

## NATIONAL NUMERACY - FIRM FOUNDATIONS FOR ALL

### What is numeracy?

By numeracy we mean everyday maths. Being numerate goes beyond simply 'doing sums' – it means having the confidence and competence to use numbers to make decisions in everyday life.

### What is the issue?

The Skills for Life Survey 2011 found that 17 million adults are working at Entry Level 3 or below. Over 8 million of these adults are at Entry Level 2 or below - roughly the skills expected of 9 year-olds or younger.

Poor numeracy is a strong indicator of deprivation. Those with good numeracy skills are more likely to be in employment, earn more, and be in good health.

Many UK adults want to improve their maths skills, and feel that they were badly prepared at school for the maths they need in everyday life (YouGov 2013). Yet there is a lack of research and innovation in adult numeracy and many are not sufficiently supported.

### What are we doing about it?

Our initial response to the major issue of low adult numeracy has been the National Numeracy Challenge - a nationwide drive which aims to improve the numeracy skills of 1 million adults by 2018. As part of this drive we have developed the Challenge Online, an interactive and adaptive website which guides users towards resources appropriate to their learning needs.

However, we recognise that the Challenge Online will not meet the needs of everyone, particularly those with very low levels of numeracy, those who struggle with literacy, and those with limited or no access to a computer.

To support these people, we have now begun work on the Firm Foundations for All.

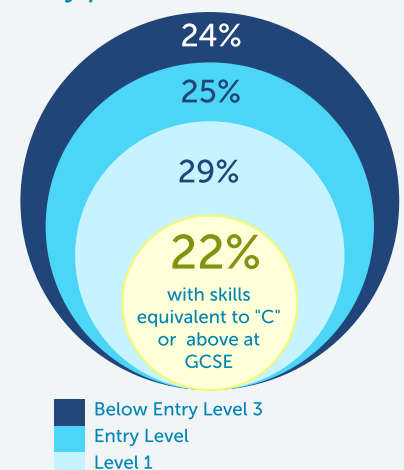
### WHAT THE RESEARCH SAYS

“ Across OECD data globally, good numeracy is the best protection against unemployment, low wages and poor health. ”

Andreas Schleicher, Special Advisor on Education Policy to the OECD's Secretary General

### THE STATE OF NUMERACY

Data from the Skills for Life Survey in England from 2011 shows numeracy is very poor.



## Firm Foundations for All: Aims

- Support UK adults with low levels of numeracy.
- Develop new resources/approaches, exploring the role of technology.
- Tackle negative attitudes - everyone can learn maths.
- Provide adults with a pathway into further numeracy development, either using the Challenge Online or other learning routes.

The initial Firm Foundations for All project is funded by the Paul Hamlyn Foundation and runs from Oct 2013 – Dec 2014.

## How are we doing it?

**Phase 1 - Research:** Oct 2013 – Apr 2014. During this time National Numeracy is conducting a combination of desk and field research, including focus groups with adult learners. We have also put together an Expert Group of professionals with varied experience and specialisms in adult numeracy, and pedagogy.

Through this research, we hope to develop innovative approaches that can transform adult numeracy learning in the UK.

**Phase 2 – Piloting:** Apr – Dec 2014. National Numeracy will develop and trial Firm Foundations for All resources and approaches.

We will look to make the project sustainable and recommendations for scaling up effective practice will be outlined in an end of project report to be submitted to the Paul Hamlyn Foundation in February 2015.

## Firm Foundations for All Future Steps

The current Paul Hamlyn Foundation funded project runs from Oct 2013 – Dec 2014. However, we see this phase as just the beginning and hope to continue to develop resources and support for adults over the coming years.

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“Poor numeracy is the hidden problem that blights the UK economy and ruins individuals’ chances in life.”

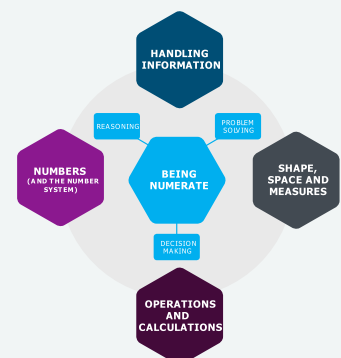
Sir Michael Rake,  
Chairman BT

“With increased competition for jobs it is more important than ever that students keep working at maths and the sciences.”

Nigel Whitehead, Group  
Managing Director, BAE  
systems

## ESSENTIALS OF NUMERACY FOR ALL

This model highlights the interrelated areas of numeracy needed for life and work. This will inform our approaches.



View the full schematic at:  
[www.nationalnumeracy.org.uk/essentialsofnumeracy](http://www.nationalnumeracy.org.uk/essentialsofnumeracy)