



PROGRESS INHIBITORS - Personal circumstances

HOW TO USE THIS RESOURCE

Progression Inhibitors: Personal circumstances

Rationale/Outline

A key requirement for a successful study programme is that each learner is recognised as an individual, with their needs and personal circumstances identified early in the programme so they can be effectively supported. If this does not happen the learner is more likely to leave or make insufficient progress towards their learning goals.

Research shows those from poorer deprived areas are more likely to leave early. This resource is designed to help pinpoint what is required regarding types of support and advice required in relation to personal circumstances to reduce the risk of non-completion. This resource has two main aims:

- To encourage an open-ended discussion, and learner self-assessment, of potential risk factors likely to cause insufficient progress in an individual's study programme.
- Agree an action plan to address and reduce risk factors which is learner focused and captures the progress the learner is making as they overcome any inhibitors.

Suggestions on how to use this resource

This resource is most effective when learners take the lead to review a variety of statements and decide which of these best reflect their own thinking or concerns. It can also be used with a fictional character "M" to avoid learners talking about themselves.

This can be an individual activity or group discussion with selected cards to help identify the specific nature of any identified risk factors that may hinder progress. **Not all cards need to be used, select the cards that are most appropriate for each group or individual.** Further discussion points can include the challenges learners may face, how they can be avoided and the support available. If used as a group discussion, the tutor is then available for 1 to 1 tutorials.

- Learners go through each statement card and sort them into 2 piles according to whether they agree or disagree.
- Ask the learner/s to discuss each statement they agree with to identify the nature of their concern.
- After identifying individual needs a risk assessment regarding likelihood for leaving early can be completed. There is an example risk assessment on page 9.
- An individualised set of actions to address risk factors using personalised targets to identify progress made against each of these factors can form an action plan. There is an example action plan on page 10.
- Use the blank template to add relevant statements.

Some learners may not wish to disclose their true feeling or concerns in a group session. This activity can be done several times during a learners programme as their circumstances may change over time.

Intended impact

Learners are reassured that their individual needs have been identified, and they will have access to the support they need to make the progress of which they are capable.

The relevant support and tracking will be planned early in the learner's course so chances of leaving or slow progress are drastically reduced.

A personalised action plan of support clearly shows how the learner overcomes any barriers to their learning and subsequent progress.

Personal circumstances

Changes in personal circumstances can have a significant impact on learners' progress and is considered one of the main inhibitors to progress.

Early identification of these potential inhibitors and swift, supportive action will help learners overcome barriers.

Signs that there are changes negatively impacting on a learner can be:

- Learners are not making progress as planned.
- There are drastic differences in attitude, appearance or approach.

Card sort activity

The purpose of these cards is to allow a simple but effective way of letting learners highlight issues or concerns relating to their personal circumstances which may stop them from progressing and leading to disengagement or leaving early.

Using the cards will help to create an action plan to put strategies in place which lessen the risk of early leavers and track their progress.

Instructions: this can be a group or individual activity.

1. Place the 2 large cards '**This is like me**' and '**This is not like me**' in front of the learner/s about 60cms apart.
2. Shuffle the small coloured cards so they are in a random order.
3. The following is a guide to what can be said to introduce the task:

"This task will help us to talk about what help or support you may need to be successful, make good progress and remain on your study programme. There are no right or wrong answers – it's all about you as a person. On each card there is a short sentence. I would like you to read each one in turn and then put the card in one of two piles - underneath the two large cards. So, if the sentence applies to you put it under 'This is like me' and if it does not apply to you put it under 'This is not like me'. If you can't decide or you are not sure for whatever reason, put the card to one side. You can have as long as you want to complete the task - there is no need to hurry but it will probably take no more than 5 minutes to complete. Any questions? Let me know when you have finished."

4. Leave the learner/s to complete the exercise on their own. Remain nearby to help if they get stuck or confused.
5. When the learner/s complete the task, check how they felt about completing it and if they have any general comments to make about the process.
6. Take the cards from under the 'This is like me' card and look at each one in turn:
 - Confirm that the card does reflect them and if it applies to them.
 - If they select something like 'most of the time I do not feel very confident', they clearly have some concerns. This is an opportunity to discuss these concerns and see if any further actions or investigations are required.
 - They may also choose cards that confirm no barrier. There is an opportunity to check this is the case.
7. As you work through the cards make sure key notes are kept about possible barriers to address.
8. Next, look at any cards which they were undecided about and work through whether they do apply or not.
9. Go through the cards put under 'This is not like me' just to check they are in the right pile (not spending time on each card as above) as a quick review.
10. You can now turn to their individual action plan and use the outcomes of this exercise to discuss how any barriers can be addressed and/or the range of jobs and development they can aim for in view of their personal circumstance, skills and experience. This will include personalised targets to show progress.
11. Use a risk assessment form or action plan (or both) to highlight those learners likely to require frequent interventions and/or checks. The examples reflect the need for short frequent interventions, so it is addressed in first few months. The action plan demonstrates clearly progress being made and how it has impacted the learner. If preferred, modify the action plan to fit current systems in place.

This is like me

This is NOT like me

CARDS TO HELP IDENTIFY POTENTIAL ISSUES
Personal circumstances – these are examples, use the blank template to create your own.

I have no financial worries.	I have debts or finances I am worried about.
I have family that are always there for me.	I have interests or hobbies that I enjoy.
I feel safe and content with where I live.	I would like to live somewhere else.
I don't have any family that support me.	I am a carer (e.g. for child or someone with a disability or a relative).
I can travel to most places in this area when I have a work placement.	I can only travel to certain places for a work placement.

I have lost someone very close to me.	I don't go out much or take part in social activities.
I have a criminal conviction.	I am involved with a court case at the moment.

BLANK TEMPLATE

You may want to create your own topics for discussion.

Risk assessment

After identifying individual needs, a risk assessment regarding likelihood for disengagement can be completed.

Example risk assessment following card activity

Risk assessment for possible early leaver Name: _____ Date: _____

Examples of risk factor identified	Level of possible impact 1 – mild 2 – moderate 3 - severe	Re-assessment	Re-assessment	Re-assessment	Re-assessment
		Date 1	Date 2	Date 3	Date 4
Financial worries about the cost of travel and equipment for the course.	2	1- Now clear what learner can claim for and has submitted relevant forms.	No risk. Has funds to meet needs and has put own budget plan together.		
Reluctant to travel far for work experience.	2	2- Re-assured this will be addressed in tutorial before WE starts.	1- Now has opportunity to choose between two work placements, with good transport facilities.	1- Researching best ways to get to placement.	No risk. Have travel plans in place which learner is happy with and now looking forward to WE.

Example action plan

Alternatively (or as well as) an action plan can be agreed that fits with the organisation's system for tracking progress.

Area of concern	Specific action(s)	Personalised target	Progress with date	Evaluation
Financial worries and whether learner can afford to attend.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Arrange session with advisor regarding financial support available. - Support any applications for financial support. 	Make a personal budget to cover all income and expenses.	(Date) Has now received confirmation of extra financial support which is sufficient to cover travel expenses and equipment for course.	The learner was given sufficient information and advice to empower them to arrange their own financial support and now has control of their own budget.
Lacks confidence in using public transport to travel outside immediate area.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Individual research on local train and bus options to identify 1) length of travel 2) frequency and times of transport 3) cost of travel. - Plan travel arrangements for visit to employer, as part of class activity. 	Complete a personal travel plan identifying times/places from home to agreed possible work placement venue.	(Date) Now decided to use local train and has accurately worked out time to leave home to catch train with back-up plan if trains not running. Clearly feels confident now able to do this.	Taking responsibility for arranging travel plans for class visit helped confidence considerably - came up with suitable plan that worked well on day and particularly beneficial that did it together as small team.