



Leading learning and skills



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## Developing excellence in E2E series

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# Agreeing objectives and targets within E2E

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## Hints and Tips for Providers

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Skillcom and Education Relations

For

Learning and Skills Council Greater Manchester

## Foreword

This is one booklet in a series of 'Hints and Tips for Providers.' These booklets are to be used to promote continuous improvement and the spreading of best practice for those providers who deliver the Entry to Employment (E2E) programme for young people. They will support providers bringing about a marked increase in the quality of their delivery. They have been produced by the Learning and Skills Council Greater Manchester in association with consultants Lynne Clough and Richard Sharples who are the authors of the series.

The 'Thematic Review of Entry to Employment,' published by the Adult Learning Inspectorate in early 2005, stated the areas for improvement within E2E. Some of these are:

- Providers do not use data sufficiently to measure and improve achievement. They tend to collect only that data required by their contracts.
- Few providers make an adequate assessment of individual learners' needs and fewer still follow this up with a well-designed programme of learning.
- General goals/objectives are set, but seldom broken down into smaller, measurable targets. Target setting and reviews of learners' progress are often inadequate.
- In the first year of E2E only thirty four percent of learners progressed into work-based learning, further education or employment. If E2E is to be more successful, it seems reasonable to expect more emphasis on vocational learning and better provision of literacy, numeracy and language and key skills.

The 'Hints and Tips for Providers' series has therefore been developed as an improvement aid for staff delivering the E2E programme. The four booklets in the series cover:

1. Collecting, analysing and using data within E2E
2. Improving initial assessment within E2E
3. Agreeing objectives and targets within E2E
4. Improving positive progression in E2E.

We hope you find that using these booklets will support you in enhancing the experience and skills of learners and improving their opportunities to progress.



John Korzeniewski Executive Director

**The Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI)<sup>1</sup> has identified setting and reviewing appropriate targets as a weakness in many work-based learning programmes. Agreeing key objectives and targets with learners has proved a big challenge for many practitioners working with E2E learners. A challenge which may have limited some young people's opportunity to progress and achieve. The Adult Learning Inspectorate has identified common mistakes in setting targets in E2E, including:**

- 'Targets set on learning plans tend to be vague or unsuitable'
- '... General goals are set, but seldom broken down into smaller, measurable targets'<sup>1</sup>

## Introduction

This document aims to offer E2E providers a series of hints and tips to support effective practice in developing objectives and targets with E2E learners.

Learners are entitled to a rich, broad learning experience which is based on the E2E entitlement curriculum and which is relevant to their needs. They are also entitled to achieve levels of success in learning which are in line with their potential and prepare them for adult working life.

Successful learning is about good trainers who focus on the right things at the right time. Key objectives and targets increase the likelihood of achievement and progression and help to secure a focus. Effective targets increase the possibility of success for learners and staff.

The *E2E Passport*<sup>2</sup> defines key objectives as the areas that the young person needs to address in order to fulfil their career and progression

aims at the end of their E2E programme. They might be viewed as the key barriers, which if not addressed, will prevent the young person moving on. They are recorded in the *E2E Programme* document within the Passport.

Short-term targets are designed to support the achievement of learners' objectives and should be translated into 'bite-size' chunks for the learner. They might be seen as stepping-stones towards the achievement of their key objectives.

Objective and target setting can have a positive impact on learning. As trainers become more focused on key objectives and targets in their planning, training and learning will become increasingly effective. Progression and achievement is highest when learners and trainers have a clear picture of what needs to be achieved and how to achieve it. Well-defined objectives and targets help us to achieve that picture.

The use of objectives and targets can:

- focus the trainer's attention and effort on clearly defined priorities based on learners' training and support needs
- help learners develop a clear picture of what

- they need to do to progress and achieve
- help other agencies and carers know what they can do to support learners
- enable trainers to evaluate the effectiveness of their training techniques and programmes as a whole.

Objective and target setting is not a magic pill for success in learning but it can be a powerful tool for the trainer, if used intelligently and thoughtfully to support learning and help learners gain confidence. In contrast, the use of inappropriate or irrelevant objectives and targets is unlikely to support the development of a learner's self-esteem and achievement.

E2E programmes are based on a small set of individual key objectives. The achievement of these objectives will prepare the learner to move on to a positive progression route and will also coincide with the completion of their E2E programme.

Where possible, key objectives should be specific and include a mechanism for measurement, so that learners are clear about what they need to do to achieve the objective.

E2E programmes include a cycle of regular progress reviews between learners and their trainer. Progress towards E2E key objectives is most likely to occur when learners have shorter-term intermediate targets to work towards between reviews.

As with key objectives it is essential that targets are worded so that learners are clear about what they need to do to achieve them. Targets should be small and achievable; if they are too large, it makes the learner feel like they are not making progress.

It is often possible to break down key objectives into a number of short-term targets. One

effective approach is to list all the shorter-term targets that will lead the learner to the achievement of their long-term objective. This is called the *Ladder to Success* approach and is described in more detail later. In practice, this is sometimes a little difficult, as you may be able to list most short-term targets but you might not be sure they are sufficient. This is all right because it is possible to revise and amend targets as circumstances dictate and as your understanding of what needs to be done to help the learner achieve their key objective improves.

Targets should be accompanied by tasks; these are the simple things which need to be done today, next Tuesday, or this Friday morning. The order or tasks often doesn't matter a great deal; their importance comes from chipping away at a specific target. Tasks can be recorded on the *E2E Activity Plan* in the Passport.

**? Hint and Tip 1 – Be clear about the difference between E2E key objectives and E2E targets**

E2E key objectives describe what needs to be accomplished to overcome the learner's main barriers to making a positive progression from E2E. They are recorded on the *E2E Programme* within the Passport.

E2E targets are agreed at reviews and describe what needs to be achieved between reviews to make progress towards the learner's longer-term key objectives.

Encourage staff and learners to use the terms 'objectives' and 'targets' in the same way.

**? Hint and Tip 2 – Make it a priority to identify and agree the learner's most likely positive progression route**

<sup>1</sup> *Entry to Employment: Looking back over the first year and forward to the future*, Adult Learning Inspectorate, 2005

<sup>2</sup> *The E2E Passport*, LSC, 2004

A thorough initial assessment phase during E2E will help learners identify a likely positive progression route and possibly a preferred job. It should also identify their training needs and barriers which are making it difficult for them to progress immediately. The barriers should directly shape the learner's E2E key objectives.

Without a clearly identified progression route (accepting that sometimes this will turn out not to be the actual progression route) it is difficult to identify specific barriers and, ultimately, appropriate E2E key objectives.

**? Hint and Tip 3 – Make sure the objective is relevant to the learner's aspirations**

Objectives and targets must be meaningful to learners and related to their aspirations. The initial assessment process must identify learners' aspirations, likely progression route and training needs.

The consequences of worthwhile targets and objectives are obvious. If they are not obvious to trainers or learners then they probably need to be rewritten.

**? Hint and Tip 4 – Identify the benefits to the learner**

When agreeing key objectives with learners, it is important to consider the benefits of them achieving the objective. For example, it might include: being eligible to apply for a job, looking good, expanding a circle of friends, staying out of prison, or being paid a regular wage. If you can't identify any benefits for achieving a key objective, you should probably identify another objective. When a learner's initial enthusiasm wears thin, or the programme becomes a bit more difficult, this

list of benefits will help to remind you and the learner of what it is all about. Benefits can be very personal to learners and they might not always make sense to another person.

**? Hint and Tip 5 – Agree a limited number of objectives and targets**

The *E2E Passport* contains space for a limited number of overall E2E key objectives and targets for each review. Consider how you prioritise objectives and targets so that you work on those that will have the greatest impact on the likelihood of the learner achieving, and making a positive progression from the programme.

**? Hint and Tip 6 – Use the SMART approach when writing objectives and targets**

The SMART acronym refers to objectives or targets that are:

**Specific** – clear, concise and action focused

**Measurable** – stated in terms of quality or quantity

**Agreed** – between the learner and the trainer

**Realistic** – targets which stretch learners but are achievable with training and support, and are based on where the learner is now

**Time-framed** – have deadlines or time periods during which action will take place.

All objectives and targets should include these components.

**? Hint and Tip 7 – Use action words when writing objectives and targets to help make them specific**

Key objectives are often most useful if they begin with the words: learn, improve or develop.

A wider variety of action words can sometimes help staff and learners agree review targets. A useful staff development activity can be to brainstorm a list of action words that are appropriate for use in E2E. Annex 1 contains a selection of words that might help to get your list started; you might feel some are more useful than others. These words are open to fewer interpretations. It is obviously important that learners understand their objectives and targets and any words used are appropriate to their reading level.

**? Hint and Tip 8 – Word objectives and targets positively**

Objectives and targets should be worded so that they stimulate learners to demonstrate a specific skill or behaviour so that it can be seen by trainers, the learner or their employer. They should not include words such as stop or don't.

For example: *Successfully follow the cashing-up procedure* is much better than: *Stop making mistakes when cashing-up.*

They should be based on a realistic picture of where the learner is now, what the behaviour or skills they need to demonstrate are and the help available to them, to close the gap between the two.

**? Hint and Tip 9 – Identify the best way of measuring objectives**

Some objectives will lend themselves more easily to being measured than others. Improving literacy or numeracy levels from one level to another, or developing specific vocational skills for example, will be fairly straightforward to set. Providers often find setting measurable objectives for personal and

social skills, however more challenging, because they are not as easy to quantify e.g. developing confidence or motivation levels. In these situations providers may find it easier to identify a number of short-term targets, where the collective achievement will equal achievement of the overall objective. The *Ladder to Success* approach described below is an example of this.

**? Hint and Tip 10 – Use the Ladder to Success approach to help set targets to support objectives**

The *Ladder to Success* approach (see table 1) can be used to help link targets clearly to objectives and provide a basis for the measurement of learners' objectives.

Begin by describing where the learner is currently at in relation to an important area in which they need to make progress. Secondly, describe the ultimate behaviour, knowledge or skill that you agree needs to be demonstrated. An example in the personal and social skills strand of E2E, might be to: *Improve my decision-making skills.* Then identify a series of 6-10 targets which, once completed, allow the key objective to be signed off. These pre-agreed targets can then be used as review targets over a period of time. This approach can be particularly useful with issues such as motivation, personal presentation skills and developing independence.

**Table 1** *The Ladder to Success Approach*

<b>Objective</b>	Improve my decision-making skills
<b>Target 7</b>	I can show that I can make decisions rather than put them off
<b>Target 6</b>	I can show that I can make decisions about people that matter to me
<b>Target 5</b>	I can show how I have sought advice to help me make decisions
<b>Target 4</b>	I can show that I can make decisions about who might hold me back
<b>Target 3</b>	I can show that I can make decisions about who can help me move forward
<b>Target 2</b>	I can show that I can make decisions about what job I would like to do in the future
<b>Target 1</b>	I can show that I can make decisions about what I would like to do after E2E
<b>Current position</b>	Jay finds it difficult to make decisions

\* Targets adapted from *Skillmap*, Skillcom & Education Relations, 2005

**? Hint and Tip 11 – Focus on performance targets**

Take care to set targets which you have as much control as possible over. Failing to achieve a target, for reasons beyond your control, can be very disheartening for a learner. This could be because of limited work placement opportunities, changes to assessment dates, an employer deciding the learner isn't the best match for the job they have on offer, or setting targets were there won't be an opportunity to access the training needed. Targets based on personal performance are easier to keep control over and more likely to result in learners experiencing success.

**? Hint and Tip 12 – Make sure the learner knows what they need to do to achieve their objective or target**

Make sure the learner knows exactly what they need to:

- do
- show
- demonstrate
- behave like

to achieve their objective or target. Make sure the objective or target is written in such a way that it will be possible, at some foreseeable point, for you to say "Well done, you've achieved that."

**? Hint and Tip 13 – Maximise opportunities for the learner to experience success**

Agreed objectives and targets should not only stretch or challenge learners but should also always be attainable. Many learners have experienced little previous success in the education and training system. Targets that

stretch learners and that are also achievable can help learners change their self-perception of how good they are and improve their confidence. Learners coming to reviews with an expectation that they have had the opportunity and support to achieve their targets can lead to an upward spiral of success and achievement.

**? Hint and Tip 14 – Encourage learners to reflect and review their progress**

Reflecting on our own performance, making judgements about the progress we have made and identifying objectives and targets, are skills that many of us have developed without conscious effort. Many of the learners on E2E programmes have not fully developed these skills.

Make a deliberate decision to set out to develop learners' skills in these areas so that, over time, they can take more responsibility for their own targets and contribute more readily to reviews.

Consider how you will help learners develop these skills during the time they spend on the programme. Think about reviews as an opportunity for supporting the development of these skills during the time they spend on E2E.

**? Hint and Tip 15 – Provide *medal and mission feedback* to learners when reviewing progress against their targets**

Providing accurate feedback is a key characteristic of the review stage of the E2E learning cycle. The use of targets is only effective when learners have the opportunity to receive and discuss feedback on the progress they have made, either partially, or fully, towards the targets which were set at their last review. Partial progress is usually positive. This can be described as *medal* feedback.

Setting targets for the period to the next review will also be the subject of discussion in reviews. Learners are most likely to benefit when they receive clear feedback on what they need to do next to make further progress. This can be described as *mission* feedback.

Some trainers believe that learners' self-esteem will suffer if they are given any feedback which challenges their perceptions of their ability or progress. This can have the effect of giving learners unrealistic expectations that are not matched to their ability.

**Table 2** *Medal and mission feedback*

<b>Medal</b>	<b>Mission</b>
Feedback on the progress made towards the target	Feedback on what needs to be done next to make further progress

**? Hint and Tip 16 – Display progress towards key objectives**

Consider how you can focus a learner's attention on the achievement of their key objectives.

One E2E provider laminates a small card containing the learner's key objectives and uses this as a page-marker in their portfolios.

Another E2E provider uses a wall chart to display the achievement of key objectives for all their E2E learners. Key objectives are given a number from 1 to 5, to protect the privacy of learners' specific key objectives. Learners mark off how far they are to achieving each key objective based on units of one-quarter, one-half, and three-quarters. This isn't an exact

science but it does help to motivate many learners and encourages them to take ownership of their objectives.

**? Hint and Tip 17 – Use powerful questions to help new staff improve objective and target setting**

Once objectives and targets have been agreed, it can be useful to check them against these prompts:

- Are the expected results for objectives in line with the learner's anticipated progression route, or are the expected results for targets in line with the learner's key objectives?
- Is the key objective a short statement, without complex language?
- Are the learner and the trainer really clear about what needs to be done to so that the target can be achieved?
- Do the key objectives relate to the most likely progression route?
- Is the target measurable? Could the learner come back to you and say, "I've done that, will you sign it off?"
- Have the targets been agreed with the learner? Imposed targets are rarely motivating or achieved.
- Is the expected result challenging yet achievable with support and training?
- What training and support will we offer to help the learner achieve their target?

## Annexe 1 – Useful words for writing objectives and targets

A Accumulate	M Maintain
Administer	Make
Advise	Manage
Analyse	Motivate
	Meet
B Budget	O Obtain
Build	Operate
C Calculate	P Participate
Check	Present
Collaborate	Plan
Collect	Produce
Compile	Provide
Complete	
Conduct	R Receive
Construct	Recommend
Consult	Record
Contact	Release
Contribute	Report
Control	Represent
Co-ordinate	Review
Create	Revise
D Design	S Start
Determine	Set up
Develop	Secure
Direct	See
Discuss	Sell
Distribute	Sign
Document	Solve
E Ensure	Sort
Establish	Specify
Evaluate	Submit
Examine	Supervise
Execute	Supply
	Survey
F Fix	T Take
Follow-up	Train
Function	
G Gather	V Verify
Give	W Write
I Implement	Work out
Identify	
Improve	
Inform	
Issue	
Interpret	
Interview	
Investigate	