

# Case Study National Skills Survey and Longitudinal Trials



## Challenge

Following the National Skills Surveys of Adult Literacy and Numeracy (in 2003 and 2011, undertaken by TNS-BMRB and AlphaPlus), it became clear that although the government had invested heavily in adult basic skills education over 10 years since 2002, the skills of the population had not increased by much. Further research was needed to explore why – were people learning and then forgetting their skills? Was teaching ineffective? Did changes in the population (immigration for example) have an impact?

## Solution

Working again with TNS-BMRB, AlphaPlus developed new assessment instruments designed to measure literacy and numeracy against the new Functional Skills curriculum (which replaced Skills for Life, Key Skills and Basic Skills programmes). These new assessments (available on-screen and on-paper) measure learning gain on a IRT-calibrated numerical scale from Entry Level to Level 2 (Key Stage 1 to approximately GCSE grade C) and can measure changes quantitatively (not just level by level, as for the public examinations), including small

changes of less than a single level.

Using a Randomised Controlled Trial, the research aimed to test the effectiveness (in terms of skills gained during their course) of different models of teaching and learning of adult basic English and maths provision and assess which is most effective for different types of learners. The research then followed the progress of learners after their course to investigate the factors affecting how their skills improved or atrophied over time.

The development of around 800 items took three months, followed by two months of piloting and calibration before live use. Tests were delivered on-screen and have worked successfully as research instruments.

AlphaPlus also supported delivery in colleges and in-home assessment.

This project demonstrates AlphaPlus' capability to create ground-breaking assessment tools for use in high stakes research settings, utilising advanced assessment techniques to make accurate fine measurements of learning.



We help make educational assessments better

AlphaPlus is an education service business that specialises in **standards, assessment and certification**. We help our clients design, develop, deploy and evaluate **qualifications** and their **underpinning assessments**.

Our work spans the public and private sectors, schools, colleges, vocational and professional learning.

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## Our role

- Developing assessment instruments to measure literacy and numeracy
- Piloting the assessments
- Calibration of the items from Entry Level to Level 2
- Supporting delivery

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