

Literacy toolkit

for homelessness organisations

Westminster City Council

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Westminster City Council

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Foreword

I would firstly like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who has contributed to the production of this literacy toolkit.



Cllr Daniel Astaire

Improving reading and writing skills is a crucial tool in helping turn lives around and building a life away from homelessness. Poor literacy can often leave individuals with low self confidence and without the basic practical skills required to maintain accommodation. Many are embarrassed to speak about their literacy problems and try to hide them. This embarrassment and frustration not only holds people back but can contribute to some of the negative behaviour traits that can be found amongst some of the homeless community.

For many individuals in rough sleeping services with literacy problems, going to college feels like an unreachable possibility. Therefore Westminster City Council, in partnership with a range of commissioned services, devised a pilot scheme where individuals can be helped to learn by their peers in a setting in which they are comfortable.

The success of this scheme has been extraordinary. Individuals who previously would not even acknowledge that they had literacy issues have made terrific progress under the program. This toolkit aims to provide similar agencies with examples of how the scheme could be adapted to other settings, and how it can be tailored to match the individual's needs. The small but regular commitment of volunteers makes a huge difference to individuals' lives.

Improving literacy skills can lead to soaring self confidence, and as a result an individual's ability to chart their own course in life is vastly enhanced.

Cllr Daniel Astaire

Cabinet Member for Adult Services and Health
Westminster City Council

Special thanks

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Background to this toolkit

Workers in homelessness organisations are often in contact with adults with poor literacy and other basic skills needs, and thus are ideally placed to identify issues and support people to tackle them. However, so often opportunities are missed. Literacy is rarely discussed and, when it is, college feels like the only option. For many that is a step too far. This toolkit aims to reverse this and show how homelessness organisations can cheaply and effectively maximise opportunities to tackle literacy and other basic skills needs.

It draws upon Westminster City Council's pilot literacy strategy, run during 2011 in their rough sleeping and hostel sector. A hugely successful model was developed and has been rolled out across services in Westminster, securing the runner up prize in the Andy Ludlow Awards 2011. The model involves linking up learners with coaches (another hostel resident, worker or external volunteer) and working together through a phonics-based manual called *Yes We can Read*. Developed in 2010, we believe it is the best tool to teach reading currently on the market and deserves to be present in every hostel, day centre and supported housing office around the country.

The toolkit documents the essential elements of a tried and tested, flexible model that we think all homelessness organisations can use. There should be no barriers, as the costs are low and the peer based approach means special literacy workers are not necessary. It focuses on teaching reading, but ideas on tackling other basic skills needs are also covered. It is a practical toolkit that service managers can use to design models for their particular organisations' circumstances and that will give a good general briefing on literacy for workers taking on the literacy coordinator role we recommend. We hope that the last section on key working with people with a range of basic needs will be useful for all key workers in homelessness organisations.

The success of the model owes much to the original consultation, which sought views from those with poor literacy about the type of help they wanted. Their response was overwhelming: they wanted help within the services they already used. This was the basis from which we created a flexible model that has helped people with a wide range of needs including substance misuse, mental health and dementia. Time and again we have seen that once people tackle their literacy problems they go on to build the confidence to achieve in other areas of their lives.

The extent of the issue

This toolkit does not focus on the prevalence and debilitating effects of poor literacy. Instead the focus is on positive action that can be taken. However, it is important that workers are aware of the issues involved.

There is a dearth of research into low literacy, dyslexia and homelessness. The studies that have been undertaken indicate a high prevalence, e.g. the Thames Reach study¹ found 9% of people with experience of homelessness had a serious reading difficulty and 38% had trouble understanding written materials. These percentages are useful to consider when designing services.

There is a number of reasons for poor reading skills among adults:

- **Lack of parental support** – a background of severe exclusion may mean some parents are unwilling or unable to help their children learn to read while others see little value in formal education.
- **Interrupted schooling** – poor attendance at school due to truancy, expulsion, childhood illness, moving home when in care or bullying can lead to skills never being acquired.
- **Hearing and/or visual problems** – if problems are not detected by parents, carers or teachers, young children with hearing and/or visual problems may struggle to acquire reading skills and over time this can have a detrimental effect on their ability to learn.
- **Dyslexia** – in severe, moderate or mild forms can affect the acquisition of reading skills. It is a genetic condition found in about 10% of the population amongst people of all levels of intelligence. It is characterized by difficulties in reading and spelling, memory and slow processing of verbal information. These problems can persist even when education has been adequate.
- **Lack of interest or motivation** – if children experience any of the problems mentioned above, learning can become a serious struggle for them and many will decide not to bother.

Crucially, a lack of reading skills does not mean a lack of intelligence. However, many non-readers will believe this of themselves and workers need to be equipped with the knowledge to enable them to gently challenge this view.

Research shows that, compared to those with adequate skills, adults with poor basic skills are:

- up to five times more likely to be unemployed
- more likely to have children at an earlier age and to have more children
- more likely to have children who also struggle with basic skills
- more likely to have housing problems
- less likely to be in good health
- less likely to be involved in public life, a community organisation or to vote
- over represented in prisons and young offenders institutions.

This research provides a strong call to action for homelessness organisations to give vulnerable people opportunities to articulate their literacy needs, followed by access to systematic, structured support.

¹ Turning the Key: Portraits of low literacy amongst people with experience of homelessness, Thames Reach 2010

The importance of screening and options for screening

The importance of screening for literacy needs is central to the project. There is a number of possible screening options, two of which are set out below.

The Fast Track Assessment is a tool produced by the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE), specifically designed to be used by non specialist staff to make an early identification of basic skills needs. The tool:

- identifies basic skills needs (those who have literacy below Level 1 and numeracy skills below Entry 3 of the National Standards for Adult Literacy and Numeracy)
- is to be used in 1:1 interviews and is in the form of 20 questions
- takes only 10 minutes to complete and mark.

Copies, along with the guidance instructions, can be purchased from the NIACE website www.niace.org.uk

This tool has been extensively used in Westminster and is useful and easy to use. The assessment covers reading, writing and numeracy. After a period of using the full form, some hostels have condensed the questionnaire to 5 key questions:

1. *Do you have any qualifications in English?*
2. *How often do you read for pleasure (e.g. a newspaper, magazines or books)?*
3. *How often do you need help reading forms or letters?*
4. *How often do you need help filling out forms?*
5. *Would you like help with any aspects of literacy (reading, hand writing or spelling) or numeracy?*

The Thames Reach Literacy Toolkit² provides another screening alternative in the form of the discussion tool questionnaire below.

	Question	Yes	No	Follow up action needed and things to consider for key work
First, let's get some background information on factors that might affect your literacy.	Is English your first language?			
	Do you wear glasses? Do you think you might need glasses?			
	Have you been tested for dyslexia?			
	Did you learn to read and write at school?			

² Turning the Key: Improving the literacy skills of people with experience of homelessness A Thames Reach report summary and toolkit 2010. Available to download at <http://www.thamesreach.org.uk/publications/research-reports/turning-the-key/>

	Question	Yes	No	Follow up action needed and things to consider for key work
Next, let's find out how confident you are doing everyday tasks that involve reading, writing and having conversations.	Do you need help to fill in forms?			
	Do you need help to write letters?			
	Do you need help to read letters?			
	Do you need help to use new routes on public transport?			
	Do you need help to find the things you need in shops?			
	Is your handwriting easy to read?			
	Do you have trouble remembering long lists or instructions?			
	Can you remember the important points from conversations?			
	Can you put ideas into words easily when you speak or write?			
Finally, if you want to get support let's think about what might work for you	Have you been to literacy classes before?			
	Were the classes useful?			
	Would you like to do a course?			
	What other support might you need?			

In terms of timing, assessing within the first month of residency has been judged to be optimal. The point at which resettlement is being planned may be another opportunity to check literacy.

Case study

Screening for literacy when considering resettlement

In 2011 King Georges Hostel introduced a traffic light system for resettlement across the range of independent living skills needed to maintain a tenancy. To progress resettlement plans, residents must demonstrate they are at 'green' with good skills in areas which include: budgeting, health, substance misuse, health and safety, ID, cooking, education, training and employment activities and literacy. Rather than involving a rather softer approach of asking questions about literacy, the assessment involves an everyday task like reading and understanding a housing benefit letter. The system has been introduced to reduce the likelihood of tenancies breaking down because of unaddressed needs.

In a day centre or outreach setting, timing the screening needs to give consideration to whether support services can realistically be provided e.g. for clients whose primary plan is to be reconnected to their home area. Nonetheless, knowledge of a literacy need and being sensitive to this (even whilst not offering services to address it) can be hugely beneficial to working with a client to bring a plan such as reconnection to fruition.

Case study

Turning Point South Westminster Drug and Alcohol Service

Turning Point introduced literacy with a dedicated week, focusing on a blitz of screening, identifying people with needs and potential coaches. Daily events including spoken word performances, speed scrabble, a 'recovery' word mural, presentations on *Yes We Can Read*, what it's like to be a coach and what it's like to be dyslexic were arranged, mixing light hearted and more serious topics.

Helping people with serious reading problems – *Yes We Can Read*

Very few adults are unable to read at all. However, for all those on the continuum that ranges from recognising a few words up to being able to read some things, there is an excellent product called *Yes We Can Read* by Libby Coleman and Nick Ainley that has been tried and tested across a range of homelessness settings.

The book is based on a one to one phonics approach, breaking learning into tiny steps. Anyone who can read can coach a learner to read in around 6 months. It has a unique alphabet that uses 3D pictures to represent letters, as many people with dyslexia see letters as 3D objects. Starting with this simple method for learning the sounds of individual letters (phonics), the learner discovers how to blend sounds together, soon articulating whole words. Those words which don't follow the rules are learned in groups of 'Look Write Say' words. The manual is specifically designed with dyslexic people in mind, although it is equally beneficial for those who have struggled to learn to read for other reasons.

There is a range of reasons why this product is so successful. It is easy to use and well structured for coaches, so no experience is needed. The material is fun and encourages reading for meaning. Crucially the one to one model, with the emphasis on encouragement and praise, helps tackle the issues of self esteem that can be eroded through years of poor literacy. Learners immediately get the benefits of their new skills. One learner, Michael, said after his third session "I never thought I could do this and if I can do this just imagine what else I can do!"

The following section describes the model created in Westminster to support the use of *Yes We Can Read*.

Ways for homelessness organisations to identify and support people with serious reading problems

The system primarily enables hostel residents who can read to teach hostel residents who cannot, on a one to one basis. This is a model used very successfully in prisons (the Toe by Toe scheme). The system is supported by hostel/day centre workers taking on the role of literacy coordinators and supplemented by volunteers from other existing schemes. The roles and components of the system are outlined below.

Literacy coordinators – a hostel or day centre worker who has the following responsibilities:

- ensures literacy screening takes place with all new residents
- maintains a log of residents interested in literacy services and brokers options
- maintains a resource file of information on best practice and literacy services for other key workers to access (college prospectuses, library resources, spelling, writing and numeracy resources, dyslexia help etc)
- liaises with external volunteers
- recruits, trains and supports peer coaches (using a person specification and training manual).

Coaches – volunteer hostel residents or day centre users who are able to read fluently and willing to teach another resident in their service to read and ideally are able to offer a three month commitment. Coaches have the following responsibilities:

- agrees a learning contract with the learner, covering how often and for how long the one to one lessons will be (ideally five times a week for 20 mins)
- attends supervision with the literacy coordinator.

External volunteer coaches – it is recognised that there will not always be a ready pool of coaches within each service. A pool of external volunteers can therefore be created to supplement in-hostel coaches. Their responsibilities are:

- agrees a learning contract with the learner, covering how often and for how long one to one lessons will take place
- where possible provides the learner with continuity when residents move on from hostels.

In the Westminster model, to keep things simple, external volunteers are part of each organisation's own volunteering programme, which manages CRBs, work based skills training, code of conduct, safety, confidentiality, boundaries etc. The risks of matching peer coaches to learners are considered manageable without asking peers to be part of a formal volunteering process provided both people are service users of the same organisation, so the risks can be managed by the literacy coordinator.

Matching coaches to learners

Literacy coordinators in each hostel manage the practicalities of matching. This tends to involve hostel workers working directly to coach learners with other prominent chaotic support needs, and peer and external coaches being matched to more stable learners willing and able to commit to set times. Some learners find being coached by a friend in their hostel works well, including less organised learners. Hostel resident coaches are particularly successful in attracting learners who have not revealed their reading difficulties to staff.

Case study

Recruiting volunteers

Passage House has created a range of options delivered on a bespoke one to one basis using external volunteers. Recruitment of volunteers for this scheme has been very easy. Free adverts were placed in The Guardian and received a massive response, indicating this line of volunteering is very popular; probably because people know what huge impact literacy can have on a person's life. Clients with fluent reading skills are encouraged to become coaches too. This not only gives clients the opportunity to help each other but also enables the scheme to provide a diverse range of coaches ready to fit to learners' needs. Passage House is now expanding the options offered to help with writing, spelling and numeracy tailored to learner's interests and needs to ensure that work is relevant and engaging to the learner. A beginners book club has been also set up.

The Mayor of London's Team London scheme is a useful place to advertise for external volunteers. The aim of Team London is to make volunteering easier to do and easier to find out about, and to get more Londoners giving their time to help make London a better place. Team London welcomes any organisation seeking volunteers to make a difference in identified key areas, including literacy, and can help organisations find volunteers, promote their work, and recognise the great work that volunteers are doing.

For more information please visit www.london.gov.uk/teamlondon or email teamlondon@london.gov.uk

Training needs

A key feature of *Yes We Can Read* is that no training is needed to be a coach. However, experience has shown it is useful to have some extra materials on literacy to brief potential literacy coordinators and coaches. A series of learning materials has been collated in the appendices of this toolkit to provide a resource bank. They include:

- advice for coaches
- a checklist explaining the benefits of *Yes We Can Read* (for coaches and learners)
- coach person specification.

Creating opportunities for literacy coordinators across organisations to come together and share ideas and tips has also been found to be very beneficial.

Fundraising

Experience from schemes around the country has shown fundraising to cover the cost of *Yes We Can Read* manuals can be relatively easy, as literacy seems to be an attractive area. Funds have been raised from a variety of sources including local banks, supermarkets, newspapers and radio stations.

If funds are limited, materials can be used as reference copies with each learner using a pad of tracing paper to work through books without permanently marking them.

Learners moving on

The experience in Westminster is that a proportion of learners will move on before completing *Yes We Can Read*. The manual is totally transferable and learners and coaches should plan for this in advance and identify potential coaches in the new local area.

Using *Yes We Can Read* with people with English as a second language

Although not designed as a tool for those with English as a second language, *Yes We Can Read* can work well with people who have good verbal English and vocabulary but struggle with reading English.

Addressing broader basic skills needs

For people who cannot read fluently, a one to one reading coach using *Yes We Can Read* can be a better option than college as it allows for the pace and content to be directly tailored to the individual's specific needs. If people have some reading ability, you still are recommended to use *Yes We Can Read* from the beginning. The learner is likely to make quick progress through the first sections and eventually reach a point where they start learning new things. This approach may also benefit writing skills as *Yes We Can Read* will bolster confidence and improve transferable skills. It is especially beneficial for people who picked up some reading and writing skills at school but were not taught using phonics.

For those who can read fluently but who are seeking help with writing, spelling, comprehension and numeracy, colleges provide dedicated services to which clients should be signposted. However, for many the step is a big leap and there is much that homelessness organisations can do to build confidence to work towards more formal learning settings. The decision tree in Appendix 1 summarises the options based on learners' situations. The following sections offer a series of ideas that homelessness workers who are not basic skills experts can use, although recruiting volunteers with a teaching background has proved to be particularly beneficial.

Writing and spelling

A range of tried and tested writing and spelling materials has been identified and is listed in Appendix 3, but understanding the particular needs of the learner must be the starting point.

Most students not confident at spelling are reluctant writers. A simple exercise to help people improve their writing and spelling is to encourage people to write for five minutes a day. It can be on any theme, but something uplifting might give the task more appeal, such as a "gratitude journal" – three things I was grateful for today.

The worker can then go through the journal and pick out the areas the person is having difficulty with (for example particular spellings or punctuation) and work on those areas using worksheets from the resource packs. The range of exercises available helps make learners aware of different styles of everyday writing and gives plenty of opportunities for experimentation.

Encouraging reading and book clubs

For people who can read but still struggle with writing, encouraging independent reading is vital to extend word recognition and provide exposure to vocabulary and different writing styles.

Libraries can be very helpful in creating packages to support emerging readers, and with initiatives such as book clubs. They often have a "quick reads" range that is in an easy to read, topical and engaging format. Holding a book club might be a good way to encourage reading.

Numeracy

For numeracy, the numeracy pack by the Basic Skills Agency has been tried and tested in Westminster and has proved to be a good resource for use either on a one to one or group basis. The pack offers a wide variety of activities and suggestions for their use by both teachers and students, including: handling data; counting and number concepts; the 'four rules of numbers'; fractions, decimals, percentages, ratio and proportion; and money.

None of these suggestions can replace the structured approach taught by basic skills experts that people would benefit from at college, but they can offer a taster of how learning can be satisfying and an indication that improvement is achievable.

Key working with people with a range of basic skills needs

Understanding literacy needs and the impacts these have on day to day life is an important part of support planning. The ideas in this section are designed to provide a foundation for sensitive key work and conversations about literacy strengths and needs.

Covering up the problem

Screening for literacy will hopefully encourage service users to be open about their needs, but some clients may find it hard to disclose their issues. Over the years clients with basic skills needs may have developed a number of coping strategies designed to cover up their problem. The list below is from a resource created by the St Mungos Skills Team and may help identify people in this group.

- Unwillingness to write anything.
- Always giving excuses:



- Ignoring some or all written communication.
- Inability to follow directions or read maps.
- Problems with personal organisation.
- Filling in the wrong part of the form e.g. writing first name in surname box.
- Asking for an item on the menu but pointing to another one – often beginning with the same letter, e.g. asking for a hot dog and pointing at the word hamburger.
- Mixing up sequences, reversing numbers e.g. telephone numbers, post codes, door numbers. This could be a sign of dyslexia.
- Body language such as having tense hands when holding a pen.
- Becoming angry or frustrated when presented with paperwork.

- A change in handwriting, for example returning forms with different handwriting.
- Acting, for example flicking through newspapers.

Creating productive and accessible key working

People who have literacy needs may have a level of anxiety about their lack of skills. Effective key workers put people at ease. Confidence breeds confidence and change is easier if you are confident of success.

Screening tools will identify basic skills needs but it is also important to identify strengths. A useful idea is to identify “skill spots” – things the service user can do independently - and use support planning to give the service user responsibilities that use this skill. Confidence can be built by discussing how these skills can be used in work or training.

The following paragraphs from the Thames Reach Literacy Toolkit list some practical tips for ensuring support work is sensitive to three of the key areas affected by literacy needs - reading, listening and understanding and organisation skills.

Reading

Understanding written information might be difficult and stressful for a person with poor literacy:

- keep it short and simple: do not overload a page with too much information
- use font styles that are easiest to read: for example Arial, Tahoma, or Microsoft Sans Serif
- use size 12 or larger font
- use 1.5 or double line spaces
- use clear headings to explain the context of the text
- use simple, clear language
- use bullet points where possible
- to make print less tiring, try printing on off white or coloured paper.

Listening and understanding

Some people have trouble understanding verbal communication or putting their own thoughts across:

- meet in a quiet place
- be explicit in what you say
- repeat information in different ways
- keep it brief
- provide information in small chunks
- give the service user time to reflect and express their ideas
- ask the service user to tell you what they understood at stages throughout the meeting
- at the end of the meeting go over the main points again
- provide a visual reminder of key points.

Organisation

Service users with literacy needs may also have difficulties with their organisational skills. Good habits may take longer to become automatic because memory can easily become overloaded. You can support helpful skills and strategies such as:

- keeping a diary or personal organiser
- prioritising tasks using to do lists
- promoting good filing systems (for example for DWP paperwork, health details etc)
- using post it notes and other visual reminders of upcoming appointments and tasks.

Wondering if dyslexia is the reason for literacy difficulties?

For some people having an explanation for all the difficulties they have had learning to read is really important. The following information might help workers discuss the possibility with service users.

Dyslexia might be an issue if:

- you have been told you have dyslexia
- despite trying, you have found learning to read very difficult
- low literacy is not explained by missed schooling or quality of teaching
- you have a weak working memory (not explained in the past by trauma, substance abuse or other lifestyle causes)
- you were made to feel 'lazy' or 'stupid' as a child.

People with dyslexia may also have difficulties with these specific skills:

- reading unfamiliar words
- understanding or remembering what has just been read
- pronunciation of longer words
- expression – finding the right word when you speak or write
- remembering spoken information
- left and right are still confused
- poor personal organisation and sense of time.

These difficulties are not a sign of low intelligence but they may be a sign of dyslexia.

There are simple screening tests and full assessments available. It should be borne in mind that it is more difficult to accurately identify dyslexia in people whose childhood education was disrupted and who may now have weak memories due to lifestyle factors, including substance abuse or other factors such as mental health issues.

Dyslexia screening tests are usually administered in places such as adult education colleges or job centres. Even the shortest course at college entitles the learner to access their student support team and this is a good route to access dyslexia screening tests. However, they do not provide detailed information about strengths and weaknesses; for this a full assessment is beneficial. However, full assessments are expensive and lengthy, taking two hours or more to complete. Funds may be raised through access to work grants, employers, colleges or charities. For people with serious dyslexia this course of action may be beneficial to access additional support in the future.

Building motivation to address literacy needs

Adults with low level literacy skills have been living and coping with their needs for a long time. Improving their literacy may not be one of their priorities. Talking about how literacy can make

the connection between these skills and personal goals can be very motivating. Goals could include writing letters, getting into work, going to college or reading to children. Helping the service user find their own personal reason can be a very important first step.

Adult education college courses

Local adult education colleges usually offer courses for English speakers who want to develop basic skills in reading and writing. Courses tend to be free and a pre-enrolment assessment interview is held to ensure the right level is found.

The advantages of attending college may include:

- the feeling of being part of a mainstream service
- the option to continue at college on one of the huge variety of courses
- the social element
- achieving a widely recognised certificate at the end of the course
- help with dyslexia – some colleges have a specific remit.

The disadvantages of attending a college based course may include:

- the institutional nature of college, which may feel overwhelming for those who had bad experiences at school
- the bigger group sizes
- the length of the course (typically a term or a year in length)
- some courses combine literacy and numeracy and a client may not have needs in both areas
- the fixed intake dates (typically September and January)
- targets relating to attendance.

For those considering college, thinking through the potential barriers in advance can be helpful. The following table from the Thames Reach Toolkit identifies potential barriers and suggested solutions:

Potential barriers	Suggested Solutions
Poor organizational skills	
These skills often go hand in hand with literacy needs. They can make all the difference to both starting and sticking with a course.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Buy a diary for the service user and spend time explaining how to use it. • Post signs at home with the dates and times of sessions. • Offer reminder phone calls or texts. • Plan when homework will be completed.
Navigating college administration	
<p>Going to college may be a new and scary experience.</p> <p>Signing up for a course often involves substantial literacy skills, which can be off-putting.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Find out how to apply ahead of time so you know what to expect and what paperwork to bring. • Offer to go to the college with the service user to enrol. • Stay for a coffee afterwards to talk about their experience.
Maintaining motivation	
Learning literacy skills requires dedication and practice. It is hard work and progress may be slow at times. But keep going and the rewards are huge.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk about it! Use keywork sessions to review progress and discuss problems. • Reinforce success – offer praise in words and actions. As reading improves, shift the responsibility for reading tasks to the service user.

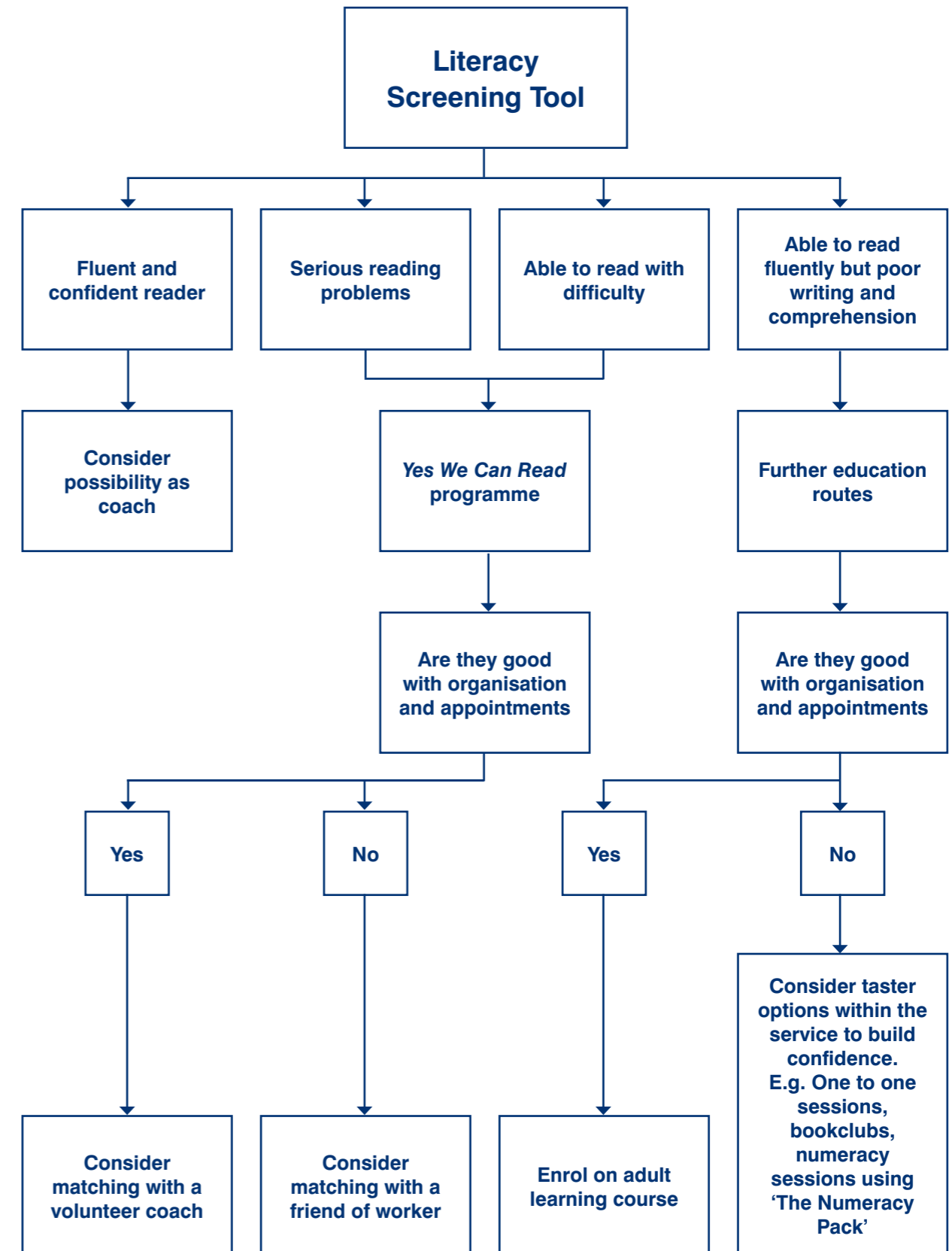
The Thames Reach Toolkit also contains a discussion tool for key workers to help structure conversations with service users thinking of taking up support.

Question	Answer
I want to improve my skills because.....	
I would like to learn ...(e.g. in a group, on my own, online, during the day, in the evening, near to home)	
I expect the course to be .. (e.g. difficult, fun, exciting, slow-going, loud, full of people younger than me)	
In order to succeed, I think I'll have to make these changes in my life... (e.g. cut down on drinking, make time to do homework and practice, work with others)	
By the end of the course, I expect to be able to... (e.g. fill out forms on my own, travel to new places, read a map, write a letter, get a job)	
If I need support, I can get it from...	

We hope this toolkit will go a long way to meeting unmet need. The follow appendices contain extra sources of help and information.

Appendix 1

Decision Tree



Appendix 2

Literacy resources on the internet

There is a huge number of free websites devoted to literacy. Below is a selection which has an emphasis on adult literacy combined with practical situations, although websites geared at children may also be useful.

Edexcel

Edexcel is a leading provider of qualifications.

<http://www.edexcel.com/quals/skillsforlife/alan/entry/Pages/default.aspx>

The practice tests available cover literacy and numeracy in practical situations and you can pick the level to suit the learner.

BBC Skillswise website

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/skillswise/words/grammar/sentencebasics/whatisasentence/tutor.shtml>

Contains a wide variety of factsheets, worksheets, quizzes and games to help improve literacy and numeracy skills.

Skillsworkshop

<http://www.skillsworkshop.org>

An adult basic skills resource centre for students and tutors with over 1200 free functional skills resources (maths, English and life skills). The crowded layout and font is initially off putting but there is a huge range of material including topical and fun stuff such as football or The Apprentice.

Excellent Gateway- Read Write Plus

<http://rwp.excellencegateway.org.uk/literacy>

A series of worksheet style units with audio clips, starting at a basic level, with practical scenarios including first day in a new job and using a computer.

Handwriting

There are lots of resources to help learners practice handwriting including websites that let you create your own templates and exercises about pencil grip, posture and multi sensory writing.

<http://www.handwritingworksheets.com/>

<http://www.theschoolrun.com/downloads/handwriting-resources>

Literacyactionnet

Literacyactionnet provides literacy guidance, resources and best practice examples.

<http://www.lemosandcrane.co.uk/literacyactionnet/login.php?>

British Dyslexia Association

<http://www.bdadyslexia.org.uk/>

Appendix 3

Resources for improving spelling and writing

The following publications are from Brown and Brown and have been used in Westminster.

Left to Write

A book of photocopy masters providing ideas and exercises for practice in writing.

Everyday Spelling

A workbook providing practice in some of the basics of spelling.

Spelling In Practice

A book of photocopy masters for adult students, providing information and exercises on spelling basics.

Spelling Worksheets

A book of photocopy masters providing information and exercises on spelling for adult students.

Appendix 4

A checklist for explaining the benefits of *Yes We Can Read*

For Learners

- The lessons are one to one
- People rarely get the chance for free, one to one reading lessons
- The learning is for complete beginners and for those who can read a little bit and want to get better
- The learning will go at the learner's own pace
- Confidence and self esteem will improve
- Learning to read is a great way to improve your life.

For Coaches

- You will develop skills in helping and supporting others
- It looks good on your CV especially if you are planning a career in counselling, coaching, youth work, support work or teaching
- You will find it rewarding.

Appendix 5

Literacy Coach – Person Specification

Skills

- The ability to read fluently
- The ability to sound out the letters of the alphabet correctly
- The ability to actively listen to others and show empathy
- The ability to support adult learning in a non patronising way
- The ability to give positive feedback to learners.

Knowledge

- An understanding of the *Yes We Can Read* manual and how it works
- An understanding of the barriers to learning that non-readers can face.

Personal Qualities

You need:

- patience
- a non judgemental attitude
- to be encouraging and motivating
- an interest in learning and an enthusiasm for reading
- respect for others
- to be organised and committed
- confidence to ask someone for help and advice if you are unsure.

Literacy Coach – Role Description

- To coach at least one learner and support them in developing their reading skills using the *Yes We Can Read* manual, ideally offering them a minimum three month commitment.
- To make an agreement with the learner about how often, when and where you will meet.

Appendix 6

Advice for coaches

1. Read the introduction to the *Yes We Can Read* manual.
2. Read the Coach pages carefully and always ask for clarification from a Literacy Coordinator if needed.
3. Make sure you can say the sounds of the letters yourself. If not ask someone who knows.
4. Always turn up on time to meet your learner.
5. Always use the first few minutes of each session to find out how your learner is feeling, and then recap on the last session.
6. Find out if your learner should be wearing glasses to read.
7. Find out if your learner would benefit from a coloured overlay to reduce glare from the white page of the book.
8. Find out if your learner has a hearing impairment. It may affect which side s/he prefers you to sit.
9. Allow the learner to have ownership of his/her manual.
10. Encourage independence in your learner, for example let him/her open the book at the right page.
11. Try to sit at right-angles to your learner so that you have a clear view of the pages without invading his/her personal space or being too overbearing.
12. Make sure you have privacy.
13. Recognise overload in your learner and encourage him/her to recognise it too. If your learner is struggling, suggest you both sit back and have a chat for a couple of minutes before you start again.
14. Realise that some sounds will be impossible for your learner to get to grips with if English is not his/her first language or if s/he has a strong regional accent.
15. Realise that your learner will have good days and bad days.
16. Encourage at all times.
17. Make sure your feedback is specific and appropriate. Your learner will soon get tired of you telling him/her that everything is 'fantastic!' all the time.
18. Encourage your learner to apply his/her new reading skills as soon as s/he feels confident.
19. Realise that every learner is different.
20. Don't get despondent if you think your learner is making slow progress. Progress is relative.
21. Try and finish each session on a positive note.
22. Enjoy your coaching.
23. Always ask for help if you are not sure of anything.
24. Remember that you really are helping to improve lives.

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