

# Final Draft



Adult

Learning

Plan

2003 - 2004

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## **PREFACE**

Adult Learning in Bracknell Forest takes many forms. For some it is a step towards a personal goal, for others a way to help family members make progress in their own learning. In all its forms it enriches the community.

This Adult Learning Plan is one of the key strategic plans of Bracknell Forest Borough Council. It sets out the vision, priorities, approaches and funding arrangements for the provision, development and quality assurance of Adult and Community Learning in Bracknell Forest and builds upon the success of previous years. It is also a pre-requisite of grant funding from the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) and follows a nationally prescribed format. However, it is written to reflect local needs at the time of publication, set against the context of a recent inspection of the leadership, management and quality of provision by the Adult Learning Inspectorate. The published inspectors report and the subsequent Action Plan to further improve the quality of the service are seen as integral components of this plan, together with the ongoing issues resulting from the Borough's self-assessment and review strategies. This plan covers the work of the Lifelong Learning Team, the direct provision of community learning, the work with sub-contractors and the development work with community partners to promote learning in Bracknell Forest.

The funding of this plan is by a fixed sum LSC grant for the period August 2003 to July 2004. It is based upon the previous years funding (set by the Secretary of State's guarantee) adjusted through negotiation and the submission of preliminary data and information during February 2003, together with a 3% uplift for inflation. The outcomes of this work are presented in this document, together with plans for implementation of growth in particular Family and Community programmes.

From August 2004, the LSC plans to fund Adult and Community Learning by national formula that is still being developed. This will impact of the style of future plans.

### **Organisational details:**

The Director of Education is responsible for this strategic plan and the LEAs contact for matters relating to the plan is:

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# ADULT LEARNING PLAN

August 2003 to July 2004

## BRACKNELL FOREST BOROUGH COUNCIL



### 1.0 Executive Summary

The Adult Learning Plan sets our ways in which individual participation and progression in learning new skills can contribute to the development of the community and to raising standards of achievement.

#### 1.1 Adult learning in Bracknell Forest is secured by the following means:

- A mainstream programme of some 800 courses is provided under an Adult Education Contract with Bracknell and Wokingham College.
- A developing programme of outreach and community learning is provided, as a component of the above Contract with the College, aimed at widening participation in hard to reach groups.
- Support grants are provided to organisations that are responsible for providing or promoting learning within particular sectors within the Borough.
- A range of development projects is planned in response to local needs identified by the Community Education Manager. These are delivered through partnership working between the local authority, the College and other partners from the Bracknell Forest Lifelong Learning Partnership.
- Through the development of Open Learning Centres, other community venues and schools that encourage adult learners to re-engage or return to learning, particularly where there is evidence of educational deprivation.
- Through the creation of significant capacity building projects that meet sectoral needs and are the subject of external grant funding from ESF, DfES, NOF, etc.
- Through an on-going programme of Family Learning, initially focusing on Literacy, Numeracy and computer skills, but more recently through the development of parenting and learning skills which are provided and supported on a multi-agency basis. Schools are vital partners in this area of activity.
- Collaboration of other BFBC departments

#### 1.2 This vision and strategy was recognised by inspectors who reported the following key strengths for Adult and Community Learning in Bracknell Forest:

- Effective strategic direction of adult and community learning
- Productive partnership arrangements to widen participation
- Good use of scarce resources to target hard-to-reach learners
- Good teaching and learning
- Achievement of significant personal development and social skills
- Good resources for community learners.

#### 1.3 The development of adult learning in Bracknell Forest is in response to identified need. Since 1998, the nature of provision has changed to better reflect the needs and wants of the community, which have been determined by consultation and research undertaken by the Council and its partners. Particular emphasis has been given to implementing new learning opportunities for families, for those reluctant to learn as a result of poor basic skill levels and for those often excluded from learning by circumstance. A fuller description of the needs analysis is set out in Section 6 on Page 23.

- 1.4 Strategic development is directly linked to the local context. Programmes of new learning opportunities, funded through this plan, reflect the availability and success of existing services and seek to compliment the work of other providers. Resources are deployed to meet specific need identified in sectors or targeted groups within the local priority. New strategies are piloted providing greater understanding of need; this involves risk but overall has proved successful in increasing participation and developing effective ways of supporting new learners. A fuller description of the planning context is set out in Section 6 on Page 23.

## 2.0 Strategic Management

### 2.1 Mission Statement:

The vision for Bracknell Forest in the Community Plan is:

**'To make Bracknell Forest a place where people can thrive;  
living, learning and working in a clean, safe and healthy environment.'**

The Adult Learning Plan contributes to the Community Plan's aim of making learning a vital part of community development. This is because learning is fundamental to personal, community and economic growth and development. For this reason the overarching aim is to encourage learning for all and learning for life.

### 2.2 The Borough Council's Key Objectives for education are:

**to make Bracknell Forest a Learning Community in which:**

- **All learners will have appropriate opportunities;**
- **All learning will be in a suitable environment;**
- **All schools will be good schools;**

**and all plans will contribute to the corporate social inclusion strategy.**

This plan makes a significant contribution to meeting all aspects of these objectives. The focus of four years development work has been to extend the range, appeal and accessibility to learning opportunities, including those that enable, motivate and build self-confidence in new learners. There has been a determined approach to de-institutionalise adult education and take learning to where the people are in the local community. This has been supported by the capital development of Open Learning Centres, the grant funding of UKonline centres, and ICT facilities in Day and Residential Care settings each providing high quality learning facilities. Partnership working with schools and other community groups has further widened the list of learning venues and has confirmed the value of 'non-threatening' settings for hesitant learners. Adult Learning supports the third objective by recognising the mutual benefits of linking adult learning to the learning of pupils and students through family activity. The fourth objective emphasises that learning is for all and that learning has a significant contribution to play in the development of the local community.

### 2.3 The Strategic Objectives for Adult and Community Learning to achieve this are:

- To enhance individuals' personal development and quality of life by providing a range of learning opportunities to meet the needs of local people.
- To support the implementation of the Borough's cultural strategy by raising awareness of the value of learning and by providing access to recreational and leisure courses.
- To widen participation in learning through opportunities that motivate learners and offer a variety of progression routes.
- To foster social inclusion and economic competitiveness by developing and implementing an Adult Basic Skills Strategy.
- To support the raising of standards in schools by influencing attitudes to learning and enhancing families' ability to support their children's education.

- To provide advice, guidance and learning support to enable more people to access learning at appropriate levels and progress to higher or complementary levels of qualification.

These strategic objectives are based on local consultation and research, which is on going, and under constant review.

**2.4 In order to achieve these objectives the Adult and Community Learning Plan incorporates the following principles:**

- Ensuring appropriate opportunities for all requires a clear understanding of local needs and the potential for community development.
- Effective provision is based on working strategically and collaboratively with a wide range of partners, inside and outside the Council.
- Increased participation results from taking learning to where people are.
- Innovative use of ICT resources and connectivity increases flexibility for learners.
- Efficient planning is based upon good management information systems.
- Effective quality assurance systems underpin strategic decisions and high quality service provision, which evolves to meet changing needs.
- The local action specified in this plan makes a significant contribution to meeting the national and local priorities of the Learning and Skills Council.

**2.5 Bracknell Forest Borough Council adds value to Adult and Community Learning because it:**

- Has a reputation for innovation and making a difference.
- Is best placed to gather information on local community needs and aspirations through interdepartmental working.
- Can join up Council services in complementary provision.
- Has a role in community leadership that enables it, through strategic partnerships and local networks, to reach consensus on achievable priorities that are set out in the Community Plan.
- Has a wide range of external contacts and is able to lever in significant additional funds to build and sustain capacity.
- Has expertise in managing learning programmes and quality assurance.
- Has developed effective working arrangements with the Berkshire Learning and Skills Council and is well represented at Board and operational levels.

**2.6 Working in Partnership.** From the beginning of the new unitary authority in 1998 the Council has sought to achieve these objectives by working in partnership with the community, with business and with other providers. From the formal establishment of the

Bracknell Forest Lifelong Learning Partnership in July 1999, the Council's approach has been to work through it and with it and the LEA is the designated lead body for the Partnership. Whilst the Council has retained statutory responsibilities, the Partnership has provided a valuable vehicle for co-ordinated action and collaborative activity. The Bracknell Forest Lifelong Learning Partnership (BFLLP) has set out its own complementary vision statement as:

***'Bracknell Forest: a community learning together for a successful future'.***

In March 2003, BFLLP agreed three key themes for cohesive action as part of a new three-year strategic vision. These are to focus partnership working and activity on:

- Regeneration
- Adult Basic Skills
- Learning for life

A new learning plan to express the three-year vision is currently in preparation.

## **2.7 National Priorities for Adult Education**

The Borough Council recognises the importance of the following national priorities for the adult learning sector:

- basic skills
- widening participation
- family learning provision
- neighbourhood renewal
- citizenship
- ICT skills at all levels and
- modern foreign languages (MFL)

The Council has already embraced these as areas of action in previous adult learning plans and further reference to future developments is given within this plan in section 5.

## **2.8 Local Priorities for the Berkshire Learning and Skills Council**

The Borough Council similarly recognises the importance of the following challenges set out in the Berkshire LSC's 2002 – 2005 Strategic Plan for this learning sector. Of the ten challenges identified, seven have significance within this plan; these are to:

- develop a high quality, flexible, efficient and collaborative learning infrastructure;
- improve the economic potential for people who have been disadvantaged for cultural, health, social, environmental and employment reasons;
- improve the level of basic skills;
- address the key current and forecast skills shortages of the area;
- raise skill levels amongst the local labour workforce;
- develop e-learning and e-skills throughout Berkshire; and
- address the continuous learning needs of the ageing population.

The Council has already embraced many of these as areas of action in previous adult learning plans and further reference to future developments is given in section 5.

## **2.9 Areas for action identified by the Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI)**

Following the inspection of Adult and Community Learning by ALI in November 2002 and the publication of the Inspection Report on 28 February 2003, the Borough Council has had two months to produce a Post Inspection Action Plan. This work continues in parallel to the production of this plan. From the strengths, weaknesses and 'other improvements needed' the priorities listed below have been identified for action during the life of this Adult Learning Plan. The key areas for action include:



- Implementation of a new Management Information System (MIS) to record information on individual learners and their progress and to provide data analysis capable of informing future planning;
- Development of revised procedures for the monitoring of all quality assurance arrangements with sub-contractors and community partners as prescribed under the Common Inspection Framework;
- Review current practice and develop new strategies to ensure that direct provision and that delivered by subcontractors reflects the needs and wishes of adults wanting and needing to learn in the local community;
- To identify the resources required to provide for the needs of all potential learners including more systematic access to effective advice and guidance for all learners.

Many of these issues had already been identified in the self-assessment report (SAR) document, published by the LEA prior to the inspection (August 2002), and work was already in progress to address these. The SAR formed the baseline for the inspection and the final report has been used to confirm the priorities set out in the Action Plan.

#### 2.10 **Coherence with other provision - External partners:**

Bracknell Forest Borough Council is the designated lead body in the Bracknell Forest Lifelong Learning Partnership. The BFLLP provides a forum for consideration of this plan as partners work collaboratively to develop adult learning in the local community. Partners include:

- Bracknell Forest Borough Council                      Education Department and Schools  
Leisure Services Department (inc. Libraries)  
Social Services & Housing Department
- Bracknell & Wokingham College
- CfBT – Advice and Guidance
- Education Business Partnership
- Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership
- Bracknell Forest Chamber of Commerce
- Retail Organisations
- The Prince's Trust
- MIND in Bracknell
- University of the Third Age (U3A)
- Local Churches and Industrial Chaplaincy
- Learning Disability Forum
- Job Centre Plus
- Bracknell Forest Voluntary Action
- Primary Care NHS Trust
- Employers in the Bracknell Forest Community
- Berkshire Learning and Skills Council

#### 2.11 **Within the LEA/local authority:**

Given the small size of the Council and the co-terminus boundaries of the Bracknell Forest Lifelong Learning Partnership, the officers and partners are able to provide a coherent vision for adult and family learning. With the direct involvement of other council services and with the unified approach taken by schools to promote and support lifelong learning, the Council is able to integrate the planning of adult and family learning opportunities into wider educational strategies. In sharing mutual planning processes with the BFLLP, the Council is able to deploy resources effectively and avoid unnecessary duplication of provision. This supports a cohesive approach to learning from early years through to activities for the elderly.

This Adult Learning Plan is a contribution to the three-year Strategic Lifelong Learning Plan. There are also links to the following local authority plans:

- The Education Development Plan
- The Early Years Development & Childcare Plan
- The Community Safety Strategy – section of Breaking the cycle of offending
- The Community Plan
- The Policy and Performance Plan which includes Lifelong Learning Goals
- The Annual Library Plan & Medium Term Strategy
- The Cultural Strategy

## **2.12 Supporting organisations and specialist provision**

2.12.1 The Ark is a charitable trust which offers specialist provision through a combined arts education programme for people with severe or profound multiple learning disabilities, physical disabilities or who are recovering from mental illness. The Ark's services help to fulfil a number of the Borough's objectives and priorities for adult education. Responsibility for the overall management of The Ark lies with the Board of Trustees. The Ark will provide services to the Borough on the basis of a service level agreement covering a range of adult learning activities targeted to meet the needs of this sector.

2.12.2 Music Therapy is provided for people with severe or profound and multiple learning disabilities and physical disabilities at Brakenhale Open Learning Centre. A specialist music therapist funded by the Berkshire NHS Trust leads this work. Bracknell Forest provides, through Partnership, specialist accommodation within a supportive learning environment.

2.12.3 Bracknell Forest Voluntary Action (BFVA) provides a programme of training to support leaders and voluntary participants in voluntary organisations; this is provided in collaboration with the College. The work also recognises the important role that voluntary sector organisations play in identifying and supporting potential learners through networking and sign-posting activity.

2.12.4 In 2001, BCVS (now BFVA) was responsible for the setting up a Bracknell Forest branch of the University for the Third Age (U3A) with financial support from the Council. This is now a self-managed group that has in excess of 120 members and meets regularly at the Brakenhale Open Learning Centre as well as in members' homes. U3A is supported and encouraged in its linking with other learning provision.

## **2.13 Externally funded activity**

2.13.1 The development work undertaken over the last four years has led to a series of successful applications for externally funded projects. These projects build learning capacity in sectors where needs have been identified, where appropriate research has been undertaken and where the opportunity to engage more learners cannot be met from existing resources. It is however within the core function and responsibility of the Council to lead and co-ordinate the planning and application process by bringing together sectoral partners, and research findings, with those that can manage and deliver the new opportunities. This responsibility extends to monitoring, evaluation and the development of strategies to plan sustainable provision.

2.13.2 Significant capacity building projects have received substantial grants for activity over the next three years. These projects are one demonstration of the added value achieved by the Borough Council, in working with local partners to meet identified learning needs. The projects include:

### 3.0 Key Performance Indicators and review of strategic objectives 2002-03

3.1 The following table sets out the volume of activity proposed in this plan for 2003-2004 and compares this with current performance and the target set for the year to July 2003. These indicators are the result of work undertaken with LSC officers during Spring 2003 and form the basis of the provisional funding agreement on which this plan is based. It must be recognised that much of the data is collected manually and prior to the implementation of a MIS system, which will be used to construct the first Individual Learner Record (ILR) in December 2003.

Performance Indicator	Current prediction for year to 31 July 2003	Original target set for 2002-03 in ALP2	Provisional Target set for 2003-04
<b>Adult and Community Learning</b>			
Total Number of learners (ACL only)	3242#1	2872	3210
Enrolments per 1000 adult population	56.06	59.29	63.97
Numbers of learners in basic skills provision #2	Under investigation	No target set	Still subject to definition
Percentage of learners who are male	30%	30%	30%
Percentage of learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities	12%	15%	12%
Percentage of learners from minority ethnic groups	4%	4%	4%
Percentage of learners aged 60 or over	29%	29%	25%
<b>Family Learning</b>			
Number of participating adults	72	72	64
Number of participating children (under 18 years)	80 #3	144	96
Percentage adults and children with disabilities/learning difficulties	5% #4	20%	1%
Percentage male adults	5%	2%	5%
Percentage adults and children from minority ethnic groups	4%	4%	4%
Percentage adults 60 years and older	1%	1%	1%
Percentage primary school children	85%	85%	85%
Percentage secondary school children	15%	15%	15%
<b>Family Literacy &amp; Numeracy</b>			
Number of courses run	8	6	22 #5
Number of participating families	89	63	220 #5

#1 This figure includes a cohort of 'supported learners' who are supported by grant allocation and the infrastructure of Open Learning Centres. This includes U3A and UKonline that have recruited far more learners than anticipated. However, we recognise that there is an element of cross funding and not all of these learners would be recordable in an ILR. This matter is under consideration prior to implementation of ILR. There are 473 learners in this category in 2002-03. This is predicted as 122 learners for 2003-04 because this activity cannot be included in the count of LSC funded learners.

#2 The definition of 'basic skills provision' is still under investigation. Nationally, this category refers to adults on an accredited course that is fully funded by the LSC and

provided by recognised centres including FE Colleges. This opportunity is available in the Borough at Bracknell and Wokingham College but the provision is not funded through this plan. However there is a range of activity which provides the opportunity for adults from hard-to-reach groups to be offered basic skills support to build their confidence and self-esteem prior to engaging on accredited courses. These learners currently fall outside this performance indicator. It is anticipated that the evaluation of the ESF Basic Skills Pilot project (completing in December 2003) will offer new insight to this issue.

**#3** The families on the current year programmes have brought fewer children to the sessions than was our experience in previous years. There were many more parents bringing a single child.

**#4** There has been a significant challenge in the targeting of the families in this category. The predicted target is proving unrealistic. The current strategies used to target learners are tending to reach more parents with low self-esteem and limited confidence than with actual learning difficulties. This matter is being reviewed, prior to each recruitment, but it is clear that additional strategies will be needed to reach the parents with low/very low skills who are reluctant to accept they have a learning need.

**#5** This significant rise in this target takes account of the following issues:

- project work previously delivered for and funded directly by the Basic Skills Agency is now to be funded through the LSC's Adult and Community Learning Fund;
- considerable local success in providing quality courses in Family Literacy and Numeracy has resulted in more unmet need and further demand being identified by partner organisations, especially infant and primary schools;
- a direct response to the LSC's request for increased capacity in this area to support performance targets for Berkshire.

### **3.2 Progress against strategic objectives 2002-03**

As a pre-requisite of funding for this plan the following statements were agreed with LSC officers to demonstrate the Council's progress against the strategic objectives set out in Paragraph 2.3 of the 2002-03 Adult Learning Plan, which are in bold.

- **To enhance individuals' personal development and quality of life by providing a range of accredited and non-accredited learning opportunities.**  
BFBC continues to support a range of non-accredited learning via the contract with the College. Only a few accredited courses are being used at access and pre Level 1 as the College already provide a full range of accredited courses funded by the LSC. As part of the community outreach, new ways of engaging learners are under constant development.
- **To support the implementation of the Borough's cultural strategy by raising awareness of the value of learning and by providing access to recreational and leisure courses.**  
This is an on-going focus for promotion and development for new learning sectors. Significant resources go into Adult Learners' Week and Bitesize campaigns. A 'Spring Collection' promotional programme has been developed in partnership with the College and linked to the implementation of BF's SMART card as a means of incentive to enrol on full and part-time courses.

- **To widen participation in learning through opportunities that motivate learners and offer a variety of progression routes.**

BFBC has supported the development of a wider learning infrastructure and there are linked developments that are bringing more adults into the learning community. These include a large local branch of U3A, cohorts of learners referred on by UKonline centres, and targeted projects with 4th age learners – our ‘Silver Surfers’ groups.

- **To foster social inclusion and economic competitiveness by developing and implementing an Adult Basic Skills Strategy.**

BFBC has been successful in obtaining an ESF co-financed project grant to develop an ‘engagement strategy’ to bring more adults with ABS needs into mainstream funded courses. This is a pilot for the calendar year 2003.

- **To support the raising of standards in schools by influencing attitudes to learning and enhancing families’ ability to support their children’s education.**

The success of the Family programmes is reflected in the ALI Inspection report. Feedback from infant school headteachers indicates clear benefits to the support provided by families to children joining YR and Y1. Programmes have been designed to link directly to national Literacy and Numeracy Strategies. Multi-agency approaches to family learning have made additional impact on family health and welfare. Individual parents talk freely of increased confidence in supporting their child, increases in self-esteem and of their realisation that they can successfully ‘return to learning’.

- **To provide advice, guidance and learning support to enable more people to access learning at appropriate levels and progress to higher or complementary levels of qualification.**

BFLLP’s IAG service has developed well and key providers have achieved national accreditation. The capacity to provide focused IAG to individuals has reached overload. It is clear that aspects of IAG will need to be embedded into all types of ACL funded activity in proportion to need. This will have the greatest significance in those outreach activities designed to widen participation and reach hard to reach sectors of the population. There is a need to reconsider the ‘needs analysis’ and diagnostic elements of this service as adult learners with basic and specific learning needs are reached.

3.3 An analysis of funded learning is given as Annex A. This sets out more detailed targets for specific types of programmes, together with the initial budget allocated to each area of activity. Annex B also lists the core staffing and associated central costs resulting from the management, quality assurance and venue costs which underpin the work of the Adult and Community Learning team.

3.4 The table (3.5) that follows sets preliminary volume targets for learning activity funded by this plan. It uses the descriptors ‘enrolments’ and ‘learners’ as both operate as performance indicators in adult learning. An enrolment occurs when an individual joins a learning activity funded by this plan, whilst learners refers to the number of individuals who undertake one or more learning activities during the period of this plan. Multiple enrolments are common as learners progress to new or more advanced activities, or choose to continue to learn specific activities over longer period for their own pleasure or personal development.

## **4.0 Quality assurance and quality improvement**

- 4.1 Following the inspection of adult and community learning by ALI in November 2002, this section of the Adult Learning Plan is being reviewed. The Inspection Report highlighted significant expectations for the quality assurance of 'contracted out' provision which far exceeded current practice in this and indeed all Berkshire Unitary Authorities. Council officers continue to work with Bracknell and Wokingham College and with the LSC, who are responsible for the monitoring of post inspection action plans to determine the most time efficient means of ensuring quality assured provision.
- 4.2 The Post Inspection Action Plan for Adult and Community Learning is in final draft and the Council awaits the approval of the LSC. The Action Plan sets out a series of actions to address weaknesses and areas for development identified by Inspectors. Some of these involve direct action by the LEA, some require action by the College and some involve working in partnership with the College to ensure a greater consistency of monitoring of quality procedures throughout the contract period.
- 4.3 The Council is required to complete a Self-assessment Report (SAR) for the LSC, following the end of each academic year, identifying actions that are planned to further improve the quality of local provision. This is an on-going process and involves all providers and organisations that work with the Council in providing adult learning. For the current academic year 2002 – 03 a SAR will be published in October 2003 setting out improvements to be implemented in the following year. This SAR will inevitably replicate and reflect the work identified in the Post Inspection Action Plan.
- 4.4 Many of the issues identified by inspectors had already been included in the SAR for 2001 – 02 and work to address these areas of concern were in progress at the time of inspection. Some, including the provision of improved data collection and analysis were affected by delays in national specifications and moving time-scales for implementation.

## **4.5 Actions to implement quality assurance arrangements**

- 4.5.1 Adult Education Contract with Bracknell and Wokingham College. With effect from August 2003 the Contract with the College will include the Council's requirements for strengthening the quality assurance procedures.

These will include:

- Provision of annual reports from the College's SAR process giving specific ACL information for each area of learning.
- A schedule of termly minuted meetings to review evidence of progress against the Adult Contract and the post inspection action plan.
- An agreed schedule for LEA officers to review a sample of post-course evaluations completed by students and the composite course reports produced by subject leaders.
- A schedule of termly minuted meetings to develop new projects for community outreach and agree revisions and priorities for additional provision to be included in the College's Part-time Course Brochure (published each May) for the following academic year. This will be driven by the analysis of learner need and by local research into the complimentary learning provision.
- A schedule for a sample of class observations, across all ACL areas of learning, which will be the subject of 'inspection' using the Common Inspection Framework.
- The appointment of independent ALI trained consultant/s to conduct class observations, and a review of college policies and procedures in each area of learning.
- The appointment of independent ALI trained consultant/s to review college policies and procedures in areas of equal opportunities, quality assurance and cross-college practices.

## 5.0 **Planned developments and changes in 2003-04 to address Equality and Diversity in provision.**

### 5.1 **Adult Basic Skills (ABS)**

- 5.1.1 In 2000 the Basic Skills Agency calculated that there are 15,654 adults in the Borough with basic skills needs. This is 22.2% of the adult population. The data set shows considerable variation between electoral wards with 9 of 19 wards having levels of adult basic skills needs significantly higher than the national average of 24%.
- 5.1.2 Working through the Bracknell Forest Lifelong Learning Partnership, the Borough Council has fulfilled the requirement to develop a local Basic Skills Strategy, with an Action Plan that will meet the government targets to address the issues raised through the Moser Report. This Action Plan was considered by the BFLLP in March 2002 with the recommendation to seek external ESF funding to build the capacity necessary to make a significant impact on the scale of local need.
- 5.1.3 BFLLP has now established a ESF pilot project to develop methods of engaging new groups of learners with ABS needs, providing entry level work to build sufficient confidence to engage with more structured ABS learning. This pilot project will report in December 2003. The council will continue to recognise ABS as a key area within an overall widening participation strategy.

### 5.2 **Widening Participation**

- 5.2.1 The Council has the following plans to **widen participation in learning**:
- To establish a series of promotional events including Adult Learners' Week and Bitesize and Summer Schools and 'Spring Collections' in collaboration with recruitment activity organised with Bracknell and Wokingham College.
  - To continue to raise the profile and value of learning and to celebrate the success of individual learners with a view to them taking on the role of 'community champions'. This is delivered through publicity, press coverage and promotional activity throughout the community.
  - To produce more targeted information leaflets that demonstrate the value of learning to individuals in their lives, their workplace and their family and seek every opportunity to gather the 'voice of the learner'.
  - To use the specific communities of local Primary Schools (parents and families), Community Groups and Voluntary Sector Groups to create new learning opportunities and pathways to other learning provision.
- 5.2.2 Widening participation remains a key area of work in the Borough. Participation rates in learning remain low, particularly in the less qualified and younger age ranges. Low regard for the value of learning remains a characteristic of particular sectors of the residential population. The Council will continue to promote outreach activity, strategies to reach new groups, and promotional projects will be used to increase the size of the learning community. This will provide a critical volume needed for more structured progression pathways to accredited courses.

### 5.3 **Family Learning**

- 5.3.1 The Council has the following plans to **support family learning**:
- Courses based in Primary Schools or Open Learning Centres, to develop the basic ICT skills of Parents and families;
  - Working with schools to target families with low basic skills, promoting the value of learning on the basis of 'to help your child' learn more effectively, particularly

sector organisations, including work to enable volunteers to be signposters, advocates and mentors to members of their organisations.

## **5.7 ICT programmes at all levels**

- 5.7.1 Bracknell Forest Borough Council has an advanced corporate and community ICT infrastructure which makes a significant contribution to learning. All Libraries have public access terminals operating UKonline service and connectivity and community centres have Internet capable PCs.
- 5.7.2 In developing adult learning within school communities, the Borough continues to exploit the use of the excellent computer resources, provided to schools as part of the NGfL. Computer networks with Internet access. These have been used effectively for adult and family learning activities out of school hours, within the limitations of working in Primary School environments.
- 5.7.3 Working in partnership with Bracknell and Wokingham College, a wide range of ICT training courses are provided within the mainstream programme; these include courses starting with 'ICT for the terrified', generic ICT skills and range of applications. These are the subject of a review following the Inspection in November 2002. The College also manage the Bracknell LearnDirect Centre, offering the Ufi branded range of on-line learning activities.
- 5.7.4 The Borough has established three UKonline Centres in the local community. These provide structured, supported and open access learning opportunities for local residents. Two are located within Open Learning Centres, a crucial part of the Borough's promotion of learning; a third is located within a 'Neighbourhood Centre' in partnership with a local community association.
- 5.7.5 All nine Libraries in Bracknell Forest have UKonline connectivity and public access to the Internet and to Internet based learning. Library staff can provide informal support to users and encouragement to access on-line services. The Library service regularly provide 'Net for Novices' courses to Library users, often in conjunction with Adult Learners' Week.
- 5.7.6 Following a very successful pilot project introducing ICT learning to 4<sup>th</sup> age learners, the Borough Council has placed on-line ICT facilities in 1 Day Care and 3 Residential Care Centres. This is managed within the scope of the UKonline programme, and provides supported access and learning opportunities within the wider care package. This work is effectively supported by care staff and voluntary mentors and is affectionately known as the 'Silver Surfers' programme.
- 5.7.7 The Brakenhale Open Learning Centre also has 2 portable WAN computer systems, which are deployed, in community venues as part of developing new pilot ICT projects and computer assisted learning programmes. These facilitate taster and access activity without the need to permanently install new facilities. The system becomes fully Internet capable with the temporary installation of connectivity at the venue for the duration of the activity.
- 5.7.8 The Borough continues to use individual laptop computers to provide basic ICT training at community venues and in voluntary sector groups. This still links to the original DfEE Adult Laptops scheme and to the Basic Skills Agency pilot projects.



- Expansion of IAG provision 'at source' and directly related to taster course programmes;
- Development of U3A provision and its potential role in providing learning mentors to other projects.

#### 5.10.4 Specific Learning Provision aimed at under-represented audiences

The LEA and the partners working through the BFLLP have identified the following priorities that are supported by specific actions that bridge the Adult Learning Plan and the Lifelong Learning Plan:

- Adults, whose earlier experiences of education or training have resulted in their adoption of real or perceived barriers to learning for themselves and for their children. This group has a low regard for learning, often have basic skills needs, or will benefit from training to support their economic effectiveness.
- Single Parents, where the provision of economic childcare will enable them to re-engage with learning, gain confidence and self-esteem and progress to further learning opportunities.
- Reluctant learners, who for reasons of self-confidence or low motivation can see no value in learning; this is a critical group in actions aimed at widening participation.
- Individuals with severe or profound multiple learning disabilities, whose needs for sustained support programmes have been recognised and need to be further developed.
- Adults who are suffering or recovering from mental illness who need more flexible learning arrangements to enable them to be re-skilled or to be trained for future employment. Capacity building provision for this group is through a current European Social Funded project; further funding will be sought to sustain the work in this sector.
- Carers, whether operating professionally, in a voluntary capacity or as a family member, whose role prevents them from accessing mainstream provision, and who need more flexible learning arrangements to enable them to study or train to support their current or future needs. Pilot work in this field is currently funded by LSC LIF Grant.
- Young Adults whose progress and transition from full time education, whether mainstream or from alternative curriculum initiatives, requires further specialist provision or sign-posting to existing national and regional programmes e.g. 'E2E – Entry to Employment'. Liaison with the BFBC Youth service and with Connexions is implicit in this action.

#### 5.11 Disability statement

5.11.1 The Borough Council has a Policy on Fair Access for Service Delivery supported by departmental action plans

The LEA works within the Council's Policy which states that:

**Bracknell Forest Borough Council recognises the diversity of the local community and acknowledges that it has a duty to ensure that its services are responsive to the different needs of all individuals and sections of the community. The Council undertakes**

## 6.0 Resource Management

### 6.1 Needs Analysis

6.1.1 Bracknell Forest is one of the fastest growing towns in the UK and is materially advantaged when compared to many parts of Great Britain. There are current proposals for further large housing developments and the plans for the renewal of the town centre will have a significant impact on the learning and skills needs of the residential community and the commuting workforce. The average household income in Bracknell Forest is £35,600 – 36% above the national average. Material advantages of the area mask other characteristics that have a significant impact on the aspirations and attitudes to learning beyond statutory school age.

- In 9 out of the 19 wards within Bracknell Forest Borough, the proportion of adults with low or very low literacy and numeracy skills is well above the national average.
- The Basic Skills Agency has calculated that there are 15,654 adults in the Borough with basic skills needs. This is 22.2% of the adult population.
- The 2001 Census indicates 20.3% of the population have no qualifications, whilst 23.2% have degree or higher qualifications.
- There is high movement of families in and out of the area, particularly of families with children of school age.
- A large proportion of families with school age children, either new to the area or second and third generation inhabitants, live some distance from other close family. The 2001 Census indicates 5.5% of the households are of lone parent families whilst the average occupation of households is high for the south east at 2.46.
- There is significant evidence that there are 'reluctant learners' in the adult population as a direct result of previous educational experience. They do not put any value on education and this attitude has passed through the generations to influence the young people in schools. Indicators are that these people are among the 20.3% unqualified in the population.
- Many people in the Borough are characterised by a "Cash rich, time poor" ethos.
- Participation in the mainstream programme of adult courses provided by the College is below national norms and despite increased publicity and promotional activity this figure is only climbing slowly. For 2001-02 the figure for College based provision was 30.8 enrolments per 1000 of the population. It has been noted that the provision of daytime courses excludes those adults in full or part-time employment.
- A programme of community and family learning activity and taster courses provided in community venues and primary schools has proved extremely successful in recruiting new learners. 'Reluctant learners' value non-threatening environments and informal settings. Three years of such activity is now impacting on mainstream recruitment. 'Learning to support your child/grandchild' has provided worthwhile motivation to adult learners. In 2001-02 community development added a further 1136 enrolments, and additional 45% to that provided by mainstream provision.
- The overall participation rate for all work funded by the Adult Learning Plan for 2001-02 is 44.8 enrolments per 1000 of the adult population.

6.1.2 Bracknell Forest has a small but increasing ethnic minority population. In 1991, 2.7% of the Borough's population were from minority ethnic groups; the 2001 Census indicates that 6.5% were born outside of the EU.

6.1.3 Bracknell Forest and surrounding areas have experienced rapid and successful economic growth. The local economy is strong; 72.8% of the Borough's population are in employment, which is the highest in the South East. Large, multi-national companies play an important part in that success. Bracknell Forest has an established reputation as an important location for high technology industries. This reliance on relatively narrow employment sectors has reduced the range of job opportunities available to the local workforce.

- The Adult Education Contract includes provision for concessions. The current rate of concession is 50%. Concessions are provided to students resident within the Borough who are:
  - over the age of 60 years and not in full time employment
  - in receipt of unemployment benefit, income support, family credit or disability allowances.

6.2.2 Provision in cases of specific hardship will be considered individually by the College within existing welfare guidelines.

6.2.3 Specific promotional programmes such as the "Spring Collection" providing free taster courses are linked to the use of the Council 'Edge Card' (SMART Card). This pilot project enables each learner progressing to a mainstream learning programme to claim a further fee subsidy as an incentive to continue learning. Consideration will be given to extending this approach when the evaluation of this programme is completed.

### 6.3 Learner Support

6.3.1 Within the Adult Education Contract provision is made for concessions. The current rate of concession is 50%. Concessions are provided to students resident within the Borough who are over the age of 60 years and not in full time employment or are in receipt of unemployment benefit, income support, family credit or disability allowances. Provision in cases of specific hardship will be considered individually by the College within the existing welfare guidelines.

6.3.2 Within the planned approach for Family Learning, including Literacy and Numeracy parents are supported through the provision of free childcare and free transport, where a local venue does not have the appropriate standard of facilities to the support learner.

6.3.3 The Borough Council, through the Bracknell Forest Lifelong Learning Partnership, is part of the Berkshire Information, Advice and Guidance Consortium. Working with Bracknell & Wokingham College the partnership funds a peripatetic guidance worker who supports adult learners within the mainstream programme and is deployed off-site venues to support learners on all developmental, outreach and taster sessions. As the local IAG network expands, the Borough is aware that demand will soon outstrip supply, and there are plans to increase the staffing in this area and increase the training for community tutors as front-line IAG providers and sign-posters. This work will be jointly funded by the BFLLP, by ACL, by component of external grant funding and by the College.

### 6.4 Information advice and guidance

*Further work on this section will link to the revised business plan of the LSC funded Berkshire IAG Consortium which will be available following the meeting of the Management Group on 18<sup>th</sup> June 2003. Bracknell Forest is represented on this group.*

*The provision and funding of IAG services is changing nationally from August 2003 and the use of ACL funding, as an alternative to ring-fenced IAG funding, to establish such provision is still unclear.*

### 6.5 Additional Learning Support

6.5.1 Provision is made within the Adult Contract to support adult students to access the programme of mainstream courses. Tutors are trained to identify additional educational needs and the College has a referral system that allows for students to take further courses of supportive learning to facilitate their mainstream learning. This additional

learning is generally at no extra cost to the learner and the funding of the learning support activity is included in the Contract.

- 6.5.2 A similar approach occurs on family and outreach projects, although in reality the tutors selected for these course have proved very able at providing a differentiated curriculum to each adult in the relatively small groups (maximum 12). In a number of cases, and by arrangement with the Community Education Manager, additional time or alternative sessions have be made available in response to identified need.
- 6.5.3 One of the efficiencies of smaller unit partnership working is the ability to respond quickly to the needs of the individual learner.

## 6.6 Subcontracting

- 6.6.1 The Borough plans to provide ACL funded learning through arrangements with the following bodies:

Provider	Terms	Value	Learner Numbers	Volume (weighted guided learning hours)
Bracknell & Wokingham College (FE)	Contract	£180,000	1466	52,520
The Ark Charitable Trust	S.L.A	£30,000	60	1800
<i>All figures are provisional pending contractual discussions</i>				

- 6.6.2 Contracts and SLAs are negotiated annually on the basis of monitoring, out-turn and quality assurance review. The composition of areas of provision within a contract/SLA is determined by agreement with the provider, based upon recruitment data, targeted developments and cohesion with other learning capacity within the Borough, funded by alternative means.

## 6.7 Accommodation Strategy

- 6.7.1 No provision is being withdrawn in the next year. Any changes to venues results from rolling programmes of development or the location of new pilot activities.
- 6.7.2 The main part of the programme of Adult and Community Education, for residents of Bracknell Forest, is provided through an annual contract with the local FE College (Bracknell & Wokingham). The contract is managed and monitored by the LEA. The LEA and the College are key members of the Bracknell Forest Lifelong Learning Partnership. The college owns, manages and maintains premises on nine sites across two local authorities.
- 6.7.3 The Borough Council's strategy has established two 'Open Learning Centres' on secondary school campuses, which are used for outreach activity in adult learning. Locations were selected in clear areas of educational deprivation and where opportunities for partnership working between the Council and College were readily available. The venues are used for a range of activities that underpin the Bracknell Forest Lifelong Learning Partnership's strategies for widening participation and developing new ways of learning for identified target groups. e.g. Family Learning and 'ICT for the terrified'. The College, as a partner, provides staff and curriculum resources

to facilitate these activities; it also uses the venue for some mainstream programmes where additional capacity is required.

- 6.7.4 The Brakenhale Open Learning Centre has been operating for 3 years following the Council's capital investment for refurbishment of what was originally a primary school building at a cost of approximately £120,000. This centre now supports a significant level of Adult & Community Learning and is a UKonline site.
- 6.7.5 The Sandhurst Open Learning Centre was the subject of a major BFBC capital building programme completed in October 2002 at an overall cost of £430,000. This now enhances the provision, for collaborative use by the College FE Centre, the School and community learning programmes all in one venue. It is also a UKonline site.
- 6.7.6 Both premises have been subject to the Council's regular inspection for assessment of condition and are covered by reactive maintenance programmes.
- 6.7.7 Bracknell Forest Borough Council is committed to community based locations for learning, particularly where this provides for new learners and the development of new approaches to learning. The use of LSC funding to support this development and enhance facilities by contributing to the cost of the minor works programme is valued.
- 6.7.8 Where existing accommodation is refurbished, for adult and community use, through the Council's capital programme and in the case of new-build, the requirements of DDA and SEND Act compliance are taken into account. This still leaves some accommodation which has been 'refreshed' but where access issues remain; some of these issues will be resolved using the 2003-04 DDA/SEND grant.
- 6.7.9 As part of the redevelopment of the town centre, the Council is in the early stages of designing a new Civic Centre (Hub) which will include a focus for learning and for the provision of information, advice and guidance relating to learning, training and employment.

## 6.8 **Locations where learning is offered**

- 6.8.1 Adult and community learning is provided at both Bracknell and Wokingham College sites and community venues as part of the LEAs strategy to promote learning to all the residents of Bracknell Forest.
- 6.8.2 The College uses five sites within the Borough boundary and Bracknell Forest residents have equal access to a further four sites in neighbouring Wokingham. The Bracknell Forest Sites include:

### **College sites:**

Church Road Centre, Bracknell  
Wick Hill Centre, Bracknell  
Adult Centre at Sandhurst School (shared site with Open Learning Centre)

### **Partnership sites**

Open Learning Centre at Brakenhale School, Bracknell  
Adult use of Edgbarrow School, Crowthorne

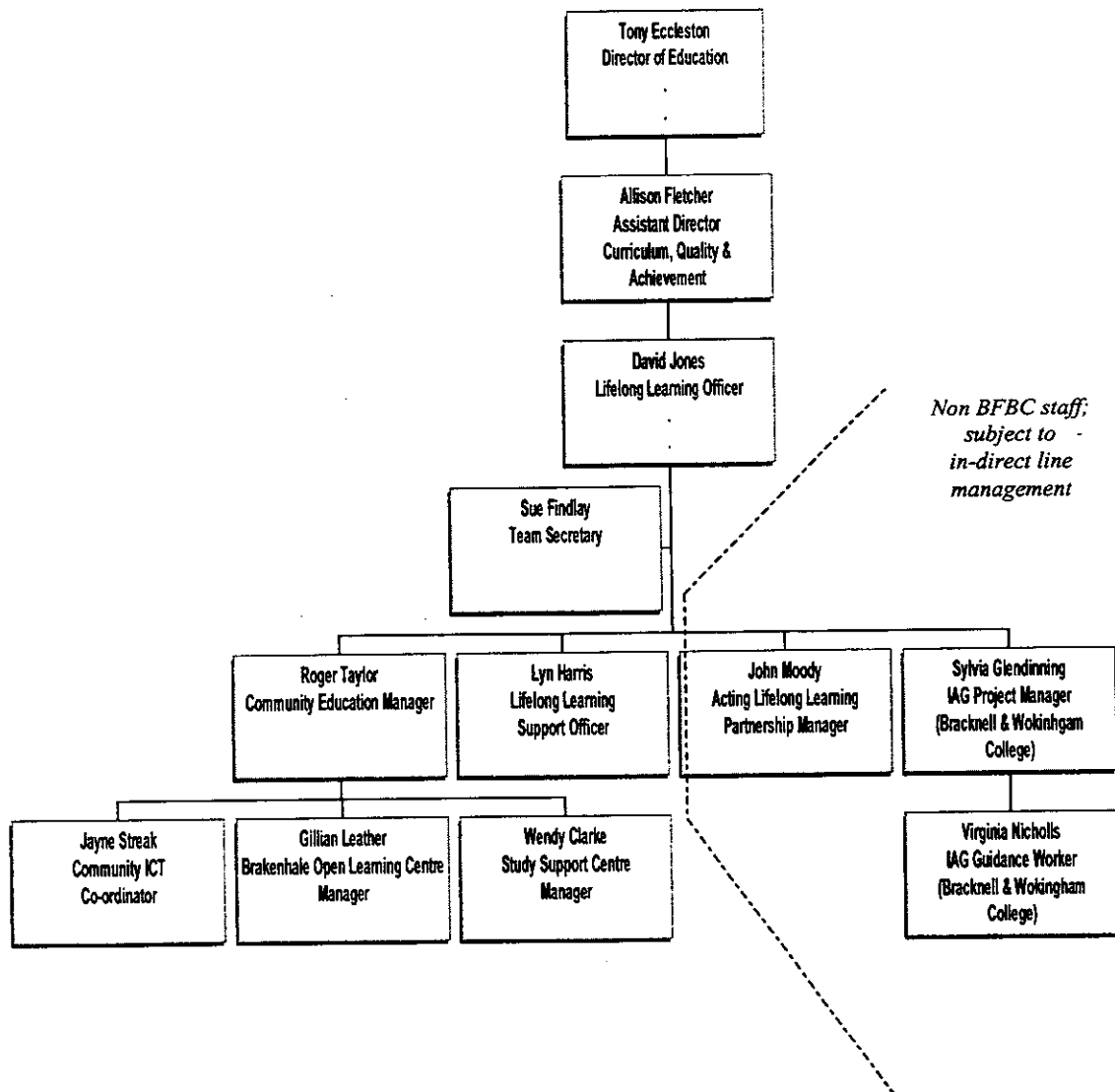
- 6.8.3 Open Learning Centres and UKonline sites  
The Borough Council has established and manages two Open Learning Centres dedicated to providing specialist accommodation for family and community learning programmes. These underpin the ACL funded activity and are located on Secondary School sites in areas of high need. Both are equipped as UKonline Centres providing open access and structured ICT learning activity. These are:

## 6.9 Staffing

6.9.1 The following core staff support the development, management and quality assurance of adult learning within Bracknell Forest. These members of staff are funded through ACL; some also take responsibility for addition learning activity funded by external grant to build capacity in particular sectors. They also take line management responsibility for the specialist staff funded as part of external projects.

	Working	ACL Funded
Lifelong Learning Officer	1.0fte	82%
Lifelong Learning Support Officer	1.0fte	90%
Community Education Manager	1.0fte	85%
Open Learning Centre Manager	1.0fte	100%

6.9.2 The Director of Education takes responsibility for Adult and Community Learning and the core team work in the Curriculum, Quality and Achievement Branch of the LEA, managed by an Assistant Director. The structure chart follows.



## ANNEX A

### BRACKNELL FOREST BOROUGH COUNCIL

#### THE ADULT LEARNING PLAN

August 2003 to July 2004

The following areas of activity are proposed. Annex B provides a summary of the provisional costs of these areas of activity. The table in paragraph 3.4 on page 14 indicates the volume of activity provisionally agreed with the LSC.

#### Adult Education Contract

1. A mainstream programme of Adult Education Classes provided through a contract with Bracknell and Wokingham College. The programme covers a range of approximately 800 courses at over 9 centres throughout the Borough. The funding of this area provides subsidised access to learning for all Bracknell Forest residents who then pay a reduced course fee. This programme is funded per student per guided learning hour, with some specialist or intensive provision 'weighted' to better meet the needs of the student.
2. Further funds provide concessions to support adult students to access the mainstream programme. These funds enable Bracknell and Wokingham College to reduce, by 50%, the hourly fees charged to students in certain sectors and who are resident within the Borough. These include those aged 60 or over and not in full time employment and those adult students in receipt of unemployment benefit, income support, family credit or disability allowances pursuing the course from the Programme during the academic year.
3. A range of new Adult learning activities as outreach to the community provided through a contract with Bracknell and Wokingham College. This reactive programme of courses is established in partnership with the Bracknell Forest Community Education Manager in responding to new opportunities to take taster courses to where people are. The funding of this area provides free learning for adults as part of the widening participation strategy. This programme is funded per guided teaching hour, with the college tutors working off-site in a range of community venues.

#### Service Level Agreements

4. The Council has a service level agreement (SLA) with The ARK. Bracknell Forest has always supported the creative learning activities provided by The Ark for adults with learning disabilities and will continue to do so through a service level agreement. This work is unique and offers specialist provision that cannot be sourced from any other provider. These learners require a high teacher/learner ratio; unit costs are high compared to mainstream provision. The SLA also helps to fund a festival that is used to promote the service, celebrate achievement and recruit new learners.

#### Community Learning

5. Family Literacy and Numeracy programmes, which have been run successfully in Bracknell Forest since 1999 is now funded by the main ACL grant. This area of activity targets parents with pre-school children to work together on developing these particular

of the Adult Learning Inspectorate and this is identified in the Action Plan written to address the operational weaknesses identified in the Inspection Report.

11. The LEA is required to implement a new Management Information System (MIS) in September 2003, which can record and track each learner who enrolls on a programme funded by this Plan. The MIS is used to compile an Individual Learner Record (ILR) which is sent to the LSC three times per year. This ILR will become the LEAs main data set to analyse volume and sector targets; in future years the LSC will use this data and a national formula to determine the level of ACL grant. Work is in progress to identify appropriate software and hardware requirements. This process has been limited by delays in defining a national specification for the ILR and software developers willingness to configure software to the smaller scale requirements of U.A.s, like Bracknell Forest, who provide a mixed economy of contracted out learning provision and community programmes directly managed by LEA staff.

### **Salaries and on-costs**

12. A team of four people manages the provision of Adult and Community Learning and the aspects of Lifelong Learning that underpins partnership working across the Borough. The staffing amounts to 3.57fte funded by this plan as detailed in section 6.9. Other staff working in the area of Lifelong Learning, as shown in the structure chart in paragraph 6.9.2, are funded by specific project grants.

### **Corporate recharges**

13. These cover the cost of accommodation, infrastructure and Council services as determined by the Education Finance Team.



## ANNEX C

### List of Acronyms used in this report

ABS	Adult Basic Skills
ACL	Adult and Community Learning
ACLF	Adult and Community Learning Fund
ALI	Adult Learning Inspectorate
ALP2	Adult Learning Plan 2 (2002 –2003)
BCVS	Bracknell Council for Voluntary Service (Now BFVA)
BFBC	Bracknell Forest Borough Council
BFLLP	Bracknell Forest Lifelong Learning Partnership
BFVA	Bracknell Forest Voluntary Action
DDA	Disability Discrimination Act
DfEE	Department for Education and Employment (now DfES)
DfES	Department for Education and Skills
ESF	European Social Fund
FE	Further Education
IAG	Information, Advice and Guidance
ICT	Information Communication Technology
ILR	Individual Learner Record
LEA	Local Education Authority
LIF	Local Initiative Fund
LSC	Learning and Skills Council
LSP	Local Strategic Partnership
NgfL	National Grid for Learning
NHS	National Health Service
MFL	Modern Foreign Language
MIS	Management Information System
NOF	New Opportunities Fund
OLC	Open Learning Centre
PCs	Personal Computers
SAR	Self-Assessment Report
SEND	Special Educational Need or Disability
SLA	Service Level Agreement
U3A	University of the 3 <sup>rd</sup> Age
Ufi	University for Industry
UKonline	A programme of computer learning centres in the community
WAN	Wireless Access Network