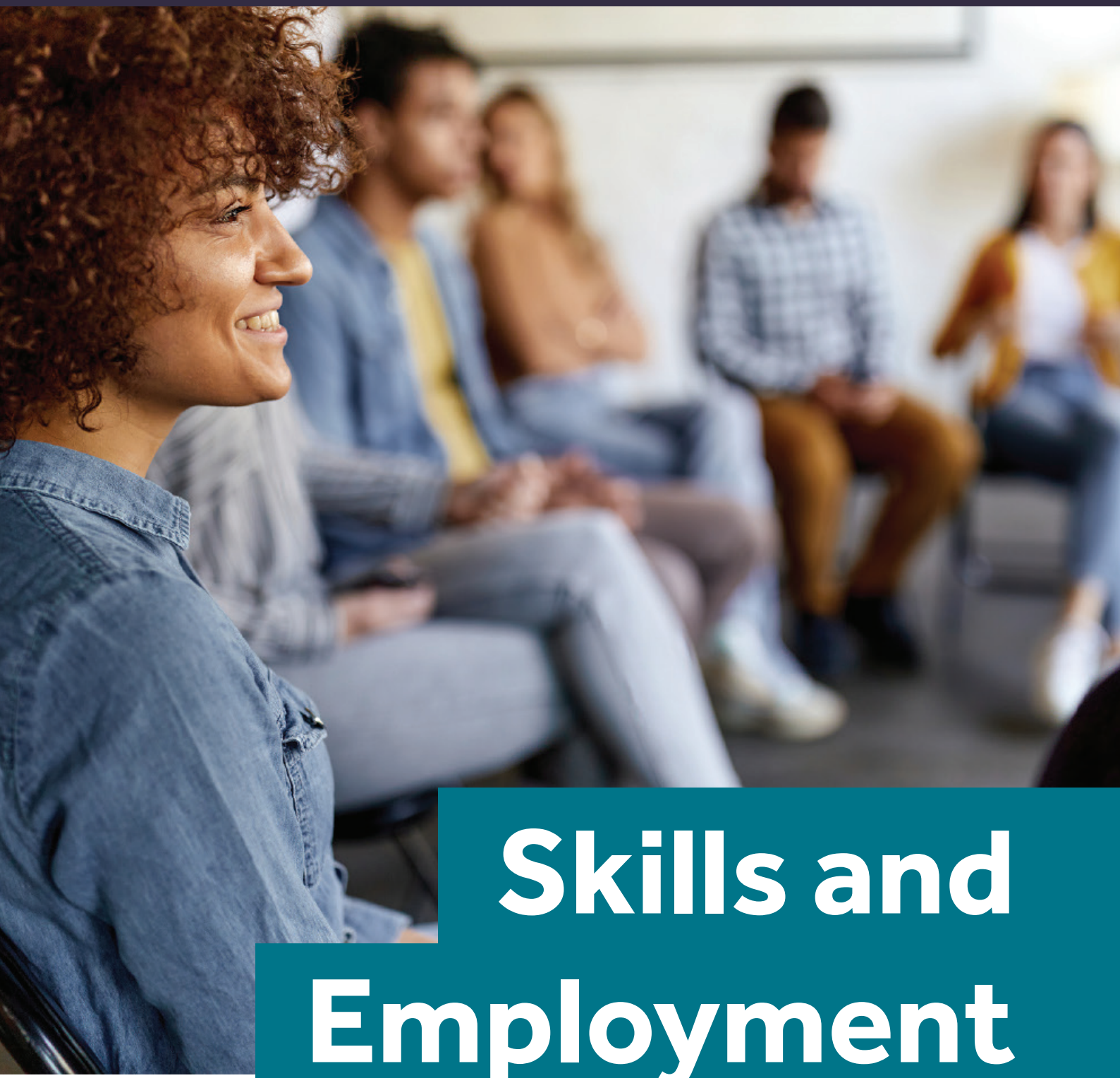
Cheshire West & Chester Council



Skills and Employment

Skills and Employment Service

Cheshire West and Chester

Are you:

Looking for work?

Wanting to improve your skills to make you more employable?

Needing advice on where to start and how to progress?

Looking for a training course for employment?

In need of employment support because you have a health condition?

Cheshire West and Chester Council's Skills and Employment Service is here to provide all the support you need to find and keep a job.

Skills and Employment Hubs

This prospectus will tell you all about the employment support projects we run and the training courses we offer. Almost all our services are delivered out of Skills and Employment Hubs (previously called Work Zones), our four centres in Chester, Ellesmere Port, Northwich and Winsford. On the next page you can find full details of each Hub and how to contact us.

When you get in touch we will ask about your circumstances and suggest how you can get started. This could be an assessment of your maths, English and IT skills, a training course, developing your job searching skills, volunteering or taking part in one of the employment support projects listed in this booklet.

Most of our services and training courses are for adults aged 19 and over. Some are available to those aged 16 and over.

Tuition fees may apply but many of the courses - including basic maths and English - are free.

We are the largest provider of adult education in the borough. At any one time we work with over 1,000 people to improve their current job prospects or help support their child's education.

Find out how we can help you by contacting your local Skills and Employment Hub...

Skills and Employment Hub Chester

The Bluecoat Buildings, Upper Northgate Street, Chester, CH1 4EE

Email: chestersehub@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk

Telephone: 07775 717122

Skills and Employment Hub Ellesmere Port

The Portal, Wellington Road, Ellesmere Port, Cheshire, CH65 0BA

Email: ellesmereportsehub@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk

Telephone: 07990 532869

Skills and Employment Hub Northwich

Waterside House, Navigation Road, Northwich, CW8 1BE

Email: northwichsehub@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk

Telephone: 07833 236675

Skills and Employment Hub Winsford

Wyvern House, The Drumber, Winsford, CW7 1AH

Email: winsfordsehub@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk

Telephone: 07766 205389

Our services

The following pages will give you an overview of what the Skills and Employment Service can offer you.

Because of government funding, each service is aimed at a slightly different age group. We have organised the information by putting the projects for the youngest age groups nearer the start and older age groups towards the end.

Age 16+

Employment Directions

If you or someone you know is struggling to find work or stay in work due to a physical or mental health condition, we can help.

What Employment Directions provides:

- An employment specialist who will discuss jobs that match your interests and skills
- A focus on paid employment – we start job-searching with you as soon as we can
- Employment that forms part of your treatment
- Personalised benefits advice to make sure you are better off once you are in work
- Once you are in work, individual support which has no time limit

Employment Directions is right for you if:

- You are aged 16 or over
- You have a diagnosed physical or mental health condition
- You are working and have been employed for at least 3 months
- You want to find paid work for more than 7 hours a week
- You are not receiving any other employment support or on another DWP programme

If you are interested in Employment Directions, you can ask your primary care health professional* to refer you or speak to your DWP work coach, school or college.

You can also contact your nearest Hub or email **IPS@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk**

** Your GP, nurse, social prescriber or health practitioner*

In late 2025, Employment Directions will become part of a new programme Connect To Work

Skills and Employment Service
Employment Directions

Employment Directions case study

Participant M

In 2023, I was unemployed and struggling with multiple long-term health conditions. These had caused me problems sustaining employment and keeping up a good level of wellness. My DWP Work Coach referred me to Employment Directions to receive support into employment.

With my allocated Employment Specialist I began tackling my barriers, addressing some of the issues I was facing on a day to day basis. We updated my CV, looked at job applications and worked through support tools like action plans and a vocational profile. I also created a 'thriving health plan' which helped me to set goals and visualise my future.

I was referred to relevant courses to improve my office skills and volunteered in an administrative position. Shortly afterwards I found work with a well-established local employer. I took advantage of in-work support, which allowed me to focus on my chosen path whilst still receiving help from my specialist. After the 26-week milestone I left the programme.

I am now permanently employed at the same organisation and am thriving in my work. I have recently been promoted to a new role in the direction of my chosen career. My confidence and self-esteem have improved and I have excellent relationships with my colleagues. I only access primary health care services occasionally for check-ups on conditions that can only be managed with my GP.

Employment Directions helped me to realise my potential and my self-worth. The support I received allowed me to explore options that I may never otherwise have looked at. My quality of life has dramatically improved, I have financial stability and I feel very excited for my future.

Age 16+

Employment Advisors in NHS Talking Therapies

The relationship with work has a significant impact on our mental health. Employment Advisors in NHS Talking Therapies will help you identify your employment goals, build confidence and increase your opportunities to develop.

What Employment Advisors in NHS Talking Therapies provides:

- Individual support from a dedicated advisor to help you overcome work challenges and concerns
- Your clinician and Employment Advisor work together to support you

Employment Advisors in NHS Talking Therapies is right for you if:

- You are aged 16 or over
- You are currently involved with the NHS Talking Therapies service
- You are looking for work OR
- You are in work and would like strategies to deal with your current work situation more effectively OR
- You are in work and are looking to change your work situation OR
- You are returning to work after an absence

If you are interested in Employment Advisors in NHS Talking Therapies please scan the QR code or visit cw.limbic.ai online or call

South Cheshire and Vale Royal 0300 303 0639 (option 1)

West Cheshire 0151 488 8348 (option 1)

East Cheshire 01625 469 950

Skills and Employment Service
Employment Advisors in Talking Therapies

What patients have said about Employment Advisors in NHS Talking Therapies

"The whole experience enabled me to see through my negativity and come out the other end with renewed positivity about my future working life."

"My employment advisor was very understanding and professional and supported me to make changes in how I manage workloads and how to cope with management styles in work. This has prevented ongoing overload as I am able to say no to extra work."

"I have got back my confidence and happiness."

"I received the professional help which allowed me to go back to work. Without support from my employment advisor it would be not have been possible. I appreciate the level of engagement, fantastic communication and knowledge. I strongly recommend the service for every person with long term mental health problems."

"My employment advisor has helped put me back on my feet having been made redundant. She's helped me with finding a new job and supported me through the interviews and starting a new role, growing my confidence and resilience along the way and I am truly grateful."

Age 16+

Individual Placement Support (IPS) Drug and Alcohol Service

What IPS Drug and Alcohol Service provides:

- Personalised job search to meet your preferences
- Create or update your CV
- Links with local employers
- Support with your applications and interviews
- In-work support to maintain employment alongside your treatment
- Benefits advice

IPS Drug and Alcohol Service is right for you if:

- You are of working age
- You are in structured treatment for drug or alcohol use
- You are interested in securing paid employment
- You are entitled to work in the UK

If you are interested in IPS Drug and Alcohol Service please contact your nearest Hub or:

Chester and Ellesmere Port

07912 293653
ipsreferral@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk

Northwich and Winsford

07768 271269
ipsreferral@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk

Department for Work & Pensions | Department of Health & Social Care | v-i-a

Skills and Employment Service
IPS Service

IPS Drug and Alcohol Service case study

Participant K

I have struggled to find employment over the last 2 years. As a single mother it's been hard trying to find a job with hours that work for me. I have also had addiction issues.

Finding suitable employment was vital for me, mainly because it would benefit my child and me financially. More than this, it would also help me to establish a positive routine which would add structure to my life and give me a new purpose.

Since meeting my advisor at Via, he has helped me to understand the correct way to prepare and apply for jobs, and has created a new CV for me which helped massively.

I wasn't sure of the best way to conduct myself in an interview situation and how to explain the gaps in my employment. My advisor worked with me to find the best way to talk about my past situation and work history.

When I was offered an interview at a care home we practised interview questions and answers which I found very helpful. Having the support and someone believing in my ability has made me feel a lot more confident.

I was then offered the position of housekeeper at the care home. It is close to where I live and the employer has been very flexible regarding working hours. I'm glad I had the confidence to explain my childcare needs at the interview because the employer has adjusted my rota so my hours fit around my child.

I'm feeling very positive about the future now and it's reassuring to know that I can still be supported whilst in employment. I feel like my life is now back on the right path.

Age 16-19

Fresh Start

If you are a young person not in education, employment or training Fresh Start will equip you with the skills, confidence and resources you need to progress towards meaningful work or further education.

What Fresh Start provides:

- Encouragement and coaching to build your confidence and motivation
- Setting your goals. We will help you develop clear, achievable goals and regularly review progress
- Identifying where your skills might need updating
- Development of essential skills and qualifications through targeted training programs
- Help with college applications, apprenticeship opportunities, CV support, and career profiling through our partner providers
- Successful transition into further education or employment

Fresh Start is right for you if:

- You are aged 16-19
- You need help deciding what your goals are
- You are looking to go into further education or training
- You are looking for resources and tools that can help you find work
- You are interested in learning a new skill

If you are interested in Fresh Start please contact your nearest Hub or:

fresh.start@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk

Funded by UK Government

Skills and Employment Service
Fresh Start

Fresh Start case study

Participant B

B struggled with traditional schooling due to mental health issues. Having recently finished her GCSEs B felt lost and unsure of her future.

B was referred to Fresh Start where the advisor began by conducting an assessment to understand B's unique needs and aspirations. She required support in key areas including job searching, interview technique, and self-confidence.

With guidance from her Fresh Start advisor, B created her CV and honed her job application skills. B took part in mock interviews to prepare her for real-world scenarios, helping her to feel more confident and composed.

To enhance her prospects, B enrolled in a work experience program run by Storyhouse. "The Agency" empowers young people to use creativity to make positive change in their community. This practical experience not only boosted B's skills but also helped her develop essential workplace know-how.

Throughout her journey, B's advisor remained a constant source of support, offering encouragement and practical advice. Together they identified and addressed the barriers that hindered progress, such as her anxiety and potential housing instability.

The support and guidance provided by Fresh Start resulted in B securing employment at a café, a significant milestone in her journey towards independence and self-sufficiency.

B's mother says:

"I just want to thank you so much for working with and helping B. She has come out of her shell and it's great to see. When she got the news to say she has the job - wow, she was beyond excited. This is a good start for her going forward and it's thanks to you!"

Age 16-24

New Ground

New Ground offers Supported Internships: structured placements for those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) who are looking to move into work. To qualify you will have an Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan or existing SEND barriers.

What New Ground provides:

- A work placement which matches your capabilities and will contribute to your long-term career goals
- A personalised study program which includes the chance to gain relevant qualifications
- If appropriate, qualifications in English and maths at a suitable level

New Ground is right for you if:

- You are aged 16-24
- You have an EHC plan or SEND barriers to employment
- You have experience of participating in a work environment
- You are able to work a minimum of 16 hours per week (if you take on paid employment)
- You are motivated to work and are flexible in the type of job you will do
- You can contribute to the company's success by meeting standards of attendance, timekeeping, behaviour and dress code

If you are interested in New Ground please contact your nearest Hub or:
Supported.internships@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk

New Ground
Believe Grow Succeed

Skills Builder
Gold Award

Skills and Employment Service
New Ground

New Ground case study
Participant J

J started a Level 1 Baking and Patisserie qualification at Reaseheath College but left after a week as she felt the college was too big and overwhelming. J signed up for the New Ground programme with no long-term career goal, just wanting to become independent and live on her own in future. J is autistic and said she wanted to be "like everyone else".

J was always prepared and ready to learn but her anxiety when meeting new people was a significant issue; she feels she can comes across as 'shy' or 'distant'. Her lack of self-belief was preventing further progress. Because her biggest barrier was with social interaction, J wanted to work in a small team. New Ground team members identified that she was very good at following instructions, had an excellent eye for detail and was capable of dealing with confidential records.

New Ground advisors matched her strengths with various jobs, exploring office vacancies as the most suitable next step on her journey.

Following some work to improve J's confidence and self-esteem, she attended an interview with West Cheshire Autism Hub. A month later J began her placement, initially working 1 day per week from home due to the pandemic. J's Job Coach reported that she was increasingly confident talking to other professionals independently. Feedback from the employer was positive and J was able to increase her working days.

Within 4 months J was offered a paid job as Personal Assistant to the Strategic Manager, a well-deserved reward after all her hard work on placement. J said that she was "hoping that it might it happen but never really expected it". J continues to develop new skills and grow in confidence.

Age 18+

Supported Employment

The Supported Employment service offers high quality, personalised support for people with learning disabilities and/or autism. We work together to find suitable paid employment and then provide support and training in work, helping people stay in jobs.

What Supported Employment provides:

- Employment support staff who are experienced at working with people with learning disabilities and/or autism
- Personalised support. We take time to understand your goals, skills, previous work experience, and job interests
- Working with families and support workers to find a job that's a perfect fit
- Working with your employer to ensure your needs are met and providing in-work support to help you settle in
- We help you grow in your role by exploring opportunities for training, increased responsibility and progress in the workplace

Supported Employment is right for you if:

- You are aged 18 or over
- You have a diagnosed learning disability and/or autism
- You are unemployed
- You are actively seeking employment
- You are not in education or training

If you are interested in Supported Employment, please email SupportedEmploymentService@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk or contact your nearest Hub

In late 2025, Supported Employment will become part of a new programme Connect To Work

Funded by UK Government

Skills and Employment Service
Supported Employment

Supported Employment case study
Participant P

P was volunteering at a local charity shop. He loved interacting with customers and keeping shelves organised but unlike his friends and family, P wasn't getting paid for his hard work. This nagging feeling left him wanting more.

P has a learning disability, but that didn't deter him. Recognising P's desire for paid employment, his carers contacted Supported Employment. With our comprehensive support package - including crafting a stellar CV and interview coaching - we empowered P to shine. But the crucial aspect for P was the offer of in-work support – having someone by his side when he started a job.

We introduced P to a local retail store that was recruiting.

We explained P's talents and how we could ensure a smooth transition for both him and the employer. We even helped them tailor the interview process to highlight P's strengths. This innovative approach showcased P's talent and infectious enthusiasm, landing him the job.

Our job coach initially worked with P helping him to learn the job and integrate with the team, and ensuring everyone understood the best ways to support him. As P gained confidence, little further support was needed.

P's journey is a testament to the power of inclusion and tailored support. It's been a huge success for P, his employer, and everyone who gets to work alongside him.

Testimonials:

- **Colleague** - "He is a total joy to work with, he brightens up our day."
- **Team leader** – "P completes tasks really well; he is focussed and works hard. We wouldn't want to be without him. This has shown us that someone who has a learning disability makes a superb team member."
- **P's mother** – "Without doubt this has been one of the most beneficial things he has done. The main advantage has been meeting and being accepted by other people."
- **P** – "I love my job and my friends at work, I am brilliant at sorting out shelves and my aisle is always the best. I like being paid for my hard work like my friends."

Age 20+

Defining Futures

Defining Futures supports people aged 20 or over who face barriers to work, such as a health problem or living a long way from any jobs.

What Defining Futures provides:

- Tools and resources to continuously develop your skills and stay competitive in the job market
- Finding meaningful employment to create personal well-being, stability and fulfilment
- Support including skills training, mentoring and housing assistance

Defining Futures is right for you if

- You are aged 20 or over AND
- You are unemployed AND
- You have a physical disability OR
- You have a mental health condition OR
- You live in a rural area OR
- You are homeless or at risk of homelessness OR
- You are aged 50 or over

If you are interested in Defining Futures please contact your nearest Hub or defining.futures@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk

In late 2025, Defining Futures will become part of a new programme Connect To Work

Funded by UK Government

Skills and Employment Service
Defining Futures

Age 11+

Independent Travel Training

You are eligible to receive independent travel training if you currently receive travel assistance from the Council and would like to learn how to travel independently.

What Independent Travel Training provides:

- A personalised plan tailored to your needs, based on meetings with your support network
- One to one training. In person support from an experienced trainer to develop your travel skills and confidence
- Journey planning and public transport skills
- Training on personal and road safety

If you are interested in Independent Travel Training, please discuss this with your key worker, allocated social worker or SEN team in school.

Independent Travel Training is right for you if:

- You are eligible for travel assistance and require support to travel on your own

Funded by UK Government

Skills and Employment Service
Independent Travel Training

Coming soon

Connect To Work

Connect To Work is a work programme to help disabled people, those with health conditions and people with complex barriers to employment, to find and sustain work.

Starting in autumn 2025, Connect to Work is a voluntary programme connecting work, health and skills.

Of our current programmes, Employment Directions, Supported Employment and Defining Futures will form part of Connect To Work once launched.

Skills and Employment Service
Employment Directions

Skills and Employment Service
Supported Employment

Skills and Employment Service
Defining Futures

Adult Learning and Training courses

Our training courses will give you the new skills or qualifications you may need to help you get a job.

What a training course provides:

- An initial assessment to see where your skills may need improvement
- Maths at an appropriate level, if needed
- English at an appropriate level, if needed. English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) is also available
- Information advice and guidance about career planning and job searching
- Course in your chosen area: this could be anything from computers and IT to beauty treatments, fork-lift truck driving or construction (CSCS card).

A training course is right for you if:

- You are aged 19 or over
- You want to learn new skills
- You would like to move into or progress in work or further education
- You want to achieve a qualification that you didn't get at school
- You want to meet new people and expand your social circle
- You would like to improve your overall health and wellbeing
- You want to better support your family's education, health and wellbeing

If you are interested in a training course please contact your nearest Skills and Employment Hub, details on Page 4.

Skills and Employment Outreach

As well as our four Skills and Employment Hubs, we offer Skills and Employment Outreach based in local primary schools and other community venues. Our outreach locations provide a welcoming space for adults to develop their skills, gain qualifications and give opportunities to learn alongside your children. Whether you want to help your child with their maths, boost your confidence, or take steps towards a new career, we have a wide range of casual sessions, courses and qualifications for you. From self-development and wellbeing to employability skills, our outreach hubs are here to support you every step of the way on your learning journey. Discover how learning can open new doors for you and your family!

If you would like to find out more about Skills and Employment Outreach and the courses on offer, please contact your nearest main Hub or jodie.ronan@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk

The courses we deliver vary between centres and according to demand. Below is a selection of the types of learning we offer. For up to date information about course programmes, search "Cheshire West and Chester Skills and Employment Hubs" or scan the QR code.

Accredited learning

An accredited course usually leads to a recognised qualification. For more information about levels of learning, search "What qualification levels mean" on the gov.uk website.

Functional skills

English (Entry 3 to Level 2)

Maths awards (Entry 1 to Entry 3)

Maths (Entry 3 to Level 2)

English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) (Entry 1 to Level 2)

IT courses

Essential Digital Skills Qualification (EDSQ) (Entry 3 and Level 1)

Word (Level 1 and Level 2)

Excel (Level 1 and Level 2)

Vocational courses

Some vocational courses are delivered by partner organisations

Pathway to work (Level 1)

Customer service (Level 1 and Level 2)

Food safety in catering (Level 2)

Business administration and finance (Level 1 and Level 2)

Teaching assistant (Level 2)

Childcare development (Level 1 and Level 2)

Construction (CSCS) (Level 1)

Forklift truck (Level 2)

Door supervision in private security (SIA) (Level 2)

Beauty sector courses (Level 2)

Digital marketing and social media marketing (Level 2)

Health and wellbeing

Health and wellbeing (Entry 3 and Level 1)

Welcome to Care (Level 2)

Counselling skills (Level 1)

Non-accredited learning

Non-accredited learning does not lead to a formal qualification. This includes:

Non-accredited learning

Skills and Employment Hub registration

Interview techniques

Brush up your English

Brush up your maths

Computers for beginners

Budgeting basics

Eat well for less

First aid (Level 3)

Youth mental health first aid

Neurodiversity awareness

Developing confidence and motivation

Art and mindfulness

Game changers

General Support

CV support

Job search

Skills and Employment Outreach in the community

Courses are held in community locations like primary schools and are aimed at helping parents assist their children's learning.

Help your child with English

Help your child with maths

Let's get arty (arts and crafts)

Youth Connect 5 (parenting)

Slow cooker workshop

Christmas/Easter/summer workshops

Help your child with phonics and SPAG

Story sacks for early reading

Fun with play dough

Notes

Notes