications.

They (the PDU Managers) are having a **significant influence over providers** in terms of supporting them to develop their ability to respond to demands for the qualifications.

The **added value** of the PDP is:

- Support for the Quality Initiative;
- Support for Providers.

The PDP has played a crucial role in the success of getting the Quality Initiative off the ground in the region.

It is clear that the PDP has been highly valued by practitioners, providers and other Skills for Life professionals. The PDP has provided a key support role to providers and practitioners and has focused attention on the qualifications.

At the local level, the **PDU Managers have filled a key gap in terms of Information, Advice and Guidance** around the qualifications and are widely recognised as the key contact for the agenda.

There is a sense that in many aspects, the work has just begun. **Non-FE providers have had less involvement** in the project, and are more likely to require more dedicated support to be able to develop their staff to undertake the Level 2 and 3 qualifications.

The PDU Managers agree that **less progress has been made on the Level 3** qualifications, and this will require further attention in the future to bring providers on board. However, a range of generic issues are making it more difficult to influence this.

Little specific activity has been undertaken to support increasing the capacity of the Skills for Life workforce.

- 2.1 In considering the key **achievements, impacts and added value** of the North West Skills for Life Professional Development Project, it is necessary to highlight a number of issues associated with supporting the **capacity** and **capability** of the Skills for Life Workforce.

Capacity

- 2.2 Capacity was defined by the regional project, as **the number of people working in Skills for Life**, which includes both those who are subject specialists in literacy, numeracy and ESOL and also those who embed basic skills in the delivery of their subject specialism.
- 2.3 The availability of appropriately qualified staff to fill vacant positions is commonly reported as an issue by Skills for Life providers. However, jobs advertised for basic skills specialists tend to be part time or fractional posts, which are less likely to attract people new people into the profession, who are likely to need full time work. It is therefore difficult to identify specific activities that would influence the capacity of the workforce when generic issues associated with the nature of the profession have the strongest influence over recruitment.
- 2.4 The structure of the workforce also makes it difficult to count the number of people working in the field, as so many posts are part-time or fractional, and there is significant movement/cross-working of staff between providers. It is also difficult to calculate the number of people who are, or should be embedding basic skills in the delivery of their subject specialism. As such, any comments on increasing capacity are perceptions, rather than based on hard evidence.
- 2.5 Nevertheless, the research reviewed as the first phase of the YCL project activity indicates that **there are well over 2000 Skills for Life practitioners working in the North West**, a significant proportion of which are females, working for FE colleges, on a part time basis.

Capability

- 2.6 The key role of the PDP is to increase the coherence and coordination of the delivery of the FENTO Level 2, 3 and 4 qualifications. **However, the role of the PDU Managers has extended much further than simply coordinating provision.** Much of the activity, particularly in the earlier stages of the project, focused on increasing the number of providers delivering the qualifications, and supporting quality in delivery. In addition, a number of activities were developed to remove barriers faced by providers to deliver, and individuals to access the qualifications.
- 2.7 As such, the **reports on achievement and impact go beyond some of the specific objectives set out for the PDP.** The achievements tend to relate to the outputs from the project - what has been put into place since the project's inception, and how consultees² report the success of these. The key achievements identified are:
- Infrastructure;
 - Materials;
 - Establishing a progression route (training).
- 2.8 The second area to examine is the **impact** that the project has had. The remit of the project is "*add(ing) coherence and co-ordination to develop the **capacity** and **capability** of the basic skills workforce*". To what extent has the project been successful in this, and what impact has been had on the capacity and capability of the workforce. Under impact, we report on:
- Coherence and Coordination;
 - Awareness of the Requirements;
 - Influencing Demand and Supply of the Qualifications;
 - Quality of Provision of the Qualifications;
 - Improvements in Teaching Standards.
- 2.9 Finally, we look at the **added value** of the PDP. How has the existence of the PDP additionally supported the development of the capacity and capability. These are structured under the following headings:

² The feedback is based on evidence gathered in two workshops with Skills for Life Managers Team and the PDP Management Team, a survey completed by 75 Skills for Life professionals from across the region who are known to the PDU Managers, and interviews with key stakeholders.

- Support for the Quality Initiative;
- Support for Providers.

Achievement

2.10 **Section 2** highlighted that each of the sub-regions of the North West were starting from a different base in terms of existing structures to support Skills for Life providers and practitioners. Local LSCs have used capacity building money to support the Skills for Life strategy in different ways, and the various provider types have different approaches to networking in each of the sub-regions. Progression against each of these achievements therefore varies across the regions, but PDUs have been encouraged to take a common approach to driving the agenda forward in their sub-region.

Infrastructure

2.11 In each region, the PDU has established infrastructure to bring together Skills for Life providers to raise awareness of the qualifications, and influence the numbers of people accessing these. Each PDU has established a Core Team, generally made up of Skills for Life professionals, HR Managers and other key staff from a range of different provider types. These networks have enabled staff from competitor organisations to come together and work collaboratively. **Table 3.1** outlines the key structures in place in each sub-region.

Table 3.1 PDUs' infrastructure by Sub-region				
Cheshire and Warrington	Cumbria	Greater Manchester	Greater Merseyside	Lancashire
Core Team	Core Team	Core Team	GMPDU Steering Group	Core Team
The Qualifications Group	Level 2 Network Group		Qualifications Task Group	SfL network
Private Training Organisations	PDU Minutes sent to WBLP forum		Employer Engagement Task Group	To develop WBL Network
		FE and ACL Network	Voluntary and Community Task Group	To develop Voluntary and Community Network

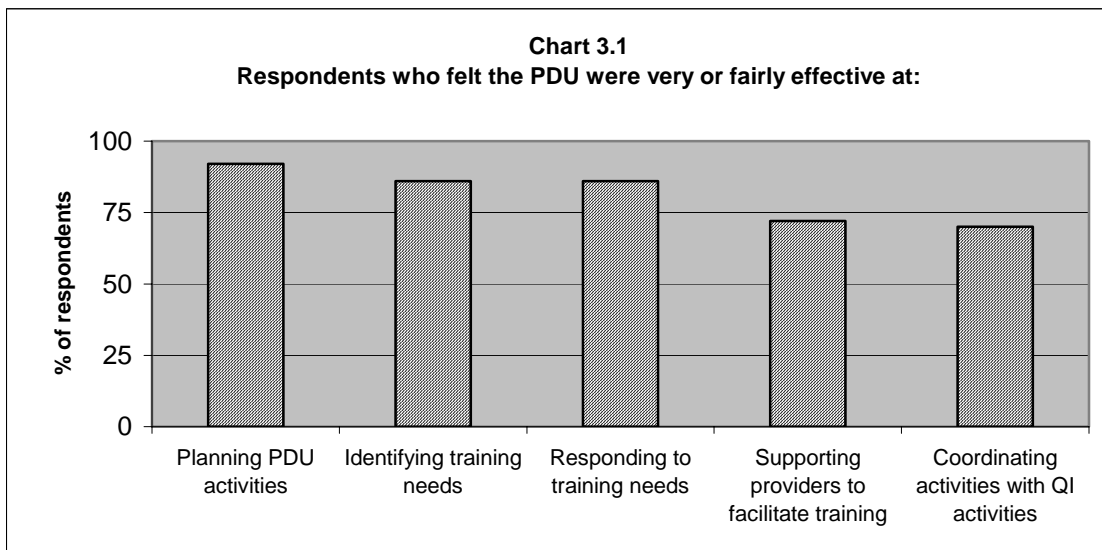
Table 3.1 PDUs' infrastructure by Sub-region				
Cheshire and Warrington	Cumbria	Greater Manchester	Greater Merseyside	Lancashire
The Cheshire and Warrington Skills for Life Network	PRDC Steering Group	Partners Group	PDC/Website Steering Group	Pre-entry Network
	Cumbria SfL Stakeholder Group		Key Local Agencies Task Group	ESOL Network

2.12 Activities undertaken through the infrastructure established have included:

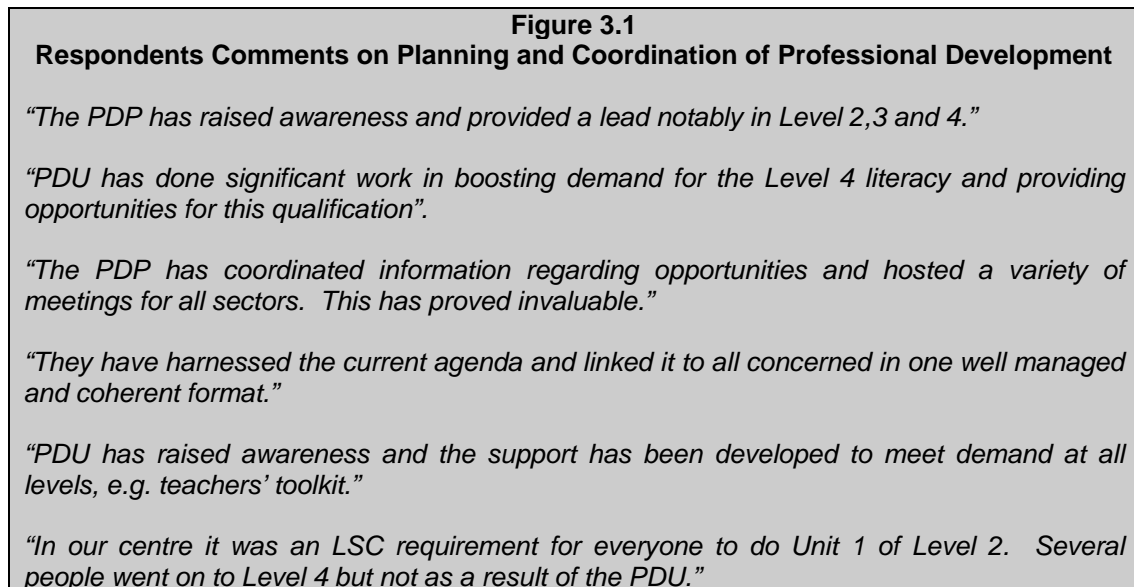
- raising awareness of the business case of Skills for Life;
- identifying appropriate staff to undertake the qualifications;
- identifying additional CPD needs of staff;
- responding to CPD needs;
- identifying appropriate trainers to deliver the qualifications; and
- facilitating agreement to collaborate on the provision of the qualifications.

2.13 Feedback from the survey indicates that through the established networks, the PDUs have had a significant impact on coordinating training activity in the North West. **Chart 3.1** illustrates that a significant majority of respondents were either very or fairly satisfied with how the PDUs have:

- planned PDU activities (93%);
- identified training needs (84%);
- responded to training needs (86%);
- supported providers to facilitate training (76%);
- coordinated activities with the Quality Initiative (70%).



2.14 Comments made by respondents are illustrated in Figure 3.1.

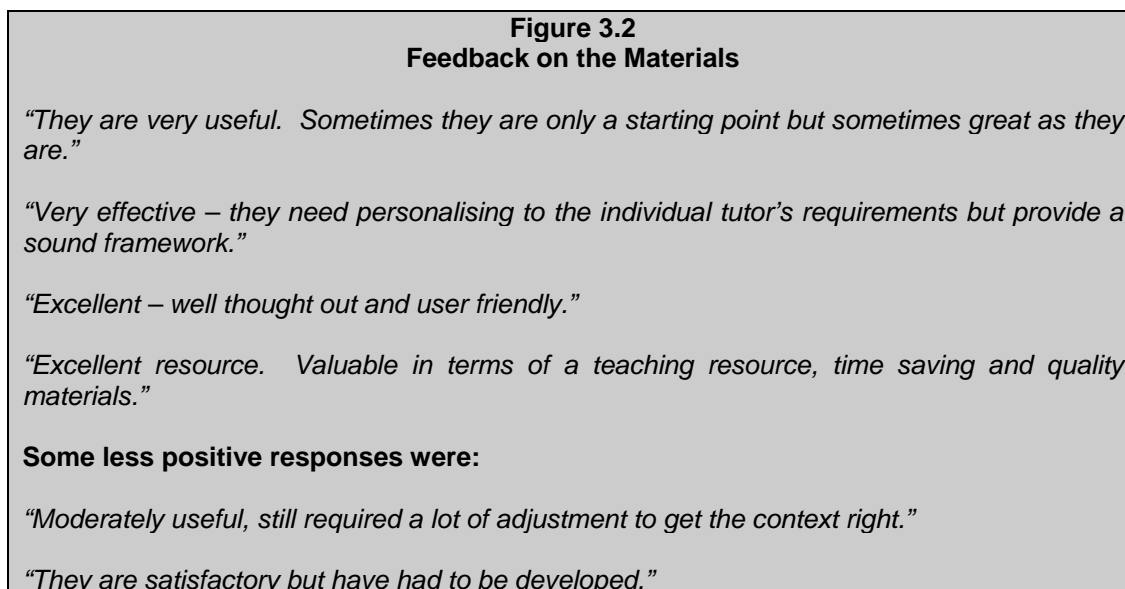


- 2.15 There is a real sense that the **promotion of the qualifications through the infrastructure established has driven forward the message on professional development** and raised the awareness of senior management to the importance of staff development. The research indicates that meetings are well attended and valued by practitioners, and the opportunities to share good practice are being taken advantage of. In addition, providers of all different types are getting involved with the activities of the PDUs, extending the reach of provider support into the non-LSC funded arena. There is a real sense from the survey respondents that both providers and individuals feel they have somewhere to go for advice and support with the Skills for Life qualifications.
- 2.16 The PDU Managers acknowledge that the establishment of infrastructure to support the various provider types varies, and further development is required particularly with providers such as work based learning, specialist colleges, voluntary, community, prison and probation. However, these gaps are recognised and are being addressed, as the project progresses. If the project were to cease in July 2005, it is felt that these providers would have made least progression over all.

Materials

- 2.17 Through activity in the early stages of development of the PDP, a number of providers identified that they were not able to deliver the national qualifications unsupported (due to lack of appropriate expertise), and that people undertaking the courses were not receiving sufficient practical guidance on delivery in the classroom. A key area of work in the first phase of activity was therefore developing resources to support the quality of delivery.
- 2.18 Depending on the sub-regional structures, members of the Core Team or other sub-regional groups have developed materials to support delivery of the Level 2, and Level 3 and 4 literacy and numeracy qualifications. Each PDU took the lead on developing one or more elements of the materials supported by a network of practitioners in each area.

2.19 This has been regarded as a true success in terms of regional working, as all sub-regions are now benefiting from the work undertaken across the whole patch. Feedback on the materials is provided in **Figure 3.2** and is generally very positive.



2.20 The materials developed have been a key factor in addressing the gaps identified for providers and individual tutors delivering the qualifications, and are proving to be a valuable tool in the classroom. A number of practitioners indicated that there is an additional need for more resources to be developed aimed at milestone and pre-entry level students, with a particular focus on non-paper based resources. However, consideration should be given as to whether the PDP is the ‘right’ place for these to be coordinated.

2.21 Some sub-regions have also produced additional materials to support providers and individuals, for example, Greater Merseyside PDU has developed a qualifications guide, which spells out who should be taking which courses and qualifications. They have also produced a ‘jig-saw’ which illustrates how the qualifications fit together and what the progression route might be.

Establishing a Progression Route (training)

2.22 In the early stages of development of the project, it was recognised that many established practitioners were reluctant to undertake the Level 4 qualifications. For some, this was a consequence of them feeling they were already sufficiently qualified as they held Level 4 teaching qualifications already. For others, there was a feeling that undertaking a Level 4 qualification might be ‘a step too far’. Many practitioners have been delivering basic skills for a number of years, but feel that undertaking a Level 4 qualification, particularly at later stages of the career is too much to take on.

2.23 To bridge the gap, the PDP has been developing a progression route to the Level 4 qualifications through the development of the Teachers’ Toolkit, and coordination of other professional development activities listed below:

- The Teacher’s Toolkit - 5 modules/15 hours (developed by PDP);
- Core curriculum training - 1 day sessions;
- Training the Trainer;
- Workforce Development Skills for Life (Gtr. Merseyside only);
- Embedding SfL into vocational programmes;
- Diagnostic Training;
- Access for All; and
- Critical Skills Teacher Training for Skills for Life teachers.

2.24 This has also been used to support those that are qualified to Level 4, but have less practical experience in delivering Skills for Life. Respondents to the survey were very positive about the teachers’ toolkit and the quality of other CPD activity.

2.25 Comments on training events delivered by the PDUs are provided in **Figure 3.3**.

Figure 3.3
Feedback on the Training Events

“The staff development and training events we have been through have been pitched at the right levels and are just what we needed to do.”

“The majority of staff from our organisation have accessed the core curriculum training – this has resulted in a change in the method of delivery in Skills for Life classes.”

"I have benefited from the sessions I have attended – I feel I have a greater repertoire of teaching techniques and also the resources available are very good at giving me time back for planning and delivery."

"The PDU provided excellent opportunities to develop staff knowledge and understanding of specific topics."

"There is significant interest in the teaching toolkit in our college, if not so much in the Level 2, 3 and 4. This reluctance may just be a factor where I work, and will take time to address."

Impact

2.26 The success in establishing the activities, networks, materials and training events identified under achievements are identifiable positive outputs from the PDP. However, the key aim of these activities is that they result in impacts and outcomes. The core areas that the PDP aims to influence are:

- an increase in the number of people employed in the Skills for Life workforce; and
- an increase in the take up of the qualifications.

2.27 However, it should be recognised that the ultimate goal of these aims is to influence the volume and quality of teaching of basic skills. Most consultees acknowledged that little direct activity had been undertaken to influence the capacity or volume of Skills for Life practitioners. The key focus to date has been on supporting the professional development of existing staff, including those who may not have previously considered themselves as Skills for Life staff.

2.28 The key impacts of the work of the PDP in terms of influencing the uptake of the qualifications are examined below.

Coherence and Coordination

- 2.29 One of the key objectives of the PDP was to “ensure regional coherence”. It is difficult to define exactly what this means, but for many of the stakeholders consulted, it refers to a sense that each of the sub-regions are working as part of a regional network, undertaking similar approaches to addressing common issues in relation to professional development. It is difficult to identify whether ‘coherence’ has been achieved, however the perceptions are that there have certainly been positive steps towards this.
- 2.30 The regional overview of the PDP Manager ensures that the sub-regions work to achieve similar goals, although depending on the development and existing infrastructure in each area, the specifics of approach vary. Cross-regional working is encouraged through PDU Managers sharing practice, and some established sub-regional networks may be moving towards a regional grouping, where this is appropriate. The PDU Managers talk consistently about the aims and the outcomes of the PDP, albeit in relation to progress in their area.
- 2.31 Respondents were asked, “To what extent has the PDP been successful in setting up a coherent regional structure for professional development?” Over 50% felt that the PDP had established or was well on the way to establishing this.
- 2.32 Comments from some of the survey respondents and stakeholder interviews relating to regional coherence are presented in **Figure 3.3**.

Figure 3.3
Survey responses on regional coherence

Survey

“Well on the way. Has reached Skills for Life teams, needs to spread to other practitioners now.”

“Regular valuable regional network meetings, sharing good practice, collaborative approach to developments, and a high level of expertise and commitment.”

“Full programme of training in our area and the region I think.”

“We feel part of a sub-regional structure, and I feel this is replicated across the region, although we identify with the sub-regional PDU”.

Stakeholder

"I'm not sure about regional coherence – certainly sub-regional coherence as part of a regional approach. However, I imagine that most people involved with the work of the PDUs will identify with their local PDU manager rather than the regional Project."

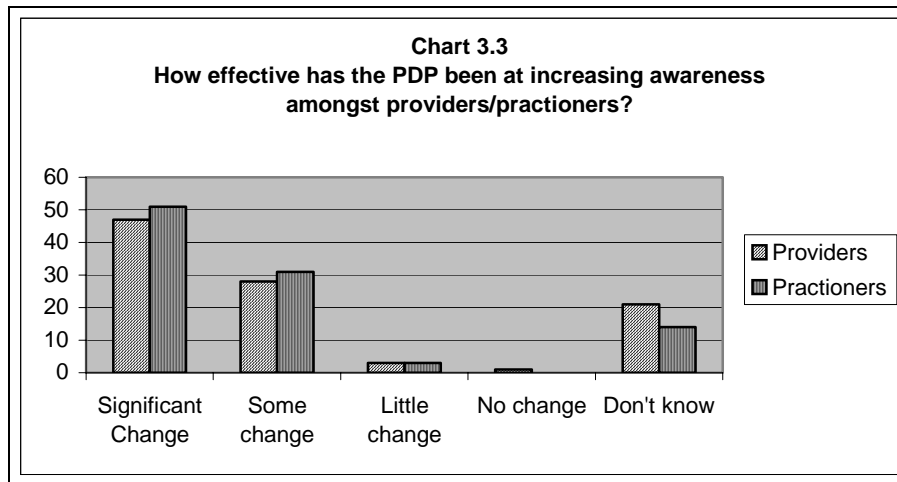
2.33 This coordinated approach has been important in establishing a regional structure to support professional development. However, the developments in each area have been driven by the local level needs and requirements. In terms of supporting the professional development requirements of the Skills for Life workforce, **there is a sense that the PDP is less well coordinated strategically with other organisations and initiatives aimed at supporting providers**, for example Support for Success, Jobcentre Plus and the Skills for Life Quality Initiative at the sub-regional and regional level.

"The PDP and the Quality Initiative should both be regionally based to ensure they appropriately fit in with what else is in place. These two initiatives and others working with providers, such as Support for Success, should be driven by a regional strategy to support the development of quality." (Strategic Stakeholder)

"The PDP and Quality Initiative should be part of a regional agenda, supporting the LSC to support providers. I'm not sure whether the PDP should be driven by a regional strategy, but it should be recognised as part of a regional agenda, driven to respond to local LSCs strategies for supporting quality." (Strategic Stakeholder)

Awareness of the Requirements

2.34 A key impact of the PDP has been raising awareness and clarifying the requirements of the national standards to a range of providers in the region. **Chart 3.3** illustrates the responses to a question about raising awareness.



2.35 There is a sense that in most areas, much work has been done with FE, who tend to be more clear about what they should be aiming to achieve in terms of staff development. Whilst a number of non-FE providers have tapped into the work of the PDP, a key area for future development is working with providers such as WBL, voluntary and community providers, specialist colleges, Jobcentre Plus and prisons and probation.

2.36 These providers are likely to be a much tougher “nut to crack” in terms of engagement with the agenda, as they tend to have less capacity to take advantage of networks and release staff for training. It is the job of the PDP to maintain the drive towards improving access to the qualifications for these providers. Comments on awareness are provided in **Figure 3.4**.

Figure 3.4
Survey responses on raising awareness

"I am aware that the PDU has done significant work in raising awareness of the Level 4 qualifications, and the need for practitioners to tap into continuing professional development." (ACL)

"The PDP has improved communication amongst providers and has enabled staff to access a range of appropriate training and support." (FE)

"Staff at all levels are aware of the necessary requirements." (FE)

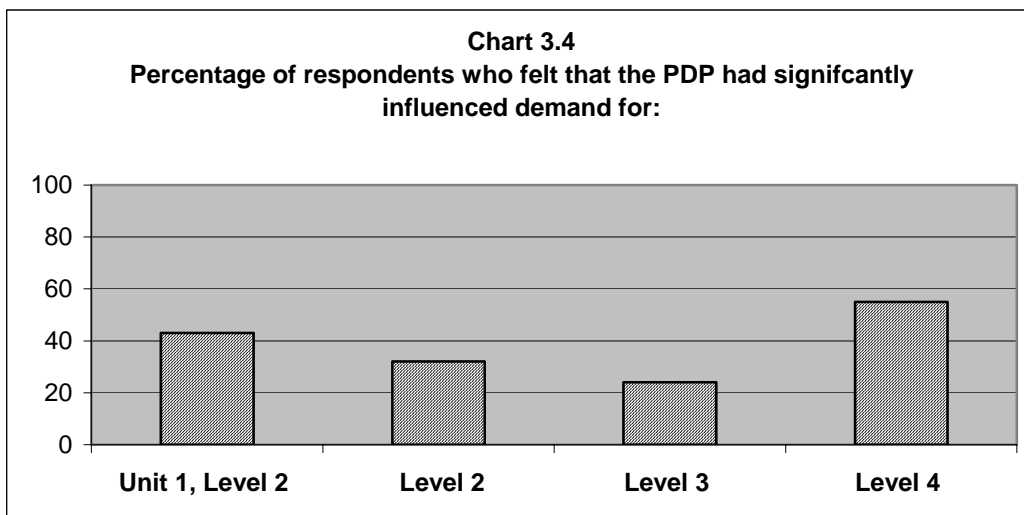
"While more people are now aware of the requirements, there is still no sense of urgency and hence information about opportunities are filtering slowly." (FE)

"I haven't seen much support or promotion from the PDP." (WBLP)

"Not everyone is tuned into the networks." (ACL)

Influencing Demand and Supply for the Qualifications

2.37 Both PDU Managers and those consulted through the research indicated that the **PDU had had most influence over demand for the Level 4** qualifications. The proportion of survey respondents that felt the PDP has significantly increased demand for the qualifications is illustrated in **Chart 3.4**, however, 55% felt that demand for the Level 4 had been significantly influenced, with a further 26% indicating there had been some influence over demand.



2.38 **Figure 3.5** provides respondents feedback on how demand has been influenced.

Figure 3.5
Survey responses on influencing demand

"I am in the first cohort of tutors to go on the L4 course in this area. Three of our staff have gone on this training. A second wave has now started the L4 with a number from this establishment." (FE)

"Our PDU was the first to begin developments towards L4 qualifications and raised awareness & demand early on. The formation of the PDU from secondments from FE provider staff ensured that developments were cascaded throughout the provider network. Demand for L2 & L3 is growing too as a result." (FE)

2.39 A key impact of the PDP has been in supporting providers to deliver the qualifications. Prior to the PDP, there is a sense that there was a relative lack of demand for the qualifications, augmented by limited provision. This was largely a result of providers not having appropriately experienced staff to deliver the qualifications, nor having the resources to support delivery. PDU Managers made specific reference to how they have been able to influence demand and supply.

"Through accessing ESF money we have managed to fund 33 people through the Level 4 literacy. Two more courses started in September – the next focus will be Level 2 and 3." (PDU Manager)

"Prior to the PDP, we only had one Level 4 literacy provider in the area. There are now four or five providers up and running with the course." (PDU Manager)

"Our initial priority was establishing delivery of the Level 4 qualification. Nobody was offering it in our area so we had to buy in provision from outside the region. I've managed to get two providers to collaborate on the delivery of Level 4 literacy and numeracy." (PDU Manager)

2.40 **Figure 3.6** provides respondents feedback on how the PDP has influenced supply of the qualifications.

Figure 3.6
Survey responses on influencing supply

“The PDU have helped us to liaise with organisations for our staff’s professional development on the L2,3,4. We have been helped to set up two courses of FENTO L3 for 30 of our training officers. They also ensure we are aware of all developments and courses.”(WBLP)

“We’ve witnessed increased demand for Level 4 training in literacy and numeracy and have received support from the PDU to respond to this.”

“Information from PDP provided support in putting forward a joint FE colleges bid for ESF funding for the L3 and L4.”

2.41 These comments show, that where the PDUs are active, **they are having a significant influence over providers in terms of supporting them to develop their ability to respond to demands for the qualifications.**

Quality of Provision

2.42 A primary goal of the work of the PDP is to influence quality of provision in the delivery of the qualifications. Participants in the research were able to identify ways in which the PDP has influenced the quality of provision of the qualifications. These have been through:

- identifying appropriately trained tutor trainers, and supporting the development of new trainers;
- producing materials to support delivery of the qualifications;
- offering progression routes to ensure people are ‘ready’ to undertake the qualifications;
- supporting providers to deliver the qualifications.

2.43 The PDP has also identified that delivery of the qualifications needs to be relevant to the context in which the tutor delivers. For example, WBL tutors have significantly different needs to people working in FE. This is recognised and has been identified by the PDP as an area for future development.

2.44 Through all the consultation stages, it was identified that there are not sufficient numbers of tutor trainers to be able to respond to all the demands for training, and that in some instances, trainers were delivering that had relatively little practical experience. The PDP has made efforts to address this by supporting providers to identify suitable trainers, and delivering ‘trainer training’ to those who have the appropriate skills but are not necessarily confident enough to deliver in practice.

Improvements in teaching standards

2.45 The ultimate goal of improving the capability of the workforce is that it will have an impact on the quality of teaching standards for Skills for Life learners. Whilst it is not possible to identify the direct impact of the PDP from other initiatives in any quantifiable terms, we asked respondents to comment on the extent to which PDP activities had influenced confidence in delivery, improvements in standards and improved teaching styles. These are presented in **Chart 3.4**, with supporting comments in **Figure 3.7**.

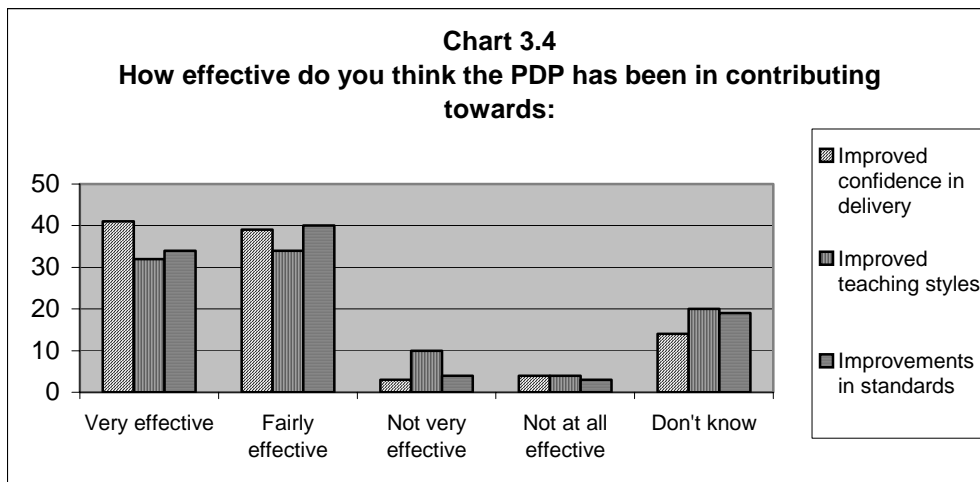


Figure 3.7
Impact of staff development on quality

“Core curriculum training with college staff carried out. College is more aware of own needs. Embedded into staff development plan.”

“I feel confident to deliver teacher training as a result of my work with PDU.”

“It has helped me to develop the capacity and skills of the team.”

“Significant impact on confidence and credibility of tutors working in basic skills. They have gained respect and credibility alongside key skills tutors.”

“Increased the teaching and learning grades at 17% above national average.”

Added Value

2.46 **It is clear that the PDP has been highly valued by practitioners, providers and other Skills for Life professionals. The PDP has provided a key support role to providers and practitioners and has focused attention on the qualifications.** At the local level, the PDU Managers have filled a key gap in terms of Information, Advice and Guidance around the qualifications and are widely recognised as the key contact for the agenda.

2.47 However, when considering the impact or success of such initiatives, it is important to consider the factor of deadweight - that is, how much of this activity would have happened anyway? Certainly some providers would have progressed their staff development plans without the support of the PDP, but the scale and depth of activity (into non-FE providers), has certainly been heightened significantly through the PDP. In addition to this, the PDP has been able to support the other key initiative aimed at supporting providers develop basic skills across their organisation, the Skills for Life Quality Initiative.

Support for the Quality Initiative

- 2.48 The North West Quality Initiative Regional Facilitator indicated that the PDP had played a crucial role in the success of getting the QI off the ground in the region. The local contacts made through the PDUs provided the QI with a base of over 300 providers to target in the region, and the existence of the PDP means that providers are easily able to access information about training and development opportunities in their area. However, whilst these are joined up on the ground, they are not driven by a regional strategy, providing clear guidelines of the roles and remit of each.

Support for Providers

- 2.49 Other initiatives aimed at supporting providers with the quality agenda could also benefit from closer links with the PDP. PDU Managers are recognised as the face on the ground for IAG, and people know where to turn to. This is a key benefit for providers.

Summary

- 2.50 It is clear that significant progress has been made by the PDP to date in developing the capability of the Skills for Life workforce, particularly around the Level 4 qualifications. However, there is also a sense that in many aspects, the work has just begun. Non-FE providers have had less involvement in the project, and are more likely to require more dedicated support to be able to develop their staff to undertake the Level 2 and 3 qualifications. The PDU Managers agree that less progress has been made on the Level 3 qualifications, and this will require further attention in the future to bring providers on board.
- 2.51 In addition, very little specific activity has been undertaken to support increasing the capacity of the Skills for Life workforce. These are the key areas where gaps would remain if the project would cease to be funded beyond July 2005. This is addressed further in **Section 4 - Barriers**.

3 BARRIERS

KEY POINTS

A number of barriers have been identified around developing the capacity and capability of the workforce. Some of these are generic issues, relevant to the workforce as a whole, whereas others are specific to the context of the North West Skills for Life Professional Development Project. These barriers have been categorised as:

- Supporting Capacity;
- Supporting Capability;
- PDP Structure.

Capacity

The availability of appropriately qualified staff to fill vacant positions is commonly reported as an issue by Skills for Life providers. Jobs advertised tend to be part time or fractional posts. It is difficult to identify how the PDP can influence the capacity of the workforce, in isolation, when generic issues associated with the nature of the profession have the strongest influence over recruitment.

Capability

Level 3

Further problems in terms of supporting uptake of the Level 3 relate to uncertainties around 'who' the Level 3 qualifications are aimed at. This is exacerbated by the fact that the qualification must be undertaken in either literacy or numeracy (there is no combined qualification as for Level 2), and the fact that it is not a compulsory requirement for staff.

Other barriers

Other more generic barriers to promoting providers to support staff development reported by PDP Managers as presenting issues in terms of driving the agenda are listed below. These are common issues associated with professional development.

- concerns over poaching
- lack of funding / time to send staff on training
- misunderstandings about who qualifications are for
- lack of capacity to support staff in house in smaller providers
- lack of demand – concerns over the 'leap' to level 3 or 4;
- no Accredited Prior Learning (APL) for staff.

PDP Structure

A further barrier is how it (the PDP) fits with other strategies to support providers. Currently, the PDUs are not embedded within LSC structures in all areas, which has implications for the level of influence they can have over providers, in terms of encouraging them to get involved with the agenda.

The PDP is funded on a short-term project basis, but its remit has long-term strategic aims.

3.1 **Section 3** identified that significant progress had been made in supporting the development of capability in the Skills for Life workforce, particularly around the Level 4 qualifications. However, a number of barriers have been identified around developing the capacity and capability of the workforce. Some of these are generic issues, relevant to the workforce as a whole, whereas others are specific to the context of the North West Skills for Life Professional Development Project. These barriers have been categorised as:

- Supporting Capacity;
- Supporting Capability;
- PDP Structure.

Supporting Capacity

Recruitment

3.2 The availability of appropriately qualified staff to fill vacant positions is commonly reported as an issue by Skills for Life providers. Particularly in the more traditional basic skills providers (FE/ACL/Voluntary), the workforce is generally comprised of white, middle aged women who have tended to move into teaching adults later in their working life. Jobs advertised tend to be part time or fractional posts, which are less likely to attract 'young blood' to the profession, and therefore, a more sustainable workforce for the longer term. It is difficult to identify how the PDP can influence the capacity of the workforce, in isolation, when generic issues associated with the nature of the profession have the strongest influence over recruitment.

- 3.3 Some local Learning and Skills Councils have implemented their own initiatives to recruit new Skills for Life teachers including using capacity building money to support providers financially in recruiting new teachers into full time positions. At the national level, the DfES has introduced the Golden Hello initiative for new tutors working in FE shortage subject areas³. However, if providers are not able to justify the business case for increasing the number of tutors working as dedicated basic skills staff, this will be a particularly difficult area to address.
- 3.4 Greater Merseyside PDU has supported recruitment by using the GMPDU website to advertise vacant Skills for Life positions. This has been successful in stimulating demand for vacancies, and has attracted significant numbers of visitors to the site. Future areas where the PDP might influence capacity building is through further work with Initial Teacher Training and HEIs to stimulate interest in SfL as a profession. This is an area yet to be explored to any extent by the project.

Diversity

- 3.5 The issues which influence capacity building also impact on supporting the development of diversity in the workforce. It is difficult to influence increasing diversity if there is relatively little increase in capacity of staff. Nevertheless whilst there has been no specific activity undertaken to support the development of diversity, PDU Managers have reported anecdotal evidence that there has been some change in terms of the profile of people attending their workshops and training events; i.e. more men, younger people and people from ethnic minority backgrounds.
- 3.6 PDU Managers attribute this to the increased engagement of non-FE providers in the Skills for Life agenda. An increase in the number of people qualified to embed or teach Skills for Life in areas such as WBL and voluntary/community is likely to have a positive impact on the diversity of the workforce, as there tends to be more mixed representation of gender, age and ethnicity in the staff working in these providers.

³ New tutors that have been working in the field for a year and are working towards a qualification in line with FENTO standards are eligible for a one off payment of up to £4,000 depending on their contracted working hours.

Supporting Capability

Uptake of the Level 3

- 3.7 A key area where the PDP aims to support capability is through working with providers who deliver vocational subjects to those who may have a basic skills need, e.g. FE vocational tutors and WBL tutors. Prior to the SfL strategy, these tutors were not required to undertake a basic skills teaching qualification, which enables them to effectively embed delivery of basic skills in their teaching. Activity has taken place with provider management to encourage vocational staff to undertake Skills for Life qualifications (usually Level 2 or 3). This is an area for further future development, particularly in light of the 14-19 Education and Skills White Paper. However, this has also thrown up a number of other barriers where progress has been made to engage vocational tutors.
- 3.8 PDU Managers have identified that a significant proportion of vocational tutors, that have been involved in training or events to support their development in terms of embedding basic skills in their delivery, have basic skills needs themselves. This is a fundamental issue in terms of developing appropriate progression pathways for these tutors.
- 3.9 Further problems in terms of supporting uptake of the Level 3 relate to uncertainties around 'who' the Level 3 qualifications are aimed at. This is exacerbated by the fact that the qualification must be undertaken in either literacy or numeracy (there is no combined qualification as for Level 2), and the fact that it is not a compulsory requirement for staff. In addition to this, there is anecdotal evidence that non-FE providers have been waiting for FE to respond to the developments. With limited numbers of FE vocational tutors undertaking the Level 3 qualification, it is difficult to persuade other non-FE providers to take the lead.

Other barriers

- 3.10 Other more generic barriers to promoting providers to support staff development reported by PDP Managers as presenting issues in terms of driving the agenda are listed below. These are common issues associated with professional development.

Providers

- concerns over poaching
- lack of funding / time to send staff on training
- misunderstandings about who qualifications are for
- lack of capacity to support staff in house in smaller providers

Individuals

- lack of demand – concerns over the ‘leap’ to level 3 or 4;
- no Accredited Prior Learning (APL) for staff.

PDP Structure

Role and Responsibility

3.11 A further and more fundamental barrier to the work of the PDP is how it fits with other strategies to support providers. Currently, the PDUs are not embedded within LSC structures in all areas, which has implications for the level of influence they can have over providers, in terms of encouraging them to get involved with the agenda.

3.12 Feedback indicates that some PDU Managers have felt somewhat unsupported by their local LSC, in terms of driving the professional development agenda forward. This is felt to be a consequence of their role not being fully embedded within local structures. The PDU Managers are highly experienced Skills for Life professionals, and fully appreciate the issues with supporting capacity and capability. However, for some PDU Managers, there is a sense the local LSC is ‘leaving them to it’ as they have confidence that the PDU Managers are addressing the issue. However, as the PDUs are not part of the local LSCs, a provider’s participation and response to the activities of the PDU is not part of the provider review process.

Sustainability

- 3.13 A further barrier to the PDP is the nature of the funding which supports it. The PDP is funded on a short-term project basis, but its remit has long-term strategic aims. In addition, the infrastructure established is not sustainable without funding, and it is unlikely that the work of the PDP could be mainstreamed, certainly in the short term. A comprehensive exit strategy is therefore required to assess what potential the project has in the longer term, if its bids for further funding are unsuccessful.

4 IMPROVEMENTS AND FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS

KEY POINTS

The perception is that the PDP has laid the foundations to effectively support capacity and capability, but there is still much to do. ..If the project were to continue into a second phase, the professional development project would be required to build on what has been established already, with a tighter remit and clearer guidance on what the role of the PDP is.

Structure

Clarification is required as to the role of the PDP in relation to other Skills for Life initiatives, (e.g. Quality Initiative, Whole Organisation Approach) and how it is supported by the local Learning and Skills Councils in the region. In addition, some thought is required to how each of the PDUs are resourced and supported in each sub-region, and what impact this has on their ability to influence change in terms of capacity and capability.

Activities

The recommendations include building on existing activities to broaden the reach of what has been delivered so far, with new activities developed to take advantage of the infrastructure developed. The NWPDP could play an instrumental part in responding to the 14-19 Education and Skills White Paper, in terms of the demands it will place on staff development around the basic skills agenda.

The PDP Manager has identified key areas for development in the future. These are reported under the following themes, identified as the core areas of PDP activity:

- Strategic Regional Coherence;
- Sub-regional Coordination;
- Awareness and Promotion;
- Support for Providers;
- Support for Individuals;
- Capacity building initiatives.

- 4.1 Significant progress has been made by the North West Skills for Life Professional Development Project in establishing the infrastructure to support professional development in the region. Much work has been carried out to support the needs of Skills for Life providers and remove the barriers to take up of the national qualifications already. **The perception is that the PDP has laid the foundations to effectively support capacity and capability, but there is still much to do.**
- 4.2 Feedback from the research indicates that, if the project were to continue into a second phase, the professional development project would be required to build on what has been established already, with a tighter remit and clearer guidance on what the role of the PDP is. However, if the PDP is not funded into a second phase, the development of an exit strategy is of primary importance, with consideration to how the activities, or outcomes of the project can be mainstreamed and sustained.
- 4.3 This section focuses on future developments, assuming that the project continues into a second phase.

Structure

- 4.4 A key area in considering the development of the PDP, is how it is structured, both at the regional level in terms of links with other initiatives, and at that sub-regional level, with regards to local strategies and structures to support quality.
- 4.5 Clarification is required as to the role of the PDP in relation to other Skills for Life initiatives, (e.g. Quality Initiative, Whole Organisation Approach) and how it is supported by the local Learning and Skills Councils in the region. In addition, some thought is required to how each of the PDUs are resourced and supported in each sub-region, and what impact this has on their ability to influence change in terms of capacity and capability.

4.6 At the regional level, the PDP is currently managed by the Learning and Skills Development Agency (LSDA), and is therefore outside of regional structures supporting Skills for Life. Support for a second phase for the project should include an assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of this structure, and how it impacts on delivery of the project.

Activities

4.7 The remainder of this section provides recommendations for improvements and developments. The recommendations include building on existing activities to broaden the reach of what has been delivered so far, with new activities developed to take advantage of the infrastructure developed. The NWPDP could play an instrumental part in responding to the 14-19 Education and Skills White Paper, in terms of the demands it will place on staff development around the basic skills agenda.

4.8 The PDP Manager has identified key areas for development in the future. These are reported under the following themes, identified as the core areas of PDP activity⁴:

- Strategic Regional Coherence;
- Sub-regional Coordination;
- Awareness and Promotion;
- Support for Providers;
- Support for Individuals;
- Capacity building initiatives.

Strategic Regional Coherence

4.9 The overarching aim of the PDP is to “add(ing) coherence and co-ordination to develop the **capacity** (volume) and **capability** (quality) of the basic skills workforce”. However, it should be recognised that the PDP does not work in isolation on this agenda, and it therefore needs to be linked with other activity operating at the regional and sub-regional level in the future.

⁴ These themes have been developed by York Consulting as the core areas of activity the PDP have been working to achieve

- 4.10 Whilst the PDP has an identifiable remit, the boundaries of its role are not entirely clear, and the activities that it focuses on tend to be restricted by the resource available. If the project continues into a second phase, clear consideration should be given to its role, particularly in relation to the Quality Initiative, Support for Success and other regional and sub-regional strategies to support the quality agenda.

Sub-regional Coordination

- 4.11 The action plan for each sub-region has been developed in relation to the regional action plan, with consistencies in terms of networks, events and activities established and delivered in each area. However, there are also variances in terms of the approach taken and the outcomes arising from the structures established. This is not necessarily a weakness, as it allows each sub-region to respond to local structures and priorities. However, some analysis is required to how each of the sub-regions approach their priorities, with identification of good practice, and some clearer expectation of anticipated outcomes.
- 4.12 Structures that have been established could be developed further in a second phase, with effort focused on engaging non-FE providers. Through the Quality Initiative, good practice clusters have been established in core areas of Skills for Life delivery (FE/WBL and ESOL) around Grade One providers. These could be developed by the PDUs in a second phase, with a focus on support towards improved inspection grades. This added level of coordination could incorporate a Whole Organisation Approach to the development of standards in providers, linked to inspection frameworks. The operation of these should also be linked to local LSC/QI activity to support providers towards improved inspection grades.
- 4.13 In terms of capacity building, the sub-regions also have a part to play in terms of marketing progression routes into Skills for Life as a career following success in the Level 2 and 3 qualifications. Whilst it is clear the Level 3 and Level 4 are the expected standards for being able to embed and teach Skills for Life, capacity of the workforce could be boosted by identifying potential future candidates who may be working in the field of Adult Learner Support.

Awareness and Promotion

- 4.14 The core activity of the PDP to date has focused on raising awareness and promotion of the Level 3 and Level 4 qualifications. This should be continued in the second phase, with a focus on providers working in the fields of work based learning, voluntary, community, prisons and probation. PDU Managers have identified that as part of the promotional activity, it would be beneficial to undertake 'consolidation' case studies to identify good practice and outcomes of involvement in the activities of the PDP. This could involve identification of what has worked well, and how this has impacted on teaching practices and quality in the classroom. This evidence could be used to encourage other providers to follow suit.
- 4.15 An area for future development identified by the PDP is working with business support agencies through the development and delivery of awareness raising packages. This is clearly a priority area in terms of raising awareness of the Skills for Life agenda, however, some consideration should be given to how this 'fits' with the remit of the Professional Development Project. To date, the remit of the PDP has largely focused on the Level 2, 3 and 4 qualifications, - awareness raising to employers about the wider basic skills agenda (as opposed to just professional development requirements and/or opportunities) is a distinct move away from this remit.
- 4.16 In addition, consideration should be given to the role that the PDP would play with supporting business support agencies in terms of identifying and training tutors to be appropriately trained to deliver in the workplace. The evaluation of the BSA Brokerage Scheme⁵ identified a number of issues associated with brokers stimulating demand for basic skills with employers, and providers not being able to respond to their needs. As such, clarity is required in terms of what the aims of the awareness-raising package will be, and how the PDP can support the professional development requirements of tutors to be able to deliver in the workplace.

⁵ Evaluation Of The BSA's Fresh Start In The Workplace Programme, York Consulting, 2002.

4.17 Consideration should also be given to national and sub-regional initiatives working with employers (e.g. the Employer Toolkit, Employer Training Pilots), to ensure the PDP is able to build on existing developments, rather than reinvent the wheel.

Support for Providers

4.18 A key achievement of the PDP to date has been the work with providers to support them in the delivery of the Level 4 qualifications. This has resulted in a significant increase in the number of providers delivering the Level 4 qualification in the region.

4.19 An area for development under this theme is support for providers who have responsibilities for embedding basic skills in the delivery of other qualifications. Currently, there are fairly low levels of take up of the Level 3, with staff much more likely to work towards the Level 2 qualification. Whilst the research did not provide specific detail on the reasons for this, anecdotal evidence has suggested that the requirement to undertake the Level 3 qualification in either literacy or numeracy has been a deterrent, exacerbated by uncertainties about 'who should do what' and the fact that it is not a compulsory requirement.

4.20 This is a key area for future development for the PDP, particularly in light of the recent announcement in the 14-19 Education and Skills White Paper that achievement in maths and english should be at the core of success in the new Diplomas. PDP activity to respond to these developments could include developing and assessing feasible models of staff development for non-basic skills specialists in a range of provider types and sizes.

4.21 In addition to this, the PDP could offer further support to providers with regards to contextualising the delivery of the qualifications to the needs of the tutors accessing the training. If providers are able to deliver the qualifications in an appropriate context, there is likely to be an increase in the relevance and therefore uptake of the training, at whatever level is deemed appropriate.

4.22 The PDP has been responsible for coordinating delivery of the Level 2, 3 and 4 by working with providers to negotiate 'who delivers what' and promoting the availability of qualifications. This has been successful in most areas in terms of raising awareness of where to access the qualifications, but is likely to require continued support.

4.23 Survey respondents made repeated reference to the lack of availability of appropriately qualified and experienced trainers. The PDP has supported providers by providing access to trainers, and also supporting the development of the capacity of trainers, by delivering trainer training. A future development could involve the development of an online database of trainers accessible via the PDP website.

4.24 A further key achievement of the PDP has been the production of the materials to support the Level 2, 3 and 4 qualifications. A number of practitioners responding to the survey indicated that there is a need for more resources to be developed aimed at milestone and pre-entry level students, with a particular focus on non-paper based resources. However, consideration should be given as to whether the PDP is the 'right' place for these to be coordinated.

Support for Individuals

4.25 Survey respondents indicated that through involvement in the networks, events and training delivered by the PDP, they had benefited from being able to share good practice, and develop further skills. The PDP has identified that the project would wish to continue and expand the coordination of this support, to include establishing networks for post-qualifying basic skills professionals at Level 3 and Level 4.

Capacity Building Initiatives

- 4.26 The team has identified that the majority of capacity building activities have focused on the existing Skills for Life workforce, or those who are required to embed basic skills in teaching other subject areas. There has been relatively little activity to support the development of new capacity building of the Skills for Life workforce. However, this is largely a consequence of concerns around stimulating the supply of new teachers, when there remains a shortage in the availability of full time posts.
- 4.27 The team identified that links could be built with HEIs delivering the Level 4 qualifications and with Initial Teacher Training departments to promote Skills for Life as a potential career pathway. Whilst this activity should be cautious in terms of promoting the availability of full time positions, it could raise awareness of the potential to work in the Skills for Life sector. This is an avenue which requires further exploration.

Summary

- 4.28 This section has identified key areas for development if the project continues into a second phase. Much has been achieved in terms of establishing the infrastructure to support the capability of the workforce, however, there is also the potential to broaden the reach of activity into non-FE providers. In addition, consideration is required as to where the PDP 'fits' with other regional strategies, and at the local level.

5 CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1 The research design took a broadly qualitative approach asking respondents to consider the core achievements and impacts of the PDP in relation to its initial remit and objectives. It also identified considerations in terms of how the project should develop in the future to support the capacity and capability of the Skills for Life workforce. Consideration was also given to the context of the NW SfL PDP, and how it fits with related strategies at a regional and sub-regional level to support the quality agenda.
- 5.2 The consultation process identified key strengths of the North West Skills for Life Professional Development Project. It has established an experienced team of Skills for Life professionals, working at the local level to promote and coordinate activity around the national qualifications at Levels 2, 3 and 4. Activity to date has worked to remove many of the barriers associated with uptake and delivery of the qualifications, and the managers play a key IAG role for providers and individuals.
- 5.3 There is significant demand for the role that the PDU Managers play at the local level, and awareness, demand and supply for the qualifications has increased as a result. However, it is recognised that there is still much to do, particularly in non-FE providers, and in terms of activity in the workplace. The project has laid the foundations to be able to influence take up of the qualifications, but has not achieved all its aims.
- 5.4 In addition, there has been relatively little impact around the 'capacity' agenda in terms of the volume of Skills for Life professionals. This may not be an area that the PDP can effectively address, however, consideration should be given to how this should be driven forward.
- 5.5 In terms of the role and remit of the PDP, the current structure has been effective in terms of setting up the infrastructure at the local level. However consideration is required regarding:
- where the regional project fits with other SfL initiatives and therefore, where it should sit;

- how the sub-regional PDUs are resourced and supported and what impact this has on their ability to influence change;
- how the project fits with sub-regional strategies to influence quality in the provider base.

**ANNEX A
METHODOLOGY**

Methodology

This section presents our approach to providing consultancy services to the North West Skills for Life Professional Development Project (PDP) for the three distinct elements to the project:

- research and mapping;
- evaluation of the Professional Development Project;
- strategy development.

- **Stage 1: Planning;**

- **Stage 2: Desk Research:**
 - literature review;
 - mapping regional structures;

- **Stage 3: Evaluation:**
 - strategy and management workshop;
 - telephone consultations;
 - postal/email survey;

- **Stage 4: Strategy Development and Reporting** (desk based).

Stage 1: Planning

Stage 2: Desk Research

The purpose of Stage 2 was to set the context of the current capacity and capability of the region's workforce, identifying key issues relating to developing workforce capability and capacity.

Literature Review

This stage of the project entailed a focussed review of available data and core literature relevant to the capacity and capability of the region's workforce. The research available focused on the mapping activity undertaken by CTAD or local training needs analyses of the area.

Reporting

The key output of Stage 2 was a concise report summarising the key issues and messages relevant to the North West region.

Stage 3: Evaluation

There were a large number of stakeholders to include in the evaluation of the PDP, within a limited budget. As a result we selected an inclusive and

resource effective methodology that is perception based, underpinned by core quantitative data.

The purpose of the evaluation stage of the project was to understand the PDP's achievements, its perceived impact on practitioners/providers, added value and areas for improvement and development.

Our evaluation comprised of three main elements:

- two participatory review workshops (Skills for Life Managers Team and PD Management Team);
- stakeholder consultations;
- postal/email survey.

Review Workshop

We undertook two workshops as part of activity within previously arranged meetings. This proved to be the most effective way of obtaining feedback from the key PDP stakeholders. These involved flip chart activities where we asked participants to review progress against objectives, and future priorities, followed by a discussion around the issues arising.

We feel that a workshop methodology will offer YCL the opportunity to introduce the evaluation and, more importantly, to further engage stakeholders in the future of the PDP. The workshop may also identify additional issues for exploration in the stakeholder interviews.

Stakeholder Interviews

The stakeholder interview process provided an in depth understanding of the performance, added value and future requirements of the project both at a sub-regional and regional level. We undertook 20 consultations over the telephone (with the exception of the PDT Project Manager) with:

- PDP Manager (face to face);
- Six PDU Managers (2 in Greater Manchester);
- Five local LSC Skills for Life Managers;
- ABSSU Regional Director (through the inception meeting);
- Regional Facilitator for the Skills for Life Quality Initiative;
- NWDA;
- Five sub-regional stakeholders.

Survey

The target groups for the survey comprised:

- practitioners undertaking SfL teaching qualifications (L2,3,4);

- a range of practitioners from FE, private and voluntary organisations undertaking CPD;
- tutor trainers training staff to deliver the SfL teaching qualifications;
- provider management (including Teacher Education Managers, Staff Development Managers, WBL Managers).

Our approach involved:

- sending an individually coded survey to each of the named contacts provided to YCL by the PDU Managers;
- emailing an electronic version of the survey to a named contact in each provider requesting that it be forwarded to other Skills for Life staff. A return email address and helpline at York Consulting was supplied;
- we then followed non-respondents up after the deadline with an email prompting them to respond. This almost doubled the response rate.

The breakdown of contacts, and responses received are provided in **Table 1**. Some contacts were asked to distribute the survey to their colleagues. Through this method (email) an additional three responses were received.

Table 1												
	Cheshire and Warrington		Cumbria		Gtr Manchester		Gtr Merseyside		Lancs		Total	
	Sent	Rcvd	Sent	Rcvd	Sent	Rcvd	Sent	Rcvd	Sent	Rcvd	Sent	Rcvd
Level 4 Learners	22	9	9	4					4	0	35	13
Materials Developers	8	1							10	2	18	3
Other Stakeholder	4	2			5	1	23	7	13	0	45	10
PDU Core Team	10	4	6	1	20	6	8	2	19	10	63	23
Provider Management	10	7							37	10	47	17
Tutor Trainer									10	6	10	6
Email return						1				2	0	3
Total	54	23	15	5	25	8	31	9	93	30	218	75
Response Rate		43%		33%		32%		29%		32%		34%

A total of 218 surveys were sent out by letter or email to a named contact. 75 responses were received, three of which were from unnamed contacts. This provides a total response rate of 34%. Cumbria, Greater Manchester and Lancashire had similar response rates around the average, whilst Cheshire and Warrington was above average at 43%, and Greater Merseyside was slightly below at 29%. Of the total number of surveys sent out, Lancashire and Cheshire and Warrington were most heavily represented with 93 and 54

surveys sent to each area respectively. The survey responses from these two areas make up 71% of the total number of responses received.

Of the 75 responses received, 73 indicated which sector they worked in. These are broken down by each area in **Table 2**. The table shows that 60% of responses were from FE, 7% from WBLP, 4% from Voluntary and Community, 27% from Adult and Community and 1% from Prison and Probation. The breakdown is fairly even across the region, although Cumbria had proportionately more responses from ACL.

Table 2						
	FE	WBLP	Vol/Comm	ACL	Prison and Probation	Total
Cheshire and Warrington	17	1	1	4	0	23
	74%	4%	4%	17%	0%	
Cumbria	1	0	0	3	0	4
	25%	0%	0%	75%	0%	
Gtr Manchester	6	1	0	1	0	8
	75%	13%	0%	13%	0%	
Gtr Merseyside	4	0	1	3	0	8
	50%	0%	13%	38%	0%	
Lancs	16	3	1	9	1	30
	53%	10%	3%	30%	3%	100%
Total	44	5	3	20	1	73
	60%	7%	4%	27%	1%	100%

The respondents were asked how aware they were of the work of the PDP. **Table 3** illustrates how aware each of the different provider types were. Of the 71 people who responded to this question, 73% were aware of the PDP and involved in the activities. This was broadly representative of each of the sectors except voluntary and community. However, only three people from this sector responded to the question.

Table 3					
	Completely unaware	Little awareness	Aware but not involved	Aware and involved	Total
FE	1	1	8	32	42
	2%	2%	19%	76%	
WBLP	0	0	1	4	5
	0%	0%	20%	80%	
Voluntary & Community	1	0	1	1	3
	33%	0%	33%	33%	
Adult & Community Learning	2	1	3	14	20
	10%	5%	15%	70%	
Probation/Prison	0	0	0	1	1
	0%	0%	0%	100%	
Total	4	2	13	52	71
	6%	3%	18%	73%	

The same question, analysed by sub-region is presented in **Table 4** below. This shows that from the responses received, each area had broadly similar levels of awareness and involvement of the PDP. However, it should be noted that this level of awareness is influenced by the PDU managers having supplied us with their contacts.

Table 4					
	Completely unaware	Little awareness	Aware but not involved	Aware and involved	Total
Cheshire & Warrington	3	1	3	14	21
	14%	5%	14%	67%	
Cumbria	0	0	1	4	5
	0%	0%	20%	80%	
Greater Manchester	0	0	2	6	8
	0%	0%	25%	75%	
Greater Merseyside	1	0	2	6	9
	11%	0%	22%	67%	
Lancashire	1	1	5	23	30
	3%	3%	17%	77%	
Total	5	2	13	53	73
	7%	3%	18%	73%	

ANNEX B
NW SFL PDP OBJECTIVES

Project Objectives

1. To ensure regional coherence.
2. To work towards the development of a regional profile of Skills for Life workforce professional development requirements.
3. To establish a regional Professional Development Team to coordinate the recruitment of new staff and raise the skills and qualification levels of existing staff to support the delivery of new qualifications at Levels 2, 3 and 4 through the establishment of sub-regional Professional Development Units.
4. To encourage greater diversity in the workforce to more accurately reflect the demographic composition of communities.
5. To address skills and experience gaps among the existing workforce; identify and meet training needs of staff through the development and delivery of a regional Skills for Life continuous professional development strategy. Needs will be identified through research and the Professional Development Units.
6. To provide specific support for non-LSC funded providers, for example, voluntary and community organisations.
7. To draw on the lessons learnt from the LSC Employer Training Pilots (ETPs) and address the qualification requirements of basic skills trainers in the workplace.
8. To develop the underpinning skills and knowledge of mentors, union learning representatives, workplace brokers, and other staff involved in the referral, support and delivery of Skills for Life provision.
9. To facilitate providers in the region including FE, HE and other training providers to carry out training.
10. To offer consultancy to providers on aspects of basic skills provision, including programme models, staffing, resources, progression routes and support in developing research.

Extracted from Regional Framework Action Plan