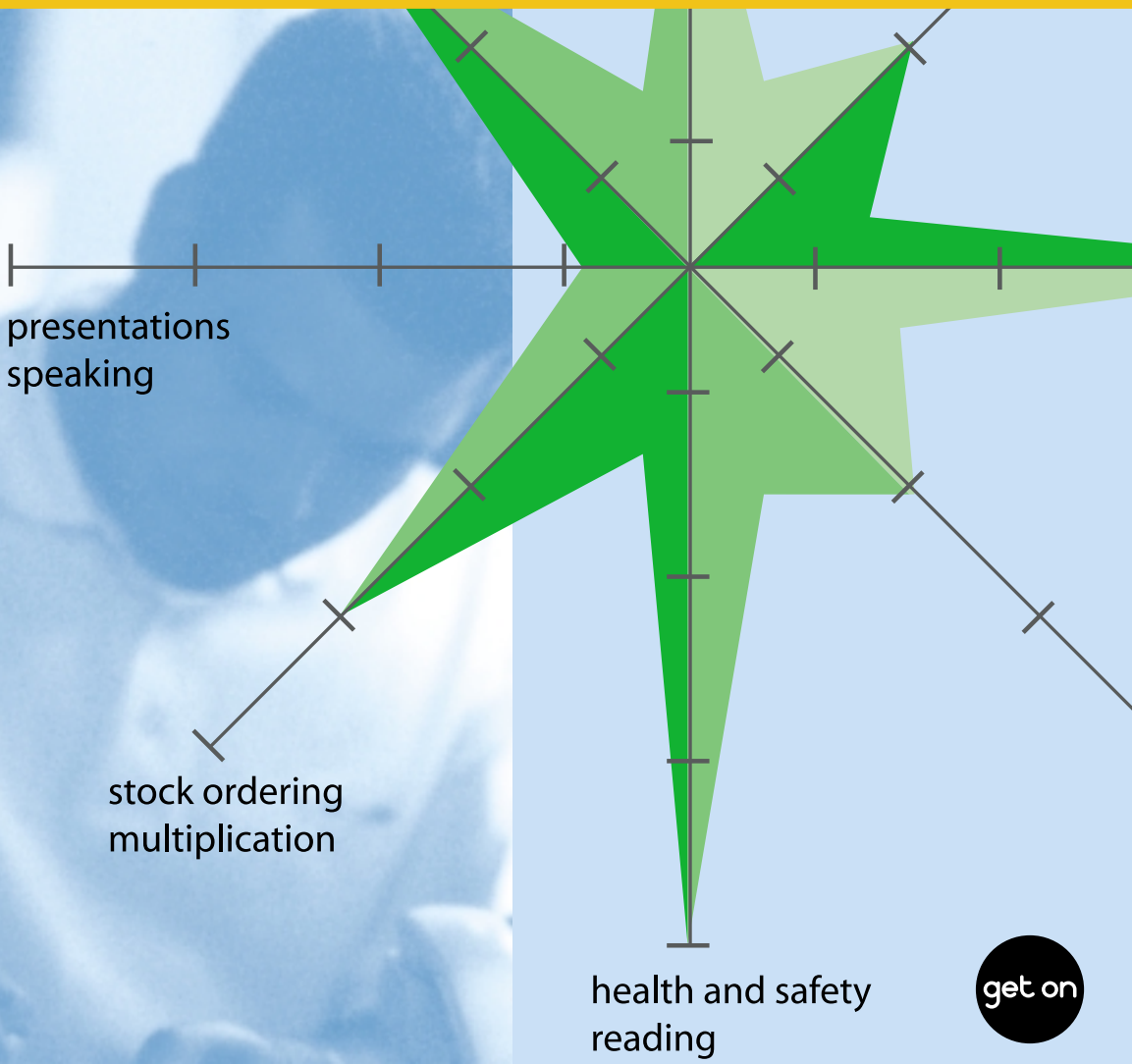


Skills for Life

# Developing workplace potential



# Making *Skills for Life* work for you

This guide shows you how to make *Skills for Life* a workable part of improving workplace skills.

## **What do we mean by *Skills for Life*?**

*Skills for Life* are the literacy, language and numeracy skills that you need to do your job well and with confidence. At work, you:

- read a range of documents
- write quickly clearly and accurately
- speak and listen effectively
- use numbers to calculate and record information

If these skills are not present at the levels needed, the quality of everyday work tasks and the ability to take part in training and development will be affected.

Everyone has gaps in their skills. Giving employees the chance to brush up on *Skills for Life* at work not only improves a company's performance; it can also unlock hidden abilities.

This guide offers a range of workable ideas and strategies for integrating *Skills for Life* learning into your workplace. No matter how big or small your company is, some of these will work for you.

# Contents

The business case 

Solutions for the workplace 

Making it work 



Learning releases potential

# The business case

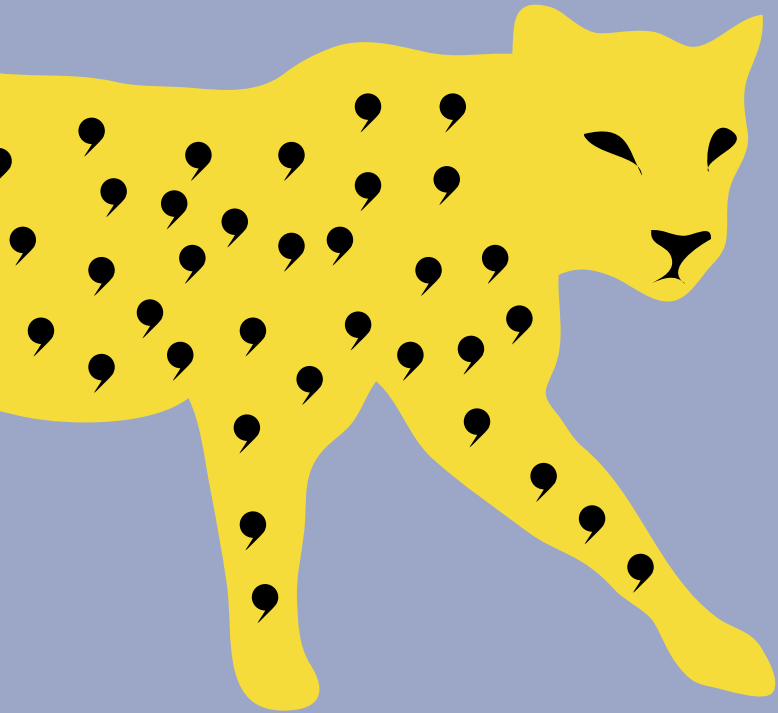
*Every day, 3.5 million people go to work in this country with skills below those expected of an 11 year old. Imagine the impact that this has on performance and productivity.*

Digby Jones, Director General, CBI

**Are poor skills affecting your  
performance and productivity?**

**How?**

# How did the leopard get it's spots?



## Spot the mistake? It should say "its"

Why? "it's" doesn't show possession, it's an abbreviation of "it is".

# Improving your employees' skills in literacy, language and numeracy can benefit your business.

Improving these work-related skills can result in business benefits such as:

- **Better customer relations** and fewer complaints, through improved communication skills
- **Better Quality Assurance** through quality procedures being understood and followed
- **Increased productivity and cost-efficiency** through lower absenteeism, less wastage of materials and forms being filled in accurately
- **Full compliance with Health and Safety** as hazards are more easily identified and understood

# Developing people

It's not just about filling skills gaps, it can also be about making more of people's potential. Jean's story shows how taking a small step opened up many possibilities both for herself and her employer.


Jean worked as a line supervisor in a fruit-packing factory. She left school with no qualifications. Her job was a way to supplement the family income. When the company introduced NVQs, Jean took up the offer of a pre NVQ course, with the prospect of enrolling on the NVQ in two months' time.

Jean passed the National Literacy Test Level 2 and then went on to get her NVQ. With newfound confidence, she enrolled on an evening class at her local college. Over two years, Jean achieved GCSE English and Maths and started several IT and business courses.

When a vacancy occurred in the sales office, Jean applied and was successful. She is currently working towards a Level 3 NVQ in management.

To start you off thinking about how *Skills for Life* can benefit your workplace, try this quick health check:

	List three key challenges for your business	How are you planning to meet each challenge?	How will <i>Skills for Life</i> affect your success?
1			
2			
3			

You could explore this with a *Skills for Life* advisor. Contact your local Learning and Skills Council or Business Link . Details are at the back. **Making it work** 



I could give you fifteen, twenty stories of when we've tested people and not realised they were as bright as they are. We've got one girl in the accounts department, who is the brightest person in the company and she started with us for whatever reason as a picker in the warehouse.  
Steven Bell, Chief Executive

## Are you a small company?

No time or resources for work-related training, let alone *Skills for Life*?

Contact your local Business Link  
(details are at the back)  
or visit [www.businesslink.org](http://www.businesslink.org)



## Are you a big company?

Employing a large and diverse workforce needing development?

Contact your Learning and Skills Council  
(details are at the back)  
or visit [www.lsc.gov.uk](http://www.lsc.gov.uk)



As the saying goes:  
Don't ask the cost of  
training,  
ask the cost of not training...

...and anyway, help with  
*Skills for Life* is **free**



If someone comes in to open a video account, the staff need to be literate to be able to type the details into a computer. They might have to put orders in to suppliers, so they do need basic literacy in the work environment.  
Christine, training manager



# Solutions for the workplace

How to recharge your company  
with *Skills for Life* training.

# What does *Skills for Life* training cover?

There are three main areas that *Skills for Life* training covers:

**Literacy training:** helps people with reading, writing, speaking and listening

**Language training:** is for people whose first language isn't English

**Numeracy training:** helps people with everyday maths, such as addition, subtraction and percentages

## Who can apply for *Skills for Life* training?

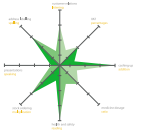
Training is available to any employee over the age of 16, and covers levels up to and including Level 2 (GCSE A-C grade)

## Who provides *Skills for Life* training?

A range of organisations provide training. The first step is to contact the Skills for Life adviser at your local Learning and Skills Council. Details are in the back of this book.

There are five keys to effective *Skills for Life* training.

**1** Learning is more effective when learners feel comfortable about admitting to skills gaps. Spiky profiles are a positive way to show learners their strengths as well as to spot skills gaps.



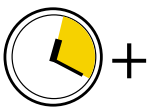
**2** Learners need to feel in control of when and how they learn. There are many ways of learning, from group sessions to computer-based courses or individual workbooks.



**3** Learners need to be supported by qualified staff, such as teachers, vocational trainers or mentors.



**4** Learning is best done in small amounts on a regular basis. It doesn't have to take much time to get started with learning.



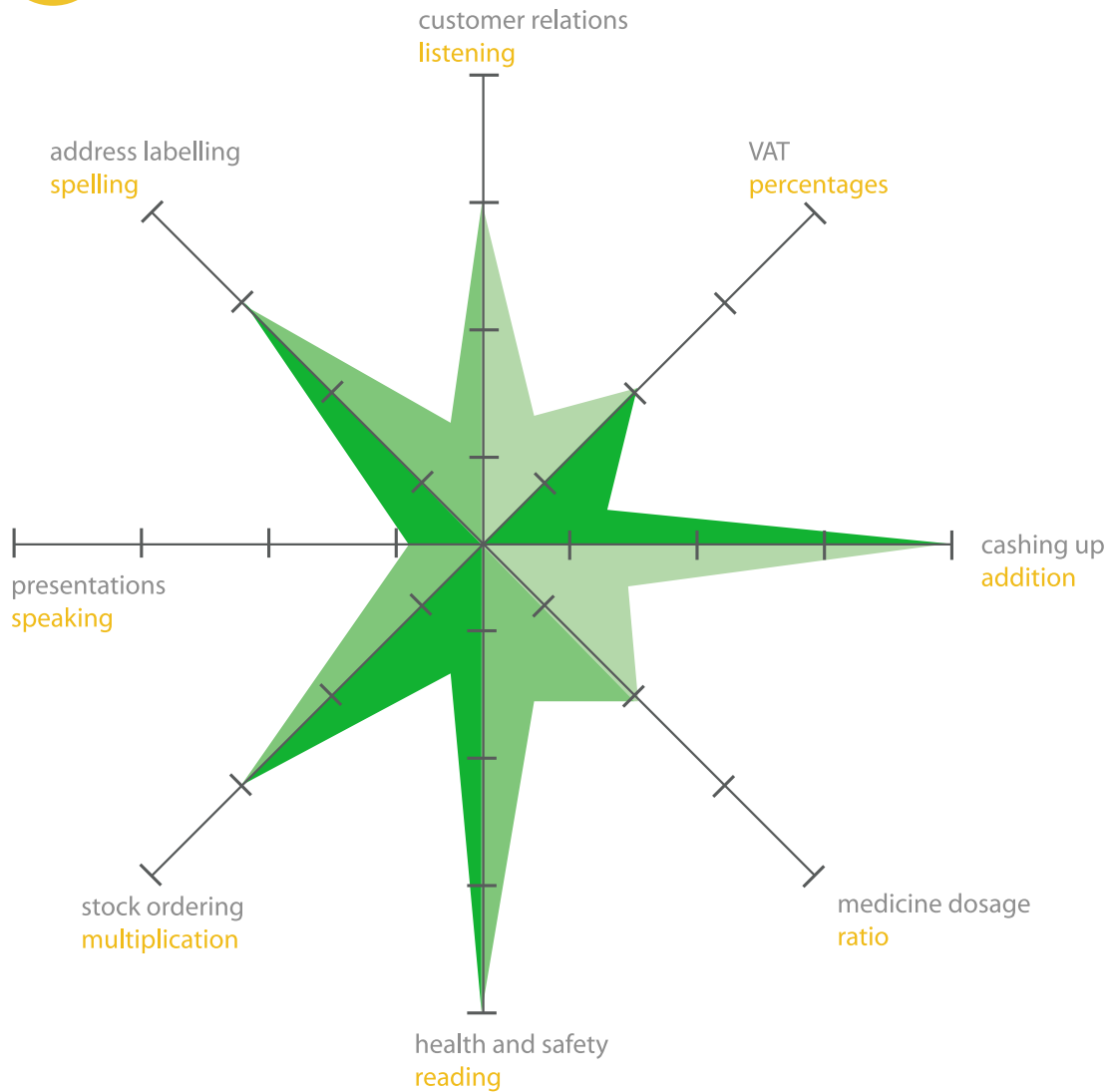
**5** Learning needs to happen within a planned framework with clear goals. Recognising achievement is vital for motivation, confidence and progress.







# Spiky profile



The term 'spiky profile' is often used to talk about the strengths and weaknesses that we all have in different areas of literacy and numeracy. **What's yours like?**

A spiky profile can affect an employee's ability to do certain parts of their job quickly and effectively.

No one has a perfect profile, everyone has skills gaps, so many employees would benefit from a chance to improve formal writing, spelling, calculations or communication. You can find out how well an employee's profile matches their work tasks by offering them an informal training needs analysis, together with *Skills for Life* assessment.

To find out more about assessment speak to your local *Skills for Life* advisor.



I'm looking at doing my spelling and I want to go for my certificate in management. Ten years ago, if you'd said to me "I think you can do that", I would have said "yeah right, on yer bike!"  
Peter, Senior Revenue Protection Officer, South West Trains

# 2

## Learning resources

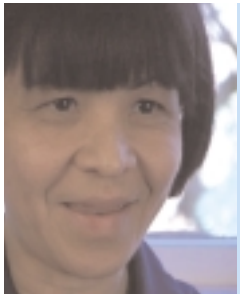


There are many different ways of learning to suit everyone's needs. For example:

- **on-site learning**  
One-to-one or in a group
- **independent learning**  
At home or in the workplace
- **e-learning**  
In the workplace or at a learndirect or ukonline centre

**Which suits your workplace?**

**What can you get started now?**



Health and social care staff without professional qualifications are improving their reading, writing, computer and number skills. They are also developing and demonstrating their skills as care workers on customised care courses.  
Careconnect Learning

If e-learning seems to be the answer for your training need, think about:

Benefits	Challenges
Most employees will like learning in this way.	You will need support for learners
Employees can learn at any time, in work or outside	You will need to find access to hardware and programmes
Employees can learn in short time slots	You may need access to technical support
e-learning is high status: it can help avoid stigma associated with poor literacy or numeracy	You may have difficulty in finding programmes to meet your specific work related training needs

For advice on how to overcome e-learning challenges, speak to learndirect or to a local *Skills for Life* advisor or provider.



There are many ways of getting access to e-learning:

- using desktops or laptops currently in the workplace
- having laptops brought in for learning sessions
- using home computers
- using e-learning access points, such as libraries and ukonline centres
- signing up at a local learning centre or learning bus

Look for local opportunities for learners to borrow or be given free or subsidised computer hardware.



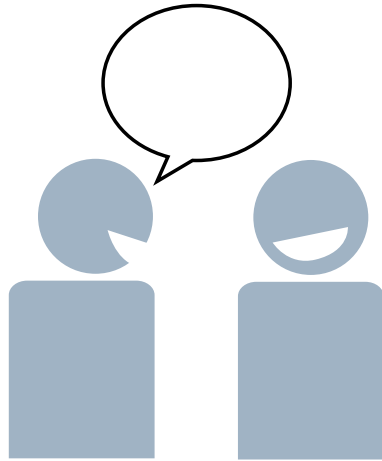
## Training support

Providing literacy, language and numeracy support is a specialist job, and teachers and trainers need to be qualified to do this.

*Skills for Life* teachers are fully qualified teachers with specific training in teaching literacy, numeracy or language.

*Skills for Life* vocational trainers are staff who deliver vocational training and in addition can support learners with *Skills for Life* training needs.

*Skills for Life* mentors and support staff may come from a range of different work roles. They are trained to help *Skills for Life* learners find the right type of training, work through their course and achieve success.



Your local *Skills for Life* advisor or provider can help you find the right people to provide support in your workplace.

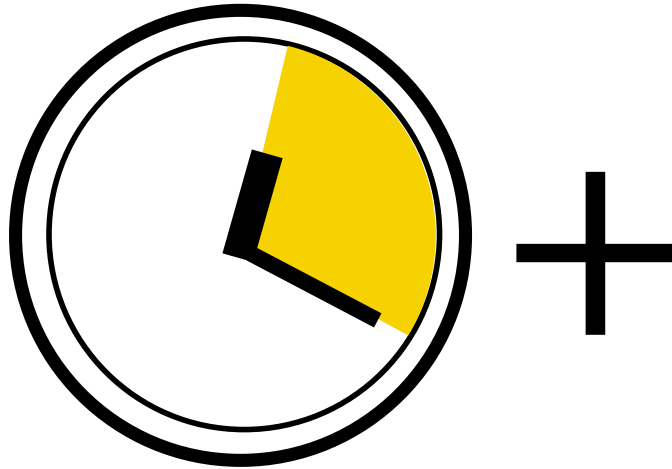


If you form a relationship with a provider they will give you free access to:

- Impartial advice and guidance on how to improve employees' skills
- A confidential report based on an assessment that identifies employees' strengths and weaknesses in literacy, language and numeracy
- An individual learning plan that identifies realistic milestones and targets
- A relevant programme of learning that matches the individual's aims and aspirations to their current abilities and future potential
- On-going feedback and support that is clear, meaningful and motivating
- Nationally recognised qualifications that are valuable to learners and valued by employers
- Timely information and encouragement to help progression to other education and training



## The **time** factor



Small chunks of learning, done on a regular basis, can make a big difference to an employee, depending on their situation and what they're learning.

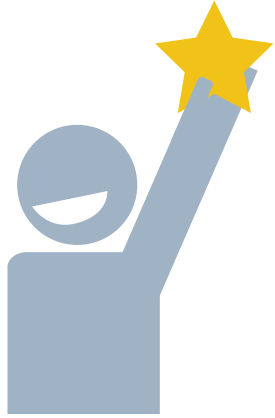
Employees who are using paper-based or other learning materials can use their work and home space to progress and learn.

If you add some extra time for *Skills for Life* into work-related training programmes, you'll be able to identify needs and tailor training to suit your employees' job roles.

Training in all of these areas can include small chunks of *Skills for Life* training:

- NVQs
- Health and safety
- Food hygiene
- Quality control
- Inductions and on-job training
- Supervisor training
- Presentation skills
- Business report writing
- Telephone skills
- Customer care

# 5 Recognise **success** with the National Tests



1. Recognise all achievement, whether it's in literacy, language, numeracy, or IT skills
2. Progress to the National Tests, to reinforce the learner's sense of achievement
3. Use the test as a measurement tool to track progress

Recognising achievement can raise confidence levels, motivate employees to continue learning and encourage other learners.

Remember that employees need to learn within a framework, where they can see themselves progress and achieve more.

'TGB training displays a roll of honour for successful learners. Awards are presented by the Mayor of Lambeth at public ceremonies.'

*Skills for Life* Research:  
Phase One Report  
Ufi learndirect, 2002

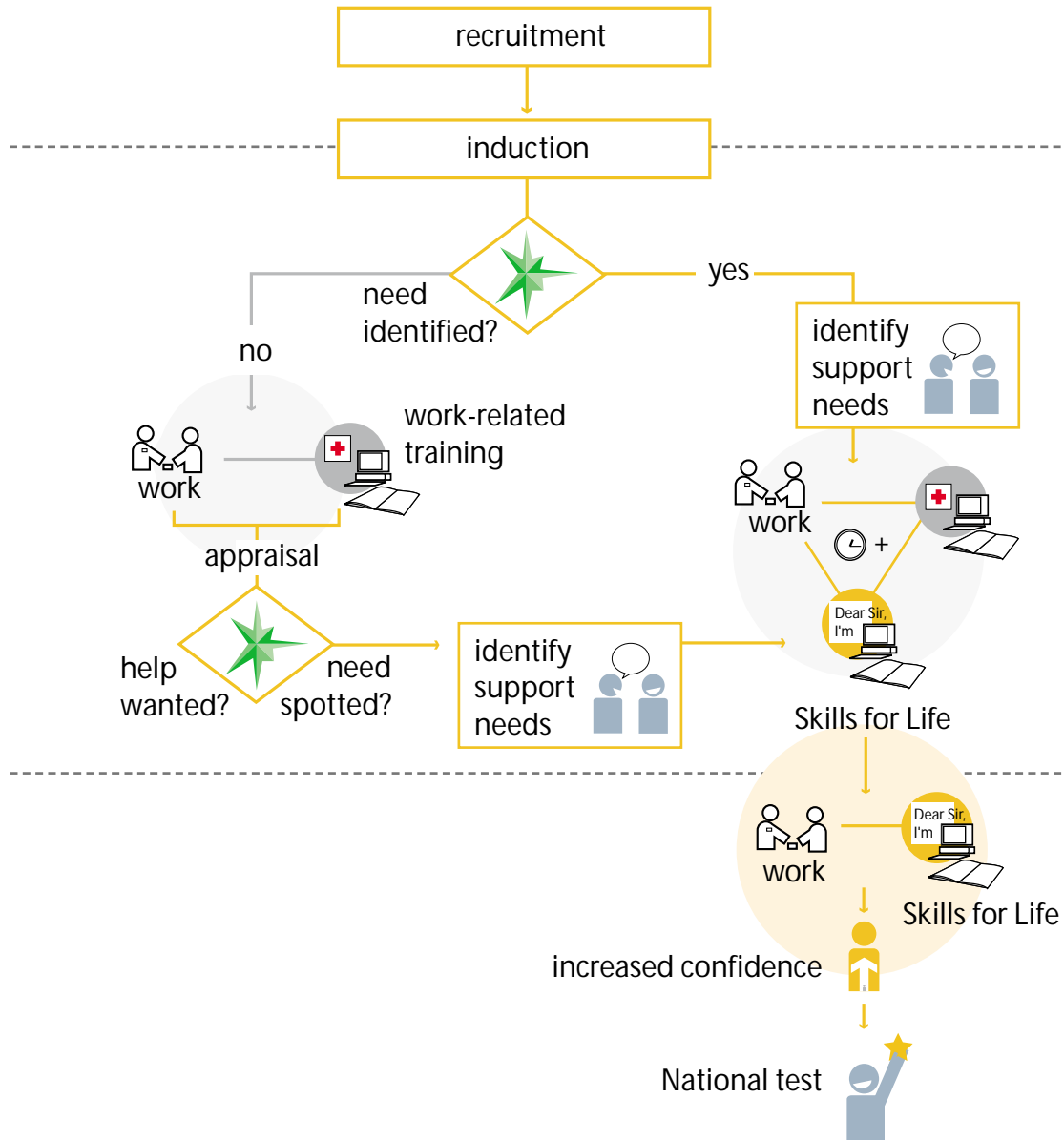
The National Tests for Adult Literacy and Numeracy are a free, national benchmark for standards. Anyone can access the Tests. Practice versions of the test are available online at [www.dfes.gov.uk/readwriteplus/learning](http://www.dfes.gov.uk/readwriteplus/learning) or at accredited test centres.

The National Register of Test Centres can be found at [www.dfes.gov.uk/readwriteplus/testcentres](http://www.dfes.gov.uk/readwriteplus/testcentres)

The national "Move On" project has a co-ordinator in your area who can advise you on how to access opportunities leading to the National Tests. There is a regular newsletter giving you updates on new initiatives. For more information go to: [www.move-on.org.uk](http://www.move-on.org.uk)



## Using the 5 keys



## Recruitment

Make sure that you identify and check any *Skills for Life* needed by job applicants. If an applicant has all the person specifications, consider how you can offer *Skills for Life* support in order to maximise recruitment opportunities.

## Induction

Identify *Skills for Life* within your induction process. Make sure that any assessment and support for these are available to all new employees.

## Appraisal

If you have an appraisal or review system, make sure that your staff have the skills and knowledge to identify *Skills for Life* issues when they hold appraisal or review meetings with employees.

## Employee development

When an employee has achieved the required *Skills for Life* levels, explore opportunities for further training and development.

# Support strategies

There are four main support strategies for providing *Skills for Life* training that suit different companies, situations and learners.

If you don't have a strategy, work out which would suit your company and employees best.

If you already have a strategy in place, compare these four against yours and see how you might be able to improve it.

The four strategies overlap. You could use all of them, some of them, or adapt one to suit you.

Which strategy suits you?

How can you implement it in your company?

1



## **On-site learning centre**

for employees to access during the day or before or after work.

2



## **Independent learning**

at home or at their own desks, for employees who prefer to manage their own learning in their own time

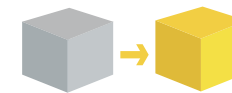
3



## **As part of other training**

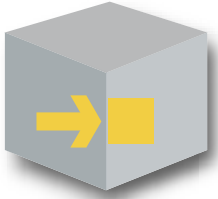
*Skills for Life* as an integral part of training, not a bolt-on activity

4



## **Local training providers**

when you need specialised provision or appropriate resources



## 1: On-site learning centre

Providing a dedicated space within the company can suit people doing either group or individual training, or those who need some support when learning at home.

### Who it suits

- Companies with space for learning facilities
- Employees on shift work
- Employees who work in a busy or noisy environment

### Benefits

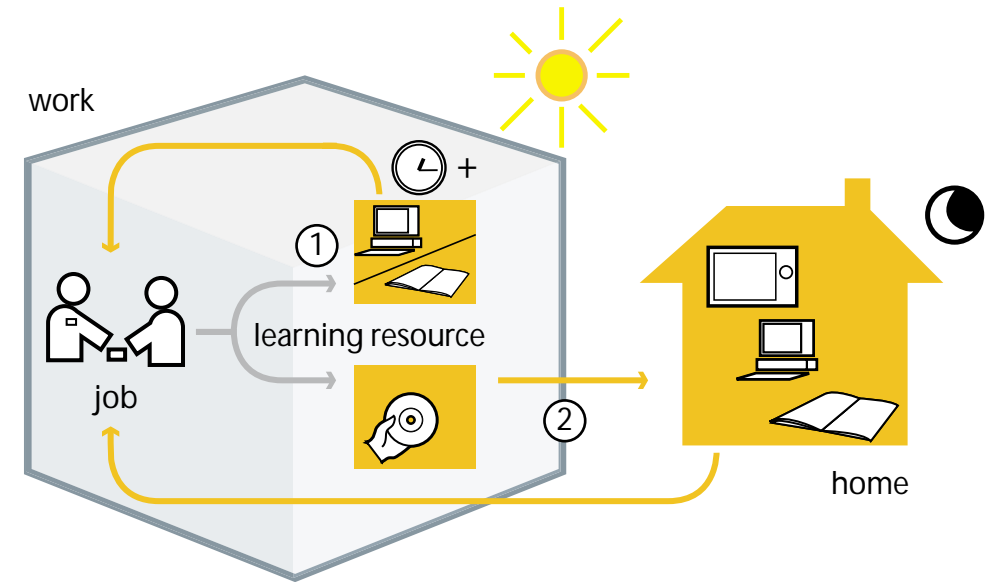
- Flexible approaches
- Good for learners who need one to one support
- Venue for learning with local teachers

### Tips

- Consider the level of support on offer. If learners have low skill levels, they may not be able to use the centre unsupported.
- Display/communicate a rota of specialist teaching support
- The centre can be used to encourage family learning



A lot of staff come into the Waterloo learning centre during their break times, or as they finish their morning shift, or at the beginning of a shift.  
Kevin, South West Trains



1. Employees visit the centre at work, during breaks, between shifts or during designated learning times.
2. Employees doing home-based learning can collect resources and get support from the centre.

Do you have space for a learning centre?  
Can you work with another local employer?  
Is there a mobile learning centre in your area?





## 2: Independent learning

Employees can access training independently through computers, at work or at home, or through paper-based resources and video.

### Who it suits

- Companies with limited space
- Employees who are self-motivated and have flexibility in their day
- Employees who have the skills to work independently

### Benefits

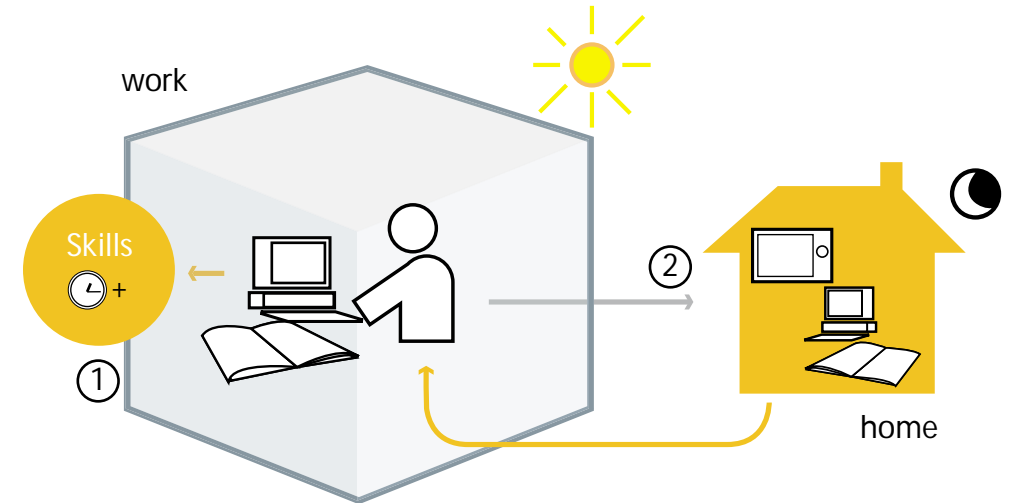
- Flexible and economical
- Learner works at own pace

### Tips

- You still need to plan and review the employee's progress
- Consider schemes to match home-based learning time with learning time during working hours



I met with the learner and showed her how to use the programme. Even though the computer we were using was very slow, it did provide Anna with a taster and she was delighted with Surf Direct.  
Careconnect Learning



1. Employees can access learning at work and fit in small amounts of learning in spare time.
2. Employees who want to learn outside work can do so at home or at libraries, with computer, paper or video-based courses.



### 3: As part of other training

*Skills for Life* can be integrated into other training. Adding extra time to work-related training can be a good way to deliver focused *Skills for Life*, such as reading Health and Safety guidelines.

#### Who it suits

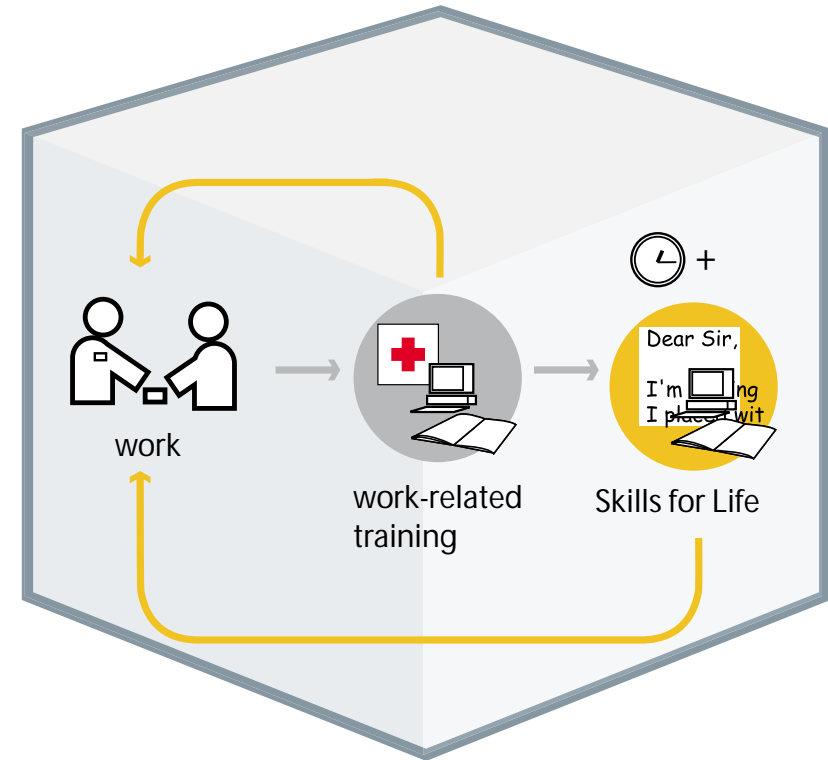
- Companies with work-related training
- Employees who need an introduction to learning flexibly
- Companies working towards Investors in People

#### Benefits

- Can accommodate group training
- Can focus training on specific work-related areas
- Only additional resourcing is some time and planning

#### Tips

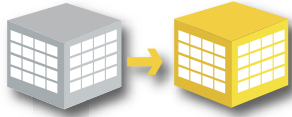
- Some existing training courses may already have a *Skills for Life* element that can be enhanced
- Try incorporating dedicated time to *Skills for Life*



Employees do work-related training, which includes *Skills for Life* to improve their performance at work. For example, NVOs demand competency in literacy, language and numeracy.



It's not a bolt-on type of training, it's an integral part of what we should be doing as employers.  
Sheila, Bells Stores



#### 4: Local training providers

It's often easy and free to organise training with local training providers, such as Further Education colleges, work-based training providers and private training organisations.

##### Who it suits

- Smaller companies who don't have the space or facilities for on-site learning
- Employees whose skills need specialised attention
- Employees who don't use computers

##### Benefits

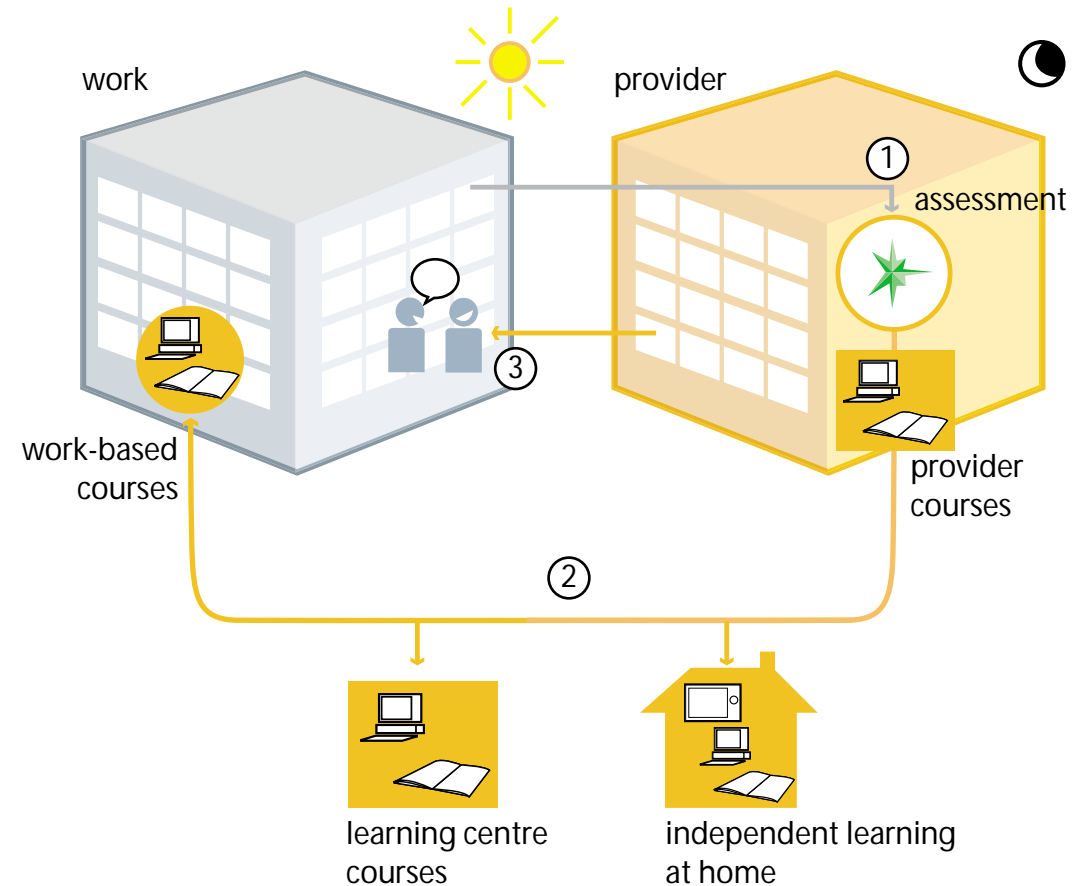
- Intense and quick
- Can focus training on specific work-related areas
- Good for groups

##### Tips

- Funding is available for local provider courses
- Employers with open learning centres may consider bringing teachers on-site to run sessions
- Employers can get advice from local LSCs and Business Link, who can put you in touch with local providers



Rona has been encouraged to develop her own learning. She has since requested to be enrolled on other learndirect courses and has been encouraged to go to college to improve her English.  
Careconnect Learning



1. Employees go to a local provider for assessment, or the assessment can be done on-site.
2. They then follow a customised course at the provider, in the workplace or at a learning centre.
3. Specialist teachers may also be able to visit the workplace to deliver support on site.



# Making it work

How to get started and where to go for help

# How do I start?

So how are you going to get it working in your company?

Well you don't have to start a revolution. A more workable way is to build on the strengths and possibilities you've already got, step by step.

Think small and focused.

Remember, *Skills for Life* training will be most effective if you:

- promote *Skills for Life* effectively and positively
- make sure that key managers and supervisors commit to training and support
- enlist the help of unions and others to support employees
- have clear guidelines for the selection of quality specialist help and work in partnership with specialists
- recognise employee potential and maximise new skills

Five steps to get up and running

1

## Evidence the need

- What is the identified business issue?
- How does it relate to employee skills levels?
- How are you going to show that *Skills for Life* affect the bottom line?
- Who are the key people in your organisation to sell it?

2

## Audit the resources

- What time can realistically be given to supporting *Skills for Life* training?
- What in-house space could be dedicated?
- Will shift patterns affect employees' opportunities to learn?
- What computer-based resources do you have?

3

## Get advice

- What do you need to know?
- Where can you get advice locally?

4

## Access funding and resources

- Do you know about the funding support available?
- Do you know how to get it?

5

## Up and running!

- What are your goals?
- How will you monitor, evaluate and review?

# Making it work

The following pages show contact details for organisations that can help you identify needs and source *Skills for Life* training.

If you're a big company, look for your local **Learning and Skills Council**.

If you're a small company, look for your local **Business Link**.

## Good advice and resources

### Adult Basic Skills Strategy Unit

[www.dfes.gov.uk/readwriteplus](http://www.dfes.gov.uk/readwriteplus)

### Learning and Skills Council

[www.lsc.gov.uk](http://www.lsc.gov.uk)

### Business Link

[www.businesslink.org](http://www.businesslink.org)

### Sector Skills Development Agency

[www.ssda.org.uk](http://www.ssda.org.uk)

### TUC

[www.tuc.org.uk](http://www.tuc.org.uk)

[www.learningservices.org.uk](http://www.learningservices.org.uk)

### Basic Skills Agency

[www.basic-skills.co.uk](http://www.basic-skills.co.uk)

### learndirect

[www.learndirect.co.uk](http://www.learndirect.co.uk)

Tel: 0800 100 900

### Workforce development

[www.investgrowcompete.info](http://www.investgrowcompete.info)

### British Chambers of Commerce

[www.chamberonline.co.uk](http://www.chamberonline.co.uk)

### Workplace Basic Skills Network

[www.lancaster.ac.uk/wbsnet](http://www.lancaster.ac.uk/wbsnet)

## Learning and Skills Councils

[www.lsc.gov.uk](http://www.lsc.gov.uk)

### Local offices:

#### Bedfordshire and Luton

Tel: 0845 019 4160

#### Berkshire

Tel: 0845 019 4147

#### Birmingham and Solihull

Tel: 0845 019 4143

#### Black Country

Tel: 0845 019 4186

#### Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole

Tel: 0845 019 4148

#### Cambridgeshire

Tel: 0845 019 4165

#### Cheshire and Warrington

Tel: 0845 019 4163

#### County Durham

Tel: 0845 019 4174

#### Coventry and Warwickshire

Tel: 0845 019 4156

#### Cumbria

Tel: 0845 019 4159

#### Derbyshire

Tel: 0845 019 4183

#### Devon and Cornwall

Tel: 0845 019 4155

#### Essex

Tel: 0845 019 4179

#### Gloucestershire

Tel: 0845 019 4189

#### Greater Manchester

Tel: 0845 019 4142

#### Greater Merseyside

Tel: 0845 019 4150

#### Hampshire and Isle of Wight

Tel: 0845 019 4182

#### Herefordshire and Worcestershire

Tel: 0845 019 4188

#### Hertfordshire

Tel: 0845 019 4167

#### Humberside

Tel: 0845 019 4153

#### Kent and Medway

Tel: 0845 019 4152

#### Lancashire

Tel: 0845 019 4157

#### Leicestershire

Tel: 0845 019 4177

#### Lincolnshire and Rutland

Tel: 0845 019 4178

#### London Central

Tel: 0845 019 4144

#### London East

Tel: 0845 019 4151

#### London North

Tel: 0845 019 4158

#### London South

Tel: 0845 019 4172

#### London West

Tel: 0845 019 4164

#### Milton Keynes, Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire

Tel: 0845 019 4154

**North Yorkshire**  
Tel: 0845 019 4146  
**Norfolk**  
Tel: 0845 019 4173  
**Northamptonshire**  
Tel: 0845 019 4175  
**Northumberland**  
Tel: 0845 019 4185  
**Nottinghamshire**  
Tel: 0845 019 4187  
**Shropshire**  
Tel: 0845 019 4190  
**Somerset**  
Tel: 0845 019 4161  
**South Yorkshire**  
Tel: 0845 019 4171  
**Staffordshire**  
Tel: 0845 019 4149  
**Suffolk**  
Tel: 0845 019 4180  
**Surrey**  
Tel: 0845 019 4145  
**Sussex**  
Tel: 0845 019 4184  
**Tees Valley**  
Tel: 0845 019 4166  
**Tyne and Wear**  
Tel: 0845 019 4181  
**West of England**  
Tel: 0845 019 4168  
**West Yorkshire**  
Tel: 0845 019 4169  
**Wiltshire and Swindon**  
Tel: 0845 019 4176

## Business Link

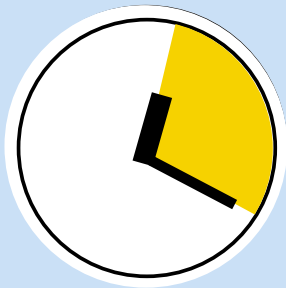
[www.businesslink.org](http://www.businesslink.org)  
Tel: 0845 600 9006

### Local offices:

**Bedfordshire and Luton**  
Tel: 01582 522448  
**Berkshire and Wiltshire**  
Tel: 0845 600 4141  
**Birmingham (inc. Solihull)**  
Tel: 0121 607 0809  
**Black Country**  
Tel: 0845 113 1234  
**Cambridgeshire**  
Tel: 0845 609 7979  
**Cheshire & Warrington**  
Tel: 0845 345 4025  
**County Durham**  
Tel: 0191 374 4000  
**Coventry & Warwickshire**  
Tel: 024 7665 4322  
**Cumbria**  
Tel: 0870 757 1177  
**Derbyshire**  
Tel: 0845 601 1038  
**Devon & Cornwall**  
Tel: 0845 600 9966  
**Dorset**  
Tel: 0845 458 8558  
**East Lancashire**  
Tel: 01254 607 000  
**Essex**  
Tel: 0845 717 1615

**Gloucestershire**  
Tel: 01242 863863  
**Greater Merseyside**  
Tel: 0845 330 0151  
**Hampshire & The Isle of Wight**  
Tel: 0845 458 8558  
**Hereford & Worcestershire**  
Tel: 0800 104010  
**Hertfordshire**  
Tel: 01727 813813  
**Kent**  
Tel: 0845 722 6655  
**Leicestershire**  
Tel: 0845 070 0086  
**Lincolnshire & Rutland**  
Tel: 0845 757 4000  
**London**  
Tel: 0845 600 0787  
**Manchester (inc. Stockport)**  
Tel: 0161 236 4114  
**Milton Keynes, Oxfordshire & Buckinghamshire**  
Tel: 0845 606 4466  
**Norfolk**  
Tel: 08457 218218  
**North & Western Lancashire**  
Tel: 01772 790200  
**North Manchester (inc. Bolton, Bury, Oldham, Rochdale & Wigan)**  
Tel: 01204 663131  
**North Yorkshire**  
Tel: 01904 686000  
**Northamptonshire**  
Tel: 01604 671200

**Northumberland**  
Tel: 01670 813322  
**Nottinghamshire**  
Tel: 0845 757 3680  
**Shropshire**  
Tel: 01952 208200  
**Somerset**  
Tel: 0845 721 1112  
**South Yorkshire**  
Tel: 01709 386300  
**Staffordshire**  
Tel: 07002 202122  
**Suffolk**  
Tel: 01473 417000  
**Surrey**  
Tel: 0845 749 4949  
**Sussex**  
Tel: 0845 678 8867  
**Tees Valley**  
Tel: 01642 806666  
**The Humber**  
Tel: 0845 124 3333  
**Tyne & Wear**  
Tel: 0191 516 6700  
**West (formerly Avon)**  
Tel: 0117 973 7373  
**West Yorkshire**  
Tel: 0113 383 7733  
**Wiltshire**  
Tel: 0845 600 4141  
**Business Eye in Wales**  
Tel: 0845 796 9798  
**Invest Northern Ireland**  
Tel: 028 9023 9090



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