**Action Planning and Target Setting**

An important aspect of your role is to help your learners to identify a set of goals and to work with them to develop an action plan which will help them achieve their goals. These goals can cover a range of issues but the majority of them should be around the Learner Engagement Plan in section 5 which supports the learner journey into higher education.

Remember your role is to guide, support and facilitate, not to decide what their goals should be. It is essential that learners feel they have ownership of their goals. Without this they will not have full commitment to any action plan that is put together and are unlikely to meet their targets. At every stage, make sure that you acknowledge their achievements, praise and validate their efforts. Look for small gains which can build to major achievements.

**SMART Targets**

**Download the SMART targets templates from the online Learner Engagement Plan!**

Try to use the SMART criteria for all targets you set with your learners. In the example below a Learner has shown some interest in Midwifery as a possible option for Higher Education study and future career.

In this case, a possible SMART target could be:

***“To explore the application process for a BSc. (Hons) course in Midwifery I will attend an Open Day at Birmingham City University during this term”***

* **SPECIFIC** - All targets should be clear and specific. For example: A goal which states *“attend Open days”* would be too vague and unspecific – *Are there any open days specifically for Midwifery that can be attended this term?* It would be useful to look at Birmingham City University website/prospectus and find out when their open days are for the midwifery courses
* **MEASURABLE -** It feels good to have something in front of you indicating a job well done! The target should be measurable and able to show completion – *what evidence can be used to show that the goal was achieved?*
* **ACHIEVABLE -** Make sure that when a target is set, the learner has everything that they need to complete it and it is achievable! *Do they know where to find the information about Open Days at Birmingham City University?*
* **REALISTIC -** It’s okay to stretch and challenge your learner but their targets should be realistic and within reach of the learners – *Is the learner able to actually attend the Open Day/s?* Unrealistic targets can lead to loss of confidence in learners and can be detrimental to the mentoring relationship
* **TIMELY -** A goal must have a target date – we all know what it’s like to have the “someday” dream goal – we never get round to doing them. Deadlines help focus on the target. Make sure that the deadlines are not too short, and not too long! In this case the timeframe is to attend the Open Day by the end of the term.

**Tips:**  If the overall target is huge then you should help them to break it down into SMART milestones. Also make sure that the target is owned by the learner – they should read “I will…” **NOT** ”you will...”.