Using Numeracy Skills in the Workplace

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Maths4Life Stage 2 Pathfinders

Published by the NRDC:
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Maths4Life, a Skills for Life programme funded by the Department for Education and Skills, was based at NRDC between July 2004 and March 2007. On 1st April 2007 the work to take forward and develop Maths4Life transferred to the National Centre for Excellence in Teaching Mathematics (NCETM). NRDC remains a key partner in NCETM’s further development of the post-16 maths and numeracy work started by Maths4Life. For further details see ncetm.org.uk and maths4life.org.
# Maths4Life Stage 2 Pathfinders

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1 Introduction

The project built on an in-house training programme designed to enable Gloucestershire Re-integration Service (GRS) clients to prepare for and progress into employment, a work placement, further or higher education or to obtain self-employed status by developing the numeracy skills they needed to access these opportunities. Through the Maths4Life project we wanted specifically to explore the use of IT to support clients' development of numeracy skills.

1.1 Background issues

Gloucestershire Re-integration Service (GRS) is a county-wide service under the “umbrella” of the Gloucestershire Probation Service (GPS) and in partnership with Gloucestershire Drug and Alcohol Service (GDAS). The Service offers help to people exiting treatment for drug use and wishing to re-integrate back into the community.

GRS works with clients who are both offenders and non-offenders and they are referred to the service via various routes. Within GRS, clients are able to access support to gain employment, education (including literacy and numeracy), careers advice and guidance, pathway to work planning, employability workshops, relapse prevention, 1:1 support and action-planning, drop-in sessions, sports and leisure activities, housing advice and links to other services.

Education activities take place in one room only in Gloucester and the tutors see clients in other sites on a 1:1 basis to deliver some literacy, numeracy and IT. The Structured Day Programme run by GDAS is also based in the same building and clients are referred to GRS from this programme when they are stabilised and ready and motivated to change.

1.1.1 The integration of Education within the GRS Programme

GRS Education, Training and Employment (ETE) aims to enable all GRS clients to access internal and external educational and work-based opportunities. GRS ETE is committed to ensure that all its activities are led by equality of opportunity and that all clients are guided and supported to achieve their full potential.

The Education Officer has the responsibility of delivering educational activities to people who are given community orders (COs) through the courts. Therefore, there has to be close communication between the Education Officer, the treatment element delivered by the County Substance Misuse Service and offender managers (probation officers) with regards to re-integration and to make sure the court orders are adhered to.

Since the GRS started to deliver its educational activities in July 2004, ICT has always been seen as the primary means of engaging these “labelled”, hard-to-reach learners because they wanted to learn how to use a computer and it was not seen as formal education and how they had, perhaps, viewed school. Gaining mathematics and English qualifications are now viewed as part of the educational infrastructure and most GRS clients see these qualifications as means of progression and accessing opportunities to learning and work.

“A key reason why National Probation Service (NPS) policy has focused increasingly on basic skills is because of potential relationships between improved basic skills and reductions in reoffending, through the route of employment." “I travelled Among Unknown Men”: basic skills tutors’ perceptions of the National Probation Service as a foreign culture and the implications of this for cross-cutting policy[1]. Caroline Hudson Educational Studies, Vol.29, pg 413, N0.4 December 2003
GRS clients on community orders normally have to attend up to sixty educational sessions including information, advice and guidance, maths and English and employability. Attendance at these sessions is obligatory and unacceptable absences can have serious consequences. Despite commitment from staff and from the agencies with whom we work, some clients have not in the past engaged with numeracy activities, for the following reasons:

- Relapse back into drug use
- Taken back into custody
- Other appointments – to address housing, benefits – which are more pressing than attending a course
- Feel unable to address issues around work
- Unable to commit to turn up to a session at a certain time
- Do not want to work in a group setting

1.1.2 The Tutors

There is tremendous commitment from all the staff on the GRS education team to deliver quality provision to our clients and they are well supported by the education officer. It was decided that X and Y, the two IT tutors would have the main involvement in the project because they were there at the start of the education provision and had helped to develop, in particular, the IT. This project would enable them to develop resources as well as their own skills, and to look at different ways of delivering numeracy in order to engage the learners. They are well qualified and very highly skilled in the delivery of IT; X has just completed her Cert(ed) FE and Y will complete at the end of the year. Both women have worked in a local college and also in community locations, working mainly in the delivery of vocational qualifications.

The IT provision is delivered through Western Region Open College Network. X leads on facilitating the on-line testing process, whilst Y leads on the delivery of the European Computer Driving Licence qualification and liaises with a local college for registration and assessment.

Through involvement in the Maths4Life project [a project run by NRDC in which GRS took part] the tutors’ confidence has been enhanced and staff expertise is expanding with the consequence that different approaches are being used to work with clients, with the emphasis on ICT. There is now a commitment from all the teaching staff to look at activities that will develop clients’ numeracy skills. The tutors saw the Maths4Life project as supporting other aspects of learning.

For all of Excel, OCN and ECDL, you have to have a certain level of understanding of maths terminology, for example, to work a spreadsheet efficiently...If they do get a job they will need the ICT skills too – English and maths (without IT) will not help you with the job because everything’s done on computers. (Tutor X, Gloucester, May 2005)

1.1.3 Embedded Skills for Life

We have found that some clients do prefer to address their maths needs through their own interests and these skills are embedded in, for example, project work.

Additional part-time staff are also employed to teach other activities, to include development of resources to embed basic skills. For example, a creative skills tutor is presently drafting recipes as an activity so that clients can then use ICT to compile them into a booklet. This work will incorporate numeracy skills – weighing, measuring, calculating, multiplication - as well as encouraging clients to complete an IT qualification.
Two careers consultants (Willow Associates) also work within the service and refer clients to mathematics and english sessions if there is an identified need or by request. Clients are able to access ICT tools such as Adult Directions and complete individual action plans. Therefore, enhanced IAG is embedded within any educational activity that takes place.

1.2 Research questions

With these contexts in mind, the Pathfinder project addressed the following two questions:

1. What software contributes to the start of an integrated programme for the clients of GRS and fits with the ethos of this individually tailored programme?

2. What are the key features of the successful introduction of such software: its use in teaching and learning and how it fits in with other aspects of the centre’s programme?

2 Methodology

GRS Client Attendances

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Client</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Offender/Non Offender</th>
<th>Length of time with GRS</th>
<th>Attendance record</th>
<th>Maths Level</th>
<th>Qualifications achieved</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>CRO</td>
<td>3 mths</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Lit &amp; Num levels 1 &amp; 2,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>Non-offender</td>
<td>1 year</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Numeracy level 2,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>DTTO</td>
<td>1 year</td>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Numeracy level 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>On licence</td>
<td>5 mths</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Completing IT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>DTTO</td>
<td>1 year</td>
<td>Poor (due to ill-health)</td>
<td>E3</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>(M)</td>
<td>DTTO</td>
<td>6 mths</td>
<td>Not consistent due to drug use</td>
<td>E3/L1</td>
<td>Completing an OCN in DTP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>(28)</td>
<td>DTTO</td>
<td>6 mths</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>L1/2</td>
<td>Level 1 &amp; 2 literacy working towards Numeracy 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>(M)</td>
<td>DRR</td>
<td>2 mths</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>E3</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>DTTO</td>
<td>2 mths</td>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>L1</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>DRR</td>
<td>6 wks</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>E3</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>DTTO</td>
<td>1 mth</td>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>E2</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>DRR</td>
<td>2 mths</td>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>Not assessed</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>(M)</td>
<td>DTTO</td>
<td>1 mth</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>E3</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>DTTO</td>
<td>8 mths</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>L1/2</td>
<td>Lit &amp; Num level 1,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>DTTO</td>
<td>4 mths</td>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>L1/2</td>
<td>Lit level 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>DRR</td>
<td>3 wks</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>L2</td>
<td>Working towards tests</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>Non-offending</td>
<td>6 wks</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>L1/2</td>
<td>Level 1 Numeracy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Non-offending</td>
<td>4 mths</td>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>L2</td>
<td>Level 1 Num, Levels 1 and 2 Lit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>(M)</td>
<td>DTTO</td>
<td>No longer attending</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Lit level 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>CRO</td>
<td>3 mths</td>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>L1/2</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>(M)</td>
<td>DTTO</td>
<td>Order</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>L1/2</td>
<td>Num level 1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Maths4Life Stage 2 Pathfinders

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>22 (M)</th>
<th>DTTO</th>
<th>finished</th>
<th>Order finished</th>
<th>Only attended 3 times</th>
<th>L2</th>
<th>Lit 1 and Num 1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

2.1 Methods and methodology

Methods for data collection have included records of informal exchanges, collection of relevant documents, observations and team discussions. In keeping with the ethos of the centre, where possible and appropriate, clients have chosen to take an active part in the project, including for example interviewing each other. While this would offer valuable insights about clients’ point of view; the project recognises that such input may not be sought by clients. The project included the following elements:

- reflective practice by the Education team and from within organisation on how mathematics is delivered, and we looked at positive or negative responses, from staff or clients, to on-line and paper-based national tests
- a service user, A, interviewed clients
- interviews and discussions took place between the project researcher, the GRS Education Officer, the teachers X and Y, the client A and another GRS client, B. Theses discussions were taped and also informal. The researcher visited GRS several times and these visits were much appreciated by staff and clients, who responded well and were interested in the Maths4Life project
- data was also collected through a questionnaire on how people felt about mathematics and their opinions: from GRS staff and clients
- a scheme of work/learning materials for tutors is now being developed
- we have worked with GRS clients to develop criteria for the evaluation of the project from their points of view. While the success of the project itself will be evaluated with reference to its aims and proposed outcomes, we have also sought to explore ‘insider’ perspectives on, for example, any unplanned outcomes associated with the project.
- This project has provoked discussions and debate within GRS

We initially assumed that interviews would be tape-recorded. Some clients however preferred not to be taped and interviewers made notes of their responses to interview questions.

Project staff collated and analysed the data, with initial input on methods and analysis from Maths4Life.

2.2 Notes on data robustness

Appropriate permissions were given by GRS clients to use their thoughts and reflections in this report. The Maths4Life ethical guidelines have been followed and clients have been advised that they can use pseudonyms.

What we have written here should be read in the knowledge that this was a small research and development project, working collaboratively with a group of people who have particular reasons to be apprehensive, defensive and feel threatened. Nevertheless, we had the impression that clients were very happy to engage with the project and that they would have passed on any opposing or critical views.
3 Research findings

3.1 Analysing the interviews and questionnaires

In the early stages of the project we tried out "grounded" techniques for coding the data, but this proved to be unrealistically complicated in a project of this size. We therefore kept closely to our research questions as we read the data. The main themes were those listed below.

A:1 GRS Ethos
A:2 Experience
A:3 Own reflections and perceptions
A:4 Client barriers and caution around numeracy
A:5 New experiences around IT and numeracy
A:6 Software
A:7 Achievements at school/college
A:8 Previous employment
A:9 Work placements
A:10 Prospective employment

Much emphasis was put on codings A:1 – A:7. This may be because some of our clients have not worked previously and are still exploring education rather than employment. The codings related to experience, reflections and client barriers indicated that schooling had not been a pleasurable experience for some.

The above coding has also been linked to the data collected from individual interviews, comments and the questionnaire.

Interviews

As we combed the interviews, looked at the responses to the questionnaires and compared them with impressions from staff within the ETE team and also a co-ordinator, we found the following themes/issues:

- ICT had become an integral part of the educational delivery at GRS
- GRS is now viewed as a “college”
- Most participants saw education as an integral part of an ex-drug user’s re-integration
- Mathematics skills and confidence may not make the difference for some people in terms of motivation to get work because other issues take precedence over learning and work
- On-line national tests are popular because they do not relate to school and there is instant feedback to the client
- To achieve qualifications, to include ICT and numeracy, is often the catalyst for change
- Some clients do not attend workshops on money management and budgeting, even though they do need support in those areas
- Mathematics and school have been negative experiences for some clients

3.2 Questionnaires

The questionnaire was presented to 14 clients. For interview 12a, a GRS co-ordinator was present so we have also indicated his responses. Most of the answers to the questionnaire were given in response to an interviewer – the GRS Education Officer or a client interviewer. Only one client filled in the questionnaire individually in written form. It was found that it was more appropriate for
our client group for the questions to be answered orally rather than written down. This was due to lack of time, lack of confidence, feelings of self-consciousness.

**Question 1:** What is your understanding of Maths – what does Maths mean to you?

Relating to Codes: A:1, A:2, A:3, A:7

Out of fourteen clients

1 client said that it was boring
2 clients said they liked maths
1 client said “I did GCSE and A level before the gear mate”
1 client described maths as “pure in a way that it is the language of the world”.
1 client thought maths was tough and related it back to school
1 client did not pay attention at school and did not like maths
3 clients indicated that maths meant fractions, equations, algebra and trigonometry
2 clients related maths to GCSE experience
1 client said he could “get by”
1 client thought that maths was the “working of numbers”

**Question 2:** What has been your previous experience of Maths – did you enjoy Maths at school?


It is important to note that GRS is not a basic skills scheme; some clients (including for example the client who conducted some of the interviews, enjoyed mathematics at school).

There was a mixed reaction to this question with some very interesting comments. One client commented that

School was OK until fifth year when I had a crap teacher, I lost interest really, I didn’t see the ………ing point

Some clients had completed GCSEs in maths and had a range of results from B grades and a D at AS level to F. Five people interviewed did not like maths at school, one said he “hated maths at school and technical drawing” and there appeared to be a feeling of negativity and failure – “I did at first, but later it was not fun for me, school was tough, “ and “I failed my exams mate”.

However, three clients did have a much more positive experience of maths at school.

I did it at school and I like astronomy which uses it for telescopes and coordinates

Motivation was also mentioned – interviewee 14 who said he did not have much motivation and mathematics was not his “favourite”.

**Question 3** Do you think that you need to have good Maths skills to get a job?


Again, there was an interesting set of responses that were not just straight yes, no or don’t know. 8 clients and a GRS co-ordinator said yes, for example, with “some jobs like with computers or
making things like cars”. Four clients said “we use it all the time” and this seems to have been one of the themes in answering this question. Another client stated

I think in a lot of jobs there’s things you do which you are not aware of that are maths….so I think you naturally do things in your job which you don’t see as maths

However, two clients stated “no….I don’t see the point” and “no, I can get a job without good maths skills”, one client commented “I suppose so yes I mean employers wants loads these days” and another commented that he could “scrape through”.

So most clients thought that having good maths skills has some bearing in getting a job and there is a hint that the Pathfinder project itself made some uses of mathematics more visible to a least one client.

**Question 4**  What areas of Maths would you like to learn about? For example:
- Managing your money – budgeting
- Spreadsheets
- Book Keeping
- Basic Maths – multiplication, division
- Different concepts – fractions, percentages, decimals, calculations around volume, area
- Maths using money calculations


It was found that the overwhelming response to this question was support for mathematics relating to money management, spreadsheets, book keeping and budgeting. This question relates directly to the introduction through the Pathfinder of new software, including MOVE ON resources on finance, OCNs in IT and ECDL and also relates to original research questions which included how software linked into the teaching and learning that takes place within GRS.

8 out of 14 clients wanted to learn about these skills. 2 clients did not wish to learn about anything. 1 client commented “Blimey all of them I think I do like computers”. 1 commented about “using a calculator to do it so I don’t”. This could mean that this particular client does not recognise the need to learn different skills if a calculator can do the work for him. 1 client did not use IT for maths at all. 1 commented “all of it at some point”.

**Question 5:** Do you think that IT helps you to do Maths? If so:
- which software have you tried?
- Did you find it easy to use?
- What were the difficulties?
- Would you recommend it for other clients?
- Will it help you to get a job?


This question is an example of how too many questions were asked in one. However appropriate data was collected from interviews with mixed responses:

Don’t know: 1
Windows XP 6
Excel used “yes definitely computer does the hard work”, “the computer does it all for me that’s good for me”, I’ve used Excel and Word it does it for you doesn’t it”, “the it teacher here is pretty good and helpful”

Not good on a computer: 1
No: 1

“No because it does it all and I think that’s lazy”

Not used ICT a lot: 1
“but I will though at grs”
Yes: 3 (interviews 12,12a, 13)

Interviewee 14 commented that:

I have used the basic software – Microsoft Publisher – I do a newsletter, voluntary – that does require planning, measurements, letter sizes, filling up spaces and making it fit….I think it is a lot less stressful than on paper.

**Question 6: Would you prefer to complete paper-based Maths?**


No: 8

“find computers just feel more comfortable”

Don’t mind: 3

“maths on paper reminds me of school a bit not sure how I feel about that”

Paper-based: 3

“liked paper-based maths”

**Question 7: Do you think that achieving a qualification in Maths is important in getting a job, going to college or finding a work placement?**

Relating to Codes: A:3, A:7, A:8, A:9, A:10

Yes: 10

Suppose so: 1

Might be: 1

Maybe: 1

Depends on the job: 1

Depends on the job…what you have achieved at school or whatever career path you have already had……you have to appreciate that you have to got to go and get these qualifications to be successful

Another comment was made from interviewee 8 who answered yes “a necessary evil really employers demand lots don’t they”. Interviewee 3 stated “Yes…..we need it whether we like it or not”
Question 8: Do you think that Maths is more difficult to learn than English? If so, why?

Relating to Codes: A:2, A:3, A:4, A:7

The results from this question were more difficult to quantify in numbers and were mixed: The following comments were made: “I liked English but maths is crap really”, “I found it all tough I’m dyslexic and I struggle”, “they use different skills I think does that answer your question”.

The GRS co-ordinator who answered this particular question stated that English is used every day “he does letters for clients”. He went on to say that he had not considered every day instances “using maths as maths”. Please refer interview 12/12a.

One comment was made that “English is harder……I never seem to get across how I feel in words, maths is simpler I think” and another comment that they were “different”.

Question 9: Are you happy with the way that Maths is delivered in GRS? Is there enough variety for you?

Relating to Codes: A:1, A:3, A:5, A:6

Yes: 7
Don’t know: 2 – could be from GDAS
Not sure: 1 – could be from GDAS
OK: 1
Paper-based preferred: 1
Access available if needed: 1
Not enough variety: 1

Referring to interviewee 14:

I have used GRS for some time….I have always been aware that certain paths you want to take are available, but like I said, I’ve not chose to do Maths maybe yet. I have obviously other commitments at the moment…

3.3 Interviews

The staff found a generally more positive feel in the centre about using software and computers. The Education Officer commented that

Teachers and clients have changed the way they do things and that has come about through the increased focus on IT

When asked about the sort of ICT that clients used, generic or educational, one of the tutors stated that

Worksheets are a good example because a lot of learners are not ICT proficient and they tend to print off Skills Wise. A lot of learners have trouble with writing and we could do with pens and tablets to write on screen – the computer converts to numbers

The motivated clients who came into use the learning room set an example to those who had a more ambivalent approach towards learning in general. Development of life skills and self-
confidence has been interlinked with the development of the use of IT as this overlaps with literacy, numeracy and general “chatting” amongst clients and tutors.

Recently, we had a visit from a new member of the Probation Senior Management team. There was an IT group running when he came into the learning room, some working towards ECDL and others completing practice tests and spreadsheets. All was quiet and afterwards, a client commented how much things had progressed from previous times – “no one was kicking off”.

3.4 On-line testing:

At the beginning of this year, it was suggested by the WEA that GRS become an on-line testing centre for National Tests. We had excellent support from the South West Regional Adviser and, after a “shaky start” with the administration, the uptake of these tests has been extraordinary. Maths4Life has also affected the popularity of the tests and this example of ICT provision has been very successful in attracting learners who were not very interested in completing any education at all – non-offending clients who had been accessing IT are now attending maths and English sessions as well.

We have found that rather than having a negative impact on clients, offering on-line testing has had the opposite effect and has engaged people to carry to complete further ICT-based qualifications. It has also worked the other way round – clients using ICT already have now been drawn into trying the national tests.

As the project has progressed, the uptake for completing tests and ICT qualifications has increased and the tests have indirectly become a tool for formative assessment and self-assessment of learners.

One GRS client has commented:

I prefer to do the Literacy and Numeracy tests on the computer instead of paper because I don’t have to wait for the results through the post

Staff comments on on-line testing:

The staff have the impression that learners who don’t like using the computer are more keen to do so when they pass computer-based literacy and numeracy tests. Learners have said that they much prefer computer-based tests because results are obtained instantly. Tutors prefer this method because it eliminates the possible loss of papers, avoids trips to the post office and instant results enables swift and more accurate progression routes for learners. (email from X to GRD Education Officer, 1/07/05).

Therefore the tests are used as a “hook” to encourage GRS clients to look at further ICT-based qualifications and enables them to achieve in bite-size chunks.

However, some clients do prefer to work with paper-based resources and up-to-date maths text books have been purchased – Mathematics, The Basic Skills, Fifth Edition, S Llewellyn and A Greer. Some clients also prefer to complete paper-based tests. It may be that they prefer to work on a 1:1 basis in another GRS office where there is not on-line access and paper-based testing is the only option.
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We have recently downloaded MOVE ON screen savers on the computers in the IT room. This was at the suggestion of a MOVE ON adviser/trainer who came to deliver a training day for the ETE tutors and clients in June of this year.

Consequently, when a client switches on a computer, a practice question appears for literacy or numeracy and the client's interest is immediately aroused, especially if they are new to GRS and not aware, as yet, as to what is on offer.

3.5 Reactions from GRS Staff and Clients

Some GRS clients now refer to attending “college”. Education is regarded as “normal” and not connected with the drug world and the clients behave accordingly. In a recent conversation with two clients they thought of GRS as a ”little” college, not as a strict as college, but it is normal and not connected with drugs”.

3.6 Numeracy as a Motivation for Employment

Sometimes some clients are quite happy to access the service in a low profile manner. For example, clients may see their co-ordinators, access relapse prevention or book an interview.

The proposal for the project did not include among the aims that GRS clients would apply for jobs or get jobs, only that it would “prepare” clients to “enable” progression. However, one particular finding from the research is that all the improved maths skills and confidence may not make any difference at all for some people in terms of motivation to go and find employment. Maths may be irrelevant because of other things that are going on in a client’s life. For example:

- Homelessness
- Domestic violence
- Relapse into drug use
- Financial problems
- Abuse
- Family problems
- Mental Health

We realise that there are some clients who probably will not return to employment because the issues indicated above have had an irrevocable impact upon their lives. These clients are still able to access the organisation and the fact they turn up and complete any activity is helping them to move forward in some way. We see clients who regard GRS as their “family” and accessing the service gives them a reason to get up in the morning. They still want achieve qualifications but may never go to work.

For others the lack of a maths qualification was all that was holding them back. An example of the latter is demonstrated in the following case study:

Client M is in his twenties and has recently entered the service as a GRS client. He was referred via the through-care service to the GRS Gloucester DIP co-ordinator. Client M is motivated to change his lifestyle and progress to further education and self-employment. His co-ordinator referred him to the GRS educational activities and he has already achieved Numeracy and Literacy at Levels 1 and 2. Client M is now completing an OCN Levels 2/3 in Spreadsheets and he eventually hopes to become self-employed.
Client M demonstrated how the completion and achievement of on-line tests have acted as the catalyst for change and his progression to use ICT as a vehicle to enter work. His participation in education has not only enhanced his skills but has also acted as integral part of his re-integration in the community and society. Client M also has another educational goal – to complete a course on how to start your own business. This provision is something that GRS hopes to run shortly.

3.7 Employers and Employability

One aspect of the project has been to investigate the most suitable method of job search for our clients. Although twenty GRS clients have obtained full-time work during the past year, through JobcentrePlus, some have not attended ETE provision, some of the clients are precluded from various employment routes such as retail and financial occupations, the search for empathetic employers does takes time.

The Education Officer and one of the IAG consultants visited a local Jobs Fair that had been well advertised. It was thought that some of the represented organisations might be receptive to work placements or just coming in to talk to clients. This was not the case: again, it seemed to be quite a complicated process to gain employment if a person was an offender; if drugs were included, a further barrier was added.

This means that there is no straightforward way for the gains from the Pathfinder, including greater willingness to engage with numeracy education and more familiarity with the use of IT, to be translated into increased employability for clients.

4 Conclusions

Client feedback has suggested that negative experiences as well as teaching at school have affected maths understanding and achievement

We found that many GRS clients have had a negative experience at school and most did not attend regularly from the age eleven onwards. One client admitted that he had always had trouble concentrating for long periods, so he was then “labelled” as troublesome at school because of his lack of concentration. He did not complete any qualifications at school and now feels uncomfortable working in a group. This client has just achieved his first qualification in literacy and now wants to look at completing his Level 1 Numeracy.

We found that the extension of the use of IT-based resources and the introduction of on-line testing have been the catalysts for encouraging GRS clients to participate in numeracy activities

We have found that the introduction of ICT-related activities, particularly around numeracy, have attracted many GRS clients who would not have attended these classes if there was just a paper-based option. Clients will accept the relevance of attending ETE if they know that they will not only enhance their skills, but also gain a qualification in ICT at the same time. Some also need to view gaining qualifications as a means of accessing employment.

The project has motivated clients to participate in numeracy-related activities and raised general awareness around mathematics for both clients and staff

In introducing this software, we found that a number of clients who up till now had shown none or little interest in accessing the learning room, gradually started to realise that:
Maths4Life Stage 2 Pathfinders

- Learning and IT could be interesting and “fun”
- it was a means of meeting new people and making friends
- IT and mathematics were pathways to gain practical skills and qualifications in a safe and supportive environment (for some people, the first certificates they had ever achieved)
- and ultimately, helping our clients to progress towards employment and a life after using drugs, thus reintegrating them back into the local community and society as a whole

This has been a comparatively small project. However, from the evidence that we have gathered it seems that the following have been useful: European Computer Driving Licence (ECDL), Open College Network (OCN) qualifications to include spreadsheets, Desk Top Publishing, Internet and Email and using a database and, perhaps surprisingly, access to on-line National Literacy and Numeracy Tests.

5 References

“I travelled Among Unknown Men”: basic skills tutors’ perceptions of the National Probation Service as a foreign culture and the implications of this for cross-cutting policy[1]. Dr Caroline Hudson Educational Studies, Vol.29, No. 4 December 2003.

Offenders Learning and Skills Service for Adults and Juveniles – Delivery Framework for England, Working document, final draft

Acknowledgements

Maths4Life Team: Institute of Education
GRS clients: Gloucestershire Re-integration Service
Tracy Nield, Tutor: Gloucestershire Re-integration Service
Katy Moss, Tutor: Gloucestershire Re-integration Service
Rachel Longbotham: GPA Finance Officer
Staff from WEA
Anne Cooper: GRS Practice Manager
Cleon Golding: GRS Co-ordinator
Nic Gerard: GRS administrator