Foundation Learning Support

Foundation Learning champions' training programme

Coherent delivery of programmes

Learning outcomes

This resource should help you to:

- understand what 'coherent delivery' means when applied to Foundation Learning programmes
- understand the key features of effective practice in coherent delivery of programmes
- understand the importance to the learner of a coherent and meaningful learning experience
- consider how coherent your current Entry and Level 1 offer is
- identify some key actions to help you improve the coherence of your Foundation Learning provision

Understanding coherent delivery

Learners on Foundation Learning programmes should have access to a coherent, integrated offer that includes:

- vocational or subject-based learning: 8–40 credits;
- functional skills: 15 credits;
- personal and social development skills: 3 – 21 credits.

It is expected that a Foundation Learning programme will normally include 18– 70 credits in total. The overall size and the way in which the three different curriculum elements are weighted will vary according to the learner's individual starting point and their planned destination.

Teaching and learning for the three components of individual learning programmes should be active, with the generic skills contextualised wherever possible. This will help the learner to better understand how each element of their programme moves them from their starting point to their planned destination (e.g. an apprenticeship or a supported employment position).

Learners usually learn best when they understand *why* they are doing what they are doing, and the context for that learning is meaningful to them. The way the provider combines the different curriculum elements into a single, integrated Foundation Learning programme is therefore very important.

Case Study Activity 1
Building a coherent programme

This activity should help you understand how the different components of a learner's programme can be meaningfully integrated.

Gary is part way through a 12-month custodial sentence. When he is released, he plans to get trained as a painter and decorator. With the help of information, advice and guidance (IAG) staff in the prison, he has already picked out the Level 2 course he plans to apply for. In the longer term, he sees self-employment as his best option for getting work.

At the moment Gary has very low literacy levels, poor numeracy skills and some basic self-taught ICT skills. He has done some painting and decorating, mostly for friends and family on a casual basis, but has no formal training.

Gary has reasonably good personal and social skills. He is fairly confident and communicates well with other people.

On the basis of:

- information gathered through initial assessment;
- the entry requirements for the course Gary wants to progress to;
- the skills he is going to need to succeed both on the course and as a self-employed painter and decorator…

Gary's tutors have decided that his programme should consist of:

- a small Level 1 vocational award focused on practical skills development;

NOCN Level 1 Award in Progression
Developing wall-papering skills (3 credits)
Preparing ceiling and walls for decoration (1 credit)
Using painting skills for internal ceilings and walls (3 credits)

- functional skills at different levels taking into account his current level of ability and the level of skill he will need to progress;

City & Guilds Entry 3 Functional Skills in English (5 credits)
City & Guilds Entry 3 Functional Skills in Maths (5 credits)
City & Guilds Level 1 Functional Skills in ICT (5 credits)

- a small personal and social development award at Level 1 that focuses on the key employability skills Gary needs to develop.

Edexcel Level 1 Award in Work Skills
Solving work-related problems (2 credits)
Building working relationships with customers (1 credit)

Please note that these qualifications are not being recommended over others but represent the choices of an individual provider.

How might you integrate Gary's programme? Use flipchart paper to create a visual representation of your group's thoughts and write some notes to go with your diagram to explain how you have integrated Gary's programme and why you have chosen to do it this way.

Painting and decorating

Employability skills

ICT

Literacy

Numeracy
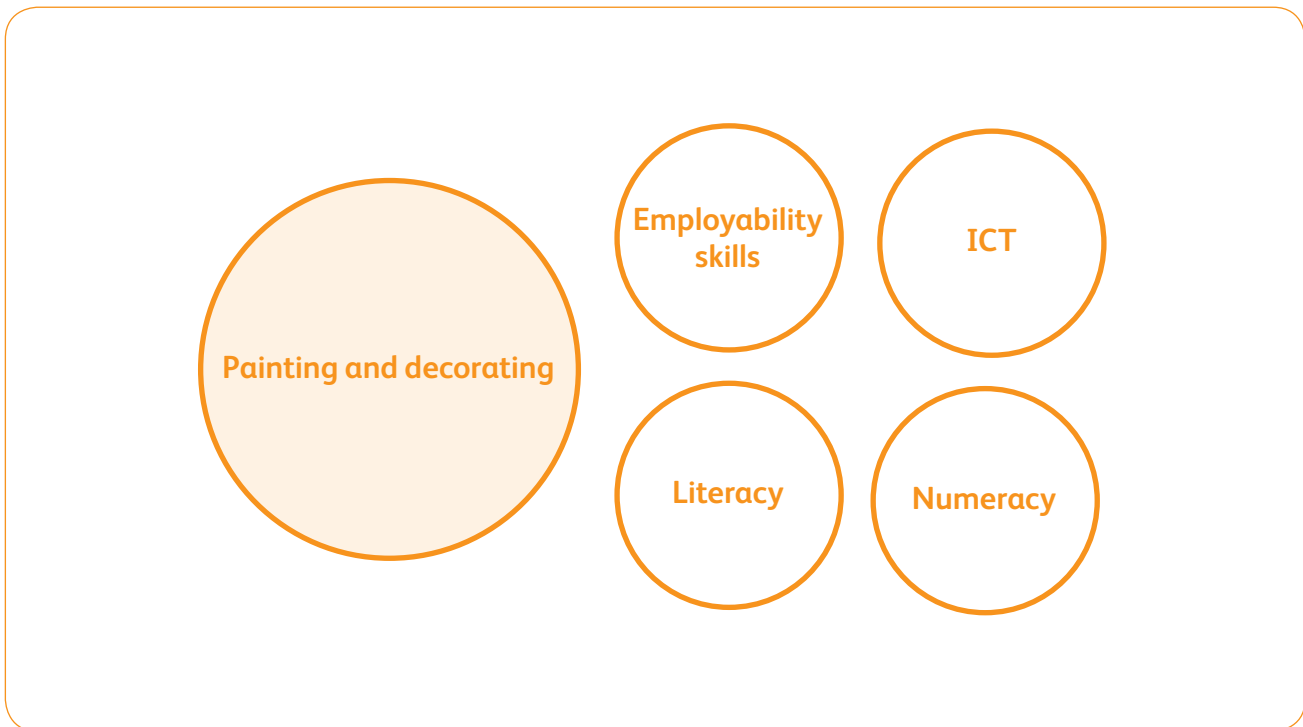
Case Study Activity
Building a coherent programme –
how Gary's tutors visualised his programme

ICT

Literacy

Painting and decorating

Employability skills

Numeracy
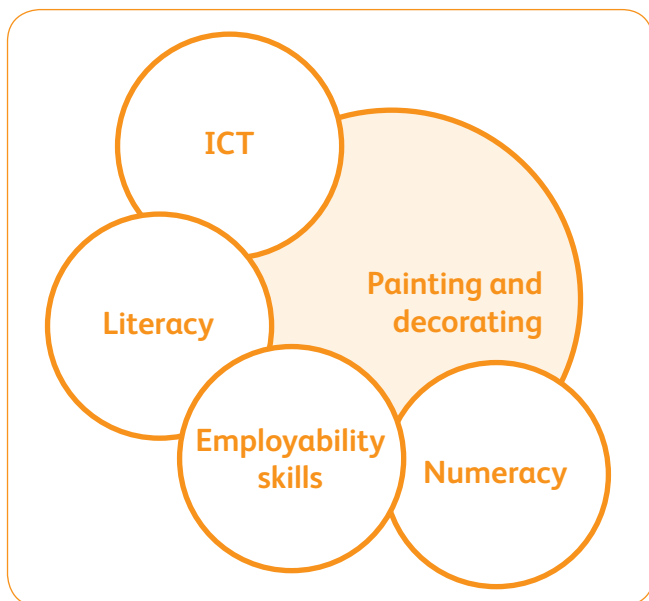
How Gary's programme was integrated

For each of the functional skills, Gary needed some discrete delivery to fill in gaps that were partly a result of poor attendance at school. This was most significant in English where he needed to develop his reading skills and to work on his spelling and punctuation. There were also some basic mathematical concepts that we needed to help him develop and some specific ICT applications that he had not encountered before.

However, we ensured that opportunities to develop and practise the functional skills were also embedded in the vocational learning. Our basic skills lead tutor worked with our vocational tutors to map the functional skills across all the vocational courses. There is also on-going communication between them so that each knows what's going on and cross-referencing can happen.

Literacy also cuts across the employability skills work and parts of ICT. We work hard to point out, for example, that the skills used in the spoken part of Functional English are the same as those used in talking to customers. When you produce a document in ICT, such as a sales invoice, you want to make sure that it is punctuated and spelt properly.

All the employability skills are delivered by the vocational tutor with reference to the appropriate sector. Some of Gary's work-related problems we also linked to numeracy. For example, how do you quote for a decorating job as a self-employed person? This helped Gary to understand that he really needed the numeracy skills – they were not just something we were making him do for the sake of it.

Reflecting on your own provision

■ How close was your description of Gary's programme to what he actually experienced?

■ Would you say your own Foundation Learning programmes are more or less integrated than Gary's?

■ How might you make improvements to the way in which you deliver Foundation Learning programmes to ensure that learners are getting a coherent experience?

■ With whom might you make a map of your own Foundation Learning programmes and use it as a discussion tool to help you plan for increased coherence?

Coherence across partnerships

Foundation Learning programmes are often delivered in different settings and by more than one provider, or by staff from several different departments in larger organisations. Given this delivery model, there is a risk that the learning programme may become fragmented and that learners fail to understand how the different elements combine to form a coherent whole.

Where programmes are offered in partnership and learners are working with more than one provider, it will be particularly important to ensure that the different elements of the curriculum are pulled together in a way that is meaningful to the learner. It is also essential that the lead provider takes responsibility for tracking learner progress across the whole programme and for sharing that information with delivery partners.

It will be important to ensure that the work of the different staff involved in delivery is coordinated so that it results in a coherent programme and a meaningful experience for the learner.

Tutors will need to be involved in joint planning of programmes, a shared approach to reviewing learner progress and a coordinated approach to assessing and recording learners' achievements. Effective communication across staff involved is essential.

Characteristics of effective practice in coherent delivery

Characteristics of effective practice in coherent delivery of Foundation Learning programmes include:

- sharing initial assessment outcomes across all relevant staff;

- all-staff involvement in planning personalised programmes;

- individual tutors and learners understanding how the different elements of the programme contribute to helping the learner progress to their chosen destination;

- staff awareness of a learner's whole programme to enable planned opportunities for developing and practising skills across the curriculum;

- regular and detailed communication between staff to enable specific issues or problems to be picked up and addressed;

- all-staff contribution to on-going reviews and learners' reflections fed back to all staff after each review;

- opportunities for assessment identified and exploited across the curriculum, as appropriate.

Case Study Activity 2
Coherence from the learner's point of view

A large FE provider decided to shadow one of their learners across two days of their Foundation Learning programme as part of a self-evaluation exercise. The provider wanted to understand just how coherent the course was from a learner perspective. An experienced support worker accompanied the learner throughout the two days, including tutorial time, literacy and numeracy sessions, an afternoon's vocational session (catering) and a day on placement at a local hotel.

The learner in question was a young man, Jamie, who had applied to the college for a Level 2 catering course but did not meet the entry requirements. He had been directed onto a Foundation Learning programme as a stepping stone towards the Level 2 course. When the shadowing took place he was hoping to get onto an apprenticeship in catering at the end of his course.

The support worker was asked to reflect on

■ how smoothly the different elements of Jamie's programme fitted together and how clearly they related to his planned destination

■ whether aspects of literacy and numeracy were explicitly addressed in the catering session

■ whether catering was used as a context for the literacy and numeracy sessions

■ where personal and social development (PSD) were explicitly addressed and how this related to Jamie's identified PSD needs

■ whether Jamie was able to practise any of the skills addressed in the college catering session while on placement

■ whether tutorial time was used to pull the programme together

The support worker was asked to prioritise five areas where she had observed a lack of coherence and to suggest actions for improvement. She recorded the following.

Issue	Suggested improvement
Each individual aspect of Jamie's programme was directly relevant to his ambition to become a catering apprentice but he couldn't see that. He didn't know why he had to go to a numeracy class, even though Level 1 numeracy is an entry requirement for the apprenticeship.	Make it much more explicit to learners why they are doing what they are doing.
There weren't any direct links between work placement activity and what had been going on in class. They'd been covering customer service at college. The next day Jamie was serving food to delegates at a conference at the hotel. When he was being briefed about answering questions about the food, nobody referred directly to what they'd just done at college.	Learners could have a very brief log book where they show their placement supervisor what they've been doing in college that week. This could include vocational, PSD and functional skills.
Nobody mentioned personal and social development in the two days I was with Jamie. Jamie has a target around developing better interpersonal skills. He could have been generating evidence for the unit he's doing when he was talking to customers at the hotel and cross-referring it to the customer service unit he was doing in the vocational session.	All teaching staff need to know what personal development targets learners are working towards and how they can help learners meet them.
There were lots of references to catering in the literacy and numeracy sessions but no reference to literacy or numeracy in the catering session.	Vocational staff need to be more explicit about how functional skills are integral to the vocational learning.
Only the vocational tutor and staff at the work placement seemed to know that Jamie wants to be a catering apprentice.	All staff involved with a learner need to know what their aspirations are so that they can use these goals to motivate learners and show them that they are interested in them as individuals.

Reflecting on your own provision

■ How does your delivery measure up against the characteristics of effective practice for coherent delivery?

■ If you were to carry out a similar shadowing exercise, what would you expect to find?

■ How could you go about understanding a learner's experience of their course?

■ What other means of evaluating the coherence of your Foundation Learning programmes from the learner perspective could you use, perhaps by asking both staff and learners the same key questions and comparing their answers?

■ What about coherence from other perspectives? For example, do support staff understand how a learner's programme fits together?

■ What are the key things you need to improve on if learners are going to experience fully coherent learning programmes?

Final thoughts

■ Is there any value in you facilitating this as a CPD session with practitioner colleagues to initiate an exploration of options for implementing coherent programmes of learning?

■ Reflect on any implications for your Foundation Learning implementation plan and record any actions that you need to take in your reflective notebook.