

A story on the BBC news website about basic skills from 2003 when I was 35 years old and teaching in London

The Department for Education and Skills blamed "decades of neglect" for figures showing millions of people lacking basic literacy and numeracy skills. The survey found 47% of the adults in England - or 15 million people - had a lower level of mathematical knowledge than was needed to gain a grade G at GCSE. Some 21% - or 6.8 million - were less numerate than the standard set for 11 year olds in national tests. Meanwhile, 16% of adults had sub-GCSE literacy, with 5% failing to achieve the expertise required of 11 year olds.

DfES findings, based on a survey of 8,730 16 to 65 year olds in England, found a strong link between numeracy and literacy and higher wages. Some 68% of full-time workers earning more than 20,000 a year had gained at least one GCSE at grade C or above. The CBI estimates that poor skills cost the British economy 10bn a year.

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/education/3227263.stm>

A story from the Guardian newspaper in 2007 a year after I left my teaching post and was actively looking for work with my PGCE

The Department for Education and Skills (DfES) uses qualifications as the proxy for literacy and numeracy, and Skills for Life targets anyone over 16 who doesn't have the equivalent of an A*-C GCSE in English and maths. This means that four in five of all adults are included in the target, as 82% of adults don't have a A*-C GCSE or equivalent in English and maths.

<https://www.theguardian.com/education/2007/jan/30/furthereducation.educationguardian2>