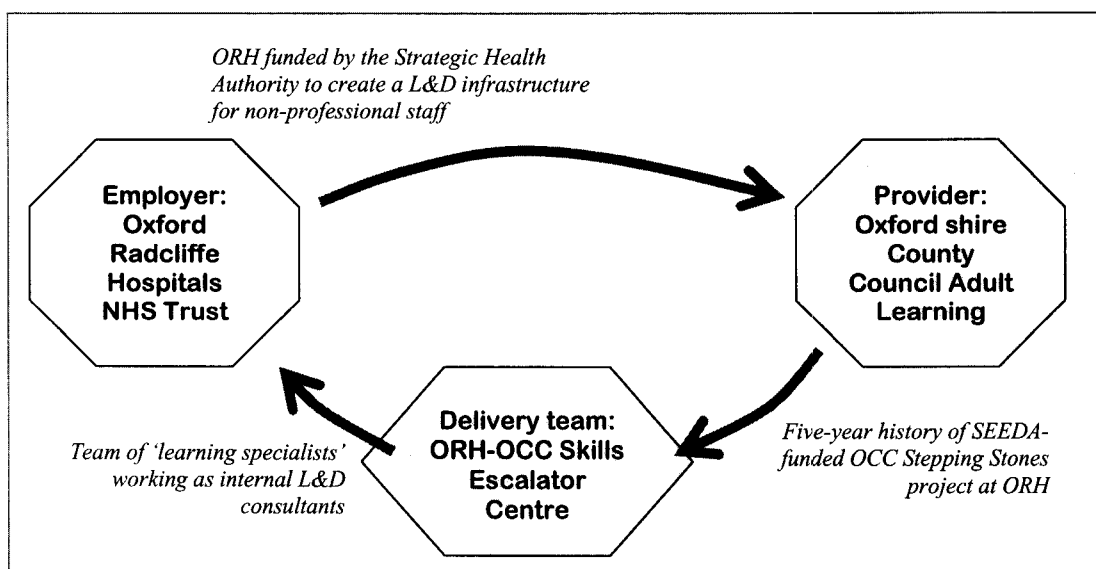


Embedding/integrating LLN in the workplace

The three projects described below seek to 'embed/integrate' LLN activity in the workplace. Consider their rationales, aims and objectives.

1. Oxford Radcliffe Hospitals NHS Trust-Oxfordshire County Council Skills Escalator Centre



Between 2001 and 2006, a project known as Stepping Stones worked with non-professional staff at Oxford Radcliffe Hospitals, with a particular focus on the enabling skills of literacy, English language and numeracy. The project was delivered by Oxfordshire County Council and funded by SEEDA, the South East RDA. Outputs were measured in six-hour learning opportunities and the project was afforded considerable flexibility. Demand from ORH led to an increasing focus on supporting departments to implement NHS modernisation initiatives. When RDA funding ended, ORH used external NHS funding for 2006-07 to establish a (virtual) Skills Escalator Centre, staffed by a team of six part-time (0.6) learning specialists, recruited from the Stepping Stones project and employed by Oxfordshire County Council.

The SEC team specialises in communication, maths and IT skills; health and safety, food hygiene, risk management; NVQ support and facilitation; team leading and supervisory skills; learning and study support.

SEC works to quarterly objectives identified by its ORH management group. Over the past year work has focused on supporting departments implement the KSF (the NHS's new competency-based appraisal system), delivering statutory-mandatory training (H&S, conflict management, E&D), risk management coaching and mentoring, supporting NVQ programmes, and working with individual staff to develop communication skills (including ESOL and ICT) and maths skills.

Learning through work: Is it possible?

project's 20 employer-partners included NHS trusts and PCTs, local authorities and private sector employers. A team of over 20 working learning practitioners, drawn from South East LEAs, FE colleges and private consultancies, acted as 'practice evidence gatherers'. The Institute for Employment Studies acted as the project's expert partner. An advisory group included representatives from: the Business Services Association, CIPD, IDeA, IIP UK, LLU+, NIACE, Skills for Health, WPiLSU, Southampton Hospitals University NHS Trust and Unison among others.

Phase 1 results

Phase 1 was completed in July 2006. Its results, analysed and reported by the Institute for Employment Studies, suggest that on-the-job learning has the potential to improve skills development and performance outcomes for both individuals and organisations. Phase 2, now underway, will investigate practical ways to realise that potential.

More information about Phase 1 findings can be found in two reports available at

<http://www.employment-studies.co.uk/pubs/report.php?id=433> and

<http://www.employment-studies.co.uk/pubs/report.php?id=434>

Phase 2

The aim of Phase 2 is to design, trial and evaluate on-the-job learning methods in the low-paid, low-skilled workplace in order to assess their potential to raise skill levels and improve organisational outcomes within the practical constraints of that workplace.

The project's next steps include

- Commissioning the design of on-the-job methods for trialling and an evaluation model
- Running the trials
- Evaluating the trials and reporting on outcomes

Each of the projects described seeks to embed/integrate LLN development in the workplace. With reference to one or more of these projects, consider the following questions.

1. *How does 'embedding/ integrating' in the workplace compare to 'embedding/ integrating' in vocational education/training in terms of rationale, aims and objectives, constraints and barriers?*
2. *Is work activity a suitable vehicle for LLN learning? If so, how is that learning best delivered? If not, why not?*
3. *How might the Skills for Life quality and funding structure be developed to better address workplace needs?*

Learning through work: Is it possible?

3. Learning through Work project

Learning through Work is a skills project sponsored by the South East England Development Agency (SEEDA), with co-funding from Investors in People UK, Skills for Health and the DH's Widening Participation unit. NIACE is currently acting as the project fund-holder.

Project rationale

Access to learning at work is restricted, particularly in the low-paid workplace where many are thought to lack crucial foundation skills in literacy, English language, numeracy (LLN). Current approaches to LLN skills development focus on off-the-job training. Practical constraints within the low-paid workplace severely limit participation in off-the-job training. New approaches to workplace LLNIT learning are needed to widen participation.

Project premise

Basic skills are only relevant at work if workers are required to apply the skills.

Any requirement to practise a skill offers a potential opportunity to develop that skill. To the extent that work activities demand the application of basic skills, those activities offer opportunity to practise and therefore to develop those skills through on-the-job learning.

Project aim

Learning through Work aims to identify ways to widen participation *within the existing constraints* of the low-paid workplace *through work and work-related activities* (on-the-job learning). The project will

- identify the learning opportunities offered by work
- develop methodologies to support and facilitate on-the-job learning
- specify how this sort of learning is most cost-effectively supported.

Project structure

The project has three phases. Each phase addresses a **learning question**.

PHASE 1: What opportunities does the low-paid workplace offer for 'on-the-job' LLNIT learning?

PHASE 2: How might those LLNIT learning opportunities best be maximised, i.e. allowed to occur as widely and as often as possible, and optimised, i.e. made as accessible and productive (both to individuals and to the employer organisation) as possible?

PHASE 3: Is there a place for publicly-funded intervention to support this kind of skills development and, if so, how could such intervention be made most cost-effective?

What happened in Phase 1

In Phase 1, the project scoped the question through a research review and an audit of practices in over 50 south east workplaces. This first phase was supported with funding by the South East England Development Agency (SEEDA), Skills for Health, the DH's Widening Participation in Learning Strategy Unit, the Hampshire-Isle of Wight Strategic Health Authority and Investors in People UK. The

2. SISCO: Supporting Induction in Social Care (www.sisco.org.uk)

