

Cheshire West & Chester Council



Learner Handbook



Skills and Employment Service



Cheshire West
and Chester

Skills and Employment Learner Journey

1

Starting point: *What do you want to achieve?*

We will discuss your requirements, assess your skills and produce an action plan. We will then help identify a suitable course. You will receive information, advice and guidance on your next steps throughout your course.



2

Course induction: *Creating an individual learning plan*

Your induction will provide you with information about your course and the support available to you. You can set personal goals and develop an individual learning plan to work towards achieving them.



3

On course: *Your learning activities*

During the course you will have plenty of opportunity to review and assess your progress and develop your targets and skills. You will receive ongoing information, advice and guidance in relation to your next steps.



4

End of course: *Certificate or qualification*

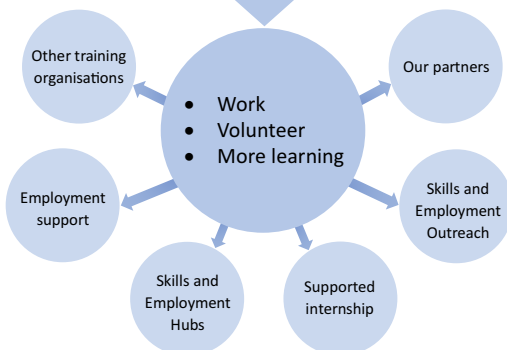
You will assess your achievements and evaluate the course. Your tutor will advise on your next steps. You can also get advice on progression, further courses or careers advice from the National Careers Service.



5

What next?

Your tutor will advise on your best next steps. This could be continuing your learning, volunteering, preparing for work or finding employment.



Welcome to your course with the Skills and Employment service

Our aim is to help you achieve your goals. You might be looking to get into work as soon as possible, or employment might be a very long-term plan. You might want to brush up your existing skills or you could be starting out with computers or English. You may just need a place to be accepted and to meet new people.

Whatever your aim, we are here to help you on your journey. Our venues are an inclusive and safe environment to learn. Our staff will provide you with expert teaching and the best possible information, advice and guidance. And 99% of our learners say they would recommend our service.

We hope you enjoy your course and wish you every success.

Happy learning!



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Matthew Smith', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Matthew Smith

Senior Manager, Skills and Employment



Learner Code of Conduct – what we expect from you

When you become our learner we expect that you:

- follow ground rules set at the start of the course
- take ownership of your learning by getting actively involved
- attend sessions regularly and punctually
- inform the appropriate member of staff as soon as possible if you are unable to attend a session
- inform your tutor or staff members about any special requirements you have or any support you may need
- seek help when you need it and take advantage of the support offered
- use our facilities and resources responsibly
- behave respectfully to others and adhere to the Adult Education Cheshire West and Chester policies and procedures
- give us feedback to help us to improve our courses and services
- will follow our guidance regarding artificial intelligence



Learner Charter – our commitment to you

Cheshire West and Chester Council's Skills and Employment Service aims to give you:

- a service that is polite, professional and respectful of diversity in all its forms
- support to help you progress towards your career aim
- high quality Information Advice and Guidance (IAG), including Careers Education and Guidance (CEG) where needed
- an assessment of your current skill levels and advice on how to develop them further
- a choice of courses that meet your needs
- an induction to your course
- high quality teaching, resources and support
- help to enable you to take responsibility for managing your own learning
- regular and constructive feedback on your progress
- the opportunity to feedback to us to help us improve our service
- opportunities in every course to develop your essential transferable skills and aptitudes



Our commitment to your Health and Wellbeing

We aim to create an environment that promotes your mental health and wellbeing.

This means that as a Service our tutors will:

- create an open and inclusive classroom environment which encourages an understanding for those with mental ill health
- promote equality of opportunity and challenge mental health stigma through curriculum teaching and wider support programmes
- undertake relevant mental health training so that they can offer the best possible support for all their learners
- signpost to external support services, where appropriate
- promote the benefits of the NHS 'five ways to wellbeing' to mental wellbeing
- focus on the importance of building and maintaining healthy relationships

Health and Wellbeing

Mental health and stress-related problems face a growing number of people.

Evidence suggests there are 5 steps you can take to improve your mental health and wellbeing. These steps could help you feel more positive and able to get the most out of life. During course induction, your tutor will also provide you with a '5 ways to wellbeing' handout.

Connect

Connect with people around you – with family, friends, colleagues, neighbours and local communities. Good relationships are important for your mental wellbeing. They can:

- help you to build a sense of belonging and self-worth
- give you an opportunity to share positive experiences
- provide emotional support and allow you to support others

Be Active

Walk, dance, exercise, but remember, good quality sleep is every bit as important to wellbeing as being active. Evidence shows that being active can improve your mental wellbeing by:

- raising your self-esteem
- helping you to set goals or challenges and achieve them
- causing chemical changes in your brain which can help to positively change your mood

Give

Give your time by doing something nice for a friend or stranger. Give someone a compliment. Join a group and contribute. Research suggests that acts of giving and kindness can help improve your mental wellbeing by:

- creating positive feelings and a sense of reward
- giving you a feeling of purpose and self-worth
- helping you connect with other people

Take Notice

Paying more attention to the present moment can improve your mental wellbeing. This includes: your thoughts and feelings, your body and the world around you. Here are a few ideas:

- Go for walks and take notice of the sunset, sunrise, trees, birds, gardens and the changing seasons.
- Visit new places
- Take notice of how people around you feel and act

Keep Learning

Try something new. Learning new things will help you feel more confident as well as being fun. Learning new skills can:

- boost self-confidence and raise self-esteem
- help you to build a sense of purpose
- help you to connect with others

For more information visit: <https://www.nhs.uk/mental-health/self-help/guides-tools-and-activities/five-steps-to-mental-wellbeing/>

Transferable Skills and Aptitudes

During the course, you will also develop many of the following essential transferable skills/aptitudes that are applicable in your everyday life, education or at work, such as:

Essential Transferable Skills	Meaning
Listening	Receiving, retaining and processing of information or ideas
Speaking	Oral transmission of information or ideas
Problem Solving	The ability to find a solution to a situation or challenge
Creativity	The use of imagination and the generation of new ideas
Staying Positive	The ability to use tactics and strategies to overcome setbacks and achieve goals
Aiming High	The ability to set clear, tangible goals and devise a robust route to achieving them
Leadership	Supporting, encouraging and developing others to achieve a shared goal
Teamwork	Working cooperatively with others towards achieving a shared goal
Aptitudes	Meaning
Resilience	The capacity to recover quickly from difficulties and toughness
Confidence	The quality of being certain of your abilities or of having trust in people, plans, or the future
Independence	Being able to do things for yourself and make your own decisions, without help or influence from other people
Tolerance	Willingness to accept behaviour and beliefs that are different from your own, although you might not agree with or approve of them

Essential Skills in English, Maths and IT

Why are English and maths skills so important?



Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG), including Careers Education and Guidance (CEG)

We want to ensure that you have the support you need to overcome any barriers you may be experiencing to help you progress into further learning and/or employment.

With this in mind, we offer free and impartial Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) to all of our learners in a number of different ways. These may include:

- pre-course information, online or in venue
- on-course information delivered by tutors or IAG qualified advisors
- discussions with tutors, mentors or other members of staff
- other leaflets and posters displayed in learning venues, or provided by tutors
- referrals for one to one appointments with a qualified IAG advisor/mentor
- signposting to organisations for specialist support such as housing, benefits, Citizens Advice, JCP and other organisations
- partnerships with JCP and other organisations

For further personal IAG support you can talk to the National Careers Service (NCS)

<https://nationalcareers.service.gov.uk/> or call 0800 100900.

Learning support

If you have a learning difficulty or disability, please inform your tutor. The tutor will assess your needs and provide appropriate adaptations so you can fully benefit from your course.

Working Safely Online

This document provides a summary of the key principles of working safely online.

Avoid sharing or exchanging any personal information while using the Internet and/or online learning platforms

The use of chat rooms and live messaging may be part of the course delivery. These will be monitored by tutors. It is important that you only use these to post appropriate content that is relevant to the course. You should reject any unwanted requests for contact from learners outside of the class environment. Block friend/access requests from anyone you don't know.

Secure passwords are important. They should be something that others can't guess. Secure passwords include numbers, and symbols, upper and lowercase characters. Don't use the same password for every site and change them regularly. Never tell anyone your password.

When using our organisation's computers and throughout your course, you must not attempt to access, download or upload information online that is obscene, sexually explicit, racist, defamatory, incites or depicts violence, or describes techniques for criminal or terrorist acts. You must not access material to cause distress to others.

Images, music, videos, and apps from the internet often have a copyright attached. Don't copy or use these files unless you have the creator's permission and you are confident it won't infringe the copyright. When using Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools, don't enter sensitive or confidential information.

Offensive or abusive language will not be tolerated during online teaching sessions, in group messages, online chats or while using AI or Virtual Reality tools. If you post messages, the system will show who posted them. Learners must not pass messages off as being from another person.

At the end of your session make sure you log out of the programmes and computer. This will avoid other users accessing your desktop and private data.

During online learning sessions you must not make any recordings or screen shots. If you would like to capture some content, please tell the tutor who will arrange this.

When online it is good practice to blur your screen background. This will minimise distraction and increase your privacy. If you need help, your tutor will show you how to do this.

Throughout your course, you must not post anything online that contains:

- Any offensive, obscene, harmful, threatening, abusive, harassing, slanderous, hate inciting, racist or criminal content.
- Anything that causes embarrassment to Cheshire West and Chester Council, its customers, clients or members.
- Personal data about another person including names, contact details and sensitive personal data e.g. about another user's mental or physical health, racial or ethnic origin, religious or other beliefs.

For full details about online safety please read the Online Safety Policy and the Cyber-bullying Policy documents, which your tutor can share with you.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) Usage

The authenticity of your learning is vital. You are expected to submit work that is your own, reflecting your own independent knowledge, skills, and understanding.

You will only be permitted to use AI tools with the agreement of your tutor, and in accordance with the assessment guidance associated with your course. However, AI tools will be restricted to maintain the integrity of your work; they should not replace individual thought or effort in learning activities.

You will be informed how to use AI tools responsibly and the implications of their misuse. You will also receive guidance on fact-checking your findings and determining reliable and unreliable information.

AI misuse may include:

- the submission of AI-generated content without appropriate acknowledgement
- copying or paraphrasing large portions of AI-generated text
- using AI tools to bypass the learning process

Such misuse will be treated as misconduct and may lead to sanctions including disqualification from the assessment or, in the case of an accredited course, the qualification.

When using AI tools you must be clear and transparent regarding what was produced with the assistance of AI by including the following at the end of your work:

- the name of the AI tool used
- the date of its use
- a brief explanation of how the AI-generated content has contributed to the work
- non-editable records - such as screenshots - of the AI-generated content, including the information that was entered into the AI tool to achieve the generated output
- a declaration of authenticity confirming that the work produced is your own and that you have followed the centre's policies regarding the use of AI



Online Session Protocol

The following guidelines will help you get the most out of your online session and stay safe whilst online.

Get ready for your session

- Make your study station ready
- Position your camera to show you against a blank wall or use the background option as you enter the teams lobby to 'blur' the background or choose a backdrop. Watch a video on how to change your background
- Tell anyone else you live with that you are on a course. This will help you to stay focused and will stop unwanted interruptions. Make sure that no other family members are in view

During the session

- Switch your camera on so that the tutor can see who is attending
- Discuss any concerns with your tutor at the start of the session, for example, if you have young children you are looking after
- Follow the class rules your tutor sets
- Remember, this is a learning session and to get the most out of it you need to commit to the session time, concentrate, follow instructions, participate in activities and limit interruptions from other members of your household
- When the tutor and peers are talking, 'mute' your microphone to stop background noise being picked up which can put other people off
- Inform the tutor on 'chat' if you need to step away for a moment
- Treat all others in the meeting respectfully; don't interrupt or talk over the tutor or other learners – use the 'raise hand' icon when you want to speak
- DO NOT record sessions, take pictures or use screens shots

At the end of the session

- Leave the meeting when your tutor informs the group that the session has ended
- Close or switch off your camera if you are continuing to use your device
- If you have any concerns about the safety of your learning or want to report something, you can contact your tutor, or a Designated Safeguarding Officer

For further information, watch a short 6 minute video about online safety: search for the BBC's video 'Digital Literacy Staying Safe Online'



Attendance, punctuality and absence

You are expected to attend every planned session as absences and late arrivals can have a negative impact on not only your own progress, but also that of your peers.



Whilst we recognise that very occasionally there may be circumstances beyond your control, we do require you to contact your tutor or learning establishment to inform them of an expected absence. Please be aware that tutors must follow-up any unauthorised absences.

How we use your personal information

Your personal data and learner files are kept for as long as is necessary to fulfil the purposes we collected it for, as required by law. Your personal data may be used to process or to support any application made for funding associated with your learning. For these purposes we will share the information you supply with the Education and Skills Funding Agency in England, and other funding providers.

Your information may also be shared with third parties for education, training, employment and well-being related purposes, including for research. This will only take place where the law allows it and the sharing is in compliance with the General Data Protection Regulation.

At the point this information is collected you will be asked to indicate if you do not wish to be contacted by the Education and Skills Funding Agency or its partners in respect of courses, surveys and research.

Further information about the use of, and access to your personal data, and details of organisations with whom we regularly share data are available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/esfa-privacy-notice>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-shared-prosperity-fund-privacy-notice/uk-shard-prosperity-fund-privacy-notice>

Comments, Suggestions and Complaints

We value the opinions of our learners and we welcome any comments or suggestions you may wish to make. We always want to hear when things go well, but on occasions we may get things wrong. If we do, we want to hear from you about this too so that we can work together to put the matter right and stop it from happening again.

Your tutor will inform you of the different ways that you can provide feedback or make a complaint.

Course Evaluations and Feedback

During your course, usually towards the end, your tutor will ask you to provide feedback on your learning experience. This process is extremely valuable to us and helps us know what went well and what we need to do to improve.

In addition to this, you may be contacted after you have completed your course via email, telephone or post in order to find out what you have progressed onto, and if your course was of any significant value to you.

Safeguarding including Prevent

We want all our learners to feel comfortable talking to members of staff about issues that are troubling them, and our approaches to safeguarding are explained at induction. If you feel that you or someone you know is being abused, you can talk to a member of staff who will pass the information on to one of the Designated Safeguarding Officers. Abuse can be physical, emotional, financial, sexual, institutional, discriminatory or bullying (including cyber bullying).

Prevent, including British Values

Under the Prevent duty, all tutors have a statutory obligation to promote our British Values. These include:

- Democracy
- Rule of law
- Individual liberty
- Mutual tolerance for those of different faiths and beliefs

In upholding these values within our service, we have a duty to take action and report any activity that could contravene and oppose these values through extremist views and/or actions. Extremism can include:

- Right or left wing extremism
- Religious extremism
- Animal rights extremism
- Other forms of extremism

Your tutor will discuss Prevent and British Values during the course induction and will demonstrate and promote these throughout the course. If you have any concerns relating to Prevent, speak to your tutor immediately or report your concerns to the Police anti-terrorist hotline on 0800 789 321.

Healthy Relationships

Healthy relationships involve good communication, trust and respect. When those things are absent you may feel uncomfortable being around someone. If you are concerned about any relationship that doesn't feel right, there is help available from the following organisations:

NHS	www.nhs.uk/mental-health
CALM	www.thecalmzone.net
Samaritans	www.samaritans.org
NSPCC	www.nspcc.org.uk
Silverline	www.thesilverline.org.uk
Mind	www.mind.org.uk
LGBT Hero	www.lgbthero.org.uk
Act On It Now	www.actonitnow.org.uk (for young people)

Harassment and Bullying

The Skills and Employment Team is committed to ensuring that all our learners and staff are valued and treated fairly and with respect. If you feel that you or your peers have experienced sexual, racial and other forms of personal harassment and bullying, please contact your tutor or the Designated Safeguarding Officer.

Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

Our aim is to actively promote equity diversity and inclusion, and to tackle bullying and discrimination so that all learners and potential learners have equal and fair access to our services.

We are committed to eliminating unlawful or unfair discrimination on the grounds of the nine protected characteristics:

- age
- disability
- gender reassignment
- marriage and civil partnership
- pregnancy and maternity
- race
- sex
- religion or belief
- sexual orientation

The Skills and Employment Team is required to carry out reviews of their services in relation to the nine protected characteristics as mentioned above.

If you experience or observe discrimination or unfair treatment please tell your tutor or another member of staff.

Health, Safety and Security

As far as is reasonably practicable, we will ensure that learning takes place in safe, healthy and supportive environments which meet the needs of the learner. It is the responsibility of all staff and learners to ensure that safe working practices are adopted.

Your tutor will inform you of the fire evacuation procedures and the location of the assembly point. Please note that learners are responsible for their own personal property and equipment whilst at their learning establishment.

If you see anything that might cause harm to your own and/or others health, safety and security, or if an incident/accident occurs, please report this immediately to your tutor or member of staff. In the case of an injury, the designated first aider will be contacted and the appropriate help sought.

Local and National Support Services

Here are more national and local support services that may be useful

Citizens Advice

Ellesmere Port and Neston

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

Chester

Bluecoat Building, Upper Northgate Street,
Chester CH1 4EE

Northwich and Winsford

Wyvern House, The Drumber,
Winsford CW7 1AH

Phone: 0808 278 7806

Mental Health Support

The following charities provide information and support for anyone with mental health problems or learning disabilities

Mind

Phone: 0300 123 3393

Email: info@mind.org.uk

Website: www.mind.org.uk/

Samaritans

Phone: 116 123 (free 24-hour helpline)

Website: www.samaritans.org.uk

Mental Health Foundation

Phone: 0207 803 1100

Email: info@mentalhealth.org.uk

Website: www.mentalhealth.org.uk/

Learning disabilities

Mencap

UK charity for people with a learning disability

Phone: 0808 808 1111 (Monday to Friday,
9am to 5pm)

Website: www.mencap.org.uk

Domestic Violence

Refuge

National service for women experiencing domestic violence

Phone: 0808 200 0247 (24 hours, freephone)

Website: www.nationaldahelpline.org.uk

Cheshire West and Chester Council – Open The Door

Help, advice and access to self-support services

Phone: 0300 123 7047, option 2.

Out of hours – Emergency Duty Team: 01244 977277.

Website:

www.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/residents/crime-prevention/domestic-abuse

In an emergency, ring 999

Parenting

Family Lives

Provides advice on all aspects of parenting, including dealing with bullying

Phone: 0808 800 2222 (Monday to Friday, 9am to 9pm and Saturday to Sunday, 10am to 3pm)

Website: www.familylives.org.uk

Benefit and money advice

Money Helper

For support with money worries.

Phone: 0800 138 7777 (Monday to Friday, 8am to 6pm, freephone)

Email: enquiries@moneyadvice.service.org.uk

Website: www.moneyhelper.org.uk (includes webchat and contact form)

Benefits and welfare

Cheshire West and Chester Council – Benefits team

Phone: 0300 123 7021 (main switchboard)

Email: benefits@cheshirewest.gov.uk

Website: <https://www.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/residents/benefits-and-welfare-help>

Alzheimer's Society

Provides information on dementia, including factsheets and helplines.

Phone: 0333 150 3456 (Monday to Wednesday, 9am to 8pm, Thursday and Friday, 9am to 5pm, Saturday and Sunday, 10am to 4pm)

Website: www.alzheimers.org.uk

Abuse of children

Children's charity dedicated to ending child abuse and child cruelty.

Childline – 24 hour helpline for children

Phone: 0800 1111

NSPCC Helpline

24 hour helpline for adults concerned about a child.

Phone: 0808 800 5000

Website: www.nspcc.org.uk

LGBT Foundation

A national charity delivering a wide range of services to lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans LGBT communities.

Phone: 0345 330 3030

Email: info@lgbt.foundation

Website: www.lgbt.foundation/ (includes contact form)

Addiction (drugs, alcohol, gambling)

Alcoholics Anonymous

Helps chronic alcoholics to overcome their addiction to alcohol

Phone: 0800 917 7650 (24-hour helpline)

Email: help@aamail.org

Website: www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk (includes webchat)

Jobcentre Plus enquiries

www.gov.uk/contact-jobcentre-plus

NHS

Cheshire and Merseyside

Responsible for GP services and other health and care services for the people of West Cheshire.

Email: enquiries@cheshireandmerseyside.nhs.uk

Website: www.westcheshireccg.nhs.uk/

Useful Contacts

Adult Education Cheshire West and Chester

Matthew Smith - Skills and Employment Manager and Designated Safeguarding Officer
07990 532840

Ben Watts - Deputy Safeguarding Officer
07881 500226

Jodie Ronan - Deputy Safeguarding Officer
07768 558858

Safeguarding team email:
SETsafeguarding@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk

Cheshire West and Chester Skills and Employment Hubs Chester

The Bluecoat Buildings, Upper Northgate St, Chester CH1 4EE
Phone: 07775 717122
Email: chestersehub@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk

Ellesmere Port

The Portal, Wellington Road, Ellesmere Port, Cheshire, CH65 0BA
Phone: 07990 532869
Email: ellesmereportsehub@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk

Northwich

Waterside House, Navigation Road, Northwich, CW8 1BE
Phone: 07833 236675
Email: northwichsehub@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk

Winsford

Wyvern House, The Drummer, Winsford, CW7 1AH
Phone: 07766 205389
Email: winsfordsehub@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk

Accessing Cheshire West and Chester Council information and services

Council information is also available in audio, Braille, large print or other formats. If you would like information in another format or language, including British Sign Language, please email us at: **equalities@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk**

You can also telephone: **0300 123 8 123**
or textphone: **18001 0300 123 8 123**
website: **www.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk**