Managing challenging behaviour within skills provision for unemployed adults
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## Contents

**Introduction**  
5

**The range and skills needs of unemployed adult learners participating in skills provision for unemployed adults**  
8

**The range of people supported in skills provision for unemployed adults**  
8

**The skills needs of people supported within skills provision for unemployed adults**  
9

**The nature of challenging behaviour within skills provision for unemployed adults**  
12

- **A definition of challenging behaviour**  
12

- **The nature of challenging behaviour exhibited in skills provision for unemployed adults**  
12

- **The extent of challenging behaviour within skills provision for unemployed adults**  
13

- **The timing of incidents of challenging behaviour on skills provision for unemployed adults**  
14

**Underlying causes of challenging behaviour within skills provision for unemployed adults**  
16

- **Some learners not having learnt and therefore not being able to exhibit appropriate behaviours**  
17

- **Some learners not being in a fit state to participate**  
19

- **Some learners’ routines not being compatible with their skills provision**  
19

- **Distress resulting from the psychological impact of unemployment**  
19

- **Distress arising from financial upheaval and difficulties**  
20

- **Distress from impact of unemployment on accommodation**  
21

- **Anxiety from having to deal with a new environment or return to a learning environment**  
22

- **Issues arising from bringing people together**  
22

- **Issues arising from finding a specific individual in the group who a learner actively avoids in the community**  
23

- **Motivational issues**  
23

**Approaches that can be taken in advance of provision to lower the risk of challenging behaviour**  
25

- **Comprehensive, accessible and up-to-date information about provision**  
25

- **Providers being candid about the limitations of the support they can offer**  
25
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Referral agents and providers sharing information</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providing opportunities for learners to find out more through open days and informal information sessions</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initial interviews</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal confirmation of a place given to the learner</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Structuring the provision to lower the risk of challenging behaviour</strong></td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Managing behaviour within skills provision for unemployed adults</strong></td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behaviour change theories</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The application of behavioural theories to behaviour management in learning settings</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-requisites to tutor management of behavioural incidents</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laying the foundations with a new group for effective learning and behaviour management</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applying well-known principles of behaviour management to skills provision for unemployed adults</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Supporting and building learner motivation</strong></td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivation theories and their application within skills provision for unemployed adults</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual approaches to building learner motivation and willingness to consider change</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Conclusion</strong></td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Annexes</strong></td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annex 1 Ten top tips for behaviour management within skills provision for unemployed adults</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annex 2 Recommended reading</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annex 3 Regulations for learners in receipt of Jobseeker’s Allowance in relation to attending longer-term full-time training</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annex 4 Acknowledgements</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Introduction

In November 2010, the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) published its strategy document *Investing in Skills for Sustainable Growth* (BIS, 2010) which set out the Government’s direction for skills policy over the course of the parliament. One of the Government’s priorities declared in *Investing in Skills for Sustainable Growth* is the provision of training for people who are unemployed. Accordingly, since August 2011, providers have been able to use their single Adult Skills Budget allocation to deliver skills provision for unemployed adults, including young people aged 19 to 24 who are not in education, employment or training (NEET).

The arrangements for this provision are described in detail in the *Skills Funding Agency Updates and Guidance Notes 6, 7 and 8* (Skills Funding Agency, 2011). In essence, to deliver skills provision for unemployed adults, providers have to:

- work in partnership with Jobcentre Plus (JCP) and other partners at a strategic and operational level;
- engage employers to identify local labour market priorities and skills needs;
- align provision to provide learners with local labour market relevant skills;
- effectively engage unemployed participants and then support them as they progress through their course and into work;
- make the most of the potential within the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) to provide single units that bridge the gap between an individual’s current skills and those needed by the local labour market;
- ensure provision is accessible to unemployed adults by being available in a flexible, short course format that has multiple start dates and the facility for participants to easily continue with their training after they have got a job; and
- gather evidence, to demonstrate progress made and claim job outcome payments.

Skills provision for unemployed adults through the single Adult Skills Budget replaced the Skills Funding Agency funded ‘Programmes for the Unemployed’, which ran during 2009–2011. Only on rare occasions did learners participating voluntarily in the ‘Programmes for the Unemployed’, exhibit challenging behaviour in learning settings. However, learning providers perceive an increased risk of challenging behaviour within the current skills provision for unemployed adults through the single Adult Skills Budget. This is because eligibility for the current provision is wider and, under the new Skills Conditionality arrangements described in the *Skills Conditionality Toolkit* (Skills Funding Agency/Job Centre Plus, 2011), some participants are mandated to attend under threat of losing benefit payments.
Challenging behaviour can take many different forms within learning settings, ranging from relatively minor learner disaffection through to physical violence. Passive forms of challenging behaviour such as non-participation don’t impact dramatically on other learners, but they can drastically lower the achievement of the learner involved. More active forms of challenging behaviour can be very disruptive for other learners. The most serious forms of challenging behaviour such as aggression or violence are assessed by learning providers as very serious risks.

As well as impacting learners, tutors can also be at risk physically or mentally through stress arising from specific incidents or ongoing disruption. The confidence of tutors, particularly at the beginning of their careers, can be badly shaken if they feel are not able to manage behaviour as well as they or others expected.

Published accounts of strategies to manage challenging behaviour are available, such as those described in *Engaging and motivating learners* (QIA, 2007) and *Classroom Behaviour* (Rogers, B., 2011). Many of the strategies published in these and other accounts have the potential to be very helpful within skills provision for unemployed adults but when choosing which strategies to apply and when and how to apply them, it is important to take into account the context of skills provision for unemployed adults which differs from all other types of FE delivery by:

- involving mandatory participation for learners referred through Skills Conditionality;
- involving learners whose primary objective is employment rather than the achievement of a learning outcome;
- being arranged for a learner at short notice (potentially starting within a few days of a Jobcentre Plus referral) giving learners only a little time to prepare for entry;
- often involving very short courses designed to provide a short, sharp intervention to facilitate rapid entry to the labour market which requires some learners to make significant lifestyle adjustments to orientate themselves for employment; and
- potentially involving learners from a wide variety of backgrounds and age groups, some of whom may never have worked or who have spent a long time out of work and some of whom will have had poor previous learning experiences.

The need to look into the management of behaviour within skills provision for unemployed adults was highlighted by a finding within the *NIACE survey of providers delivering skills provision for unemployed adults* (NIACE, 2011), which revealed that eight in ten of the providers surveyed found it challenging to support learners exhibiting challenging behaviour. In response to this finding, the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) commissioned NIACE to undertake research into the support and management of learners exhibiting challenging behaviour within skills provision for adults. This guide is the result of this research undertaken by NIACE between October 2011 and February 2012.
The guide begins by describing the range of people participating in skills provision for unemployed adults and their skills needs. It then describes the nature of challenging behaviour exhibited by unemployed adults and reveals some of the underlying causes of this behaviour. The guide then describes approaches that can be taken prior to delivery to lower the risk of challenging behaviour. This is followed by a section on managing challenging behaviour during delivery. The guide finishes with a consideration of the potential of motivational approaches to avert challenging behaviour.

Although our research primarily involved providers of skills provision for unemployed adults through the Adult Skills Budget, the approaches described in the guide could be adopted by providers of any classroom-based learning provision for unemployed adults such as that within the Work Programme and ESF-funded programmes.
The range and skills needs of unemployed adult learners participating in skills provision for unemployed adults

The range of people supported in skills provision for unemployed adults

When first conceived, the unit offer provision of skills for unemployed adults was primarily intended to be taken up by people who would benefit from a skills intervention at an early stage in their claim for Jobseekers Allowance (JSA) or Employment Support Allowance (ESA) or Work Related Activity Group (WRAG). This encompassed a very diverse range of people including:

- people recently made redundant, some of whom are highly skilled, seeking employment in a new occupation because it would be difficult to return to their former occupation;
- people whose skills, particularly in English and maths, are below that required in their local labour market;
- women returning to the labour market following looking after children;
- people trapped in a low pay, no pay cycle as a result of only being able to find low skilled, temporary work;
- school, college and university leavers aged 19+ who may never have worked;
- people originally from other countries with ESOL needs and/or a need to adapt skills developed in their country of origin; and
- people, reassessed and transferred to JSA or to ESA (WRAG) after claiming incapacity benefit, who may have additional needs associated with residual long-term health difficulties.

Although primarily intended for people early in their JSA or ESA (WRAG group) benefit claim (for example, at a pre-Work Programme stage), there is no time limit on eligibility for skills provision whilst people continue to claim these benefits. Even after an individual is referred to the Work Programme, which generally takes place some way into their benefit claim, they remain eligible to participate in skills provision. Whether, in fact, people on the Work Programme do participate depends upon:

- the Work Programme provider agreeing that the skills intervention is helpful; and
- upon the learning provider having enough spare funds within their Adult Skills Budget.
allocation to provide for people referred at both the pre-Work Programme stage and after they have entered the Work Programme.

Although originally intended for people who claim JSA or ESA (WRAG), following a government announcement in August 2011, eligibility for fully funded training by unemployed adults was extended to people on inactive benefits who declare they are undertaking the provision in order to gain skills for employment. People on inactive benefits are not ordinarily expected to be actively seeking work and their circumstances and length of time on benefits may mean they are some distance from the labour market. A significant proportion of people claiming inactive benefits are parents of very young children, some of whom will need access to childcare provision to enable them to participate in learning.

**The skills needs of people supported within skills provision for unemployed adults**

Because such a wide range of people are referred onto skills provision for unemployed adults, providers find that participants have very varied skills needs. Skills needs commonly encountered include:

- vocational skills required to enter a new occupation;
- additional vocational skills to complement or update existing skills within an occupational area;
- English and maths needs such as literacy, numeracy and ESOL to meet occupational requirements;
- basic employability skills such as personal organisation, team working and self presentation skills; and
- IT skills.

Short, sharp skills interventions can address the skills needs of many learners. However, discussions with learners during their initial interview may identify some learners who would benefit from longer-term vocational provision. In addition, initial assessment will identify some learners who would benefit from longer-term provision to address more extensive English and/or Maths needs. The arrangement of longer-term provision requires the agreement of the learner’s Jobcentre Plus Adviser, in part because the learner may have to transfer from their benefit to a training allowance for the duration of the training. Details of the regulations concerning the arrangement of longer-term provision are given in Annex. 3.

Employability skills include basic social skills such as social communication skills, social interaction skills and self-awareness. Where a learner does not possess these vital skills, they are more likely to exhibit challenging behaviour in learning and employment settings. In response, some providers have established longer-term employability skills/
personal development provision to develop these skills to a level that enables the learner to cope within learning and at work. As for the other types of longer-term provision described above, the learner’s Jobcentre Plus Adviser needs to agree to their participation. Where learners have less acute employability skills needs, these can be addressed through embedding employability skills within the short vocational skills courses available within skills provision for unemployed adults.

**Case study** – Dearne Valley College’s provision of motivational support through its Elevate course

Dearne Valley College (DVC) currently run the Skills Funding Agency’s ESF Skills Support for the Unemployed contract in Barnsley, Doncaster and Rotherham, delivering sector-specific, employer-led training and other interventions to progress learners into sustainable jobs. On launching the provision, DVC soon realised that immediate entry to vocational training was too large a step for some learners as major behaviour and participation issues were becoming apparent. After looking into the nature of the behavioural issues and the learners’ barriers in more depth, DVC began planning an intervention that would look at the learner holistically, addressing issues relating to confidence, motivation, positive outlook, debt management and support networks. Using the expertise of a variety of staff with backgrounds ranging from trained counsellors, drug and alcohol rehabilitation workers, ex-offender support, disability and health specialists and recruitment experts, the Elevate course was created. Elevate aims to raise the aspirations of the learner by developing self-awareness, adopting a condition management approach to boost morale and build confidence and motivation with a focus on what the learner ‘can do’ rather than on the barriers holding them back.

The tutor, who specialises in supporting hard-to-reach customers, has most recently been spending time developing a group in Doncaster. All the participants are some distance from the labour market due to their length of unemployment, lack of experience and multiple skills barriers, including poor social skills. The tutor uses a variety of teaching styles and practical exercises to get the group connecting and forming positive relationships in order to boost self-confidence and awareness. Bite-size sessions work best as they keep the learners’ energy levels to a maximum and break learners in gently into the learning environment. As a result of Elevate courses such as the one running in Doncaster, DVC has noticed an increase in engagement, retention and effective participation once learners progress onto vocational skills provision. Client A is an example of the effectiveness of the Elevate course. Client A had been unemployed for four years, having previously worked in construction but was unable to return to the sector due to a health condition. Client A’s
confidence was low due to the feeling of rejection experienced through applying for a number of jobs and not getting a response. Client A had no clear job goal and felt detached from society, craving the feeling of self worth that comes from the routine of work and the interaction with colleagues and peers. Client A met with an Employment Adviser and they discussed the possibility of working within the Health and Social Care industry as a Domiciliary Carer. However, as Client A had no experience of learning and low self confidence they both felt the Elevate course would be a helpful first step. Client A attended Elevate sessions on confidence and motivation, CV workshops and interview and application sessions. He then felt ready to take on the Health and Social Care sector-based work academy, through which he completed intense training and a work placement with a care employer, followed by a guaranteed job interview. Client A was successful in his job interview and is currently working throughout Doncaster providing personal care support for people in their own homes. Without the Elevate programme, Client A admitted that his own preconceptions about learning and the challenge of preparing to work in a completely different sector would have probably caused him to behave in an inappropriate manner and become disengaged. However, being introduced to the programme gradually through the Elevate programme helped sustain him whilst he took the first steps on his new career path.
The nature of challenging behaviour within skills provision for unemployed adults

A definition of challenging behaviour

After considering the nature of challenging behaviour in a variety of further education and adult learning settings, the action research project, *What’s your problem? Working with learners with challenging behaviour* (Learning and Skills Development Agency, 2007), defined challenging behaviour as:

- behaviour that disrupts routine teaching to an extent that it challenges the teacher’s resources and the concentration of other learners; this behaviour may not be violent, offensive or dangerous, but simply disruptive;
- behaviour that is offensive or violent, interfering with routine activity;
- offending behaviour, including offending in the criminal sense, which bullies or ridicules fellow learners and creates an intimidating environment;
- extreme passivity or non-engagement in learning; and
- intermittent patterns of attendance.

For the purposes of this guide, we have adopted this useful definition. However, where helpful to the reader, we have grouped and refer to the different types of challenging behaviour listed above, as either:

- inappropriate behaviour (all of the above types, except extreme passivity or non-engagement in learning and intermittent patterns of attendance); or
- non-participative behaviour (extreme passivity or non-engagement in learning and intermittent patterns of attendance).

The nature of challenging behaviour exhibited in skills provision for unemployed adults

Providers told NIACE that they experienced a wide range of challenging behaviour, although serious forms of challenging behaviour such as racism, aggression and violence were reported to be very rare within skills provision for unemployed adults.

Common forms of inappropriate behaviour include:

- inappropriate language;
- minor theft, such as taking stationery etc.;
- inappropriate use of the Internet;
• choosing not to comply with college rules; for instance, texting and using Facebook on phones during sessions;
• taking non-permitted substances at lunchtime;
• attending whilst under the influence of alcohol or drugs;
• cyber bullying;
• being angry or irritable; and
• being inappropriately vociferous or boisterous.

Common forms of non-participative behaviour include:

• exhibiting disinterest for instance, by learners displaying closed/disinterested body language, not making eye contact, by putting their head in their arms, slumping in seats and dragging their feet;
• emphasising disinterest such as distracting other learners, huffing and puffing and giving the impression they can’t get out soon enough;
• excessively or unnecessarily demanding rights;
• poor time-keeping and trying to minimise participation through arriving late and leaving early or getting lost on the way between room changes;
• exhibiting inattentiveness such as fidgeting or looking out of the window;
• being withdrawn, lost in their own thoughts, ruminating;
• not applying themselves when given tasks and choosing not to make a contribution to group work; and
• non-attendance.

The extent of challenging behaviour within skills provision for unemployed adults

Some providers find that they experience few instances of challenging behaviour; for instance one provider said,

“We have very low level issues. The only issue with behaviour has been that some clients might leave the classroom to take time out if they feel anxious or frustrated but return and apologise.”

(Operations Manager within a small FE college)

From our discussions with providers, it appears that the rate of challenging behaviour within a specific provider depends on the occupational nature of their delivery and any agreements reached between them and their referral agents as to the types of learners that should be referred. For instance, providers exclusively delivering social care training reported that they had a low incidence of challenging behaviour. This may be because the nature of learners choosing to work in care occupations makes them less likely to exhibit challenging behaviour.
One provider indicated that mandation through skills conditionality arrangements had an impact on levels of challenging behaviour:

"20% of referrals are mandated – amongst this group 50% exhibit challenging behaviour. However, 80% are self-referral or want to be referred, meaning that overall only 5–10% of learners show challenging behaviour."

(Operations Manager within a large FE college)

The timing of incidents of challenging behaviour on skills provision for unemployed adults

During our research, many providers said to NIACE that the incidence of challenging behaviour increases after learners stop being on their best behaviour at about two days into the provision. One provider said,

"It is often later in the afternoon of the second day when their true character comes through."

(Tutor within a large FE college)

Providers said incidents reach a peak by the second week and then reduce as learners become more and more accustomed to routines of the learning environment and expectations of tutors and other learners. One provider said that 40% to 50% of learners exhibited one form or other of challenging behaviour on first contact, but that this reduced to just 5% on an on-going basis. A tutor, using negotiated ground rules, said that on peak days she has to refer learners to the ground rules about five times a day.

This fits the ‘three basic phases of life of a classroom community’ described in Classroom Behaviour (Rogers, B., 2011), through which a learner group passes: the establishment phase (1st/2nd week), the consolidation phase (2nd week/3rd week) and finally the cohesion stage (4th week onwards). Where skills provision for unemployed adults doesn’t last more than a couple of weeks, a group will never reach the cohesion phase. However, bearing in mind the consequences if behaviour gets out of hand, it is essential to take time to proactively manage behaviour, even within courses of very short duration.

Delivering in a roll-on, roll-off format can mean that the group as a whole never reaches the consolidation and cohesion phases. This is because the continual addition of new learners who exhibit establishment phase behaviour can mask the improved behaviour of learners that have been in the group for a longer period. As one provider described,

"The tutor experiences constant low-level disruption in her provision. People join groups weekly which can add to this."

(Operations Manager within an independent training provider)
Underlying causes of challenging behaviour within skills provision for unemployed adults

Minor and isolated instances of challenging behaviour can generally be managed without the need to identify their underlying cause. This is good as tutors just don’t have the time to get to the root cause of every incident that occurs. However, it is useful to try to identify the underlying cause of more serious incidents or repeated less serious incidents when seeking to prevent their reoccurrence.

Because people are very complex and they have complicated lives, the underlying cause of a behavioural incident is unlikely to be obvious. Underlying causes can sometimes be revealed through a discussion with the learner involved. The ABC (Antecedent – Behaviour – Consequence) model, originally developed within the behaviourist school of psychology, is very helpful in providing a simple framework for an examination of:

a) the antecedents; for example, events that prompt, precede or trigger the behaviour;
b) the behaviour itself; for example, the specific actions of the individual; and
c) the consequences; for example, subsequent events that make the behaviour more likely to reoccur (i.e., the reward as perceived by the learner) or less likely to occur (i.e, the deterrent as perceived by the learner).

With this information, it is much easier to help the learner consider what could be the underlying cause of their behaviour. Once the possible underlying cause is revealed, the learner can be helped to explore options that might reduce the likelihood of a repetition of the behaviour. The following account illustrates how the ABC model can be used in practice:

Learner A shouted at another student to “stop getting on my case and leave me alone”. Following this incident, learner A appeared disinterested in subsequent sessions and rejected attempts by the tutor to engage him. In discussion with the student counsellor, learner A and the counsellor worked out that:

a) the antecedent was another learner saying “can you move your bag so that I can sit down”

b) the behaviour was learner A responding by shouting out, “Stop getting on my case and leave me alone”. This was followed by learner A feeling agitated and becoming withdrawn in that and subsequent sessions.
c) the consequence was that learner A was avoided as other learners felt intimidated by him. Learner A didn’t want the other learners to be wary of him, but felt this was a price worth paying if he was not bothered.

Hearing that learner A wanted to be left alone by all the students prompted the counsellor to ask why he wanted to be left alone. This led to learner A revealing that he just wanted some peace and quiet as his relationship with his partner was strained because money was tight and they had had a number of rows over their credit card debt. The counsellor was able to offer to refer learner A to a money management support service in the hope that this could help resolve the credit card bill problem. Once learner A received help from the service, he appeared relaxed and much more engaged in subsequent sessions.

There may be a myriad of underlying causes for challenging behaviour within skills provision for unemployed adults, including all those that commonly result in behavioural incidents in other forms of delivery and in other settings. However, drawing upon their experience, providers interviewed by NIACE identified the following underlying causes of challenging behaviour as being particularly common within skills provision for unemployed learners.

**Some learners not having learnt and therefore not being able to exhibit appropriate behaviours**

The ability to behave in a manner considered to be appropriate within a particular setting is, according to behaviour theories (described in a later chapter), learnt gradually through a process of observation, and interaction with others alongside ongoing evaluation and refinement through practice. Some learners, especially those who have never worked and whose education has been disrupted, may have had quite restricted opportunities to observe appropriate behaviour in learning and work settings. These and other learners may also have not developed the empathy, self-awareness and/or self-control needed to select and modulate their behaviour to fit the particular circumstances they find themselves in. One provider said,

> Sometimes they just don’t know how to behave – neither parents nor schools have helped them learn what is acceptable. They sometimes have no understanding of expectations. We teach them what behaving professionally involves.

*(Operations Manager within a large FE college)*
Some learners have developed helpful and appropriate ways of behaving in some circumstances but not in others. One provider said,

“They may not have developed basic employability skills such as team working and personal organisation skills or an appreciation of appropriate workplace behaviour. The problem is compounded if they also have not developed an understanding of appropriate behaviour elsewhere.”

(Operations Manager within a large FE college)

And another provider said,

“Many unemployed learners lack the social experience of being in a professional working environment and present a lack of social skills and limited understanding of appropriate behaviour”

(Operations Manager within an independent training provider)

Although many learners can be supported to develop employability skills to meet workplace expectations – where learners are at a total loss as to how to behave appropriately in a learning setting let alone a workplace – they need much more support than a short vocational course can offer. Some providers have therefore developed longer-term employability skills provision in which they have embedded personal development content to help learners develop appropriate behaviours. Details of the regulations concerning the arrangement of longer-term provision are given in Annex 3. One provider described their course by saying,

“Young people with employability skills and behaviour needs are referred to a ten-week (ten hours per week) employability programme involving work experience in charity shops. At the end of this, they are put forward for a pre-Apprenticeship programme. It is non-accredited and funded through the Adult Safeguarded Learning/ Foundation Learning weekly rate. Where an individual learner referred to our unit offer construction provision shows a risk of challenging behaviour at induction, we also recommend the employability skills course. They tend to go along with this so long as they are told they can do the CSCS card at some point (that is, at the end of the employability skills course they can join the construction course).”

(Operations Manager within a large FE college)
Some learners not being in a fit state to participate

Several providers explained to NIACE that some of their younger learners lived chaotic lives which lead to them not eating properly and not getting adequate amounts of sleep. This meant they found it difficult to concentrate or show any enthusiasm in learning sessions. Some relied on caffeine energy drinks to keep going, but this became a problem in itself. One provider said,

“Energy drinks are really popular, sometimes not just a can but a whole litre bottle! We’ve had to ban them drinking them in class – the learners were up the walls!”

(Curriculum Manager within a large FE college)

Some learners’ routines not being compatible with their skills provision

Some learners will struggle to accommodate a regular early morning commitment to attend skills provision alongside the lifestyle, routines and commitments that they have gradually adopted whilst not working. Examples of regular commitments unemployed adults may have to others include care responsibilities for siblings or older family members, dog walking and driving family members to work. As skills provision for unemployed adults is sometimes arranged at quite short notice, people in this position can struggle to arrive punctually or to attend at all in the first few days of provision until they have made alternative arrangements for their commitments.

Distress resulting from the psychological impact of unemployment

The psychological impact of becoming unemployed can be sizeable. The majority of the 1,202 respondents to a survey into the impact of becoming unemployed reported in The Anguish of Unemployment, John J. Heldrich Centre for Workforce Development (Rutgers University, 2009) said they felt or experienced anxiety, helplessness, depression and stress after losing their job. Many said they experienced sleeping problems and strained relationships. Others described diminished hopes of finding employment at older ages, and feelings that advanced qualifications were useless with some questioning their self-identity if their jobs and careers had defined them. Alongside these psychological impacts, the experience of being unemployed is often characterised by a change in the structure of an individual’s life as a result of:
• not having to maintain working behaviours and routines; and
• having reduced access to work and social networks, primarily due to cost but also
  sometimes due to an individual choosing to withdraw because they are embarrassed
  at being unemployed.

Not surprisingly, therefore, recently unemployed people on skills provision may be
feeling distressed and their heightened emotional arousal resulting from fear, anger,
frustration and disappointment can predispose them to challenging behaviour.
Anything that maintains an unemployed individual’s positivity and self-esteem is very
helpful, and there is a lot that can be done to this end through the delivery of skills
provision for unemployed adults.

Distress arising from financial upheaval and difficulties

Any length of time solely reliant on benefits will result in a marked reduction in an
individual’s standard of living, and unemployed people, especially those living on their
own, very soon often struggle to afford any non-essential expenses. Making changes to
eliminate non-essential spending, such as selling their car, can radically change an
unemployed person’s lifestyle, which can further contribute to the change in self-
identity described above. Some individuals may fear these changes are permanent. One
provider said,

“We are seeing people who previously held high paying jobs (for example,
scaffolding at £36k per year) but with few qualifications. When their high
paying jobs are unavailable, their low skills set results in only minimum wage
jobs being accessible. The income from minimum wage jobs doesn’t cover
the financial outgoings/commitments that individuals have built up.”

(Operations Manager within a large FE college)

An unemployed individual’s reduced income whilst on benefits and potentially reduced
earnings over the longer term can cause tensions within their closest personal
relationships. Learners with financial worries, especially if they are impacting their
personal relationships, may be distressed when arriving for their skills provision and find
it difficult to concentrate during sessions.

Some unemployed people run short of money before their next benefit instalment is
due. This can result in them not being able to eat properly or afford electricity and
heating until their money arrives. Inexperience in budgeting and no recourse to parental
support means this is more likely to happen to young people living on their own. To deal
with this, one provider told NIACE that they provide tea and toast in the mornings for
everyone on their skills provision for unemployed adults.
Additional financial support to cover the costs of travelling to skills provision is only provided on a discretionary basis from JCP unless they have mandated the learner under skills conditionality arrangements. This means some learners may have to make considerable financial sacrifices to identify funds from their Jobseekers’ Allowance or ESA payment to cover the costs of travel themselves. If they run short of money before their next benefit instalment, this can mean that they cannot afford to travel to attend their skills provision until their next benefit payment arrives, disrupting their learning and further contributing to the learner feeling ‘out of control’ of their situation.

Several providers said to NIACE that learners frequently request permission to miss sessions on their signing on day as, although arrangements can be made to alter their signing on time/day to fit with provision, many learners worry, possibly without due cause, that this complication may upset their benefit payment. Sector-based work Academies (sbwa) are not affected by this issue as an automatic benefit payment is established whilst a person participates on a sbwa.

**Distress from impact of unemployment on accommodation**

Recent reductions in welfare entitlements to financial support towards the costs of housing may lead to some unemployed learners worrying whether they can afford to continue renting their current accommodation or pay their mortgage. Moving to cheaper accommodation may not be straightforward, as many landlords, even those offering relatively cheap accommodation, do not accept unemployed people as new tenants.

Homelessness has always been associated with unemployment, with young people being particularly prone to sudden loss of their accommodation as they rarely have savings upon which they can draw to stabilise their accommodation situation and are often being dependant on the goodwill of others; for example, parents and friends. Young people in this situation may seek help from the local authority or charities such as the YMCA. Initially, however, many will ‘sofa surf’ at friend’s homes. As well as the psychological impact of being homeless, it causes practical problems for learners, such as having nowhere to wash clothes, store food or list as a postal address when applying for job vacancies.

When faced with the need to address fundamental needs such as food and shelter, Maslow’s hierarchy of needs described in *Motivation and personality* (Maslow, A.H., 1943), predicts that people will focus their attention on resolving these physiological needs and find it difficult to focus on higher-level aspirations such as gaining skills. This explains why the attendance of learners who are homeless or on the verge of being homeless will often become erratic and generally stop altogether after a short time. As one provider described,
Managing challenging behaviour guide – Underlying causes of challenging behaviour

“When debt, homelessness and depression are experienced, it results in individuals focusing on the basics and presents barriers to engaging and progressing in employment-focused provision.”

(Operations Manager within an independent training provider)

If at initial interview a learner discloses that they have major housing issues, it might be better to postpone entry until these are resolved. One provider explained,

“If the issue requiring greater flexibility is temporary, we will often postpone the start date as we run most provision every four weeks, so it is better to wait four weeks rather than to try to accommodate. We find this supports retention.”

(Operations Manager within a small FE college)

Anxiety from having to deal with a new environment or return to a learning environment

Some learners may not have been in a learning environment since they left school, in some cases many years ago. Some may also have had bad experiences of education which may be recalled on returning to a learning setting. Other learners may have had life experiences that have eroded their confidence or self-esteem. All these learners are likely to feel anxious at the beginning of their provision and may respond to this anxiety by becoming withdrawn, as one provider described,

“Often low confidence/self-esteem can present as reluctance to engage due to their shyness.”

(Operations manager within an independent training provider)

Alternatively learners can respond to the anxiety and discomfort they are feeling by faking excessive confidence, typically by being loud and boisterous.

Issues arising from bringing people together

Within skills provision for unemployed adults, providers may find they have quite a high proportion of learners who are at risk of exclusion. It is crucial for providers to have effective and pro-active equality, diversity and inclusion policies to protect and support all learners. Because it is likely that some learners will have experienced discrimination in the past, it is important that learners within skills provision for unemployed adults feel reassured that they will be supported and treated fairly during every stage of their
provision, including within any workplace-based activities they undertake. Practitioners delivering skills provision for unemployed adults may benefit from additional continuing professional development (CPD) to enable them to support employers and other stakeholders to work to best practices in equality, diversity and inclusion.

Skills provision for unemployed adults may be the first setting in which some learners find themselves learning and working alongside people from a wide variety of backgrounds and communities, including individuals with protected characteristics as specified within equalities legislation. The provision can provide an opportunity to help learners not well acquainted with equalities, diversity and inclusion concepts to understand and appreciate their value. As well as helping to minimise the risk of inappropriate forms of challenging behaviour, this will help learners to subsequently understand, value and meet the expectations of equality, diversity and inclusion in the workplace.

**Issues arising from finding a specific individual in the group who a learner actively avoids in the community**

Skills provision for unemployed adults can bring individuals together who may otherwise avoid each other in the community. For instance, some learners who have been intimidated or bullied in the past may meet up with the person responsible. This may initially cause the learner to become angry or anxious. Subsequently, they may stop attending.

There may be other reasons why people might not wish to find they are in a learning group with a particular individual; for instance, people may have had past disagreements or past or ongoing relationship difficulties.

Ultimately, these are safeguarding issues which the provider’s safeguarding policy must be able to address. A key element of any safeguarding policy is ensuring that learners are able and are encouraged to approach practitioners to let them know of anything that is proving problematic for them.

**Motivational issues**

Learners that are not motivated to take part in skills provision may exhibit a variety of forms of non-participative behaviour and occasionally inappropriate behaviour due to boredom and frustration.

Some learners who have become adjusted and accustomed to unemployment may feel that acquiring skills and taking up a job brings with it risks that threaten the stability of their financial circumstances, lifestyle and self-perception. People who feel like this can
become quite resistant to participation if mandated to attend under skills conditionality arrangements. Providing reassurance as to the feasibility and positive benefits of starting or returning to work is helpful in supporting these learners.

Learners who do not want to participate are less likely to give Jobcentre Plus or the learning provider the benefit of the doubt if something appears to go wrong within their referral process or their subsequent provision. They can become quite outraged. One provider described their approach to dealing with this by saying,

“Once clients have had their say, their behaviour calms down – it is mostly due to a ‘distrust of system’. I and my team use a calm approach, try to establish what the problem is, advise clients to speak to JCP about it, if relevant, and explain that we are offering a service to help them.”

(Operations Manager within a small FE college)
Approaches that can be taken in advance of provision to lower the risk of challenging behaviour

Comprehensive, accessible and up-to-date information about provision

Ambiguous or out-of-date provision information can result in learners undertaking courses that are very different to the descriptions they were given beforehand. This can lead to challenging behaviour, if learners feel misled or blocked in pursuing their aspirations. In comparison with information on other forms of provision, information on skills provision for unemployed adults is at greater risk of being out of date, as the provision changes frequently in response to rapidly changing labour market demand. Updating information immediately as changes occur and using version control eliminates the risks inherent in out-of-date information.

Comprehensive and accessible information helps referral agents and their customers make appropriate choices. One provider said:

“The better we inform them, the fewer problems we encounter.”

(Operations Manager within a small FE college)

During its study, NIACE found that providers are going to substantial lengths to inform referral agents of their provision. Alongside regularly updated literature, coffee mornings and open days are common, through which referral agents might visit Work Clubs and inductions and even have the opportunity to observe vocational skills sessions. Some providers have co-located their staff in JCP offices, and in one instance a provider said that JCP staff were co-located within one of their provision venues. Where a learning provider has less opportunity to directly showcase its provision to, or work alongside, JCP advisers, it can be useful to ask for the email addresses of front-line JCP advisers so that information and updates on provision can be sent directly to them without any delay.

Providers being candid about the limitations of the support they can offer

Not all providers are able to support learners with English, maths, personal development needs or learning difficulties or disabilities. If initial assessments reveal that a learner has needs that a provider cannot support, the appropriate course of action is to refer the learner back to the referral agent, possibly with the details of other providers who may
be able to support the learner. If a learner with additional needs is taken on by a provider who cannot effectively support them, there is a greater probability of the learner:

- exhibiting inappropriate behaviour arising from frustration or boredom;
- exhibiting non-participative behaviour in an attempt to ensure their needs are not exposed to tutors or other learners; and
- not attending the provision, which may result in the learner’s benefits being sanctioned if they were mandated to attend through skills conditionality.

Referral agents and providers sharing information

It is helpful if referral agents are able to share information on individual customer needs and circumstances, as earlier notice of additional needs gives providers more time to put the necessary support in place.

Effective information sharing, bearing in mind that it has to be within the constraints of data protection, also helps learners see that things are joined up between their referral agent and learning provider. This gives the learner the impression that they are being treated seriously and that they in turn must take the provision seriously themselves. During interviews with providers, NIACE found that co-location and telephone contact between JCP advisers and provider staff, appear to have considerably supported liaison between providers and JCP.

Providing opportunities for learners to find out more through open days and informal information sessions

First impressions given to learners through provision information can be helpful in setting expectations and building learners’ motivation. One provider said,

“We choose carefully what we send them, what the first instruction is and what the documents look like.”

(Senior Manager within a large FE college)

Although tasters are, on the whole, unfeasible due to the relatively short duration of the majority of skills provision for unemployed adults, some providers are using informal information sessions to introduce provision to learners. As providers explained:

“We don’t have tasters, but we do have open days for our contact centre programme, including employer visits. We believe retention is higher as a result.”

(Operations Manager within a large FE college)
And,

“We invite people to a session at which we introduce ourselves and the provision. The session gives learners an opportunity to find out about the provision, experience the environment and meet the staff. Following this they receive a one-hour one-to-one IAG session. This reveals any additional needs or issues.”

(Operations Manager within a large FE college)

Initial interviews

The initial interview serves many purposes, one of these being to manage down the risk of challenging behaviour. It can do this by:

• providing careers guidance, through which the interviewer can check that the provision does meet the learner’s aspirations. One provider said,

“Sometimes it is about helping the learner see why it is not a good fit. At the end of the day, it is all about supporting independence. All our vocational provision is ten days in length and leads to a Level 1 in Employability Skills. In each course, the materials are themed to the vocational area. Our management information system (MIS) sees them all as the same qualification, which means it is possible for someone to swap between vocational areas if they feel they want to change.”

(Operations Manager within a large FE college)

• discussing options within the provision that allow for personalisation;
• describing employment opportunities and other progression opportunities that may motivate learners;
• describing the commitment required as a means of setting expectations; and
• providing an opportunity through screening for learners to reveal any barriers to participation, such as homelessness, alcoholism, relationship difficulties and domestic violence. One provider explained,

“As a result of lessons learnt, a standard screening process for all learners has been established covering mental health, criminal record, substance use and housing, and a risk analysis is carried out to assess what support is required and/or whether the college can accept the learner.”

(Operations Manager within a large FE college)
Learners may sometimes not disclose an issue until they are settled in, and some issues may be picked up by staff inadvertently; for instance, during conversations between learners and tutors during breaks or at lunch. It is therefore helpful to offer a review a short time into the provision. It is helpful to research external sources of support to which guidance staff and tutors can refer learners facing major problems such as mental or physical health difficulties, substance use, alcoholism and debt.

The opportunity to undertake initial assessments allows for English or maths needs, personal development needs and any learning difficulties to be identified. Where these needs are found to be present, the adviser can initiate the process of ensuring appropriate support is provided. Alternatively, the outcome of the assessments may mean the provision is inappropriate for the learner at the present time. Learners can be disappointed about this. One provider said,

“People can become frustrated if they find that their basic skills needs are a barrier to progress.”

(Operations Manager within a large FE college)

In these circumstances, it is helpful to be able to describe progression routes to reassure learners that whilst they may need to address some needs beforehand, vocational provision leading to employment will be available to them in the future.

The initial interview also provides the opportunity to establish the working relationship between an adviser and learner if the adviser subsequently becomes a sustained source of support during the provision. Several providers ensured their advisers were available on the first day of provision to reassure learners. One provider said,

“The IAG adviser will offer to accompany anyone so that there is a familiar face in the first session if someone says they are anxious about attending.”

(Operations Manager within a large FE college)

Formal confirmation of a place given to the learner

On accepting a learner on to provision, providers said to NIACE that it helped start rates and reinforced behavioural expectations if each learner was sent a letter that welcomed them, described the provision, stated expectations and asked them to bring evidence of their benefits with them when they start (in some areas, JCP provide this evidence directly to the provider). As a further reminder it is also useful to send a text message to the learner two days before they are due to attend. Sending a text is more helpful than making a phone call as younger people will often not answer their phone if they don’t recognise who is calling.
Structuring the provision to lower the risk of challenging behaviour

Many providers in the NIACE study had evolved the structure of their provision to reduce the risk of challenging behaviour. Examples of the changes they made follow.

1. Adjusting group sizes to manage risks. Most providers felt that ten to 15 learners was an ideal group size as groups approaching 20 become unwieldy. With learners very likely to exhibit challenging behaviour, such as 16–18 year olds undertaking construction provision, the maximum group size was set as low as five learners.

2. Deliberately ensuring that groups consisted of a wide range of age groups as providers found that the behaviour of younger people improved when older people were in the group. Older individuals sometimes motivated the younger individuals by sharing their experience, and were particularly helpful in drawing on their experience in role-playing situations and in helping younger learners complete job applications. In turn, the younger learners helped them with technology; that is, IT skills. One provider explained,

   “Peer pressure within construction courses helps as an older learner will often say, ‘Shut up, I want to learn this’.”

   (Operations Manager within a large FE college)

3. Involving ex-occupational mentors who can endorse the tutor’s descriptions of workplace behavioural expectations. The involvement of mentors can also further link the provision to the workplace and sometimes provide role models.

4. Changing the duration and content of some provision to adapt it to the learner’s learning style; for instance one provider said,

   “Initially we delivered the CSCS card through a 30-hour taught course, but we now make it shorter and more practical, and this seems to have eliminated some of the challenging behaviour issues.”

   (Operations Manager within a large FE college)

5. Establishing employability/personal development provision to run prior to vocational skills provision, to which individual learners could be referred if they were likely to exhibit challenging behaviour or if they needed motivational support. This provision ranged in duration from a few days to ten weeks, and tended to focus on basic employability skills into which personal development provision was embedded (see the case study on Dearne Valley College’s Elevate provision on page 10).
6. Enabling some whole vocational skills groups to be given a few days of social skills/employability skills provision ahead of their vocational skills curriculum content. The decision whether or not to provide this was often taken on a group-by-group basis by the provider. Providers told NIACE they found it useful in helping some groups develop more appropriate ways of working and relationships between learners and staff.

7. Ensuring that the learning takes place in an environment that is fit for purpose, attractive, uncrowded and safe. Skills provision for unemployed adults takes place in a very wide variety of on-site or off-site community or workplace environments. Although on-site and community-based premises have their own advantages, a number of providers explained that environments closely resembling workplaces or adjacent to workplaces appear to inspire learners to behave more professionally. This is helped if the tutors state that they expect professional behaviour. For instance, the New College Nottingham retail provision is based in a large shopping centre. Employers pass by and visit the provision very regularly. The provision has its own brand and identity as separate to the college. Only workplace behaviour is acceptable in the shopping centre which the tutors describe to learners as their,

“Place of business which requires a certain standard of behaviour that will be seen by the general public and employers alike.”

(Operations Manager within a large FE college)

Case study – the impact of the location of the Retail National Skills Academy Nottingham Skills Shop

Skills Shops are one-stop, walk-in retail advice and training centres based on the high street or within shopping centres. They are operated by trained staff who provide free advice and guidance to retail employers, retail employees and those seeking to work in retail.

The Skills Shops offer includes:

- career advice, information and guidance: up-to-date information for those planning a career in retail and those currently looking for work in retail, plus ongoing support, mentoring, advice and training;
- retail apprentice information, advice and guidance;
- skills programmes: training to give learners the skills to succeed, from pre-employment preparation to moving into management; and
- job opportunities: details of the latest retail vacancies in Nottingham.
The Skills Shop is a bright and vibrant venue that resembles a retail shop. As it is based in the heart of the Broadmarsh Centre, retailers can drop in at any time while training courses are taking place. Therefore, it is explained to learners that the Skills Shop is a place of business and must be treated accordingly. Rules are set on day one, such as no mobile telephones, no food or drinks except water in the training room. Breaks and lunch times are fixed as they would be for staff working in a retail shop. Learners accept these rules as unavoidable because the Skills Shop is embedded in the shopping centre where the vast majority of the people employed visibly adhere to similar rules.

Learners are briefed, on day one, that because employers will pop in looking to recruit, behaviour management is the number one priority. Knowing employers visit in this way is a major incentive to learners to dress and behave appropriately at all times. Employers also visit the Skills Shop to talk on a variety of employment-related issues, such as the skills needed in the current retail job market.

When an employer is seeking to recruit through the Skills Shop, the job description is entered on the Skills Shop learner database, which then matches the job description requirements to skills listed on individual learner CVs. By using this system, the Skills Shop can identify work-ready people at short timescales for an employer. This motivates learners to gain additional skills and experience, and incentivises them to update their CV as soon as they can. Employers can also use the Skills Shop for interviewing. This is convenient for them and therefore they are more likely to seek to recruit through the Skills Shop.

The proximity of the Skills Shop to major retail employers also helps in identifying work experience placements for learners. Every learner on Level 2 and Level 3 retail courses is guaranteed access to work experience, with many learners being placed with leading retailers like Boots the Chemists and John Lewis. One of the first Skills Shop students was offered full-time employment with John Lewis, where she is still employed.
Managing behaviour within skills provision for unemployed adults

Behaviour change theories

Many of the behaviour management strategies used within learning settings can be traced back to individual behaviour change theories. Each theory focuses on different factors in attempting to explain how behaviour is learned and changed. Of the many that exist, some of the most widely acknowledged are as follows.

• Behaviourism
  This school of thought initially proposed that complex behaviour is learned gradually through the modification of simpler behaviours. B.F. Skinner later added the concepts of reinforcement and punishment in his theory of ‘operant conditioning’. The theory of operant conditioning proposes that rewards reinforce desirable behaviour, whereas negative consequences can lead to the gradual abandonment of the behaviour.

• Cognitive theory
  Cognitive theory proposes that an individual’s thoughts ultimately control emotions and behaviours. Cognitive theory therefore implies that an individual’s beliefs would need to change if they are to change their behaviour. This in turn implies that only when learners are convinced of the value of more appropriate behaviour are they likely to adopt it.

• Cognitive behaviourism
  This is a blended theory that incorporates both cognitive theory and behaviourism. According to cognitive behaviourism, our responses are based on a complex interaction between thoughts and behaviours. This implies that helping an individual adopt different ways of thinking, either through cognitive behavioural therapy or Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) can result in a changed behaviour outcome.

• Social cognitive theory
  This theory proposes that behavioural change is determined by the interaction of cognitive, behavioural and environmental (including social) elements. The theory proposes that people learn through observation and interaction with others, and that internal cognitive (thought) processes then determine whether and how the individual subsequently chooses to adopt the behaviour they have observed. Positive role models (that is, tutors and other learners) are important in social cognitive theory as they provide opportunities for learners to observe behaviours; for instance, the tutor demonstrating self control, which learners then may choose to emulate. The
theory also implies that there can be benefit derived from the tutor sharing helpful ways of thinking; for example, by introducing a more positive way of perceiving a set of circumstances. Supporting a learner’s self efficacy, that is, their belief in their ability to learn and perform, is also important in social cognitive theory as this influences an individual’s motivation to endeavour to learn.

- **Reasoned action theory**
  This theory proposes that individuals consider the consequences of a particular behaviour before undertaking it. Personal attitudes and social pressure contribute to an individual’s perception of the consequences and therefore they contribute to shaping intention, which is a pre-requisite to performance of behaviour. An implication of this theory is that supporting learners to become more aware of the attitudes and feelings of others will result in behavioural change. The process of formulating ground rules helps learners appreciate the attitudes and feelings of others, and it is the learners’ subsequent reluctance to break rules that have been shaped and agreed on by their peers that underpins the success of ground rules as a behaviour management tool. The adoption of new behaviours appears to change the attitude of the individual. For example, studies on the impact of seatbelt laws in the United States revealed that people often changed their negative attitudes about the use of seatbelts as they grew accustomed to using them. This can be seen to work in learning settings where learners gradually change their attitude to routines initially imposed by the tutor.

### The application of behavioural theories to behaviour management in learning settings

Early behaviour management practices in learning settings relied on strategies developed from behaviourism, such as positive reinforcement. As later behaviour change theories were proposed, strategies taken from these theories were adopted. For instance, in response to the greater emphasis on self regulation in the cognitive theories, a greater focus was soon placed on building self-control in learning settings. Brophy (1986) writes:

> Contemporary behaviour modification approaches involve students more actively in planning and shaping their own behaviour through participation in the negotiation of contracts with their teachers and through exposure to training designed to help them to monitor and evaluate their behaviour more actively, to learn techniques of self-control and problem solving, and to set goals and reinforce themselves for meeting these goals.
The first published account of the extent and nature of challenging behaviour within FE settings was *Ain’t misbehavin’* (Further Education Development Agency, 1998). *Ain’t misbehavin’* explores the background to the emergence and recognition of the issues surrounding disruptive behaviour in the post-16 sector and outlines the ‘5Ws schema’ for identifying and analysing:

- what types of behaviour occur;
- where the disruption is located;
- who gets involved;
- when it arises; and
- why the sector is experiencing these problems.

*Ain’t misbehavin’* strongly advocated the necessity of a whole-organisational approach to behaviour management and, as well as providing numerous case studies, it advocated a wide variety of strategies for behaviour management within further education settings. Many of these strategies were initially developed by Rogers and Gribble for use in schools. Rogers has since gone on to publish several books on classroom behaviour management which are included in the recommended reading list in Annex 2.

Later published work on managing behaviour in FE settings contextualises the approach laid out in *Ain’t misbehavin’* and Rogers and Gribble’s work to new learner cohorts and new types of FE provision. These include the DDA action research project, *What’s your problem? Working with learners with challenging behaviour* (Learning and Skills Development Agency, 2007), which draws heavily upon *Ain’t misbehavin’* to tailor existing approaches for use in managing the behaviour of learners with learning difficulties. Other examples include the LSIS research paper on *Enhancing student behaviour and achievement through promoting teamwork and outdoor learning* (LSIS, undated), the LSIS series of *Dealing with difficult behaviour* videos (LSIS, undated), and the *Improving learner behaviour – Barking and Dagenham Training Service case study* (Ofsted, undated).

**Pre-requisites to tutor management of behavioural incidents**

Although steps taken within the referral and initial interview process can minimise the risk of challenging behaviour, incidents naturally do still occur. In order to effectively manage these instances of challenging behaviour, a number of pre-requisites need to be in place. These are listed as follows.

1. The provider taking a whole organisation approach. A whole organisation approach to behavioural management as first proposed for the FE sector in *Ain’t misbehavin’*, ensures that a consistent approach is taken across the organisation, that each level
within the organisation fulfils its role in supporting behaviour management, and that individual tutors are guided and feel supported when dealing with serious or ongoing behavioural incidents that they are unable to resolve alone.

2. Ensuring that there is a bedrock of good teaching and learning, including a clear direction to the session that relates to learners’ objectives, good lesson planning, good resources and a variety of engaging learning activities that appeal to a variety of learning styles. If teaching and learning is not of good enough quality this can trigger behavioural incidents where they may not have otherwise arisen. As one tutor said to NIACE,

“We manage passive/non-participation through curriculum design. We make it real and make it hands on. When they feel their time is being wasted; i.e. in filling in forms they can get frustrated. Passive/non-participation is generally associated with the younger learners. They revert to learned behaviour from school as this type of behaviour got them out of things then.”

(Tutor within a large FE college)

3. Fairness and consistency in the monitoring and management of behaviour.

4. Respectful relationships based on an assertive approach that has high expectations of learner behaviour and a high sensitivity to learners’ needs.

5. An effective and well communicated single equality scheme and safeguarding policy that enables the organisation and provision to operate to the highest standards in promoting equality and diversity and protecting learners.

6. The ability of the tutor to take an appropriate stance such as the ‘relaxed vigilance’ recommended by Bill Rogers in Classroom Behaviour (Sage, 2011), which he describes as,

“The teacher’s confident, assured and firm expectations about cooperative compliance when engaged in behaviour management.”

Laying the foundations with a new group for effective learning and behaviour management

The first couple of sessions when learners are generally on their best behaviour is an ideal time to lay the foundations for a positive and constructive learning atmosphere. This atmosphere will make dealing with behavioural incidents subsequently much easier. Suggestions of how this atmosphere can be created are listed in the table on pages 38–40).
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<th>Suggestion</th>
<th>Application in skills provision for unemployed adults</th>
<th>Quotations from providers delivering skills for unemployed adults</th>
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<td>Establish rules and the consequences of breaking the rules through a negotiated process with learners linking your behavioural expectations with those expected in the workplace.</td>
<td>The process of negotiating ground rules can help learners appreciate the feelings of others and sign up to a code of behaviour in advance of any challenging behaviour taking place. Negotiating ground rules and consequences helps adults who have not been in a learning environment for some time and who therefore do not know what is expected, both in terms of behaviour and acceptable consequences for inappropriate behaviour. Suggest rules during the negotiation process that are wide enough to encompass different forms of related challenging behaviour; for instance, rather than including “no talking when the tutor is talking”, a better rule would be “no disruptive behaviour that interferes with others learning.” Discussing what is and what isn’t appropriate behaviour in the workplace can help learners that have no work experience appreciate that behaviour must be modulated to fit the context. The immediacy of employment following skills provision for unemployed adults provides justification for raising behavioural expectations to those that would be expected at work.</td>
<td>“We treat them as adults. Some learners will say ‘what if I forget my folder’. When this happens, I explain that they need to be taking responsibility for themselves.” (Tutor within a large FE college) “Negotiated ground rules are set in the group and along with standard college ones are displayed on walls. This is basically a rights and responsibility approach. We ask learners to sign them.” (Operations Manager within a large FE college) “Tutors pull learners up on the ground rules, but often the other learners will pull them up on things too. It can be up to five times a day that we refer to the ground rules, just little things.” (Tutor within a large FE college)</td>
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<td>Introduce the concept of positive working relationships. Seek to reinforce and maintain positive working relationships throughout the course, including when managing challenging behaviour. Seek opportunities to encourage and try to build a rapport with individual learners that you feel may exhibit challenging behaviour.</td>
<td>The experience of being unemployed can have a negative impact on self esteem. It is helpful to deliberately incorporate content that builds learner self-esteem and confidence. Introducing the concept of assertiveness to learners can be helpful. Learners can then be supported to adopt assertive behaviours throughout the remainder of their course.</td>
<td>“Through team activities, social bonding occurs in the first day. We encourage learners to try to find common ground whilst at the same time taking learners out of their comfort zone. This gives them the social skills they need to use at work, such as how to communicate with people you don’t like.” (Operations Manager within a large FE college)</td>
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<td>Introducing the importance of maintaining positive relationships at work can be helpful in justifying why learners are expected to be thoughtful about how they behave. &lt;br&gt; The tutor can demonstrate that they have the best interests of the learners at heart in the way they talk about the success of past learner groups and in the way they describe how learners shared and individual objectives will be met through the provision.</td>
<td>“We suggest that being positive is the best way to approach the programme and stress the positive atmosphere throughout.” (Tutor within a large FE college)</td>
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<td>Establish routines and cues for starting and ending sessions and activities.</td>
<td>Establishing routines and cues even in skills courses that are relatively short in duration does pay dividends. Learners appreciate having cues to begin and end activities and to pay attention. Many learners feel uncomfortable without such cues and prefer the reassurance of knowing what to expect. &lt;br&gt; A short discussion on how routines are important at work, for instance at the beginning and at the end of workplace meetings, can be helpful.</td>
<td>“Getting used to following routines helps learners prepare for the routines at work.” (Senior Manager within a large FE College)</td>
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<td>Create a calm environment.</td>
<td>The small group size and maturity of the older learners within skills provision for unemployed adults often contributes to the calm atmosphere. &lt;br&gt; Deliberately selecting activities that maintain, or return the group to, a calm atmosphere can be helpful. &lt;br&gt; Using group work to move learners around helps break up cliques of younger learners that are prone to exhibit challenging behaviour. &lt;br&gt; Justify moving learners around by explaining that working with others will build confidence and that in the workplace people are expected to be able to work and mix well with others.</td>
<td>“On the first day we try to incorporate a fun element, a competition, some music, a quiz relevant to them.” (Tutor within a large FE college) &lt;br&gt; “We try to make it welcoming and friendly. Behaviour issues are more apparent when people feel under pressure to participate.” (Operations Manager within a large FE college) &lt;br&gt; “We describe employers’ expectations – and explain that we need to be working to these standards. This can be very useful in providing a reason to challenge behaviour. Some learners are very loud – we deal with this by saying ‘when we are here we have to act professionally.’” (Tutor within a large FE college)</td>
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<td>Use encouragement to build learners’ confidence and give recognition for their efforts. People value recognition from others and the possibility of future recognition will incentivise learners to put in further effort.</td>
<td>Unemployment can severely damage self-confidence. Therefore tutors should make the most of opportunities to boost the confidence of learners as individuals and as a group. There are ample opportunities to build in recognition of success and encouragement within skills provision for unemployed adults for both individuals and groups as a whole.</td>
<td>“Recognising the achievements of individuals and teams, instigating group applause and other ways of celebrating of success and giving one-to-one feedback through the review process are very important in recognising effort and success.” (Operations Manager within a large FE college)</td>
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<td>Inform learners that your high expectations for their behaviour relate to your belief in their employability.</td>
<td>Skills provision for unemployed adults offers the potential for tutors to explain that as everyone’s objective is to find employment, we need to approach the course with the dedication and professionalism that would be expected in the workplace.</td>
<td>“It is about putting your cards on the table and having a frank discussion during induction. We explain the aim of the provision is to help them get a job. We say we expect what an employer will expect in terms of behaviour. It is harder for the younger ones who have not worked before as they don’t know what an employer expects. But we keep our expectations high and consistent.” (Operations Manager within a large FE college)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Give unambiguous instructions and set realistic objectives.</td>
<td>The frequently repeated nature of skills provision for unemployed adults allows for considerable refinement of activities with successive groups to address any lack of clarity or unrealistic targets originally set. Allow ample time for learners to complete tasks when doing something for the first time.</td>
<td>“The job-focused nature of the programme is emphasised from day one.” (Tutor within a large FE college)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“We put in the challenging bits at beginning of each week when the learners are not tired.” (Tutor within a large FE college)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Applying well-known principles of behaviour management to skills provision for unemployed adults

Many new tutors find managing behavioural incidents difficult, and even experienced tutors find this an ongoing challenge. As new tutors gain experience, they gradually build a repertoire of responses upon which they can draw to manage the majority of behavioural incidents they encounter. This gives them confidence which is perceived by learners who then more readily accept the tutor’s authority and then tend to behave better. The following list of principles of behaviour management may give new tutors a head start and even experienced tutors some new strategies.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principle</th>
<th>Application in skills provision for unemployed adults</th>
<th>Quotations from providers delivering skills for unemployed adults</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intervene early, briefly, directly and by the most positive, least intrusive means possible, for instance, by saying “John, I need you to focus on this so that you can complete the workbook later.”</td>
<td>Nipping things in the bud in an unobtrusive manner is helpful and most learners, particularly adults, will appreciate and respond very well to this. Older adults can read subtle signs of disapproval and generally require less prompting to desist than younger adults. A gesture such as a raised eyebrow when a learner knows they are doing something they shouldn’t or slow shake of the head to signal ‘No!’ when they are about to do something they shouldn’t can often convey the message without disturbing other learners. Adults in unfamiliar settings can inadvertently do something quite out of character simply because they have not established a way to behave in the new environment. On reflection, they may be very embarrassed about what they did and this may be enough of a future deterrent without much need for more than an acknowledgement that the tutor was aware of what happened and is not keen to see it repeated.</td>
<td>“We respond quickly to signs of discomfort.” (Operations Manager within a large FE college) “When appropriate, we look at things from a humorous perspective.” (Tutor within a large FE college) “We link our challenges to the learner’s aspirations, for instance we might say, ‘If you were in the workplace would you have your earphones on? What would your customers say?’” (Tutor within a large FE college) “Sometimes we will ask someone to stay behind to talk with them; we don’t come down too hard. Light heartedly pointing something out is more effective.” (Operations Manager within a large FE college)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use the rules, for instance by saying “Jenny (pause to get Jenny’s attention). We have a rule for not using mobiles and we all have agreed to stick to the rules”. Then giving Jenny time to comply.</td>
<td>Using the negotiated rules enables the tutor to take the role of an enforcer rather than the originator of the rules. This lessens the risk that learners will develop personal animosity towards the tutor as they are more prone to do if the tutor alone had decided upon the rules.</td>
<td>“I say, they are not my rules, they are your rules!” (Tutor within a large FE college)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **When drawing attention to the consequences of an action, give the learner a choice to comply or to accept the consequence;** for instance, by saying, “Tom, to complete this task you need to return to your seat”. Tom hesitates in returning to his seat at which point the tutor says, “Tom, the consequence for breaking the rule about disrupting other learners is that you have to discuss how the session went with me during break. Its return to your seat or take time during your break to discuss how the lesson went with me. your choice!” | **If negotiated ground rules are in place and learners know what consequences to expect from breaking a rule, it is possible for the tutor to simply draw attention to this.**

Apply the minimum consequence needed to manage the behaviour and use this consistently. If possible make the consequence relevant to the behaviour exhibited, for instance, by saying “Alex, You’ve used up your warning earlier. As you know the consequence we all agreed on for swearing is that you have to stand up and give three reasons to the group why it is inappropriate to swear whilst at work – would you like a couple of minutes to come up with the reasons or would you like to start straightaway.” |

“We challenge them in a way that raises their awareness. For instance, we might say ‘No business could function properly if they can’t count on their staff arriving on time’. We follow with an incentive like “We will of course be able to recommend you to an employer if you attend on time at 9am each day.” (Operations Manager within a large FE college)

**Discuss more serious incidents on a one-to-one basis with the learner involved.** Offer some negotiation and opportunity to make restitution where appropriate.

Point out the consequences for everyone affected. Use the ABC model (described earlier) to reveal any underlying cause for the behaviour and help the learner see the necessity of addressing the underlying cause.

Helping the learner become more aware of the impact on others often presents some positive opportunities for restitution.

Although it may be helpful to remind people mandated through skills conditionality that they are expected to

“Try to find out about them as a person. Try and relate the impact of their behaviour back to their goals.” (Operations Manager within a large FE college)

“When we discussed the impact on others of his actions, he was horrified when he realised that others were feeling intimidated by him.” (Operations Manager within a large FE college)
Focus on the primary behaviour and, when appropriate, ignore secondary behaviours.

In the heat of the moment learners will sometimes act up. There are many reasons for this such as, in an attempt to save face or simply because they are agitated and struggling to control strong emotions. These secondary behaviours should not distract the tutor from focusing on the primary behaviour or things can quickly become unfocused and escalate into a row.

"When a learner says, 'Whatever' following complying, we choose to let this go so that it doesn’t further affect the progress of the lesson.” (Tutor within a large FE college)

Take the first steps to restore relationships where these may have been damaged.

Learners can resent being pulled up on their behaviour. This is less likely to happen if the tutor has demonstrated an on-going positive regard for their learners who then are more likely to recognise that the tutor’s aim is to act in the learner’s best interests even when addressing challenging behaviour. Where a tutor feels there is a risk that their relationship with a particular learner may have deteriorated it is helpful if the tutor can take the first step towards restoring positive regard by the use of a passing friendly or encouraging statement, for instance, “I’m really looking forward to today’s session on customer service – I think you might enjoy it” or “Do let me know if you need any help today.”

“Unemployment can have a negative impact on self esteem so it is important to minimise any further loss of self esteem as a consequence of addressing a learner’s challenging behaviour.” (Operations Manager within a small FE College)
Case study – Leicester College’s use of negotiated ground rules

Leicester College has its own rules introduced to learners as ‘The Way We Do Things Round Here’ and is proud that the college is an enjoyable, comfortable and safe place for all staff and students because all try and work to these rules.

Each group or class at College also discusses and creates their own ground rules. The ground rules example below was created by a group of learners aged 16–19 during the induction to their foundation learning programme called ‘Launch pad’. Launch Pad gives learners the opportunity to develop the essential skills needed to move on to an Apprenticeship, work or further college course.

To introduce the concept of ground rules to the learners, the tutor discussed why rules are used, generally using rules within sports as an example. Learners always appreciate that it is impossible to play sports without rules. The rules for different types of sports were then discussed to help learners appreciate that the appropriateness of a rule depends on the context of its application.

Then learners were then given a short quiz sheet to complete about the college rules. This gave them ideas for creating their own rules:

- no violence;
- no bullying;
- no cyber bullying;
- no mobile phones or iPods in class;
- no swearing;
- no sexual harassment;
- be on time;
- no disruptive behaviour that interferes with others learning;
- take responsibility for health and safety;
- no drugs; and
- no damage to property.

One learner challenged the rule about ‘no mobile phones’ saying that she didn’t see a problem with having a phone in class as long as it was on silent. However, the other learners and the tutor felt that you would be tempted to look at texts and social networking sites if you had the phone at all times. The tutor then came up with an idea of having a see-through box in which to put everyone’s phones. Learners who were concerned that they might lose their phone were satisfied that they could see it at all times through the see-through box. It was agreed that learners would retrieve their phones at break and lunchtimes. All agreed to try this out for a few weeks.
All the learners sign up to the rules which they hold in higher esteem as they have been involved in the process of creating them and they are very aware of the peer pressure to stick to them. Having the rules displayed is a constant reminder of the rules and gives learners wishing to uphold the rules more confidence to point out when rules are broken. Rules do naturally get broken, but much less than if the rules were not developed through a negotiated process. When a rule is broken there is also less argument about the appropriateness of the rule as the learner that infringes it knows that they have had a hand in developing them and signed up to them.
Supporting and building learner motivation

Skills provision for unemployed adults has many features that are highly motivating for participants; for instance by:

- providing learners with local labour market relevant skills;
- offering learners a choice in the sector for which they undertake training;
- often being designed with the input of employers;
- offering units or qualifications that are recognised as valuable by employers; and by
- being short in duration.

For this reason, on the whole, participants are well motivated. However, providers do encounter de-motivated learners. Lack of motivation is obviously a major underlying cause of non-participative behaviour, but it can also be an underlying cause of inappropriate behaviour due to learner boredom or frustration at having to do something to which they are not committed.

Because skills provision for unemployed adults attempts to achieve two goals – the acquisition of skills and employment – it is important learners are motivated to achieve both. Some learners are very motivated to find work but are not motivated to participate in skills provision. Other learners enjoy participating in skills provision but are less motivated to seek work. Some learners are not motivated to gain skills or to seek work.

In recent years, increased attention has been given to approaches that build learner motivation in further education settings. A very early mention of the potential of Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) techniques to increase motivation was made in Ain’t misbehavin’. A much more detailed reference to the potential of motivational support was made in Improving Teaching Training and Learning: Using motivational dialogue to help E2E learners progress (Standards Unit, 2005). This introduced motivational dialogue techniques, based on the Transtheoretical or Stages of Change model (described later), as a means of developing learner motivation. Some subsequent CPD resources have been developed to disseminate motivational approaches, such as the QIA CPD course on Engaging and motivating learners (QIA, undated), and the Stick with IT (QIA, 2008) guides for managers, practitioners and learners.
Motivation theories and their application within skills provision for unemployed adults

In simple terms, motivation is an individual’s willingness to choose to pursue a goal or satisfy a conscious or unconscious need.

Many different theories have been proposed that describe the processes of motivation. There are a few that are particularly helpful when considering the participant motivation within skills provision for unemployed adults to secure the two goals of skills acquisition and job entry.

Sources of motivation can be split into: extrinsic sources which are those that arise from outside and which are done to or for the individual; and intrinsic sources, which are those that arise from engaging in the task itself.

Extrinsic sources include the award of a qualification certificate, the recognition of achievement from peers, friends and family, and the pay cheque from a new job. Extrinsic sources can also include punishments, such as the sanctioning of benefits for non-attendance for those people mandated to attend.

Intrinsic sources, which are believed to be more powerful than extrinsic sources, include the satisfaction from achieving a goal, the challenge of working towards a goal and the opportunity to experience taking part in working towards a goal. Intrinsic motivation is supported by having choices, from choosing challenging yet attainable goals and from feelings of being in control.

Unfortunately research findings by Goldsmith et al. described in the article entitled ‘The psychological impact of unemployment and joblessness’ (Journal of Socio Economics, vol. 25, Issue 3, 1996), indicate that feelings of being in control diminish the longer someone is unemployed. Goldsmith identified two different groups of unemployed individuals: those with an internal locus, who feel that they influence the things that happen to them; and those with an external locus, who believe that they don’t have much control over their lives and that events just happen to them. Those with a more internal locus tend to be initially more motivated to do all they can to return to work, since they see a tight connection between actions they take and life outcomes. However, no matter what their original outlook, Goldsmith reports that all unemployed people tend to become more externally focused over time,

“Looking at longer periods of unemployment, say four to six months, we see statistically significant evidence of people becoming more externally focused and feeling helpless.”
To some extent Goldsmith reports that having an external focus is protective:

“Having an external locus can act as a coping mechanism or a way of avoiding self-blame which protects one’s sense of emotional well-being.”

The implications of Goldsmith’s research are that if, after a few months unemployment, people become more externally focused and feel they have less control over their lives, their intrinsic motivation is likely to be weaker as feeling in control is a pre-requisite for strong intrinsic motivation.

Another theory that sheds light on the process of motivation is Expectancy Value Theory, which states that a learner’s motivation is a function of how much they believe they will succeed (expectancy) and the value the learner places on that success (value).

It therefore helps if learners are:

a) clear about the goals they are aiming for. Many learners will be clear about their overall goals; for example, the acquisition of skills and employment within a particular sector. However, they may be less aware of the steps required to reach these goals. The initial interview provides an ideal opportunity to give further detail on the pathways available;

b) believe in their ability to reach for their goals. Although tutors might be relatively confident that a learner can succeed, learners themselves may not be so sure of their ability to reach their goals, with this lack of confidence having a corrosive effect on their motivation. For some learners their lack of confidence may stem from not having been in a learning environment for some time or from previous negative experiences of learning. Where this is the case, it is important to ensure these learners feel valued and included. Where learners have had previous negative experiences of learning, stressing the unique nature and employment focus of the provision can help learners recognise that it will not be like their past learning experience. The research by Goldsmith (1996) described above explains why people unemployed more than a few months may lack confidence in their own ability to influence whether they succeed in acquiring skills or gaining employment. However, there is a lot that providers can do to help their group of learners to build and maintain their belief in their ability to reach their goals, such as:

- deliberately incorporating confidence-building content;
- encouraging and deliberately building in opportunities for peer support;
- providing additional support through Work Clubs;
- establishing Job Shops and using job boards to display vacancies thereby reassuring learners that there are jobs available;
- using case studies to describe how other learners have succeeded;
- showing learners statistics of past learner success to show that it’s proven to work.

As one provider said, “Being able to tell people that learners get work, really helps”;
(Operations Manager within a large FE college)
• arranging for employers to meet learners and to describe their vacancies;
• arranging for employer engagement staff to visit the group. As one provider said, “This can be very motivating as they can say things like “five people in the previous group got work with this employer” (Operations Manager within a large FE college);
• arranging talks to be given by past learners who have found work, particularly if the past learners faced major barriers themselves;
• offering licence to practice qualifications such as CSCS cards and Food Hygiene certificates that learners know are sought after by employers;
• by talking about the possibility of Apprenticeship opportunities in addition to other job vacancies;
• by the tutor describing their background, experience and knowledge to gain credibility and to enable the learners to ‘buy into them’;
• by using inspirational quotations, such as the quote by Thomas Jefferson, “I’m a great believer in luck, and I find the harder I work, the more I have of it” or the quote by George Burnham, “I can’t do it’, has never accomplished anything; ‘I will try’ has performed wonders”;
• by encouraging learners in the group, who know they are further away from the labour market for non-skills-related reasons, to do what they can now to put themselves in a better position for the future, thereby motivating them without denying the realities; and by
• breaking down the curriculum into small achievable steps which are immediately signed off and celebrated. As one provider said “I visit the groups when they are having celebrations of achievement. These are very positive” (Senior Manager within a large FE college) and another said “give them a sense of achievement on the first day by signing off something. When they are introduced to the workbooks, some may feel overwhelmed, so at this point the tutor reassures them that they have already covered some elements and signs them off immediately so they feel they have made a start on it”. (Operations Manager within a large FE college);

c) are aware of the rewards they will get from achieving the goals. Learners often seek to be reassured that they will be financially better off in the long term from taking work and that they will have enough funds to cover the transition from benefits into work. A key objective of Universal Credit, which will shortly replace many of the existing benefits, is to ensure that people do have recourse to adequate financial support during the transition period. In the meantime, advice on in-work benefits, any available back-to-work bonuses and budgeting is very helpful. It is also helpful to ensure learners are aware of the other positive sides to being in work, such as the opportunity to meet people, to gain a sense of satisfaction, to gain recognition from their achievements and to develop personally as a result of experiences gained at work. It can also help to explain that once in work it is possible to progress to positions of greater responsibility and pay, and easier to get another job that may be more interesting or satisfying.
d) consider that the rewards will be worth the effort. For most learners finding work in the occupational area they have chosen within skills provision for unemployed adults is worth the effort it will take. However, some learners, and particularly those that have become accustomed to being unemployed, may feel that finding a job, even in an occupation that they would like, is not enough of a reward. Where this is the case learners may benefit more from the more intensive forms of individual support described below.

**Case study – motivating learners at Swindon College**

Since the introduction of skills provision for unemployed adults through the Adult Skills Budget in August 2011, Swindon College has introduced a number of strategies to help motivate learners to remain on their course and achieve. These were adapted from approaches developed during previous Skills Funding Agency contracts such as the 6 Month Offer and Routes into Work, which provided pre-employment training for 18 to 24 year olds. These strategies include:

- using the initial interview to gain interest and engagement. The first point of contact with a learner is when they attend an initial interview. It is really important to use this opportunity to discuss the learner’s aspirations and to match provision to what the learner wants and needs;

- ensuring the first day of the course meets their expectations and needs. Research undertaken by psychologists at the University of London, shared through a Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS) event, has shown that to gain ‘buy in’ to a course for young people, you need to understand their reason for being there on that day; is it for the social aspect, for example, to see friends? If so, the College ensures more team building and social activities are included. Are they attending because they’ve been mandated and might lose their benefits if they don’t? In this case, the College includes lots of activities to help them meet their JCP adviser’s action plan, plus showing how being in work, even part time, can help them gain extra income; and

- incorporating employer input to motivate and incentivise learners. A visit by a local employer sets the scene for the course, helping learners to realise that there are genuine opportunities for staying and achieving. If an employer is difficult to find, establishing a good relationship with recruitment companies will often fill the gap, as will a visit from the Apprenticeship team, as they can often explode many myths learners have about becoming an apprentice. On the college’s recent pre-employment training programme for a new Asda store, the greatest motivating factor for learners was the visit by the Deputy
Individual approaches to building learner motivation and willingness to consider change

Learners with very poor motivation levels (particularly those that doubt that the rewards will be worth the effort), and learners at risk of expressing forms of challenging behaviour (that would be or already are challenging to manage in the learning setting) may benefit from intensive, individual support. Ideally, people in this at risk group would be identified during the initial interview so that support can be initiated from the start of their learning programme.

Learners with low motivation levels can be identified by asking all learners to give a score out of ten for each of the following:

1. I am clear about the goals I am aiming for;
2. I believe that with effort I can reach for these goals;
3. I am aware of the rewards I will get from achieving these goals; and
4. I believe the rewards will be worth the effort.

Where learners give low scores to all and/or a particularly low score to “I believe the rewards will be worth the effort” this should alert the interviewer that it may be appropriate to arrange individual support.

Learners more likely to exhibit challenging behaviour may also be identified as a result of:

- their acknowledgement of recent behavioural difficulties in learning environments;
- their disclosure of issues that pre-depose learners to challenging behaviour;
- pre-warning from referral agents; and
- a learners overall approach and attitude to their initial interview.

a) Motivational dialogue

Several providers interviewed by NIACE said their counsellors had been trained in motivational interviewing techniques and that they were using this technique to support...
at-risk learners. The technique is helpful for supporting learners to increase their motivation for participating in skills provision and/or seeking employment, as well as for learners who exhibit challenging behaviour. The description that follows is intended to inform readers as to the process and potential of Motivational Interviewing (MI) rather than to replace the training necessary to effectively carry out MI.

Motivational Interviewing is a client-centred counselling style that helps the client clarify and resolve ambivalence about change. It was first proposed in Motivational Interviewing: Preparing people for change (Miller and Rollnick, 1991), and was subsequently developed in further in Using motivational dialogue to help E2E learners progress (DfES Standards Unit, 2005), as a non-confrontational way to help E2E learners progress.

The intentions of motivational interviewing/dialogue are to:

- identify risks and goals;
- explore and resolve ambivalence;
- elicit change talk; and
- set targets and support change.

Motivational Interviewing achieves these goals by supporting people to travel through the five stages of change proposed by the Transtheoretical Model (also known as the Stages of Change Model). The five stages are pre-contemplation, contemplation, preparation, action and maintenance. At the pre-contemplation stage, an individual may or may not be aware of a problem, but has no thought of changing their behaviour. From pre-contemplation to contemplation, the individual develops a desire to change behaviour. During preparation (or decision), the individual intends to change the behaviour within the forthcoming time period, and during the action (or active change) stage, the individual begins to exhibit new behaviour consistently. An individual finally enters the maintenance stage once the new behaviour becomes habitual.

The individual has to make the journey through the five stages themselves, but can be supported to make the journey more quickly by a counsellor who uses stage-specific strategies that can help the individual to move onto the next stage. Some of the strategies used are listed in the following table taken from the DfES Standards Unit resource: Using motivational dialogue to help E2E learners progress.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage on the Wheel of Change</th>
<th>Appropriate help</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-awareness</td>
<td>Build up rapport and gain trust. Provide information about the learner’s situation, e.g. assessments, attendance, etc. Increase learner’s perception of risks or problems. Promote concern about learner’s behaviour or situation (e.g. low motivation to participate in skills provision or to seek work). Explain the consequences of not changing (but take care you do not sound as though you are making a threat).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Contemplation</td>
<td>Encourage learners to talk about the problem and the situation. Elicit change talk. Reinforce learner’s own reasons for change and their perception of the risks of not changing. Help the learner learn from previous attempts to change. Raise the learner’s awareness of the discrepancy between their present behaviour/low motivation to participate in skills provision or to seek work and their broader goals. Examine the losses and gains (costs and benefits) of the learner’s current behaviour/low motivation to participate in skills provision or to seek work. Ask learners to assess their degree of readiness for change.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Decision</td>
<td>Negotiate a realistic action plan for change. Discuss the consequences of not carrying out the plan. Agree SMART targets and possible change strategies. Emphasise that responsibility for change rests with the learner. Help the learner to be clear and realistic. Focus the learner’s attention by providing choice between options. Express confidence in the learner. Plan how to overcome possible barriers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active change</td>
<td>Actively help the learner by: • reminding; encouraging; • giving positive reinforcement; • removing barriers; • giving advice if it is asked for; • giving feedback on progress.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintenance</td>
<td>Identify strategies to avoid relapse. Discuss possible outcomes from new behaviour/greater motivation to participate in skills provision or to seek work. Encourage learners to articulate how they have changed. Gradually decrease the level of support. Explain that relapse is a common part of the change process but that it is not inevitable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relapse</td>
<td>Discuss any successes preceding the relapse. Analyse the reason(s) for the relapse. Explore what can be learnt from the experience. Help the learner to move on once again in the process of change.</td>
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</table>
b) The use of psychotherapeutic talking therapies to develop motivation

The use of Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) and Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) to support participants within employment programmes is an interesting development. Both these approaches are psychotherapeutic talking therapies that support people to perceive issues and situations in a more helpful, positive manner. They help to avoid negative thought patterns that can trap people in despondent, anxious or pessimistic ways of thinking. NLP has been used or many years within personal development programmes for company executives wanting to develop their personal effectiveness. It has therefore been relatively straightforward to translate this provision to support unemployed adults who might benefit from a more optimistic and positive outlook.

CBT is generally used in more formal psychotherapy settings. It has been proven to be at least as effective as other psychotherapies in helping people recover from common mental health difficulties such as anxiety and depression, with negative thoughts being a major factor in both conditions. The UK National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) recommends CBT as the treatment of choice for a number of mental health difficulties, including post-traumatic stress disorder, OCD, bulimia nervosa, and clinical depression. NLP and CBT may potentially be helpful in enabling some people increase their self-esteem where low self-esteem is otherwise hampering their ability to perform well at interview or in learning. NLP and CBT may also help people overcome anxieties that inhibit them in employment settings, for instance, where they have social anxiety which causes excessive shyness. It is likely that individuals receiving NLP or CBT will be less at risk of exhibiting inappropriate behaviour and/or non-participative behaviour resulting from negative thoughts. However, NLP and CBT programmes can require considerable time – weekly or fortnightly sessions over several months – with the full benefits only being accrued over this time. The duration required makes NLP and CBT costly and therefore it is unlikely to feature as a component of short duration skills provision for unemployed adults in its current format. However, a description of NLP and CBT has been included as staff delivering skills provision will benefit from being aware that some of their learners may have benefited already from NLP/CBT or be undertaking NLP/CBT through other support providers at the same time as participating in skills provision for unemployed adults.
Case study – Motivating learners through recording progress at Reading College

Reading College has a suite of short, flexible courses aimed at job seekers. These courses are popular with JCP who both mandate and signpost clients to them. The majority of the learners are mandated to participate. Learners often resent being mandated and, in some cases, their resentment is expressed in challenging behaviour.

The team responsible for the college’s courses for the unemployed are able to draw on a wide range of behaviour management tools and strategies originally developed to reduce challenging behaviour within the College’s provision for young people NEET.

From our work with young people NEET, the College knows it is important to ensure that at-risk learners see the progress they are making as the course progresses, and feel they are in control and responsible for the progress that they make. Whilst the achievement of qualifications motivates some learners, others perceive an award in employability as meaningless. Therefore the college does not solely rely on the achievement on employability units to give learners a sense of satisfaction. The course team is also continually developing other ways of identifying and recording on-going progress in terms of employability skills.

A recent initiative is the development of a ‘fifteen steps to success’ visual aid to demonstrate progress made each week. The visual aid is a large poster showing a 15-step staircase. At the beginning of the course, each learner places a small figure representing them at the bottom of the staircase. As the learner progresses, they move their figure up the steps.

Each week, students are expected to attend five teaching sessions of approximately three hours each. Each session carries a maximum of three points, which would take them up three steps on the visual aid. One point is available for attending the session. The learner is either present or absent; no account is taken of authorised absence. A second point is awarded for punctuality. The learner needs to be ready to start the session on time in order to be awarded this point. The third point is for performance and is based on satisfactory completion of the day’s activities. The criteria selected are the most basic principles of employability that would form the basis of a job reference the course team might write for a learner. The criteria are explained to the learners at the start of the course. Small rewards have also been introduced to recognise weekly progress, such as a voucher for a free drink in the college canteen. The recognition given to the learner receiving a reward is
more important than the nature of the reward. Each week, the student starts again at the bottom of the staircase. This enables learners who have not progressed far the previous week to have a clean start at the beginning of the next.

One tutor using the system commented that he uses the ‘steps’ to help learners become responsible for their own job search and counter the often-heard comment ‘no one is getting me a job’. The tutor can use the chart to reinforce the concept that whilst others can help the learner find the vacancies, success in securing the job and sustaining employment requires resilience, persistence and personal responsibility over a period of time.

The current system is limited by logistical and physical factors. The pressures on FE timetabling mean that the course takes place in several different rooms. In addition, the poster is A3 in size and, with the sticky people attached to the staircase, it is not easily portable. In practice, this means that teachers sometimes forget to record the progress and that learners do not always take note of their position on the staircase. In order to address these concerns, online versions are currently being piloted. These include a graphical version of the steps poster. A couple of learners, on encountering the steps poster, criticised the idea as ‘childish’, but when the criteria was explained, they recognised that the attributes being recorded are those most valued by employers.
Conclusion

This guide describes the nature of challenging behaviour within skills provision for unemployed adults and the measures that providers can adopt to minimise its occurrence and manage incidents when they do occur.

Although not a major issue for all providers, some providers do experience significant levels of challenging behaviour within some or all of their groups of learners. Even where providers have just a few isolated incidents of challenging behaviour, it is important for the individual learner involved that adequate behavioural management support is provided to ensure they gain as much as possible from their participation in the provision. Providers interviewed by NIACE believed that pro-active behavioural management enabled them to confidently extend access to skills provision for unemployed adults to learners with a greater risk of exhibiting challenging behaviour. By doing this, skills provision for unemployed adults becomes accessible for far more people than just those who are very close to the labour market with no behavioural issues.

We hope this guide is of use to managers and practitioners working with unemployed adults in any group setting, including those within the Work Programme and ESF-funded programmes, as well as Adult Skills Budget funded pre-Work Programme skills provision. In particular, we hope the guide is helpful to tutors who are new to working with unemployed adults or indeed new to teaching adults altogether. A ‘recommended reading’ section is provided in Annex 2 for managers and tutors wanting to find out more about behavioural management within FE and other settings. At the time of publication, a number of organisations are providing CPD training in behaviour management including EMFEC’s one-day CPD training on ‘Assertive Approaches to Classroom Management’ and Watt Works Training’s one-day course on ‘NLP for Classroom Management’.
Annexes

Annex 1 Top tips for behaviour management within skills provision for unemployed adults

Lessen the risk of challenging behaviour by:

1. producing comprehensive, accessible and up-to-date information about provision for learners and referral agents:
   - being candid with your referral agents about the limitations of the support you can offer;
   - requesting that referral agents share information on learners’ needs ahead of their participation;
   - providing opportunities for learners to find out more through open days and informal information sessions; and;
   - providing guidance and undertaking rigorous screenings and assessments during initial interviews.

2. structuring the provision to lower the risk of challenging behaviour by:
   - adjusting group sizes to manage risks;
   - changing the duration and content of some provision to adapt it to the learner’s learning style; and
   - establishing employability/personal development provision to run prior to vocational skills provision.

3. ensuring pre-requisites to managing behaviour are in place, such as:
   - taking a whole organisational approach;
   - ensuring that there is a bedrock of good teaching and learning;
   - fairness and consistency in the monitoring and management of behaviour; and
   - respectful relationships are built based on an assertive approach that has high expectations of learner behaviour and a high sensitivity to learners’ needs.

4. laying the foundations with each new group for effective learning and behaviour management by:
   - establishing rules and the consequences of breaking the rules through a negotiated process with learners, linking your behavioural expectations with those expected in the workplace;
   - introducing the concept of positive working relationships;
using encouragement to build learners’ confidence and giving recognition for their efforts;
informing learners that your high expectations for their behaviour relate to your belief in their employability;
giving unambiguous instructions and setting realistic objectives;
establishing routines and cues for starting and ending sessions and activities; and
setting out to create a calm environment.

5. adhering to principles of behaviour management by:

• intervening early, briefly, directly and by the most positive, least intrusive means possible;
• using ground rules effectively;
• giving the learner a choice to comply or to accept the consequence;
• discussing more serious incidents on a one-to-one basis with the learner involved in an attempt to reveal and address the underlying cause;
• focusing on the primary behaviour and when appropriate ignoring secondary behaviours; and
• taking the first steps to restore relationships where these may have been damaged.

6. supporting and build learner motivation by:

• helping learners develop clarity about the employment and learning goals they are aiming for and the pathways available to achieve their goals;
• building learners’ belief in their ability to reach for their employment and learning goals;
• raising learners’ awareness of the range and real nature of the rewards they will get from achieving the employment and learning goals; and
• providing individual motivational support where learners do not consider that the rewards in gaining skills and employment will be worth the effort.
Annex 2 Recommended reading

AELP/ LSIS (2012) *A guide to delivering adult skills provision to the unemployed*.

Appleby, Y. (2008) A *guide for skills practitioners on working with people who are considered to be ‘at risk’ or who find formal provision ‘hard to reach’*. NIACE/NRDC.


Further Education Development Agency (1998) *Ain’t misbehavin’*.


Rutgers University

LSC (2010) *Delivering employment related skills to people who are out of work*.

LSIS (2009) *Supporting learners to succeed, guidance for pastoral provision – key messages*.


NIACE/NRDC (2008) *Bridges into learning for adults who find provision hard to reach*.

NRDC (2008) *Stick with It: Messages from the development projects*.


QIA Skills for Life quality initiative (2007) *Engaging and motivating learners, CPD trainer and participant packs*.


Annex 3 Regulations for learners in receipt of Jobseeker’s Allowance in relation to attending longer-term full-time training

The regulations relating to the longer-term full-time participation in learning of learners in receipt of Jobseeker’s Allowance changed in April 2011 such that now,

“Jobcentre Plus have the flexibility to refer to longer full-time courses from the start of a customer’s claim period, if they perceive this as the most effective way of helping the claimant secure sustainable work as quickly as possible. Those wishing to undertake training for 16 hours a week or more for more than two weeks in a 52-week period will need to seek their Jobcentre Plus adviser’s agreement.”

Skills in the Pre-Work Programme Job Centre Plus offer, Skills Funding Agency Update, April 2011.

Claimants that have been claiming Jobseeker’s Allowance for less than six months will need to be transferred from Jobseeker’s Allowance to a training allowance to undertake a full-time course that is longer than two weeks. The cost of training allowances has to be met from the Jobcentre Plus Flexible Support Fund. The Flexible Support Fund is managed at Jobcentre Plus District Level, and it is up to District Managers locally to agree the use of the Flexible Support Fund for this purpose.

Following a further change in November 2011 to the attendance rules under Skills Conditionality for customers claiming Jobseeker’s Allowance (JSA) for more than six months, the rules now,

“allow a claimant who has been claiming JSA for six months or more to attend full-time training and remain on JSA rather than transferring onto a training allowance. This change only applies to training of up to 30 hours per week and up to eight weeks’ duration.”

Skills Funding Agency Update, Number 86, 2011.

Where provision lasts for more than eight weeks or is over 30 hours per week, customers claiming JSA for more than six months have to transfer onto a training allowance with their Jobcentre Plus adviser’s agreement.
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