

Northern Ireland

Social

Care

Council

Funded employment support and skills programmes

November 2025

Contents

Funded employment support programmes	Page 3
Essential and functional skills programmes	Page 6
Employability programmes	Page 8

Note: The content of this document was correct at date of publication. The Social Care Council is not responsible for content of external links.

Funded employment support programmes

Name of initiative	Overview	Funding stream	Eligibility criteria	Link/s	Provider/s
Workable (NI)	Workable (NI) offers support to help people with disabilities who have barriers to employment to keep work.	Department for Communities (DfC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have a disability. Aged 16 or over. About to start a new job or are having difficulties in your existing job. Job is 10 hours or more on a minimum of a six-month contract. 	Workable (NI) nidirect	<p>Workable (NI) is delivered by three providers contracted by the Department for Communities (DfC) as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Workable NI - Support in the workplace Disability Action Northern Ireland Supported Employment Solutions (sesni.org.uk) Use! Workable Social Enterprise Helping People with Disabilities or Health Conditions Gain Employment
Access to Work - practical help at work	Access to Work supports people who want to enter employment or are having difficulties, related to their disability, in their current job.	Department for Communities (DfC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have a disability. Aged 16 or over. Want to start a new job or are having difficulties in your existing job. 	Access to Work - practical help at work nidirect	<p>Contact the Department for Communities (DfC) via:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Email: HealthandWorkSupportCoordination@communities-ni.gov.uk Contact a work coach in your local Jobs and Benefits office
Step Up (16+ yrs. old)*	Step Up gives individuals an opportunity to develop confidence, build on existing skills, gain qualifications and explore career options while receiving one-to-one mentorship.	Department for the Economy (DfE) and Department for Communities (DfC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> People aged from 16 to 24 years old who are not in employment or education or training. 	Step Up – the person-centred skills project nidirect	Further Education Colleges and Higher Education Institutions of Northern Ireland.

		Note: Bursaries are available and will be aimed at all students with a background of care and students registered on Nursing, Allied Health and Social Work programmes who have confirmed caring responsibilities or disabilities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People aged from 16 to 24 years old who care leavers. • People aged 24 years and over who are unemployed or economically inactive. • Young people and adults with a disability or Special Educational Needs. • Economically inactive women returners. 		
Skill Up (18+ yrs. old)	Skill Up is a flexible programme that offers individuals the opportunity to attend free accredited courses to enable the individual to re-train and re-skill.	Department for the Economy (DfE), as part of the Skills Fund.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aged 18 and over. • Eligible to work in Northern Ireland. 	SKILL UP – the flexible skills programme nidirect	Further Education Colleges and Universities.
Condition Management Programme	<p>The Condition Management Programme (CMP) helps individuals to manage health condition to support them to progress towards, move into and stay in employment.</p> <p><u>NB</u> See link for details of health conditions</p>	Department for Communities (DfC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Struggling to stay in work due to a health condition • Have recently gone off work due to a health condition • Are receiving benefits and struggling to find work due to a 	Condition Management Programme nidirect	<p>Contact an employment advisor or work coach in your local Jobs and Benefits office</p> <p><u>or</u></p> <p>Contact the CMP office in your local Health and Social Care Trust (HSCT).</p>

			<p>health condition</p> <p><i>Taking part in the CMP is voluntary so it will not affect individuals benefits.</i></p>		
--	--	--	---	--	--

*Step Up has multiple pathway options depending on the individual's life circumstances

Essential and functional skills programmes

Name of initiative	Overview	Funding stream	Eligibility criteria	Link/s	Provider/s
Essential Skills	Essential Skills courses help the individual to improve their ability to read, write, use mathematics and improve their computer skills.	Department for the Economy (DfE) <i>All Essential Skills courses are free.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aged 16 and over. Resident in Northern Ireland. Usually accessed by individuals who have left full-time education and have not achieved GCSE English and Mathematics at grade A – C. 	Essential Skills nidirect	Accessed through Further Education (FE) colleges.
Multiply	The Multiply course aims to help individuals to improve their numeracy skills in daily life, home and work.	Department for the Economy (DfE), funded through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aged 19 plus+. UK resident. Individuals who do not already have a GCSE at grade C (or equivalent) in maths. <p>Note: <i>Eligibility has recently been extended to 16-19-year olds who are at risk of becoming NEET (not in education, employment or training) in Northern Ireland.</i></p>	Search for Multiply courses on the following websites: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local councils in Northern Ireland nidirect Universities and colleges in Northern Ireland nidirect 	Accessed through Further Education Colleges (FE), universities and a number of voluntary and community organisations in collaboration with local councils as local labour market partnerships (LMP).
English for speakers of other languages (ESOL)	The ESOL course helps the individual to improve their everyday English speaking, listening, reading and writing.	Department for the Economy (DfE) <i>ESOL courses are free for refugees, asylum seekers and other specific</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There are no formal entry requirements for ESOL courses. However, the individual will have to complete an initial 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) nidirect 	Accessed through Further Education (FE) colleges and a number of voluntary and community organisations.

		<i>categories of displaced migrants.</i>	assessment when they apply for the course.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ESOL NI 	
--	--	--	---	---	--

Employability programmes

Name of initiative	Overview	Funding stream	Eligibility criteria	Link/s	Provider/s
Assured Skills (no specified age criteria)	The assured skills pre-employment training offers Academy-style training that will help someone to get a job by giving them the skills that companies want.	Department for the Economy (DfE)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No specific criteria. Open to all individuals. 	Assured Skills Academies nidirect	New foreign direct investment (FDI) companies and expanding local businesses in Northern Ireland.
Work Experience Programme (16 – 65 yrs. old)	<p>The Work Experience Programme offers short work experience placements with local employers for people aged 16-65 years.</p> <p>Placements can last between two and eight weeks and will give you the chance to try out various tasks in a real work situation and develop skills needed to help you get a job.</p>	Department for Communities (DfC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aged 18-65. Receiving Universal Credit or Jobseeker's Allowance, Employment and Support Allowance or Income Support and actively seeking employment Be actively seeking not claiming benefits employment if you're unemployed and not claiming benefits. 	Work Experience Programme nidirect	<p>Directly accessed by individuals seeking employment and employers through the DfC.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Email: WorkExperience@communities-ni.gov.uk.
Opportunity Guarantee - Work Experience Programme (16 – 24 yrs. old)	<p>Opportunity Guarantee is a strand of the Work Experience Programme for young people aged 16-24. It builds on the Work Experience Programme with enhanced features:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> work experience placements of thirteen weeks 	Department for Communities (DfC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aged 16-17 and receiving Universal Credit. 	Work Experience Programme nidirect	<p>Directly accessed by individuals seeking employment and employers through the DfC.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Email: WorkExperience@communities-ni.gov.uk

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a guaranteed interview for a job or apprenticeship when the placement ends. and • can link to a JobStart opportunity if the employer offers you a job after the placement ends. 				
Job Works (18 – 24 yrs. old)	JobWorks is an employability programme aimed to meet the needs of young people aged 18-24 years who are not in education, employment or training.	Northern Ireland European Social Fund 2014-2020 Investment for Jobs and Growth Programme, Dept. for Employment and Learning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young people aged 18 – 24. • Not in education, training or employment. • Living within the Greater Belfast area. 	Free employability programme for 18-24 year olds CommunityNI	Springboard Opportunities Limited
JobStart (16 – 65 yrs. old)	JobStart provides an opportunity to enter the job market by offering six-month job opportunities with a range of employers across all job sectors in Northern Ireland.	Department for Communities (DfC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aged 16 - 65, • Unemployed or economically inactive <p><u>and</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Currently claiming working age benefits. 	JobStart Scheme nidirect	<p>Directly accessed by individuals seeking employment and employers through the DfC.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Email: jobstart.scheme@communities-ni.gov.uk