

## **Parents Guide to Foundation Learning**

Foundation Learning is a new national qualification route for Year 10 and older learners.

Foundation Learning recognises that some learners need more time to develop.

Foundation Learning is all about progression and enabling your son or daughter to make the next move in their chosen career.

Frequently asked questions...

### **1. What is Foundation Learning? Who is it for? What levels does it cover?**

FOUNDATION LEARNING is the accreditation of Level 1 Learning and Entry Level – learners will achieve Nationally recognised qualifications!

Learners will have access to Vocational Learning, Personal and Social Development and Functional Skills in Maths, English and ICT.

Learners will be able to access personalised learning programmes based on the learners stated destination preference (their career choice). Programmes are designed to support this progression.

FOUNDATION LEARNING uses QCF accredited qualifications. QCF qualifications are bite-sized learning opportunities which can be built into larger more substantial qualifications.

FOUNDATION LEARNING is for all learners operating at Level 1 or below including mainstream learners, disengaged learners, etc.

Institutions offering FOUNDATION LEARNING include the following: mainstream schools and academies, special schools, short stay schools, Training Providers, Alternative Providers, Youth Offending Teams, Charities and Sandwell College.

### **2. What qualifications could I get?**

There are currently over 1000 Qualification Credit Framework qualifications on the Foundation Learning Qualifications Catalogue. Additional subjects are still being prepared.

There is a wide range of qualifications being used by Sandwell providers. They include:

- Functional Skills in ICT, Maths and English
- Vocational qualifications in Retail, Construction, Business Admin, Childcare, etc
- Award in Parenting
- C&G Certificate in Personal and Social Development
- Asdan Award in Award of Personal Effectiveness (AOPE)
- Personal Progress units at Entry Level 1 which help support Supported Employment and Independent Living
- Combined qualifications (these cover Personal Social Development and Vocational Learning) such as NOCN Step Up and Edexcel Workskills – these are all designed to develop employability skills.

These are all nationally accredited qualifications, recognised by employers and enabling learners to progress.

***“Employability and Progression”***

Qualifications come in three sizes based on the number of credits completed.

An Award is up to 12 Credits, Certificate up to 36 Credits and a Diploma (37 + Credits).

Most learners will achieve smaller qualifications (an Award) and then build them up to Certificate and Diploma size.

**3. How long do Foundation learning programmes last? How quickly could I progress onto other courses/an Apprenticeship? How is Foundation Learning valued by education and training providers?**

This depends on the size of the qualification and why it is being studied. Typically a FOUNDATION LEARNING course can last 26 weeks, 1 year or even 2 years. Alternatively qualifications can be completed very quickly enabling future progression.

The Pilots suggest that the most common destination for FOUNDATION LEARNING Learners is Apprenticeships, followed by jobs and/or College courses.

In Sandwell all our Training Providers, Sandwell College, our two Special Schools, Short Stay Schools and 4 Schools/Academies are offering FOUNDATION LEARNING programmes in 2010-11. Other schools/academies are now beginning to prepare FOUNDATION LEARNING offers.

Foundation Learning offers a significant number of our learners the opportunity to study personalised programmes, achieve nationally recognised accreditation and progression opportunities. It is for this reason that the LA recognises FOUNDATION LEARNING as a priority for raising achievement and participation in learning within the Borough.

**4. If I don't quite meet the entry criteria for the course(s) I want to take/an Apprenticeship is Foundation Learning my only option? Can I retake GCSEs?**

FOUNDATION LEARNING is not the only option. Some schools offer a limited GCSE with BTEC re-sit offer.

Most providers view FOUNDATION LEARNING as the best opportunity for securing the desired progression and outcomes. Learners should discuss their options with their Connexions PA who will be able to advise on the alternatives available.

**5. What is the difference between Foundation Learning and a Foundation Diploma?**

All qualifications in the QCF come in three sizes, as listed above – Award, Certificate and Diploma. A QCF Diploma is, therefore, just an extended qualification.

The Foundation Diploma is part of the new Diploma suite offering extended applied learning opportunities in area of study. The Foundation Diploma is currently unavailable in Sandwell.

**6. Is Foundation Learning valued by employers?**

What kind of work will Foundation Learning prepare me for?

Foundation Learning **is** valued by employers who were themselves instrumental in the development of these qualifications through their work with the 15 Sector Skills Councils.

Many employers offer QCF qualifications themselves or pay for their learners to undertake FOUNDATION LEARNING qualifications.

Foundation Learning will enable learners to develop a range of transferrable skills needed to participate in our changing economy.

**7. What are functional skills? How are they covered in Foundation Learning?**

Functional Skills are essential applied skills in Maths, English and ICT.

Learners will develop and master a range of skills which are then applied in a range of contexts. The development of these skills will provide learners with valuable qualifications and enhance their learning throughout their studies.

The development of these skills, which are supported by employers, will enable learners to participate more effectively as employees and citizens.

Functional Skills are available at Entry Level, Level 1 and Level 2

Functional Skills at entry level are assessed internally; Level 1 and Level 2 assessments are by externally marked test.

Functional skills play an essential part in FOUNDATION LEARNING, Diplomas, and Apprenticeships. Functional Skills are now built into the revised GCSE specifications for Maths, English and ICT.

**8. How can Foundation Learning help me prepare for independent living or supported employment?**

Foundation Learning, particularly at Entry Level 1 and Entry Level 2 are designed to support learners work towards independent living or supported employment,

The Personal Progress units are designed to develop independence and the necessary skills including Personal Development, Functional Skills, Independent Living Skills and Vocational/Work Skills.

**9. What funding/support will I receive on Foundation Learning?**

Currently EMA is available for FOUNDATION LEARNING courses – this is means tested.

Schools, Colleges and Training providers may have access to other support which your son or daughter may be able to access.

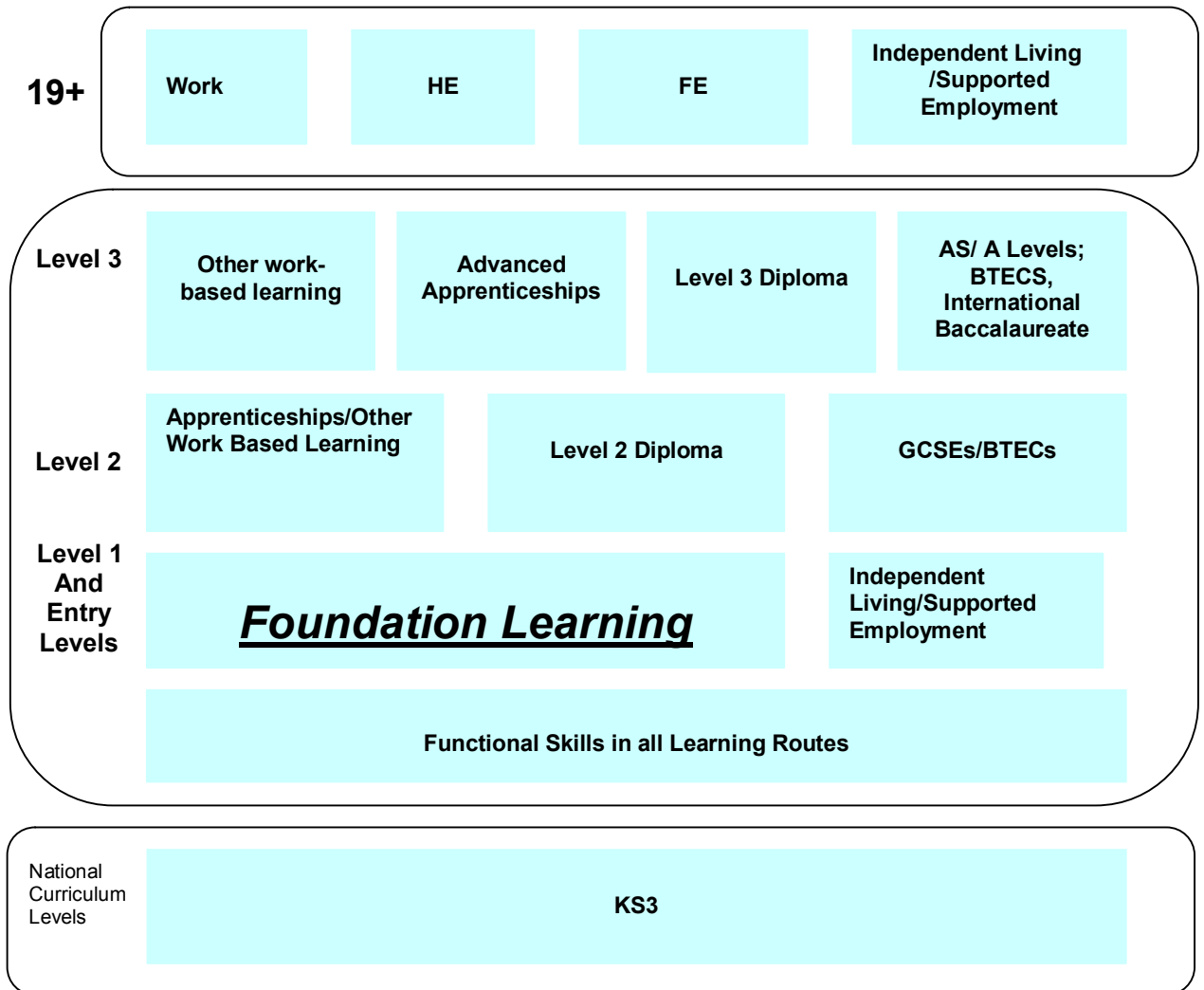
**10. How can I find out more about opportunities to study Foundation Learning in my local area? How do I enrol?**

Connexions PAs will be able to advise your son or daughter of the opportunities available alternatively please contact [ian\\_crawford1@sandwell.gov.uk](mailto:ian_crawford1@sandwell.gov.uk)

**11. How can I find out more about what young people taking Foundation Learning think of their courses?**

This is the first year for FOUNDATION LEARNING. We will be gathering a range of evidence based on learner views as the year progresses. We will share these views and use to model future improvements.

**Learner Choice – 14-19+ Progression Routes in Sandwell**



**There is flexibility between routes.**

**Connexions Sandwell will be able to advise you about Foundation Learning or you can talk to a member of staff in your school or centre.**

**Ian Crawford is responsible for coordinating Foundation Learning for Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council. You can contact him on [ian\\_crawford1@sandwell.gov.uk](mailto:ian_crawford1@sandwell.gov.uk) or 0121 569 2327**