

Learner Withdrawal Policy

Most recent update: 02 April 2025

Scope

Cheshire West and Chester Council's (CW&C) Skills and Employment team aims to ensure that all of its learners receive the best possible information advice and guidance so that they are able to enrol on the most suitable course. In addition, the service aims to ensure that the learner's experience is of the highest level when on their chosen course. However, there will always be circumstances where a learner will wish to leave their course. This could be due to changes in personal circumstances, personal ambitions or in the requirements or skills needed to achieve learners' goals.

Purpose

We seek to constantly improve outcomes for our learners. We monitor key performance indicators such as retention, achievement and satisfaction rates to help us identify 'failure demand' – where we are told something is not quite right. As a service we can then work to improve things and remove this predictable 'failure demand' from our systems. For example, a course may have been scheduled to end at 4.30pm and could be changed to an earlier end time to allow parents to do the school run.

Minimum standards of performance have been previously set for Adult Skills provision at around 65%. Provision falling below this level in significant numbers would incur Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) investigation and there could be implications for funding and/or Ofsted inspection.

Our aim is always for 100% success; we are not prepared to accept any targets that allow failure. However whilst we do not set arbitrary targets locally, we measure retention and attendance regularly to ensure learners are not being let down by the service they receive. Therefore it is not only important for the learner but also to us as the provider that learners get the best information about their course. Making informed enrolment choices and then receiving the highest quality learning programme ensures learners stay on programme and achieve. If learners are not completing their courses of study in a timely fashion and in line with their Individual Learning and Support Plans, we need to establish the reasons and investigate the circumstances.

We recognise that people choose courses for different reasons and that they may choose to leave those courses for different reasons. Any tutor or manager seeking to apply the guidance in this policy statement should treat the needs and wishes of the learner as pre-eminent over any practical measures in this policy statement. The need to find out why a learner wishes to leave a course should never aggravate a situation which, for the learner, has already not matched what they had hoped for. Those implementing this policy should therefore apply their own discretion in individual learner's circumstances. Those applying discretion should be willing to document their reason for doing so in order that managers can have a wider understanding of the learner's experience.

To minimise unexplained absences, tutors should inform learners of how to make contact in the event that they are going to be absent. This practice should be made clear to the learners at induction and reinforced throughout the course. Following an unexplained absence tutors should

make every effort to contact learners. Additionally tutors should use the CW&C VLE at www.cheshireadultlearning.org/learningplatform to host work for learners that are either struggling to attend some sessions or who need to spend more time or work at their own pace to achieve their learning objectives.

Absence And Withdrawal Guidance

Following an unexplained absence, best practice is for the tutor to make a phone call to the learner. In some circumstances this may not be appropriate. In these situations, it is vital that the tutor discusses this with their Quality, Performance and Curriculum (QPC) lead within the Skills and Employment team.

If a learner leaves their course early, the tutor should complete a Completion/Withdrawal form with the support of the learner if they are still contactable. The Completion/Withdrawal form should then be sent to the QPC team. This will ensure that their completion status is correctly recorded on the main Management Information (MI) database and subsequently on the ILR return to the ESFA. The ESFA has rules around claiming funding which relate to learners leaving a course early which may affect the money to be claimed from the ESFA, and therefore paid to providers. For example, if a course is due to run for between 14 to 167 days and a learner withdraws before completing 14 days, this would not be fundable unless the learner achieves the aim they were studying for.

As stated earlier, the needs of the learner are paramount and so the implementation of this policy should in no way be to the detriment of the learner. It may not be possible or appropriate to have a learner's involvement in the completion of the withdrawal forms so they should be completed by the tutor as fully as possible before sending to the QPC team. However, if the learner is available at the time of withdrawal, they should also be asked to complete a course feedback form. Reasons for withdrawal will be discussed between the Development Officer and the provider at a quality monitoring visit and the outcome recorded and actioned.

Withdrawal Due To Securing Employment

If a learner withdraws early from a course due to securing employment, confirmation of this must be sent by the learner to the provider using the Employment Outcome form (available from the [Provider Resources section](#) of the Adult Learning website). This will ensure partial achievement funding can be drawn down (where available) and the withdrawal does not affect overall retention rates negatively.

The Forms – What We Need To Find Out

There are 4 distinct objectives that must be addressed when completing learner withdrawal information.

1. The withdrawal procedure should inform all relevant MI (Management Information) systems of the learner's withdrawal.

2. Forms should, where possible, capture the reasons why the learner withdrew.
3. Learners withdrawing should be directed towards any learner satisfaction systems, giving them an opportunity to explain what the service, provider or tutor could have done better.
4. In the case of Adult Education provision, if the learner withdrew because they secured employment, confirmation from the learner should be sought. Achievement funding can still be drawn down, and retention and achievement statistics are not negatively affected by a very positive outcome.

To Keep Withdrawals To A Minimum

- Appropriate information, advice and guidance will be given to every prospective learner before enrolment.
- Course outlines made available for every learner providing information about entry requirements, course content, scope of course and costs (if any charged).
- Tutors name and managers details shared with prospective learners.
- Registers kept up to date by tutors to show up any unexpected absences.
- Tutor and/or contracted organisation manager to follow up absent learners.
- Where possible introductory courses should precede longer courses so that learners can find out more about their subject before they commit their time to the longer course.

We Will Monitor The Effectiveness Of The Withdrawal Process By:

- Analysing returned withdrawal forms for indications of dissatisfaction with any aspect of the course and following up with the partner provider.
- Monitoring and analysing retention data at provider and tutor level as appropriate.
- Auditing registers through Course Summary Report Forms (for directly delivered courses).
- Provide training to new and inexperienced tutors to establish good practice with regard to withdrawals.
- Check individual tutors practice during teaching and learning observations and monitor registers during these visits.
- Auditing retention issues with sub-contracted providers at Quality Support Visits.
- Monitoring and analyse satisfaction rates and audit learner feedback.
- Monitoring withdrawal information and reporting concerns to the relevant QPC officers.
- Monitoring overarching retention and achievement rates compared with national benchmarks in similar learning.