

Developing a partnership strategy for the delivery of Foundation Learning programmes to learners with special educational needs or learning difficulties and/or disabilities

This CPD resource is one of a suite of five resources for providers and practitioners working with learners with special educational needs or learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The other resources in this series are:

- Recognition of achievement and progress for all
- Using Personal Progress qualifications to recognise the achievements of learners at entry 1
- Developing coherent, personalised programmes for learners with special educational needs or with learning difficulties and/or disabilities
- Destination-led planning for learners with special educational needs and learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

How to use this CPD resource

This resource looks at the benefits of working with partners to provide opportunities for progression for learners and includes four tasks to help you to think about the opportunities offered by partnership working. The tasks can be worked through individually or with other colleagues as part of a CPD session.

Learning outcomes

This resource should help practitioners to:

- understand the importance of working in partnership and the benefits of working with different types of partner
- identify where existing partnerships need developing in order to support Foundation Learning
- identify where new partners are needed and the role(s) they might play.

Resources

Resources include:

- Partnerships table (page 5)
- Questions to consider for Task 1 (pages 6–7)
- Questions to consider for Task 2 (pages 8–9)
- Partnership-working action plan (page 10)
- Tasks.

Partnership-working in Foundation Learning

Foundation Learning is dependent on successful partnerships. It is highly unlikely that a single organisation (whether you are a small special school, an inclusive mainstream school or a large further education (FE) college) will be able to:

- provide sufficient breadth of choice in terms of curriculum
- have on site all the facilities and resources needed to provide personalised programmes
- offer in-house the full range of support services and experiences needed to enable learners to access or focus on learning, stay on track, achieve and progress.

This is why it is important to work with others.

Different types of partner

This resource explores the roles of the following types of partner:

- delivery partners
- progression partners
- providers of specific support for learners
- providers of access to particular resources or facilities.

Although some large providers (eg a large FE college) will also need to think about internal partnerships, the priority for most providers will be to ensure effective partnerships with external partners. This resource therefore focuses mainly on external partners.

A **delivery partner** will take responsibility for delivering a part of the learners' programme, for example a local FE college providing a catering course for special school learners. Provision might be purchased by one organisation from another or may be part of an exchange, for example one special school offering music technology to another special school's learners in exchange for a horticulture course.

Progression partners are those organisations to which learners are likely to progress. Providers can work with these partners to ensure that learners are gaining the right kind of skills, knowledge and understanding within their Foundation Learning programme to succeed when they move on. They can work together to plan the learners' transition, so that the learners experience a seamless learning journey as they move from one setting to another.

Providers of specific support are organisations or individuals who support learners while they are on their Foundation Learning programme, offering services beyond those that the school or college itself is able to provide. Support might take the form of information, advice and guidance (IAG), transition support, support to meet personal needs, a range of therapies, mentoring or counselling.

Providers of access to particular resources or facilities are partners who offer resources or facilities to enrich the learner's Foundation Learning programme. These might include employers offering work placements, a mainstream school providing access to its design and technology workshop for local special schools, or a local charity offering access to its disability benefits advice helpline for an FE college's LDD learners and their families.

Partnerships table

Type of partner	Existing partners
Delivery partners	
Progression partners	
Providers of specific support for learners	
Providers of access to particular resources or facilities	
Other partners	

Questions to consider for Task 1

General

- Do all of your existing partners understand Foundation Learning and how it affects your entry level and level 1 provision? If they don't, what do you need to tell them and how will you get your message across?
- Are you part of a Diploma consortium? If so, how might you need to develop this partnership to ensure that your Foundation Learning learners are also benefiting from it, so that they have access to their entitlement (by 2013) of an appropriate personalised programme?
- Are you part of a special schools, SEN or LDD network? If so, how much focus has the group put on Foundation Learning? Do you need to bring it higher up the agenda?
- Are you part of any local authority 14–19 partnership groups or sub-groups? If so, are the needs of learners on Foundation Learning programmes with SEN or LDD being fully addressed by these groups?

Delivery

- Might you need to be more assertive in commissioning provision from delivery partners, rather than settling for what they initially offer, in order to ensure that your Foundation Learning provision matches learner need, interests and aspirations?
- Are your current delivery partners offering you access to provision that is relevant to Foundation Learning (ie vocational or subject-based learning, personal and social development (PSD) and functional skills)?
- If delivery partners are using qualifications, are these listed in the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) *Foundation Learning Qualifications Catalogue* (www.qcda.gov.uk/resources/5612.aspx)?
- Do current delivery partnerships support a range of vocational choices for learners for whom vocational learning is appropriate?
- Are there arrangements across delivery partners for collecting assessment evidence that could count towards QCF qualifications?

Progression

Where learners are progressing to further learning (eg from Key Stage 4 in school to an FE college):

- Do you already discuss with progression partners how to tailor individuals' programmes to improve their ability to access further learning in the receiving organisation (eg a certain level of literacy or the ability to travel independently to access a particular FE course)?

- Will moving to Foundation Learning change the nature of these discussions where they are already happening?
- Will you need to have conversations with local FE colleges or specialist training providers to ensure that you are providing complementary provision (eg a qualification suite that would enable a learner to progress horizontally, building on credits achieved for an Award to gain a Certificate or a Diploma)?
- How will you transfer data about progress and achievement on Foundation Learning programmes to progression partners, to enable them to place learners on appropriate courses (eg independent living or employability-focused provision), offer access to qualifications at appropriate levels, or continue to work on identified areas of need or interest?
- Where learners will stay on Foundation Learning programmes after they leave school, will you need to work with progression partners to ensure that the post-16 offer builds on achievements at Key Stage 4 and that the learner enjoys a smooth transition?

Where learners are progressing to supported employment or independent living:

- Will you need to change the way that you work with supported employment agencies?
- Will moving to Foundation Learning affect the way that you work with adult services?

Support

- Do existing providers of support understand the significance of PSD within Foundation Learning programmes and how achievements in this area can be recognised through qualifications?
- Do your partners understand the focus on progression within Foundation Learning provision and the need, wherever appropriate, to reduce or remove support to help foster greater autonomy for learners (eg a planned withdrawal of taxi services for a learner engaged in travel training, to enable them to use public transport or an existing school bus)?
- Are those providing IAG and careers advice able to provide accurate IAG to learners with SEN/LDD about employment opportunities for people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities?

Resources and facilities

- As you expand the range of choices within your Foundation Learning provision, might you need to explore the possibility of gaining access to further resources or facilities from existing partners or of making more use of those that are already agreed?

Questions to consider for Task 2

General

- Do you need to form new partnerships in line with your local authority's strategic plan for Foundation Learning?
- Have you considered what you might be able to bring to a partnership supporting another school or college's learners and how you might be able to use this to the advantage of your learners on Foundation Learning programmes?

Delivery

- Do you need new partners to enable you to offer vocational options to all your learners (except, in some cases, those working towards independent living)?
- Do you need new partners to enable you to expand the range of choices available to learners (and hence to be able to offer them more personalised programmes)?
- Do you need partners to support your PSD offer?

Progression

- As you work to support learners to progress in line with their aspirations, might you need to find new progression partners to support a wider range of progression routes?
- If you don't already have links with a supported employment agency, might you need to establish a relationship with one or more, either (in the case of schools) to understand what they can offer to learners at a point in the future when they may be ready to work, or (in the case of post-16 provision) to work together to prepare the learner for – and to find – suitable employment for them?

Support

- With expectations that most learners with a learning disability will be expected to gain some form of employment in the future (see *Valuing Employment Now: The Delivery Plan* (Department of Health, 2009) www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/media/217091/delivery_plan.pdf), are your learners and their families receiving the right kind of employability and related welfare advice, or might you need new partnerships to provide this?

- Are you able to provide the right support to learners on work placement, on visits to the workplace or in work-related learning activity at school or college?
- Do your learners and their families have access to information about disability-related benefits and work, to help them understand the implications of working in the future?
- For learners working towards independent living, do you need new support partnerships to help them access a range of settings beyond the classroom and the school or college setting?
- Do you need to involve new partners (eg families, health or social services, advocates), to help you identify appropriate destinations for learners with the most complex needs?

Resources and facilities

- Do you have access to the right range of resources and facilities to offer fully personalised programmes that are focused on learner progression?
- Might you need to access a wider range of resources for your learners working towards independence (eg schools having access to an 'independence flat' within a college or an FE college using a residential college's facilities)?
- With more learners expected eventually to find some form of work, do you have sufficient access to work placements with employers who understand the needs of your learners?
- For learners who are not yet ready to go out into the workplace, do you have arrangements with employers or employed people to make visits to your learners on site?
- Staff working with learners with SEN/LDD often have varied professional backgrounds. Do any of them have the expertise to deliver areas of learning that would be beneficial to your Foundation Learning learners but you lack the facilities to do so? Could you explore new partnerships that would provide access to appropriate facilities and so allow you to take advantage of this expertise?
- Where learners would benefit from accessing expensive technologies, are there sharing arrangements that you could enter into with other partners?

Partnership-working action plan

Area to address	What needs doing	By whom	By when
Partnerships to revisit			
Areas where new partners may be needed			
New partners to approach			

Reflecting on your learning

You may find that the following prompt questions help you to reflect on what you have learned in working through the tasks above.

- What have I learned about partnership-working within Foundation Learning?
- How could partnership-working improve our Foundation Learning programmes?
- What are our priorities for refreshing existing partnerships or building new ones?
- How do we overcome some of the logistical problems that we may have identified and prevent them from 'putting a block' on partnership-working?
- What actions should we be putting into our Foundation Learning implementation plan?

Use the space below to record your initial reflections.