Individual learning plans

helping learners plan their learning

What?
- record the initial assessment process
- record support and reviews
- record training and assessment plans
- revise and update plans.

Why?
Producing a learning plan for each learner is a requirement for work-based learning programmes. It’s good practice in any case. But it’s not something that has always been done well.

“Individual learning plans were often unsatisfactory. Many were inaccurate and did not reflect personal needs . . . In many cases, the learning plans were insufficiently detailed, did not specify target dates for the completion of training and were neither referred to nor updated during progress reviews.”


The Learning and Skills Council (LSC) requires an individual learning plan (ILP) to be completed for each learner. There is a standard LSC format for the plan, which is in three parts:

- Part 1 – factual information about the learner, employer, provider and the programme the learner is on.
- Part 2 – a summary of information from initial assessment, more details about the programme delivery and a summary of arrangements for supporting the learner.
- Part 3 – brief details of any changes made to the plan during the programme.

Part 1 should normally be completed within two weeks of a learner’s start date. Part 2 should be completed as fully as possible at the point at which learning starts, and can be added to throughout the period of learning.

Employers and providers can use their own formats for the plan, as long as all the items in the LSC format are included. The LSC format can be downloaded from the website and customized for use by individual organisations.

In practice, not all the information contained in an individual learning plan is unique to an individual. This means that some of the information – such as the employer’s or provider’s details – may be entered on the plan before discussing it with the learner, although learners must be given a chance to see and agree everything in it.

It is also possible that some of the genuinely individual information about learners may have been gathered and recorded in other documents, as part of initial assessment. For example, section 2c of the LSC plan asks for details of basic skills training. If these have already been agreed with a learner and recorded in another document, it is generally acceptable to refer to the document and attach a copy to the ILP.
The ILP and planning learning

The individual learning plan is a starting point for planning an individual's learning. It is not the only record of planning there will be for a learner, and producing an ILP doesn’t mean that the process of planning learning is finished. In fact, it's only just started. The process of planning learning carries on continuously until learners reach their goals – more about this in the factsheet entitled 'Individual learning'.

The ILP provides an essential record of what has been agreed at the start. Learners, employers and provider staff will want to refer to it from time to time, e.g. when they are checking progress. There are things to be kept up to date (such as records of reviews) and it’s important that any significant changes to the programme are recorded on the ILP.

How?

Record the initial assessment process

The individual learning plan should show that a thorough process of initial assessment has taken place. It should contain:

- a brief summary of the types of initial assessment used (see the box below), and the date(s) when they were carried out – the factsheet entitled ‘Initial assessment’ has more details
- whether, as a result of initial assessment, the learner has been endorsed as eligible for additional learning or support needs
- a summary of the learner’s relevant qualifications, experience and skills
- a summary of the assessment methods used, the results and recommendations for supporting the learner
- a brief record of the learner’s objectives relating to their employment, career and continuing learning.

Some of the other information required in the plan is also likely to come from the initial assessment process as well. Inspectors look closely at initial assessment and assess both the process itself, and the extent to which it has or has not provided useful information for the ILP.

Types of initial assessment

- Interview
- Test
- Structured task or assignment
- Self-assessment
- Discussion in groups

“Procedures for the initial assessment of learners were often inadequate . . . When drawing up individual learning plans, few providers took account of qualifications learners had already achieved or the results of any initial assessment they had received.”

Adult Learning Inspectorate (2002)
Annual Report of the Chief Inspector 2001-02

Record training and assessment plans

Individual learning plans should provide a broad outline of the training a learner will receive. They should give information about:

- the arrangements made for a learner’s induction training
- the NVQ, including all the units to be taken, the date of registration and the anticipated completion date
- basic skills training, including expected start and end dates
which key skills are to be taken, including details of concessions and proxy qualifications
- technical certificates and any additional qualifications
- arrangements for on- and off-the-job learning, including hours of attendance and the names of people responsible for the training.

Arrangements for assessing each component of the training should also be summarised.

Some aspects of training and assessment have to be planned and formally agreed with the workplace supervisor, such as specific hours per week and the names of supervisors and/or mentors.

It's good to involve the learner as much as possible in preparing their ILP. At the very least, they need to know what plans there are for them. It's much better if they play an active part in the planning.

**Record support and reviews**

Effective support makes all the difference to a learner’s chances of success. It's another aspect of the learning programme that can be planned in advance and recorded, in broad terms, on the ILP.

The plan should contain summary information about:
- a learner’s mentor, if there is one
- arrangements for providing practical support for things like travel, childcare, protective clothing, equipment etc.
- when reviews will take place.

Plans should be updated every time there is a formal progress review so that a continuous record is kept of the review process. Reviews are a good way of monitoring whether the learner is meeting the targets set out in the plan. If not, there’s a chance at review to update the plan, e.g. by changing the anticipated completion date for individual components or the whole plan.

**Revise and update plans**

When all the information has been put into the ILP, it should be signed by the learner, employer and provider as a formal record of their commitment to the programme. All three should get a copy of the plan, so that they know in broad terms what actions are to be taken and when.

Formal progress reviews focus on things that may have an impact on the ILP, such as:
- whether targets have been met – and the reasons for not meeting them
- whether the programme is meeting the learner’s aims and objectives
- any additional training undertaken.

Where problems are identified at review, further support may be planned or the timetable may need to be revised. If the changes are significant, not minor, the ILP should be revised.

Individual learning planning is an ongoing, collaborative process, where plans change as new circumstances arise or different aims are developed. The ILP reflects this and is therefore a working document. Updates, revisions and reviews all form part of it.

**Where and when?**

Individual learning plans are normally completed during the first few days after learners are registered on a programme. The process often goes in parallel with initial assessment.
It's not a purely administrative job, and several different members of a staff may need to be involved, such as:

- those who interview learners
- trainers and assessors responsible for facilitating the learner’s progress
- basic skills and/or key skills tutors
- staff who liaise with support agencies.

Learners may interact with some or all of these people during the process. At the end, all the information should be drawn together into a plan that reflects these various interactions accurately and concisely.

**Case studies and examples**

**A procedure for ILPs**

A national provider supporting employers in the construction sector has a systematic procedure for developing individual learning plans.

An ILP form is generated by the administrator for each learner who has an employer and a place at a college for off-the-job training. The administrator fills in the standard components.

The ILP is then passed on to the new learner’s training officer, who adds individual information gained from initial assessment tests and an in-depth interview with the learner. The training officer makes sure that any additional support arrangements identified at this stage are entered on the ILP. Where key skills concessions or proxies are claimed, the training officer will obtain the relevant evidence and include it in the learner’s file within six weeks of the start date. If a learner has basic skills or other support needs, the training officers discuss their specific requirements with a specialist tutor and adds the information to the ILP.

When the ILP is complete and signed, the training officer returns it to the administrator, who sends copies to the learner and employer within two weeks of receiving the plan.

**Resources**

The LSC format for individual learning plans is available on the LSC website, together with guidance notes on how to complete it.

**Stay in touch**

- [www.lsc.gov.uk](http://www.lsc.gov.uk)

**Checklist**

- Does your organisation use the LSC format for individual learning plans (ILPs), or its own?
- Which sections of the ILP, if any, can justifiably be completed in advance and discussed with learners later?
- How do you make sure that the outcomes of initial assessment are reflected accurately in the ILP?
- How are learners involved in drawing up the ILP?
- How does the ILP fit into the whole process of planning learning, in your organisation?
- To what extent are your learners’ ILPs living documents, that are reviewed and updated on a regular basis?