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Introduction and overview

The Skills Builder Partnership works with a range of organisations to ensure that everyone builds the essential skills to succeed. The network of Impact Organisations who are aligning their provision to the Skills Builder Framework use a common language and consistent approach.

Through our work with the Inclusive Learning Organisations Cluster, we have seen incredible examples of organisations who have built essential skills in an inclusive way, including through their work with learners with additional needs.

Within specialist and mainstream settings, this has supported skill development within education, training and employment. These essential skills are at the heart of individuals working towards and into the next stage of their development and the work these organisations do is critical to this.

This Guide is to support organisations to use the Skills Builder Expanded Universal Framework and embed skill development in specific aspects of their programmes. For learners of all ages, the aim is to do this in a truly inclusive way, enabling access to the most meaningful experiences.

As particular areas of need are so wide and varied, we do not seek to provide guidance on specific needs. Rather, this guide supports an inclusive and person-centred approach and is the ideal way for organisations to:

- build confidence in using the Skills Builder Expanded Universal Framework.
- incorporate essential skill development into existing activities.
- effectively support the most meaningful essential skill development.

Drawing upon the huge expertise of organisations within the Cluster, aligned to the voices of neurodiverse and disabled people’s experiences, this Guide contains practical support on skill development, including key considerations when working with a range of learners.

Some of the examples might be directly applicable to your programmes. Others may help to give you an idea of how you can use the Skills Builder Expanded Universal Framework to add further detail and focus to activities you are already running and ensure these are as inclusive as possible.

We hope this provides a helpful additional tool in your important work and supports an inclusive provision for all learners.

Tom Ravenscroft
CEO, Skills Builder Partnership
The Skills Builder Expanded
Inclusive Organisations Cluster

The Skills Builder Partnership

The Skills Builder Partnership brings together 800+ organisations and 10,000+ educators around a common approach, helping 1,400,000+ individuals of all ages to build the eight essential skills to succeed.

Our common approach is based around the Skills Builder Framework. This breaks down each of the eight essential skills into defined steps which are teachable and measurable. This support learners and facilitators to identify and articulate explicit strengths and areas for development – and then build those skills further.

Inclusive Organisations Cluster

We are hugely grateful to all of the organisations involved for the time, expertise and experience they have put into this project to make it a success. Whether contributing to wider discussions, attending Cluster meetings, sharing examples of best practice or providing feedback and advice, these organisations are the driving force behind this Guide and the practical examples used to structure its content.

Inclusive Voices

Aligned to the contributions of the Cluster organisations, this Guide is shaped by the voices of neurodiverse and disabled people.

We are extremely thankful to the following for sharing their insights and experiences of essential skill development:

• **Ben and Jordan (Rip Stars)** – The Rip Stars are a group of disabled young people who lead their own research projects. These projects share the voices of other disabled young people and use research evidence to improve opportunities and ensure quality, rights-based provision.

• **Matthew Hazell** – Matthew is VP Finance for PIMCO, a global investment management firm. At the age of 44, Matthew was diagnosed as Autistic and now works to support young Autistic people by volunteering with the Ambitious About Autism Schools Trust.

• **Steph Yates** – Steph is the Founder of The Butterfly Princess SEND Initiative, which was set up to give disabled people positive role models and a voice for advocacy. Steph has Cerebral Palsy and is a wheelchair user.

With many thanks to the Youth Futures Foundation for their generous support of this project.
The Essential Skills

We define essential skills as ‘those highly transferable skills that almost everyone needs to do almost every job’ and which in turn support the application of knowledge and technical skills. Our Framework creates a common approach and shared outcomes to align efforts to build these skills effectively. The consistency of the language is key to the transferability of essential skills, so that all learners can recognise these in a range of settings.

The Skills Builder Expanded Universal Framework

The Skills Builder Universal Framework shows how to build essential skills at every stage of life. Breaking the skills down into 16 teachable Steps, this supports all learners to not only recognise and articulate what they can already do, but also to identify areas of focus to develop their skill set further.

The Step descriptors within the Framework give learners and facilitators the flexibility to identify the areas of focus most relevant at a given time or within a given context. Viewing the Framework as a roadmap overview of progression, rather than a linear ‘tick-list’, means skill development can be personalised and adapted to suit.

The Expanded Universal Framework breaks progression down into more tangible chunks, placing three simple Stepping Stones between Steps to give more extensive scaffolding. This allows facilitators and learners to hone in on the explicit components of each Step to be focused on, allowing for more targeted development and detailed identification of strengths.

Using the Expanded Universal Framework in this Guide

Each of the eight essential skills can be grouped into four themes:

- **Getting Started Steps** looks at the foundations of that skill
- **Intermediate Steps** begin to develop these further
- **Advanced Steps** apply this skill in a range of contexts
- **Master Steps** require learners to reflect on this application and devise plans to develop further.

Throughout the themes, this Guide provides support in facilitating and embedding skill development, alongside key considerations for all learners. These considerations draw upon the reflections, experiences and insights of the SEND Cluster organisations and Inclusive Voices, aligned to our work across the broader Partnership.
Key Adaptations in this Guide

Communication

For some learners, the use of the term Speaking is not accessible and therefore this skill name, icon and step descriptors are not appropriate.

For learners who use other forms of communication, the skill of Communication and use of the accompanying icon may be more suitable.

In these situations, the skill of Communication is defined as ‘the transmission of information or ideas’. Step descriptors build on how learners communicate and share their ideas with an audience. The Framework shows the same progression, with the form of communication considered.

The Communication version of the Framework is on pages 10 & 11.

Active Listening

For Step 6 of Listening, the descriptors for the step and its stepping stones have been adapted to reflect that learners show active listening is a range of ways. Whether this is through shared attention, glances or maintaining eye contact, responses to what is being said or body movements, this Step recognises that learners will show active listening in different ways.

Skill Symbols Communication Grid

To aid learners’ recognition of essential skills, many settings are using communication symbols for each skill to make the meaning clearer and easier to understand.

This Guide features a Communication Grid for the essential skills, including Communication, on page 30 which can be used to raise awareness of these skills and help to communicate when these are being used. The grid has been created using Widgit Symbols with full licensing; if learners are more familiar with other pictorial systems, the grid can be used as a template.

Widgit Symbols © Widgit Software 2002-2021 www.widgit.com
# Listening

The receiving, retaining and processing of information or ideas

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### GETTING STARTED

**Steps 0-5**

**Listening to others**

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step 0</th>
<th>I listen to others without interrupting</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Step 1</td>
<td>I listen to others and can remember short instructions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Step 2</td>
<td>I listen to others and can ask questions if I don’t understand</td>
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<tr>
<td>Step 3</td>
<td>I listen to others and can tell someone else what it was about</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 4</td>
<td>I listen to others and can tell why they are communicating with me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 5</td>
<td>I listen to others and record important information as I do</td>
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### Individualised Approaches

Steph Yates: “Treat everyone as individuals; one disabled person may need more or less time to understand things. Get to know them, not their disability.”

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### INTERMEDIATE

**Steps 6-8**

**Demonstrating listening**

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step 6</th>
<th>I show I am listening by how I respond and use body language</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Step 7</td>
<td>I show I am listening by using open questions to deepen my understanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 8</td>
<td>I show I am listening by summarising or rephrasing what I have heard</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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### Receiving and Processing Information

Jordan and Ben, Rip Stars:

“I like to be given the time to think through what was said and to think of my answer. Don’t expect an answer right away; give me time to process what was said, even if it’s just a couple of seconds.”

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### Considerations

Steps 6-8: Are learners showing active listening through particular responses and/or body movements? Are they able to summarise or rephrase in a non-verbal way?

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### Additional

- I actively listen for a sustained period
- I show that I am listening through my responses
- I show that I am listening through my body language
- I follow the thread of a discussion to make appropriate contributions
- I understand the difference between closed and open questions
- I identify how I can expand my understanding of what is said
- I understand what it means to summarise information
- I understand what it means to rephrase information
- I find appropriate points in conversation to summarise or rephrase
- I show I am listening by summarising or rephrasing what I have heard
Listening
The receiving, retaining and processing of information or ideas

Flexibility on Meetings and Sharing Information
Matthew Hazell: “Meetings are not something I relish; things move so quickly. I prefer the time and patience to digest things. I work best if I have the time to collect information and then give feedback later.”

Considerations
There is an evidence base for the explicit development of communication skills reducing anxiety and depression. For neurodiverse learners, this may involve providing opportunities to advocate for themselves and to create environments where they can communicate in a way they feel most comfortable. What measures may already be in place to facilitate this?

ADVANCED
Steps 9-10
Recognising influence

MASTERY
Steps 11-15
Listening critically
**Speaking**

The oral transmission of information or ideas

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- I understand what speaking is
- **I respond to simple questions and prompts**
- ***I speak clearly so another person understands me***

**Step 0** I speak clearly to someone I know
- **I understand how to engage more than one person**
- ***I speak in front of others***
- ***I speak clearly so more than one person understands me***

**Step 1** I speak clearly to small groups of people I know
- **I understand what is different about talking to people I don’t know**
- ***I speak clearly to individuals I do not know***
- ***I speak clearly to small groups I do not know***

**Step 2** I speak clearly to individuals and small groups I do not know

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**GETTING STARTED**

**Steps 0-6**

Speaking clearly and effectively

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**Considerations**

When learners are working on short-term programmes, with unfamiliar peers and/or facilitators, Stepping Stones for Steps 0-2 can support identifying explicit strengths and areas for development. What are they able to do? What could you focus on?

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**Opportunities to Speak**

Steph Yates:

“It’s important to let people express themselves when they speak so you can listen to what they are all about – what their capabilities and needs are – as much as what they are saying. I have become a confident speaker because I’ve been allowed to express myself and be me.”
Speaking

The oral transmission of information or ideas

**INTERMEDIATE**
Steps 7-9
Speaking engagingly

- I understand the value of using facts and statistics when speaking
- I support the ideas I share with appropriate facts and examples
- I know how to structure an opinion or argument

**ADVANCED**
Steps 10-12
Speaking adaptively

- I speak engagingly by using facts and examples to support my points
- I understand what visual aids are and how they can help
- I know how to use visual aids effectively
- I create simple visuals and props to support what I am saying

**MASTERY**
Steps 13-15
Speaking influentially

- I speak engagingly by using visual aids to support my points
- I know how tone, expression and gesture can make speaking more engaging
- I speak in front of others and manage my tone to be more engaging
- I use appropriate gesture and expression to make my speaking more engaging

- I know how to prepare for different audiences
- I identify how my listeners are feeling about what I am saying
- I know how to adjust language, tone and expression in response to an audience

**Step 10**
I speak adaptively by changing my language, tone and expression depending on the response of listeners
- I define what a negotiation is and explain why they happen
- I anticipate the other party's position before a negotiation
- I plan changes to my points in response to the other party's position

**Step 11**
I speak adaptively by planning for different possible responses of listeners
- I identify the structure of a negotiation
- I recognise the importance of listening in negotiations
- I use strategies to adapt the content of what I say

**Step 12**
I speak adaptively by changing my content depending on the response of listeners
- I define what influence means and explain how it is used
- I understand how we can change the structure of our points to be influential
- I read the response of my audience and change my structure accordingly

**Step 13**
I speak influentially by changing the structure of my points to best persuade the listeners
- I recognise how using examples and facts can be influential
- I evaluate the persuasiveness of different examples and facts
- I select examples and facts that are appropriate for my audience

**Step 14**
I speak influentially by changing the examples and facts I use to best persuade the listeners
- I explain and define what a vision is using examples
- I identify the characteristics of a compelling vision
- I structure and deliver a vision that is compelling for my audience

**Step 15**
I speak influentially by articulating a compelling vision that persuades the listeners
- I define what influence means and explain how it is used
- I understand how we can change the structure of our points to be influential
- I read the response of my audience and change my structure accordingly

**Opportunities to Practise**
Matthew Hazell: “The world of work is a fast, fluid, dynamic environment; it's not a dry academic exercise. It's so important to focus on speaking skills and practice these, because you're taught these skills in school, but not always given a situation where you've got to quickly think on your feet and react.”
Getting Started
Steps 0-6
Communicating clearly and effectively

Forms of Communication
Jordan and Ben, Rip Stars:
“Communication is not always with words. It can be with pictures, gestures, actions... Come to a conversation with an open mind; their form of communication must always come first. Respect others’ forms of communication and remember that these can change over time.”

Considerations
When learners are working on short-term programmes, with unfamiliar peers and/or facilitators, Stepping Stones for Steps 0-2 can support identifying explicit strengths and areas for development. What are they able to do? What could you focus on?

- I understand what communicating is
- I respond to simple questions and prompts
- I communicate clearly so another person understands me

Step 0 I communicate clearly to someone I know
- I understand how to engage more than one person
- I communicate in front of others
- I communicate clearly so more than one person understands me

Step 1 I communicate clearly to small groups of people I know
- I understand what is different about communicating to people I don’t know
- I communicate clearly to individuals I do not know
- I communicate clearly to small groups I do not know

Step 2 I communicate clearly to individuals and small groups I do not know
- I understand what it means to communicate things in a logical order
- I understand why putting things in a logical order is important when communicating
- I use different approaches to putting things in a logical order

Step 3 I communicate effectively by making points in a logical order
- I understand why it is important to know what my listeners already know
- I know how to build on what my listeners already know
- I explain new concepts that listeners are able to follow

Step 4 I communicate effectively by thinking about what my listeners already know
- I understand why language changes in different settings
- I explain the difference between formal, informal and technical language
- I judge what language is appropriate in different settings

Step 5 I communicate effectively by using appropriate language
- I know what tone is and what is appropriate in different settings
- I know what expression is and what is appropriate in different settings
- I know what gesture is and what is appropriate in different settings

Step 6 I communicate effectively by using appropriate tone, expression and gesture
**Communication**

*The transmission of information or ideas*

**Expressive Skills**

The Communication step descriptors can be used to support oral, signing and manual transmission of information or ideas to ensure they are more inclusive for all types of communication needs.
Problem Solving
The ability to find a solution to a situation or challenge

- I know what instructions are
- ** I understand and follow simple verbal instructions
- *** I understand and follow simple visual instructions

**Step 0** I complete tasks by following instructions
  - I know when I need help
  - ** I explore where I might find help
  - *** I know who I can ask for help

**Step 1** I complete tasks by finding someone to help if I need them
  - I identify a problem I am having
  - ** I explain a problem to someone else
  - *** I act on advice to solve problems

**Step 2** I complete tasks by explaining problems to someone for advice if I need
  - I identify what I already know and what I need to know about a problem
  - ** I know where to go for extra information
  - *** I use extra information to help me solve a problem

**Step 3** I complete tasks by finding information I need myself

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**GETTING STARTED**
Steps 0-3
Completing tasks

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**Time and Patience**
Steph Yates: “For me, Problem Solving works best when you are given time to understand what the problem is. It might need to be broken down into stages so it’s not overwhelming. Be patient and talk through the problem to allow time for questions to be asked.”

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**INTERMEDIATE**
Steps 4-8
Exploring problems

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- I identify complicated problems that do not have a simple solution
- ** I understand why creating lots of possible solutions can help solve complicated problems
- *** I develop multiple potential solutions for complicated problems

**Step 4** I explore problems by creating different possible solutions
  - I explain and define what pros and cons are
  - ** I identify the pros and cons of different solutions
  - *** I apply pros and cons when evaluating solutions to make the best choice

**Step 5** I explore problems by thinking about the pros and cons of possible solutions
  - I explain and define what complex problems are
  - ** I identify the characteristics of complex problems
  - *** I know how to work with complex problems

**Step 6** I explore complex problems by identifying when there are no simple technical solutions
  - I identify what I know and what I need to know to understand a complex problem
  - ** I identify the research that would be useful in exploring complex problems
  - *** I know how to carry out primary and secondary research

**Step 7** I explore complex problems by building my understanding through research
  - I explain and define what causes and effects are
  - ** I know why causes and effects are important in understanding complex problems
  - *** I identify causes and effects and how they might join up into chains or circles

**Step 8** I explore complex problems by analysing the causes and effects

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Considerations
Steps 1 and 2: Are learners not asking for help because they are reluctant or unable to ask? On short-term programmes, how will you support learners to communicate what they need?
Problem Solving

The ability to find a solution to a situation or challenge

Step 9
I create solutions for complex problems by generating a range of options
- I know how to evaluate possible solutions to a complex problem
** I understand that implementing solutions will have secondary effects
*** I evaluate potential solutions by considering secondary effects

Step 10
I create solutions for complex problems by evaluating the positive and negative effects of a range of options
- I explain and define what logical reasoning is
** I understand the differences between inductive and deductive logic
*** I use logic trees as a tool for logical reasoning to arrive at a conclusion

Step 11
I analyse complex problems by using logical reasoning
- I explain and define what a testable hypothesis is
** I create testable hypotheses to be used to solve complex problems
*** I test hypotheses using sample data

Step 12
I analyse complex problems by creating and testing hypotheses

ADVANCED
Steps 9-12
Analyse complex problems and solutions

MASTERY
Steps 13-15
Implementing strategic plans

Relationships and Communication
Jordan and Ben, Rip Stars: Problem Solving is like a meal, where the relationship is a plate and communication is the cutlery. Without the plates and cutlery in place, you can’t enjoy the meal; if you don’t have the relationship and communication established, you can’t solve problems together.

Considerations
Steps 5 and 9: How can you ensure the focus is on trying to create lots of possible solutions and not finding one strong idea? Can you set a target number of ideas?
Creativity
The use of imagination and the generation of new ideas

**GETTING STARTED**
Steps 0-5
Imagining and generating ideas

- I understand the difference between imaginary and real
- I give examples of where imagination has been used
- I show how I have used my imagination

**Step 0**
I imagine different situations
- I know why it is helpful to explain what I imagine
- I know how to talk about what I have imagined
- I describe what I have imagined

**Step 1**
I imagine different situations and can say what I imagine
- I know different ways to share what I have imagined
- I draw or record what I have imagined
- I act out or model what I have imagined

**Step 2**
I imagine different situations and can bring them to life in different ways
- I explain and define what a creative brief is
- I know how to generate ideas for a simple brief
- I explain and define what success criteria are

**Step 3**
Generate ideas when I’ve been given a clear brief
- I explain why success criteria are important
- I use success criteria to identify what something is supposed to be able to do
- I use success criteria to generate ideas for improving something

**Step 4**
Generate ideas to improve something
- I explain and define what a concept is
- I identify the different components of an idea or concept
- I know how two or more ideas can be combined

**Step 5**
Generate ideas by combining different concepts

**INTERMEDIATE**
Steps 6-10
Using creativity and developing ideas

- I define and describe what creativity is
- I see the value of creativity for supporting work
- I know how creativity can be used across different types of work

**Step 6**
I use creativity in the context of work
- I identify the aspects of creativity
- I explain when I have used creativity in my wider life
- I recognise the benefits of using creativity in my wider life

**Step 7**
I use creativity in the context of my wider life
- I explain and define mind mapping
- I create mind map to explore ideas
- I share mind maps to explain how ideas are linked and related

**Step 8**
I develop ideas by using mind mapping
- I recognise the role of questioning in developing ideas
- I identify what sort of questions to ask
- I use answers to questions to develop my ideas

**Step 9**
I develop ideas by asking myself questions
- I define and describe what perspectives are
- I outline factors that might cause a different perspective
- I recognise how different perspectives can be used to improve ideas

**Step 10**
I develop ideas by considering different perspectives

Considerations
Steps 1-2: Some learners may not understand the difference between imaginary and real. How can you ensure they still share their ideas and what they are imagining?
Creativity
The use of imagination and the generation of new ideas

**Step 11** I innovate effectively when working in a group
- I identify the advantages and risks of innovating as a group
- I know how to avoid a group reaching consensus too quickly
- I know how to broaden a group’s perspective

**Step 12** I innovate effectively by seeking out varied experiences and stimuli

**ADVANCED**
Steps 11-12
Innovating effectively

**MASTERY**
Steps 13-15
Supporting others to innovate

**Considerations**
Step 11: Innovating in a group doesn’t necessarily mean learners are physically together; could this be done remotely via messages or calls?

* I understand why it is important to support others to be creative
** I identify different creative tools that can be used to explore ideas further
*** I recognise how creative tools can be used by others to boost their creativity

**Step 13** I support others to innovate by sharing a range of tools
- I know why it is important to be able to evaluate creative tools
** I identify the most effective creative tool for different tasks
*** I make recommendations for the best creative tool and explain my reasoning

**Step 14** I support others to innovate by evaluating the right creative tools for different situations
- I know what coaching is and how it supports creativity
** I evaluate others’ innovative capabilities
*** I identify others’ working styles and skill sets

**Step 15** I support others to innovate by coaching them to be more creative

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**Time to generate ideas**
Jordan and Ben, Rip Stars:
“You need to give us time to come up with ideas, maybe by giving us information before. I don’t go from A to B and just think of an idea. My head often goes to C, D and E first.”
Staying Positive

The ability to use tactics and strategies to overcome setbacks and achieve goals

**GETTING STARTED**

**Steps 0-6**

**Keeping trying**

**Step 0**
- I can tell when I feel positive or negative
  - I explain what positive and negative emotions look like
  - I know what events might lead to positive and negative emotions
  - I recognise and name emotions in others

**Step 1**
- I can tell when others feel positive or negative
  - I know typical emotional responses to something going wrong
  - I explain the downsides of giving up
  - I know different strategies to motivate myself to keep trying

**Step 2**
- I keep trying when something goes wrong

**Responding to Negativity**

Steph Yates: “Everyone experiences negativity, especially disabled people. The negativity doesn’t define you, it’s how you come back from it that defines you.”

**Considerations**

Step 3: Learners will have different strategies for staying calm; how can you ensure you are aware of these strategies and how best to support?

- I know typical actions people make to emotional responses
- I know different strategies to help me stay calm
- I know how staying calm can help me to keep trying

**Step 3**
- I keep trying and stay calm when something goes wrong
  - I manage my emotional response to something going wrong
  - I take a positive approach to learning from something going wrong
  - I analyse when something goes wrong and learn lessons

**Step 4**
- I keep trying when something goes wrong, and think about what happened
  - I identify clues to recognise others’ emotional responses
  - I understand why cheering others up is helpful
  - I use appropriate strategies to cheer up others when something goes wrong

**Step 5**
- I keep trying when something goes wrong and help cheer others up
  - I define and describe what motivation is
  - I recognise how motivation can change when something goes wrong
  - I encourage others to remain motivated and keep trying

**Step 6**
- I keep trying when something goes wrong and encourage others to keep trying too

**Sharing emotions**

Jordan and Ben, Rip Stars: “If you ask me if I’m OK, at first I’ll say ‘I’m fine’; until we’ve built trust, I won’t talk about it and I’ll try not to show it. Asking for help may be the last thing on my list, so I might keep trying but that doesn’t mean I’m calm or OK.”

**Considerations**

Learners’ ability to use this skill effectively is supported by, and feeds into, the development of other skills. How will you provide opportunities to demonstrate how Staying Positive supports, and is supported by, skills such as Problem Solving and Teamwork?
### Staying Positive

The ability to use tactics and strategies to overcome setbacks and achieve goals

#### INTERMEDIATE

**Steps 7-10**

**Finding opportunities**

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Step 7</strong></td>
<td>I look for opportunities in difficult situations</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Step 8</strong></td>
<td>I look for opportunities in difficult situations, and share these with others</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Step 9</strong></td>
<td>I look for opportunities in difficult situations, and adapt plans to use these opportunities</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Step 10</strong></td>
<td>I look for opportunities in difficult situations, and create new plans to use these opportunities</td>
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#### ADVANCED

**Steps 11-12**

**Managing risks and rewards**

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<tr>
<td><strong>Step 11</strong></td>
<td>I identify risks and gains in opportunities</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Step 12</strong></td>
<td>I identify risks and gains in opportunities, and make plans to manage them</td>
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#### MASTERY

**Steps 13-15**

**Supporting others to stay positive**

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<tr>
<td><strong>Step 13</strong></td>
<td>I support others to stay positive, by managing my own responses</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Step 14</strong></td>
<td>I support others to stay positive, by helping others to see opportunities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Step 15</strong></td>
<td>I support others to stay positive, by helping others to see opportunities and creating plans to achieve them</td>
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**Opportunities in difficult situations**

Matthew Hazell: “There will be times when things go wrong. People are different and there are always clashes. It’s about recognising these and finding the positive, what we are trying to do. If it’s possible, you need to communicate and try and ascertain what is going on and why things have gone wrong. As an Autistic person, I find the more you can practice that, the better.”
**Aiming High**

The ability to set clear, tangible goals and devise a robust route to achieving them

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**GETTING STARTED**

Steps 0-4

**Working effectively**

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<tr>
<td><strong>Step 0</strong></td>
<td>I know when I am finding something too difficult</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I understand what doing well means</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I know when I have done good work</td>
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<td></td>
<td>I know when I am making a good contribution</td>
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| **Step 1** | I know what doing well looks like for me |
|   | I understand what working carefully means |
|   | I take my time when working |
|   | I pay attention to detail |

| **Step 2** | I work with care and attention to detail |
|   | I recognise when I have been successful |
|   | I take satisfaction in being successful |
|   | I share what I feel when I have done well |

| **Step 3** | I work with pride when I am being successful |
|   | I understand why new challenges are a good opportunity |
|   | I look for opportunities in my stretch zone |
|   | I identify the positives of approaching a new challenge |

| **Step 4** | I work with a positive approach to new challenges |

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**Considerations**

Steps 1 & 3: *‘Doing well’* and *‘being successful’* mean doing our best: this may not immediately be recognised as success if there are no associated rewards. Can you support learners to identify when they are doing well through feedback or a positive emotional response and personal satisfaction?

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**INTERMEDIATE**

Steps 5-9

**Setting goals**

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<td><strong>Step 5</strong></td>
<td>I set goals for myself</td>
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<td></td>
<td>I identify the needs of myself and others</td>
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<td></td>
<td>I build needs into the development of my own goals</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I build needs into the development of others’ goals</td>
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| **Step 6** | I set goals informed by an understanding of what is needed |
|   | I define and explain what tasks are |
|   | I identify tasks that need to be done to achieve a goal |
|   | I put tasks into a logical order |

| **Step 7** | I set goals, ordering and prioritising tasks to achieve them |
|   | I define and explain different resources types |
|   | I identify what resources are needed in order to complete a task |
|   | I know how to secure the resources needed |

| **Step 8** | I set goals and secure the right resources to achieve them |
|   | I recognise people are different to other types of resources |
|   | I identify how I can involve others in my plans |
|   | I know how to engage people in my plans |

| **Step 9** | I set goals and plan to involve others in the best way |
Aiming High

The ability to set clear, tangible goals and devise a robust route to achieving them

**Identifying skill sets**

Matthew Hazell: “Everybody is unique. If somebody has a ‘label’ then that can be their unique selling point. Maybe they haven’t developed it yet or just don’t know, but it’s there. What are your strengths? Think about what you’re good at, what you like to do, who you are. This is what gives you your unique selling point.”

**ADVANCED**

Steps 10-12

Creating plans

- I identify my own skill set
- I identify others’ skill sets
- I build skills into plans I create

**Step 10**

I create plans that are informed by my skill set and that of others

- I identify what elements are important in creating a plan
- I define and explain how goals and targets differ
- I know how to turn goals into tangible targets

**Step 11**

I create plans that include clear targets to make progress tangible

- I understand and recognise the role of constructive criticism
- I identify appropriate people and how to ask for constructive criticism
- I identify how to build external views into plans I create

**Step 12**

I create plans that are informed by external views, including constructive criticism

**MASTER**

Steps 13-15

Developing long-term strategies

- I define and explain what a long-term strategy is
- I take an internal view to evaluate strengths and weaknesses
- I take an external view to evaluate opportunities and threats

**Step 13**

I develop long-term strategies taking into account strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats

- I identify the parts of a strategic plan
- I define and explain what milestones are
- I know how to set milestones that create clear goals to work towards

**Step 14**

I develop long-term strategies that use regular milestones to keep everything on track

- I define and explain what feedback loops are and how they are important
- I define what strategic flexibility is and explain why it is valuable
- I know how to adapt plans using positive and negative feedback

**Step 15**

I develop long-term strategies that include feedback loops to support flexibility and adaptability

**Considerations**

Essential skill development is a long-term journey; the goals and plans learners create should reflect this. Could using aspirational role models and raising the profile of different pathways help to identify outcomes and the steps to achieving them?
Leadership
Supporting, encouraging and developing others to achieve a shared goal

Considerations
Essential skill development is a long-term journey; the goals and plans learners create should reflect this. Could using aspirational role models and raising the profile of different pathways help to identify outcomes and the steps to achieving them?

GETTING STARTED
Steps 0-2
Understanding emotions
- I know how to divide up tasks
- I know how to share tasks out in a fair way
- I spot if there are problems
Step 3
I manage dividing up tasks between others in a fair way
- I manage the team's time effectively
- I ensure my team has the right resources
- I know how to support my team to complete tasks
Step 4
I manage time and share resources to support completing tasks
- I identify the different roles that exist in a meeting
- I chair meetings so everyone has a chance to contribute their ideas
- I support the team to reach a decision
Step 5
I manage group discussions to reach shared decisions
- I recognise that disagreements can be helpful
- I know how disagreements can be unhelpful
- I know how to turn disagreements into shared solutions
Step 6
I manage disagreements to reach shared solutions

INTERMEDIATE
Steps 3-6
Managing tasks
- I know how to divide up tasks
- I know how to share tasks out in a fair way
- I spot if there are problems
Step 3
I manage dividing up tasks between others in a fair way
- I manage the team's time effectively
- I ensure my team has the right resources
- I know how to support my team to complete tasks
Step 4
I manage time and share resources to support completing tasks
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Step 6
I manage disagreements to reach shared solutions

Leadership
- I know what different emotions might look and feel like
- I recognise positive emotions and what might cause them
- I recognise negative emotions and what might cause them
Step 0
I know how I am feeling about something
- I recognise why it is helpful to explain how I am feeling
- I know there are good ways to express how I am feeling
Step 1
I know how to explain my feelings about something to my team
- I know how to recognise how people might be feeling
- I link how people might be feeling to what has happened
- I explore others' feelings to understand why they feel that way
Step 2
I know how to recognise others' feelings about something

Considerations
Step 1: How will you ensure all learners are able to communicate their feelings to their team? What modelling and support will learners and teams need to do this?
Leadership
Supporting, encouraging and developing others to achieve a shared goal

Leadership

•  I know the elements of being an effective leader
••  I identify my own strengths as a leader
•••  I identify my own weaknesses as a leader

ADVANCED
Steps 7-12
Managing and supporting others

Step 7  I recognise my own strengths and weaknesses as a leader
•  I identify areas of strength for others in my team
••  I identify areas of weakness for others in my team
•••  I recognise the different types of skills people have

Step 8  I recognise the strengths and weaknesses of others in my team
•  I define what roles are with examples
••  I identify the needs in different roles
•••  I know how to allocate roles by matching others’ strengths with role requirements

Step 9  I recognise the strengths and weaknesses of others in my team, and use this to allocate roles accordingly
•  I define and explain what mentorship is
••  I identify what makes mentoring work for the mentee
•••  I support my mentee to identify goals

Step 10 I support others through mentorship
•  I define what coaching is and explain how it differs from mentoring
••  I understand what a coach does
•••  I identify how coaching can be used effectively to improve performance

Step 11 I support others through coaching
•  I define what motivation is and what factors can influence motivation
••  I know how understanding my team can boost motivation
•••  I know the critical things a leader can do to maintain motivation in their team

Step 12 I support others through motivating them

Step 13 I reflect on my own leadership style and its effect on others
•  I identify which leadership styles I use most and why
••  I evaluate how others respond to different leadership styles

Step 14 I reflect on my own leadership style, and build on my strengths and mitigate my weaknesses
•  I understand different leadership styles are better suited to different situations
••  I reflect on which leadership styles have been most effective in different situations
•••  I understand when and why major leadership styles are effective

Step 15 I reflect on my own leadership style, and adapt my approach according to the situation

Open to questions
Matthew Hazell: “In every job I’ve had, leaders have been different. However they lead, it’s about the team knowing what is required and not being afraid to go back and say, ‘I don’t understand this.’ That is something that people must never be afraid of.”

Considerations
Step 7: Think about questions to guide learners’ reflection on their leadership: how can you use the framework and examples to ensure these are specific? For learners who need support to recognise their own strengths, what opportunities for feedback will there be?
## Teamwork

Working cooperatively with others towards achieving a shared goal

### GETTING STARTED

**Step 0**

I understand why working with others can be helpful

I know what working positively looks like

I recognise when it is difficult to work positively

**Step 1**

I work with others in a positive way

I define what behaviour is with examples

I know how behaviour might vary

I identify the appropriate behaviour for different situations

**Step 2**

I work well with others by being on time and reliable

I understand why being on time matters

I can define reliability and why it matters

I identify how to get better at being reliable

**Step 3**

I work well with others by taking responsibility for completing my tasks

I understand what it means to support others

I explain why supporting others is important and helpful

I know how to identify if I can support others

**Step 4**

I work well with others by supporting them if I can do so

I define and explain what diversity means

I define and explain what equality means

I define and explain what inclusivity means

**Step 5**

I work well with others by understanding and respecting diversity of others’ cultures, beliefs and backgrounds

### Working with others

**Step 0-5**

Working well with others

**Considerations**

Step 0: Working cooperatively means getting the job done, not being best friends. How can you ensure learners are aware of what is meant by ‘working positively’? Could agreeing upon shared expectations support learners in this?

**Disagreements**

Steph Yates: "Good teams listen to each other and take on board what others say but aren’t afraid to disagree.”

### INTERMEDIATE

**Steps 6-8**

Contributing to the group

- I define and explain what group decision making is
- I recognise the benefits of contributing to group decision making
- I know how to contribute positively to group discussions

**Step 6**

I contribute to group decision making

- I understand that sharing my ideas is just one part of group decision making
- I identify why group decision making can go wrong and take steps to avoid this
- I recognise the value of others’ ideas

**Step 7**

I contribute to group decision making, whilst recognising the value of others’ ideas

- I recognise why everyone in a group should contribute
- I understand why sometimes people don’t want to contribute
- I encourage others to contribute effectively

**Step 8**

I contribute to group decision making, encouraging others to contribute
Teamwork
Working cooperatively with others towards achieving a shared goal

Team Members’ Strengths
Matthew Hazell:
“...I’m much more comfortable working at my desk and analysing things; I prefer to collect information and funnel it up to someone who goes to meetings and presents data. Teams work well without all having to be in the same place at the same time.”

Considerations
Steps 9 & 10: How will you support learners to understand the difference between disagreement and conflict? How can you use development in other skills such as Staying Positive and Listening to support this?

ADVANCED
Steps 9-11
Improving a team

- I define what unhelpful conflicts are and what effect they can have
- I recognise common causes of unhelpful conflicts
- I know strategies to help avoid conflicts starting

Step 9: I improve the team by not creating unhelpful conflicts
- I prepare to resolve my own conflicts
- I use conversation to resolve my conflicts with others
- I know how to help resolve the conflicts of others

Step 10: I improve the team by resolving unhelpful conflicts
- I recognise why relationships beyond the team are important
- I understand what external relationships might be based around
- I know how new relationships can be started, maintained and developed

Step 11: I improve the team by building relationships beyond my immediate team

MASTER
Steps 12-15
Influencing a team

- I use evaluative questions to reflect on a team’s progress
- I make suggestions for improving team performance
- I know how to work with the leader to positively influence my team

Step 12: I influence the team by reflecting on progress and suggesting improvements
- I understand how objective targets help a team to see if it has been successful
- I use team objectives to evaluate successes and failures
- I know how to use constructive feedback to encourage positive outcomes

Step 13: I influence the team by evaluating successes and failures and sharing lessons
- I evaluate team members’ strengths and provide positive feedback
- I evaluate team members’ weaknesses to identify where support may be needed
- I use my understanding of team attributes effectively support a team

Step 14: I support the team by evaluating others’ strengths and weaknesses, and supporting them accordingly
- I recognise what benefits external stakeholders can bring to a team
- I identify external stakeholders to bring expertise to a team
- I know how to nourish external relationships

Step 15: I support the team by bringing in external expertise and relationships

- I use evaluative questions to reflect on a team’s progress
- I make suggestions for improving team performance
- I know how to work with the leader to positively influence my team

Step 12: I influence the team by reflecting on progress and suggesting improvements
- I understand how objective targets help a team to see if it has been successful
- I use team objectives to evaluate successes and failures
- I know how to use constructive feedback to encourage positive outcomes

Step 13: I influence the team by evaluating successes and failures and sharing lessons
- I evaluate team members’ strengths and provide positive feedback
- I evaluate team members’ weaknesses to identify where support may be needed
- I use my understanding of team attributes effectively support a team

Step 14: I support the team by evaluating others’ strengths and weaknesses, and supporting them accordingly
- I recognise what benefits external stakeholders can bring to a team
- I identify external stakeholders to bring expertise to a team
- I know how to nourish external relationships

Step 15: I support the team by bringing in external expertise and relationships
Putting the Framework into action

While the Expanded Universal Framework is a helpful tool for understanding and exploring essential skills, we have also worked hard to create tools and resources that can be used to put the Framework into action.

**Interactive Framework Tool**
This tool is the best way to get to know the Skills Builder Framework itself. Each skill step has a ‘Build It’ section that explores the building blocks, or key components, of each Step. These building blocks align with the stepping stones of the Expanded Framework. Using reflection questions as a core structure, each section explores the theory behind each Step and provides advice to bring the steps to life in all settings.

**The Skills Builder Hub**
The Hub provides a one-stop shop for teaching essential skills, including printable resources, short video lessons and workshops. The Hub also provides an opportunity for a facilitator to quickly assess a group of young people, and then be directed to the most suitable resources.

**Skills Builder Benchmark**
This tool introduces each essential skill to individuals and allows them to answer a series of questions on each skill. This will then give them a score and skill summary for further development. Facilitators have the opportunity to direct individuals to this tool and then track the data.

**Skills Builder Launchpad**
Skills Builder Launchpad is an online resource platform for individuals aged 11+ to build their own essential skills at every stage of life. Interactive modules build every step of the Universal Framework, with opportunities for real life application and space to articulate skills through independent reflection, discussion and written records.

**Inclusive Learning Resource Pack**
The Inclusive Learning Resource Pack provides an overview of resources and activities to support learners, including those with additional needs. Alongside this overview, Best Practice Snapshots give examples of where these have been successfully applied in an inclusive learning setting.
A critical starting point when supporting learners to develop skills is to identify which of the essential skills and steps they are feeling confident with and to review where their areas for development might be. This understanding can be used to drive subsequent activities and experiences around explicit skill development. Supporting learners to be part of this process ensures there is a shared understanding of strengths and areas for development and skill development is meaningful and personalised.

Use the Skills Builder approach

The common language of the Universal Framework supports learners to not only understand the skills but to articulate and give examples of when they have shown them. Consistency of language is key to highlighting the transferability of these skills in a range of contexts and for facilitators to set meaningful targets and next steps.

With the essential skills broken down into smaller chunks in the Expanded Universal Framework, it can support facilitators and learners to select a skill and a step to hone in on. These key components can be used to determine what learners are already able to do and to target which areas to develop.

Focus on Strengths

Matthew Hazell:
“What I have to stress for anybody is to find your strengths, that unique selling point. When you are not so orientated towards a certain skill set, it does become difficult. It can become an issue. Direct yourself towards being indispensable in certain areas, then provide support for others who can use their skills in other areas.
For neurodiverse learners, this may well revolve around analysis, testing hypotheses, crunching data, manipulation of figures and using logic to solve problems. Once you’ve found that unique selling point, build on it and master it.”

Resources

Interactive Framework Tool: Exploring the Building Blocks of each Step allows learners and facilitators to identify which components have been demonstrated and target explicit areas for focus.

Hub Baselining Tool: Completing a baseline assessment gives facilitators an overview of learners’ strengths and areas for development. Facilitators can then target skill steps and use resources to explicitly develop these.

Short Lessons: Targeting key components of each Step and building these using videos, activities and reflection questions gives tangible evidence of when skills have been developed.
A focus on skill development provides the foundation for many reflective discussions around an individual’s development, progress and achievements. Using a progression framework as a starting point to highlight strengths and to identify areas for development can be a fantastic opportunity to provide one-to-one support for learners to enable them to learn more about a particular area, help them to identify and meet their goals and take a more personalised approach to their ongoing development.

**Use the Skills Builder approach**

Some organisations have focused mentoring on the development of essential skills, with the mentor helping the individual to reflect on their essential skills, to set goals for improvement, and then to catch up regularly to keep them on track. Working towards a particular goal can also help to develop Aiming High and Staying Positive skills.

For many learners, it can be difficult to identify and recognise the skills they have developed and demonstrated. Initiating discussion around what they have done or what their interests are can provide opportunities to highlights the necessary skills involved and how these transfer to other areas of learning and development.

**Resources**
*(Can be used independently and/or with support)*

**Skill Workbooks:** Activities support learners to build their own skills and reflect on how they have used these in different contexts and settings. Used as a basis for reflective discussions.

**Interactive Skill Passports:** These allow learners to record examples of how they have demonstrated specific components of each skill step to share and celebrate.

**Launchpad Modules:** These interactive modules explore each skill step of the Universal Framework and lead learners to reflect and record how they’ve applied essential skills in a range of contexts.

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**Using the Framework to Structure Discussions**

Matthew Hazell:

“I’m very poor at talking myself up and explaining what I do well... I do what I do. I don’t know if it’s good or bad. Having a framework for skills means you can look at the different descriptors and say ‘Yes, I do that’, ‘No, that’s not me’ or ‘That’s something I’d like to work on.’ Whether that’s in an interview or an appraisal, that’s a great way to be able to talk about what you do well and means you’re talking about the same things.”

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Adopting an outcomes-focused approach means orienting your programmes and provision to achieve a specific outcome or outcomes as a result of your activities. Outcome-focused programmes and support therefore aim to achieve the aspirations, goals and priorities identified by learners and facilitators and helps organisations prove to stakeholders that what they are doing is working. Having a clear and shared understanding of these outcomes creates a solutions-focused approach that puts learners’ interests at the core of the provision and ensures all stakeholders are aware of the purpose of their involvement.

Use the Skills Builder approach

Supporting learners to recognise the importance of thinking about skills when making plans, and how to use their knowledge of the skills they have to set goals, is core to an outcome-focused approach. In order to identify where essential skills will be embedded, it’s important to understand the different types of skills.

The Expanded Framework can be used to understand learners’ strengths and areas for development and identify achievable goals. This skill development can then be built into programmes to ensure provision is driven by a focus on outcomes and which skills need to be developed in order to achieve these.

Person-centred Approach and Learner Voice

Steph Yates:
“People have always underestimated me and they still do. They see my disability and decide what I can do and what I can’t do. They don’t see the person.”

Ben and Jordan, Rip Stars:
“A diagnosis is only good for that: what my diagnosis is. It doesn’t tell you who I am or what I can do. Coming with a predetermined idea doesn’t work if someone thinks they already know me because of what they’ve been told or read about me.”

Resources

Interactive Framework Tool: Explore each skill step in detail, reflect on how learners explicitly demonstrate this skill and learn about why this particular skill is important in a range of contexts so learners apply learning to explicit tasks linked to outcomes.

Launchpad Modules: Interactive modules explore each Step and lead learners to reflect and record how they’ve applied skills, giving tangible examples to discuss in the context of outcome areas.

Skill Workbooks: Activities for learners to build their own skills and reflect on how they can use these in other contexts and settings. Can be linked to explicit activities linked to outcomes.
Great Minds Together is a not-for-profit organisation with a multidisciplinary team that aims to deliver better outcomes for children and young people, particularly those with social, emotional and mental health needs and/or special educational needs and disabilities.

Best Practice Snapshots

• Focus on skill sets by supporting young people to identify which skills they have demonstrated and use the Expanded Framework to highlight strengths and examples of when these have been demonstrated.

• Programmes’ individualised employability focus gives an outcome-focused approach to help to raise a young person’s career aspirations and provide a shared understanding for their support network.

• Highlighting young people’s strengths through experiential learning and linking these to positive employability outcomes supports young people’s emotional mental health needs and social efficacy.

National Literacy Trust are an independent charity dedicated to improving the literacy of the UK’s most disadvantaged communities, where one in three people have low literacy levels. Their ‘Words for Work’ programme challenges inequality in employment opportunities for young people, giving them the communication skills to be successful in the workplace.

Best Practice Snapshots

• Words for Work highlights the importance of communication in the development of skills such as Leadership and Teamwork, whilst the careers-related learning focuses on the development of Aiming High skills in younger learners.

• Work with businesses to embed language of essential skills in their outreach activities, including school visits and virtual workplace tours.

• Embed common language of essential skills within resources used across whole community to aid recognition and support identification of skills in all settings, highlighting strengths and skill sets to raise confidence and aspirations.
The mission of the SAND Project is to create meaningful work opportunities for people with learning difficulties. They provide personalised work training programmes for young people with moderate learning disabilities through a café, media centre and college.

Best Practice Snapshots

- Personalised, aspirational pathways draw upon learners’ skill sets and provide framework for training, where the Expanded Framework provides focused targets for specialist support within work experience programmes.

- Links with Oak Grove College in Worthing, the local special school and college, creates opportunities for learners to apply skills developed in the classroom in the workplace.

- Step descriptors used as a platform for learners’ personalised targets, using specific activities and contexts to make application tangible (e.g. XXX works with care and attention to detail when preparing food in the kitchen).

Spiral’s interactive workshops focus on equipping young people with the transferable skills essential for success, using real-life challenges to support skill development and confidence in career readiness.

Best Practice Snapshots

- Matched skills and step descriptors to organisation’s Theory of Change Develop. Programmes focus on specific skills (Teamwork, Aiming High and Staying Positive) and Framework used to target what is tracked and measured.

- Initial teacher assessments used to understand levels of individual learners and groups before programmes start to guide how workshops are tailored to meet needs.

- Learners’ self assessment and facilitator reflections guide accurate and detailed feedback around particular Steps.

- Share young people’s progression with them throughout programme, helping them to recognise their achievements and motivating them to continue this development.
With many thanks to the Youth Futures Foundation for their generous support of this project.