



Developing your skills



Barriers to Progression

There are numerous barriers for learners to progress onto formal education, including financial, lack of information, poor understanding of new teaching styles and family pressures.

Potential students need to have the necessary support in place even before enrolling in a course enabling the learner to concentrate on settling in with the appropriate support from the beginning. These notes intend to raise your awareness about possible barriers to progression in your region and how to best advise the students, so that they can overcome their own personal barriers.

BARRIERS TO PROGRESSION

For many adults learners, becoming involved with formal education should represent the opportunity to return to learning in a safe and supportive environment. Here they can build their confidence and self esteem with other learners who, in the main, will also be taking the first steps back into learning.

However, research has identified many different barriers that can stop people accessing local learning opportunities. These may include factors such as

- Low income
- Lack of confidence
- Unemployment
- Lone parenthood
- Language barriers
- Low literacy or numeracy
- Lack of basic skills
- Learning difficulties
- Low personal motivation and self-esteem
- Location (such as rural or isolated)
- Lack of family and friends' support
- Lack of employer support
- No available time

- Resistance to change
- "Family tradition" of not entering formal education
- Worried that it will change their identity
- Worried about system too complex
- Lack of funding
- Failed education experiences in the past
- Seen as high-risk activity
- Lack of information
- Poor understanding of new teaching styles
- Other responsibilities

Some of these learners will have had a negative experience of learning at school and will assume that their ability to learn is limited. This may mean that they have limited skills in literacy and numeracy. Others may have a learning difficulty that wasn't identified at school and will instead think of themselves as unintelligent because this is what some people will have told them over the years. For others it may be experiencing financial difficulties or problems caring for children.

For all these potential learners their ability to achieve their learning goals will have been severely limited by these difficulties. Efforts to engage local communities and increase their participation must take full account of the need to consult with local people and encourage their active engagement.

People need to feel welcome, safe, valued and respected from the first point of contact, regardless of who they are, how they look, where they live or their background. The key factors for success include identifying and meeting real needs, effective teaching and learning and community involvement.

You are not expected to solve these problems, but you should be aware that some of the learners may have problems like this. Formal education should look at



Developing your skills



removing barriers that adults face when they want to return to learning. It is only after these barriers have been overcome that the learner can look to move on to formal education.

SUGGESTED QUESTIONS

- In your area, what do you think are the most common barriers to progression?
- How would you and your organisation be able to address them?
- Discuss how these issues may influence the way you engage with students

FURTHER INFORMATION

- Local sources
- [Stick with it!](http://www.staff-support.co.uk)