

**Community Employment
Individual Learner Plan**

Individual Learner Plan:

Operational Guidelines - Working with the Learner

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1. Individual Learner Plan: Introduction

Community Employment aims to provide participants with:

- An opportunity to avail of quality training and development, certified where possible, that will enhance their job prospects on leaving the programme;
- Valuable work experience that will enhance their prospects of gaining employment on leaving the programme.

This Guide to the Individual Learner Plan contains all the information the CE Supervisor will need to develop a plan for each participant and record the progress that each person makes. It also explains how the Supervisor can pull together and summarise the ILPs for all participants, at a project level, and report on this regularly to the project's DSP Community Development Officer (CDO).

1.1 What is an Individual Learner Plan?

The Individual Learner Plan (ILP) is a process of planning, organising and recording the work experience, training and development that each Community Employment participant receives while working on CE.

The Individual Learner Plan is also a set of documents that will be used for each participant by the Project and by DSP. The project Supervisor develops the Individual Learner Plan in consultation with each participant. Each ILP records all of the training and development opportunities that are specifically arranged with the participant's particular skills, interests and needs in mind.

The Individual Learner Plan also generates the documentary evidence that will be required in order to support the quality assurance demands of accreditation and for programme and training monitoring purposes.

Following approval of each Individual learning activity recorded in the ILP, the Supervisor will keep a record of the progress that each participant makes as s/he takes part in training and development. The Supervisor can generate summary reports on learning activities for the project Sponsoring Committee and for DSP.

1.2 What are the aims of the Individual Learner Plan?

The aims of the Individual Learner Plan are:

- To support participants and Supervisors in identifying the training and development needs of each participant, and in reviewing participant progress;
- To provide a phase-by-phase structure for planning, implementing, reviewing, recording and reporting on all of the learning activities undertaken by participants while on CE.

Learning activities that enhance participants' future employment prospects can include accredited training:

- Development of skills to carry out the work of the project to quality standards;
- Training which can improve social and personal skills, e.g. Core Skills training;

- Support for literacy and numeracy;
- Internal and/or external work experience; and
- Job-related specific skills training.

1.3 Is the Individual Learner Plan based on a particular approach?

The Individual Learner Plan has been designed according to a set of Guiding Principles that direct the way it is used. The Plan is designed to be:

- **Participant-centred** - the goals and training needs of the individual on CE are the main focus of the plan and these are identified through on-going consultation by the Supervisor with each participant.
- **Supportive** - developing the Individual Learner Plan helps participants to clarify their goals and to develop a plan of action to reach these goals.
- **Flexible** - new learning activities can be included to accommodate new opportunities.
- **Accurate** - the Individual Learner Plan gives a phase-by-phase record of all learning opportunities that a participant on CE experiences during their time on the programme.
- **User-friendly** - the Individual Learner Plan is a structured approach to identifying, planning, recording, implementing and monitoring the participant's training and development needs.
- **Quality** – the Individual Learner Plan provides a platform for the provision of quality assured certification to learners.

1.4 What are the advantages of the ILP approach?

- **Individual** – the ILP tailors training to the individual learner.
- **Ownership** – each learner is encouraged to take personal 'ownership' of his/her development.
- **Progressive** – the ILP takes full account of the learner's previous experience and learning and provides for greater continuity.
- **Timing** – training can take place at the most appropriate time for the participant, training can be implemented as early as possible.
- **Flexible** – changes can be made and new inputs accommodated at any time.
- **Online Reporting** – much of the crucial documentation is submitted online; some of the documentation is held on file at project-level.
- **Speed** – plans can be quickly approved and moved to implementation.
- **Pre-planning** – Supervisors can undertake preparatory work in advance of participants joining the project.
- **Continuity** – the ILP approach provides a framework that gives continuity of planning, action and review throughout the year, as well as taking previous experience into account and providing a platform for continuing support after Community Employment.
- **Certification** – the ILP approach includes an emphasis on certification and provides for accreditation of both project work-based learning achievements and formal training learning achievements.

2. Individual Learner Plan: Organisation

How is the Individual Learner Plan organised?

The participant's time on CE may be divided into four Phases:

Phase 1: Identification of Learner Needs

- Induction
- Identifying and meeting participant's immediate needs on joining the project
- Planning for project-related training needs

Phase 2: Project-Related Training & Personal Development

- Delivering project-related training
- Exploring participant's personal development needs
- Core Skills, literacy/numeracy

Phase 3: Progression Planning & Training

- Exploring participant progression aspirations
- Identifying and planning for progression-related development
- Implementation and ongoing review of progression-related development

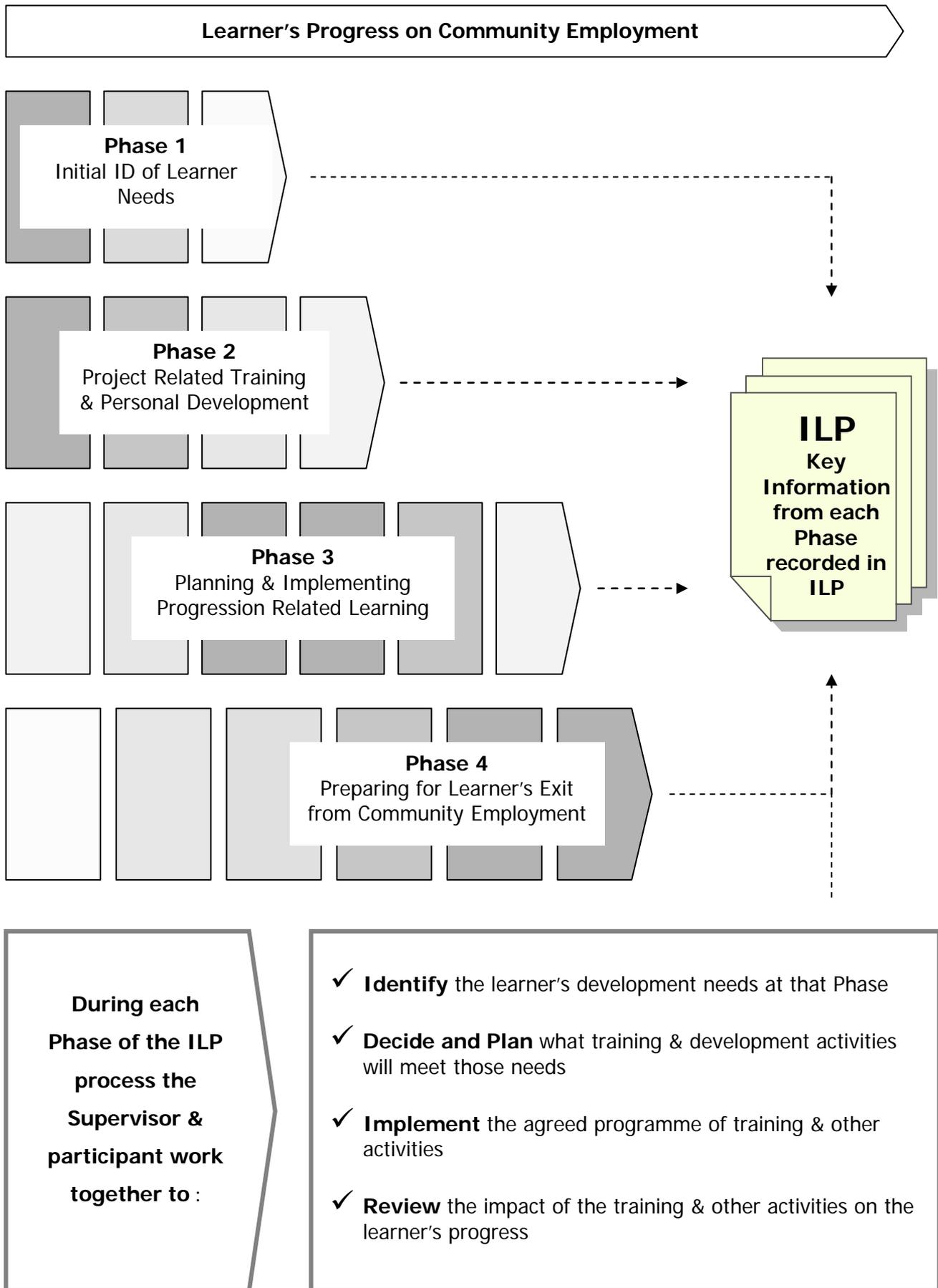
Phase 4: Preparing for Exit from Community Employment

- Preparing for departure from the project
- Completing training and development
- Establishing contacts and linkages for ongoing support
- Completing a Record of Achievement.

By viewing the individual's time on Community Employment through the focus of these four phases (which may, to some degree, overlap), it will be possible to ensure that the full range of their learning needs will be met. Figure 1 provides an overview of the various Phases in the Process of Developing & Implementing a Participant's Individual Learner Plan. During each of these four Phases, the Supervisor, in consultation with the participant, will carry out:

- **Needs Analysis**
Identify the individual's training and development needs at that Phase. Decide what training and activities will meet those needs;
- **Planning**
Plan training and activities to cater for those needs;
- **Implementation**
Implement the training and development as planned;
- **Monitoring, Review & Reporting**
Review and record the impact of the training and development activities on the participant's progress.

Figure 1 – Overview of Phases in the Process of Developing & Implementing a Participant’s Individual Learner Plan



What are the differences between the four Phases?

The four Phases provide a general framework aimed at ensuring that the individual participant is facilitated in meeting the needs that arise for them at the appropriate time. Although the Supervisor will carry out the needs assessment, planning, implementation and review during each Phase, the focus at each Phase will vary, depending on how long the individual has been with the project and what Phase the participant's Individual Learner Plan has reached.

People move through the different Phases at different paces, so there can be some variety in the tasks relevant to each Phase. The Supervisor will also need to summarise the overall situation of the project and report on this to the DSP CDO at regular intervals.

Participants who are on their second or third years on the project will, most probably, not need to be brought through parts of Phase 1, since they will already be fully inducted and will be well-equipped for their project-related tasks.

The processes of Induction and of initial project-related needs identification should be addressed as early as possible. Equally, progression-related development should be introduced as soon as possible, taking into account the fact that the participant may need time to settle in. Phase 4 activities become more important as the participant approaches the time for leaving Community Employment.

The length of time that will be involved in moving through a particular Phase will depend on the participant concerned. Some participants for example, may need less time committed to induction or project-related training. Others may even be able to effectively skip a given Phase. The sequence of the Phases is likely, however, to be as outlined. The following pages give an overview of the main tasks involved for each Phase.

2.1 Phase 1: Identification of Learner Needs

Phase 1 focuses primarily on ensuring that:

- The participant is effectively inducted into the project.
- The participant is assessed regarding the skills they need in order to carry out their project tasks.
- Their previous experiences and achievements are recognised.
- Plans are made to meet the needs that are identified.
- Essential project work-related training is planned.
- Initial training commences.
- The value of the ILP to the participant is established.
- Consideration of progression is introduced.
- Consideration of Core Skills is introduced.

Phase 1. Identification of Learner Needs.

	Phase 1 Tasks	
Needs Analysis	1	Supervisor draws on the job description for each role on the project (these should be in place prior to start-up). (DSP LP-1 CE Project job Description) This provides a detailed breakdown of the tasks involved in the job, as well as the skill levels required.
	2	Supervisor holds informal one-to-one discussions with each participant in order to explore their experience, skills, interests, strengths and needs.
	3	Supervisor holds formal one-to-one discussions with each participant, in order to identify and agree initial plan of training, especially with regard to project-task related needs. This should include Induction. (DSP LP-2 identification of Participant's Needs and Career Planning) Supervisor also explores participant needs with regard to Literacy and Core Skills. (DSP LP-2, question 7).
Planning	4	Arising from step 3, Supervisor enters details of each planned training activity for each participant onto the ILP system. Supervisor lists agreed development and training activities on the Individual Learner Plan system for each participant. Supervisor sources trainers. Arranges Core Skills and Literacy briefings. Enters details on the DSP LP-5 Proposed Training Provider(s) to be Contracted form. Supervisor submits information to DSP through the online IT system.
	5	Supervisor plans the activities, on receiving DSP Approval.
Implementation	6	Supervisor implements Induction. Supervisor implements the agreed training & development. Supervisor updates the online IT system as activities progress.
Monitoring, Review & Reporting	7	As each activity is completed the Supervisor reviews and records its effectiveness and impact on the participant's progress, in consultation with the participant. (DSP LP-3 Quarterly Programme Review (incl. Annual Review) by Participant)
	8	The Supervisor has a formal discussion with each participant. Reviews general progress with participant, considering all training activities to date. (DSP LP-3 Quarterly Programme Review (incl. Annual Review) by Participant)
	9	The Supervisor summarises all learning activities that each participant has engaged in by printing the Record of Achievement, which is generated automatically by the ILP IT system. The Supervisor completes a final review with the participant (DSP LP-4 Final Review (Exit Planning) with CE Participant).
	10	Online data generates project-level summary of progress.

2.2 Phase 2: Project-Related Training & Personal Development

Phase 2 focuses primarily on ensuring that:

- The individual is provided with the skills they need in order to effectively carry out their project tasks;
- Essential project work-related training is delivered;
- The participant is assessed regarding their personal development needs;
- Training is reviewed as it proceeds.
- Consideration of progression is further discussed and explored.
- Further training needs are identified and planned for.
- Participant's work achievements are assessed, recognised and recorded.

This Phase continues the process of exploring and meeting each participant's project-related training needs. Project-related training is delivered and reviewed. Participant's personal development needs are explored and acted on. During this Phase there may also be continuing training and development flowing from Phase 1, either ongoing or only now beginning.

The participant's progress with regard to their project work is assessed, with a view, where possible, to attaining certification. Progression continues to be promoted as a real objective, in order that the specifics of how it can be achieved can be readily addressed in Phase 3.

2.3 Phase 3: Progression Planning & Training

Phase 3 focuses on exploring, identifying and planning for progression. By this Phase all participants should, in all probability, have completed any project-related training they needed. The emphasis is now on the participant's needs related to progression.

- Some participants may have already begun progression-related training
- Some may have completed some parts of it
- Some may have discovered new needs and learning options
- Some may be in need of external work experience placements
- Some may need advanced training, arising from introductory training
- Some participants may still be undecided about their future steps
- Some may still need more social development inputs, such as literacy or core skills, before they are able to plan any further
- Some may be preparing for retirement.

The steps in implementing Phase 3 are identical to those for Phase 2, with the same process of needs analysis, planning, implementation and review. The same rules, regulations and reporting arrangements apply. The same documentation applies. During this Phase it may also be appropriate and necessary to complete the actions that will be needed in order to submit for learner accreditation with regard to QQI courses.

2.4 Phase 4: Preparing for Exit from Community Employment.

Phase 4 prepares the participant for exit from Community Employment. The emphasis is on ensuring that issues such as CV preparation, job-seeking skills, links with DSP Employment Services/Intreo/Local Employment Services (LES) are addressed.

Where appropriate, training continues from earlier Phases, or new training is agreed, planned and implemented. The steps and documentation are the same as for Phases 2 & 3. It is important that each participant is given a final (updated) copy of their individual Record of Achievement.

The Record of Achievement will record for the participant all successful development activities they have undertaken, including both training and work experience. Phase 4 attempts to ensure that the individual is well-prepared for leaving Community Employment. As such, there will be a need to ensure that they have most, if not all, of the following:

- An Individual Record of Achievement;
- A copy of their Job Description (to help them describe their work experience on the project);
- An up-to-date CV;
- A draft letter of application for jobs;
- A personal action plan;
- A list of important contact names, agencies, supports, telephone numbers;
- A DSP Employment Services/Intreo contact;
- Have undertaken interview skills and job-seeking skills training;

3. Individual Learner Plan: Tracking the Process

3.1 How does the Supervisor keep track of all of this?

The Individual Learner Plan provides a standardised format for recording, reviewing and reporting all of the learning activities that make up a CE participant's experience. Here is a summary of the documents which assist the Supervisor in planning, implementing and reviewing an Individual Learner Plan for one participant.

DSP LP-1	CE Project Job Description
DSP LP-2	Identification of Participant's Needs and Career Planning
DSP LP-3	Quarterly Programme Review with Participant
DSP LP-4	Final Review (Exit Planning) with CE Participant
DSP LP-5	Proposed Training Provider(s) to be Contracted

All of these records are designed to help the Supervisor and the participant to discuss the planning and implementation of a programme of training and work experience. These documents are kept on file, in a secure place, for the Supervisor and the participant to examine in private. The DSP Community Development Officer will monitor them from time to time.

The IT reporting system covers activities relating to the following developmental areas:

- Induction
- CE Project related training
- Briefings
- Progression planning activities
- Progression related skills training
- Internal & External Work Experience
- Exit planning

3.2 When does the Supervisor submit information to the DSP CDO?

The Supervisor sends information to their DSP CDO as soon as s/he and the participant have agreed on any given training and development activity. If the participant was with the CE project during the previous year, by the time the project rolls over the Supervisor should have already completed a review of learning for that year, and may have agreed training activities with the learner that can be submitted for approval immediately.

For a new participant, confirmation that Induction has been completed should be entered onto the online system as soon as it is finished. Information regarding proposed Individual Learning activities should be entered without delay, as soon as the necessary information has been gathered. The DSP Community Development Officer has to approve the Individual Learner Plan before any training, except Induction, is carried out.

As soon as the Supervisor selects the training provider to deliver an Individual Learning activity, s/he submits information drawn from the DSP LP-5 'Proposed Training Provider(s) to be Contracted' to the DSP CDO for approval. This is done using the online system. The hard copy of the DSP LP-5 Form must be signed off by the Sponsor PDO before training commences.

3.3 Does this mean continuous contact between DSP and the Project regarding ILP activities for participants?

Yes. The DSP CDO will want to keep track of the planning and training which is being carried out for all participants.

If participants are recruited in smaller numbers or one at a time, the Plans for different participants will be ready at different times. The Supervisor should send these to the DSP CDO for approval as soon as they are ready. The Supervisor can add new activities to the Plan and submit these for approval at any time. There may be slight variations in this time-scale, as different participants' progress at different speeds.

3.4 How much one-to-one contact will the Supervisor need to have with participants to manage this?

The Supervisor will need to formally interview each individual participant twice during the first three-month period (Phase 1), first when they start on CE, to get to know their needs, and again about three months later, to review their progress. The Supervisor will also be able to notice how the participants manage at work, during Induction training and through informal chats and interaction with other participants.

The review meeting at the end of Phase 1 will be the first quarterly review and should also be a planning meeting for Phase 2. This means that after the Phase 1, the Supervisor interviews individual participants every three months, at the end of Phases 2, 3 and 4.

3.5 Does the Supervisor have to do anything different for Phases 2, 3 and 4?

For Phases 2 and 3 the Supervisor goes through the same cycle of analysing needs, planning, implementing and reviewing activities. S/he updates the Plan early in Phase 2 and sends it to the DSP CDO. This should be done no later than six or seven weeks after the start of that Phase, that is, around week 20 of the person's CE work placement. The Supervisor does the same near the start of Phase 3, at approximately week 33 of the individual's placement, and the same for Phase 4. This time scale is a general guide only, as some participants may be ready to move to the next Phase more quickly, whereas others may need extra time.

There is one extra element in the planning for Phase 4. The participant needs to prepare to make the transition to work or to further training that will enhance their job prospects. This involves drawing up an Exit Plan that includes a programme of contact and interviews with DSP Employment Services/Intreo or the Local Employment Services (LES). Their training and development activities for Phase 4 will therefore need to include CV preparation, interview and job-seeking skills and a review of their entire CE training so far.

3.6 How can the Supervisor keep track of what is happening overall in the Project?

As well as documenting and reporting on the individual participant's Plan, the Supervisor will also need to keep track of the overall situation on the CE project – that is, the range of training and development activities that has been planned for participants, and what activities have actually taken place. The Supervisor also needs to be able to monitor expenditure to ensure that this keeps within project budget allocation.

The budget summary gives an overview of all of the training that is planned and what has already taken place, how much training each individual has accessed and for how long, and how much it has cost. This is an essential tool for managing the project's budget.

4. Individual Learner Plan: Budget

4.1 What is the project's budget?

An annual training budget is allocated to the project based on the number of approved project places.

4.2 Managing Expenditure

No expenditure should be committed or paid out unless approval has been granted

The DSP CDO will receive updates and new additions to Individual Learner Plans from the Supervisor quite regularly, as participants move through the project.

At the same time, both the Supervisor and the CDO need to keep track of how much is being spent on training during each quarter, this can be done by the Supervisor entering planned and actual spending for each participant onto the system.