

Progression Policy

Most recent update: 02 April 2025

Scope

The entire 19+ Adult Skills Fund curriculum delivered by Cheshire West and Chester Council (CW&C) is based on careful planning and constant review using comprehensive analysis of the local and regional economy informed by all available data. The results of this analysis are contained in the Commissioning and Delivery plan which is updated annually.

Purpose

CW&C recognise the value and importance of learning for its own sake to both the individual and the wider community. However the curriculum delivered by CW&C and its partners is built around the recognition that learning facilitates individuals to move forward in their lives. This moving forward, or progression, can look very different from case to case and through this policy we endeavour to recognise progression in all its forms.

Progression can include a move to volunteering, further learning, employment or a progression within employment. However, 'softer' outcomes are also important aspects of progression. These can include increased confidence, improved communication skills, or the ability to apply learning to better understand one's mental or physical health in a way that leads to positive changes.

Cheshire West and Chester Council have been using statistically robust methods to monitor the progression of our adult learners since 2011, when a project in partnership with statisticians from the international polling company TNS/KANTOR designed the initial techniques for this programme. Since then, the statistical project has evolved as the curriculum has developed but has kept the original purpose: robustly monitoring the progression of our learners to inform the design of our curriculum and measure its impact.

Over the years of running the progression project, what we have learned is that we should not expect progression to be linear in nature or time bound to an academic year. Linear progression is attractive when designing a curriculum as it is clean and easily understood. Whilst it is possible for a learner to move from progression outcomes enabling better mental health, to better confidence, to further learning and then into employment, in practice such a linear progression route is not the norm, and may actually be quite rare. The reality is that learners arrive with a huge variety of starting points and may take a completely different progression path from the learner sitting next to them. For example, it is possible for a learner to gain employment before their mental health has improved, use the employment to improve their mental health and confidence, lose or give up their job, return to learning and then seek better employment than they had initially gained. These complex progression routes need to be captured and understood before outcomes are used to influence the curriculum, so as to ensure that conclusions are accurate and appropriate.

Collection Method Including Legal Basis

In line with data protection regulations, all learners are presented with a privacy notice before they complete any enrolment forms containing personal information. The privacy notice makes clear that while a learner may opt out from being contacted nationally for surveys, local progression surveys are part of the funded learning process. There is no opt out for being contacted unless there are special circumstances such as a risk of domestic abuse or illness. The privacy notice makes the learner aware that the legal basis for collecting and using their data is 'public task' as the learning process, including the progression data collection, is in line with national education legislation.

CW&C run a very wide variety of courses ranging from Fork Lift Truck qualifications to non-accredited ICT courses (which teach how to contact relatives living at a distance) and inclusion programmes for older adults. Learners targeted for these courses range from recovering addicts, to learners responding to recent redundancies, to the elderly living in areas of deprivation learning how to do simple chair exercises. The range of progression outcomes we intend when setting up these areas of the curriculum vary significantly. As a result, to measure our curriculum's success in achieving these progression outcomes our techniques also need to vary.

For those courses where the intention is for progression to be personal, to benefit the community or to be a 'soft' progression, it is not fair to attempt to measure 'hard' progression data, for example an employment outcome. Therefore we seek to collect skill progression information through surveys where we measure outcomes with questions around improved confidence, engagement in their community and better mental or physical health.

A variety of methods are employed to collect progression data for those courses where the funding intention is to see progression: to further (higher) learning, employment or progression within employment.

When a course is completed tutors, learning centres (Skills and Employment Hubs), contracted partner providers and the learners themselves are encouraged to keep in touch so that progression can be monitored and the progression success of their courses can be measured. If there is a positive response through these methods the learner is not contacted using any other method.

Learner records are kept on the ILR and on databases in line with the requirements of the ESFA funding rules. Where a learner has undertaken multiple instances of learning this data is used to compare these instances to see if a 'progression' has taken place. The rules for this are set out in the next section but in summary, a progression is deemed to have taken place if later learning has been undertaken at a higher level than previous learning.

After this, an analysis of the available progression instances is matched against the list of learners in the last 12 months, and where there are learners without a progression record various contact methods are used.

We run an internal telephone survey by making use of Cheshire West and Chester's partnership with 'QWEST' who provide business support to the council. The results of these telephone surveys, which are run throughout the year based on those learners who don't have a progression record, are added to the overall progression list.

Finally, if there are learners for which we still do not have a progression record, a survey is sent by email and then by post to encourage a response.

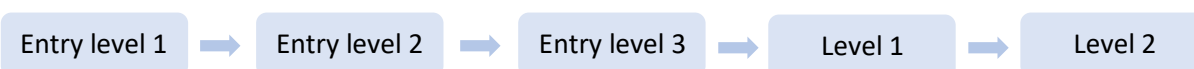
Calculation Method

There is no national set of rules to define what constitutes positive progression. At a basic level, it is possible to identify positive progression through looking at the learner's journey. For example, if a learner is on a programme which is designed to provide the 'last step' into employment such as a construction course where an achieving learner will receive a CSCS card (which allows them to work on a construction site), it is reasonable to ask 'after their course have they gained employment?' The same can also be said of learners attending low level courses where the intention is clearly to progress to a course of a higher level. An example of this would be a learner attending Entry Level 2 English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) where there is an obvious progression to Entry Level 3 ESOL. In this case we would ask 'has this learner started a higher-level course?'

Levels themselves can be a complicating factor in calculating progression. For example level 1 is in practice very broad and a learner may take a long time at this level if they take a number of programmes at level 1, all of which could be considered progression for that learner. There is an argument that even though the level is the same, progression may have taken place if a learner has undertaken additional learning at the same level. There is even an argument that learning at a lower level but in a different subject area should be counted as positive progression.

However, despite the complexities and the variation between learners' different learning and progression paths, ultimately any performance measurement system requires a decision to be made on rules. In order to make this decision and to add to the robustness of the progression monitoring system, a progression outcome to further learning is only counted if the later learning is demonstrably at a higher level. However, in order to widen the scope of the calculation and to recognise genuine progression made by learners, we take into account the course type or funding stream as well as levels of learning.

In practice this means that the progression we monitor and report as positive progression will use the following definitions of progression:



Progression between course types or funding streams is also recognised even if the learning is technically at the same level:



*very small introductory course

The use of both of these systems allows recognition that although the level of learning might be the same the level of rigour is much higher at each step on a learner's journey through these different stages of learning.

In addition, the following progression destinations from any type or level of course are considered positive progression:

- ➡ Progression from learning to volunteering
- ➡ Progression from learning to employment

We will also be monitoring wider progression as a separate indicator which includes:

- ➡ Indicators that demonstrate increased confidence and wider skill development
- ➡ Indicators that demonstrate increases in mental or physical health
- ➡ Indicators that demonstrate increased engagements of a learner within their community

Programmes designed purely to increase these wider skills are not included in the 'hard' progression monitoring system.

Results Of Progression Data

The results of progression data are reported on a 12-month rolling basis so if reporting is happening mid-year the analysis will be based on the previous 12 months' ILR data regardless of year boundaries. This allows CW&C's Skills and Employment team to consider the latest progression information when making decisions about the curriculum at any time.

However, progression is also formally reported to the Skills and Employment Management Team on a quarterly basis. This allows for formal management scrutiny and creates a record where differences can be analysed over time.

Progression data is also supplied to the council scrutiny processes through the performance management framework to allow the most senior leaders, council members and others in governance roles to assess the Skills and Employment team's achievement.