

Strategy 2025-2028

nationalnumeracy.org.uk



The UK's numeracy crisis

We're in the grip of a numeracy crisis. Around half of working-age people have the numeracy skills of a primary school child.^(1,2) Poor numeracy costs the UK economy up to £25 billion a year.⁽¹⁾ It's holding us back, and it needs to change.

Not getting on with numbers blights lives and livelihoods, contributing to pervasive problems from unemployment^(1,2) to poor health^(1,3) and debt.^(1,4)

Low numeracy can be a lifelong barrier to social mobility.⁽⁵⁾ The strongest predictor of a person's numeracy skills in the UK is their socio-economic background.⁽⁶⁾

Improving skills, confidence and attitudes to numbers and maths makes a real difference to people's lives by opening up educational, employment and financial opportunities that lead to brighter futures.

National Numeracy is the UK's only charity dedicated to everyday maths. We aim to boost social mobility and inclusion through numeracy in communities where the need is greatest.

We empower adults and children to feel confident using numbers in everyday life, helping them thrive at work, home and school.

National Numeracy's work since 2012 has shown that improving numeracy can drive opportunities for everyone to progress, and be the best that they can be, without being hampered by socio-economic disadvantage.

With a pronounced gap in number confidence between men and women,⁽⁷⁾ and anxiety about numbers passing on from one generation to the next,⁽⁸⁾ we need to stop this cycle now.

Our new strategy aims to do just that.

Sam Sims,
Chief Executive,
National Numeracy



Perdita Fraser,
Chair, National Numeracy



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Left: Nadia, one of the winners of our Number Heroes competition



Introduction

Our mission

We empower people to thrive by using numeracy to open up opportunities and access brighter futures, targeting communities where the need is greatest.

Right: National Numeracy
Ambassadors Bobby Seagull and Katya
Jones launch National Numeracy Day





Above: Cath, a Capital One employee, taking part in our corporate volunteering programme for schools

Our ambition for 2028

Our ambition is to empower half a million people to thrive using numeracy by 2028.

This is a measure of participation in our programmes, cumulatively between 2025-2028 inclusive.

Who we serve

Everyone can access our resources, but our priority is supporting people with low number confidence or numeracy skills in communities where the need is greatest.



Left: Christine, a numeracy improver in Edinburgh

How we make change happen

1. **Directly supporting people** to get started on number confidence and numeracy skills improvement through face-to-face and online interventions with beneficiaries.
2. **Working with those who support others** such as the teachers, parents and carers who support children, or employers that support their staff.
3. **Working hand-in-hand in the community** with partners who have a deep connection to the people and needs of particular places.
4. **Driving positive change** by working with and influencing those who are able to effect change in local and national government, in the business community and in civil society.
5. **Building a sustainable independent charity** that continually learns, improves and adheres to deeply held values.
6. **Developing the in-house culture and capability**, systems, technology and ways of working that support our people to do their best work.

Right: Amelia, one of the winners of our Number Heroes competition



The Three Big Changes we want to see.

Everything outlined in our strategy contributes to bringing about these Three Big Changes.

1

Numeracy for Equality

Numeracy improvement driving social mobility and gender equality

2

Numeracy for Success

A positive attitude to maths in the UK from cradle to career

3

Numeracy for Community

Communities empowered by number confidence

““

You give people a chance, and sometimes that's all someone needs to better themselves.

Alma,
numeracy improver





Framework

Our framework to support those in communities where the need is greatest

1

Numeracy for Equality

Impact goals

- Improved numeracy
- Social mobility and gender equality through numeracy
- Greater life opportunities

Priorities to 2028

- Reach more of those in need
- Build numeracy skills and number confidence
- Embed social mobility and gender in all our work
- Compelling research & insight

2

Numeracy for Success

Impact goals

- Positive attitudes to numbers and maths among adults and children
- Number confident parents, carers and teachers

Priorities to 2028

- Work & Employability programme
- Schools & Families programme
- Early Years programme
- Corporate Volunteering
- High profile campaigns

3

Numeracy for Community

Impact goals

- Empower communities to take action
- Improved numeracy at the community level

Priorities to 2028

- Working in areas of greatest need
- Local Numeracy Champions driving change

BIG CHANGE



Numeracy for Equality

Everyone has the opportunity to develop numeracy throughout life, regardless of socio-economic background or gender

Why do we need Numeracy for Equality?

Social Mobility

Poor numeracy limits learning opportunities and career choices, throwing up a significant, potentially lifelong barrier to social mobility.

- The strongest predictor of a person's numeracy level in the UK is their socio-economic background.⁽⁶⁾
- Lower attainment and number confidence are linked to a greater negative career impact, which is a fundamental barrier to social mobility (earnings, career choices and progression).⁽⁵⁾

Gender Equality

Having low number confidence affects aspirations, limits educational and career choices, and can prevent women from accessing learning and applying for jobs in key sectors of the UK economy.

- Nearly three times more women (59%) than men (21%) report that their earnings have been negatively impacted as a result of not having a maths qualification.⁽⁹⁾
- 54% of British girls do not feel confident learning maths, compared to 41% of boys, despite girls performing well at GCSE maths.⁽¹⁰⁾

- Women are more than twice as anxious as men about using maths and numbers. 12% of men say they experience this anxiety, while 24% of women say they do.⁽¹¹⁾

“”

For me, the National Numeracy Challenge took away the fear – not just the fear of the numbers themselves, but the fear that I couldn't do it.

Jo, numeracy improver

Introduction to Numeracy for equality

The strongest predictor of a person's numeracy level in the UK is their socio-economic background.⁽⁶⁾

The numeracy gap between those from lower socio-economic backgrounds and their wealthier peers starts young and can last a lifetime.⁽¹²⁾ This is a major barrier to social mobility.

Low numeracy can prevent people from accessing work and building a sustainable career, and increases vulnerability to debt, fraud and unemployment.⁽¹⁻⁴⁾

This is felt most acutely by women and girls,⁽⁹⁾ whereby a pervasive number confidence divide holds millions of people back from fulfilling their potential.

Crucially, this can be changed. Supporting people to improve their numeracy will help address these systemic inequalities, level the playing field and create a wealth of opportunities.

Below: Cara, a numeracy improver in Brighton



Impact goals

1

Improved numeracy levels of those in need

Long-term outcome

We will reach and support people with low numeracy in communities where the need is greatest to improve their number confidence and numeracy skills.

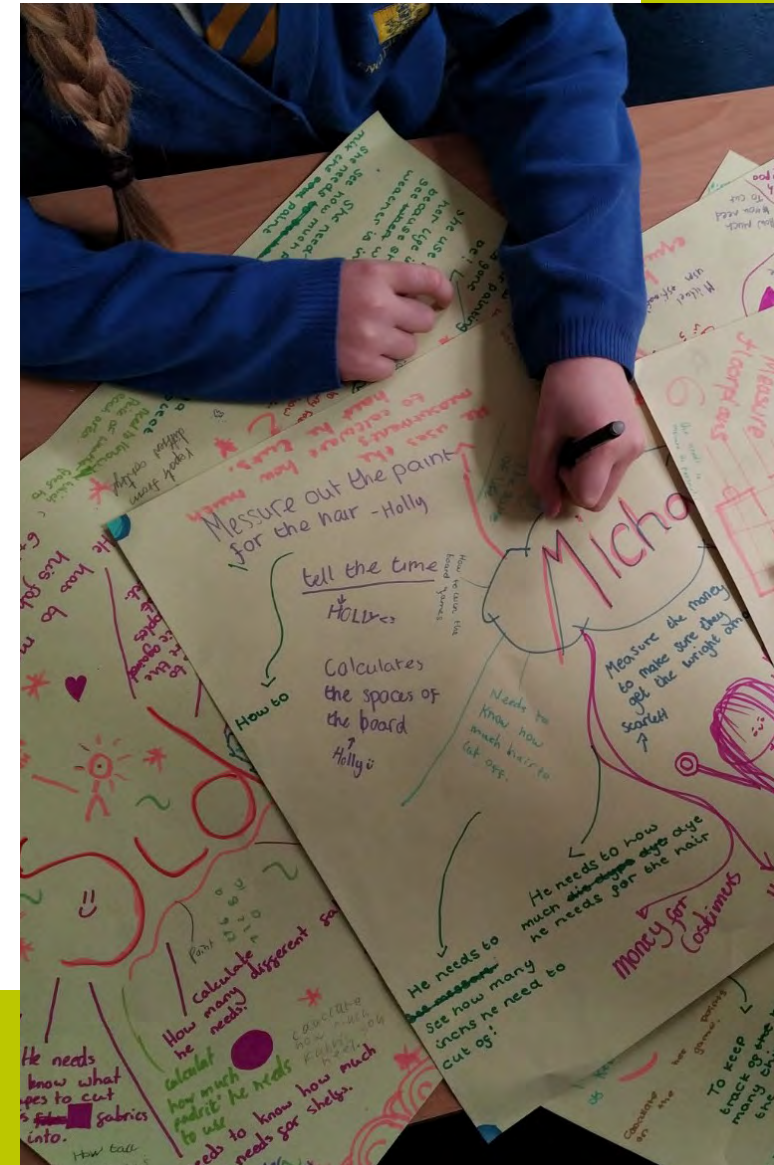
2

Increased social mobility and gender equality through numeracy

Long-term outcome

We will drive better life opportunities by equipping people to get into work, build sustainable careers and feel more in control of their finances. Our work will help tackle the gender number confidence gap.

Right: Children taking part in our corporate volunteering programme for schools



Priorities

1.1

Reaching more of those in need

Millions of people in communities struggle with numbers and maths throughout their everyday lives. Struggling can make us feel vulnerable and anxious, often leading us to believe that we just can't improve and closed off to support that may be available.

We will prioritise reaching those in need, breaking down barriers and helping people to take their first steps towards believing that change is possible.

1.2

Building confidence and skills

Low confidence with numbers and maths holds people back. It is the single greatest barrier preventing those who struggle from improving their numeracy skills.⁽⁷⁾

We will prioritise supporting people to build their confidence and take their first steps to improving their skills.

1.3

Embedding social mobility and gender equality in all our work

Low numeracy can prevent people from accessing work and increases vulnerability to unemployment and debt,⁽¹⁻⁴⁾ compounding socio-economic disadvantage and inequalities that are felt most acutely by women and girls.⁽⁹⁾

We will prioritise harnessing numeracy to drive social mobility and ensuring all our work combats the gender number confidence gap.

1.4

Driving collective action through compelling research and insight to influence policy and practice

Long-term, systemic change will require a societal shift, brought about by people and organisations working together.

We will prioritise producing and sharing research and insight on how numeracy can help drive social mobility and gender equality. We will use our insight to influence policy and practice in order to generate collective action resulting in real change.

BIG CHANGE

2

Numeracy for Success

**All of society
understands the
value that numeracy
can bring to their
lives, has the
confidence to thrive
and holds the belief
that we can all get
on with numbers**

Why do we need Numeracy for Success?

- Maths anxiety is rife amongst the UK population. Nearly a third of UK adults (32%) say they are not a “numbers person”, and 18% say that maths and numbers make them feel anxious.⁽¹¹⁾
- The greatest barriers to improving numeracy are low confidence with numbers, not understanding or appreciating the value of numeracy and having a lower appetite for learning.⁽⁷⁾
- Just one in five people (20%) say they would be most proud of their child if they were very good at maths and numbers, while more than twice as many (45%) would be most proud if their child were very good at reading and writing.⁽¹¹⁾
- Where 62% of adults would feel embarrassed to say they were no good at reading and writing, just 45% would feel embarrassed to say they were bad at numbers and maths. This difference is seen year in, year out with people being less worried about having poor numeracy by an average of 17 percentage points.⁽¹¹⁾



Jason, a numeracy improver in Castleford

Introduction to Numeracy for Success

Negative attitudes towards numbers and maths are prevalent in the UK, with millions of people believing they are ‘just not a maths person’.

While the reasons for this are complex, one thing is clear: there is disconnect between the often-abstract maths we learn at school and our everyday lives, as children and adults.

Improving the numeracy of the nation requires a cultural shift in attitudes: from a negative culture of fear and anxiety to a positive, number confident culture in which prevailing attitudes recognise and embrace the value of numeracy to our daily lives.

This shift cannot be achieved by focussing support on either adults or children alone.

Amongst the strongest factors affecting the attitudes of children are the adults that support them, at home and at school.^(14,15)

From the National Numeracy Challenge, we know that supporting better outcomes for the children in their care is often the strongest motivating factor for adults to improve their numeracy.

As such, a permanent step change in attitudes across society requires a generational shift – number confident adults are the most powerful lever towards a more number confident next generation.

Achieving this generational shift to a number positive culture is our second Big Change.

Right: National Numeracy Day celebrations in Tower Hamlets, London



Impact goals

1

Positive attitudes to everyday maths across communities

Long-term outcome

We will support people to develop a positive attitude towards the value of everyday maths in order to boost life opportunities both for them and the children in their care, as well as for generations to come.

2

Number confident parents, carers and educators

Long-term outcome

We will create a powerful intergenerational cycle of number confidence by empowering adults who support and work with children to be confident using numbers and everyday maths.

Right: Ellie, from This Girl Talks Money, taking part in our corporate volunteering programme for schools



Priorities

2.1

Employability

Low numeracy costs UK employers up to an estimated £25 billion each year in lost earnings, as well as holding millions of adults back from achieving their career potential.⁽¹⁾

Adults without a Level 2 (GCSE grade C/4) maths qualification observe a greater effect on their earnings, career choices and job performance.⁽⁵⁾

Low numeracy holds adults back at work, with 26% saying they would be put off from applying for jobs involving numbers or data.⁽¹¹⁾

Employers, in partnership with local authorities, play a vital role in addressing this,

with 42% of adults surveyed saying they would try to improve their numeracy if their employer offered support.⁽¹³⁾

We will prioritise working in partnership with employers to improve the confidence and skills of the workforce by providing a programme of support including training Numeracy Champions, Confidence with Numbers workshops, the National Numeracy Challenge, and participation in our campaigns.

We will prioritise working with local and combined authorities across all four nations to improve attitudes to maths, confidence with numbers, and numeracy skills across the whole of the UK.

2.2

Increasing support for schools & families

The confidence and attitudes of children are deeply influenced by the adults that support them. It's why the drive to support the children in our care is one of the most powerful motivations for improving our own confidence, attitudes and skills when it comes to numbers and maths.

Sharing how maths is used throughout our everyday lives is a powerful way of supporting young people to understand the value of numeracy and the positive role it can play in helping them beyond school.

We will prioritise mounting powerful national campaigns as a means to influence policy makers and promote the value of numeracy, through engaging activities, resources, content, and the stories of relatable role models, via ambassadors, champions and across a variety of media.

Priorities (continued)

2.3

Developing a programme to support the adults who support Early Years children

Our very first years are the most important to developing the fundamental building blocks of numeracy. We are highly influenced by the number confidence and attitudes of the adults around us – parents, carers, educators and those that look after us.

We will prioritise creating and piloting a programme that aims to develop number confidence and maths-positive attitudes amongst parents, carers and educators of children in the Early Years.

2.4

Corporate Volunteering

Many young people finish school feeling that they won't need to do any more maths. We are working to change this perception by training adult volunteers to speak at assembly or in class about how they use maths in their careers.

We will prioritise growing our Corporate Volunteering Programme in order to promote positive attitudes towards the value of maths with primary school children.

2.5

Building awareness and changing culture through national campaigns

For too many people, the idea of using numbers and maths creates fear and anxiety. For many others, the maths we learn at school seems to bear little resemblance to the maths we use in our everyday lives.

We will prioritise powerful national campaigns to influence policy makers and promote the value of numeracy through engaging activities and resources, the stories of relatable role models, via ambassadors and champions and across a variety of media.

Below: National Numeracy Ambassador Timi Merriman-Johnson, aka Mr MoneyJar, leads a Big Number Natter in a London library



BIG CHANGE

3

**Numeracy
for Community**

**Communities
are motivated,
empowered and
supported to
improve numeracy
at the local
level, creating
opportunities
throughout the lives
of local people**

Why do we need Numeracy for Community?

There is a huge variation across the UK in terms of peoples's numeracy skills and number confidence.⁽¹⁾

- In some major regions of the UK there is a high and consistent need for support across the whole region.
- In other regions of the UK the need for support is far more varied, with some places within the region needing more support than others.

- While 58% of working-age people in the UK are estimated to have low numeracy skills, resulting in lost earnings of up to £25billion, this varies greatly by region and nation. Taking England as an example, it is as high as 65% in North East (resulting in as much as £1.2billion in lost earnings) and as low as 51% of working-age people in the South East (resulting in as much as £2.2billion in lost earnings).⁽¹⁾

All stats from the UK Numeracy Index except where noted.⁽⁶⁾



Left: Maryam,
a numeracy
improver in
Edinburgh

Introduction to Numeracy for Community

The issue of low numeracy is spread unevenly throughout the country. Different communities experience both the issue and its consequences in different ways.

So too is the case in addressing this pervasive issue. The solutions required to boost numeracy levels must be as localised as the systemic inequalities that give rise to low numeracy.

This means employing a whole-community approach, involving employers and community organisations, as well both the public and private sectors.

It means providing the means to effect change, without dictating the ways to achieve it.

And it requires an approach that can be adapted and tailored, and one which promotes local agency, partnership and collaboration.

Crucially, communities are not only best placed to lead this change but more likely to translate change into opportunity at the local level.

“”

Without number confidence I wouldn't have had the courage to take on a new role, and I wouldn't be applying for the kinds of jobs that I am.

**Jason,
Numeracy Improver**

Impact goals

1

Communities most in need empowered and equipped with the means to boost number confidence and numeracy skills

Long-term outcome

We will support communities with the training, tools and resources to boost the numeracy levels of the people within them, with an emphasis on local partnership and collaboration.

2

Improved number confidence and numeracy skills within communities most in need

Long-term outcome

The communities we help empower and equip will take action to boost the numeracy levels of their members and communities as a whole.

Right: Nikki Chatha from Tower Hamlets celebrating National Numeracy Day



Priorities

3.1

Taking a place-based approach to supporting communities in greatest need

The issue of low numeracy is widespread and detrimentally affects individuals and communities across the length and breadth of the UK.

We will prioritise a place-based approach by focusing our efforts, programmes and activity in areas of greatest need, as identified within the UK Numeracy Index.

3.2

Empowering and equipping communities through Numeracy Champions

Low numeracy is a widespread and deeply entrenched issue, reinforced by intergenerational cycles and compounded by inequality and disadvantage.

Solutions must therefore be woven throughout communities and across generations, replacing negative cycles with self-perpetuating positive cycles that build momentum over time.

We will prioritise training and equipping a critical mass of community Numeracy Champions in partnership with local employers, public sector organisations, community organisations and charities.

“”

I like doing the Family Maths Toolkit activities because it gives me an opportunity to bond with my dad, because he normally helps me.

Child beneficiary



How we work

Understanding our impact

We are committed to tracking and understanding our progress towards the goals set out in our strategic plan.

We will track the progress in the following ways:

1. **Monitoring:** Identify key metrics and data points relevant to our goals and implement tools and systems for efficient data collection.
2. **Evaluation:** Analyse and evaluate our effectiveness by regularly reviewing performance metrics against benchmarks.
3. **Demonstrating impact:** Demonstrate our progress, effectiveness and impact to ensure our programmes and interventions are driving positive changes in the lives of our beneficiaries. Highlight success stories and case studies of our beneficiaries.
4. **Driving improvement:** Use insights from beneficiaries and partners to drive improvement in organisational and programmatic performance.
5. **Contributing insight:** Conduct thorough and ongoing research to gather data and insights that inform our work and contribute to the numeracy research evidence base.

Right: Confidence with Numbers session with South London & Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust



Our values

Our “Core Four” values define what’s important to us. They guide our actions, drive our decision-making, and exemplify how we serve individuals and communities.



1

Community commitment

We put people first. We give 100% to our people, partners and communities.

2

Trusted experts

We are the UK’s numeracy experts. We use data and evidence to offer credible, trusted insight.

3

Empowered futures

We empower people for positive change. We listen, build confidence and enable people to gain greater control over their futures.

4

Always learning

We believe change can happen. We are persistent and passionate in supporting people, partners and communities to accomplish their goals.

Left: National Numeracy Ambassador Peter Sawkins reads to children in an Edinburgh library in association with Education Scotland

Our commitment to environmental, social and governance standards

As an independent charity with a social mission, National Numeracy is passionately committed to, and constantly reviewing and improving, its Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) standards.

Our partnerships help meet our shared ESG goals.

National Numeracy's ESG measures include, but are not limited to, the following. A full list is available on request.

Environment

- We are committed to protecting the environment through sustainable practices and an environmental sustainability policy in our staff handbook.

Social

- We are committed to fair, equitable practices aligned to the Fair Work First criteria, and we are a Living Wage Employer.
- In partnership with our staff, we are dedicated to comprehensively understanding, monitoring, and enhancing our efforts in equality, diversity, and inclusion.

- We prioritise the wellbeing and satisfaction of our employees with initiatives such as trained mental health first aiders and an employee assistance programme.
- We offer flexible working to help reduce barriers that may disproportionately affect women and contribute to the gender pay gap.

Governance

- We have a gender-balanced governance structure; We are committed to having gender-balanced Leadership Team
- We commit to operating with integrity, embodying our "Core Four" values.



How we created this strategy

Our strategic plan seeks to help determine where our work, in partnership with others, will have the greatest impact.

We wanted it to reflect a wide and rich variety of authentic opinions about our charity, our work, our ambitions and the contexts within which we operate.

So, we mounted the most comprehensive consultation this charity has ever undertaken.

We consulted widely, with staff, external stakeholders, volunteers and more.

This strategy recognises the challenges faced both by our beneficiaries and the rapidly-changing context within which we work.

Over the past 12 years, we have gained unique knowledge and insight into how people best respond to numeracy improvement initiatives.

So, our research and data was considered carefully while creating this plan.

As a result, this strategic plan sets out how we can make the greatest difference by working closely with the people and places who need our help the most.

Left: Celebrating National Numeracy Day with Somerset Skills & Learning

Join us

As National Numeracy continues to grow, we're immensely grateful for our partners' and supporters' commitment and their belief in our work as a vehicle for positive change.

Our new strategy sets out a new vision allowing us to work with communities where there is the greatest need and support more people than ever to take steps to improve their numeracy. Could you join us?

Working with us brings a host of strategic benefits and we'd be delighted to discuss the ways we can work together.

Please email partnerships@nationalnumeracy.org.uk to arrange a chat.

Contact us

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Charity registered in England and Wales
Charity No: 1145669
Company No: 7886294



Thank you

We are very grateful to the many people and organisations who gave their time and expertise in helping us create this strategy, including our staff and trustees, local and national partners and supporters, the National Numeracy Leadership Council and our Strategic Pro Bono Partner, Oliver Wyman.

Above: National Numeracy taking part in the Lord Mayor's Show

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Below: Celebrating National
Numeracy Day 2024

