

Learner needs and points of referral

This handout will cover:

- Identifying learner needs
- Information, advice and guidance (IAG)
- How to identify learner needs
- Examples of learner needs
- Meeting learner needs
- Points of referral
- Maintaining a safe and supportive learning environment
- Reading list
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Identifying learner needs

Some learners will have particular needs which may affect their attendance, behaviour, learning, progress and/or achievement. If you can ascertain these prior to them commencing you will have the knowledge to be able to support them when needed. This is providing it's within the remit of your role. If not, you could refer them to an appropriate person or agency, or ask them to find out for themselves.

Your responsibility regarding identifying learner needs may differ depending upon your job role. An example job role would be to ensure that initial assessments are carried out to identify any learner needs. Your responsibility would be to ensure they are carried out at a suitable time and place and that the results are used effectively.

There might be specialist staff available in your organisation who you could liaise with. Some organisations have specific departments to support learners, often known as 'learner support' and 'learning support'.

Learner support is any type of help the learner may need e.g. general advice such as welfare, health or finance. Learning support relates to the subject being taken, or English, maths, and information and communication technology (ICT) skills.

Identifying needs is usually the first part of the teaching, learning and assessment cycle. When learners apply to take a course, it's a good time to ascertain information about them to help and support their learning experience.

Identifying needs involves finding out your organisation's, your own, and potential learners' needs, carrying out initial and diagnostic assessments and agreeing individual learning plans (ILPs).

Information, advice and guidance (IAG)

IAG can start before learners commence, and continue throughout their learning journey. It can carry on after they have left if necessary. For example, a learner may need guidance regarding other courses they could attend, require a reference for a job, or a duplicate certificate if they have mislaid theirs.

Ways that IAG can be given to support learners includes posters and leaflets, events, career advice, interviews, discussions, meetings.

This might include:

- information regarding the organisation i.e. facilities and access to certain areas
- advice regarding the programme i.e. content, dates & times, and assessment
- guidance regarding support available to help learners i.e. study skills, finance.

It is important to give learners appropriate information and to answer all their questions regarding the course they wish to take, along with other details of how the organisation can support their learning experience. If a learner is given misleading advice, they might take a course which is not suitable for them, and as a result may leave. All advice should be objective and impartial.

It might not be your role to give IAG as there may be specialists within your organisation who can do this.

How to identify learner needs

Identifying any learner needs prior to them commencing the course will ensure they can be effectively supported, and that they are on the right course. A thorough initial assessment can help with this.

Some examples include:

- application process i.e. completion of a form (manual or online)
- interview process i.e. a discussion (face to face or telephone)
- initial and diagnostic assessment i.e. a questionnaire to ascertain learning preferences, an activity or test to ascertain current knowledge and skills
- tutorial review i.e. an informal chat
- during a session i.e. observing a learner's lack of maths skills
- through conversations, writing or e-mails i.e. noticing poor English skills.

Examples of learner needs

Some learners may experience certain challenges to learning and assessment due to particular needs.

These can include:

- dyslexia, dyspraxia, dyscalculia, dysgraphia
- English as a second language
- financial issues
- health concerns
- lack of study or academic skills
- personal problems
- physical or mental disabilities
- varying work patterns
- visual or hearing impairment.

These can be identified through initial assessment, interviews, discussions.

Meeting learner needs

Don't think that you have to meet all your learners' needs on your own. There may be some that you can meet, for example, help with study skills, or others you cannot meet, for example, health concerns. However, you can refer your learner to someone or an organisation or agency that might be able to help them.

Points of referral

These could be internal i.e. people within your organisation, or external, i.e. people, agencies and organisations.

Example: internal – first aiders, language interpreters, specialist colleagues

Example: external – carers, charities, health centres, police, relevant websites and agencies such as alcohol, debt, drugs, Samaritans.

It's useful to find out who the internal and external people and organisations are, so that you can contact them quickly if you need to.

Maintaining a safe and supportive learning environment

Learners need to feel safe, secure, confident, valued and supported during their time with you. This not only includes aspects of health and safety, and equality and diversity, but those that relate to learners feeling safe to express their opinions and to not be ridiculed or bullied by others. Ways to do this include carrying out effective

initial assessments, agreeing ground rules, ensuring equipment and resources are safe to use and accessible, and informing your learners of the people or agencies who can support them, and talking to learners (in confidence if necessary).

Reading list

Ayers J (2006) *An A-Z Practical Guide to Learning Difficulties* London David Fulton Publishers

Bates B (2016) *A Quick Guide to Special Needs and Disabilities* London SAGE Publications Ltd

Delaney J, Cope A (2016) *Supporting Maths and English in Post-14 Education and Training* London OU Press

Farrell, M (2011) *The Effective Teachers' Guide to Dyslexia and other Learning Difficulties*. London: Routledge.

Gravells A (2017) *Principles and Practices of Teaching and Training* London Learning Matters SAGE

Gravells A (2014) *The Award in Education and Training (Revised)* London Learning Matters SAGE

Gravells A (2013) *Passing Assessments for the Award in Education and Training* London Learning Matters SAGE

Gravells A & Simpson S (2014) *The Certificate in Education and Training* London Learning Matters SAGE

Gravells A & Simpson S (2014) *Passing Assessments for the Certificate in Education and Training* London Learning Matters SAGE

Gravells A & Simpson S (2012) *Equality and Diversity in the Lifelong Learning Sector* (2nd Edn) London Learning Matters SAGE

Powell S & Tummons J (2011) *Inclusive Practice in the Lifelong Learning Sector* Exeter Learning Matters

Reece I and Walker S (2007) *Teaching, Training and Learning: A Practical Guide* (6th Edn) Tyne & Wear Business Education Publishers

Race P (2010) *Making Learning Happen* London Sage Publications Ltd

Read H (2013) *The Best Initial Assessment Guide* Bideford Read On Publications Ltd

Tutt R & Williams P (2015) *The SEND Code of Practice (0-25 years)* London SAGE

Wallace S (2011) *Teaching, Tutoring and Training in the Lifelong Learning Sector* (4th Edn) Exeter Learning Matters

Website list

ADHD - <https://aadduk.org/symptoms-diagnosis-treatment/>

Asperger syndrome - <http://www.autism.org.uk/about/what-is/asperger.aspx>

Assistive technology - www.washington.edu/doi/assistive-technology

Database of self-help groups – www.self-help.org.uk

Disability Equality in Education – <https://tinyurl.com/klnsvtn>

Disability Rights UK - <https://www.disabilityrightsuk.org>

Dyslexia Association – www.dyslexia.uk.net

Free online English audit - <http://sagepub.net/LM/audit/audeng.asp>

Free online maths audit - <http://sagepub.net/LM/audit/audmat.asp>

Initial assessment for using technology - <http://wip.exeter.ac.uk/collaborate/itest/>

Initial and diagnostic assessment materials - <https://tinyurl.com/zovyvex>

Mental health - www.mind.org.uk

National Autistic Society - www.autism.org.uk

SEND Code of Practice 0-25 years (2014) - <https://tinyurl.com/nr5zqtm>

SEND Resources from PearlTrees - <https://tinyurl.com/mcuoh5y>

SEND Resources from the ETF - <http://send.excellencegateway.org.uk>

Special Educational Needs lingo by Joe Baldwin – <https://tinyurl.com/jzq5ve>