

# NIACE Research and Development



## Key Findings



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### Developing a Foundation Learning Tier: an LSC and QCA initiative A scoping study conducted by NIACE on behalf of QCA

#### Abstract

The development of the Foundation Learning Tier (FLT) aims to establish an inclusive curriculum offer at Entry level and level 1 for learners of all ages from 14 upwards. The FLT would be supported by units and qualifications at Entry level and level 1 in the Framework for Achievement (FfA) which is currently under development.

Three main curriculum strands have been identified as central to the development of coherent programmes. These are key and basic skills, vocational and subject-based learning and personal and social development. It is intended that teachers / tutors and trainers would work with learners to put together a coherent programme, drawing on relevant aspects of the strands, according to the individual needs, interests and aspirations of the learners. QCA's and LSC's joint programme of work is designed to ensure that provision is available and accessible across these strands and that the learners' achievements in these areas can be recognised through units and qualifications within the FfA. One of the respondents to our survey felt that having unitised qualifications would "allow learners skills, in various subject areas, to be acknowledged at the appropriate level. We have learners who find life-skills very difficult, but are academically very able."

NIACE is working with the QCA to scope out the key achievements (in terms of areas of learning), besides Literacy, Language, Numeracy and Independent Living Skills (ILS), which should populate the lower part of the Entry level of the FfA. The aim is for a "bottomless entry level" which would be inclusive of ALL learners. This includes those learners who are currently working below entry level.

#### Research methodology:

- ❖ A questionnaire was disseminated through the NIACE networks and thereafter cascaded out to further networks. As a result of this we have no way of knowing how many questionnaires were sent out in total. 150 responses were received, collated and analysed.
- ❖ Desktop research was conducted on achievement for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities including websites for awarding bodies and available literature.
- ❖ We worked with the Network for Accrediting Young People's Achievement (NfAYPA) as they are currently conducting research into ILS and Awarding Bodies.
- ❖ We attended 2 QCA workshops.
- ❖ Working closely with staff at Oaklands College, we drew on their experience of working with learners with profound and complex learning difficulties.

## Key Findings

### The main conclusions of the project are:

- ❖ Within current provision there is a large overlap in terms of offer between accredited and non-accredited provision.
- ❖ Much of the provision on offer could potentially come under the banner of Personal and Social Development and Independent Living Skills.
- ❖ Potential learners who will access the lower tier of the bottomless entry level are likely to have profound and complex learning difficulties (PMLD).
- ❖ Learners with PMLD would benefit more from their learning being recorded in terms of the key and wider skills. For example, the subject, art is merely a tool teachers use to develop these key and wider skills.
- ❖ Many learners with PMLD will be functioning at the very earliest levels in relation to their communication development. This places a far greater emphasis on this area of learning than for other learners who might access the upper area of the bottomless entry level.
- ❖ Providers working with learners who have PMLD want an accreditation route that is flexible.
- ❖ Consideration may need to be given to how the lower tier of the bottomless entry level compares to the top tier in terms of achievement.

## Recommendations

- ❖ The emerging thinking of the author of this report is, that for learners accessing the bottom tier of the entry level, achievement is recognised in terms of the key and wider skills. This would give providers the flexibility they need when working with this cohort of learners.
- ❖ It may be that for learners with PMLD the Framework, in terms of achievement, would look different. The Oaklands College example would be a good starting point to work from. However it is recognised that this would not be suitable for other learners working in the higher tiers of the entry level.

## Output

- ❖ Report to QCA

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