Foundation Learning
Improving the progression of learners with learning difficulties and disabilities

Foundation Learning Support

LSIS LEARNING AND SKILLS IMPROVEMENT SERVICE

Foundation Learning
Improving the progression
of learners with learning
difficulties and disabilities

All information in this book was correct as at October 2009

Further information

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Introduction

Who will be interested in this guide?

This guide will help providers working with post-16 learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LLDD), who need to plan and deliver effective personalised learning programmes within Foundation Learning.

What is Foundation Learning?

Foundation Learning is the name given to provision for 14-19-year-old learners working predominantly at entry level or level 1 (as well as 14-19 year olds with more complex needs). It is intended to help raise participation, attainment and progression for these learners.

Foundation Learning provides greater opportunities for progression, with learners and practitioners agreeing to develop a personalised programme towards an intended 'destination'. Most learners will progress to level 2, others to independent living or supported employment. With the right level of support, all learners will have the capacity to progress to positive outcomes. Qualifications that support Foundation Learning offer greater flexibility and opportunities for learners to accredit their learning in 'bite-sized' units.

Foundation Learning should motivate and enable more young people, including many who are vulnerable or at risk of dropping out, to achieve greater economic and social well-being. It is intended to reduce the numbers of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) or in jobs without training (JWT) and support preparations for the raising of the participation age.

How can providers use this guide?

This document offers guidance on developing programmes which are specifically designed to help learners progress, either to supported employment or to a situation where they have increased independence or greater autonomy.

The guide begins with an overview of provision for learners with learning difficulties or disabilities, and then has sections that focus on different aspects of improving progression. Each section includes:

- a brief discussion of the issues
- resources, tools or exemplar material
- a staff development activity.

The guide can be used to support understanding of the issues that providers face in improving progression for learners with learning difficulties or disabilities. It can also help providers to begin to plan for and implement Foundation Learning and to support essential staff development.

Overview of provision for learners with learning difficulties or disabilities

The review by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) of provision for learners with learning difficulties or disabilities, Through inclusion to excellence, was published in autumn 2005. It revealed that significant numbers of learners with learning difficulties or disabilities fail to progress successfully from their LSC-funded courses, becoming trapped in what the report describes as 'a revolving-door' of provision where they move from one course to the next without making meaningful progress towards an end goal.

The LSC set out its strategy for improving provision for learners with learning difficulties or disabilities in a document entitled Learning for living and work, published in 2006. The core aim of the strategy was to ensure that LSC-funded provision for learners with learning difficulties or disabilities is focused on progression and, wherever appropriate, progression into employment. The strategy acknowledged that for many learners this might mean supported employment where on-the-job support is available for as long as the employee needs it. For other learners, where employment of any kind is not a realistic aspiration, progression will mean the learner having an enhanced quality of life and increased independence. As a result of their programme of learning, the learner should be better able to make choices and express preferences about how they live their life.

Personalised learning programmes within Foundation Learning at entry level and level 1, using accredited qualifications, nationally recognised by the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF), provide the underpinning structure for this progression-focused provision for the majority of learners with learning difficulties or disabilities.

The key features of this provision are:

- a personalised programme for each learner, based on their starting point and their planned destination
- the opportunity to have achievements recognised through nationally accredited qualifications.

Many learners with learning difficulties or disabilities will be working towards supported employment or independent living, but others will be heading for other destinations such as skilled work or an Apprenticeship. They should be encouraged to take these options where the planned destination represents a realistic aspiration. A carefully managed support programme should be put in place to enable them to progress successfully.

Beginning at the end: destination-led planning

It is essential to have a clear idea of where a learner is heading, if a programme is to help them to progress. This enables a provider to design a programme of learning which can provide the learner with the skills that they need to move from their starting point to a defined destination. It also allows providers to review each aspect of their provision to determine whether the personalised learning programme is properly supporting the learner to achieve their goal, asking questions such as:

- 'Will the support package that we are offering this learner help them to improve their ability to express preferences and make choices?'

- 'Is our current range of partnerships sufficient to support this learner seeking the sort of job that they would like to achieve?'

Providers will need to work with the learner and with parents, carers and other members of a learner's circle of support to establish the nature of the destination. It will be important to ensure that the destination is realistic and achievable as well as reflecting the learner's own aspirations. It is likely that the destination will become more specifically defined as the learner moves through their programme.

Considering the relevance of the destination can become an integral part of the review progress. Learners should be encouraged to assess their progress towards their destination. They can identify what skills they have gained and how these will help them move towards their goal and where further learning is required. Integrating the destination into the individual learning plan (ILP) will help ensure that it remains central to the learner's programme and that progress towards it is properly tracked.

Independent living

'Independent living' is a very broad term and does not necessarily mean 'living independently'. Within the context of Foundation Learning, the term is used in line with the Disability Rights Commission's definition of independent living:

'all disabled people having the same choice, control and freedom as any other citizen – at home, at work, and as members of the community. This does not necessarily mean disabled people 'doing everything for themselves', but it does mean that any practical assistance people need should be based on their own choices and aspirations. '

Disability Rights Commission, 2002[1]

It is important to adopt person-centred planning approaches to establishing where a person with a learning disability might want to progress. This will mean giving the learner opportunities to:

- tell others about themselves
- show what they can do
- make choices and express preferences about what they want to do or be
- express hopes and dreams for the future.

It will also mean working with:

- the learner to build up a rounded picture of them as a person
- any other agencies involved with the learner (for example health or social services) to understand any related needs
- a range of people significant to the learner (sometimes called a 'circle of support') to get a wider perspective and to benefit from their knowledge and understanding of the learner.

Once the provider has established a clear understanding of the learner's interests, aspirations and capacity to learn, a 'destination statement' can be drafted. This will define an end point for the personalised learning programme and on this basis short-, medium- and long-term goals can be set to help learners work towards their planned destination.

Principles for defining destinations for learners working towards independent living

The destination should be:

- in line with the learner's own aspirations, as identified through initial assessment and with a circle of support as appropriate
- clearly understood by all involved including learners, parents and carers, tutors and teachers, support staff and others
- challenging, so that the learner is encouraged to aim high
- achievable, with the right support and given the learner's capacity to learn
- positively framed so that it is motivating for the learner and others
- specific enough that objective decisions can be made as to when or if it has been met
- capable of revision as the learner moves through the programme to ensure that it remains challenging, achievable and relevant.

Sample destination statements for learners seeking to improve their independent living skills

Umer, aged 16, has just moved from a small local special school, where he'd been a pupil since he was five years old, to a large general FE college. He has profound learning disabilities and is also physically disabled. Umer has no verbal communication but can sometimes use eye contact, actions or gestures to make himself understood by those who know him well. His mother is very nervous about his move to the college: it involves a 30-minute taxi drive each way, learning to work with new tutors and support staff, and tolerating the presence of other learners with whom he is not familiar.

His destination statement might read:

'Umer's personalised learning programme is intended to take him to the point where he is able to communicate with the people that he comes into contact with regularly including college staff, support workers and other learners in his group. He will be able to express preferences between given options such as taking part in one activity or another and indicate likes and dislikes. He will be able to make simple requests and accept or reject offers of support.'

Janice is 18. She has Down's Syndrome and at the end of the year is due to move from her specialist residential FE college to a nearby sheltered house, run by a charitable organisation, which she will share with two or three other people with learning disabilities. She enjoys college life and would like to make more use of other local facilities such as the leisure centre and the library, where she would like to be able to choose her own talking books. At the moment she is restricted by the availability of support workers to accompany her on trips to the local town, not only because she does not yet have the skills to travel by herself but also because she is vulnerable alone, as she tends to talk to anybody and is very trusting of everyone that she meets.

Her destination statement might read:

'Janice's personalised learning programme is designed to help her master independent travel in her local community so that she is able to take advantage of the facilities she has identified as wanting to access. She will be able to plan and undertake journeys to a range of local facilities including the leisure centre, the library, the cinema and local cafés. She will also improve her communication skills so that she is able to ask for assistance, for example asking the librarian whether they have a particular talking book. Janice will be able to handle the small amounts of money she'll need for these trips. She will also know how to keep herself safe when she is out and about, knowing about stranger danger and road safety in particular. The programme will also help her to explore what facilities are available to her and to make choices about how she wants to spend her time and money.'

Supported employment

For learners working towards supported employment, it will be important to use aspects of vocational profiling. This is an information-gathering process dependent on a trusting relationship between the learner and the person compiling the profile. A member of staff spends time with the learner, discovering a wide range of information that will be relevant to their journey towards employment. This might include:

- the sort of employment the learner wants to achieve

- what abilities, interests, values, assumptions and experiences they have in relation to work

- their work-related likes and dislikes, strengths, interests and aspirations

- what their key learning needs are if they are going to reach their goal of employment

- how their learning programme should be tailored to give the learner the maximum chance of gaining the sort of job that they want.

This information helps to establish the kind of jobs and workplaces that might be appropriate for the learner and can be included in their destination statement. When it is done well, vocational profiling can also have secondary effects whereby learners:

- gain an increased understanding of the range of job opportunities available to them

- overcome negative preconceptions about work or some types of jobs

- benefit from raised aspirations in relation to employment.

Vocational profiling tends not to include any formal assessment or to involve any sort of diagnostic activity. In the context of Foundation Learning, therefore, it makes sense to integrate vocational profiling techniques into a wider initial assessment process. Annex A[2] contains questions which have been extracted from vocational profiling materials used by Workwise, an employment support service for disabled people within Calderdale Council, which works closely with Kirklees College. Providers might also find it helpful to make contact with local supported employment agencies to see how they undertake vocational profiling. The British Association of Supported Employment holds regional lists on their website (www.base-uk.org).

Staff development activity

This activity is designed for staff who currently undertake initial assessment with learners on employability-focused programmes.

1   Consider what information you currently find out about a learner's interests in, aptitudes for and experiences of work as part of your initial assessment process.

2   Identify what sorts of additional information would help you to have a greater understanding of a learner's starting point and their aspirations in relation to employment.

3   Consider how you might discover what you need to know:

- What tools could you use?

- Who might undertake the process with the learner?

- What sort of training might they need?

- How would you record the information?

- How would you use it to shape the learner's programme?

The series of information sheets *Moving into work* (NIACE, 2008) [3] provide a useful introduction to the supported employment model. Each is aimed at a different audience, including learners, parents and carers, employers and college staff.
Making it work (NIACE, March 2010) [4], which offers further advice on supporting people with learning diffculties or disabilities to move from vocational education and training into work.

Developing a progression strategy

Some providers are beginning to explore the notion of a progression strategy covering all of their provision for learners with learning difficulties or disabilities. The purpose of such a strategy is to ensure that a learner's progression from an identified starting point to an agreed destination is the key driver at all stages of their journey and in all interactions between college and learner.

The self-assessment tool in Annex B[5] is being developed with the School of Inclusive Learning at Southwark College, a large general FE college in south London. It can be used to help providers decide how progression focused their current offer is and to ensure that their Foundation Learning programmes are keenly focused on the learner's planned destination.

Staff development activity

This activity is designed to be a management-led process, which results in a staff-owned progression strategy.

1   As a management team, agree the purposes and principles for the strategy. You might consider the following:

  o Learners come to college to learn so that they can progress from their course to a meaningful destination.

  o Every learner is an individual and will have a personalised programme leading to a specific destination that is relevant to them.

  o The key objective for everyone involved with the learners is to help them to progress to their planned destination.[6]

2   Work with staff to develop a set of descriptors setting out what good practice should look like in terms of promoting progression. Take the statements in the self-assessment tool (Annex B) as a starting point but amend, delete and add as appropriate to your own organisation.

3   Undertake a self-assessment, using the scale supplied in the self-assessment tool, to see how close your current practice is to the practice that you have described in step 2.

4   Determine what you will need to do in order to move from your current position to the state you have described in step 2. This is the basis of your progression strategy.

Managing diverse personalised programmes

One of the essential features of Foundation Learning is that learners should have access to a personalised programme of learning, supporting the individual from their unique starting point through their journey to their planned destination.

Some providers have expressed concerns about managing these personalised programmes when learners are taught in groups and necessarily share one set of resources, facilities and staff. Learners with learning difficulties or disabilities typically have very diverse needs, making it essential for providers to find solutions to this apparent complexity.

The following example illustrates how a single session or activity can be used as a context for different learners to work towards different targets and potentially towards gaining different units or qualifications. The activity has been chosen because it is typical within post-16 discrete provision for learners with learning difficulties or disabilities. It is also the sort of activity which can sometimes become routine and not exploited as effectively or creatively as it could be.

EXAMPLE

Going shopping

Learners from the post-16 unit of a special school make a weekly visit to the local supermarket. This involves a supervised walk from school into town (a distance of about a third of a mile) with six learners, their teacher and two support workers. This week they are buying ingredients for a fruit salad.

Although all of the activity is relevant for all of the learners, there are different priorities for each of them. Each member of staff has an observation sheet, which includes the names of the two learners whom they are observing that day, the focus of the activity for each individual and the relevant target.

For Anya and Wesley, the key focus for the next few weeks is on road safety. Their teacher is observing whether or not Anya is using the pedestrian crossing safely and is now able to put into practice by herself the routine of pressing the button, waiting for the green man and then crossing the road. He is also looking to see if Wesley can keep to the middle of the pavement, as he likes to balance on the kerb, but frequently over-balances into the road.

Mark is working on money-handling skills. His support worker will be looking to see if he is able to select the appropriate number of pound coins to hand over at the till (for example £4 if he is asked for £3.25 or £2 if he is asked for £1.90).

Kai has a tendency to over-eat and is particularly fond of crisps. He is focusing on healthy living. His task is to select three different sorts of fruit that he likes and which the whole group will use later in the day to make a fruit salad. The support worker will be observing whether or not Kai is able to identify a range of different fruits and will be checking that the three he has chosen are fruits that he likes.

For Abdullah and Maryam, the focus is on communication skills. Abdullah has no verbal communication but is learning to use consistent gestures as a means of expressing himself. His support worker will be asking him to point to the three fruits he would like to go in the fruit salad. She will ask him to nod or shake his head in answer to her simple checking questions such as 'are you pointing to the apples?' Maryam is very shy with unfamiliar people. Her target for the session is to greet the cashier or respond if the cashier greets her, to say 'thank you' when she is given her change or receipt and 'goodbye' when she leaves the till.

Sample recording sheets for this activity are included in Annex C.

Staff development activity

This activity is designed to help curriculum planning and delivery staff to:

- reflect on the existing curriculum for learners with learning difficulties and disabilities

- think about how it might need improving or extending

- consider how a curriculum can be designed to provide maximum opportunities for individuals to develop the skills and knowledge that are relevant to them in their journey towards their planned destination.

1 Read through the Going Shopping example above. Discuss how effectively you use your curriculum as a context for learners to develop relevant skills and knowledge.

2 Select an aspect of your existing curriculum offered to the majority of learners on the course (for example work placements or art classes) and identify the sorts of targets (for example asking for help when necessary) and skills (for example time-keeping or team-working) that this experience could be used to develop.

3 Plan what you need to do with your existing curriculum to ensure that it offers a diverse range of opportunities to support the varying personalised programmes that you will need to offer.

Using QCF qualifications with learners with learning difficulties or disabilities

Some providers previously have not used external accreditation within provision for learners with learning difficulties or disabilities. Other providers have used external accreditation which has not transferred to the QCF. Both groups have expressed concerns about introducing QCF qualifications for this learner group. In particular, providers are anxious that external accreditation should not be allowed to drive the curriculum for learners with learning difficulties or disabilities. Individual learner needs, interests and aspirations are the basis on which a curriculum should be designed.

For learners working at a higher level, the match between the individual's aspirations and the qualification for which they are entered is often more apparent. For example, a learner wanting to work in a nursery will need to achieve an occupational competence qualification (currently an NVQ) which attests to their knowledge, understanding and skills. The learner undertakes a course with a prescribed set of learning outcomes necessary for them to qualify.

For learners working at entry level, qualifications are rarely used as minimum entry requirements for jobs or courses. The qualifications are serving a slightly different purpose, recognising achievements that are relevant to the learner on their journey towards a planned destination.

While the requirements of external accreditation and the individual needs of learners with learning difficulties or disabilities may seem at first to be at odds with one another, this does not have to be the case. Where providers carefully select QCF qualifications which have the flexibility to recognise achievements relevant to their learners, it is quite possible to meet learner needs through personalised programmes and also use external accreditation to recognise the ensuing achievements.

Key to this selection process is the point at which decisions are made about which qualifications to use. Providers should not select a qualification and then plan a curriculum around the requirements of the qualification. They should plan a curriculum based on the learners' needs and then identify qualification(s) which will allow them to recognise relevant achievements.

Providers may find the following process helpful in integrating QCF qualifications into their programmes:

1   Identify the knowledge, skills and understanding that you are aiming to develop for learners through your personalised learning programmes.

2   Consider the range of levels at which your learners are working (for example entry 1, entry 2 or entry 3).

3   Plan a curriculum that will provide opportunities to develop the relevant knowledge, skills and understanding.

4   Explore possible qualifications using the Foundation Learning Qualifications Catalogue and by using the link within it to the Register of Regulated Qualifications, where you can view individual units within qualifications.

5   Select the qualification(s) which best match your learners' needs.

Using the principles of RARPA with external accreditation

Providers who have experience of recognising and recording progress and achievement (RARPA) in relation to non-accredited learning will find that the principles of RARPA can - and should - be applied to external accreditation just as they are to non-accredited learning.

Table 1 illustrates how neatly the processes within RARPA fit with the planning, delivery and assessment of a personalised learning programme within Foundation Learning personalised learning programmes.

Table 1. Using the principles of RARPA within Foundation Learning programmes

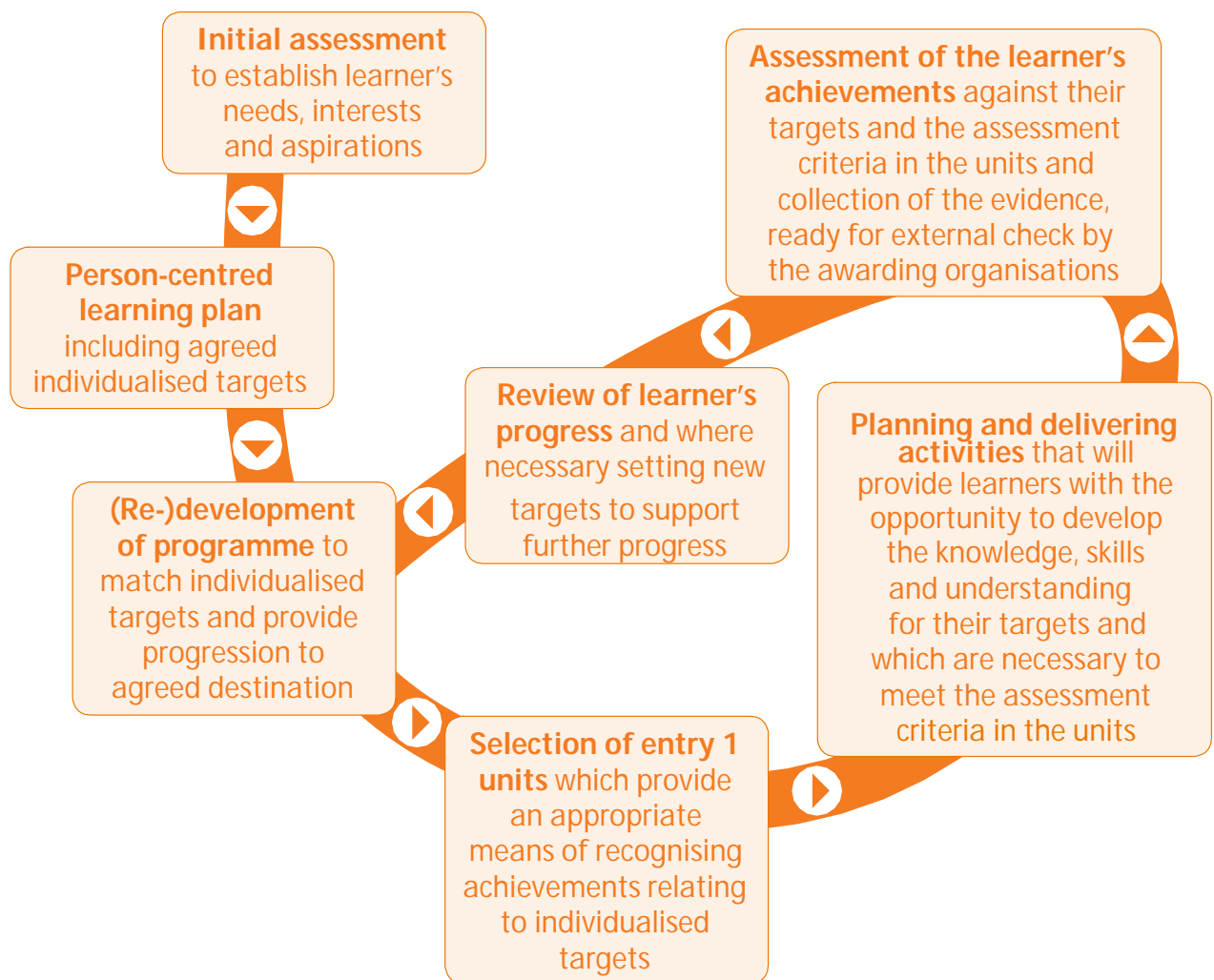|	Foundation Learning programme	RARPA
1	Staff work with the learner and their parents or carers, as well as other significant adults ('circle of support'), to decide whether this programme is the right approach for the learner. If so, they help to decide which destination would be most appropriate. For many learners this will be part of transition planning.	Aims are appropriate to an individual learner or groups of learners
2	Initial assessment is used to determine what the learner wants to get out of the programme, the end-goal they want to work towards and the skills, knowledge, understanding or level of response they bring with them.	Initial assessment to establish the learner's starting point
3	Learners' aspirations are summarised as a planned destination for their programme. Individual (challenging but realistic) targets are set with the learner and recorded within an individual learning plan (ILP). A personalised learning programme is designed to take the learner from where they are now to where they want to be. Levels and type of support are identified. Approved qualifications are selected on the basis that they can be used to recognise the achievements that are relevant to the learner in their journey towards the agreed destination. Targets (and the destination) are kept under review and amended where necessary to ensure they remain realistic, relevant and challenging.	Identification of appropriately challenging learning objectives: initial objectives are renegotiated and revised
4	Learner progress and achievement are recorded throughout the programme, using the ILP as a key tool. Unit certification might be used to recognise and celebrate successes along the way but other forms of recognition will also be valid (for example in-house certificates or group celebrations of targets which have been met).	Recognition and recording of progress and achievement during the programme
5	Learner progress and achievement are reviewed against the agreed destination to determine whether it has been reached. Credits accumulated throughout the programme are combined so that learners can claim for the relevant qualification that summarises their achievement on the programme. Where appropriate new goals are set.	End-of-programme learner self-assessment; review of overall progress and achievement

Accreditation at entry level 1

For learners working at entry level 1 (including National Qualifications Framework entry 1 and what has been termed 'pre-entry'), providers will find those qualifications which use the Entry 1 achievement continuum particularly useful. The achievement continuum is a scale which moves from encountering experiences to applying basic skills and knowledge. Many of the qualifications which use the continuum draw on a set of units at entry level 1, which are shared across a number of participating awarding organisations. Each unit relates to an aspect of communication, number, ICT, working with others, learning to learn, dealing with problems, independent living, being part of the community preparing for work or early awareness of - or engagement with - people, objects and events.

The units are learner-referenced. This means that the learner and tutor together can choose what sort of evidence will be relevant for them to produce, taking into account the individual learner's particular needs. They can also decide the level within the broad range of entry level 1 at which to have the learner's achievements recognised, using the achievement continuum.

Figure 1 illustrates how these units can be integrated into a learner's programme.

Figure 1. Using entry 1 units (from Personal Progress qualifications) within a Foundation Learning programme

Initial assessment to establish learner's needs, interests and aspirations

Person-centred learning plan including agreed individualised targets

(Re-)development of programme to match individualised targets and provide progression to agreed destination

Review of learner's progress and where necessary setting new targets to support further progress

Selection of entry 1 units which provide an appropriate means of recognising achievements relating to individualised targets

Assessment of the learner's achievements against their targets and the assessment criteria in the units and collection of the evidence, ready for external check by the awarding organisations

Planning and delivering activities that will provide learners with the opportunity to develop the knowledge, skills and understanding for their targets and which are necessary to meet the assessment criteria in the units

Staff development activity

This is a series of suggestions for staff development:

- Explore the Foundation Learning Qualifications Catalogue [7] to see what external accreditation might be suitable for learners working towards supported employment or independent living.

- Look in detail at particular qualifications on the Register of Regulated Qualifications,[8] including rules of combination and individual units. Click on the hyperlink within the Foundation Learning Qualifications Catalogue to get to the database.

- List the knowledge, skills and understanding that you are trying to help your learners achieve through their personalised learning programmes and find a 'best fit' qualification from the catalogue.

- Create your own criteria for selecting qualifications (for example 'needs to cover entry 2 and entry 3', 'must have assessment on demand', 'preferably with an awarding organisation with which we are already registered' or 'flexible rules of combination').

- Review your current assessment procedures to determine how you would build in the use of external accreditation or particular qualifications.

- Familiarise yourselves with the 'Entry 1 achievement continuum', available from all awarding organisations offering qualifications that use this scale, and attempt to make assessment decisions using this scale. Use the exercise to begin to devise an internal moderation system that will enable staff to make consistent assessment decisions using the achievement continuum.

Partnership working

Achieving positive progression for learners will almost always involve working with partners. With the curriculum being driven by the skills needed to achieve a particular outcome (rather than by the demands of qualifications) it is essential that providers are in communication with the organisations to which the learners are hoping to progress, for example employers, supported living providers and other education or training providers. Working in partnership will enable the provider to ensure the relevance of their curriculum offer.

For learners hoping to achieve supported employment at the end of their programme, the contribution of a supported employment agency can be invaluable.

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PROVIDER EXAMPLE

Lambeth College

Lambeth College works closely with the Camden Society, a London-wide charitable organisation providing community-based services to people with disabilities. The Camden Society offers career planning, guidance, training and help in finding employment for learners on Lambeth's supported employment and independent living programme. They provide two officers who source employers and suitable positions as well as aiding the learners in their transition. This includes working with the employer on disability awareness. The Camden Society has successfully placed a number of Lambeth's students into work.

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Establishing strong relationships with employers can also result in learners having the opportunity to explore and develop an understanding of the workplace, providing a valuable stepping stone towards readiness for employment.

Over an eight-year period the Learning Support Department at Barnfield College in Luton, Bedfordshire, has built up relationships with local employers largely within the retail sector but also within the hospitality, care and automotive industries. They also draw on the contacts of a local supported employment agency to provide work experience for all their learners with learning difficulties or disabilities. They see that this opportunity will be key to successful progression for learners on their Foundation Learning programmes.

The college has developed a close relationship with a number of employers, who are recruited by teaching staff with direct knowledge and understanding of the learners and their particular needs. Information about employers is collated and held on a database to help ensure that suitable matches are made and that learners are placed in environments where they are likely to thrive. Learning support assistants are trained to support those who are not yet ready to work independently.

At the end of the academic year an event is held to celebrate the success of the work placements and employers are invited to attend. This helps the college to maintain good working relationships and consolidate the partnerships that have been established, as well as helping the employers to understand the importance of their contribution to the learners' progress.

Highbury College has a working partnership with two local supermarkets, each of them part of large national chains. Employability and vocational training lessons are held each week within the stores. Tutors and job coaches work with the store management, teaching the skills required to carry out the various roles within a supermarket. Students are given weekly targets based on their specific task. They and their peers assess themselves, talking through their progress and new targets with the tutors.

Students work on the checkout packing customers' bags, within the restaurant serving and clearing tables and in the aisles packing shelves. The students are welcomed by the supermarket staff, gaining support and guidance through working alongside people with greater experience than themselves. Students are also supported by Highbury staff while at work in the supermarket.

Once they are assessed as having the skills and confidence to work alone, students move into independent work experience within other local businesses. An increased number of students are now leaving college and moving into employment as a result of this approach.

There are numerous other partners (besides employers and supported employment agencies) with whom providers could be working in order to strengthen their offer. Partnerships with parents and carers can be especially important for learners aiming for independent living, as can working with other agencies involved with the learner such as health or social services.

Providers should consider the term 'partner' in its widest sense and at each stage of the learner's journey, from recruitment to progression, in order to identify who is or should be their partner(s) in supporting the learner to progress.

Staff development activity

This activity is designed to help course managers to reflect on the adequacy of existing partnerships and to consider whether new ones are needed.

1 Work as a team to list all your existing partners in relation to your learners with learning difficulties or disabilities. You may find you want to agree on a definition of the term 'partner' in order to complete a comprehensive list. For example the definition might be 'any people or organisations with whom we work in order to provide an appropriate programme for our learners'.

2 Review each of these partnership arrangements to determine whether you are exploiting it to the full:

○ Is there more you could ask for or offer?

○ Are protocols, working arrangements, service level agreements, data sharing or other partnership arrangements properly agreed?

○ Are these arrangements still fit for purpose or could they be updated or refreshed?

○ Are there other ways in which you could improve existing partnerships?

3 Consider what new partnerships you might need to establish if you are going to achieve a positive progression for each of your learners with learning difficulties or disabilities.

4 Draw up an action plan that will enable you to improve existing partnerships and forge new ones where necessary.

Working creatively

Providers should think creatively about how they provide the right learning environment or experiences to support positive progression properly. A learning journey that is spent largely in the classroom or workshop is unlikely to prepare a learner for the workplace or to become a more autonomous individual within their community.

PROVIDER EXAMPLE

Lewisham College

Lewisham College has set up an enterprise called Posyganza, providing a fresh flower service to teach skills in floristry and retail while enabling students to gain practical work and life skills. The Young Enterprise Team Programme sets the challenges, giving learners the opportunity to:

- grow in confidence and self-esteem
- learn to work with adults outside home and college environments
- acquire a variety of work and social skills
- gain an understanding of how business works
- demonstrate their potential to prospective future employers.

By having their own enterprise the college can ensure that all learners have the opportunity to work in a real-life working environment, regardless of the level of support they might need. This experience can provide a valuable stepping stone to other employment opportunities.

PROVIDER EXAMPLE

Highbury College

This college in Portsmouth rents a local flat to deliver independent living skills. The flat is a bus journey away from the college. Using the flat as the base for independent living experience and teaching has developed the enthusiasm and confidence of students to a far greater degree than when classes were run within the college campus. The distance ensures that students become accustomed to using public transport and local facilities. When travelling to the flat the group stop to buy their lunch allowing all students to develop:

- independence skills
- communication skills
- appropriate behaviour
- numeracy skills.

Learning general housekeeping and cookery skills in the flat adds value and realism to the lessons, giving all students ample opportunity to clean, cook and develop social skills. Being out and about so frequently within the community has proved to be beneficial to all involved. Families and carers report that students are now doing far more within their own homes; previously the skills learned and applied in college were not being transferred to the home so evidently.

These colleges in London have entered into an arrangement with two independent specialist colleges, Treloar College in Hampshire and National Star College in Gloucestershire, allowing them to send some of their learners on residential visits. While they are away for between one and six weeks, the learners gain independence and employability skills while at the same time gathering evidence towards a qualification.

The two London colleges do not have their own independent flats and were therefore looking for other opportunities to help their learners develop their independence skills. They also wanted the learners to experience being away from home and leaving inner London.

In order to prepare their learners for the extended residential visits, the two colleges first took them away to a group of self-catering cottages in Oxfordshire. Learners were able to socialise with unfamiliar staff and students and were introduced to independence skills such as managing money, shopping and cooking.

While at the independent specialist colleges, learners have a chance to extend these skills and are also offered the chance to complete a work placement in one of a range of vocational areas to help them make decisions about future jobs.

Staff have noticed that many of the learners return to London with hugely increased confidence and raised aspirations about their future. Back in college, they act as role models for learners who are at an earlier stage of the course. Their families have noted their improved independence skills and for some this has resulted in adjusted expectations about what the future might hold, not just for the young person but also for the parents.

Staff development activity

This activity is designed to bring whole teams together to explore creative ways of addressing a particular problem or issue which has come to light as a result of planning or implementing Foundation Learning programmes.

1 Articulate the problem or issue in a way that everyone understands:
   - What is it that you would like to achieve?
   - Why do you need to focus on this problem or issue?
   - What are the barriers to achieving it?

2 Brainstorm some possible approaches. At this stage, set aside constraints such as time and cost, so that you are thinking as widely as possible. Record everyone's ideas, however bizarre they may seem.

3 Work together to decide which approaches are worthy of further discussion. These might be those that you think are most likely to work, are easiest to achieve or sound most exciting.

4 Explore in detail those approaches that you have prioritised in the previous step. At this point you will need to consider the constraints within which you are working:
   - What would the approach look like in practice?
   - What would need to happen to achieve it?
   - Who would need to be involved?
   - How long would it take to implement?
   - How costly would it be?
   - How effectively would it solve the original problem or issue?
   - Is the solution consistent with the principles of the Foundation Learning?

5 Set up a working party to take forward one or more of your creative approaches.

It will be important for staff to be given time to find out about and explore some of the more innovative projects that are being piloted around the country, by communicating with other providers involved in the implementation of Foundation Learning personalised programmes. Learning from the experiences of others is an invaluable part of the process.

Annexes

Annex A
Extract from vocational profiling tool[10]

Examples of jobs

Tick which work areas you feel you would like to sample or pursue a career in. Your trainer will give you more details of those listed if required. This will assist us in making sure that we find the correct work area for you and also help us in developing your training/development plan.

Put a tick in the box next to jobs you feel you could do or would like to do. Discuss these with your trainer.

Office work	Sales
☐ Reception	☐ Car sales
☐ Filing	☐ Company representative
☐ Call centres	☐ Cold calling
☐ Computer work	☐ Insurance
☐ Typing	☐ Call centres
☐ Personal assistant	☐ Others
☐ Other	

Warehouse	Factory
☐ Cash and carry etc	☐ Assembly
☐ Supermarkets	☐ Packing
☐ Fork lift truck	☐ Welding
☐ Back of store	☐ Plastic moulding
☐ Transport depots	☐ Other
☐ Other	

Practical	Security
☐ Motor vehicle	☐ Security guard
☐ Joinery	☐ Police
☐ Labourer	☐ Fire Service
☐ Building	☐ Ambulance
☐ Other	☐ Armed Forces
	☐ Other

Retail	Outdoor
☐ Supermarket	☐ Horticulture
☐ Convenience store	☐ Conservation
☐ DIY store	☐ Grounds keeper
☐ Customer service	☐ Traffic warden
☐ Corner shop	☐ Road sweep
☐ Petrol station	☐ Town ambassador
☐ Other	☐ Other

Care	Hospitality/Catering
☐ Childcare	☐ Waiter/waitress
☐ Elderly care	☐ Kitchen assistant
☐ Home care	☐ Food preparation (kitchen/shop)
☐ Nurse	☐ Usher
☐ Porter	☐ Cleaner
☐ Other	☐ Bar person
	☐ Other

Comments

Current activities

What do you do on an average day at the moment?

Tell us about the things that you do regularly, ie once or more per week/month.

Tell us about the things that you do occasionally.

Do you receive any support to participate in these activities?

Tell us about the things you would like to do.

Tell us about things you have done in the past or any clubs or organisations that you have belonged to and what you liked/disliked about them.

Have you got any physical health problems and if so how do they affect you? What do they stop you doing? Are you receiving treatment for them?

How do you see your current health problem affecting your work? Are you aware of when you are becoming unwell and what to do?

Do you have many friends or family members you are in contact with?

Work skills and interests

There are lots of skills we need to enable us to work. Please complete the grid below to get some idea of where you are now and what can be improved. Use the scale below to rate how good you are at each skill, and in the final column whether you need to improve this skill.

6	5	4	3	2	1	How good do you think you are at this? Rate 1–6	Do you think you need to improve this?	
Excellent	Very good	Good/ average	Not very good	Poor	Very poor		Yes	No
Literacy – reading, writing, spelling							○	○
Numeracy – adding up, dealing with numbers							○	○
Dealing with money							○	○
Physical fitness							○	○
Communicating – getting on with other people, talking to people you know, talking to strangers							○	○
Listening							○	○
Using the telephone							○	○
Time keeping – getting to places on time, leaving on time							○	○
Persistence – sticking at things							○	○
Reliability – doing what you say you will do when you say you will do it							○	○
Concentration							○	○
Making decisions							○	○
Making choices							○	○
Planning							○	○
Checking							○	○
Being supervised – told what to do							○	○
Learning new things							○	○
Looking after yourself, dressing smartly or appropriately							○	○
Coping with pressure or stress							○	○
Being confident							○	○
Taking responsibility							○	○
Learning from experience							○	○
Coping with change							○	○
Being self-aware							○	○

Communication and travel

Please tick the **Yes**, **No** or **Occasionally** column, as appropriate.	Yes	Occasionally	No
I feel confident when talking to strangers	○	○	○
I speak clearly and people understand me	○	○	○
I am confident enough to start conversations	○	○	○
I leave it to others to start conversations	○	○	○
I feel OK talking to someone face to face	○	○	○
I use public transport	○	○	○
I have difficulty using public transport	○	○	○
I tend to walk everywhere	○	○	○
I can use a street map	○	○	○
I can use timetables	○	○	○
I have a full driving licence	○	○	○
I have my own transport	○	○	○

Personal qualities

Here are some qualities which are useful in a work environment. Which ones do you think you have and which ones would you like to work on?

What I am

honest	loyal	caring	hardworking
careful	tidy	sensible	keen
creative	punctual	organised	optimistic
intelligent	open minded	enterprising	determined
pleasant	inventive	generous	dependable
trustworthy	reliable	friendly	good at communicating
good at remembering	good at attending	ambitious	fast working
good at concentrating	patient	assertive	motivated
consistent	persistent	responsible	good at helping others
confident	logical	attentive to detail	

What I would like to be

honest	loyal	caring	hardworking
careful	tidy	sensible	keen
creative	punctual	organised	optimistic
intelligent	open minded	enterprising	determined
pleasant	inventive	generous	dependable
trustworthy	reliable	friendly	good at communicating
good at remembering	good at attending	ambitious	fast working
good at concentrating	patient	assertive	motivated
consistent	persistent	responsible	good at helping others
confident	logical	attentive to detail	

Annex B
Progression strategy tool[10]

Self-assessment scale

1 We already do this fully
2 We do this in part
3 We have begun to think how to do this
4 We don't do this at all and have not yet considered how to do it.

Area	Descriptor	Self-assessment				Training implications
		1	2	3	4	
1 Promotion, marketing and outreach	a. Our marketing materials make clear that the purpose of our programmes is to help learners to progress to an agreed destination, such as employment	◯	◯	◯	◯	
	b. In any outreach activity we talk to potential learners about how we can provide them with a learning experience that will help them to get a job, achieve a greater level of independence or make more use of their local community	◯	◯	◯	◯	
2 Information, advice and guidance	a. The information, advice and guidance (IAG) that we provide helps learners to work out what they want to achieve by the end of the programme	◯	◯	◯	◯	
	b. Our IAG staff understand how our programmes are tailored to help learners progress to specific destinations	◯	◯	◯	◯	
3 Induction	a. Throughout the induction period, we work to establish some kind of employment as the end goal for most of our learners	◯	◯	◯	◯	
	b. We raise aspirations where this is necessary, working with families where appropriate	◯	◯	◯	◯	
	c. We provide access to benefits advice where necessary	◯	◯	◯	◯	

Area	Descriptor	Self-assessment				Training implications
		1	2	3	4	
4 Initial assessment	a. We assess the full range of abilities a learner may have at the start of a programme, including levels of independence and work readiness, communication, number and personal and social skills	◯	◯	◯	◯	
	b. Our initial assessment procedures allow us to build up a full picture of each learner as an individual, including information about likes and dislikes, strengths and weaknesses, learning styles and preferences, dreams and aspirations, support needs and preferences	◯	◯	◯	◯	
	c. We take a multi-agency approach and involve a range of people significant to the learner (such as parents/carers/siblings/ mentors), sometimes known as their 'circle of support'	◯	◯	◯	◯	
	d. Where we find it difficult to bring in members of the 'circle of support' we go out to them	◯	◯	◯	◯	
	e. Where appropriate, we use vocational profiling techniques to find out about learners' knowledge, understanding, experience and aspirations to work	◯	◯	◯	◯	
	f. We use the combined findings of our initial assessment to produce a summary statement which marks the starting point of their journey with us	◯	◯	◯	◯	
	g. We are as interested in finding out learners' strengths (so that we can build on them) as we are in their weaknesses (so that we can address them)	◯	◯	◯	◯	
5 Defining destinations	a. We use the information gathered through the initial assessment and induction process to establish a programme goal or planned destination for each learner	◯	◯	◯	◯	
	b. All planned destinations are agreed between the college, the learner and their circle of support where appropriate; they may also be shared with other agencies involved with the learner	◯	◯	◯	◯	
	c. Where the learner has a person-centred plan, the planned destination relates to the aspirations expressed within it	◯	◯	◯	◯	

Area	Descriptor	Self-assessment				Training implications
		1	2	3	4	
6 Developing an ILP, including targets	a. For each learner, we develop an ILP which maps out a proposed journey from their starting point to their planned destination	○	○	○	○	
	b. Each ILP contains targets which are directly related to the planned destination and which represent stepping stones from their starting point to their destination	○	○	○	○	
	c. The ILP is used to record learner progress towards each target, with monitoring being undertaken on a regular basis by all staff involved in the delivery of their programme	○	○	○	○	
	d. We expect the majority of targets to be addressed across the curriculum rather than by specific tutors in particular classes	○	○	○	○	
	e. We adjust targets when necessary and set new ones to ensure that learners continue to make steps towards their planned destination	○	○	○	○	
	f. Any non-college colleagues (such as employers when learners are on placement) are aware of the learner's targets and planned destination	○	○	○	○	
7 Personalised programmes	a. Our personalised programmes are specifically designed to take learners from their starting point to their planned destination	○	○	○	○	
	b. All staff involved in the planning and delivery of programmes understand the purpose of each learner's programme	○	○	○	○	
8 Curriculum	a. Our curriculum offer provides opportunities for learners to develop the skills, knowledge and understanding necessary to move from their starting point to their planned destination	○	○	○	○	
	b. We provide a range of learning experiences (such as work experience of residential placement) to allow learners maximum opportunity to develop relevant skills	○	○	○	○	
	c. All staff involved in delivery including support staff understand why learners are engaged in each activity that they undertake	○	○	○	○	
	d. Staff know that different learners may be working towards different targets while they are engaged in the same activity (eg a shopping trip might be about healthy eating for one learner and handling money for another)	○	○	○	○	

Area	Descriptor	Self-assessment				Training implications
		1	2	3	4	
9 Learner support	a. Support offered to learners is tailored to enable them to progress towards their planned destination	○	○	○	○	
	b. Wherever appropriate, there is a planned reduction or withdrawal of support to encourage maximum independence among learners	○	○	○	○	
	c. Learners needing ongoing support are encouraged to become more active agents in planning and managing their own support, wherever possible	○	○	○	○	
	d. Degrees of support are carefully monitored to prevent the growth of a dependency culture	○	○	○	○	
	e. Learning support staff are fully aware of each learner's targets and are involved in shaping the learner's programme as well as their support package	○	○	○	○	
10 Ongoing review	a. The focus of our reviews is on progress made towards the learner's planned destination	○	○	○	○	
	b. We use ongoing review to determine whether we need to adjust any aspects of the learner's programme (eg content, approach, level or type of support, specific targets) in order to increase their chances of reaching their planned destination	○	○	○	○	
	c. We will adjust a learner's planned destination, with their agreement and that of their circle of support, where appropriate, if we determine through ongoing review that it is no longer relevant, has become unrealistic or insufficiently challenging	○	○	○	○	

Area	Descriptor	Self-assessment				Training implications
		1	2	3	4	
11 Recognition of achievement	a. Learners' achievement of their targets is recorded within their ILPs	○	○	○	○	
	b. We actively recognise and celebrate achievements and demonstrate to learners how these represent steps towards their planned destination	○	○	○	○	
	c. Qualifications which are capable of recognising relevant achievements are selected and used to record those achievements which are significant on the learner's journey towards their planned destination	○	○	○	○	
	d. Qualifications chosen are sufficiently flexible to allow for a wide range of achievements to be recognised	○	○	○	○	
	e. We do not allow qualifications to dictate a curriculum for our learners	○	○	○	○	
	f. We make maximum use of the flexibility offered by the qualifications we have chosen (for example by having different learners using different units and at different levels)	○	○	○	○	
12 Transition-planning	a. From the mid-point of their programme, we begin to plan an 'exit strategy' for the learner	○	○	○	○	
	b. By the last term of their programme, we have refined the focus of the planned destination to make it more specific (eg 'employment' becomes a particular job role and where possible applying for actual vacancies)	○	○	○	○	
	c. We work with other agencies, partners or family members to maximise the chances of the learner transferring successfully to the next stage of their journey (eg to a job, a supported employment agency or to a more active role in the community)	○	○	○	○	

Area	Descriptor	Self-assessment				Training implications
		1	**2**	**3**	**4**	
13 Partnership-working	a. The purpose of all our partnerships is to maximise our learners' chances of progressing successfully	◯	◯	◯	◯	
	b. Our external partners include other agencies working with the learner (eg from health or social services), employers, supported employment agencies, other colleges or training providers	◯	◯	◯	◯	
	c. We keep all our partnership arrangements under review to ensure that we are working effectively with the right partners	◯	◯	◯	◯	
	d. We are constantly looking for new partners who can help support our learners to progress	◯	◯	◯	◯	

Annex C
Sample activity recording sheet

Staff member observing	—
Date	—
Learner	Anya
Activity/session	Supermarket
Today's focus	Road safety

Today's target(s)	Observations
To press the button, wait for the green man and then cross the road on the way there and on the way back without any instructions, reminders or prompting.	*Anya followed the routine perfectly on the way there. She even pointed out the green man to the others and said 'safe to cross'.* *On the way back a bit distracted. Had to be prompted to press the button - was just going to wait at the crossing. She knew what to do after that.*
	Other comments *Anya asked if she could go round the supermarket herself next time instead of having me with her. I think she could get some things by herself. Worth a try?*

Date	—
Learner	Mark
Activity/session	Supermarket
Today's focus	Handling money

Today's target(s)	Observations
To choose the right number of pound coins to hand over when told the total price of his purchases and count them out accurately.	*Mark got a bit mixed up and offered £4 for a bill of £4.32. He counted out the £4 correctly. Told him that wasn't quite enough and he added another pound.*
	Other comments *Still remembering to make eye contact with the cashier and today said 'bye' of his own accord as he was leaving.*