

Learning to improve the lives and aspirations of young people in Scotland

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on the provision in Scotland's colleges
for young people requiring more choices and more chances

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1 | Foreword

Over the last ten years, colleges in Scotland have significantly increased their focus on reaching out to young people who have become, or show signs of becoming, disengaged from learning. These young people were previously described as not in education, employment or training (NEET) and more recently have been identified as those requiring more choices and more chances. These young people are the focus of More Choices, More Chances (MCMC), the national strategy aimed at improving outcomes for 16-19 year olds who are at risk of failing to progress to further learning, training or work after they have left school. Supporting young people into positive and sustained destinations is an entitlement of the senior phase of *Curriculum for Excellence* and is outlined in *Building the Curriculum 3*.

Colleges have incrementally adjusted and improved their approaches and provision to attract young people back into learning to improve their lives and work choices. As a result, the needs of these learners feature highly in college ethos, strategies and arrangements with partner organisations, to provide local solutions for individual young people. Colleges review annually and adapt their strategies, and realign their provision, resources and approaches to engage this group. This cycle of ongoing improvement draws on the knowledge and experience of college staff working with these young people, and feedback from learners and key partners.

The needs of young people requiring more choices and chances are diverse and often complicated. Almost all have had experiences or circumstances which have affected their ability or desire to take part in learning. To address this, the college sector has developed strategies and approaches which recognise and accommodate the range of individual needs and do not reinforce any negative views of learning.

A strong sectoral focus on providing a more inclusive learning environment and experience for all learners has resulted in colleges developing learning and teaching approaches that are well-aligned to the needs of learners who are vulnerable to disengagement. This was highlighted in the HM Inspectorate of Education (HMIE) report *Overcoming Barriers; Enabling Learners (2006)*¹ which examined the types of approaches which were successful in re-engaging learners who had previously negative experiences of learning or were under-confident about re-entering learning. The report cited the quality of relationships between learners and staff and programme design being informed by, and matched to, learner needs, as crucial to successful engagement and achievement of these learners. This was further expanded on in the HMIE publications, *Evaluating Inclusiveness: A Guide for Scotland's Colleges (2006)*² and *Preparing Learners for Learning in Scotland's Colleges (2007)*³ which provided toolkits to assist colleges in recognising the types of issues which hinder successful learning and the steps they could take to address them.

¹ [Overcoming Barriers: Enabling Learners](#)

² [Evaluating Inclusiveness: A Guide for Scotland's Colleges](#)

³ [Preparing Learners for Learning in Scotland's Colleges](#)

The increased focus on school-college partnerships and the HMIE reports *Preparing for Work (2007)*⁴ and *Expanding Opportunities (2008)*⁵ reinforced the need to identify a range of solutions to make other and complementary learning more widely available to secondary school pupils to reduce the risk of disengagement.

In each of these reports, and within external review processes, HMIE has focused attention and reported on how well colleges and their Boards of Management plan and apply strategies to meet the needs of young people who require bespoke interventions to re-engage positively in learning. National Continuing Professional Development (CPD) activities delivered by agencies including Beattie Resources for Inclusiveness in Technologies and Education (BRITE)⁶ and Scotland's Colleges, formerly Scottish Further Education Unit (SFEU)⁷ have helped to build capacity across the college sector by providing ongoing opportunities for college staff to develop and extend their skills in working with this group of young people. As a result of these incremental approaches, practice which was deemed by HMIE as effective and worthy of dissemination three years ago, is now accepted and expected practice across colleges. This is significant progress.

Within colleges, programme teams have a central role in creating and delivering programmes to meet the needs of learners who find it difficult to engage. These teams consist of staff from different subject and support areas who work together to plan the content, sequencing of activities and delivery of their programmes.

Programme team members draw on their collective knowledge, skills and creativity to incorporate and link learning activities across the range of vocational and core skill areas. They focus on providing opportunities for learners to develop, practise and apply these skills within different contexts to achieve programme outcomes. This results in staff designing and merging learning activities across subject areas to provide a more holistic and motivating experience for learners.

During the fieldwork for this report, learners on both discrete and mainstream programmes spoke movingly to inspectors about the impact their learning at college had had on their lives, relationships and aspirations. Most described themselves as being 'lost' and feeling they had no future before they came to college and some cited examples of spending their days drinking alcohol and, or taking drugs to block out thinking about their individual circumstances and prospects.

Most learners who find it difficult to engage have difficult personal or home lives, often related to financial, care or health issues, which limited their ability to participate regularly or positively in learning at school. Many said they had fallen too far behind in classes to be able to catch up and, as a result, gave up trying. Some had enjoyed their school experience, however, most described feeling 'miserable' at school because they 'couldn't do things'. They spoke openly of why they avoided going to school and how their behaviour often contributed to making their situation worse. In almost all cases, these factors and experiences made learners reluctant to continue in learning prior to, and when they reached, school leaving age.

⁴ [Preparing for Work](#)

⁵ [Expanding Opportunities](#)

⁶ [BRITE](#)

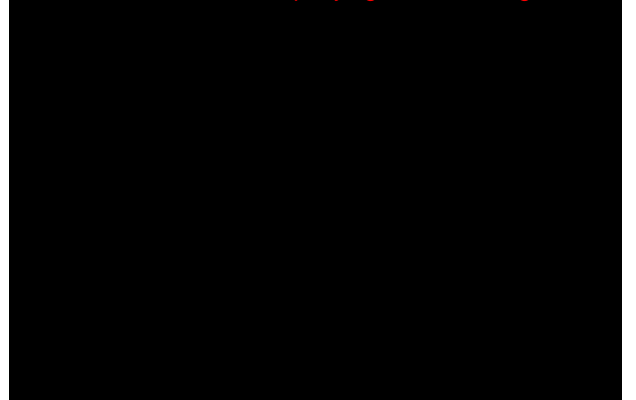
⁷ [Scotland's Colleges](#)

Across the sample of 13 colleges involved in this aspect report, all of the learners who were consulted spoke warmly of their relationships with staff in colleges and described their programmes as interesting, relevant and enjoyable. Almost all had changed their attitude to learning as a result of their college experience and were keen to continue in learning to improve or broaden their employment options. They described being happier and more confident and how this had improved their relationships with others. However, many felt they would have benefited from receiving earlier, more comprehensive information about college options whilst still at school and would have started their programme sooner if this information had been more easily available to them.

Working with this group of learners effectively is very resource intensive. They need skilled educators to work with them and generally require far more individualised support than other more confident and independent learners. They do not respond well in larger group sizes and need consistent positive interaction and relationships with staff and their peers to sustain them in learning. As a result, in comparison to other learners, they carry higher risk in terms of retention and success; require smaller groups; high quality teachers; additional support; and more time to achieve positive outcomes. This results in provision for these young people being expensive and generating significantly lower efficiency rating in terms of the number of Student Unit Measurements (SUMS) delivered by staff.

This report provides a positive picture of how colleges have responded to the needs of these young people in their local area. It illustrates the types of ethos, commitment and planning which, over the last three to five years, have contributed to providing highly responsive programmes and services. However, there is still progress to be made in areas including, improved communication between colleges and schools, arrangements for development and delivery of core skills in mainstream college programmes and more involvement of partners in evaluation and planning processes.

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At local, and in some cases national level, there is insufficient communication and understanding of what colleges offer these young people. In Skills for Scotland: A Lifelong Skills Strategy (Scottish Government 2007)⁸ there is a strong emphasis on supporting the individual and providing cohesive structures to deliver learning. The strategy states that learning and training providers need to *'consider themselves as part of one system geared towards helping people develop the skills they need, where articulation, integration and working with other providers are the norm.'* These principles and themes are mirrored in *Curriculum for Excellence*. In these economically challenging times, this has never been more necessary.

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In conclusion, the progress these young people make at college and their subsequent successful progression to a positive destination is highly important to their future personal and economic wellbeing. Many of these learners entered college feeling they had been written off by others, including their families and schools. They brought with them the baggage of failure and low self esteem which manifest themselves in very low or no aspirations and a reluctance to put themselves in situations where they may be measured and assessed. In almost all cases, they stayed, overcame their barriers, and moved on as adults to take responsibility and make informed decisions about their future. For most, their experience at college has been life changing, and for more than a few it is probably life saving. As educators, we need to learn from each other, build on what works well and make full use of the resources, services and expertise available in local areas to reach continuously out to and re-engage the young people in Scotland who are not engaged in education, employment or training.

Bill Maxwell
HM Senior Chief Inspector

⁸ [Skills for Scotland: A Lifelong Skills Strategy](#)

2 | Introduction

During 2007 and 2008, the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) allocated a total of £6 million in additional funding to Scotland's colleges in order to address further the needs of those learners identified as requiring more choices and chances. The Council provided £3 million of this additional funding, in 2007, to 15 colleges, identified as serving MCMC hotspots. In 2008, a further £3 million was made available to all colleges, through strategic investment funds, to address three key priorities, one of which was MCMC. SFC also made additional investment in six colleges for strategic growth in order to address low participation in their catchment areas. As well as specifically meeting the needs of these learners within their local communities, colleges were expected to align these efforts with 16+ Learning Choices – the Scottish Government's post-16 transition planning model⁹ - to maximise their contribution to the government's National Performance Indicator on positive and sustained destinations.

HMIE was commissioned by the SFC to evaluate and report on how well colleges utilised these monies and developed provision to meet the needs of these young people. Fieldwork was carried out in a broad sample of 13 colleges. This report represents the findings of inspectors and draws on the findings of other evaluative activities, including external reviews of colleges outwith the sample colleges. Fieldwork was carried out in the following colleges.

Ayr College
Clydebank College
Coatbridge College
Cumbernauld College
Dumfries and Galloway College
Dundee College
Forth Valley College
John Wheatley College
Kilmarnock College
Motherwell College
South Lanarkshire College
North Highland College
James Watt College

The range of provision and services delivered by colleges to meet the needs of these learners is diverse and complex. To distinguish between the different types of provision, the report uses the following terminologies. These are:

Discrete programmes

Programmes providing bespoke provision for young people who face barriers to learning. These programmes may be full-time or part-time and are centred on the aim of re-engaging learners and preparing them for re-integration to school programmes, or progression to further learning or employment.

Mainstream college programmes

Full-time mainstream college programmes which are not targeted specifically at these learners.

Examples of effective practice were identified during the fieldwork and are included in Appendix 2 of this report. The examples include practice which is innovative or illustrative of similar types of effective practice applied by a number of colleges.

Case studies produced by learners and college staff are included in Appendix 3 at the end of this report. The case studies have been adapted to protect the rights of individuals and meet data protection legislation and the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002.

The findings in this report are clustered under the following themes:

- **Planning of provision and services**
- **Planning the learning experience**
- **Delivering the learning experience**
- **Learner engagement**
- **Learner progress and achievement**
- **Evaluation and quality improvement**

⁹ <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/308354/0097118.pdf>

3 | Summary of key findings

Planning of provision and services

- All colleges demonstrate a strong and consistent commitment to meeting needs of young people requiring more choices and more chances as well as clear knowledge and understanding of the learning and support needs of learners.
- Colleges take very good account of national strategies when planning programmes and provision.
- Colleges make effective use of a range of funding sources to plan and deliver provision.
- The majority of colleges have good and productive relationships with their MCMC Partnerships.
- All colleges have effective processes in place to ensure staff have access to appropriate CPD to support them in their work with young people who are at risk of moving into a negative destination.
- Localised solutions and approaches are particularly successful in reducing barriers for learners and encouraging and enabling them to access learning within their own communities.
- Almost all senior staff and the majority of college managers are aware of the implementation and implications of 16+ Learning Choices.

However,

- In most colleges, the level of requests for places, particularly on discrete programmes, outweighs the college's ability to meet demand.
- Colleges working across more than one local authority partnership area frequently find it difficult to respond to different priorities and needs.
- In more than a few areas, MCMC partners are not sufficiently aware of the range of demands on the college sector and how these demands can constrain a college's ability to respond to requests.
- Many learners do not receive appropriate levels of information about college provision prior to leaving school.
- Overall, college teaching staff are not sufficiently aware of 16+ Learning Choices and colleges are not clear about how information on college options will be gathered, updated and provided to young people and by whom.

Planning the learning experience

- In almost all cases, programme teams involved in working with this group of learners are highly committed, enthusiastic and skilful in working with this group of young people.
- Prior to entry, college staff provide learners with very good levels of information about the content and structure of programmes and the range of college services available to them.
- College staff make good use of information from schools to plan support and interventions around individualised needs.
- All colleges have effective processes in place for ascertaining the literacy and numeracy skill levels of learners at the start of programmes and make good arrangements for learners to apply, develop and improve these skills within their programmes.
- Across the colleges, well-structured programme design enables learners to develop the skills they will need in life, in the work place and in further learning which prepares them well for progression.
- Programme teams draw creatively and productively on the collective skills of staff to plan and sequence activities to enable learners to apply theory and skills to practical situations.
- Learners with additional barriers to learning have good access to highly trained staff who have expertise and experience in identifying strategies and approaches to help overcome them.
- Programme teams build in regular meetings with learners to discuss their individual learning targets, encourage them to reflect on their progress and help them set further goals.

However,

- Almost all colleges do not receive a sufficient level of information from schools about individual pupils who have a history of non-attendance or behavioural issues. This reduces the ability of colleges to plan effectively for receiving and supporting these individual learners in the early stages of their transition to college programmes.
- Overall, arrangements for applying for student support funds are cumbersome and problematic for this group of learners, and in a few cases college staff are not sufficiently proactive in establishing ways to assist them in application processes.
- In more than a few mainstream college programmes, lack of collaboration and planning between vocational staff and staff delivering communication, numeracy and information and communications technology (ICT) components of programmes results in these core skills being not sufficiently contextualised to meet the needs of this learner group.

Delivering the learning experience

- Across all colleges, staff have established very positive and productive relationships with their learners.
- Staff make very good use of introductory activities, ice-breakers and team tasks at the start of programmes to establish positive relationships and set the tone for further learning.
- Staff set realistic and appropriate standards and expectations for learners.
- Staff delivering discrete programmes use creative and innovative learning and teaching approaches to engage and motivate learners and meet the full spectrum of learner needs.
- Staff involve learners effectively in discussing their preferred ways of learning different types of skills and use this constructively to help learners overcome preconceived barriers to learning, and take responsibility for their own learning.
- Staff are vigilant about how learners are responding to learning activities and customise content and modify their learning and teaching approaches to reinvigorate learner interest.
- In all programmes, staff take effective action to assist individual learners with additional support needs and take care to engage them fully within class activities.
- Staff involve learners regularly in planning their own learning and encourage them to contribute to the format of tasks and activities.
- Across all discrete and most mainstream college programmes, staff consistently promote the development of core skills within learning activities.
- Across the colleges, staff regularly and consistently celebrate the achievement of their learners.

However,

- In more than a few mainstream college programmes, communication, numeracy and ICT components were not sufficiently contextualised and, or linked to the overall theme of the programme. This reduced learner motivation and engagement in developing these skills and detracted from the quality of the overall learning experience.

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Learner engagement

- Learners enjoy and value their relationships with staff. They feel they are liked and well treated, and reciprocate by working productively in class activities.
 - Learners enjoy being at college and improve and adapt their attitudes and behaviours to fit into their new environment, and develop positive relationships with staff and peers.
 - Almost all learners participate enthusiastically in their learning and support each other very well.
 - Within class activities, learners contribute well to shaping their own learning and engage constructively with staff in determining ways to carry out tasks and projects.
 - Learners regularly review and assess their progress with each other, in teams and individually, and make good use of these activities to plan further learning.
- Almost all learners make good use of their involvement in work-based and college activities to develop and extend their skills for life and work.
 - Learners draw on their involvement in planning and carrying out project and class tasks to develop their interpersonal and teamworking skills.
 - Many learners make good use of their involvement and participation in college-wide and community events to increase their awareness of social and community issues and develop their citizenship skills.

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Learner progress and achievement

- Learners progress well from their prior learning.
 - Overall across provision for this group, most or almost all learners attend regularly, progress well in their learning and achieve positive outcomes.
 - Almost all who complete their programme, (overall, around 75% and higher in some programmes) progress successfully to work or further learning.
 - There are many good examples of learners entering programmes with few or no qualifications and progressing through vocational programmes to advanced study and professional employment.
 - Almost all learners gain qualifications which enhance directly their future learning and employment prospects.
 - Most learners who leave programmes early return to learning when their circumstances improve.
 - In all programmes, learners improve their core skill levels.
 - Almost all learners achieve appropriate levels of personal and learning skills to enable them to enter employment or undertake other types of learning.
 - Almost all learners achieve skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work.
- Across all programmes, learners improve their interpersonal and teamworking skills, and gain sufficient levels of confidence to progress to work or further learning.
 - In almost all programmes, learners achieve useful citizenship skills.

However,

- There are no robust systems in place to capture and chart the progress of individual learners at area or national level. This results in missed opportunities for different providers of learning, particularly within local areas, to be able to monitor the longer-term performance and achievements of learners.

Evaluation and quality improvement

- Colleges effectively apply their well-established evaluation and quality enhancement processes to review and adapt their provision to meet individual learners' needs.
- In all programmes, the criteria used by colleges to define 'successful programme outcomes' are realistic and well founded on the needs and profiles of this group of learners.
- Programme teams take good account of learner retention, attainment and success rates to identify areas for improvement or enhancement and take action to address them.
- Staff review provision systematically, analyse performance and take action to improve and enhance their programmes.
- College staff involve learners regularly in evaluating the quality of their learning experience and draw on this to inform improvements.
- Staff regularly share good practice and build on successful approaches and interventions.
- There are some good examples of colleges participating in joint CPD events with their local external partners, including schools, local authorities and community organisations to develop and share effective approaches.
- Some colleges are successful in involving staff from local secondary schools in their evaluation and enhancement processes.

However,

- In more than a few mainstream college programmes, vocational staff in programme teams do not take sufficient responsibility for the core skills components of their programmes which are delivered by staff from other subject areas.
- Overall programme teams responsible for mainstream college programmes do not take sufficient account of the performance of learners within wider class groups to determine the impact of their previous learning or identify issues which may be hindering successful completion.
- Most colleges do not share the outcomes of their evaluations with their MCMC partnerships. This results in missed opportunities for discussing and promoting the types of activities and provision to key partners.
- In too many cases, there is insufficient partnership working between colleges and schools to prepare and plan learning experiences which meet the needs of young people, and deliver their *Curriculum for Excellence* entitlements.

Planning of provision and services

All colleges demonstrate a strong and consistent commitment to meeting the needs of young people requiring more choices and chances. This commitment is conveyed effectively by Boards of Management, principals and senior managers to staff at all levels and is reflected in college plans at both strategic and operational levels. There are many good examples of colleges sharing and promoting their MCMC strategies with local external partners and working in partnership with these organisations to identify local solutions and plan joint approaches to meeting the needs of these learners. Some colleges work vigorously with their community planning and regeneration partnerships to devise interagency approaches which maximise resources and contribute to national outcome agreements. For example, John Wheatley College has established processes for empowering local community partners to work with the college and contribute to meeting the needs of these learners in the east end of Glasgow.

Colleges take very good account of national strategies when planning programmes and provision to meet learners' needs. They take particular account of Skills for Scotland: A lifelong skills strategy and the associated Essential Skills, and the principles, four capacities and themes of *Curriculum for Excellence*. A few colleges are proactively responding to the call to improve services for Looked After young people and care leavers and are targeting provision and resources to better meet their needs and circumstances. Dumfries and Galloway, Dundee, Coatbridge and John Wheatley colleges are making a strong contribution to addressing the needs of these learners.

'There is no one thing that works with this group of learners. It is lots of things which collectively make a very big difference. But in the main it comes down to three key things... positive relationships, mutual respect and very good programme design.'

College manager

Colleges demonstrate a clear knowledge and understanding of the learning and support needs of these young people and draw on this when planning provision and services. They take good account of the diverse needs and circumstances of young people in their area and social and geographical factors which could militate against successfully attracting and re-engaging them in learning. As a result, they apply a wide range of well-considered, local solutions to meet the needs of this group of learners. They recognise that 'one size does not fit all' and take care to plan different types of strategies and provision to target and engage learners in programmes which fit their individual needs and aspirations. These localised solutions and approaches are particularly successful in reducing barriers for learners and encouraging and enabling them to access learning within their own communities. For example, Ayr College delivers bespoke provision in its Cumnock campus to ease access for young people from remote areas and Forth Valley College works in partnership with school staff to jointly deliver a college-based programme for pupils in S4¹⁰.

¹⁰ Effective practice: Forth Valley College – Working in partnership to engage young people. Appendix 2 Page 39

In each of the colleges, good account of the starting levels of learners and effective planning of provision ensures programmes provide appropriate pathways to further learning. As a result, learners are able to access learning at levels appropriate to their needs and progress accordingly as their skills and confidence increase and their personal circumstances allow. This enables and extends the opportunities for learners to progress to more advanced levels of learning or undertake further learning at a similar level, depending on their progress and vocational interests and aspirations. This includes learners being able to progress from a discrete programme to an introductory vocational programme at the same Scottish Credit Qualification Framework (SCQF) level.

In most colleges, the level of requests for places, particularly on discrete programmes, outweighs the college's ability to meet demand. This is due, in the main, to colleges operating at full capacity and is exacerbated where colleges respond to meeting the demands and expectations of more than one local authority. For example, some colleges work with three or more authorities. In addition, the expectations of MCMC partnerships that colleges provide a positive destination for most of their young people does not take sufficient account of capacity and other demands on the sector, such as meeting the re-training needs of unemployed adults. This presents difficulties for colleges in being able to accommodate and respond effectively to different and conflicting priorities.

Working with this group of learners is very resource intensive. In comparison to the general population of young people in college, they carry higher risk in terms of retention and success. They require smaller group sizes, higher levels of support and more time to achieve positive outcomes.

This results in provision for this group being more expensive than for others and generating lower efficiency ratings in terms of number of SUMS delivered by staff. Colleges take very good account of these needs and use effective planning processes to make the most of the resources available to them to accommodate the needs of these learners. However, the higher levels of risk and the level of resources required to work effectively with this group are generally not well understood by external partners. This inhibits successful partnership working and reduces the capacity of colleges to forward plan. For example, vocational learning environments such as construction workshops, hairdressing and beauty salons and professional kitchens have limitations on the number of learners that can be accommodated at any one time. Many of these learners require more time than other learners to achieve and attain, which constrains access for others.

Colleges make effective use of a range of funding sources to plan and deliver provision. This includes SFC core funding, SFC MCMC funding and monies from the European Social Fund (ESF). In the main, MCMC funding is used to deliver discrete part-time or full-time programmes designed around the specific needs of this group of learners, increase capacity and enhance or adjust existing mainstream college programmes to provide better support and skill development. However, the uncertainty of future ESF and other types of funding is a matter of concern to the many colleges who are in receipt of these monies. This is constraining their ability to plan ahead to maintain their existing levels of provision and, or the levels of support required to meet the needs of these learners. In addition, in some local authority areas, colleges which have utilised literacy partnership monies to support and enhance aspects of their provision are concerned about their ability to sustain activities without these monies.

Almost all senior staff and the majority of college managers are aware of the implementation of 16+ Learning Choices and the implications for their college. However, in most cases there is a lack of awareness as to how it will operate and impact on the college. Overall, college teaching staff are not sufficiently aware of 16+ Learning Choices and colleges are not clear about how information on college options will be gathered, updated and provided to young people and by whom. The Activity Agreement is one of several post-school options now available to young people as within the senior phase of

Curriculum for Excellence. Activity Agreements are currently being piloted across ten local authority areas in Scotland and there are some good examples of colleges working with their partners to promote Activity Agreements in their local area.¹¹ For example, Cumbernauld and Motherwell colleges are collaborating with North Lanarkshire Council to establish local Learning Hubs to attract and engage young people in their communities.

All colleges have effective processes in place to ensure staff have access to appropriate CPD to support them in their work with this group of learners. These are well-linked to college evaluation and quality enhancement procedures and career development processes. Scotland's Colleges CPD programmes have been very effective in building sectoral awareness and capacity of staff in working with these young people.

¹¹ Effective practice: South Lanarkshire College – Working with MCMC partners to facilitate Activity Agreements. Appendix 2 Page 39

¹² Effective practice: Ayr College- Explaining College provision to parents. Appendix 2 Page 40

'The key to the success of our MCMC Partnership was that we all learned together about what each of our sectors and organisations could do to help the young people. We all now have a better understanding of the types of services available locally and use this well to create wider, complementary support and provision.'

College manager

Colleges are proactive and effective in promoting and explaining their provision to potential learners. College information centres, open days and community events provide a one-door approach for learners to access information and advice on programmes, funding, accommodation, childcare and additional internal and external support services. There are more than a few good examples of college staff working with local schools to help inform young people and school staff of the of the options available, content of programmes and progression opportunities. A few colleges host useful events to inform parents about the opportunities for young people. These events are well received and help parents to support young people in their transition. A few colleges have created handbooks for parents which provide good information and advice about support arrangements. Ayr College has produced a comprehensive *Handbook for Parents*¹² and Dundee College regularly hosts events for potential learners and their parents to meet staff and find out more about programmes before they start. All these approaches help prepare learners for transition to college programmes. However, in too many cases colleges are not being successful in engaging school staff and other key influencers of young people, including Skills Development Scotland (SDS), in developing and updating their knowledge of the range and types of college programmes available to learners.

Many learners do not receive appropriate levels of information about college provision prior to leaving school. This is particularly apparent in the cases of young people who were disengaged from learning for a significant period of their secondary education prior to coming to college. In the recent SFC funded MCMC Young People and Colleges: Peer Research Project¹³, 82% of learners said that ‘young people should be told more about college when they are at school.’ In conversations with young people, many reported the information they were given did not fully describe the differences between college life and their previous school experience. School pupils who had attended college link programmes in S3 and S4 were better informed about the options available to them.

The majority of colleges have good and productive relationships within MCMC partnerships. There are very good examples of some colleges working effectively with their partners in planning and coordinating interventions to meet the needs of young people in their area. For example, South Lanarkshire College and Kilmarnock College have established open and positive relationships with their MCMC partners to resolve issues and plan joined-up approaches to re-engage learners. However, colleges working across more than one local authority partnership area frequently find it difficult to respond to different priorities and needs. In more than a few areas, local partners are not sufficiently aware of the range of demands on the college sector and how these demands can constrain the college’s ability to respond to requests. This reduces the effectiveness of MCMC partnerships in planning for, and meeting the needs of, disengaged young people within local areas and in the worst cases results in partners being organisation or institution-led, rather than learner-led.

‘Being able to speak to college staff when they came to the school really helped. We were able to ask them different things about the college and what kind of things we would do. It helped us make the decision to come as we knew what to expect.’

Learner on discrete full-time programme

There are many examples of colleges working very productively with other community agencies and the voluntary sector, including the Prince’s Trust¹⁴ and Inspire Scotland, to plan appropriate and meaningful locally-based provision. Most colleges have established close and effective relationships with these organisations to maximise opportunities for young people in their area. These relationships are founded on a shared understanding and commitment to improving the life and work prospects of young people who are at risk of becoming, or have become, disaffected and disengaged from learning. In these cases, partnership arrangements transcend organisational barriers, make good use of the range of locally available resources and services, and provide learners with valuable support and learning experiences which prepare them well for progression to employment or further learning. For example, Clydebank College works closely and productively with the Tulloch Trust¹⁵ to provide early, joint-interventions to address the needs of secondary school pupils indicating risk of disengagement and Ayr College works well in partnership with yipworld.com¹⁶ to ease transition for learners to college programmes¹⁷.

¹³ SFC MCMC Young People and Colleges: Peer Research Project - [Link](#)

¹⁴ [Prince's Trust](#) ¹⁵ [Tullochan Trust](#) ¹⁶ [yipworld.com](#)

¹⁷ Effective practice: Ayr College and yipworld.com – Working together to plan and deliver provision. Appendix 2 Page 40

In all colleges, staff plan and provide effective discrete programmes to meet the needs of young people who have become disengaged from learning. These include programmes in association with local authorities such as Glasgow City Council's Enhanced Vocational Inclusion Programme (EVIP).¹⁸ In each college, there are very good examples of discrete full-time programmes being carefully planned to motivate and reinvigorate learners to participate in learning. These programmes are well matched to learner needs and provide very good opportunities for them to develop their essential skills and experience different vocational areas before making choices about their future goals. In Clydebank College, the *Switchover* programme enables local school leavers to take part in a wide range of activities to increase their skill levels and further their interests and aspirations.

There are many good examples of colleges being proactive in planning and delivering early interventions to prevent young people in their early teens from becoming disengaged from learning. This includes providing short, part-time bespoke provision for school pupils from S3 upwards who are exhibiting attendance and behavioural issues. For example, Kilmarnock College's *Leadership Academy* provides intensive alternative provision specifically designed to re-integrate learners back into their school learning environment¹⁹. John Wheatley College's Youth Access Provision provides opportunities for teenagers in the area to participate in informal learning activities in the evenings and weekends to stimulate and encourage interest in continuing learning.

Most colleges have considerable numbers of young people under the statutory school leaving age attending college full-time as an alternative to school. Across Scotland, during academic session 2008-2009, 2,810²⁰ of the young people in this category attended college on a full-time basis. In most cases, these learners attend discrete programmes. However, some have timetables tailored to their individual needs and choose to undertake different types of classes from the options available to them, including Highers or vocational units.

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¹⁸ Effective practice: John Wheatley College and Enhanced Vocational Inclusion Programme. Appendix 2 Page 40

¹⁹ Effective practice: Kilmarnock College- Working with partners to provide early, short interventions. Appendix 2 Page 41

²⁰ Figures provided by the Scottish Funding Council Links

Planning the learning experience

Prior to commencing programmes, college staff provide learners with very good levels of information about the course and the range of college services available to them. In some areas, there are examples of local youth workers providing young people with high quality advice and guidance about college programmes within their youth work activities. Some colleges have good liaison and referral arrangements with staff in local secondary schools to provide young people with first hand information about college options. In these cases, there are good examples of college staff responsible for working with these young people visiting schools to meet with pupils and explain fully the range and types of programmes and support available to them.

Young people who had been able to meet college staff in their school felt it had helped them in making the decision to come to college. For example, in Dundee College, Transition Workers are effective in linking up with different schools and liaising with learners and college tutors to plan, smooth and ease transition. In Motherwell College, Key Support Advisors work with learners prior to starting their programme to arrange and check they have the support they require. In most cases, colleges host informal welcome and information sessions for potential learners and these are valued and effective. Induction arrangements are generally appropriately paced and well matched to learner needs. As a result of these types of approaches applied by colleges, learners are well informed about the structure and content of their programme, expectations of staff and further opportunities available to them on completion. In all cases programmes met the expectations of learners.

‘Over the last few years, there has been a real cultural shift in the college. There is now much greater emphasis on staff being skilled educators, in comparison to being subject or vocational experts. This has significantly changed how we think and work together to improve the experience of our learners.’

College manager

‘We didn’t go to school very often and thought college would be like school. Writing all day in different classrooms. It’s not like that at all. We do lots of different things, which was big surprise.’

Group of learners on discrete part-time programme

College staff make good use of information from schools to plan support and interventions around individualised needs. There is generally good communication of information from schools to colleges about pupils with identified additional support needs. However, this is not always extended to learners who do not have a recognised additional barrier to learning. In cases where individual pupils have a history of non-attendance or behavioural issues, almost all colleges do not receive a sufficient level of information from schools to enable them to plan effectively in advance for their transition. Overall, there is a lack of communication between college and MCMC partners as to how information on individual pupils is used positively by colleges to prepare for, and support, learner transition. There appears to be a general misconception that furnishing colleges with this type of information will result in these pupils being denied a place on a college programme, when conversely, college provision is designed to accommodate and support the needs of these young people. This often militates against colleges being able to plan effectively for receiving and supporting these individual learners in the early stages of their transition to college programmes. However, in a few areas there are good examples of college, school and local authority staff working together to address this by devising and implementing joint protocols for improving the sharing of information.

Overall, arrangements for applying for student support funds are cumbersome and problematic for this group of learners. Many do not live with their parents and find it difficult to obtain documents needed to support their application for funding, such as a birth certificate or parent's P60.

In addition, the low levels of literacy skills amongst learners, and in some cases their parents, present further barriers. In the majority of colleges, staff recognise these issues and facilitate helpful workshops and one-to-one sessions to assist learners in making their applications. However, in a few cases, college staff responsible for administering student support funds are not sufficiently aware of the needs and circumstances of this group of learners and are not proactive enough in establishing ways to assist them in application processes.

All colleges have effective processes in place for ascertaining the literacy and numeracy skill levels of learners at the start of programmes. Almost all colleges make good use of ICT software and other profiling tools to gauge the levels of these skills, and use this process effectively to place learners on appropriate levels of programmes and units. Overall, around 80% of these learners entering college programmes indicate a very low level of literacy skills, generally equivalent to second level for literacy as defined in *Curriculum for Excellence*. Without intervention, these skill levels would impede the ability of individuals to participate fully in learning activities, and particularly in vocational areas where new taxonomy is an integral part of the learning process. Around 70%-80% indicate difficulties with numeracy. However, this is usually due to lack of confidence and not using numeracy skills for significant periods of time. Most learners quickly regain and develop their numeracy skills when they apply them within contextualised situations.

Programme teams plan effective approaches across curricular activities to help learners improve and develop these skills. Good partnership working and referral arrangements between teaching teams and specialist staff provide learners with good access to more intensive support, when required.

Across the colleges, processes for profiling communication and numeracy skill levels reveal significant numbers of learners with previously undetected additional barriers to learning. A few colleges identified over 30 learners a year with undiagnosed dyslexia or similar barriers to learning. In cases where these barriers are suspected or identified, colleges arrange for learners to undergo appropriate assessments, make adjustments to materials and resources and arrange appropriate additional support.

In all colleges, learners with additional barriers to learning have good access to highly trained staff who have expertise and experience in utilising assistive technologies, adapting resources and identifying strategies and approaches to help overcome them. These staff work alongside vocational and subject specialists to coordinate, customise and deliver support within class and workshop environments. Each of the colleges had invested significantly in centralised resources to ease access to learning for learners with disabilities. They had simultaneously developed the skills of teaching staff in employing these resources and applying approaches to meet the full spectrum of learner needs. In each of the colleges, staff who have undertaken BRITE (Beattie Resources for Inclusiveness in Technologies and Education) training contribute to the ongoing development and up skilling of staff within their colleges. Most staff continue to update and improve their skills through CPD programmes delivered by Scotland's Colleges, BRITE and other external training bodies.

Colleges take very good account of the needs of young people who face barriers to learning and take care to plan and position resources and support where they are most effective. Almost all such young people on college programmes have struggled with their learning at different times, and in various ways. Many have not engaged significantly or positively in learning for a long time, sometimes since S2 and in a few cases since primary school. As a consequence, young people embarking on a college programme are re-entering learning at different levels and stages of development.

Colleges, rightly, do not plan provision around an assumed generic profile of this group of learners, as their needs are too diverse and variable. Likewise, they do not expect each of these learners to be able to achieve comparable levels of skills within similar timescales. As a result, they take very good account of individual needs and plan appropriate differentiated learning and teaching approaches to accommodate the wide range of skills and variable confidence levels of learners.

Programme teams are skilled at recognising where significant needs exist and mobilising resources to enable learners to progress more quickly. There are many examples of colleges taking well-judged actions to provide their most disadvantaged groups of learners with the kinds of support they need to participate meaningfully in learning. These include delivering extra guidance and support sessions and providing additional support outwith normal class times.

Across the range of learners starting college programmes, it is the persistently low level of core and essential skills which is the greatest barrier to them gaining the skills, confidence, attributes and qualifications to progress successfully to work or other positive outcomes. In addition, these learners do not engage well in developing their communication, numeracy and ICT skills, where these subjects are delivered in isolation and are not related to the overall theme of their programmes. College managers are proactive in establishing college systems, which transcend subject boundaries, to enable learners to develop these skills more effectively. As a result, over the years, each college has adjusted its curriculum structures and redefined the roles of staff to provide better arrangements for delivering and developing core and essential skills for this group of learners. These arrangements include creating core and, or essential skill specialists who work with staff in subject and vocational areas to contextualise and incorporate these skills across the range of learning activities.

In some colleges, generic core skills staff contextualise and deliver the communication, numeracy and ICT components of programmes and sequence acquisition of these skills to complement vocational activities. In others, vocational specialists embed and deliver core skills within practical activities. In discrete programmes, staff teams are vigilant about finding opportunities to develop these skills and work well together to integrate and deliver them within class projects. In almost all cases, the solution-focused approaches applied by managers and staff have resulted in much improved arrangements for the delivery of core and essential skills. However, in more than a few mainstream college programmes, lack of collaboration and planning between vocational staff and staff delivering communication, numeracy and ICT components of programmes results in these core skills being not sufficiently contextualised to meet the needs of this learner group.

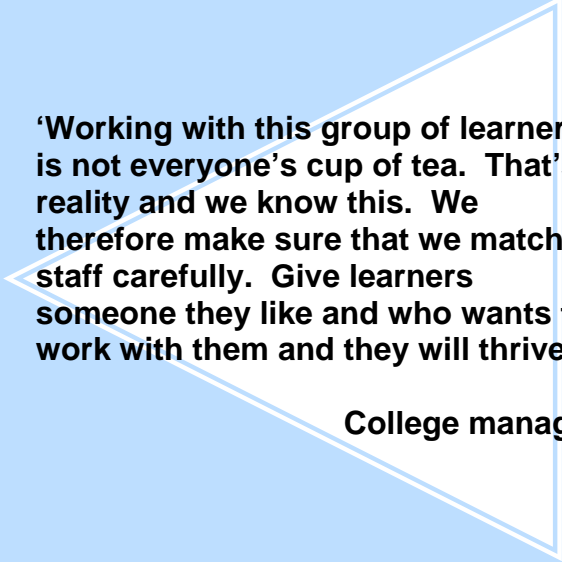
In many programmes, the diverse range of learner levels and needs necessitate additional ongoing support to be available within classroom and vocational environments. In all colleges, there are effective and appropriate arrangements to provide additional support within class activities where this is required. The titles and remits of staff delivering additional support to individual classes and programmes vary considerably across the colleges. However, in all cases they provide highly effective destigmatised support which is well-linked and contextualised to programme content. Whilst providing this type of additional support creates additional costs, these approaches are highly successful in enabling learners to engage in and maintain their learning and as a result progress more quickly. In addition, these roles have an ameliorating influence in classes where there are learners who display challenging behaviours. In Dumfries and Galloway College, Case Workers attached to specific programmes provide valuable ongoing guidance and support for learners.²¹ In James Watt College, Vocational Assistants provide useful and responsive contextualised additional support to help learners consolidate and apply theory to practical situations.

Colleges take very good care to ensure staff have the appropriate skills, attitudes and attributes to work with this group of learners. Almost all college staff are fully committed to their college's strategies for meeting the needs of all learners and have developed incrementally their knowledge and skills as their college and its curriculum have become more inclusive. Staff working directly with learners who find it difficult to engage tend to have elected or deliberately gravitated towards working with this group. In all cases, they enjoy working with these young people and find their jobs stimulating, challenging and rewarding. They have attributes which enable them to communicate skilfully and comfortably with young people. These attributes include understanding the current needs and world view of young people, empathy, ability to motivate, nurture and support, resilience and creativity.

²¹ Effective practice: Dumfries and Galloway College- - Supporting looked after and accommodated young people. Appendix 2 Page 41

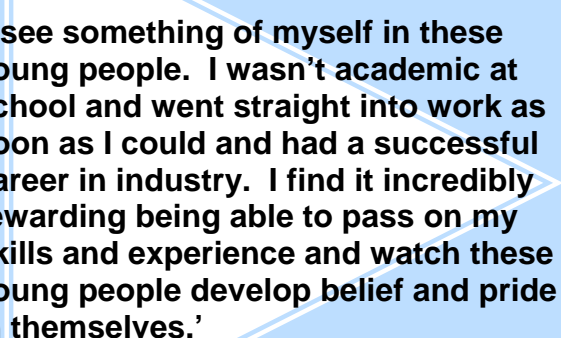
In all professional discussions, many staff cited their own experience of school and their decision to follow a vocational, rather than academic route, as being highly important in knowing and understanding the needs of these learners. All had gained success in industry and most had become involved initially in working in colleges to promote vocational opportunities to young people. They spoke of the personal satisfaction they had gained from their involvement with these learners, and how this had prompted them to change their career direction and take up teaching roles within colleges.

Many staff have gained valuable experience and skills from working with younger learners through school-college partnerships and this has contributed to colleges applying creative and well-considered approaches to meet the needs of school leavers. Well-established and well-targeted CPD arrangements, at college-wide and programme team levels, effectively support individual staff and their teams in developing and extending their skills to meet the needs of this group of learners. There are many examples of colleges implementing cross-college CPD strategies to broaden and increase the skills of staff in working with this group of learners. In Coatbridge College, strategic priority and systematic delivery of CPD has increased college capacity to respond to the needs of these learners and ease transition to college programmes.²² There are many examples of staff recruitment processes taking very good account of the attributes and attitudes of applicants to ensure best match with this group of learners.



'Working with this group of learners is not everyone's cup of tea. That's reality and we know this. We therefore make sure that we match staff carefully. Give learners someone they like and who wants to work with them and they will thrive.'

College manager



'I see something of myself in these young people. I wasn't academic at school and went straight into work as soon as I could and had a successful career in industry. I find it incredibly rewarding being able to pass on my skills and experience and watch these young people develop belief and pride in themselves.'

College lecturer

²² Effective practice: Coatbridge College – Supporting and developing staff to meet the needs of young people who face particular barriers to learning. Appendix 2 Page 42

Programme teams focus on delivering a holistic and coherent learning experience as opposed to a collection of individual subjects or topics. In almost all cases, programme teams involved in working with this group of learners are highly committed, enthusiastic and skilful in working with young people with challenging issues and, or circumstances. They are creative, able to 'think out of the box' and are willing to try out and share new approaches. They enjoy the adventure and challenge of meeting the needs of their learners and continuously seek new ways of applying and integrating their individual specialisms and attributes to enhance the overall programme and wider learning experience for learners.

Programme teams draw creatively and productively on the collective skills of staff to plan and sequence activities to enable learners to apply theory and skills to practical situations. There are examples of colleges and staff teams exploring how they gauge the effectiveness of their learning and teaching approaches in relation to working with this group of learners, and using this process to determine 'success'. In many cases, this has resulted in colleges placing more emphasis on staff being skilled educators as opposed to vocational or subject experts. The approach of, '*It's not what you teach it's the way that you teach it*' is a recurring theme across the colleges. In addition, this has helped to remove barriers between different subject areas and has increased parity of esteem between non-advanced and advanced level programmes. In Ayr College, programme teams and staff from yipworld.com, share ideas and approaches proactively to ease transition and maximise the experience for learners.

'Being part of a college programme team is fascinating. Working with teachers from other subject and vocational areas in the college and brainstorming ways of interlinking our activities to help learners achieve much broader outcomes is both exciting and challenging. It is a symbiotic relationship which relies on everyone taking responsibility and care for their part of the jigsaw.'

College lecturer

All programme teams integrate development of working with others and problem solving within learning activities. Across the colleges, all programme teams responsible for discrete provision work well together to plan and integrate the development of literacy, numeracy and ICT skills within their programmes. Within mainstream college programmes, there are good examples of vocational, communication, numeracy and ICT staff contextualising these skills to provide synergy with the wider learning experience and planning delivery approaches to maximise the engagement of learners.²³ These approaches are very successful in providing learners with motivating, relevant and realistic learning experiences. However, in more than a few mainstream college programmes, staff on programme teams do not collaborate sufficiently or effectively enough to plan, contextualise and integrate these skills across the broader curriculum.

²³ Effective practice: Ayr College – Modernising programmes to meet learners needs. Appendix 2 page 42

Across the colleges, programme design for learners is firmly focused on developing the skills they will need in life, in the work place and in further learning. Programme teams incorporate and integrate the essential skills defined in *Skills for Scotland* and the principles, four capacities and themes of *Curriculum for Excellence*, to build relevant, useful and meaningful experiences for learners. These approaches provide a valuable springboard from which learners gain the skills, confidence and attributes to enable them to participate and progress in learning activities and make informed decisions about their future.

Promotion of equal opportunities and cultural and social diversity is generally well-embedded across college programmes. In discrete programmes, programme teams incorporate topics to raise awareness of the needs and circumstances of others and develop tolerance. Within mainstream college programmes, vocational elements are often contextualised to expose learners to scenarios which challenge assumptions and prejudices. These approaches are very successful in challenging and changing the perceptions of young people who have been affected by issues such as territorialism and sectarianism.

Programme teams constructing discrete programmes apply creative and innovative approaches to involve learners in their local communities, increase awareness and tolerance of others and develop citizenship skills. They are comfortable and confident about working flexibly and take good account of learner interests and community priorities to plan and enhance the learning experience.

'The work placements are great. You get to do the things you learn at the college and meet new people. I really enjoy it.'

Learner on discrete full-time programme

They make good use of local opportunities to plan activities which involve learners in their local community projects and settings. These include identifying and carrying out projects which will benefit others, contributing to local events and participating in volunteer schemes. There are many examples of programme teams planning effectively and integrating activities to develop social, health and environmental awareness.

Programme teams designing mainstream college programmes incorporate activities to develop employability skills, awareness of current industrial standards and practices, and the expectations of employers. They build in presentations and involvement with local employers to increase confidence and extend awareness of the range and types of vocational opportunities available within specific industries. There are many examples of colleges using different strategies successfully to incorporate these activities across the curriculum. These include delivering specific units designed to develop employability skills and prepare learners for searching and securing work such as Deloitte Employability delivered at North Highland College or by providing supported, tailored, employment programmes such as Access to Employment at Forth Valley College.²⁴

²⁴ Effective practice: Forth Valley College – Helping young people to secure a positive and sustained destination. Appendix 2 Page 43

When planning programmes, programme teams incorporate activities which prepare learners well for progression to work or further learning. Programme teams consider their programme as part of a continuum, as opposed to a stand-alone learning experience. When planning programmes, they identify the knowledge and skills required by learners to engage successfully in the next level of learning and to enter employment. They build their curriculum and learning activities around these requirements to prepare learners for progression. As a result, staff teams define and measure the success of their programme on how well learners make the transition to a job or further learning, in addition to how well they attain individual qualifications. There are many examples of these approaches being very well-pitched and successful in enabling learners to move on to positive destinations. In John Wheatley College, for example, the Transition to Learning and Work programme for Looked After young people and care leavers, takes very good account of the life skills learners need to live independently.²⁵

Most programme teams take very good account of the starting levels of learners and provide good opportunities for learners to work at an appropriate level and pace. Staff teams recognise that many learners undertaking discrete programmes require longer to gain the skills, knowledge and confidence to enable them to progress to successfully to mainstream college programmes or work environments. In most cases, colleges plan bridging programmes to enable learners to further consolidate their skills and sustain their learning between entry points to full-time vocational programmes. There are many examples of colleges providing 'roll-on, roll-off' provision to enable learners to access and remain on programmes until they achieve realistic levels of skills to enable them to progress successfully. Overall, colleges have revised their portfolio of provision to provide pathways for learners to progress from access and introductory programmes to mainstream further education (FE) level programmes. This has been very successful in enabling learners who entered programmes with very low skill and

confidence levels to move through realistic gradients of learning over two or three years to achieve vocational qualifications at SCQF levels 4-6.

Programme teams build in and schedule regular formal and informal meetings with learners to discuss their individual learning targets, encourage them to reflect on their progress and help them set further goals. In all discrete programmes and almost all mainstream programmes, this is an integral part of programme design and has parity of esteem with other learning activities. Colleges have devised useful individual learning plans which enable learners to record, evaluate and chart their own progress. Within Prince's Trust programmes, learners make good use of log books to capture their achievements. These activities are very effective in developing confidence, ownership and responsibility for learning. There are many examples of learners with very low or no aspirations using these activities well to discuss and ascertain their realistic, short-term goals in order to fulfil their wider, long-term aspirations. In most cases, staff and learners make good use of individual learning plans to recognise and measure wider achievements. Kilmarnock College developed an online *Student self assessment profile* to enable staff and learners to profile wider skills at entry to college and at exit.²⁶ The assessment provides learners with a useful and easily understandable spider diagram which gives a visual picture of their confidence levels across a wide range of learning activities.

In programmes where significant numbers of learners have greater support needs and/or challenging personal circumstances, programme teams plan in appropriate levels and types of additional support. This flexible and responsive approach takes good account of the needs of specific groups of learners, including Looked After young people and care leavers and those who have challenging social, personal and home issues. As a result, learners receive different types of support informed by, and tailored to, their individual and group needs. There are many good examples of colleges working in partnership with local external community health and support agencies to provide learners with access to more specialised support services.

²⁵ Effective practice: John Wheatley College – Preparing looked after young people and care leavers for independent living. Appendix 2 Page 43

²⁶ Effective practice: Kilmarnock College – Capturing and measuring wider achievement. Appendix 2 Page 44

Delivering the learning experience

Across all colleges, staff have established very positive and productive relationships with their learners. These relationships are based firmly on two-way mutual respect and a genuine desire to meet the needs of their learners. Staff treat their learners as individuals and adapt their communication styles and learning and teaching approaches to meet individual and group needs. The high quality of these relationships is the main reason why learners attend regularly, participate in activities and progress in their learning. As result of the ongoing positive interaction between staff and their learners, the ethos and culture within the learning environment is constructive and supportive and relationships between learners and their peers are also very positive and mutually supportive.

Staff make very good use of introductory activities, ice-breakers and team tasks at the start of programmes to establish positive relationships and set the tone for further learning. Many learners have very low self esteem and lack confidence in their ability to learn or interact comfortably with others. For them, meeting staff and other learners for the first time is often very daunting. These activities are very effective in helping them to overcome their initial shyness or awkwardness with each other and in creating trust and openness between learners and staff. In discrete programmes, staff invest a lot of time at the early stages of programmes to reaffirm individual and group responsibility for achieving programme goals.

'I love coming here. I don't like it when the college is closed. The staff are the most important bit. They make us want to be here. They take time to find and show you the easiest way to do things. They don't give up on you – they stick with you until you get it.'

Learner on discrete full-time programme

They encourage learners to discuss their individual interests and strengths with each other and incorporate activities skilfully and incrementally for learners to talk about their hobbies or experiences to the whole group. As a result of these approaches, most learners form strong bonds with their peers and support each other well throughout their programme. They feel able to say when they do not understand something, without fear of embarrassment or comeback, which encourages them to address challenges rather than conceal them. In mainstream college programmes, induction arrangements generally provide a good introduction to the college and in most cases, staff provide good opportunities for learners to get to know each other, build group ethos and develop confidence in learning. Across all programmes, most staff actively encourage learners to access and use the full range of college resources to maximise their learning experience and develop independence in learning.

'Staff respect me, so I respect them'

Learner on part-time programme

Staff set realistic and appropriate standards and expectations for learners. On discrete and some mainstream college programmes staff involve learners in drawing up class contracts for learning which set clear boundaries and expectations for teams and individuals. Within this process, learners and staff work well together to identify, negotiate and agree what they expect from each other and what is acceptable or not acceptable to the class group. For example, the class will agree in light of transport and childcare commitments what are reasonable starting and finishing times for classes, specify how everyone should expect to be treated and, identify behaviours which are not acceptable such as latecoming, intolerance of others or aggression. Learners and staff incorporate collectively these agreed standards into class goals which are reviewed regularly to chart achievement and celebrate success. Within class groups, shared ownership and responsibility for achieving these standards contribute to learners self-regulating and encouraging each other to achieve good levels of attendance, participation and attainment.

Almost all learners, including those who had a history of poor or non-attendance prior to coming to college, attend regularly. There are good examples of those with challenging behaviours being encouraged and supported by their peers to alter their behaviours and successfully moderating and improving their behaviours to achieve class goals.

In some colleges, class reward schemes are used very successfully to engender and develop shared responsibility for individual and group performance. Within vocational classes, staff set high standards in line with industry and health and safety requirements, and convey these standards effectively and consistently to learners. Learners respond well to meeting these standards and expectations and enjoy carrying out activities to demonstrate and apply their knowledge of current industry practice and standards.

Staff delivering discrete programmes use creative and innovative learning and teaching approaches to engage and motivate learners and meet the full spectrum of learner needs. There are examples of young people working alongside their peers who have progressed from discrete programmes to more advanced levels of provision. This is highly motivating for learners and increases their knowledge and understanding of the types of further learning available to them. In Coatbridge College, young people undertaking FE programmes are paired with learners on advanced level programmes who act as subject peer mentors. This significantly raises the aspirations of learners.²⁷

‘Talking about how you learn really makes you think about it. It makes you see it’s not always your fault that you can’t do things and that’s a big relief. I can now apply myself to do things I couldn’t do before.’

Learner on discrete full-time programme

²⁷ Effective practice: Coatbridge College – Raising aspirations through peer mentoring. Appendix 2 Page 45

Within all discrete programmes and in almost all mainstream college programmes, staff involve learners effectively in discussing their previous experiences of learning and use this constructively to help them ascertain their preferred ways of developing different types of skills. In many cases, these discussions play a pivotal role in the successful re-engagement of learners. Learners value the process of exploring and unpacking why they achieved more in some situations than in others. In many cases, the approaches used by staff in this process are highly productive in helping young people to identify and address issues which have impeded their ability to learn effectively, in some cases for long time. Staff encourage individuals to draw on this process to make decisions about how they approach and plan their learning. This significantly helps them overcome preconceived barriers to learning, which in turn improves their confidence, helps them take responsibility for their own learning and increases their ability to work independently.

Staff are vigilant about how learners are responding to activities and modify or adjust their teaching approaches in light of ongoing feedback and response from the young people themselves. Almost all staff regularly ask learners how they feel about their specific tasks and activities and how well they think they are achieving the planned outcomes of lessons. In discrete programmes, staff take very good account of the needs and responses of all learners in their group. They manage discussions and demonstrations to ensure they all participate in class activities. Across all programmes, there are many good examples of staff using good humour and fun to motivate and engage their learners.

Within discrete programmes, flexible arrangements for scheduling and delivering activities provide staff with freedom to alter content and incorporate new activities to harness the interest and motivation of learners. There are many good examples of staff sensing early signs of restlessness or disinterest and using their curricular autonomy creatively and productively to change focus and re-interest learners.

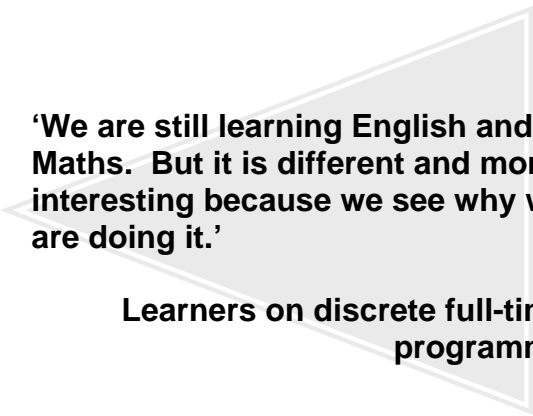
In all programmes, staff take effective action to assist individual learners with additional learning support needs and take care to engage them fully within class activities. In many cases, staff delivering additional support to individual class groups provide valuable and discreet assistance for learners with recognised barriers to learning. In all colleges, staff have well-established arrangements and procedures for accessing resources, including assistive technologies to ease and enhance access to learning. There are good examples of staff adjusting and adapting materials and resources to make them more accessible and user-friendly for individual learners. In all colleges, effective referral arrangements between teaching and centralised specialist support staff provide learners with good access to more individualised support when required. There are good examples of learners with very low levels of literacy or numeracy skills receiving intensive support to improve their skill levels.

Staff involve learners regularly in planning their own learning and encourage them to contribute to the format of tasks and activities. Across all colleges, most staff seek and take opportunities to engage learners in thinking about their learning and how their learning is delivered.

On discrete programmes, staff place a very strong emphasis on learners taking responsibility for what they learn and how they learn it. They engage learners well in suggesting and agreeing the themes and formats of projects and class activities, and apply effective strategies to challenge and empower learners in taking their ideas forward.

There are many examples of class groups negotiating and scoping projects related to their local community, environment or vocational area. Within these activities, staff use appropriate and well-judged approaches to engage learners in processes which develop skills and increase confidence and responsibility for learning. These approaches include engaging learners in identifying their individual interests, skills and attributes and using this to create a profile of their collective skills. Staff encourage and empower learners to draw on this to agree and allocate specific project roles and responsibilities. Learner groups identify and agree project parameters, define their criteria for success and set clear milestones to measure and monitor their progress towards achieving project aims.

There are many examples of young people reviewing their own learning approaches, evaluating their effectiveness and identifying what steps they could have taken to improve performance. Within mainstream college programmes, staff regularly and successfully involve class groups in shaping how they will carry out a piece of research. As a result, there are many examples of learners taking responsibility for researching a specific topic and determining methods for conveying their findings to rest of the class group. These activities and approaches are highly successful in encouraging and motivating learners to take responsibility for their own learning.



'We are still learning English and Maths. But it is different and more interesting because we see why we are doing it.'

Learners on discrete full-time programme

Across all discrete and most mainstream college programmes, staff consistently promote the development of core skills within learning activities. In most programmes, these skills are carefully threaded through the curriculum and staff use appropriate learning and teaching approaches to link their application to practical contexts. However, in more than a few mainstream college programmes communication, numeracy and ICT components were not sufficiently contextualised and, or linked to the overall theme of the programme. This reduced learner motivation and engagement in developing these skills and detracted from the quality of the overall learning experience.

Staff draw regularly on their own personal and vocational experiences to illustrate and reinforce to learners the value and use of these skills in life, work and learning. Across all programmes, staff encourage learners to give examples of where they have used their core skills to achieve wider goals in their project or work activities. Learners respond well to discussing their individual examples with staff and enjoy sharing and demonstrating to each other how they use these skills in different scenarios. These approaches extend and enrich the learning experience.

On discrete programmes, staff take care and time to help learners recognise their individual skills and attributes. They make very good use of project and team work to encourage and enable learners to apply and extend their individual strengths for the benefit of the whole group. There are many good examples of learners with very low self esteem gaining confidence, responsibility and pride through taking on specific roles and responsibilities. These approaches are very successful in developing planning and leadership skills, increasing peer appreciation and tolerance of others. This motivates learners to participate more fully in activities and develops their interpersonal skills in working with others.

Almost all of these learners have few or no qualifications and are under-confident or reluctant to engage in learning episodes or programmes which they perceive as being too long or too difficult for them. Many have become accustomed to not achieving and, as a result, have come to expect and accept failure. Most have developed strategies to avoid situations where their performance can be measured. To address this, staff devise short units of learning with clear, achievable milestones and end goals.

There are many instances of staff recognising when individual learners and groups are becoming demotivated and proactively redesigning their curriculum and modifying their learning and teaching approaches to provide learners with more motivating and realistic learning experiences. These flexible and responsive approaches encourage and improve learner achievement and attainment.

Almost all learners quickly develop confidence in learning through achieving well-pitched, short-term goals and, as a result, become more willing and able to undertake and commit to more challenging and longer units of learning. These approaches result in almost all of these young people attaining formal qualifications which they initially considered to be too difficult and outwith their reach.

In more than a few colleges, staff seek and use creative approaches to carry out assessment in non-threatening and productive ways. These approaches enhance learning and help learners plan and prepare for next steps. In these cases, staff skilfully integrate formative and summative assessments within learning activities. There are examples of teaching and support staff simulating the types of assessments used in vocational and subject areas to help learners practice organising their thoughts and approaches. In many programmes, staff involve learners regularly in carrying out team and peer assessments and use these activities effectively to engage class groups in discussing their findings and preparing for formal assessment situations. All these approaches build learner confidence in assessment situations and prepare them well for different types of assessment practices.

Across the colleges, and particularly within discrete programmes, staff regularly and consistently celebrate the achievement of their learners. They host events for learners to demonstrate their achievements to their families, friends and the wider community. Prince's Trust team presentations provide learners with very good opportunities to showcase their achievements to local partner agencies and employers. In many cases, learners are receiving formal recognition of their achievements for the first time and these events are motivating, memorable and moving experiences for them, their families and staff.

Learner Engagement

Learners enjoy and value their relationships with staff. They feel they are liked and well treated, and reciprocate by working productively in class activities. Almost all participate enthusiastically in their learning and support each other very well. They have an overall pride in being at college and enjoy getting to know and utilise the facilities available to them, particularly where their college has new facilities. In mainstream college programmes, they enjoy learning alongside other adults who have different aspirations and experiences.

Learners feel safe about commenting on their lessons and learning experiences. Almost all increase their responsibility for their own learning as a direct result of their college experience and are proactive and comfortable about asking staff for help to enable them to understand new concepts or achieve new skills. For many learners in this group, this is a significantly positive shift in how they approach learning. Within class activities, learners respond well to the ongoing encouragement from staff to be proactive in deciding ways to learn and contribute actively in shaping their own learning. They review and assess their own progress regularly with each other, in teams and individually. They discuss their progress with staff on an ongoing basis and provide staff with constructive feedback about their programme and wider college services.

Almost all learners gain useful skills for life and work through participating in work-based activities and wider college events.

'The classes are interesting and cover things that I can use and talk about outside of college. I like that. I can now talk to people in authority...I can speak to anyone now.'

Learner on discrete full-time programme

Through these activities they develop team work, awareness of self and others, interpersonal skills, and job-seeking skills including Curriculum Vitae (CV) writing and interview techniques. Many participate in college-wide and community events and projects and as a result develop citizenship and social skills. In many cases, these activities are high profile community events which require learners to take on roles which involve working with the public, presenting ideas, demonstrating skills or managing events. These experiences significantly raise confidence and self esteem and often lead to learners developing an ongoing environmental or social interest, such as working with older people or children in need. Many learners reported being surprised at how well they had gained confidence to carry out these roles.

'I used to sleep in classes at school. Now I stay awake, because I don't want to be invisible...I want to speak up and join in.'

Learner on discrete full-time programme

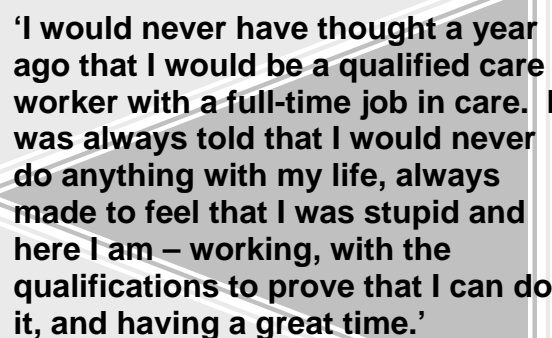
Learner progress and achievement

During session 2008-2009, there were over 45,000 young people between 16-19 years old attending full-time college programmes in Scotland. Of this grouping 46% were male and 54% female and 26% were from a deprived area. Within the 13 colleges, there were 15,690 learners in this category, 42% were male and 58% female. A third were from a deprived area. At national level, learners from a non-deprived area have a 6% higher successful completion rate.

Overall, most learners attend regularly, progress well in their learning and achieve positive outcomes. In discrete programmes many learners achieve very high levels of attendance. All colleges have effective systems for capturing learner attendance and have good arrangements for conveying this information to programme teams. Staff monitor vigilantly this information, often on a daily basis, and take appropriate and swift action to intervene when learners are exhibiting early signs of erratic attendance or disengagement.

In discrete programmes, there are many examples of individual staff taking immediate action to contact learners who have not arrived for their classes. In these cases, staff use friendly and non-judgemental approaches which in most circumstances result in learners quickly resuming their classes. In situations where learners have personal circumstances which limit their ability to attend regularly or prevent them from being able to maintain their learning, staff encourage and help these young people to continue their learning when their situations improve. As a result, most who leave programmes early return to learning when their circumstances allow.

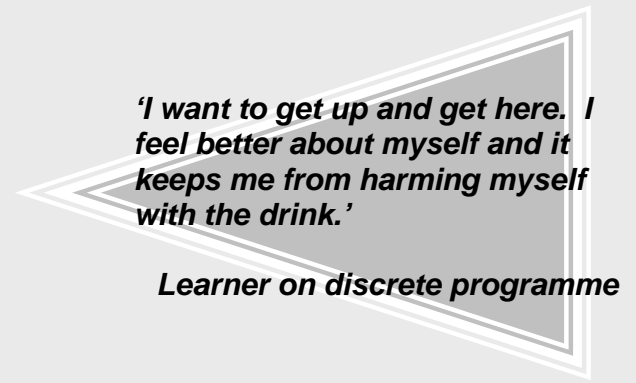
Within discrete programmes, the strong relationships between staff, learners and their peers encourage learners to attend regularly.



'I would never have thought a year ago that I would be a qualified care worker with a full-time job in care. I was always told that I would never do anything with my life, always made to feel that I was stupid and here I am – working, with the qualifications to prove that I can do it, and having a great time.'

Learner on mainstream programme

Staff are approachable, realistic and supportive and proactively encourage learners to share and discuss circumstances which could interrupt or reduce their ability to participate fully in their programme. They make the young people feel comfortable about disclosing issues which may limit their ability to engage in learning and support them well in identifying strategies and solutions to overcome these issues. However, they are also very skilled at reinforcing to learners the impact their absence has on the wider group, and the potential consequence of poor and erratic attendance leading to their peers being unable to achieve individual or class goals. These approaches are very successful in prompting learners to take steps to resolve potential attendance issues and in engendering responsibility for their own learning and the achievements of their peers. As a result, across almost all discrete programmes attendance and retention rates are good and in some cases very good. There are many examples of young people who did not attend school regularly achieving 90% or higher attendance on their college programme.




'I want to get up and get here. I feel better about myself and it keeps me from harming myself with the drink.'

Learner on discrete programme

These young people enjoy being at college. They are keen to be recognised as 'students' and part of the college community and therefore adapt their attitudes and behaviours to fit into their new environment. They value the fresh opportunity to establish new relationships with teachers and try hard to meet their expectations. This is illustrated well in a published evaluation carried out by a local authority on the local college's discrete programme. *'Because they (learners) tend to feel wanted and included in college and are able to exercise a range of freedoms not available to them in school, they want to be on the course and therefore are much more inclined to attend and conform to the rules and norms'*. Colleges recognise these factors and take steps to ensure all learners feel welcomed, included and valued.

In almost all cases, erratic attendance and low retention and achievement is caused by a range of challenging factors, including poor health, caring responsibilities or funding. Colleges recognise these factors and have established extensive and productive links with external support agencies to provide learners with access to appropriate specialist support to help them cope and deal with these issues. In some cases, learners have been victims of financial abuse and their travel and student support monies have been taken by others close to them. Some young people become homeless during their programme and stay with different friends each night of the week to avoid being a burden on any one family. Others are the sole carers of ill or elderly relatives. Looked After young people and care leavers often have multiple accommodation, financial and life issues to deal with. In all cases, the colleges act swiftly and take steps to resolve situations when they can. Good and effective relationships with information, advice and support agencies ensure learners have access to specialist services when required.



'We behave ourselves because we want to be here and almost all of us have really good attendance, 90% or higher.'

Learner on EVIP programme

Young people who require more choices and chances have a diverse range of needs which, in many cases, have the potential to impede their ability to succeed in learning and progress to positive destinations within prescribed timescales. There is no universal definition of success which can be applied equally and fairly to these learners. To minimise the risk of reinforcing negative experiences of learning and non-achievement, colleges appropriately apply a wide range of criteria for success, based on the profile and needs of individuals and groups. For example, while colleges seek to prepare and enable learners to progress to a positive destination at the end of their programme, that will be unachievable within the timescale of the programme for some young people. These learners require more time to develop the essential skills which will equip them for moving successfully into work or more advanced types of learning. Colleges make good arrangements to accommodate these learners by enabling them to progress horizontally to programmes which are at similar SCQF levels, but which provide more vocationally specific experiences. This allows them to have sufficient time to consolidate their essential skills, develop confidence in their own abilities, and make more informed decisions about their future learning and work options.

Programme teams are very effective in ensuring staff focus continuously on the 'bigger picture' of equipping and preparing learners well to move on in their lives, work and further learning. As a result, learners progress well from their prior learning and overall most (around 75% and higher in some programmes) progress successfully to work or further learning. Most learners who complete their programme successfully but do not progress immediately to the next level of programme, return to learning when their life circumstances change and allow. According to the data provided by the 13 colleges to SFC, 63% of full-time learners in the 16-19 age group do not indicate having any formal qualifications at the start of their programme. However, 70% of these learners complete their programme and of those, 93% achieve SCQF level 4 and above. There are many examples of learners entering discrete programmes with few or no qualifications and successfully progressing into mainstream college programmes and from there to advanced learning. In Ayr College, the *Pathways into Science, Arts and Humanities* (PATHISAH) programme provides a meaningful alternative to school provision for young people 15 years old and over who want to work towards more advanced level study. Many of the young people undertaking this programme are school refusers. At the end of the programme, 75% of young people progress successfully to further learning.

In all programmes, learners make good progress in improving their core skills and developing the personal and learning skills required for further learning and work. The acquisition and extension of these skills contribute significantly to improving learner confidence and self esteem, and ultimately to the successful completion and progression rates of learners. All learners who complete their programmes gain sufficient levels of confidence and skills to enable them to make realistic, informed choices about their future including accessing further programmes or entering employment.

Almost all learners gain qualifications which directly enhance their future learning and employment prospects. These include Scottish Quality Authority (SQA) units, John Muir Awards, Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN), Delloite Employability, Millennium Volunteer Awards, City and Guilds, sector skill and college-devised certificates. Almost all learners attain vocational and specific industry qualifications which are required by employers in the current job market. These include certificates in health and safety, food handling and first aid. In almost all cases, the acquisition of these qualifications provide young people with a passport of credentials which enable them to access employment more easily.

Almost all learners gain valuable employability and citizenship skills through work-based activities, involvement in community projects, volunteering and local initiatives. There are examples of colleges being proactive in engaging young people in activities outwith school hours to maintain and stimulate their enthusiasm for learning. More than a few colleges host summer programmes for teenagers.

These programmes are successful in engaging young people in sport and ICT activities. In more than few areas, community partners, including police report these programmes have contributed to a decrease in crime for the time of the provision.

Although data indicates that most learners enter programmes with few or no qualifications and most progress through vocational programmes to further learning and employment, there are no robust systems in place to capture and chart the progress of individuals at area or national level. This results in missed opportunities for different providers, particularly within local areas, to be able to monitor the longer-term performance and achievements of learners.

Evaluation and quality improvement

Colleges regularly and effectively review their provision through well-established evaluation and quality enhancement processes. Within mainstream college programmes, staff apply appropriate benchmarks to identify and measure learner attainment and successful outcomes of learning. In all programmes, the criteria used by colleges to define 'successful programme outcomes' are realistic and well founded on the needs and profiles of individual learners. In all cases, these processes work well and are well understood by staff.

Across the colleges, within quality assurance and enhancement procedures, programme teams take good account of class retention, attainment and success rates. Through the application of existing quality arrangements in colleges, staff systematically review provision, analyse performance and take action to improve and enhance their programmes. However, in more than a few mainstream college programmes, vocational staff in programme teams do not take sufficient responsibility for the core skills components of their programmes which are delivered by staff from other subject areas. Overall programme teams responsible for mainstream college programmes do not take sufficient account of the performance of young people who face barriers to engagement within wider class groups to determine the impact of their previous learning or identify issues which may be hindering successful completion.

College staff involve learners regularly in evaluating the quality of their learning experience and draw on feedback from individuals and groups to inform improvements. There are many examples of young people providing ongoing constructive feedback to staff at programme team meetings and through learner focus groups. The majority of colleges provide useful training for learners on how to contribute effectively to feedback arrangements. The SFC-funded MCMC Young People and Colleges: Peer Research Project recently extended this by involving learners from each of the 15 hotspot colleges to visit each others' colleges to answer two main questions, 'What attracts young people to college?' and 'What encourages their retention?' Learners themselves carried out the research and their findings were published.²⁸ This peer review process was very helpful in drawing out sectoral characteristics of college-based provision and in raising awareness of the collective views of young people.

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²⁸ SFC MCMC Young People and Colleges: Peer Research Project

Staff regularly share good practice and build on successful approaches and interventions. There are more than a few examples of colleges evaluating and sharing good practice with other colleges and their partner organisations. For example in Kilmarnock College, college and local authority staff participate in joint staff development events and local MCMC partners participate in college evaluation processes. This results in school and college staff learning and working productively together to improve provision for young people in their area. However, most colleges do not share the outcomes of their evaluations with their MCMC partnerships. This results in missed opportunities for discussing and promoting the types of college activities and provision to key partners. There are a few good examples of local authority staff carrying out independent evaluations of college provision. For example, West Dunbartonshire Council Psychological Services carried out an evaluation of local college provision which increased awareness and understanding of provision this group between partner agencies.²⁹

There are some good examples of colleges being successful in involving staff from local secondary schools in their evaluation and enhancement processes. However, this practice is not widespread. In supporting delivery of *Curriculum for Excellence* college and school staff need to work more collaboratively to evaluate provision for learners and to plan and develop an appropriate senior phase curriculum which offers personalisation and choice for all learners. Within this process, there is opportunity for colleges to help schools to better understand the progression routes within individual subject areas to ensure effective planning processes.

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²⁹ West Dunbartonshire Council psychological services. Evaluation of Switchover programme

5 | Recommendations

Colleges should:

- ensure they make appropriate provision for young people within their local area including those who need more choices and more chances;
- take steps to ensure that all college staff are aware of the implementation and implications of 16+ Learning Choices;
- work with their local MCMC partnerships, secondary school colleagues and SDS staff to inform and update partners on the range and types of college provision available to young people and support delivery of the senior phase of *Curriculum for Excellence*;
- ensure staff responsible for managing and processing applications for student support funding are sufficiently aware of the needs and circumstances of these learners, and take steps to ease application processes;
- ensure that on mainstream college programmes, communication, numeracy and ICT components are contextualised sufficiently to motivate and meet the needs of learners;
- improve arrangements for tracking the progress of learners from discrete programmes through further mainstream college programmes and use this information to promote coherent pathways and learner success;
- share evaluation processes and outcomes of their MCMC provision with their MCMC Partnership to inform future planning and service delivery; and
- provide opportunities for staff from secondary schools to attend meetings of programme teams who develop and deliver provision for this group of learners.

MCMC partnerships should:

- ensure that planning processes anticipate effectively the local demand for MCMC provision and that projected demand is communicated effectively to all partners;
- ensure that all MCMC partners are sufficiently well informed about the types of provision and services colleges provide for this group of young people; and
- ensure all young people receive sufficient, accurate and timely information about the opportunities available to them at college.

Local authorities and secondary schools should:

- work more closely with local colleges to plan and prepare learning experiences which meet the needs of young people and deliver the entitlements of *Curriculum for Excellence*;
- continue to work with colleges to improve sharing of information and ease transition arrangements for learners; and
- work with local partners to identify and coordinate joint CPD activities to develop and enhance the skills and attributes of staff who work with these learners.

HMIE should:

- ensure that all appropriate external review activities focus sufficiently and effectively on how well organisations address the needs of learners who require more choices and more chances;
- ensure review processes take account of the outcomes and destinations of these learners; and
- consider carrying out reviews of local, cross-sectoral arrangements for meeting the needs of this group of learners within specific geographical areas.

Scottish Government should:

- continue to improve national arrangements for capturing and sharing data to support effective tracking of progress; and
- ensure that SDS should provide effective approaches to target, encourage and support these young learners in making informed choices about their learning options.

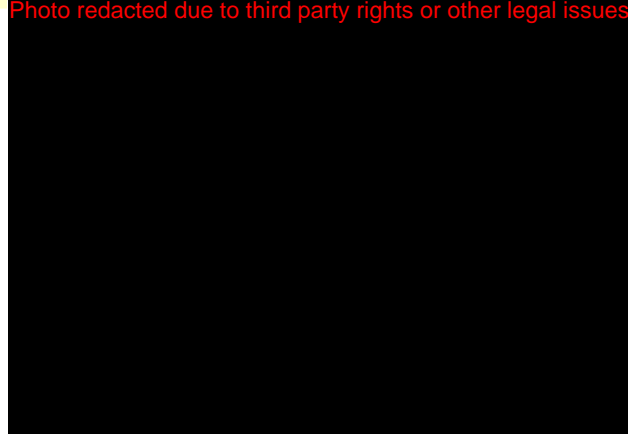
The Scottish Funding Council should:

- establish ways for supporting individual colleges in the planning and delivery of provision in order to meet local needs;
- consider carrying out an evaluation of the extent to which college provision meets the needs of Looked After young people and care learners; and
- ensure future funding arrangements take adequate consideration of the needs and resource requirements of MCMC learners and facilitate effective planning.

Scotland's Colleges should:

- work closely with SDS and other relevant bodies, including Learning and Teaching Scotland, to increase and improve partnership working between schools, colleges and other key partners in meeting the needs of learners who need more choices and more chances.

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Appendix 1

Glossary of terms

ACE	<i>Alternative Curriculum Education</i>
ASDAN	Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network
BRITE	Beattie Resources for Inclusiveness in Technologies and Education
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
CV	Curriculum Vitae
ESF	European Social Fund
EVIP	Enhanced Vocational Inclusion Programme
FE	Further Education
HE	Higher Education
HMIE	HM Inspectorate of Education
HND	Higher National Diploma
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
MCMC	More Choices, More Chances
NC	National Certificate
NEET	Not in education, employment or training
PATHISAH	<i>Pathways into Science, Arts and Humanities</i>
SCQF	Scottish Credit Qualification Framework
SDS	Skills Development Scotland
SFC	Scottish Funding Council
SFEU	Scottish Further Education Unit
SQA	Scottish Quality Authority
SUMS	Student Unit Measurements
SVQ	Scottish Vocational Qualification

Appendix 2

Effective practice

Forth Valley College: Working in partnership to re-engage young people

The school-college partnership identified a need to create provision to re-engage S4 pupils who had become disengaged from learning and had no future career plan. To take this forward, staff at the college worked with their school colleagues to create the *Alternative Curriculum Education* (ACE) programme. The aim of the programme is to enable young people to develop their vocational and essential skills simultaneously to improve their future prospects. Many learners who are referred to the programme have had social, emotional and, or behavioural issues.

The programme is delivered at the college within a small group setting of around ten learners and incorporates development of life skills alongside attainment of formal qualifications. These include ASDAN, First Aid Certificate and SQA units at Intermediate Level 1 / 2 in numeracy, communication, vocational awareness, development and business enterprise and ICT. An Outdoor Education Teacher from the school team-teaches with a college lecturer to deliver the ASDAN elements of the programme and supports learners to continue the Duke of Edinburgh award that they started at school. Staff keep in regular contact with parents through home visits, telephone calls and review meetings. Learner achievements are celebrated every year at an awards ceremony which is attended by family members, college and school staff.

Since the start of the programme eight years ago, college and school staff have worked together continuously to enhance and further develop the programme to meet the needs of this group of young people. Over the last few years the ACE group has achieved 100% retention and in the last three years all learners have progressed to positive destinations. The success of the programme is due to college and schools staff sharing the same vision for this group of young people and working together in partnership with parents.

South Lanarkshire College: Working with MCMC partners to facilitate *Activity Agreements*

The MCMC Partnership identified that a small number of young people had particularly weak communication, numeracy and employability skills which inhibited their confidence, willingness and ability to compete in the job market. In order to accommodate the diverse range of circumstances of the young people in this group, partners recognised a need to combine services and tailor support and experiences to meet individual needs. As a result, South Lanarkshire College works closely with South Lanarkshire Council, local employers and other organisations to create an individual *Activity Agreement* for each young person based on their interests and aspirations.

The college's Training and Employment Team coordinates meetings with college staff, Careers Scotland, Activity Agreement Advisors and staff from other relevant partner agencies, such as an employer or young person's Key Worker, to plan activities around individual needs. Partners work together to produce an *Activity Agreement* which is customised to the needs of the young person. This inter-agency approach is successful in providing these young people with the different types of support, learning and work experiences they need to improve their future prospects.

Ayr College: Explaining college provision to parents

In Ayrshire, the results of a market research survey indicated that local schools were unsure of the types of programmes colleges provided. While analysing survey feedback, Ayr College staff identified that if teachers were unclear, parents and pupils were also likely to be unsure. To address this, college staff worked in partnership with Careers Scotland to create a handbook for parents to explain the types and levels of college programmes, support services and progression opportunities for young people. The *Handbook for Parents* is aimed at providing parents with the types of information they need to help their children make informed career choices at S2 and S4. It covers a wide range of college learning including work experience, routes from college to university, Apprenticeships, 16+ Learning Choices and student support funding. The handbooks were produced and issued to local secondary schools and school staff distributed them to pupils to take home to their parents. Following the dissemination of the handbook, the college hosted a series of special information events to enable parents and young people to meet staff and find out more about college programmes. Since the handbook was produced the number of school pupils attending schools-college link programmes has increased by 31%.

Ayr College and yipworld.com: Working together to plan and deliver provision

Ayr College works in partnership with yipworld.com to plan, coordinate and deliver a 12 week introduction to care programme for young people in the Cumnock area. At the start of the programme, learners undertake an introductory SQA unit in care delivered by yipworld.com staff at their facility in Cumnock. At the end of the unit, learners attend college and the yipworld.com centre to participate in a range of learning activities carefully designed to extend their knowledge of the care sector and develop their essential skills. Yipworld.com staff coordinate appropriate work placements to enable learners to apply and further develop their knowledge and skills within an authentic care environment. At the end of their programme learners have opportunity to progress to the college's full-time FE care programme. Yipworld.com staff provide ongoing support for learners as they progress from the introductory programme to further college-based learning.

Productive and open partnership working between college and yipworld.com staff has resulted in creative programme design which takes very good account of the needs of learners who are the early stages of re-engagement. In the two years the programme has been running, all of the participants have progressed successfully to the college's full-time FE care programme.

John Wheatley College and the Enhanced Vocational Inclusion Programme (EVIP) - S3 Pilot

The EVIP programme is coordinated by Glasgow City Council and aims to improve the future prospects of young people who are disengaged, or at risk of disengaging from education. This year EVIP piloted a programme for S3 pupils. The one year pilot provided opportunities for young people to attend college two days a week whilst continuing their learning at school. The pilot was targeted at young people who have social, emotional or behavioural challenges.

Ten young people participated in a pilot programme in construction at John Wheatley College. They came from different areas across Glasgow and didn't know one another before the start of the course. Six of the young people were looked after by the local authority.

Whilst at college the young people undertook classes in construction skills. They had an EVIP Officer/vocational coach with them at all times who built a strong rapport with the group, provided ongoing support and mentoring and worked with each young person to arrange and ease transition to a positive next step. During the programme, college lecturers established very positive working relationships the young people. Their construction tutors reported '*The group is easy to get on with and all the young people work hard.*'

Before starting their programme, each young person had a school attendance rate of less than 40%. At the end of pilot, all of the young people have achieved above 90% attendance at college, and two achieved 100% attendance. Their attendance at school also improved. Eight of the young people have applied to return to the college to undertake a full-time EVIP placement and two have decided to stay on at school until S5 to gain qualifications.

Kilmarnock College: Working with partners to provide early, short interventions: *The Leadership Academy Programme*

The local MCMC partnership identified a need to provide earlier intervention to reduce the high number of 16–19 year olds in East Ayrshire who did not enter into education, employment or training after leaving school. To address this, Kilmarnock College in partnership with East Ayrshire Council, and with support from the European Social Fund, worked together to devise a short, intensive programme aimed at school pupils between the ages of 13 and 16 who were showing early signs of disengagement. The one week full-time programme, *Leadership Academy* was carefully designed by staff to provide school pupils with experiences to stimulate and reengage them in learning. Learners participate in a creative mix of activities including outdoor pursuits and performing arts to develop confidence, responsibility, teamwork, essential and leadership skills. The programme also introduces learners to the types of college learning opportunities available to them when they leave school. The programme is offered on a weekly basis and entry is through referral from schools staff. Around 1,000 young people have undertaken the *Leadership Academy* over the past three years and around 80% have successfully continued in their learning at the end of the programme.

Dumfries and Galloway College: Supporting looked after and accommodated young people. The role of Case Workers

Dumfries and Galloway College provide dedicated Case Workers to support looked after young people and care leavers within the college. The role of the Case Worker is to build safe and non-judgemental relationships with these young people and to provide ongoing support and opportunities for them to discuss and resolve issues as they arise. Case Workers act independently on behalf of the young person and advocate for them within the college when required.

Case Workers provide learners with daily one to one drop - in sessions which are planned around their programme timetable. They monitor attendance vigilantly and contact learners by mobile phone if they do not arrive for classes. When young people have issues which prevent them from attending regularly, their Case Worker works with them to identify and put in place strategies to help improve attendance. In cases where a learner's circumstances militate against coming to college, the Case Worker visits them at home and makes arrangements for them to continue their studies through distance learning.

The Case Workers use a range of effective approaches to keep in regular contact with learners. These include a Breakfast club three mornings a week and weekly 'Head Space' sessions. They liaise with teaching and support staff on an ongoing basis to help staff devise approaches which meet individual needs and circumstances and make referrals to external support bodies when required.

Coatbridge College: Supporting and developing staff to meet the needs of young people who face particular barriers to learning

The Board of Management and the Management Team of Coatbridge College are strongly committed to meeting the needs of young people who face barriers to learning. To support this commitment, they recognised a need to invest in college-wide CPD to develop and extend the skills of staff in working with this group of learners. *'We needed to change the attitudes of staff in how we approach and deliver to this group of learners and equip them with the skills to best meet their needs.'* To take this forward, the college planned a scheduled programme of CPD activities for staff. Around 200 staff attended the programme which included workshops on:

- Understanding the needs of young people
- Making our learning and teaching inclusive
- Managing challenging behaviour
- Managing under 16 year olds - Engage or Enrage
- Classroom management techniques for working with young people
- Domestic Abuse - What to look out for
- Tackling violence against women

Staff have applied the skills and knowledge they gained from the CPD programme to adapt learning and teaching approaches, design new programmes and adjust existing programmes to better meet the needs of this group of young people. This has contributed to improved retention and success rates of these learners, an increase in the number of school pupils undertaking school-college programmes (from 200 to over 1,000) and improved provision for young people with social, emotional and behavioural issues.

Ayr College: Modernising programmes to meet learners' needs

Although the college's business course for young people at risk of disengaging had good retention rates (80%), staff felt that the programme was not sufficiently engaging for this group of learners. The programme team reviewed the design and content of the programme and decided it was too theoretical and did not provide enough opportunities for learners to apply and develop their skills through practical activities. To address this, the programme team rebranded the programme, *Business Apprentice* and changed the curriculum and style of delivery to provide a more project-based experience for learners. Learners take responsibility for developing an idea and seeing it through the various stages to completion. Within this process they apply their theory skills to their individual project and share experiences with each other to explore and learn about business concepts within different contexts. Learners have valued and enjoyed participating in these activities and are working with staff to design jointly the second semester of the programme.

Forth Valley College: Helping young people to secure a positive and sustained destination - Access to Employment Project

Forth Valley College is an active partner within the Clackmannanshire Alliance and as part of this involvement secured Fairer Scotland funding to develop a project targeted at young people requiring more choices and chances. The overarching aim of the project is '*To enable young people in the Clackmannanshire area to secure a positive and sustained destination for their future*' and involves close partnership working between the college, Clackmannanshire Council and Careers Scotland.

The project, *Access to Employment*, consists of a six month programme which combines skill development at college with a work placement with a local employer. A member of college staff with experience in Human Resources coordinates the programme and liaises with local employers to arrange work placements which meet the individual interests, needs and aspirations of each young person. Prior to the start of the programme, college staff meet with each participant to ascertain their skills, attributes and the types of work they are interested in. Staff draw on this information to carefully arrange an appropriate work placement for each young person.

Learners commence their work placements immediately at the start of the programme and attend college two days a week. During the programme the time spent at the work placement is incrementally increased and attendance at college is reduced. At end of the programme the young people attend their workplace on a full-time basis. During their time at college the young people undertake industry recognised awards including the Health and Safety at Work certificate and engage in work-related activities to develop their employability, literacy, numeracy, ICT and communication skills. Working with others and health and wellbeing is integrated throughout programme.

The key success factor of the project is the incremental development of learners' employability skills. College learning activities are carefully sequenced to match the experiences learners are gaining in the workplace. Learners share their individual experiences of different types of work environments to broaden their awareness of the world of work. Staff visit work placements regularly to discuss with the young person how they are applying their new skills. Of the 12 young people who participated in the project, 11 successfully completed their programme and ten have achieved positive destinations. Due to the success of the project, the college has mainstreamed this activity within its portfolio of provision.

John Wheatley College: Preparing Looked After young people and care leavers for independent living

One of the aims of the *Transition to Learning and Work* programme is to prepare learners for the transition from care into independent living. Staff recognised that for learners to make that transition successfully, they require the skills to manage their finances.

Experiences from the first year of the programme indicated that Transition learners had significant gaps in their literacy and numeracy skills and had very little concept of personal budgets, saving or financial interest rates. Only one learner in the group had a bank account. This became a real issue when the students had to apply for their Educational Maintenance Allowance, as one of the criteria is that all monies must be paid into a bank account.

To address this, the *Transition to Learning and Work* programme team decided to incorporate learning experiences which would help learners explore and understand the financial implications of living independently. Staff sourced appropriate materials and adapted them to suit the needs and circumstances of Transition learners. They applied a variety of learning and teaching approaches including interactive games, small group discussions, video presentations and external visits to local banks to engage learners in developing financial management skills.

Activities included:

- How to open a bank account and what documentation is required
- Planning and maintaining a personal budget
- Debt management
- Understanding what simple interest is and how it is calculated
- The difference between credit and debit cards.

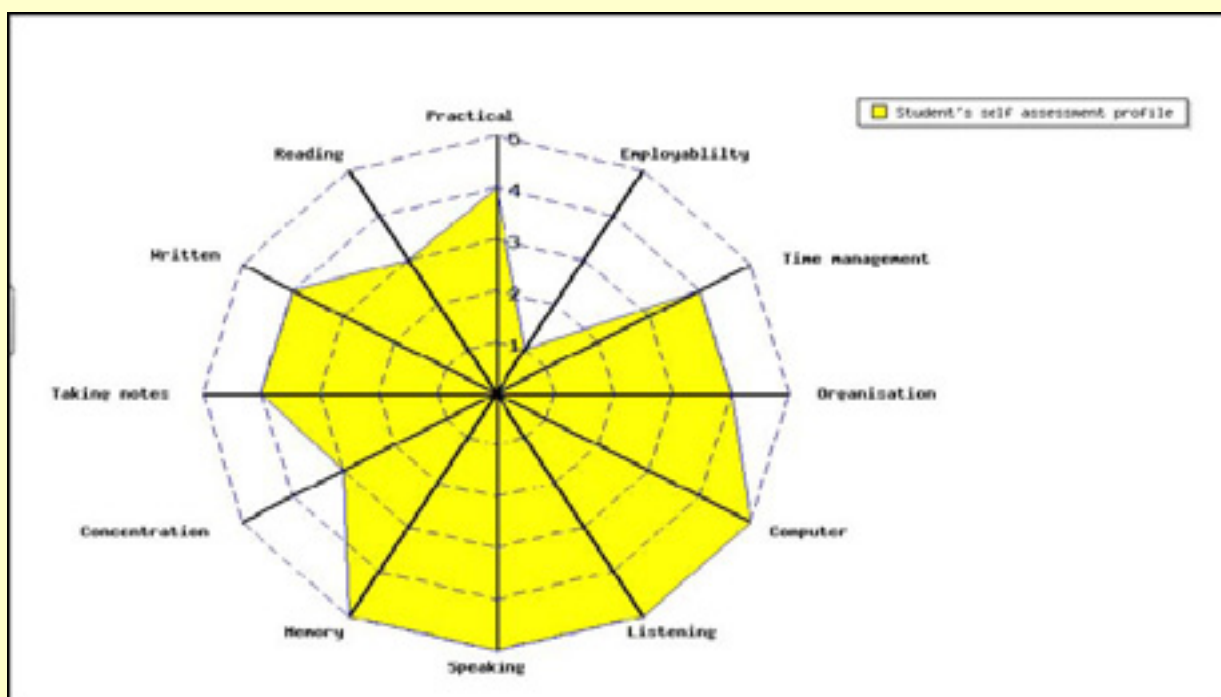
These approaches have been highly successful in equipping Transition learners with important and relevant knowledge and skills and in preparing them for living independently.

Kilmarnock College: Capturing and measuring wider achievement

In 2007, the college created an ICT profiling system, *Student's self assessment profile* to capture and measure learners' levels of numeracy, communication, and ICT. Although this process was valuable, staff considered it did not take sufficient account of the wider skills of learners. To address this, staff adapted the profiling tool to encompass *Employability, Time management, Organisation, Computer skills,*

Listening, Speaking, Memory, Concentration, Note taking, Writing, Reading and Practical work.

During the application stage, learners are asked to complete a *Student's self assessment profile* and rate how confident they are in relation to each of the wider skills. Their responses are captured on a wheel diagram and their confidence level in each of the skills is illustrated by how far the shaded area extends from the centre of the wheel.



Learners repeat the self assessment exercise during and at the end of their programme to assess distance travelled. Staff use the wheel within guidance activities to engage individual learners in discussing each of their wider skills, review their progress and set targets for improvement. These activities are very effective in raising the awareness of learners of the importance of these skills and in developing responsibility and confidence to extend and apply them within different learning contexts.

Coatbridge College: Raising aspirations through peer mentoring

Staff in the science section identified that closer interaction of higher education (HE) learners with learners on non-advanced programmes would help raise the aspirations of FE learners and encourage them to progress to more advanced levels of study. To facilitate this staff arranged for learners on the higher national diploma (HND) science programme to receive training in peer mentoring and provide mentoring to FE learners in the college and local learning centres. The peer mentors engaged enthusiastically in their role and FE learners valued and enjoyed learning first-hand from them about their programme and the types of activities involved. The HE learners were approachable and open about their own learning journey. They shared their individual experiences of how they overcame barriers such as family and life pressures, lack of confidence and self doubt in their ability to achieve and progress further in their learning. The peer mentors provided the FE learners with positive role models they could identify with, and the encouragement to further their interest in science and continue in their learning. This has resulted in improved retention, attainment and progression rates of FE learners within science programmes.

Appendix 3

Case studies

The following case studies were produced by learners and their college teachers and convey their experience of their college programme. Names have been changed to protect the identity of individuals.

Anthony's story

Anthony is 20 years old and reflects on how his college programme has inspired him to help others.

'My previous education was in a lot of different schools but I had a lot of problems with people and bullying so was often in trouble and was either suspended or excluded so had to move on to another school. My experiences were always the same – fighting, shouting, swearing and being disruptive and confrontational. I spent some time at Youth Strategy where the teachers helped me. Since I came to college, I've done lots of things I never thought I'd be able to do. We organised a conference about Respect, Relationships and Right Decisions and I had the chance to tell important people how we thought teachers and lecturers could work with us better and help us more.'

I came up with the idea of going back to Youth Strategy to see my old teachers and to give the pupils there a presentation about my programme and other courses at the college. It went really well. The kids got to learn that there was more out there for them and they had a place to go to further themselves and enjoy themselves too. My old teachers said they were delighted that I had thought of them and enjoyed that I was doing well and had changed greatly from what I used to be like. In the future I'd like to work my way up to the HNC social care and come back and work with the college or Youth Strategy because I really want to help others who have been where I have been.'

Fiona's story

Fiona reflects on how she overcame challenges and gained the qualifications to work in job really enjoys.

'I spent three years in supported education before I got a place on the college's care programme. I thought that I would never be able to do a mainstream college course because I have dyslexia and I always found college hard, and I didn't really understand it. But the care programme was set up differently. It let us learn in ways that we understood. We did an SVQ in health and social care and lots of practical work.'

Our teachers came with us to our placements and gave us help to learn so that we could do the job properly. The best bit about the course was that we got so much help and support. We got treated like individuals and learned that we can achieve things – just because we have learning difficulties doesn't mean we can't achieve our goals too. We were never made to feel stupid and we were always made to feel that we were important and that we had lots to offer even when we didn't think it of ourselves.'

I am now working full-time in a nursing home and I love it. I would never have thought a year ago that I would be a qualified care worker with a full-time job in care. I was always told that I would never do anything with my life and was made to feel that I was stupid. But here I am – Working, with the qualifications to prove that I can do it, and having a great time.'

Jim's story

Jim is a new lecturer and reflects on his experience of working with young people who are at risk of disengaging from learning.

'Before I started working at the college I was self-employed. I realised that the group did not respond well to the traditional disciplined structure, rules or authority that were part and parcel of formal education as I remembered it. I was supported to undertake CPD activities to learn about new and different approaches and became more of a mentor than a teacher. I use my own experience of industry to explain to young people how businesses work and to show them the kinds of attitudes and skills employers are looking for.'

Anna's story

Anna is 18. She and her teachers explain how the drama parts of her college programme opened up new opportunities for her.

Anna left school at 15 with no qualifications. Her social worker arranged a placement in a nursery and she went to college to do a childcare course. After five months, Anna became pregnant and left her college programme and work placement. Having her daughter was a turning point for Anna and made her think about the future.

When her daughter was old enough Anna went back to college to do a general introductory level programme (SCQF level 4). It took Anna a few months to settle back into learning. Her lack of confidence and low self esteem meant that she was very negative towards herself and she felt could not succeed in anything. Gradually Anna found she was passing her subjects and was really enjoying college. *'The lecturers listen to you and respect you. I now want to get qualifications and do what I really want to do.'*

Anna particularly enjoyed the drama parts of her programme where she felt she gained more confidence in talking in front of people. Recently Anna has joined an acting agency and has been successful in gaining parts in films as an extra. Options have now opened up for her and she is considering progressing to the next level of her programme next year or furthering her interest in drama by undertaking the NC performing arts programme (SCQF5).

Brian's story

Brian left school at sixteen and had no idea what he wanted to do. Brian and his college teachers explain how his programme helped him find the right job.

Brian went along to an open day at his local college and decided to try an introduction to building trades programme. Brian immediately showed an aptitude for bricklaying and went on to develop high skill levels in other trade areas. In light of his interests and skills, Brian's lecturers arranged for him to undertake a work placement with a local employer specialising in joinery. The placement went exceptionally well and Brian was offered an apprenticeship. He demonstrated a strong commitment to his new career and was awarded national apprentice of the year.

Brian believes the introduction to building trades programme was vital to helping him secure a job in the right trade. *'Trying out all the different trades was great because I didn't know what I wanted to do. It turned out I loved joinery. I'm still working with the same employer and I am in the last year of my apprenticeship. If I hadn't had the opportunity to try out the different trades I don't think I'd have been able to find the right job for me.'*

Angela's story

Angela reflects on how working in the community and developing job seeking techniques helped her to gain the skills and confidence to enter employment.

'When I started my college programme I was worried that I would find it too hard and that it would be boring and too much like school. But it wasn't like that at all. We did so many different things and learned about things that we really needed to know. We learned how to make soup, bake, and how to run the food cooperative at the sheltered housing unit so that we could help the older people to have a healthy diet. We learned how to do the office work and all the things that need to happen behind the scenes and this made it much more interesting and easier to learn.

We spent a lot of time at college talking about our placements and we shared our worries and experiences and learned from each other. We practiced filling in application forms and doing interviews. We interviewed each other and gave each other feedback and we watched our teachers showing us how not to do interviews which was funny, but really useful and we all learned a lot by that.

Our teachers arranged for an employer to interview us all. We had a proper interview with her and she gave each of us verbal and written feedback about how we had done. This was really good, I was really nervous but got good feedback and some good ideas to help me to improve my interview skills and it must have worked because I am working for a company now. I now know that I have the confidence and skills to be a good worker and do the job well.'

Andrea's story

Andrea reflects on how she overcame her lack of confidence to work in a job she really enjoys.

'I hated school. I never got on well and I didn't manage to get many qualifications. When I came to college I didn't like it much to start with. I had an attitude problem and I would argue with anyone. I walked out of the class and I gave the lecturers a hard time sometimes. But when we started doing some classes in care, I actually listened and I enjoyed it. My teachers asked me if I would like to go on to the mainstream care course. It was the best thing I did. They knew me really well and I could go to them about anything, not just things to do with my college work.

There were 11 of us in the class. We all had problems with reading, writing and understanding the work, so none of us felt stupid when we had to get help. We got loads of help and support, not just with the work but with working at ourselves too. I got lots of help from my teachers with personal stuff that was going on and would have left the college if it hadn't been for them. I had no confidence at all and was scared about going into workplaces but our teachers taught us how to do all the skills that we needed and came to the work placement with us.

My confidence is so much more now. I got offered a job with my work placement and I did this for a while but I have found another job now that I enjoy much more. I am a home care worker and I go into people's houses and help them to live independently. I have so much responsibility that I would never have thought I could have managed. But I do manage it. And I love it.'

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