An Employers' Guide to Basic Skills at Work

April 2006

NALA

An Employers'
Guide to Basic
Skills at Work

Table of Contents

---

[1]   Source: Central Statistics Office

Foreword

This Employer's Guide to Basic Skills at Work was developed as part of a project under the In-Company Training measure of the Employment and Human Resources Development Operational Programme, funded by the European Social Fund. The project aimed to develop a workplace basic education (WBE) model for small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and was piloted in County Monaghan.

As the Irish economy continues to change and adapt, there is an increasing importance placed on literacy and numeracy skills. Adult literacy and numeracy is now seen as a clear contributing factor to quality and progression in the work place, while also facilitating greater participation in society.

An independent consultant, Liz McSkeane, wrote this Guide which was developed, piloted and produced during the development of the overall project. We would like to thank everyone who helped to develop this Guide, in particular feedback from employers and adult literacy practitioners.

We hope it will prove useful in the continued development of workplace basic education programmes into the future.

Inez Bailey
Director

Basic Skills in the Workplace – Making the Case

One of the most significant challenges facing business and industry at the beginning of the twenty first century is finding creative ways to manage change. Every year brings new technology and working practices, which increase our business potential in many ways – potential for higher production targets, improved efficiency, better customer service and more. Ireland's success in embracing change has made us one of the fastest-growing economies in the world.

However, as every entrepreneur knows, success must be built on, not taken for granted. This means ensuring that our most important resource – people – continue to have the knowledge and skills they need to participate in the workplace and to make a full contribution to it.

> " We want to make knowledge work, to increase the competitiveness of firms, to grow our economy and to ensure the betterment of our people. These vital aims can only be achieved if we focus on ways to turn knowledge into value. "
>
> **Address by the Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment November 4th, 2004: The Research Agenda, Making Knowledge Work for Ireland**

The successful firm of the future will maintain its competitive edge by applying knowledge in the workplace at all levels – from the managing director to the shop floor.

Yet national and international research shows that every year, small and large businesses needlessly lose customers, orders and profits as a result of mistakes which otherwise diligent employees make in applying basic skills at work.

> An IT worker took a telephone order for a long-standing client who wanted 10% more product than usual. The worker got confused and wrote down an order for ten times the amount.

> A sales assistant in a department store lacked confidence in writing and spelling. Whenever a customer wanted to place an order she had to look for a colleague to deal with the query.

A bakery worker was able to work out the amount of ingredients she needed for making doughnuts, as long as it was for round numbers, like 3,000. When there was a different quantity, like 3,500, she baked 4,000 and threw the remaining 500 in the bin.

A customer of a well-known supermarket chain noticed that although the chicken he bought weekly was always approximately the same weight, the price was sometimes very different. It turned out that some of the packers in the chicken factory had difficulty using and reading from the weighing equipment.

Could these situations, or others like them, arise in your workplace?

If so, there may be valued and otherwise effective employees in your firm, who have particular difficulties in applying basic skills in certain situations. Some years ago, IBEC made a formal statement recognising the significance of basic skills in the workplace:

"Upskilling for those in employment must become a priority if we are to retain and attract higher value-added employment in Ireland. Basic educational disadvantage in the workforce must be addressed, particularly in relation to literacy difficulties."

**IBEC Response to National Employment Action Plan (2002)
Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment**

Workplace education projects which address basic skills at work have been implemented very successfully in many countries, including the UK[2], New Zealand[3] and Australia[4].

---

[2] See the Learning and Skills Council www.lsc.gov.uk and Read Write Plus at the Department for Education and Skills www.dfes.gov.uk
[3] See Workbase New Zealand at www.workbase.org.nz
[4] See National Centre for Vocational Education Research at www.ncveer.edu.au/research www.deteya.gov.au

So, even if you think this does not apply in your situation, don't dismiss the idea - it could be worth your while to think about it. Avoidable errors like those mentioned above could be having an adverse impact on your business. Employers who have supported basic skills in their workplace report many benefits, including:

- improved customer relations
- reductions in wastage
- improved time-keeping and attendance
- better morale and more flexibility from employees
- improvements in production targets
- better attention to quality
- increased profits

This **Employers' Guide to Basic Skills at Work,** is designed to help you take an important step in turning knowledge into value in your own business. It will show how you can improve the efficiency and performance by providing practical support for employees, who may not be working to their full potential – for members of your workforce who have problems with basic skills. It will help you to:

- get a general idea of what basic skills are, and why they are important in the workplace;
- examine which basic skills are used most in the different jobs in your particular business;
- get a general sense of how comfortable your own employees are in applying basic skills to their particular job;
- find out what to do if some of your workers have problems with basic skills.

Basic Skills – What and Why

Basic skills are often known as literacy and numeracy. We use these skills a great deal in everyday life, including our working life. We also make use of basic skills when we learn something new. It would be difficult to learn how to use information technology or certain new tools and equipment, without being comfortable with reading, writing, verbal communication or with different aspects of numeracy.

> Literacy involves listening and speaking, reading, writing, numeracy and using everyday technology to communicate and handle information. It includes more than the technical skills of communication: it also has personal, social and economic dimensions. Literacy increases the opportunity for individuals and communities to reflect on their situation, explore new possibilities, and initiate change.

National Adult Literacy Agency Information Pack (2005)

In 1997 the OECD[5] carried out an international survey which examined how well adults could handle different types of reading and numeracy tasks which crop up regularly in work and in daily life – such as reading timetables, reading the labels on medicine bottles, or calculating and estimating quantities. This International Adult Literacy Survey concluded that **one in four** – that is, about half a million - Irish adults 'have problems with even the simplest literacy task'[6] such as reading instructions on a bottle of aspirin. It also found that **one in six** 'of those who are in employment are at the lowest level'.[7]

More recent surveys carried out by the Central Statistics Office shed light on the numbers of people at work who may have problems with basic skills. Appendix 1 gives a breakdown of the percentage of people in different occupations who left school in the lower secondary stage or even before[8]. Of the 1,641,587 people who made up the workforce in 2002, 491,391, or **almost 30%**, fell into this category, and a third of these had only primary or even no formal education at all.

---

[5] Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
[6] OECD (1997) International Adult Literacy Survey: Results for Ireland An Roinn Oideachais page 43
[7] ibid., page 50
[8] source: Central Statistics Office Database

It is worth noting as well that the problem is not evenly distributed across the workforce: instead, particular occupations have a very high proportion of employees with low levels of education. For example,

- More than 60% of all employees working in agriculture, forestry and fishing have lower secondary education at best: and over half of these workers did not attend secondary school at all;

- Over half of the workers in mining, quarrying and turf production, and also in the textiles, clothing, footwear and leather industries, left school during the lower secondary years or before;

- Almost 42% of people working in the food industry and over 33% of all employees in hotels and restaurants have similar low levels of education.

Of course, not everyone who left school early has difficulty with basic skills. Rather, this is an important indicator of a potential problem:

> "There is a positive association between level of education and literacy level….level of education is one of the strongest correlates of literacy performance".

International Adult Literacy Survey, page 53[9]

This means that if a high proportion of the workers in your sector, or in your own company have only lower secondary or primary education, it is possible that at least some of them have difficulties with basic skills.

There is another important group of workers who may have similar basic skills needs, people whose first language is not English. Many of the workers from other countries who are contributing to Ireland's prosperity, are already highly skilled but may need tuition in the English language before they are able to work to their full potential. Some could also benefit from work in basic skills.

It is important to know that having gaps in basic skills **does not** mean that the individual has problems with all of the basics of reading, writing, verbal communication and number work. We all have things we are good at and other things we struggle with, and it works in much the same way with basic skills. People's abilities tend to be **'spiky'**, which means that they can be very good at one thing but have a real difficulty with another, which can interfere with their overall performance.

---

[9]   OECD/An Roinn Oideachas (1997) op.cit page 53

A supervisor noticed that the excellent painter and decorator was having difficulty finishing the job. He had run out of paint and did not know how to work out the proportions to get the right colour mix.

A cleaner misread the instructions on the disinfectant bottle and used ten times the amount of cleaning liquid needed for the job.

A glass drinks bottle which was half-filled with a clear liquid had a badly-scrawled label taped to the side. No-one could read the label but it turned out that the bottle contained white spirit.

Mistakes happen, but some of these examples taken from the experiences of working life could have serious consequences. Health and Safety is one area of knowledge and skill which is common to every workplace. Employees' well-being depends more and more on their ability to understand signs and symbols, technical terminology and verbal or written instructions. Where there is little or no room for errors caused by gaps, in crucial areas of knowledge and skill.

For this reason, the basic skills question does not ask for 'either/or' answers: it does not assume that there is a yes/no answer to the question as to whether people 'can' or 'cannot' manage basic skills. Rather, it's about identifying the **extent** of specific gaps and weaknesses, especially when these are in areas of work which are crucial to the success and productivity of your business and the safety of your employees. You should be able to identify most of these important areas yourself and get a general impression of where there might be skills gaps amongst your workforce. A trained adult literacy practitioner can help you with a more detailed analysis.

If you are still not sure as to whether tackling basic skills at work should be a priority for your business, it may be useful to know that there have been many national[10] and international studies[11] which indicate that employers tend to
- underestimate the extent to which basic skills are needed in their workplace; and
- underestimate the extent of basic skills difficulties in their workplace and the impact of this on their business.

---

[10] National Adult Literacy Agency (2003) Closing the Gap: Boosting Productivity and Competitiveness through Workplace Basic Education Dublin: NALA
[11] see for example, Basic Skills Agency (2002) Baseline Survey of Basic Skills Programmes in Wales

This research, combined with many real-life experiences such as those quoted above, provide strong evidence that in the current national workforce of over 1.8 million, **– perhaps as many as 450,000 - who have some level of difficulty with basic skills;** and this can cause significant problems for businesses.

Some of the effects of poor basic skills at work which have already been reported by employers include:

- misunderstandings with customers,

- mistakes in orders,

- wastage,

- inefficient or inappropriate use of equipment,

- damage to equipment,

- work time lost,

- production targets not met, and

- loss of business.

Could this be your company?
Also of crucial importance is the cost to the person. People who have difficulties with basic skills often report being in a state of near-constant worry and stress:

"You're ducking and diving all the time, wondering if you're going to be asked to fill in a form or read something. And if it does happen, you can't think of anything except **how to get out of this** and you get an adrenalin rush that gives you the inspiration to figure out **how to get someone else to do it!**"

Experiences like this can undermine people's self-esteem so much that they lose confidence in their ability to handle new challenges, sometimes become demotivated and don't fulfil their potential in the job.

The Underlying Reasons

There are many reasons why people reach adulthood without having learned the basic skills they need to manage on a day-to-day basis, difficult experiences at school or recurring health problems, for example.

> Pat is a 55 year old farmer who has been working the family farm since he was a boy. From an early age he stayed out of school to help with the chores and now he runs the farm himself. But with the new forms to fill in and cheques to write, he relies on family members to handle the business side of things.

> Maire is a 43 year old retail worker. She can read quite well but has a problem with writing, especially in front of other people. She had health problems when she was a child and missed a lot of school for a couple of years. She never completely caught up.

> Sean is a 28 year old construction worker. He was always good at making things and did well in woodwork and metalwork. But he could never get to grips with anything that involved reading and writing and left school before taking his Junior Certificate. He has to take Safe Pass [12] now, which involves a written test.

All of these people are good at what they do, but they have gaps in basic skills which prevent them from doing their job as well as they could. Some of them may have left school with adequate skills but are out of practice. Basic skills, like any others, get rusty if they're not used. Other people may have found that their job has changed in recent years and now involves a lot more reading, writing or numeracy than it used to. Many health and safety regulations, for example, are expressed in written form. Sometimes, when people change jobs they find that the reading, writing and numeracy demands are much greater in their new place of work.

---

[12] A certificate awarded to workers in the construction industry on completion of a Health and Safety programme in key aspects of construction safety.

As well as this, these days a lot of information is stored or recorded electronically. This means using the new medium of information technology, which usually involves some level of literacy or numeracy skills.

So, it is important to remember that having a problem with literacy and numeracy does not mean that the person is of poor ability or low intelligence. In fact, many are people who have important work and life skills. You may already value them highly as employees. You may have noticed and been puzzled by their reluctance to apply for promotion, embark on training, or to take on new tasks which are well within their capabilities. If you can think of someone who fits this description, the explanation may lie in some level of discomfort with one or more of the basic skills.

Taking Action

Gaps in literacy and numeracy hold people back from fulfilling their potential. This is a loss to the individual and also represents a loss of talent to you, the employer. By taking a few simple steps you can help employees to overcome these difficulties, and help your business too. Taking action on basic skills is simply another way of maximising your employees' contribution to your company.

Here are four simple actions which will help you to help your workers, and improve your business at the same time.

Action 1 - Scan your working environment
This gives you a general idea of how frequently different basic skills are used in your workplace.

Action 2 - Think about the job
You break down the tasks involved in specific jobs where you employ people, and work out what basic skills they need to carry out particular activities.

Action 3 - Think about the people
You identify strengths and weaknesses in how employees do their job, and identify problems which might be a result of problems with basic skills.

Action 4 - Decide how to help
Depending on what you learn from Action 2 and 3, you offer employees a suitable basic skills support strategy, chosen from a menu of options.

If you are already convinced of the benefits of tackling potential basic skills issues in your company, you may decide to seek the assistance of the National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA), who can guide you through the four actions. A list of the activities and support services which NALA provide is given in the Appendices. Alternatively, you may prefer to work out yourself what are the basic skills demands which your employees have to handle.

Action 1:

Start by thinking about the general working environment.

Consider the kind of documentation people have to read and fill in, in their role as an employee. Then reflect on your company's key documentation such as Health and Safety manuals and notices and employee memos. Consider also the level of oral communication involved in being an employee of your company. Think about the numeracy demands on your workers: perhaps they have to work out how many items they can pack in one bag, or maybe they need to record or retrieve information from charts and graphs. Then complete the checklist on pages 16, 17 and 18. Not all of these skills will be used all of the time – but those which are needed may be crucial.

Action 2

Now, go through each task involved in a particular job and ask yourself whether any of the basic skills mentioned in Action 1 are needed to carry out that task properly.
If so, note the basic skills which are needed, using either Checklist 2a on pages 19 – 23, or Checklist 2 b on pages 24 - 25. This will provide a snapshot of the range of skills required to carry out particular tasks and may give a general picture of particular areas which may need special attention.

Action 1   Scan your working environment

Which of these activities do people working in your sector routinely or occasionally carry out?

Reading	Routinely	Occasionally	Never
Recognise technical words	☐	☐	☐
Get information from pictures, graphics	☐	☐	☐
Get information from timetables, charts	☐	☐	☐
Read from diagrams, plans, maps	☐	☐	☐
Read from bills, invoices, orders	☐	☐	☐
Look up numbers in telephone book	☐	☐	☐
Get information from notices, flyers	☐	☐	☐
Follow instructions, recipes, directions	☐	☐	☐
Read a written telephone message	☐	☐	☐
Use index, table of contents to find topic	☐	☐	☐
Read from trade journals, magazines	☐	☐	☐
Discuss contents of article	☐	☐	☐
Read memos, letters, health and safety	☐	☐	☐
Read reports	☐	☐	☐
File documents	☐	☐	☐

Writing	Routinely	Occasionally	Never
Fill in forms with personal information	☐	☐	☐
Write lists	☐	☐	☐
Take a telephone message	☐	☐	☐
Send emails	☐	☐	☐
Take down instructions	☐	☐	☐
Prepare receipts	☐	☐	☐
Complete invoices	☐	☐	☐
Keep records of orders and payments	☐	☐	☐
Write letters	☐	☐	☐

	Routinely	Occasionally	Never
Write reports	☐	☐	☐
Fill in job application form	☐	☐	☐
Spell accurately	☐	☐	☐
Draw up curriculum vitae	☐	☐	☐

Speaking and listening	Routinely	Occasionally	Never
Follow verbal instructions	☐	☐	☐
Ask and answer questions	☐	☐	☐
Communicate on the telephone	☐	☐	☐
Leave messages on answering machines	☐	☐	☐
Talk to customers face-to-face	☐	☐	☐
Give information, directions, instructions	☐	☐	☐
Pass on messages verbally	☐	☐	☐
Take part in meetings	☐	☐	☐
Express opinions, argue a case	☐	☐	☐
Make presentations	☐	☐	☐

Using numbers	Routinely	Occasionally	Never
Round amounts up and down	☐	☐	☐
Give change	☐	☐	☐
Add and subtract e.g. for bills, invoices	☐	☐	☐
Work out discounts and sale prices	☐	☐	☐
Calculate VAT payments	☐	☐	☐
Work out pay and deductions due	☐	☐	☐
Fill in time sheets	☐	☐	☐
Work out budget	☐	☐	☐
Use measuring instruments	☐	☐	☐
Measure length, height, weight, volume	☐	☐	☐
Set time pieces e.g. alarms, videos	☐	☐	☐
Calculate area and volume	☐	☐	☐
Make or work from scale drawings or plans	☐	☐	☐
Pack boxes or shelves	☐	☐	☐

Other skills	Routinely	Occasionally	Never
Team work	☐	☐	☐
Problem solving	☐	☐	☐
Initiative	☐	☐	☐
Monitoring own work	☐	☐	☐
Other – insert as appropriate	☐	☐	☐

Using technology

Many workplace tasks depend on being able to use technology, whether this is general equipment such as the office photocopier or fax machine; or more specialised items specific to your sector. It may be worthwhile going back over this checklist and asking yourself whether your employees need to be able to use any of the skills listed, in order to handle the usual technology demands for example the operating instructions for a photocopier requires the ability to read and to understand key symbols.

Action 2   Think about the job - Checklist 2 a

TASK Reading	Standard Operating Procedure/Task	Tick if relevant √									
Recognise technical words											
Get info from pictures, graphics											
Get info from timetables, charts											
Read from diagrams, maps, plans											
Read from bills, invoices											
Look up phone book											
Get info from notices, flyers											
Follow instructions											
Read phone message											
Use index, TOC											
Read journals, magazines											
Discuss contents of articles											
Read memos, letters, reports											
File documents											

Action 2   Think about the job - Checklist 2 a

TASK Writing	Standard Operating Procedure/Task	Tick if relevant √						
Complete forms								
Write lists								
Take a phone message								
Send emails								
Take down instructions								
Write receipts, invoices								
Record orders, payments								
Write letters								
Write reports								
Complete application form								
Spell accurately								
Write CV								

Action 2 Think about the job - Checklist 2 a

TASK Speaking + listening	Standard Operating Procedure/Task	Tick if relevant √						
Follow verbal instructions								
Ask and answer questions								
Talk on phone								
Leave message on voicemail								
Talk to customers								
Give information, directions								
Pass on messages								
Take part in meetings								
Express opinions								
Make presentations								

Action 2 Think about the job - Checklist 2 a

TASK Numeracy	Standard Operating Procedure/Task	Tick if relevant √						
Round up and down								
Give change								
Add								
Subtract								
Work out discounts								
Work out VAT								
Work out pay due								
Work out deduction								
Fill in time sheet								
Work out budget								
Measure								
Set time								
Work out volume								
Work with scale								
Pack boxes or shelves								

Action 2 Think about the job - Checklist 2 a

TASK Other skills	Standard Operating Procedure/Task	Tick if relevant √						
Team work								
Problem solving								
Initiative								
Monitoring own work								

TASK Using technology	Standard Operating Procedure/Task	Tick if relevant √						

Action 2 Think about the job - Checklist 2 b

Basic skills task analysis

Job title

Summary of operating procedures involved in the job
Title of procedure + Number of procedure

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

Basic skills in standard operating procedure
Reading, writing, speaking and listening or number skills

Standard Operating Procedure Title + Number

Basic skill

Basic skill

Basic skill

Basic skill

Basic skill

Basic skill

Standard Operating Procedure Title + Number

Basic skill

Basic skill

Basic skill

Basic skill

Basic skill

Standard Operating Procedure Title + Number

Basic skill

Basic skill

Basic skill

Basic skill

Basic skill

Standard Operating Procedure Title + Number

Basic skill

Basic skill

Basic skill

Basic skill

Basic skill

Action 3   Think about the people

Now that you have clarified the range of basic skills which your employees need in order to do their job well, you can start to think about the people.

The purpose of this next activity is to allow you to get a **general** sense of whether some of your employees could have a difficulty with one or more of the basic skills. This is usually a question of degree. It is not so much that people cannot read, write or use numbers at all, but rather, they may have gaps or cannot do certain things as well or as fluently as they need, in order to do their job with confidence and accuracy.

Finding out the **level** of a person's basic skills is a job for a trained practitioner of adult literacy and numeracy. If you think that some of your staff could benefit from this, you may at some stage offer to engage the services of such a person, to carry out a formal assessment. This is not something you should do yourself, unless you are a trained literacy practitioner.

At this stage, you are simply trying to gain a general understanding of the needs of your employees. It is best to do this informally and with discretion, being very careful not to embarrass or expose a person who may have gaps in basic skills.

There are four stages in your contact with your employees when you can take note of how they manage the basic skills elements of their work:

1. at the recruitment stage,

2. during induction,

3. on the job, and

4. at the progression stage.

During **recruitment** you can pay particular attention to
- The person's general level of education;
- How accurately the application form is completed, especially the writing of dates, abbreviations, personal details, signature;
- Answers to open questions on form: punctuation, spelling, handwriting;
- Care and accuracy of the handwritten covering letter which accompanies job application, if you ask for this.

During **induction training** note how employees manage
- Any written materials they receive;
- Instructions to read or to summarise parts of a training or health and safety manual;
- Timekeeping;
- General level of comfort in taking part in discussion and group activities;

On the job, be attentive to how people are coping with all of the basic skills demands you have identified in Actions 1 and 2 above. You can use the basic skills task analysis on pages 24 – 25 above to focus on specific areas.

At the **progression stage**, when employees are due for review and appraisal, you can discuss the person's education and training development with her or him, in a sensitive manner. Skills gaps relating to a particular job may be identified. When promotion opportunities arise, it can also be useful to consider possible reasons why some employees do not put themselves forward, especially if these are people you think would be good at the new job. Sometimes unidentified gaps in skills prevent people from applying for promoted positions.

The following checklist provides a set of more **general indicators** which sometimes arise because of an individual's difficulties with basic skills. You can use this list at all four stages – recruitment, induction, on the job and progression - to get a sense of a person's comfort with basic skills. This does not mean that everyone who displays some of the behaviours listed necessarily has needs in basic skills. However, if someone frequently displays all or most of these tendencies, it would be worth exploring the possibility further.

General Indicators of Possible Need for Support in Basic Skills

1. Frequently absent
2. Poor timekeeping
3. Resists going on training courses
4. Reluctant to take on new tasks
5. Often asks colleagues for help on simple tasks
6. Personal documentation sometimes not in order
7. Makes errors in noting dates, times etc
8. Writing elements of their work inaccurate or wrong
9. Passes certain tasks on to other people
10. Does not follow written instructions correctly
11. Avoids reading aloud
12. Frequently misplaces spectacles, asks others to read
13. Illegible handwriting
14. Poor spelling of words which should be familiar
15. Confusion of letters 'b', 'd' and 'p', 'q'.
16. Reading or writing reversals i.e. 'saw' instead of 'was'
17. Declines to go for promotion
18. Resists taking on responsibility, even when capable.

Action 4   Decide how to help

The next, and most important step, is deciding what to do with the information you have gathered. You have scanned your working environment and analysed the jobs your employees carry out and you now think that there really are some basic skills involved in effective performance in your workplace. You have discreetly considered how your employees are getting on with the different aspects of their work, in particular with the basic skills elements of their tasks. You have thought about their general work patterns. You now consider it possible that some of your employees – or perhaps even only one – may have some basic skills needs. You have a general idea of where there might be a difficulty – doing calculations for orders, for example, or following written instructions. Beyond that, you are not sure. What do you do now?

Confidentiality

It is crucial at this stage to protect the privacy of the individual or individuals whom you have tentatively identified as being in need of support in basic skills. Many people who have a difficulty in these areas are embarrassed about it and go to great lengths to hide the fact – sometimes for years, even from their friends and immediate family. If your initial judgement is right, you will need to handle the next step with tact and discretion. The whole purpose behind thinking about your employees' basic skills in this way is to decide how you can help them to improve their work performance, thereby benefiting your business as well.

It may be useful to consider a few simple Dos and Don'ts for this step:

DO	DON'T
Introduce the idea of basic skills generally, in the context of many other work-related skills;	Approach the person directly and ask if they have a problem with basic skills;
Invite people to identify all areas of training where they could benefit from support, and include reading, writing, spelling, number work, among possible training/support topics for the future;	Raise the topic of basic skills in a group, out of context as this can expose people who are not yet ready to address the issue;
Raise such questions as part of a one-to-one regular staff appraisal, or in a group, in a matter of-fact way;	Ask people directly what their level of education is, especially if you think it is low;

Avoid terminology which is loaded with negative associations: literacy, illiteracy, **low** basic skills;	Encourage people to talk about their basic skills needs in an unprepared group, unless they are very under-standing and mutually supportive;
Use neutral, adult-friendly words and phrases: **help** with spelling, **work** on the numeracy content;	Discuss one person's case with any other employee;
Give all employees key statistics and other information about the level of basic skills needs nationally, as this can help people to feel less isolated;	Leave written records or notes, such as checklists for Actions 1 and 2, in an insecure place;
Gently challenge any preconceptions other employees or managers may express about people who have basic skills needs;	Test people by giving them extra basic skills-related tasks;
Let it be known, in a matter-of-fact way, that you and your company want to help and that your door is open.	Talk about 'literacy' or 'illiteracy' as this can lead to misunderstanding.
	Express amazement at the fact that some adults have basic skills needs – there are always good reasons why they do.
	Convey the idea that people are obliged to do anything they do not want to do.

If the insights you gained from Actions 1 - 3 suggest that one or more of your employees may benefit from support in basic skills, this is the point at which you will need to engage the assistance of a trained adult literacy practitioner, if you have not already done so. The Vocational Education Committees are the main providers of adult basic education in Ireland. In 2005 a Workplace Basic Education Fund (WBEF), Skills for Work, was established by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment. The fund is being managed by FÁS Services to Business section and guided by a National Steering Group consisting of representatives from relevant stakeholders including employers, trade unions, practitioners and NALA. Guidelines for the fund are available from FÁS, where employers, employees, trade unions and practitioners can apply for funding to deliver workplace basic education courses.

Other service providers can be contacted through the Local Area Partnerships, the Trades Unions and the ICTU Congress Networks. Contact details for these organisations are given in Appendix 3.

Depending on the stage at which you engage the services of the adult literacy practitioner, there are a number of things you can do to assist her/him in their work:

Preparation

- Provide any documentation which gives an insight into your business: both the work content and the organisational structure.

- Identify the key staff members who will have most influence on supporting employees who decide to work on basic skills. Support from supervisors and managers, before, during and after training, is one of the strongest factors in ensuring that the results of training are actually translated back into the workplace[13].

- Give some thought to what kind of help you would like from the adult literacy practitioner. Here are some of the options you can access through the contacts in the Appendices:

1. **General awareness raising** of basic skills issues and introduction of the topic to staff and/or employees: for example, a half-day interactive workshop giving general information and exploring the practicalities of basic skills work;

2. Assistance with **workplace scan**, **task analysis, basic skills scan:** working through Actions 1 – 3, using the checklists on pages 16 – 25. This provides a basis for an in-depth **training needs analysis**, which takes into account the basic

---

[13]   This is true of all work-related training, not just basic skills. See for example Taylor, M (1998) Partners in the Transfer of Learning: A Resource Manual for Workplace Instructors Partnerships in Learning. A substantial body of research on transfer of learning supports the idea that transfer of learning to the workplace can be maximised through goal-setting, creating a positive learning environment and providing opportunities and encouragement to use new skills.

skills content of your sector, the organisational structure of your company, the jobs carried out by employees and the workers' training needs, and assistance in developing a strategy for tackling basic skills needs in the workplace;

3. **Analysis of workplace documentation** for readability using a professional readability tool which will give a general indication of the level of difficulty of different types of texts;

4. Analysis and review of your general **communications strategy** within and outside the workplace;

5. **Plain English Service** which can either train your staff in writing work-related documentation in Plain English, or review and revise existing documentation to maximise its accessibility;

6. **Individualised literacy/numeracy assessments**. This is carried out by the adult literacy practitioner, who relates the individual's particular strengths and weaknesses in basic skills, to the needs of their work, in order to plan an individualised support programme or identify another suitable support strategy for the person.

Only raise this option if an individual has indicated that they want to address a basic skills issue. Make sure that they know that the results of any assessment – and even the fact that they are having one – are confidential. This means that any information about their basic skills abilities which emerge from an individualised assessment is kept on record by the tutor. This is not recorded in their work or personnel file.

7. Development and delivery of **dedicated workplace literacy/numeracy group programme** for employees, on- or off-site in company time or in the employee's own time; or a mixture of both. The VECs may be contracted to provide a tutor to work with your staff on site during work time, if there is a demand. Current rates of pay are given in Appendix 4. Employees, who are interested in taking their work on basic skills further can, in their own time, take part in tuition provided through the local Vocational Education Committees, or by making contact with one of the other providers of adult basic education. These include: the Irish Trade Union Trust; and ICTU Congress Networks. In addition, employees can access workplace basic education support through their local FÁS Services to Business office.

Workplace programmes generally operate with a small group of about seven or eight people. Topics covered include: literacy, numeracy, communication skills, computer skills, interpersonal skills, problem solving and report writing. Content is tailored to your particular workplace and the needs of the learners. Programmes usually take place for at least 3 - 4 hours per week from 10 to 30 weeks.

8. Individualised **literacy/numeracy tuition** provided by the adult literacy practitioner, on or off-site, in company time or in the employee's own time; or a mixture of both.

9. Development and delivery of training programmes **(training of trainers)** for in-house or external trainers of work-related topics, on the theme of **Building Literacy into Training.** This will be tailored to your own sector and to the demands of your particular workplace.

10. Development of literacy/numeracy training elements or materials **integrated with work-related training**, in consultation with work trainers. Help with basic skills can be woven into general, work-related or induction training. You, or the trainer, can work with the literacy practitioner at the planning stage and identify areas where basic skills occur in the programme and work out ways to teach these in the context of whatever topic is being addressed.

This approach has many advantages. Basic skills are best learned in a meaningful situation and work-related tasks provide a ready-made context. This strategy also avoids singling out individuals, while supporting those who need it.

Not all of these options will be suitable for all situations and you should seek the assistance of the National Adult Literacy Agency in deciding which step, or combination of steps, best suits your circumstances. In order to clarify this you should also

- Give some thought to the level of resources you want to commit to this work: funding; time; premises and equipment. Support for particular resources may be available through a range of different funding sources such as FÁS Services to Business, the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, Skillnets or the Local Area Partnerships.

- Consider how you will manage confidentiality. Immediate supervisors or line managers may need to be informed if an employee is being released to work on their basic skills. However, this should be on a 'need-to-know' basis, not common knowledge, unless the employees agree to disclose it.

- Think about how you will manage information which is generated by an employee's work on basic skills. You should ask for periodic updates on progress so that you can support the employee and you should gradually notice an improvement in how your employees handle basic skills-related tasks in their work. However, in adult basic education the specifics of the basic skills work are confidential. In particular, the results of individualised literacy and numeracy assessments are generally considered to be a private matter between the learner and the tutor. It is important that the learner feels comfortable about passing on information to you or any other manager in your company.

A copy of the Operating Guidelines for Adult Literacy Practitioners in Workplace basic education projects is shown in the Appendices. This will give you an idea of the scope of their role, and the way they will work when they come into your company.

Can you afford not to help?

Some employers understandably wonder if the time and energy involved in addressing their employees' basic skills needs might be more than they can manage. Others worry that if they do help, their newly-skilled workers will leave for greener pastures and let other employers benefit from their investment.

However, if you consider that your business may already be losing orders, customers and profits as a result of mistakes in the accurate application of basic skills, consider that it could do your company a lot of good to support basic skills in the workplace. Businesses can also benefit from having a reputation of being a good employer who 'takes care of their staff', and inspire the loyalty of their workers.

Bearing all this in mind, the question now is not 'Can you afford to help?' but 'Can you afford not to?'

Appendices

Appendix 1: Persons aged 15 years and over at work, by occupation and level of education[14], 2002

Appendix 2: Operational Guidelines for Adult Literacy Practitioners in Workplace Basic Education Projects

Appendix 3: Contact details for Adult Basic Education

Appendix 4: Costings for Workplace Basic Education Programmes

Appendix 5: Summary of activities and services provided by the National Adult Literacy Agency

---

[14]   Source: Central Statistics Office

Appendix 1: Persons aged 15 years and over at work, by occupation and level of education[15], 2002

Education level Industry	Total number in industry	Primary only or no formal ed (% of number in industry)	Lower secondary only	Total % Primary only/no formal ed + lower secondary
All industries	1,641,587	164, 493 (10.02)	326,898 (19.73)	**29.7**
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	97,281	30, 748 (31.67)	28,238 (29.02)	**60.69**
Manufacturing industries	244,203	21,800 (8.92)	57,426 (23.51)	**32.43**
Construction	149,271	21,145 (14.16)	49, 464 (33.13)	**47.29**
Wholesale and retail trade	219,165	19,575 (8.93)	57,375 (26.17)	**35.10**
Industry not stated	101,528	12,085 (11.9)	16,949 (16.69)	**28.59**
Transport, storage and communications	96,855	11,592 (11.96)	23, 854 (24.62)	**36.58**
Health and social work	143,520	11,056 (7.7)	19,600 (13.65)	**21.35**
Hotels and restaurants	81,418	8,560 (10.51)	18,441 (22.64)	**33.05**
Real estate, renting and business activities	151,107	6,971 (4.61)	14,813 (9.80)	**14.41**
Other community, social and personal service activities	64,333	6,524 (10.14)	14,249 (22.1)	**32.24**
Education	109,301	5,541 (5.06)	7,568 (6.92)	**11.98**
Public administration and defence	94,746	5,296 (5.58)	11,653 (12.29)	**17.87**
Metals, metal products, machinery and engineering	89,591	5,277 (5.89)	18,293 (20.41)	**26.30**
Food industries	35, 279	5,034 (14.26)	9,726 (27.56)	**41.80**
Chemical, rubber and plastic products	33,511	2, 148 (6.40)	6,109 (18.22)	**24.62**
Textiles, clothing, footwear and leather	11,238	2, 079 (18.49)	3,578 (31.83)	**50.32**
Glass, pottery and cement	13,268	2,033 (15.32)	4,191 (31.58)	**46.90**
Other manufacturing (incl. transport equipment)	24,707	2,023 (8.18)	7,210 (29.18)	**37.36**
Paper, paper products, printing and publishing	23,619	1,873 (7.93)	5,101 (21.59)	**29.52**
Mining, quarrying and turf production	6,658	1,394 (20.93)	2,079 (31.22)	**52.25**
Electricity, gas and water supply	11,363	1,167 (10.27)	1,887 (16.6)	**26.87**
Banking and financial services	70,838	1,039 (1.46)	3,302 (4.66)	**6.12**
Wood and wood products	6,019	670 (11.13)	2,009 (33.37)	**44.50**
Beverages and tobacco	6,971	663 (9.51)	1209 (17.34)	26.85

---

[15]   Source: Central Statistics Office

Appendix 2: **Operational Guidelines for Adult Literacy Practitioners in Workplace Basic Education Projects**

Guiding principles of good adult education practice were developed in consultation with practitioners, learners/students and other stakeholders in the adult basic education sector. These should underpin all work carried out in workplace programmes.

Good adult education practice affirms

- The learner's right to attend on a voluntary basis and to set his/her own goals

- An ethical code of confidentiality, respect and trust

- Respect for cultural differences

- An atmosphere of social interaction, informality, enjoyment

- Participation by learners in organisation, including evaluation

National Adult Literacy Agency (2002) Evolving Quality Framework for Adult Basic Education User Guide

Adult literacy practitioners providing support for workplace basic education can draw on these principles to inform their work. It is important that the employer or manager, who is the broker between the adult literacy practitioner and the workplace learners, is aware of these guiding principles. This will allow her or him to understand the need for discretion and confidentiality in this work.

The range of supports which an adult literacy practitioner can provide to a company wishing to promote the basic skills development of employees will depend on each individual set of circumstances. Some employers will already have carried out an initial analysis of their situation before calling in the adult literacy expert. Others may be starting from the very beginning. The following steps will be relevant in most cases.

STEP 1

Obtain as much information as possible about the company, sector business, number of employees, trade union or worker representation, length of time in business, other training carried out, who provides training, previous experience of basic skills support for employees, involvement in other workplace support projects, training needs analyses already carried out.

Also, how the company is structured: managing director/owner, departments, chain of command, training/human resource staff, **key link person/people who will facilitate or influence basis skills work.**

Sources of information: company documentation such as reports, training manuals and programmes, training plans, job and task analyses; also interviews with manager/owner/human resource staff, whoever is the main contact; also local knowledge, FÁS office, VEC staff.

STEP 2

Identify the individual who will be the link person for this work and also, the person with decision-making powers, if these are different. Provide them with information about adult basic education issues: basic facts and figures, impact of basic skills problems on business, impact and benefits of workplace basic education, costs and responsibilities, guiding principles of adult basic education.

Provide the company with information about the service you can provide or facilitate: Awareness raising, environmental/work scan, training needs analysis, review of documentation and communication strategy, Plain English Training, development and delivery of training for trainers programme, development and delivery of individualised or group adult basic education programmes, individualised assessments.

Strategies: provide documentation e.g. *An Employers' Guide to Basic Skills at Work*; hold group meetings; meet key staff one-to-one.

STEP 3
Draw up a draft strategy tailored to the needs of the company
Include a proposal to set up an in-company steering group who will oversee, monitor and support the workplace basic education work. With the help of your company link person, identify and name the people you think should be on this group. Include a detailed time plan. Include also a suggested method of monitoring the actions included in the plan; and a draft method for evaluating the impact of the whole initiative. Suggest topics which could be monitored and evaluated and methods for doing so. These will be implemented later, and the monitoring and evaluation strategy may change but it needs to be planned for at this stage.

Present strategy and negotiate. Ensure that the key staff are aware of the commitment of time and resources involved in each action you recommend.

Finalise the strategy and formalise into a training/support plan. Ensure that the named individual is detailed to advance different aspects of the plan; and that a deadline and performance indicators are agreed for each action.

STEP 4
Plan delivery or organise specific options contained in your plan

(i) General awareness raising of basic skills issues and introduction of the topic to staff and/or employees: a half-day interactive workshop giving general information and exploring the practicalities of basic skills work.
Source: National Adult Literacy Agency and local adult literacy service

(ii) Workplace scan, **task analysis, basic skills scan**: using the checklists on pages 16 – 25 of *An Employers' Guide to Basic Skills at Work*. Use this as the basis for an in-depth **training needs analysis** of that particular workplace.
Source/Materials: Adult Literacy Practitioner with *An Employers' Guide to Basic Skills at Work*

(iii) Analysis of workplace documentation for readability using a
professional readability tool to obtain general indication of the level of
difficulty of different types of texts used by the company
**Source: Readability Test, supplied, carried out by Adult Literacy
Practitioner along with a responsible member of staff.**

(iv) Analysis and review of your **communications strategy** within and outside
the workplace;
Source: Adult Literacy Practitioner

(v) Plain English Service either to train staff in writing work-related
documentation in Plain English, or to review and revise existing
documentation to maximise its accessibility.
Source: National Adult Literacy Agency

(vi) (a) Initial Screening to find out if there are any employees who may have
basic skills needs in this workplace.
Strategy/Materials: Adult literacy practitioner supports employers by
examining documentation such as completed application forms,
curriculum vitae, other written and number material produced by
employees; informal discussions with employees in groups; and
confidential discussions with supervisors. Use checklists on pages 17
and 18 of *An Employers' Guide to Basic Skills at Work* to structure
discussions and observations.

(vi) (b) Individualised literacy/numeracy assessments. Only raise this
option if an individual has indicated that they want to address a basic skills
issue. Make sure that they know that they and the employer understand
the Guiding Principles of assessment in an adult basic education context.
Assessment is:
- **Learner-centred**
- **Flexible and informal**
- **Constructive**
- **Clear**
- **Holistic**

This means that the results of any assessment are confidential. Any
information about their basic skills abilities which emerge from an
individualised assessment is kept on record by the *adult literacy practitioner*.
This is not recorded in their work or personnel file.

**Source/Materials: Mapping the Learning Journey, Implemented by the
Adult Literacy Practitioner.**

Method for adult literacy/numeracy assessments, using Mapping the Learning Journey

(a) Explain the guiding principles of Mapping the Learning Journey to the learner and outline briefly how the system works.

(b) With the assistance of the employee, select some real-life work tasks in which the person would like to improve.

(c) Map each task using the Mapping the Learning Journey framework and form, to examine the level of literacy, numeracy and oral work on the Knowledge and Skill cornerstone, which is needed to carry out the task effectively.

(d) Ask the learner to carry out one of the tasks. If possible, be present when this is being done. Use the Mapping the Learning Journey framework and form to map the learner's performance on this particular task.

(e) Ask the learner to say what parts of the task they found easy or difficult.

(f) Discuss the nature of the task in detail with the learner, focusing on the range of elements and skills which come together in carrying it out effectively. Point out those parts which they can work on with less difficulty. Discuss with them what parts of the task they need to prioritise. In this way, help them to set goals for their learning.

(g) Show them the section of the Mapping the Learning Journey framework and form which relates to the goals they have just prioritised. Explain that this will provide a base-line from which to track their progress.

(h) Use the information obtained in the course of this assessment to draw up a learning plan for the learner. Discuss this with them and revise according to their requirements.

(i) Keep all records on file in a secure place.

(vii) Develop and deliver **dedicated workplace literacy/numeracy group programme** for employees, on- or off-site in company time or in the employee's own time; or a mixture of both.
Source/Strategy: National Adult Literacy Agency and/or your local adult literacy practitioner.

(viii) Provide **literacy/numeracy tuition** on or off-site, in company time or in the employee's own time; or a mixture of both.
Source/Strategy: National Adult Literacy Agency, local FÁS Services to Business Office and your local adult literacy practitioner.

(ix) Develop and deliver a 2-day training programme **(training of trainers, *Building Literacy into Training*)** for in-house or external trainers of work-related topics.
Source/Strategy: Carried out by the National Adult Literacy Agency using the information obtained from the workplace scan and the task analysis. Consult with the external or in-house trainers to determine basic skills content of forthcoming programmes and use this as stimulus material.

(x) Develop literacy/numeracy training elements or materials **integrated with work-related training**, in consultation with work trainers.
Source/Strategy: work with the National Adult Literacy Agency at the planning stage and identify areas where basic skills occur in the programme and work out ways to teach these in the context of whatever topic is being addressed.

STEP 5
Monitor and evaluate the strategy

Monitor the strategy: Meet the company link person and agree a forum for monitoring implementation and progress. Meet the Steering Group at agreed intervals. Refer the Steering Group back to the original plan, the actions agreed and the monitoring plan suggested. Check that these have been implemented. Check that deadlines have been met. Identify strengths, weaknesses and general issues arising.

Evaluate the strategy: In consultation with the company link person and the Steering Committee, address topics agreed for evaluation e.g. learner satisfaction; impact on job performance; impact on learners' confidence. Agree a method for gathering information on the relevant topics e.g. group or individual interview, questionnaire etc.

Appendix 3: Contact details for Adult Basic Education

National Adult Literacy Agency
76 Lower Gardiner Street
Dublin 1
Tel: 01-8554332
Fax: 01- 8555475
Website: www.nala.ie
Literacy tuition and learning website: www.literacytools.ie
Email: literacy@nala.ie

Vocational Education Committees

Co Laois VEC
Chief Executive Officer: **Ms Anne O'Keefe**
Administrative Offices,
Ridge Road,
Portlaoise
Co. Laois

Tel: (0502) 21352 22435 22316 22015
Fax: (0502) 21877
Email: headoffice@laoisvec.ie

Co. Carlow VEC
Chief Executive Officer: **Mr Larry Kavanagh**
Administrative Offices,
Athy Road
Co. Carlow

Tel: (0503) 38560
Fax: (0503) 38587
Email: admin@carlowvec.ie

Co. Cavan VEC
Chief Executive Officer: **Mr John McKay**
Administrative Offices,
Keadue
Co. Cavan

Tel: (049) 4331044
Fax: (049) 4331467
Email: info@cavanvec.ie

Co. Clare VEC
Chief Executive Officer: **Mr Eamon Fitzgerald**
Administrative Offices,
Station Road,
Ennis
Co. Clare

Tel: (065) 6828107/6820144
Fax: (065) 6824928
Email: coclarevec@eircom.net

Co. Cork VEC
Chief Executive Officer: **Mr Barra O'Briain**
QC House,
Cork Business & Technology Park,
Model Farm Road
Co. Cork

Tel: (021) 4800900
Fax: (021) 4800950
Email: ceo@cocorkvec.ie
Website: www.cocorkvec.ie

Co. Donegal VEC
Chief Executive Officer: **Mr Seán Ó'Longáin**
Administrative Offices,
Ard O'Donnell,
Letterkenny
Co. Donegal

Tel: (074) 21100/21600
Fax: (074) 22439
Email: ceo@donegalvec.ie

Co. Dublin VEC
Chief Executive Officer: **Mr Pat O'Connor**
Administrative Offices,
Main Road,
Tallaght,
Dublin 24
Co. Dublin

Tel: (01) 4529600
Fax: (01) 4515196
Email: info@codubvec.ie

Co. Galway VEC
Chief Executive Officer: **Mr Philip Cribbin**
Administrative Offices,
The Hynes Building,
St Augustine Street,
Galway
Co. Galway

Tel: (091) 562138/562139/565908/565792
Fax: (091) 567054
Email: cogalvec@eircom.net

Co. Kerry VEC
Chief Executive Officer: **Dr Barney O'Reilly**
Maine Street,
Tralee
Co. Kerry

Tel: (066) 7121488/7121248
Fax: (066) 7121531
Email: info@cokerryed.ie
Website: www.cokerryed.ie

Co. Kildare VEC
Chief Executive Officer: **Mr Sean Ashe**
Administrative Offices,
Limerick Road,
Naas
Co. Kildare

Tel: (045) 897358/879502
Fax: (045) 879916
Email: cooffice@kildarevec.ie

Co. Kilkenny VEC
Chief Executive Officer: **Mr Rodger Curran**
Administrative Offices,
Seville Lodge
Callan Road
Kilkenny
Co. Kilkenny

Tel: (056) 70966
Fax: (056) 65281
Email: cooffice@kilkennyvec.ie

Co. Leitrim VEC
Chief Executive Officer: **Mr John F. Blunnie**
Administrative Offices,
St. George's Terrace,
Carrick-on-Shannon
Co. Leitrim

Tel: (078) 20024/20513
Fax: (078) 21362
Email: vecoffice@leitrimvec.ie

Co. Limerick VEC
Chief Executive Officer: **Mr Sean Burke**
Administrative Offices,
Lower Mallow Street
Co. Limerick

Tel: (061) 412692
Fax: (061) 414671
Email: admin@limerickvec.ie

Co. Longford VEC
Chief Executive Officer: **Ms Josephine O'Donnell**
Administrative Offices,
Battery Road
Co. Longford

Tel: (043) 46493/46384/41030
Fax: (043) 45360
Email: admin@longfordvec.ie
Website: www.longfordvec.com

Co. Louth VEC
Chief Executive Officer: **Dr Peter J. Connolly**
Administrative Offices,
Chapel Street,
Dundalk
Co. Louth

Tel: (042) 9334047/9337126
Fax: (042) 9339412
Email: countylouthvec@eircom.net

Co. Mayo VEC
Chief Executive Officer: **Mr Seosamh Ó'Longáin**
Administrative Offices,
Newtown,
Castlebar
Co. Mayo

Tel: (094) 9024188
Fax: (094) 9024187

Co. Meath VEC
Chief Executive Officer: **Mr Peter Kierans**
Administrative Offices,
Abbey Road,
Navan
Co. Meath

Tel: (04690) 21447/21881/29845
Fax: (04690) 29821
Email: education@meathvec.ie
Website: www.meathvec.ie

Co. Monaghan VEC
Chief Executive Officer: **Mr Larry McCluskey**
VEC Administration Centre,
Market Street
Co. Monaghan

Tel: (047) 30888
Fax: (047) 30889
Email: monaghanvec@eircom.net
Website: www.monaghanvec.ie

Co. Offaly VEC
Chief Executive Officer: **Mr Diarmuid O'Neill**
Administrative Offices,
O'Connor Square,
Tullamore
Co. Offaly

Tel: (0506) 21406
Fax: (0506) 51400
Email: headoffice@offalyvec.ie

Co. Roscommon VEC
Chief Executive Officer: **Mr Larry O'Farrelly**
Administrative Offices,
Lanesboro Street
Co. Roscommon

Tel: (0903) 26151
Fax: (0903) 26537
Email: admin@roscommonvec.ie

Co. Sligo VEC
Chief Executive Officer: **Mr Michael Burke**
Quay Street,
Sligo
Co. Sligo

Tel: (071) 9142438
Fax: (071) 9144121
Email: sligovec@eircom.net

Co. Tipperary (N.R.) VEC
Chief Executive Officer: **Mr Luke Murtagh**
Church Road,
Nenagh
Co. Tipperary

Tel: (067) 31250
Fax: (067) 32273
Email: admin@tippnorthvec.ie

Co. Tipperary S.R. VEC
Chief Executive Officer: **Ms Fionuala McGeever**
The Mall,
Clonmel
Co. Tipperary

Tel: (052) 21067/23067
Fax: (052) 25951
Email: admin@tippsouth.vec.ie

Co. Waterford VEC
Chief Executive Officer: **Mr Paddy Lavelle**
Administrative Offices,
Wolfe Tone Road,
Dungarvan
Co. Waterford

Tel: (058) 41780/41654
Fax: (058) 41166
Email: watvecco@eircom.net

Co. Westmeath VEC
Chief Executive Officer: **Mr Gearóid Ó Brádaigh CEO**
Co. Westmeath VEC
Marlinstown Office Park
Mullingar
Co. Westmeath
Co. West Meath

Tel: 044 48389/40834
Fax: 044 43533
Email: headoffice@westmeathvec.ie
Website: www.westmeathvec.ie

Co. Wexford VEC
Chief Executive Officer: **Mr James J. Dunne**
Administrative Offices,
Iberius House,
Common Quay Street
Co. Wexford

Tel: (053) 23799/23896/44753
Fax: (053) 24109

Co. Wicklow VEC
Chief Executive Officer: **Ms Fiona Hartley**
Administrative Offices,
Wentworth Place
Co. Wicklow

Tel: (0404) 20460
Fax: (0404) 20460
Email: headoffice@wicklowvec.ie

Dun Laoghaire VEC
Chief Executive Officer: **Mr John Ryan**
Dun Laoghaire VEC
Administrative Offices
Century Court
100 Upper Georges St
Dun Laoghaire, Co. Dublin
Co. Dublin

Tel: 01 2147200
Fax: 01 2147234
Email: info@dlvec.ie

City of Dublin VEC

Chief Executive Officer: **Ms Jacinta Stewart**
Administrative Offices,
Town Hall,
Merrion Road,
Ballsbridge,
Dublin 4
Co. Dublin

Tel: (01) 6680614/6684394
Fax: (01) 6680710
Email: ceo@cdvec.ie

City of Galway VEC

Chief Executive Officer: **Mr Patrick F. Ryan**
Administrative Offices,
Island House,
Cathedral Square
Co. Galway

Tel: (091) 562292/567194
Fax: (091) 562358
Email: info@cgvec.ie

City of Limerick VEC

Chief Executive Officer: **Ms Deirdre Frawley**
Athenaeum Building,
30 Upper Cecil Street
Co. Limerick

Tel: (061) 417688
Fax: (061) 417242
Email: ceo@clvec.ie

City of Waterford VEC

Chief Executive Officer: **Mr Paudie Geary**
Administrative Offices,
30 The Mall
Co. Waterford

Tel: (051) 874007/873672
Fax: (051) 872822
Email: watvec@eircom.net

FÁS

FÁS Services to Business
Workplace Basic Education – Skills for Work
Paul Fennelly or Deirdre McGarry

FÁS Services to Business
27-33 Upper Baggot Street
Dublin 4
Tel 01 6070796

FÁS Services to Business regions

Region	Office Address	Geographic Area	Contact Details
Dublin	Frank Walsh Services To Business Manager FÁS Training Centre BALDOYLE Industrial Estate Dublin 13	Dublin North County & Postal Districts 1,2,3,5,7,9,11,13,15& parts of 4,8 & 12	Tel: 01 8167439 Fax: 01 8167440
	Tom Kennedy Services To Business Manager FÁS Training Centre Wyattville Road LOUGHLINSTOWN Co. Dublin	Dublin South County & Postal Districts 6,14,16, 18 & parts of 4, Dun Laoghaire / Rathdown	Tel: 01 2043650 Fax: 01 2043702
	Martin Dodd Services To Business Manager FÁS Training Centre BALLYFERMOT HILL Dublin 10	Dublin West County & Postal Districts 10, 20, 22, 24, & parts of 8, & 12	Tel: 01 6055990 Fax: 01 6055802
South-East	Margaret Lovatt Services To Business Manager FÁS Training Centre Industrial Estate WATERFORD	Waterford, Wexford, Kilkenny, Carlow, Tipperary South, and Wicklow	Tel: 051 301504 Fax: 051 301513 Tel: 053 47439 Wexford Tel: 056 65514 Kilkenny Tel: 055 22477 Wicklow

South-West	Enda McWeeney Services To Business Manager FÁS Training Centre Rossa Avenue Bishopstown CORK	Cork & Kerry	Tel: 021 4856331 Fax: 021 4346349
Mid-West	Chris Delaney Services To Business Manager FÁS Training Centre Raheen Business Park LIMERICK	Limerick, Clare & Tipperary North	Tel: 061 487900 Fax: 061 229447
North-West	Paddy Crowley Services To Business Manager FAS Training Centre Ballytivnan SLIGO	Sligo, Leitrim & Donegal	Tel: 071 59595 Fax: 071 71377
West	Des O'Doherty Services To Business Manager FÁS Training Centre Mervue Industrial Estate GALWAY	Galway, Mayo & Roscommon	Tel: 091 706200 Tel: 096 24002 Ballina Tel: 0903 26802 Roscommon Fax: 091 753590
North-East	Michael Byrne Services To Business Manager FÁS Training Centre Industrial Estate, Coe's Road DUNDALK Co. Louth	Cavan, Louth, Meath & Monaghan	Tel: 042 9355700 Fax: 042 9355777
Midlands	Gerry Johnson Services To Business Manager FÁS Training Centre Garrycastle, ATHLONE Co. Westmeath	Laois, Offaly, Westmeath, Longford & Kildare	Tel: 0902 75476 Fax: 0902 75480

Local Area Partnerships

Dublin Office:
Area Development Management Limited.
Holbrook House,
Holles Street,
Dublin 2,
Ireland.

Telephone: +353-1-2400-700
Fax: +353-1-6610411

Monaghan Office:
ADM/CPA European Union House
Monaghan Town
Peace & Reconciliation

Telephone: 047 71340
Fax: 047 71341

Cork Office:
ADM Ltd,
Siac Building
Ballycurreen Cross
Airport Road
Cork

Telephone: 021 4703700
Fax: 021 4703710

Sligo Office:
ADM Ltd
Waterfront House
Bridge Street
Sligo

Telephone: 071 9138240
Fax: 071 9138008

Limerick Office:
ADM Ltd
Glanmore Suite
3rd Floor
Park House
Arthurs Quay
Limerick

Telephone: 061 313084
Fax: 061 314729

Other contacts

Skillnets
Skillnets Ltd
Level 1
Frankfort Court
Dundrum Road
Dublin 14
Ireland

Tel: +353 1 2079630
Fax: +353 1 2079631
Email: info@skillnets.com
Website: www.skillnets.com

Irish Congress of Trade Unions
31/32 Parnell Square,
Dublin 1

Tel: 01-8897777
Fax: 01-8872012
Email: congress@ictu.ie
Website: www.ictu.ie

Irish Trade Union Trust Ltd.
Liberty Hall,
Dublin 1
Tel: 01-8787272
Useful website links for further information on workplace literacy

Basic Skills Agency, UK   www.basic-skills.co.uk/

NIACE   www.niace.org.uk/

Workplace Basic Skills Network www.lancs.ac.uk/wbsnet/

Workbase, New Zealand   www.workbase.org.nz

Appendix 4: Costings for Workplace Basic Education Programmes

These are based on 2005 costs.

Workplace Basic Education programmes cost approximately €16,500 for a 120 hour programme (usually 4 hours a week for 30 weeks) for 1 group (7 - 8 participants).

There may be a need for additional preparation / planning hours / funding depending on the size of the company. Also depending on the level of the learners, the amount of tutoring hours may need to be revised.

These costs include the following:
- Preparation / planning time (prior to programme commencement) including: initial meetings with management, union, employers; initial meetings with workers; initial steering group meetings; promotional work; direct recruitment; selection and assessment of group and curriculum development.

  10 hours x 8 weeks (80 hours) @ €51* per hour   €4,080

- Course co-ordination hours over the 30 week programme
  2 hours per week (60 hours in total) @ €51* per hour   €3,060

- Tutoring hours over the 30 week programme
  4 hours per week (120 hours in total) @ €51* per hour   €6,120

- Travel time and expenses for co-ordinator / tutors   €1,000

- Materials such as books etc.   €1,000

- Evaluation of programme   €470

- Other costs (e.g. rent, administration etc.)   €770

These costs only include the external costs of the course and do not include extra costs such as time off for attendance, replacement personnel, cost of bonus incentives or rent of location.

* Tutors contracted by local Vocational Education Committees are paid at a rate of €51 per hour which is the part-time teacher rate, including holiday pay and employer PRSI.

Appendix 5: Summary of activities and services provided by the National Adult Literacy Agency

The National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA) co-ordinates, organises training and develops policy on adult literacy and adult basic education (ABE) work in Ireland. This includes the following general activities:

- Provision of training for Adult Basic Education practitioners;

- Developing new ways to deliver ABE support, through projects;

- Research into ABE;

- Advising Government;

- Provision of information on our work and on ABE in general;

- Raising awareness about the extent of adult literacy difficulties in Ireland; and

- Organising a wide range of events, such as conferences and workshops.

Specific projects include the following

- In-service training

- Research

- Evolving Quality Framework

- Plain English

- Literacy through the media

- Workplace Basic Education

- Integrating literacy

- Family literacy

- English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)

- Literacy Awareness Training

- ICT and literacy

- Health and literacy

- Specific learning difficulties

- 'Mapping the Learning Journey', the assessment framework to help tutors and learners identify learners' progress and areas they may need to develop.

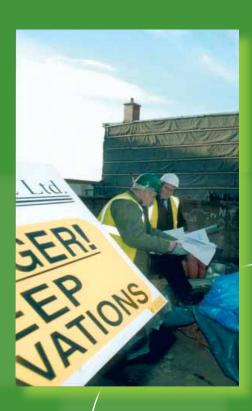**NALA provides a Plain English service, which involves:**

- Editing documents

- Offering advice on writing style

- Delivering training and workshops on plain English techniques.

NALA organises a range of awareness-raising events

- National Adult Literacy Awareness Week (NALAW)

- International Literacy Day (ILD) conference

- Literacy Awareness Training; in-service training; and events that promote new ABE initiatives and allow people working in ABE to network and exchange experience.

NALA produces a range of publications including:

- News updates, such as NALA News & Tutors Update and the NALA Journal

- Support packs to support literacy support, for example, for ESOL support or the Read Write Now TV series

- Research reports

- Promotional materials, such as flyers, posters and brochures, to promote our work.