



# EAAL Work Package 2: Rapid evidence review of inclusive entry level pathways

---

## INTRODUCTION

This work package will further develop the Citizens' Curriculum approach to adult basic skills, which interlinks language, literacy, numeracy and digital skills with wider health, financial and civic capabilities. After successful piloting, this work aims to link the Citizens' Curriculum approach with entry pathways via the development of a 'vocational plug-in' model. This complements entry pathway vocational learning with the basic and life skills learners need in order to progress.

This work builds on L&W's exploration in 2015/16 of the extent to which the Citizens' Curriculum could form the (or a) basis for a programme of study for adult learners. Study Programmes for 16-19 year-olds were introduced in England from September 2013. They aim to provide young people with robust and challenging routes to progression in education or employment. L&W found broad support for using the Citizens' Curriculum model as a study programme for adult learners, providing a balance between flexibility for learners to define their own learning goals and a coherent pathway to further education. Where appropriate, we argued that this could be enhanced through a 'vocational plug-in' to support learners' progression to employment.

Work package 2 aims to explore this vocational plug-in element in more depth and identify ways in which the Citizens' Curriculum can enhance entry level vocational learning to ensure that learners develop the basic and life skills needed in order to progress.

This paper presents the findings of the initial scoping and rapid review of existing entry level progression pathways models in all four nations of the UK. The scoping explored relevant programmes offered at a national level in each of the nations and reviewed evidence from pilots which have tested more inclusive and holistic delivery models for entry level pathways which enhance employability and progression to further learning.

## About the Citizens' Curriculum

The Citizens' Curriculum is an innovative and flexible approach to language, literacy and numeracy provision which places the needs of learners and communities at its core. The underpinning principles of the Citizens' Curriculum approach are:

- **A holistic approach to provision for adult learners interpreted through the local context**

Evidence from the Phase 1 piloting activity, our initial scoping work, the Community Learning Innovation Fund (CLIF) projects and *A New Curriculum for Difficult Times* supports the idea that learning opportunities are more likely to engage and motivate adult learners if they are

related to local needs, circumstances or a particular context.<sup>1</sup> This contrasts with 'top-down' or 'supply-side' approaches which simply offer adults a pre-determined range of learning opportunities.

- **Learner involvement in determining the curriculum to meet their needs and interests**

Evidence from our scoping work and *A New Curriculum for Difficult Times* stresses the value of co-design of the curriculum with learners. This further supports locally interpreted programmes with the engagement and motivation of learners, by increasing the relevance of the offer. Adopting such an approach may require providers and practitioners to move towards a more participatory approach to the design of the curriculum and establish new or more effective ways of gathering learner feedback.

- **An interlinked combination of literacy, numeracy, ESOL, financial, health, digital and civic capabilities**

Research shows the potential of embedded approaches to language, literacy and numeracy to be effective in motivating and engaging learners. The Citizens' Curriculum extends this to suggest that as many of the capabilities as are relevant in the context, and to the needs of learners, should be interlinked in the provision of learning opportunities. However, the way in which this is achieved may vary across different contexts.

L&W believes that this approach has great potential to engage adults, including the most disadvantaged, and motivate them to participate in learning provision which addresses English, maths and language needs whilst developing the wider skills and capabilities needed in today's society.

## THE CITIZENS' CURRICULUM AS THE BASIS FOR AN ENTRY LEVEL PATHWAY

The idea of a holistic programme based on underlying principles and outcomes for learners rather than achievement of qualifications has clear parallels with the Study Programme concept, which now operates in 16-19 Further Education provision in England. In 2015/16, L&W explored the extent to which the Citizens' Curriculum could form the (or a) basis for a programme of study or Entry Level pathway for adult learners.

The Study Programme approach aims to provide young people with robust and challenging routes to progression in education or employment. As such, the focus is very much on progression and encouraging learners to work towards a higher level than their previous attainment. It also has a strong focus on work experience and the applicability of qualifications to industries and particular jobs.

Programmes are to be designed around the needs of the learners and can take many forms. All Study Programmes offer:

---

<sup>1</sup> Simon Beer, *A New Curriculum for Difficult Times* (Leicester: NIACE, 2013)



- a core aim (substantial Level 2/3 vocational or academic qualification; or substantial work experience for those unable to study at Level 2).
- participation in non-qualifying activity, including work experience.
- study of maths and English to GCSE Grade C or above (or stepping-stone qualifications towards GCSEs).<sup>2</sup>

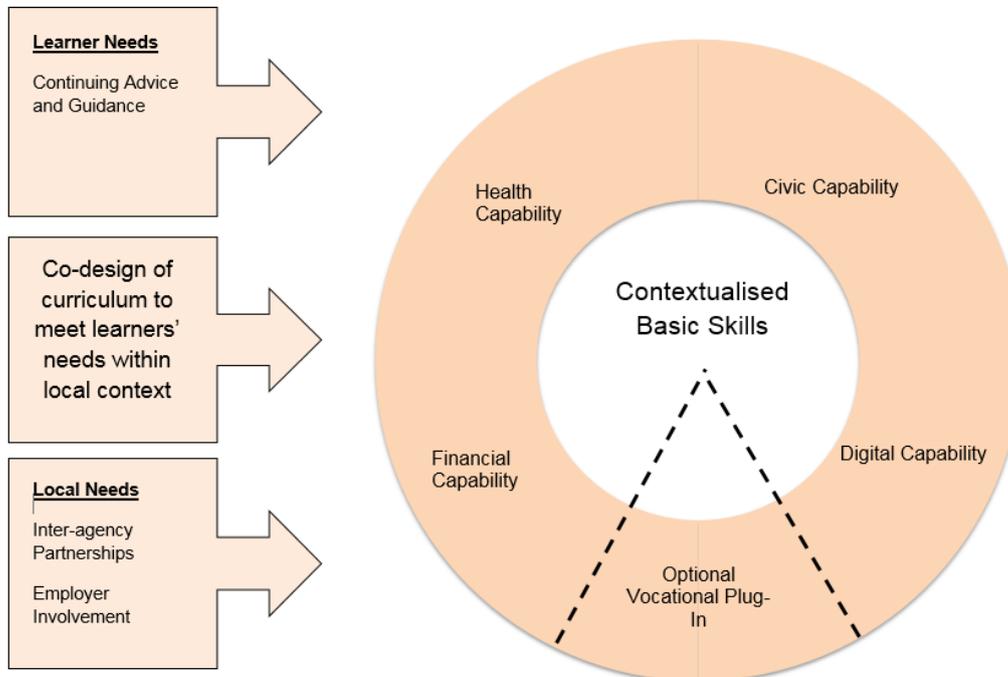
Study Programmes for 16-19 year-olds were introduced in September 2013. From August 2014 it became a condition of funding that all students aged 16-18 who did not have a grade C or above in GCSE English and/or maths continue to study these subjects as part of their Study Programme. This also applied to learners aged 19-25 who study for 150 hours or more and have a Learning Difficulty Assessment (LDA) or Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP).

To explore whether the Citizens' Curriculum could be used as the basis for an equivalent Study Programme for adult learners, L&W consulted with a range of sector specialists, providers and adult learners. The consultation identified some key benefits of a Citizens' Curriculum study programme, particularly around flexibility in delivery models and adapting these to learners' needs; promoting a destination approach which progresses learners to a final goal and develops the skills required for this; and its possible application to a range of learning contexts. A key finding of the consultation was that, in addition to providing a more engaging Entry Level offer, the Citizens' Curriculum can also provide a 'wrap around' programme to vocational and employment-focused learning at Levels 1 and 2, offering greater support for progression. The proposed model for such a programme is below.

---

<sup>2</sup> AELP. 2012. *Implementing Study Programmes (including traineeships)*. Bristol: AELP, p. 5.

The Citizens' Curriculum Programme of Study



In 2016, L&W further explored the application of the Citizens' Curriculum to progression pathways through a piece of work with Birmingham City Council (BCC) and Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council. The aim of this work was to develop a strategy to enable the lowest-skilled and least-advantaged citizens in the two localities to progress towards high-skill, high-value jobs in Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) industries.

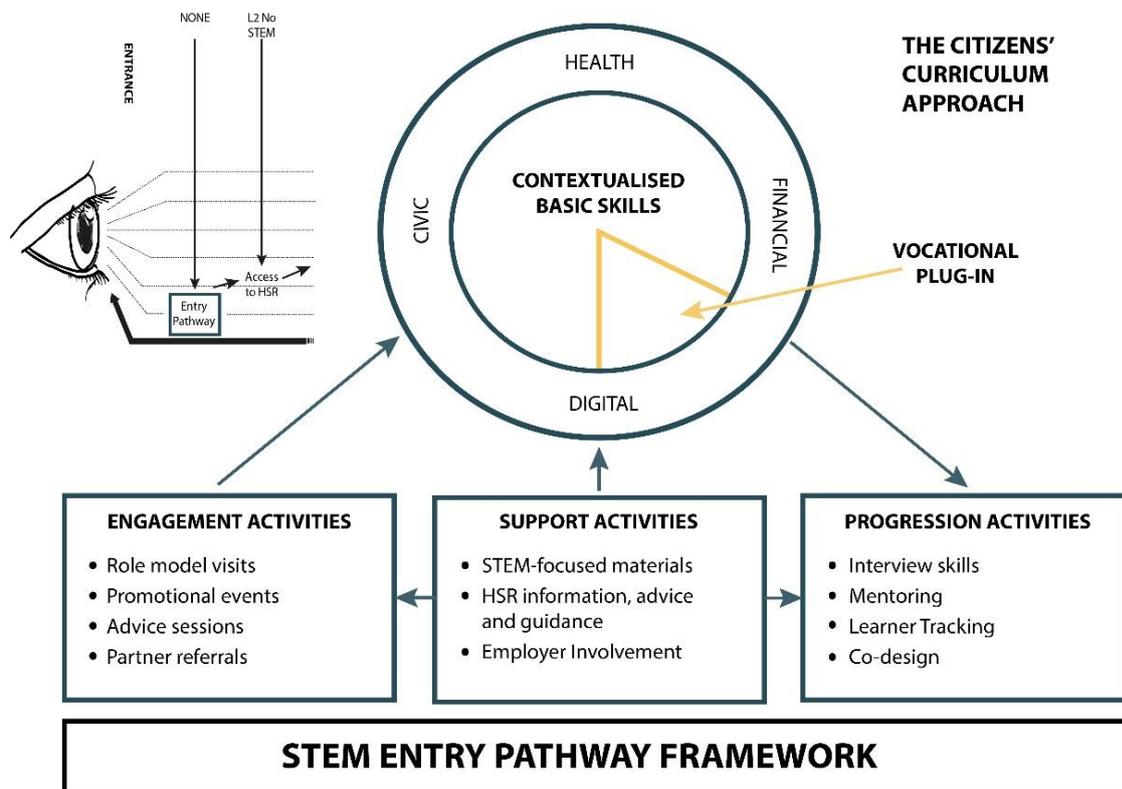
In reviewing what had worked in the region and elsewhere, L&W identified eight design features for the STEM progression pathway:

1. A clear line of sight for learners to learning and work opportunities
2. Strategic partnership co-ordination
3. Progression infrastructure
4. Tailored and targeted provision
5. A holistic approach
6. Employer involvement
7. Outreach, promotion and engagement in communities
8. Peer support and role models

In particular, a proposed STEM Entry Pathway for those with the lowest skills levels was developed, based on the Citizens' Curriculum approach. This included a "vocational plug-in" to ensure that employability skills and STEM related materials were fully integrated into the programme. The STEM Entry Pathway model was underpinned by three sets of activity:

- **engagement** (including community outreach, role model visits, promotional events, advice sessions, partner referrals);
- **support** (STEM-focused materials, tailored information and materials on local labour market opportunities, employer involvement, visits to workplaces); and
- **progression** (tailored interview skills, mentoring from role-models and employers, learner destinations tracking, co-design of the curriculum with learners, ex-students, and volunteers).

L&W argued that by implementing the STEM Progression Pathway, the two local authorities would create opportunities that were attractive to lower-level learners, support their progression, and were meaningful in the world of work. Ultimately, this would lead to the desired outcomes for learners, employers and local communities. The model for the pathway is presented below.





## EVIDENCE OF OTHER EFFECTIVE ENTRY LEVEL PATHWAYS

L&W undertook a rapid review on the evidence of effective practice in vocational and entry level pathways. This review draws on learning from a range of policies and project pilots, and summarises key learning on the most effective characteristics of these approaches. The sources reviewed are the process and outcome evaluations of programmes including: employability-focused programmes, vocationally oriented approaches, and initiatives which aim to provide skills-based progression pathways for low-paid workers. They include:

- **Skills Escalator**<sup>3</sup> was an innovative model supporting people on housing benefits in west London by providing very focussed engagement at an individual and an employer level.
- **Step UP** was a pilot run by Trust for London and the Walcot Foundation, and evaluated by Learning and Work Institute (L&W). It trialled new approaches to help low-paid workers progress in their careers and move into better work, aiming to increase the earnings of participants and support them into work that has improved conditions, responsibility and skills.<sup>4</sup>
- **MyGO** is the UK's first dedicated youth employment centre, bringing together Jobcentre Plus, careers services and personalised employment support, as part of the Greater Ipswich City Deal.
- **The Liverpool Youth Employment Gateway (YEG)** was an initiative to reduce youth unemployment across the six local authorities in the Liverpool City Region through an offer of personalised support to young claimants.<sup>5</sup>
- **Progression pathways into STEM careers: A strategy for Birmingham.** L&W was commissioned jointly by Birmingham City Council (BCC) and Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council to develop this strategy to develop pathways to STEM careers. The strategy focuses on enabling the lowest-skilled and least-advantaged citizens in the two localities to progress towards high-skill, high-value jobs in STEM industries.

These programmes have different target groups. For instance, some, like YEG, were aimed at young people, while others were focused on work and pay progression, which may be more relevant to older adults. They test more inclusive and holistic models for entry level pathways, and across them, a number of effective practices emerged. These are informative for the development of programmes that link the Citizens' Curriculum approach with entry pathways via the development of a 'vocational plug-in' model.

### One-to-one personalised approach

The importance of one-to-one time between participants and advisors is a recurring theme in the literature, and is perceived to be crucial to programme effectiveness. It is viewed as a key way for ensuring any offer is personalised and tailored to the capabilities, future aims,

---

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.learningandwork.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Evaluation-of-the-Skills-Escalator-Pilot-FINAL.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.learningandwork.org.uk/resource/step-up/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.learningandwork.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/YEG-Final-report-Summary-LW-Mar-18.pdf>



aspirations and intentions of the learner. Advisors who are good at listening, developing rapport and tailoring their work to individual aspirations are highly valued. The most effective offers also provide digital and/or remote support options to ensure flexibility and an 'out-of-hours' support offer.

Personalised one-to-one support plays a key role in building participants' confidence and motivation. It creates a suitable environment for addressing specific barriers. Key to this is addressing the particular concerns of participants, which may be health-related, financial, or to do with issues in their local community, as well as employment related. Programmes are most inclusive when advisors are responsive to shifts in individuals' circumstances and barriers, which may have knock-on effects on their aims and ambitions for skills development and employment. For a programme to be inclusive, staff require training about learning difficulties and disabilities, and the most effective advisors are also able to signpost people to other specialist services, where relevant.

### **Employability-focused support**

Programmes are valued when they support participants to prepare for, find and take up new jobs. Much of the employment-focused support is highly regarded by participants across the reviewed programmes. This includes a range of features including support with job searches and support to identify relevant vacancies; CV and job application writing; and interview techniques and job matching. There are examples of in-house employability-focused provision, that offered intensive programmes of employability skills support combined with onward referrals to other programmes such as traineeships, apprenticeships and other vocational skills provision.

Taster vocational courses support participants to make informed decisions and participants benefit from opportunities to meet employers and showcase their skills, and from jobs brokerage support. Existing research is clear that working with employers to offer effective work-related activities (such as inspiration activities and placements) can be beneficial to participants by helping them develop key employability, vocational and social skills, and to better understand the future opportunities available to them. Work-related activities are seen as particularly important to increase confidence and motivation, and prepare people for the next steps into the world of work.

### **A partnership approach**

Entry level pathways that are vocationally orientated benefit from adopting a dual customer approach. This means they are designed to serve both labour demand, by supporting and working with employers, and labour supply, by supporting and working with those who would benefit from progression. This type of approach aims to secure employment outcomes. These employment outcomes need to be both attractive to learners, and designed to support their progression, and meaningful to employers and the local economy. It is therefore crucial that local employers are closely involved in the development of programmes to support progression, and in mapping key progression pathways and opportunities in sectors of importance to the local area.

Effective vocational pathways require a partnership approach involving a broad set of local actors and institutions. Approaches to promoting up-skilling, in-work progression and retraining work well when nested within a wider local or regional focus on economic productivity. Key to this approach is engagement with local stakeholders, including: economic development agencies and LEPS; colleges, private sector training providers and universities; trade unions; employers and trade associations; local authorities; and employment services providers.

#### 4. The environment of support

Key to the inclusivity of entry level provision is the environment where support is located. Programmes are well received when they are set in places with a friendly and welcoming feel. Outreach activities, for instance in community cafes or hosting stalls at local events, can foster a positive and inclusive reputation for programmes. Programmes are most inclusive when staff ensure that private spaces are available to discuss personal issues and barriers that are more sensitive, and when support is offered in locations that are easy and affordable to access.

### EXISTING VOCATIONAL PATHWAYS IN THE FOUR UK NATIONS

This section details the range of programmes available in each of the four nations of the UK which aim to progress entry level learners through vocational pathways.

#### England

##### Traineeships

Traineeships were introduced in 2013. They are designed to support young people (aged 16-24, and those with a Learning Difficulty Assessment or Education, Health and Care plan up to the age of 25) to gain relevant skills and experience to enable them to progress into employment or an apprenticeship. Traineeships are intended to last between six weeks and six months. They consist of work preparation training; an unpaid, quality work experience placement; and support with English and maths, where required.<sup>6</sup> All young people undertaking a traineeship are required to study English and maths up to GCSE grade 9 to 4 or A\* to C if they do not already have this. Traineeships are flexible programmes which providers can tailor to their local context, to the needs of particular groups of young people and to local employers. This enables providers to address skills gaps, contribute to local growth and support young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) into sustained work that they value. This flexibility means providers can offer additional programme elements such as vocational training qualifications or digital skills support as appropriate. Apprenticeships are an important progression route for trainees. These begin at intermediate level, which is the equivalent of a Level 2 qualification.<sup>7</sup>

---

<sup>6</sup> Department for Education (2015). Traineeships: Supporting young people to develop the skills for apprenticeships and sustainable employment: Framework for delivery 2015 to 2016.

<sup>7</sup> House of Commons Library (2017). Apprenticeships Policy in England 2017.



### T-Levels 'transition year'

In England, T-Levels are being introduced as a vocational equivalent to the more academic A-Levels, providing young people with a choice between technical and academic education at post-16. However, it is recognised that not all learners are ready to study at Level 2 or 3 at age 16/17. As such, the government has proposed a T-Level 'transition year' to bridge this gap for learners, offering tailored and flexible support based on prior attainment and aspirations, which will include employer-related activity. It provides participants with a year to sample different vocational options with the intention that they will select one and begin on a T-Level pathway at the end of the transition year.

### Entry Level qualifications

In England, Entry Level qualifications are available at three sub-levels: 1, 2, and 3. Entry Level qualifications include: entry level award; entry level certificate (ELC); entry level diploma; entry level English for speakers of other languages (ESOL); entry level essential skills; entry level Functional Skills and Skills for Life. These programmes can vary in length and delivery, but broadly provide opportunities for learners to develop their skills and start on a pathway to higher level learning.

### Foundation Learning

Foundation Learning is a national programme of learning at Entry Level and Level 1. It offers personalised programmes of engaging and rewarding learning focused on progression, that support young people (aged 14-19) to develop the skills they need to progress to further education or employment. Functional Skills and personal, learning and thinking skills are embedded within this pathway, and young people have access to information, advice and guidance about training and careers they want to pursue. Learners begin with courses at Entry Level and Level 1. They can select from a range of courses to improve employability skills more generally, or to enable participants to specialise in a particular vocational area such as motor vehicle, social care or catering. All courses include English and maths components. The majority of students use this as a spring board to progress into Level 2 or Level 3 study.

### ASDAN employability programmes

ASDAN employability qualifications provide a framework for developing and recognising general employability skills at Entry 2 to Level 2. They are suitable for use with pre-16 and post-16 learners, and can be delivered flexible alongside other qualifications such as English and maths. They focus on the development of 'soft skills' such as self-confidence and motivation, which help to improve access to employment opportunities.

## Scotland

### Employability Fund

This fund supports targeted, local services which offer tailored employability provision to unemployed people. It aims to address individuals' needs but also adapt to local employer demands and skills requirements. As such, the programme addresses two of the key



principles of the Citizens' Curriculum: that learning is locally led and tailored to learners' needs.

### **National Third Sector Fund**

This fund is delivered by third sector organisations across Scotland, offering a range of bespoke support services to help people into work. It is primarily targeted at individuals aged 16-29 who are assessed as being far from the labour market, although it can support older individuals and those who have some employability skills. This delivery model appears to be in line with the Citizens' Curriculum approach, providing holistic and tailored support to meet individual needs and support them to progress.

### **Introduction to Work Place Skills**

This programme is aimed at National 3 and 4 learners (Entry and Level 1 equivalent), or those with no qualifications, who need additional support to enter the world of work. It aims to equip participants with core skills and employability competencies to help them progress onto the Certificate of Work Readiness. It may also provide support with wider competencies which learners need to develop in order to address the barriers they face to employment, such as health and wellbeing or their financial capability. As such, this programme embeds many of the Citizens' Curriculum capabilities.

### **Certificate for Work Readiness**

This programme appears to be the Scottish equivalent of a traineeship. It provides employability training and a work placement to help participants onto an apprenticeship, employment or further learning. The programme lasts for around 10 weeks but is tailored to individual needs, so can be longer or shorter. It appears to be very focused on developing skills for work, with little mention of wider competencies or capabilities.

### **Apprenticeships**

In Scotland, apprenticeships are offered at three levels: Foundation, Modern and Graduate. For the purposes of this review, the Foundation level is most appropriate. Learners can access Foundation Apprenticeships in the latter part of secondary school and complete the programme alongside their wider studies. They typically last for two years and involve time out of school at college or with a local employer. Foundation Apprenticeships are currently available in 12 subjects and aim to provide entry pathways for these careers.

## **Wales**

### **Traineeships**

In Wales, traineeships are targeted at 16-18 year olds who are unemployed. They are offered at three levels: Engagement, Level One and Bridge to Employment. Engagement level traineeships are targeted at young people who need advice and support to choose a pathway – they offer work placements and community project experience to help participants develop skills and make a more informed decision about their next steps. Level One provides participants with a NVQ Level 1 in their chosen pathway and develop a range of



wider employability skills. The Bridge to Employment traineeship provides higher level skills training focused on a particular sector or role.

As in England, traineeships are viewed as a key feeder programme for apprenticeships which, in Wales, are delivered at three levels: Foundation (Level 2), Apprenticeship (Level 3) and Higher (Level 4).

### **Youth Work**

This form of entry level learning is focused on young people aged 11-25 who are at risk of disengaging from education and training. It tends to be non-formal and aims to boost participants' personal and social development, which providing opportunities to develop employability skills. This programme appears to take an inclusive and learner-centred approach to skills development, focusing on individual need and embedding capabilities within project-based delivery.

### **Northern Ireland**

#### **Pathways to Success**

Pathways to Success is the Northern Ireland Government's over-arching strategy to prevent exclusion and promote participation amongst young people that are not in education, employment or training ("NEET"), or at risk of becoming so.

#### **Training for success**

Training for Success is a professional and technical training programme for young people aged 16 – 17 (or up to age 22 for young people with a disability, and up to 24 for young people from an in-care background). The programme lasts up to 104 weeks and is designed to help young people to develop occupational and employability skills and recognised literacy, numeracy and ICT qualifications so they can progress in a chosen career. Training for Success is delivered across Skills for Life and Skills for Work programme components. Skills for life help to address personal and social development needs. Skills for Work Level 1 and 2 aim to develop vocationally related, professional and technical qualifications. They support transitions to employment, further education or an apprenticeship. Participants have the opportunity to experience different workplaces during the programme to see which suit them best.

#### **Bridge to Employment**

Bridge to Employment is a pre-employment training programme that provides customised training to unemployed people, people at risk of redundancy and people employed in zero hours contracts, working on average less than 16 hours per week. The aim is to equip them with the necessary skills to compete for employment opportunities. Training courses are tailored to meet the skill requirements of a particular, existing job vacancy. This programme therefore corresponds with the Citizen's Curriculum focus on the approach for individual learners being built around the local context, in this case in relation to current job vacancies.

**L&W** LEARNING AND  
WORK INSTITUTE

Forum for Adult Learning **NI** ECORYS



**L&W** SEFYDLIAD DYSGU A GWAITH  
LEARNING AND WORK INSTITUTE



Scotland's Learning Partnership



Co-funded by the  
Erasmus+ Programme  
of the European Union