

EUROPEAN AGENDA FOR ADULT LEARNING (EAAL)

ENGLAND IMPACT FORUM SEMINAR

10.30 – 12.30 LEICESTER 9 JUNE 2016

WORK-RELATED BASIC SKILLS: LESSONS FROM THE REST OF EUROPE

Recently, there has been something of a resurgence of interest in work-related basic skills. Research reports such as the OECD report *Building Skills for All: A Review of England* and the BIS-commissioned research *The Impact of Poor Basic Literacy and Numeracy on Employers* have highlighted the need to tackle poor basic skills in the workplace as a fundamental part of addressing the basic skills challenge in England. The current reform of Functional Skills English and Maths aims to update these qualifications through an employer-focused consultation, which, it is anticipated, will ensure that learners develop the basic skills needed for life and work.

Of course, workplace basic skills have been addressed by previous initiatives (as this L&W [blog](#) recalls), and not entirely successfully, as the continuing poor performance in national surveys of adult literacy and numeracy shows. So perhaps looking further afield to other countries for examples of good practice in policy and practice could help? However, this is not as straightforward as it might appear. The very different policy contexts, national and regional infrastructures supporting basic skills learning, and even very different conceptions what constitutes work-related basic skills make it a challenge. Since Autumn 2014, L&W have been working in a European partnership project – [STRAIGHTEN Basic Skills](#) - which aims to identify good practice and examine how it might be transferred to other European nations.

In this seminar, we present an overview of recent research into workplace basic skills, and an overview of the success indicators and effective practices gathered by the STRAIGHTEN Basic Skills project, including a presentation of a Norwegian model. Participants will be asked to reflect upon and discuss:

- What do we mean by work-related basic skills? Are work-related basic skills just literacy and numeracy, or are there other work-related basic skills? Is there still a role for the provision of discrete, workplace language, literacy and numeracy courses?
- What are seminar participants' experiences of delivering work-related basic skills? Are there case studies of effective practice to be shared?

- Which of the STRAIGHTEN Basic Skill success indicators / practices could be developed further in England to improve work-related basic skills delivery? What adaptations would need to be made?
- What are the implications for basic skills policy in England?

At the last England Impact Forum we said we'd like to focus on a single issue for a seminar before the main forum meeting. The aims of the seminar are to:

- Discuss the applicability of international comparators and benchmarks
- Present the latest relevant policy documents in England
- Share approaches to work-related basic skills across Europe
- Explore issues around transferability and the policy implications

Seminar Programme:

10.30: Scene-setting

Mark Ravenhall, Senior Research Fellow, Learning and Work Institute.

- The importance of sharing and comparing.
- Our response to the recent OECD report *Building Skills in England*
- Discussion

10.50: Summary of some recent research

Alex Stevenson, Head of English, Maths, and ESOL, Learning and Work Institute.

- The impact of poor literacy and numeracy on employers see https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/497544/BIS-16-36-impact-of-poor-basic-literacy-and-numeracy-on-employers.pdf
- The success-factors in work-related Basic Skills from across Europe (STRAIGHTEN Basic Skills project)
- Discussion

11.30: Basic Competences in Working Life

Arne-Morten Knutsen, Folkeuniversitetet, Norway

- Presentation via Skype
- Discussion

12.10: The policy implications for our work for the EAAL

- Agreeing the main points for feedback

12.30: Sandwich lunch