

Introduction

This resource introduces a number of themes that individuals and teams can explore as a starting point towards developing a whole organisational approach to supporting learner progression as part of your quality improvement strategy:

- exploring the idea of progression
- developing the expertise of learners and teachers* to enhance progression
- a curriculum that supports progression
- data to support and evidence progression
- partnership approaches to support progression.

The resource can be used flexibly to support organisational development and continuing professional development activities (CPD). Use the interactive card activity to gain insights into how you might develop a whole organisational strategy. Alternatively use one or more of the themes to develop team approaches for supporting learner progression.

You may have additional strategic themes that are specific for your organisation. You can download the card activity and templates to customise this resource.

** We use 'teaching and learning' and 'teacher' as generic terms to include:*

- *teaching, training and learning*
- *teachers, tutors, trainers, lecturers and instructors in the further education (FE) system.*

The card activity

The activity takes a coaching approach, mirroring the approaches used in the Subject Learning Coaches (SLC) programme. In working through the activity, you will be formulating coaching style questions – what, who, which, where and how?

The activity can be used in different ways. Before trying it, think about:

- the different contributions colleagues, both from across the organisation and externally, might make
- who you want to involve
- how you wish to involve them.

Here are some ways in which you may want to carry out the activity:

- on your own
- with a senior colleague
- with your senior management team
- in a mixed group with representation from different areas of your organisation
- in a mixed group with representation from partner organisations.

If working as a group you may want to project the activity onto a large screen for ease of viewing. Alternatively you can create a series of card sets.

You could ask different groups or individuals to undertake the activity independently, then come together to discuss the outcomes and agree actions.

Strategic issue 1

Exploring
the idea of
progression.



1.1 Lead question

What does the term 'progression' mean to you?

SEE OVER

Discussion prompts 1.1

- An individual learner's progression from engagement in learning to further stages of learning and employment to fulfil personal, professional and/or academic aspirations (DCSF 2008).
- Progression is not time-limited; learners' aspirations will change over time.
- Progression may be lateral or vertical, or a mixture of both.
- Progression takes place within and between organisations.
- If we believe in the notion of lifelong learning, all learners are on a progression pathway.
- To increase participation and promote lifelong learning we need to focus on persistence and progression (a learner-centred concept) rather than retention on current programme (an organisation-centred concept).

1.2 Lead question

Why is progression important:

- to individual learners?
- to your organisation?
- nationally?

SEE OVER

Discussion prompts 1.2

- For the individual, progression can:
 - a) enhance their sense of self worth and confidence
 - b) be motivating and encourage further learning
 - c) promote positive attitudes and learning behaviours
 - d) lead to achievements and qualifications that can result in social and economic inclusion, career progression and enhanced earning power.
- For the organisation, successful learner progression can:
 - a) contribute to fulfilling its mission
 - b) maximise effort and investment
 - c) raise staff morale
 - d) reinforce local and regional partnerships
 - e) contribute to community cohesion.
- Nationally, learner progression is vital if we are to meet the targets for world class skills and enjoy the associated benefits identified in the Leitch report.*

* *Leitch, December 2006, 'Prosperity for all in the Global Economy: World Class Skills'. HM Treasury*

1.3 Lead question

What are the barriers to progression for your learners?

SEE OVER

Discussion prompts 1.3

Learners may:

- have an inadequate grasp of underpinning principles and concepts essential for further learning
- have low aspirations or confidence
- have low language and literacy skills
- have specific learning needs
- experience personal challenges such as family and caring responsibilities, or health issues
- be confronted by practical issues such as the costs of further study, location or timing of provision, or inflexible provision
- be unprepared and inadequately supported for transitions
- lack awareness of opportunities for learning progression or for career progression.

Strategic issue 2

Developing
learners
and teachers
to enhance
progression.



2.1 Lead question

How can we use teaching and learning approaches to support learner progression?

SEE OVER

Discussion prompts 2.1

The role of the teacher has been shown to be critical in motivating learners and keeping them on track.

- Use pedagogy approaches that develop confidence and persistence as well as skills, knowledge and deep learning, in particular:
 - a) assessment for learning
 - b) learning conversations, including motivational dialogue
 - c) co-operative learning
 - d) e-learning and technology.
- Understand and use metacognitive approaches that develop reflective skills and help learners 'learn how to learn'.
- Aim to raise the aspirations of all learners.
- Personalise learning to take account of learning styles, individual aspirations and needs and help learners to become active partners in decisions about their learning.

2.2 Lead question

How can we build learner motivation and persistence?

SEE OVER

Discussion prompts 2.2

Persistence is an essential element for progression and eventual achievement. Persistence is also a key feature of the 'expert learner'.

- Strive to develop expert learners in all aspects of our work.
- Include progression as an explicit aspect of individual learning plans (ILPs) with formal recording of progression aspirations, and regular review and updating of these at all stages of learning.
- Include discussion of progression in tutorials and progress reviews.
- Use the RARPA (Recognising and Recording Progress and Achievement in Non-Accredited Learning) process to introduce and address progression, with a focus on personal, learning and thinking skills.
- Use approaches that motivate learners and encourage them to think about their personal progression, for example coaching and motivational dialogue.
- Engage learners in target-setting to enhance rather than limit their progression aspirations.
- Identify barriers to individuals progression and provide support to address these.
- Consider a range of approaches to increase individuals aspirations, for example mentoring, peer and family support, or work shadowing.

2.3 Lead question

How can we support and develop interprofessional teams and individual teachers in order to enhance progression for all learners?

SEE OVER

Discussion prompts 2.3

- Increase awareness of the importance of progression to individual learners, to the organisation and nationally.
- Raise awareness of the issues surrounding progression and how these impact on individual learners.
- Raise awareness of the specific needs of particular groups of learners, for example those with learning difficulties and disabilities.
- Reinforce the idea that progression is an integral part of every member of the team's role and identify the specific contributions of different members.
- Provide information to support progression, for example, information on progression routes, or on other agencies and individuals and their responsibilities.
- Support teachers and support staff in developing skills and pedagogy approaches that can be particularly effective in engaging and motivating learners, for example, coaching, use of learning conversations and motivational dialogue, and assessment for learning.
- Support teachers in developing their skills in managing tutorials and progress reviews.
- Use references in the new overarching professional standards for teachers to reinforce the importance of progression.*

* *Domain F is entitled 'Access and progression'. There are references to a teachers' role in promoting learner progression throughout the standards.*

Strategic issue 3

A curriculum
that supports
progression.



3.1 Lead question

How do we
enhance
progression
opportunities for
all learners?

SEE OVER

Discussion prompts 3.1

- Ensure that progression opportunities take account of:
 - a) mode and place of study (including remote and on-line learning)
 - b) age
 - c) specific needs
 - d) accredited/non-accredited learning.
- Recognise that learning can be 'formal' and 'informal', and can take place in multiple environments, for example, work, leisure, home.
- Recognise that each learner will have their personal progression route (although there will be identified progression pathways within an organisation).
- Design learning programmes to support learners in achieving their highest possible aim.
- Recognise the need for learners sometimes to progress laterally as well as vertically.

3.2 Lead question

How do we ensure progression is an integral part of all stages and all aspects of the learner journey?

SEE OVER

Discussion prompts 3.2

- Recognise the importance of information, advice and guidance (IAG) in helping learners to select the right programme of study, and be aware of progression opportunities from the outset.
- Use records of prior achievement and initial assessment to identify strengths and support needs that impact on learners' progression.
- Use induction to reinforce messages about progression and gather further information about learners.
- Be aware of important transition points in learners' programmes and the influence these can have on learner progression, particularly for learners with learning difficulties and disabilities.
- Use all aspects of learning programmes to help learners develop the awareness, skills and knowledge they require for progression:
 - a) vocational and subject-based learning
 - b) generic skills (personal, learning and thinking skills and functional skills)
 - c) enrichment programmes
 - d) tutorials and progress reviews
 - e) work experience.
- Recognise that learning that contributes to progression can take place in multiple environments, for example work, leisure, or home, and that this learning may need to be identified and made explicit to the learner.
- Include a specific section for progression in learners' ILPs; use this as a focus for discussions and a means of recording decisions about progression.

3.3 Lead question

How do we develop flexible provision that can enable all learners to progress?

SEE OVER

Discussion prompts 3.3

- Ensure all relevant staff are aware of the full range of providers, learning programmes, modes of study and qualifications available to learners.
- Identify a full set of available progression pathways, both within and external to the organisation (but recognise that each learner's progression route will be personal to them).
- Recognise that individual learners' aspirations and progression plans are likely to change and will need reviewing regularly.
- Recognise that progression is not time-limited and that some learners will take longer to fulfil their progression aspirations.
- Develop a flexible curriculum that provides opportunities to try out, routes back in, flexible combinations of programme, and partnership arrangements.
- For work-based learning, recognise that where a trainee takes on a new job role, progression might mean learning a new skill at a lower level than that previously attained.
- Use e-learning and technology to provide learners with more flexible access to learning opportunities.

Strategic issue 4

Data to support
and evidence
progression.



4.1 Lead question

What national developments are there in data collection and analysis to support progression?

SEE OVER

Discussion prompts 4.1

A number of national developments relating to learner progression are in train. Look out for and find out more about:

- the Unique Learner Number (ULN), designed to help track individual learner progression by linking together all their learning experiences, exam results and qualifications. This is to be introduced from autumn 2008 for learners in FE and work-based learning *
- Management Information Across Partners (MIAP), which is planning to implement the MIAP Learner Record, using the ULN, to capture all qualifications gained by a learner in a single database*
- the development of categories of learner destination as part of the Framework for Excellence.*

** Further information on these developments can be found as follows:*

- ULN – http://www.naa.org.uk/libraryAssets/media/ULN_7_aw.pdf
- MIAP – www.miap.gov.uk
- Framework for Excellence provider guide 2008-09 at <http://ffe.lsc.gov.uk/publications/Framework-for-Excellence-Provider-Guide-200809.htm>

4.2 Lead question

What data and information do we or should we collect relating to progression, and how might we improve data collection?

SEE OVER

Discussion prompts 4.2

- Produce a comprehensive map of progression pathways available to learners, including employment, and regularly update it.
- Collect data on individual learners':
 - a) achievements, qualifications, aspirations and needs at the point of joining
 - b) internal and external progression after joining, including appropriate completion of ILP as a measure of progression
 - c) gender, ethnicity, age, disability, learning difficulty, type and level of programme and mode of study, linked to their progression
 - d) longer term progression, for example one year and five years after leaving.
- Share individual progression data with partners by use of the Unique Learner Number (ULN).
- Establish appropriate targets for progression.
- Improve methods for follow-up of learner progression after completion of programme, for example by automatic texting, or batch emails.

4.3 Lead question

How can we use information and data to support and evidence progression?

SEE OVER

Discussion prompts 4.3

- Use the map of progression pathways to:
 - a) inform learners and teachers of progression opportunities
 - b) review how to work alongside other providers to offer the maximum range of progression opportunities to learners
 - c) identify and fill gaps in provision.
- Use information on incoming learners' qualifications, needs and aspirations to:
 - a) develop individual learning plans and support reviews
 - b) support organisational planning and development of provision.
- Share individual learner data with other providers to facilitate learners' continual progression.
- Use aggregated data on actual progression:
 - a) as a measure of achievement from which to identify strengths, improvement in team and organisational performance, and areas for development
 - b) to identify trends against internal targets for progression and, if appropriate, to benchmark with peer review partners
 - c) to inform future planning.
- Analyse progression, at an appropriate level of aggregation, by gender, ethnicity, age, disability, learning difficulty and by type and level of programme and mode of study to identify patterns.
- Use data on longer term progression to identify success stories for marketing purposes, to enhance employer engagement, or to identify past learners who might motivate current learners to progress.

Strategic issue 5

Partnership approaches to support progression.



5.1 Lead question

Who are our progression partners?

Discussion prompts 5.1

- Learners who are at the centre of decisions about their progression.
- Other providers who facilitate progression to and from the organisation:
 - a) schools
 - b) GFE, sixth form and specialist colleges
 - c) work-based learning providers
 - d) higher education providers
 - e) adult and community education providers
 - f) Learndirect providers
 - g) offender learning providers
 - h) specialist providers.
- Employers to identify progression routes and help plan and/or contribute to an appropriate curriculum.
- Support agencies to address potential barriers for learners.
- Intermediaries and brokers, for example Train to Gain, Connexions, Local Education Business Partnerships.
- Members of the peer review group (where appropriate) with whom we might develop metric or process benchmarking.*

* *Metric benchmarking - comparison of performance data.*

Can compare against older data within an organisation (internal metric) or to external data (external metric).

- *Advantage: highlights areas to improve.*
- *Disadvantage: Does not suggest how to improve.*

Process benchmarking - Two or more organisations compare their practices in a specific area and learn how better results can be achieved. This type is only external.

- *Advantage: useful comparison as it brings information in from other organisations in the sector.*
- *Disadvantage: reliance on similar information being available in other organisations.*

5.2 Lead question

How can we establish a shared ethos and approach to progression?

SEE OVER

Discussion prompts 5.2

- Agree a shared understanding of what we mean by progression.
- Agree shared aims in promoting learner progression.
- Establish a shared commitment to ensuring that decisions about progression are learner-centred and learner-driven.
- Consider drawing up a shared statement of learner entitlement to progression.
- Accept that learner progression may take learners away from our own organisation.
- Establish a shared understanding of effective pedagogy and learning approaches.
- Establish a shared understanding of the issues associated with progression.
- Ensure clarity of roles for different partners and, if appropriate, establish protocols and/or memoranda of co-operation.

5.3 Lead question

What practical steps can we take with partners to enhance learners' progression opportunities and outcomes?

SEE OVER

Discussion prompts 5.3

- Draw up a comprehensive map of progression routes, available to all partners and reviewed regularly.
- Develop systems for effective sharing of information and data, including the effective use of ICT.
- Provide information and experiences for learners, whether embedded in the curriculum, or through enrichment programmes, leaflets, open days, job fairs, 'tasters', talks, or websites.
- Provide information and training for intermediaries to ensure they understand our goals and the needs of our learners.
- Establish effective referral systems.
- Ensure effective management of transitions.
- Jointly plan overall provision to maximise progression opportunities for all learners.
- Identify a hierarchy of skills, attitudes and behaviours to support progression, including initiating discussions with employers to identify skills and knowledge required for progression.
- Collaborate in planning the curriculum and schemes of work across delivery partnerships (for example Diplomas) to provide coherent learning experiences.
- Timetable across delivery partnerships to support personalised programmes and encourage progression.
- Ensure that ILPs are owned and used by the learner across different formal and informal learning contexts.
- Use multi-agency approaches to enhance progression opportunities for identified groups of learners.
- Use the Aim Higher initiative to encourage young learners from under-represented communities to progress to higher education.

Strategic issue 6

Strategic actions
required to
support learner
progression?



6.1 Lead question

What do we need to do next?

SEE OVER

Discussion prompts 6.1

- What do we already do well?
- Using our existing management information, how effectively do we support learners to progress?
- What aspects of learner progression do we need to focus on developing?
- What are the priorities in the short term, medium term and long term?

6.2 Lead question

Who needs to be involved?

SEE OVER

Discussion prompts 6.2

- Who internally in the organisation? Learners, teachers, support staff, human resources and communications, marketing?
- What contributions do the key people make?
- Do external partners need to be involved?
- How will these people be supported to carry out their roles?
- What are the benefits to learners?

6.3 Lead question

What resources
do we need?

SEE OVER

Discussion prompts 6.3

- What are the financial implications?
- Do the organisation's IT and data systems produce sufficient information? Do they need reviewing?
- Do people leading need any particular training? How will their development needs be met?
- Do both teachers and learners have access and support to e-learning and technology?

Strategic issue

Lead question

Discussion prompts

Lead question

Discussion prompts

Lead question

Discussion prompts