

Numeracy Champions in the Workplace

A National Numeracy project, supported by the Ufi VocTech Trust



Why Numeracy Champions?

The most recent Skills for Life survey shows that half of adults have primary school levels of functional numeracy. Yet participation in adult maths provision is low, and has been consistently decreasing each year.

There is a visible 'gap' between the huge number of adults who would benefit from improved confidence with numbers, and their participation in the support that is freely available to them.

At National Numeracy, we've found that to bridge this gap, it helps to:

- get adults talking about how they feel,
- support them to increase their confidence,
- identify the reasons why better numeracy would benefit them – National Numeracy's previous research found that to get a job, to get on at work, to support children, or to manage money are the leading motivations for adults to improve their numeracy,
- make sure they understand that as adults, they CAN improve their numeracy, which National Numeracy has found to be the dominant factor linked to an adult improving their numeracy (see the [Building a Numerate Nation](#) report),
- and then support them to get started with appropriate provision, such as the National Numeracy Challenge, or locally available maths courses.

This support can be powerful if it doesn't come from the government or from an institution, but instead from a colleague or a friend.

Hence the idea for Numeracy Champions was born.

What is a Numeracy Champion?

A Numeracy Champion does not teach maths. They:

- have positive conversations with colleagues, or adults in the community, about numeracy,
- support people who feel anxious about maths,
- engage and inspire others to develop a more positive approach towards numbers,
- then signpost them to take the first steps in improving their numeracy skills, using the National Numeracy Challenge or locally available provision.

In short, Numeracy Champions **get adults started** in improving their numeracy.



'Time to Talk Numbers' in action.

What was the 'Numeracy Champions in the Workplace' project?

National Numeracy was delighted to gain support from Ufi VocTech Trust in late 2021, to increase the scale and impact of the Numeracy Champions programme. The aims were to:

1 ESTABLISH

Establish a network of 500 Numeracy Champions in workplaces across the UK.

2 INCREASE

Increase the impact of Numeracy Champions.

3 PLAN

Plan how to sustainably scale the programme beyond the end of project.

So, what happened?

The project was a great success!

1. A network of over 1,400 Numeracy Champions was established across the UK.
2. Significant progress was made to increase the impact of trained Champions, and the workplace programme is now being evaluated as part of Randomised Control Trials by the Department for Education.
3. The programme formed the heart of National Numeracy's provision to local authorities, as part of the government's Multiply initiative to improve adult numeracy. This has led to opportunities to sustain this work over the coming years.

Plans are in place to continue to expand the network and impact through 2024 and beyond.



Celebrating the work of Numeracy Champions with the Lord Mayor at Mansion House in London.

Who can be a Numeracy Champion?

As part of this project, we have trained health and well-being reps, HR professionals, line managers, team leaders, local authority staff, Job Centre Plus Work Coaches, career development officers, librarians, Citizens Advice officers, financial support workers, tutors, union representatives, primary school staff, community engagement officers, volunteer co-ordinators, early years practitioners, and many others.

Anyone who is in a position to support other adults to feel more confident with numbers can train to be a Numeracy Champion!

“I jumped at the chance to become a Numeracy Champion for so many reasons: to support our amazing apprentices who through no fault of their own have barriers to numeracy - the reward in seeing someone achieve something they never thought was possible is selfishly, an incredible thing. Secondly, I have young children. I don't want them to grow up with the same fear and panic of numeracy and take that into their adult lives. Thirdly, for my own continual learning and development.”

How can people train to be a Numeracy Champion?

The training is delivered online in two sessions, typically a week apart, and an accredited CPD certificate is given on completion. The training employs an interactive mix of videos, polls,

presentations, case studies and discussions, and a full pack of resources and activity workbook are provided. The sessions are mixed, with participants from across the UK.

“The training made me feel more confident to support other people with improving their maths skills.”

“For me it's been transformational.”

“Being able to be part of someone's journey, there's nothing better for me, so that would be my advice; just do it!”



A Numeracy Champion supporting National Numeracy Day.

How do we keep in touch with Champions once they're trained?

Once trained, Numeracy Champions get ongoing support from National Numeracy, and invitations to regular Forums, which were established as part of this project, offering the chance to share success stories and best practice.

Also, thanks to this project, a digital hub has now been launched within the National Numeracy Challenge learning platform, where each Numeracy Champion can access their materials, find out about upcoming events, Forums and campaigns, and let National Numeracy know what they've been up to.

There is also a Linked In group which Champions use to keep up to date, and help each other in their roles.



Numeracy Champions join local councillors in Leicestershire.

How did the 'Numeracy Champions in the Workplace' project get started?

The project began in December 2021 with a lengthy 'define' phase, running until April 2022. This proved to be hugely valuable in ensuring that the planned activity would ultimately support target beneficiaries: adults in the workplace with low confidence with numbers.

154 adults with low confidence with numbers were surveyed on how Numeracy Champions could helpfully support them, and this informed the way the programme was developed during the project. The most popular things which were suggested as helpful support were:

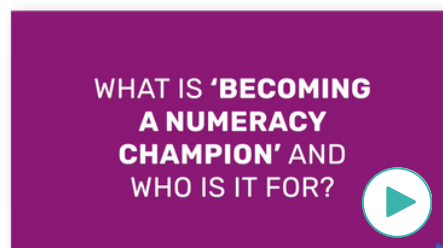
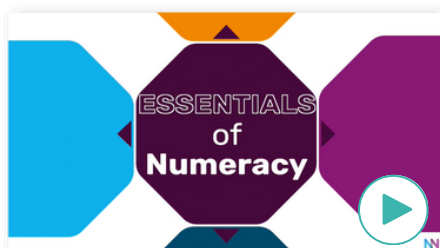
- Encouragement to get started and then keep going with improving skills and confidence,
- Help in understanding what provision is available,
- Workshops to help improve confidence with numbers.

Existing Numeracy Champions were also interviewed during the 'define' phase, to find out how they could be better supported, how they would like to be able to access their materials, and what barriers tend to get in the way of them supporting others.

What development happened during the project?

The content of the training for Numeracy Champions was adapted from work in the healthcare sector, where it was initially developed, into suitable content for retail. This was tested and refined with the Co-Op in Lincolnshire, and then broadened to support any type of workplace. The programme was developed in other ways too:

- A new framework for informally chatting to colleagues about maths was created and launched, called 'Time to Talk Numbers'.
- One-hour in person 'Confidence with Numbers' and 'Help Your Child Love Maths!' workshops were further developed so that Numeracy Champions can deliver them.
- New branding and materials were developed for Numeracy Champions, and several supportive videos were created, including:
 - Essentials of Numeracy: <https://youtu.be/6dD1Xcc8dlk>
 - BANC Recruitment: <https://youtu.be/E5zISFyBFdc>
 - Confidence with Numbers sessions: <https://youtu.be/tJK4d7APNkU>
- During the project we learned much more about barriers to understanding maths, such as dyscalculia and other 'maths difficulties'. We therefore established partnerships with organisations including the Dyscalculia Network, who can support adults with these, and also included useful information for Numeracy Champions within their training.
- Different types of voucher incentive schemes were tested, to see if they increased the engagement of trained Numeracy Champions.
- The main barrier cited by Champions to them getting going with supporting their colleagues was a 'lack of time' once they returned to their day jobs. We therefore made the training sessions more flexible, and more directive, ultimately focusing on just one or two calls-to-action for trained Champions, with ongoing support to make sure action is taken.



Key learnings

We learned a lot during the project, including:

1. For what is essentially a volunteering activity, making the training and subsequent activity rewarding in itself, and then recognising success, are the best incentives – financial incentives are less effective.
2. It is important to recruit the right people to train as Champions, who are not only motivated to help others, but already have a network of adults in place for them to support.
3. The training needs to be flexible and easy to attend, and interactive, so that participants are able to explore their own feelings, and hear from others too.
4. The training needs to be directive, with a simple call-to-action – as with any training, it’s easy for the day job to take over once Champions return to their workplace.
5. Getting buy-in from an organisation and then engaging colleagues with improving their numeracy is hard! Champions need ongoing support with this.

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“My biggest achievement as a Champion so far was supporting a colleague to boost her numeracy confidence and to feel less anxious and stressed about her Functional Skills exam.”

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“Maths doesn’t feel like a big scary thing for people in this building now.”

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“The most useful part was understanding the barriers that people face and how we can relate maths to everyday life. Maths is in everything and it’s important to change the rhetoric around maths and negativity.”

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An amazing effort!

Engaging organisations to put their staff forward to train as Numeracy Champions is consistently challenging. Awareness of the issue with numeracy in the UK, and the benefits of improvement, are still low.

So, we’ve had to work hard to promote and engage the programme, using webinars, events, and regular mail-outs to attract potential Champions.

An amazing effort from the team led to 1,403 Numeracy Champions being trained by the end of the project!

Good timing

The timing of the support from Ufi VocTech Trust with the project turned out to be great - the Department for Education’s Multiply initiative launched at the same time as the project began, in April 2022. This meant that we were able to use the programme we were creating to support local authorities with their work as part of Multiply. This in turn led to greater reach, increased learning, and inclusion in the DfE’s randomised control trials, which will evaluate the effectiveness of Numeracy Champions in the workplace.



A Numeracy Champion (and Maths Magician!) promoting number confidence in Cambridgeshire & Peterborough.

How do we track the impact Champions are having?

It is an ongoing challenge to keep in touch with Champions once they are trained and capture the impact of the support they are providing. This project has enabled us to improve this by:

- Making sure that we recruit potential Champions who already have a cohort of adults to support in place.
- Adjusting the conclusion of the training – now, in order to complete the training and claim their CPD certificate, Champions have to send us evidence that they have introduced their role to their cohort and have shared the National Numeracy Challenge with the adults they are supporting.
- We have put in place mechanisms, using the new digital hub, for Champions who run ‘Time to Talk Numbers’, ‘Confidence with Numbers’ or ‘Help Your Child Love Maths’ sessions to report back to us on the number of attendees and how many then reported an increase in confidence.
- We use the new Forums, where Champions tell us about the impact they are having, to collect success stories and case studies, which we then share.
- For 2024, we are building the impact of Champions’ activity into our new organisational KPIs.

What next?

Building on the success of this project, we will adapt the programme from April 2024 onwards so that it is more directive, and its impact more measurable.

We’ll introduce one training programme for

Numeracy Champions who will support colleagues at work, and one for Champions who will support schools and families.

We’ll introduce regular exclusive webinars for trained Champions at which we’ll focus on particular topics such as dyscalculia, getting the best out of the National Numeracy Challenge, etc.

We aim to:

- Train a further 1,000 Numeracy Champions during 2024.
- Include the programme at the heart of our Numeracy Support Packages for local areas.
- Continue to grow our reach as part of Year 3 of the Multiply initiative and identify the means to continue sustainable growth beyond Multiply, from 2025 onwards.
- Continue to develop the digital hub for Numeracy Champions, according to their feedback.



Tower Hamlets Council has thrown itself into supporting Numeracy Champions.

Thank you!

It was a wonderful project, which also supported the continued provision of the National Numeracy Challenge learning platform, and development of our new Corporate Volunteering programme.

Thank-you to everyone at the Ufi VocTech Trust for amazing support throughout the project!

Get in touch

If you'd like to find out how you, or your colleagues, can train to be a Numeracy Champion, just email programmes@nationalnumeracy.org.uk.

"It's helped me personally to understand my barrier around maths and what's contributed to that, and also, how I can break it down, and how I can help others to break it down."

"I now realise that building up confidence is the key to unlocking the fear of numbers."

National Numeracy is a charity dedicated to helping people feel confident with numbers and using everyday maths. Our mission is to empower children and adults in the UK to get on with numbers so they can fulfil their potential at work, home and school. Our work improves how people understand and work with numbers in everyday life, sparking better opportunities and brighter futures.

National Numeracy is a registered company (company no: 7886294) and charity (charity no: 1145669).

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