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Leading learning and skills

# Identifying Effective Practice in Raising Young People's Aspirations

September 2009

Of interest to everyone involved in reducing the number of young people not in education, employment or training



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# 1 INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Introduction

GHK Consulting was commissioned by the LSC National Office to undertake a study to provide an evidence base which would inform future efforts in raising the aspirations of young people aged 14-19 years. The focus of the study is on England since 2005 and on those strategies, interventions and practices that have proved to work most effectively in terms of achieving the engagement/re-engagement of young people with learning and the progression of those already engaged.

The LSC were particularly interested in apprenticeships in light of recent Government commitments made to expand this provision. The literature review, however, identified effective practice more in terms of progression pathways (e.g. via E2E). They were also keen for the study to identify effective practice in relation to *all* young people who were already engaged in learning and skills, as well as those not in education, training or employment (NEET).

This report presents the overall findings for the study. The first phase of the study was concerned with identifying and documenting existing examples of effective practice among a range of agencies involved in the education and training of the target age group. The main methods adopted included a broad literature search coupled with stakeholder interviews followed by an in-depth literature review. This enabled us to produce an initial review of the evidence, pulling out the key issues and principles of effective practice. This resulted in an interim report finalised in January 2009.

For the second phase of the study and based on the evidence presented in the interim report, the LSC selected six organisations for GHK to conduct case study work with. We also consulted with a group of peer reviewers to gain additional insights into areas of effective practice. This allowed us to build on and develop further the effective practice identified in the first phase of the study. The final report incorporates the findings from both phases of the study including the key points arising from the literature review, the stakeholder interviews, the peer reviewer process and the six case studies. The main purpose of the final report is to provide a comprehensive review of what works and why in raising the aspirations of young people and to provide policy and practice recommendations

This report will be of interest to policy makers including the Learning and Skills Council and others in central and regional government. It will also be of interest to service providers and commissioners; it presents detailed evidence on what is most effective in providing services aimed at raising young people's aspirations.

## 1.2 Overview of method

### Phase 1: Literature review and stakeholder survey

The first phase of this study was concerned with a broad and then more in-depth review of existing evidence of what has shown to be effective on the ground. The first step involved the compiling of an initial long list of resources drawing on independent evaluations, self-evaluations as well as research studies. The following inclusion criteria were used:

- 14-19 age group (with scope for going higher or lower to capture interventions working with young people with learning difficulties).

- Effective practice that relates to achieving engagement/re-engagement for those NEET and progression of learning for those already engaged.
- England only but with reference to international examples where relevant.
- Post 2005, although some studies prior to this date have been included because they focus on particular issues e.g. rurality.

We conducted searches of 27 organisational websites and databases including the Education Evidence Portal, the Ofsted/QIA good practice database, DCSF, DIUS and NfER. We also searched key academic search engines including Google Scholar, Intent and BIDS to identify peer reviewed journal articles and EU sources of information including via DG EAC. From this we identified 134 relevant reports/studies in total.

In parallel to this we contacted over 40 national stakeholders resulting in 27 positive replies. A key question put to stakeholders was their view on criteria for effective practice. We also asked them to recommend reports or provide information on relevant examples of effective practice.

A database was created on which to store, summarise and organise information on evaluation reports and studies collected through the literature search as well via stakeholder interviews. The database allowed for the recording of detailed information and had various fields, for example, commissioning organisation, implementing organisation, policy intervention, geographical area, and specific groups of young people. We also stored information on over 80 effective practice case study examples in a separate spreadsheet as highlighted by stakeholders and sourced through the Ofsted good practice website.

The initial long list of reports/studies/articles was then mapped against quality and relevance criteria to provide a 'short list' for the more in-depth review. Guided by the EPPI-Centre system we considered soundness of method, internal and external validity and relevance. This resulted in a list of more than 90 reports which the team then reviewed in-depth.

To ensure consistency, we designed a common template for the review process. This focused on the key elements of effective practice, why approaches were identified as effective, and any challenges they faced. A number of GHK staff with diverse research backgrounds were used for the review process to ensure a range of expertise and experience was deployed to capture the different policy areas that this study covers. Following the review process an internal review meeting was held to discuss and draw out the most appropriate examples of effective practice.

A peer review group were also invited to comment on the findings from Phase 1 of the study. The group was made up of four people representing the Prince's Trust, LSC South West region; LSC North East region, and Joseph Rowntree Foundation. Their comments fed into the second phase of the study and were incorporated into the final report.

#### Phase 2: The six case studies

For the second phase of the study, in consultation with the LSC, we selected a short list of organisations from the case study database using a range of criteria. Most importantly the LSC were interested in organisations or projects that were working to primarily raise the aspirations of young people in terms of engaging them in education or training in a range of settings. It was also important that the case studies reflected a cross section of: target groups, localities and intervention type (see below for summary tables for each of the six case study organisations chosen for the study).

The purpose of conducting research with the case studies was to explore in detail the specific interventions and methods that were used, highlight what worked and what combination of factors were in place that ensured this success. We were particularly interested in identifying best ways of working with young people to raise their aspirations and also, where relevant, provision that targets particular localities.

For each case study we reviewed relevant documentation and interviewed both strategic and front-line delivery staff as well as, where feasible, service users. For staff the focus of the interviews was on identifying examples of effective practice in relation to project activities, outcomes and impacts. For service users we sought their views on perceived individual impacts and aspects of the programme they felt were successful and why, and any aspects that they would like to see further developed.

From this we produced individual case study reports. These are provided as Annexes to the main report. These have been checked with the organisations for accuracy.

In this report, we have combined the findings from the case studies with the outcomes of the literature review and stakeholder interviews to inform the overall analysis of effective practice.

### Case study 1

#### **Enterprise and Entrepreneurship Programme, Merrill Lynch**

**Aim:** To raise students' career aspirations and understanding of business and entrepreneurship and more specifically to: improve their understanding of business and business techniques including financial literacy; enhance their personal skills and self-confidence; support improved academic achievement; and improve levels of attendance amongst participating students where possible.

**Target group:** Secondary school pupils from Years 8 to 13 (aged 11 to 18 years) in the Tower Hamlets area of London.

**Activities include:** Now in its fifth year, activities include a range of enterprise and business focused activities delivered through classroom activities, presentations and life skills training both during school time and at weekends/holidays. Activities include: 'speed interviewing' of Merrill Lynch staff by young people; a presentation competition; projects focused on the development, marketing and selling of a product.

**Outputs to date:** In the last year ML employees have been involved in delivering over 50 activities, events and lessons to 2,300 students. In the four years, over 10,000 student enterprise days have been delivered.

**Evidence base:** Observation of a session, interviews with 13 young people participating in the programme and the project manager, volunteers and the EBP, who are the delivery partners for the project. This was supplemented by a telephone interview with the Head of EMEA Philanthropy. **Documents consulted:** Learner portfolios and feedback forms.

**Reason for case study selection:** Business and enterprise focused, supports primary and secondary schools through volunteers – focused on raising aspirations. London based.

### Case Study 2

#### **Future:proof Framework, Sheffield City Council**

**Aim:** The programme, jointly funded by Sheffield City Council, the Learning and Skills Council and the European Social Fund, aims to enhance and complement existing services for young people NEET, as well as offering new activities specifically designed to meet the needs of these young people that are not currently being met by existing services.

**Target group:** Young people between the ages of 16 and 18 years who are not in education, employment or training (NEET).

**Activities include:** It brings together public, private and voluntary sector partners to deliver a range of projects, including arts, media, sports, vocational, basic skills, re-engagement, support, and personal and social development activities in a range of locations around the city with a range of target groups. Projects include: 'Driving Ambitions' - a 15 week programme which aims to support young people to take up employment through: developing basic skills, confidence and motivation and providing work placements and training in warehouse and logistics; 'Up 2 the Mark' - delivered by NACRO, this is a support programme for young offenders. Young people attend two 16 hour sessions for 12 weeks where they receive one to one support, vocational taster sessions, and numeracy and literacy skills.

**Outputs to date:** The 'Driving Ambitions' programme - Since November 2008, the programme has engaged 48 young people of which: 9 young people have passed the forklift training and 12 young people are currently doing Heavy Goods Vehicle training. The 'Up 2 the Mark' project is an intensive targeted project and has engaged with 6 young people.

**Evidence base:** Interview with Future:proof Framework Developer; Interview with one member of the ETL Delivery staff; a focus group with 7 young people enrolled on the ETL Driving Ambitions programme; Interviews with 2 young people attending the NACRO Up 2 the Mark programme; Focus group with 4 organisations involved in the delivery of Moving on Up programme; and Observation of Future:proof Strategic Commissioning Group. **Documents consulted:** Moving on Up, Pre-E2E Programme to engage 16-18 year olds NEET April 2007 to March 2008, Cheryl Plant, Sheffield CC; Future:proof Framework documents and newsletters.

**Reason for case study selection:** Projects working with care leavers and a range of disadvantaged young people; Integrated and personalised provision; Led by a local authority; and based in the North of England.

### Case Study 3

#### **LEAP: Learn Educate and Progress, Teenage Pregnancy Support Service, Learning and Skills Council, North East**

**Aim:** To address the increasing rate of young parents who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) in Stockton. Specifically the project engages young parents and parents-to-be in learning activities to improve their social, financial and emotional well-being and provide the necessary toolkit for young parents to be effective parents, to prevent future unplanned pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections and to progress into further training, education and employment.

**Target group:** Young parents and parents to be aged 13-19 who are NEET or at risk of becoming NEET

**Activities include:** Short courses specifically developed for young parents: Pain Relief and Labour, Ante Natal Care, Sexual Health Awareness, Preparation for Hospital, First Aid Awareness, Recognising Illness in your Baby, Budgeting and Money Management, Independent Living Skills, Building Confidence and Self Esteem and Preparation for Training, Education and Employment

**Outputs to date:** The current year's project targets are: 25 young parents to achieve Level 1 or 2 qualifications; 10 young parents to progress to further education; 10 young parents to receive IAG sessions. At present the project is on track to meet these targets.



**Evidence base:** A focus group with seven members of the management and delivery team, which included the LSC Contract Manager, Provider Development Manager/Policy and Planning Advisor LSC North East, Connexions Personal Advisor, the course Tutor and 3 Teenage Pregnancy Advisors; and a focus group with eight service users. **Documents consulted:** Supporting Vulnerable Young People to raise and realise their aspirations – How to improve outcomes (Jan 2009), monthly project newsletter.

**Reason for case study selection:** A programme of activity targeted towards raising aspirations of a particular group i.e. young mothers; based in the North East and takes a holistic approach.

#### Case Study 4

##### **Raising Aspirations Project, Sheffield Hallam University**

**Aim:** Raising Aspirations activities work to address issues and barriers which pupils and their parents/carers believe may exclude them from Higher Education (HE). For example, concerns about ability, finance or personal circumstances or abilities. The main role of the Raising Aspirations project is to provide information and activities that can present HE as a viable option by increasing contact between pupils and students, their parents/carers, and HE institutions. The University was one of the first to be awarded the Frank Buttle Trust Quality Mark as a recognition of its commitment in implementing the number of young people entering and succeeding in HE.

**Target group:** The project targets those from non-traditional HE backgrounds within the University's catchment area.

**Activities include:** Under the Raising Aspirations umbrella, there are three different types of activities that take place: **(1) Raising Aspirations** activities which include the Cash Course, Get Ahead Aimhigher Roadshow, Looked After Children and Care Leavers visits, master classes, The Graduation Project, Professor Fluffy, Student Ambassador programme, Uni4u visits and University Experience Evenings. The looked after children element of the project began as an initial research project but has developed into a much broader initiative and is an important element of the University's widening participation activities; **(2) Recruitment activities** which include Clearing, Open Days, HE fairs and conventions, student ambassador scheme and student led campus tours; and **(3) Transition Support and Mentoring** which includes The Compact Scheme, Aimhigher mentoring, Buddy Bank and the Student Preparation Programme.

**Outputs to date:** A number of activities have been delivered by Sheffield Hallam and their partners to engage young people from non-traditional HE backgrounds through raising their aspirations as well as helping students who lived in care adjust to university life.

**Evidence base:** Interviews with 5 members staff from Sheffield Hallam University (2), Sheffield University (1), Sheffield Local Authority (2) and one student who lived in care. **Documents consulted:** Briefing Document – Frank Buttle Trust Trustee Monitoring Visit, 2 Looked After Children Visit In reports, Looked After Children and Care Leavers – Plans 2009-2011, Calendar of Events and Contact and publicity material for the Student Preparation Programme and Support for Care Leavers at Sheffield Hallam University

**Reason for case study selection:** Focused on raising aspirations of young people in terms of access to Higher Education; includes a project focused on looked after young people; involves a range of approaches including visits and mentoring and based in the North of England.

#### Case Study 5

##### **University of the First Age and Darlington Education Village**

**Aim:** The UFA aims to enrich and extend the learning of young people by creating an 'open' university that aims to raise the aspirations of young people at all levels by improving their confidence and self-belief through exciting and positive educational experiences.

**Target group:** All children and young people aged 5-25 years.

**Activities include:** The UFA uses creative and imaginative approaches to training teachers and other professionals and adults working with young people. Darlington Education Village adopted

a holistic and systemic approach to raise the aspirations and achievement of young people. This approach included a range of activities: the facilitators programme (UFA); establishing links with parents/carers through the parents/carers forum, outreach work with parents/carers, free swimming sessions for parents/carers and their children; establishing links with local employers and businesses through arranging apprentices for students, employers mentoring and coaching students, getting businesses ready to become alternative education providers for students; developing leadership skills of students; and engaging young people in decision making.

**Outputs to date:** To date, UFA has worked with 50 Local Authority areas reaching over half a million young people and training 2,500 adults. As far as the UFA training is concerned, feedback from teachers, school managers and pupils has been very positive and they believe it will have a huge impact on learning. However, a key element of Education Village's approach is its holistic nature and there have been a number of impacts resulting from the combination of activities mentioned above. These include: improved behaviour and attendance of students, improved student achievement, increased young people's confidence and aspirations and improved the EV's engagement with parents/carers and the community.

**Evidence base:** interview with the UFA Chief Executive, interviews with 3 staff at the Education Village, interviews with 4 young people at the Education Village. **Documents consulted:** Review of UFA evaluation reports and promotional literature.

**Reason for case study selection:** It is a national wide programme working to support providers engaging young people to raise their aspirations. It supports 5-25 yrs olds and includes a range of approaches including leadership training for young people.

### Case Study 6

#### Working in the City/City 4 A Day, The Brokerage Citylink

**Aim:** To raise aspirations amongst young people from the City fringes who may not have previously considered a career in the City, despite its geographical proximity to their homes by providing young people with the opportunity to experience working life in the City.

**Target group:** School pupils aged 12-18 years (Years 8-13) from schools in 11 London Boroughs, including ten of the most deprived.

**Activities:** Working in the City: a taught programme, the opportunity to interview volunteer City employees, businesses skills, games and exercises, and recruitment exercises, which develop young people's skills in CV writing, job applications and interview techniques. The programme is broken down into three half-day workshop sessions which are delivered in a business setting. It also includes an outreach programme that supports careers, enterprise and employability sessions in schools. City 4 A Day: a one day programme of activities including a presentation on the location and history of the City and the types of companies operating here now; a tour of two City companies and an opportunity for the students to talk to City employees in a range of roles; and a team building exercise based on what has been learnt during the day.

**Outputs to date:** Approximately 75 companies and 117 inner city schools have participated. 6000 young people have visited City companies and 7000 have taken part in activities in schools.

**Evidence base:** interview with project manager; observation of a workshop held at a UBS for Year 12 students followed by interviews with 12 beneficiaries, the accompanying school teacher and the workshop leader.

**Reason for case study selection:** Working with pupils in schools as well as those at risk of becoming NEET, involves employers and is about getting young people to set their sights higher; group work approach; and based in London.

### 1.3 Background and context

As outlined in the introduction, this study is concerned with identifying effective ways of raising young people's aspiration in terms of their engagement in learning. The assumption underpinning this study and which is borne out in the examples and issues raised in the report is that while aspirations are clearly a key part of a young person's decision about if and how to progress their learning, it is just one of a range of factors that affect their choices and behaviour. Indeed, existing research to date shows the importance of understanding and influencing both wider socio-economic factors and individual behaviour in supporting to engage those not in education, employment or training (NEET). Low aspirations can be the cause of disengagement but it is not necessarily the sole element in re-engagement.

Since 2001 there has been a steady increase in the participation of 16-18 year olds in further learning. The increase in participation is largely due to the increase in numbers participating in full time education. Participation in Work Based Learning (WBL), Employer Funded Training (EFT) and other education and training (OET) has decreased over the same period, with Work Based Learning suffering the greatest decline. Therefore the key change has been in the type of education and training young people are participating in. Although participation in further education has increased in the past 6 years, it has changed very little from overall participation levels in 1994, where the vast majority of 16-18 year olds participated in education or training, of which over half were in full time education.

The percentage of young people NEET has remained relatively constant over the past 7 years. The highest proportion of young people NEET was for 18 year olds, with 16% of the cohort not participating in education or training in 2008. This is significantly higher than the percentage of 16 year olds (5%) and 17 year olds (9%).

Whilst the study is concerned with effective practice in raising the aspirations of *all* young people, much of the literature focuses on practice in relation to those in the NEET group, those at risk of becoming NEET, and those with low attainment. This is because much of the policy and operational focus has been on these groups of young people. This reflects the fact that the educational system has needed to be reformed in order to better meet the needs of these young people, for example, by creating more appropriate options, widening choice, developing more flexible and tailored delivery methods, providing better and more targeted financial and non-financial support, addressing specific barriers, and procedural changes such as tracking young people more effectively.

Reducing the number of NEETs was cited as the top priority for 117 local authorities in the CYP Now's 10 Year Youth Strategy (2008). The national indicator 117 (16 to 18 year olds who are NEET) and the national indicator 91 (17 year olds in education or training) are also key indicators for Local Area Agreements. The LSC is committed to increasing the number of young people participating in education and narrowing the gap in educational achievement (LSC, 2007).

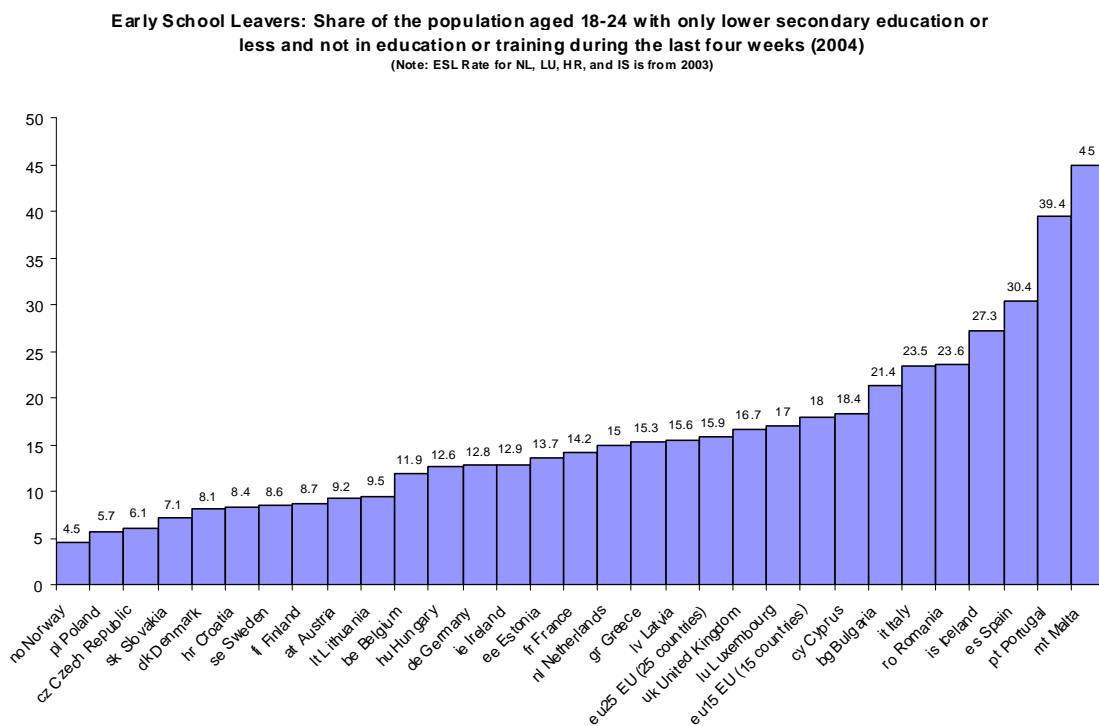
Whilst there is a view that the NEET group is declining, it has been remarkably resistant to the raft of initiatives focused on it. Some commentators argue that interventions by government have been a 'mishmash' lacking in strategic overview, long term commitment, and proper coordination (Williamson, 2008). Others question whether the right focus has been adopted, i.e. skills at the expense of jobs. The Association of Learning Providers (ALP) for example believes that the Foundation Learning Tier (FLT) proposals are overly concerned with getting people qualifications first before they get jobs.

A recent Cabinet Office report identified a number of socioeconomic, family and community based factors affecting the aspirations of young people (Cabinet Office, 2008). The Nuffield Review of 14-19 education and training, focusing on non-participation, found that not only are the NEET 'group' a heterogeneous group of young people in terms of their characteristics and needs, they also vary in terms of:

- Age – the characteristics and dynamics of 16, 17 and 18 year olds vary.
- Whether it is a lack of engagement with education, training, or employment.
- Length of time spent in NEET group – frictional and long-term.(Nuffield, 2008)

The study also identifies issues in calculating the size of the NEET group, especially as it is a negative or residual calculation. As Figure 1 and Figure 2 demonstrate the relative position of the UK depends on the definitions used. Figure 1 shows the proportion of early school leavers in a range of European countries for 18-24 year olds, based on the European Union (EU) definition of early school leavers, those with only a lower secondary education (i.e. qualified to Level 2) or less and not in education or training during the last four weeks). This shows the UK (16.7%) sits just below the average for the 25 EU countries (15.9%) and behind major competitors such as, Germany (12.8%) and France (14.2%). Inevitably, if you have countries with compulsory school leaving ages of 18 years then these are, by definition, going to have far lower NEET figures and better attainment figures.

**Figure 1 Early School Leavers 18-24: European comparisons**

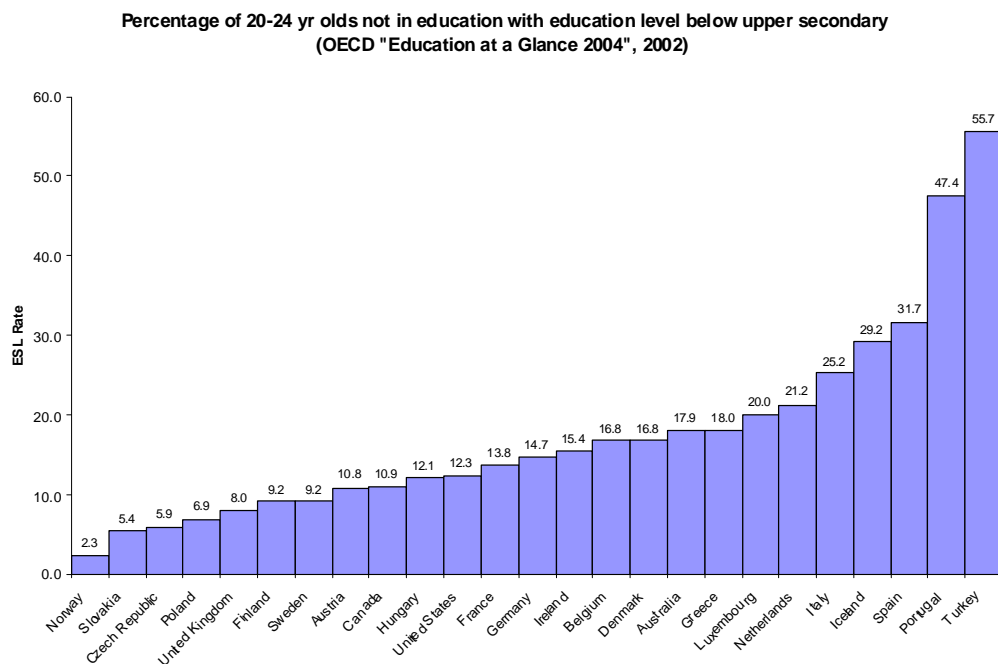


In comparison, Figure 2 below shows the proportion of early school leavers aged 20-24 based on the OECD definition i.e. those that are not in education and with educational levels below secondary education. On this measure the UK ranks fifth lowest (8.0%) well ahead of its major competitors, such as the United States (12.3%), France

(13.8%) and Germany (14.7%). Therefore, depending on the definition and age groups used, the relative position of the UK can vary significantly.

In the present context, this is important in determining what practices are effective. If the NEET figure is not declining then none of the current policies, practices and programmes can be said to have worked in affecting participation of the most vulnerable, disaffected and disadvantaged young people. However, if Figure 2 is correct then relatively, the UK in 2002 was succeeding where others were not.

**Figure 2 Early School Leavers 20-24: OECD comparisons**



Latest OECD (2008) statistics available for 2006 shows the use of another definition i.e. 20-24 year olds not in education or employment. These data show that for the UK, NEET levels were 13.7% ranking them further down the pecking order (16th position) behind the USA (9.6%) but ahead of other key competitors such as Germany (13.8%), Sweden (16.8%) and France.

The Cabinet Office report defines high aspirations as comprising the following key components: inspiration, information, self-esteem and self-efficacy (Cabinet Office, 2008). It also argues that aspirations are complex and multi-dimensional and distinguishes educational aspirations from broader aspirations. It states that parents/carers and children alike tend to think holistically about their futures in terms of 'being happy' and that disadvantaged young people do not have fundamentally different aspirations from their more advantaged peers. However the report, citing a range of other studies, also highlights that there is a difference between what people can hope to achieve and what they can expect to achieve, particularly with respect to the relative deprivation of the locality in which they reside. In the words of one of the stakeholders interviewed for this study:

*"[It is important to consider] the actual opportunities available to young people and that 'low aspirations' may reflect personal, familial, peer or community experience of limited opportunities".*

The Cabinet Office research sees effective practice in raising aspirations as sitting across a range of policy and practice areas, namely: Building human capabilities; physical and economic regeneration; empowerment; providing incentives and removing financial barriers; information and inspiration; and community. They categorise 'what works' at three levels:

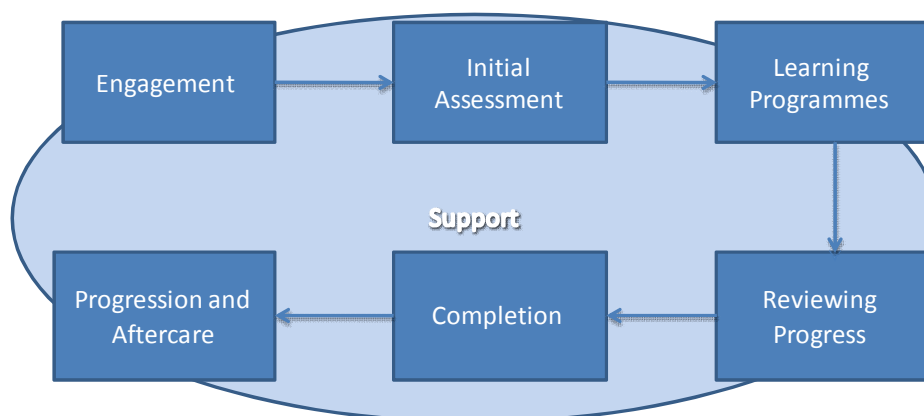
- Community (i.e. building self efficacy and social capital). Examples provided include: Extended Schools, Sure Start, Working Neighbourhoods, NRF.
- Parent/family (i.e. improving home environment). Examples provided include: Family Intervention Projects, Family Literacy, Language and Numeracy, work focused services in Children Centres.
- The individual young person (i.e. building self-esteem). Examples provided include: City Challenge, Gifted and Talented, EMA, Youth Councils.

Suggested opportunities for future provision include: expanding the Extended schools agenda; providing targeted support to parents/carers at key transition points for children; increasing IAG for parents/carers and children; targeting initiatives for children aged 11-14 years, and a broader range of role models for young people living in deprived areas. A key issue highlighted in the report is the need for a coordinated and joined up approach to delivery. This and other research (Gutman and Akerman, 2008) highlights that while interventions focused on young people's aspirations are valuable in and of themselves, they must take place alongside measures that facilitate the *achievement* of these aspirations particularly for disadvantaged young people.

It must be remembered that Government strategy starts with very young people with the SureStart initiative, then the Children's Fund and then the 14-19 agenda, as well as community regeneration initiatives which often have a learning and skills component.

Indeed, this report and our review of the literature shows that effective practice is about joined up structures and front line delivery, the collection and sharing of good quality data, thinking differently and supporting people to deliver. For the purpose of this study, we structure the findings on effective practice under headings that refer to key components in the journey of learning in its widest sense i.e. engagement, initial assessment, curriculum content, support to students, review of progress, completion, progression and after care. See Figure 3 below. We also include a section that discusses the key cross cutting issues, which includes joined up working, issues of disability, involving young people in design and delivery and the need to engage and support parents/carers.

**Figure 3 The Learner Journey**



#### **1.4 Structure of the report**

The remainder of the report presents the findings followed by the policy recommendations and comprise the following sub-sections:

Summary of Effective Practice

- Section 2: Effective Practice through the Learner Journey
  - Section 2.1 Introduction
  - Section 2.2 Engagement
  - Section 2.3 Initial Assessment
  - Section 2.4 Learning Programme
  - Section 2.5 Support to students
  - Section 2.6 Review of progress
  - Section 2.7 Completion
  - Section 2.8 Progression and after care
- Section 3 Cross Cutting Issues
- Section 4 Conclusions and Recommendations

## SUMMARY OF EFFECTIVE PRACTICE

### Engagement

- **Engage with young people at an earlier stage and at key transition points:** To raise awareness at an opinion forming stage such as through taster sessions, mentors, visits. Key transition points include from primary to secondary; between compulsory and post-compulsory; and between education and labour market.
- **Provide for the specific needs of the different sub-groups within the NEET category:** The NEET term is problematic as it refers to different groups of young people with a range of different and often multiple needs of varying intensity. Key areas of effective practice include distinguishing between 'frictional' and long term NEET; BME and gender specific initiatives; targeting specific support to address the specific barriers of particular groups, especially childcare.
- **An alternative offer to mainstream schooling:** A key element to raising the aspirations of young people, particularly those currently disengaged from learning, is for the offer to be something that is not associated with their experience of formal schooling, yet importantly still linked to the mainstream so that re-engagement is possible and encouraged, such as offering young people opportunities to study outside of school, with different learning styles and experience a new environment and also to engage in positive activities.
- **Use of mentor, role models and peer support to encourage engagement:** A recognised effective approach in the context of funded pathways to employment and training such as personal tutors, business mentors, peer support, and role models. Group work as well as one to one mentoring can provide a mechanism for providing contact with and support from peers and non-peers alike. Developing group work in this way can be resource intensive, requiring time and particular skills in facilitating group dynamics.

### Initial assessment

- **Informed and realistic:** At the point of initial assessment the provider needs access to information about the young person and then in turn the young person needs access to initial IAG. While there are examples of effective practice, the sharing of information on individual young people between agencies is still limited. Realistic target setting in terms of taking a step by step approach to target setting rewards young people incrementally and helps build up confidence particularly for those who have not been successful previously in the formal learning context.

### Learning Programmes

- **Contextualised learning:** The provision of contextualised learning is important in terms of making sure young people's aspirations fit the local economic context as well as contribute to wider market demands. As part of this providers need to be able to fully exploit local and wider opportunities as appropriate in terms of, for example, tailoring learning and setting up placements with local industries and businesses. This can also include the promotion of particular subject areas such as science, and the media.
- **Practical/work related learning and the acquisition of key skills:** For young people to successfully engage in a programme and therefore to be exposed to new opportunities and the acquisition of key skills, it is important that learning sessions are fun, active and interactive and that with respect to work placements support is on-going.
- **Delivery that is flexible and incremental:** Such as roll-on: roll-off provision; bridging activities; involving a range of accredited training providers outside the school; offering provision in a range of localities; and offering a range of teaching/learning styles. Such provision should be bolstered by the development of the Qualification and Curriculum Framework. Awards and accreditation for both 'hard' and 'soft' skills (such as social and personal skills) encourage young people to take more responsibility in selecting, planning



and leading activities based on their interests, aspirations and potential. There is much evidence of providers (especially at the Foundation Level) developing their own internal qualifications or using external ones to accredit small steps in learning achievement at regular intervals.

#### **Support to students**

- **Impartial, realistic, tailored and responsive information, advice and guidance:** IAG should be: At the right level, delivered in the right learning style and in the right environment, specific, impartial, realistic and provided on a one-to-one basis and provided by experienced and knowledgeable advisers, focused on ensuring all young people are provided with IAG at the ages of 11, 14 and 16 years, multi-dimensional and embracing.
- **Flexible and tailored support based on trust and respect:** Some programmes include a designated trusted adult with whom they build a strong relationship founded on advocacy, brokerage and support. Learning should be a co-operative venture between adults and young people. Practitioners should understand the individual and be supported in a flexible and tailored way. Staff support and development is important.

#### **Review of progress**

- **Pro-active tracking and empowering young people:** Need to proactively track progress to stimulate and reaffirm engagement in a way that captures both personal development and attainment. This is often the element of support that is neglected by providers due to competing priorities; this area of work needs to be recognised and properly resourced. Equally important is allowing young people to lead on the review process through a package of individualised support.

#### **Completion**

- **Celebration of achievement:** Particularly important for those that have not received a certificate or qualification previously e.g. end of course awards, celebration events, such as Youth Achievement Awards.

#### **Progression and after care**

- **On-going support and tracking:** Progression is not always about 'getting a job' but should also include further skills development and an appreciation of the value of learning. Relationships and activities which have lifted aspirations can be difficult to maintain beyond the life of a programme unless support continues after the programme. In this context, identifying destinations and monitoring regression is therefore important, particularly for disadvantaged learners:

#### **Cross-cutting issues**

- **Collaborative delivery at strategic and provider levels:** It is important to get initiatives into strategic structures in terms of ensuring widespread buy-in and linkages into other areas and with other providers as well as coordination of learning provision with other delivery partners such as YOTs and housing services.
- **An enhanced role for schools and Connexions in tackling NEET:** Such as secondary and primary schools working together to identify early those at risk; targeted support early on in secondary education; Local authorities; and head teachers of high producing NEET schools working together to develop programme of action such as prevention guides, provision of additional Connexion advisors. An enhanced role for Connexions Services and other support agencies can include integrated youth provision, one stop shops, and enhanced outreach work and marketing.
- **Commissioning based on needs analysis:** Strategic and integrated commissioning at a local level is more effective when based on the identification of need. Strategic, in-depth needs analysis can identify the composition of a target group, its dynamics, geographical distribution and overall numbers. Research can also identify what support structures, or

combination of support structures are needed for different learners. Sharing of information between organisations can also help identify target groups or particular issues.

- **The provision of financial support to those who need it:** Removing financial barriers to learning is a core issue for many potential learners, such as through: providing financial support to meet identified barriers e.g. childcare; the use of financial incentives to reward participation and attainment; targeting of financial support to meet specific, identified needs of learners; and providing financial incentives to employers to engage with NEET young people.
- **Involvement of young people in design and delivery:** It helps create ownership, boost confidence and ensure the service is tailored more closely to needs of young people.
- **Parental/carer engagement:** There is a strong association between parent's/carer's aspirations for their children and their children's achievements. Working to involve and raise awareness of parents/carers is therefore critical.
- **Addressing the needs of young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities:** Policies and practices within schools can either raise or constrain aspirations of young people with disabilities. Effective practice includes: dedicated services; tailored IAG; customised provision, appropriate procedures and policies; and raising awareness activities among all staff and young people.

## 2 EFFECTIVE PRACTICE THROUGH THE LEARNER JOURNEY

### 2.1 Introduction

This study has discovered a large amount and wide range of effective practice from community/local authority wide approaches and whole school approaches to smaller scale alternative provision, targeted at a broad range of young people with different needs, in different circumstances and at different levels.

In this Section we summarise the key points of effective practice from the literature review/stakeholder survey for key points in the learner journey and where relevant supplement this with the more in depth findings from the six case studies. As highlighted in the summary table above, there are a number of themes running through the various practices, such as the need for integrated working, involvement of employers, having a thorough understanding of the needs of young people and to provide responsive, customised, flexible and tailored provision. Indeed, there are a number of principles underpinning effective delivery *per se* whatever the context. A recent Ofsted report identified effective practice in those colleges that had improved their performance between the first and second cycle Ofsted inspections (Ofsted, 2008c). This report identified: clarity of vision; leadership and management; having excellence as standard; the constant monitoring and review of performance at all levels; self-critical self-assessment; and effective staff development, including management capacity. These form underpinning principles of good practice, which while not explicitly identified in this study certainly inform those examples which are highlighted.

A key element running through the case studies is that of an organisation-wide approach. Providers and their partners identify what are the main aims and objectives of their organisation, and what is needed to meet those aims, what are the barriers and how may the barriers be addressed. This creates a holistic approach out of which develops the particular programmes, initiatives and activities described below. In practical terms, this systemic approach facilitates effective practice because it identifies priorities, resources and responsibilities. Taking an integrated strategic approach can also maximise synergies with other initiatives and external partners.

This study looks at effective practice in raising the aspirations of *all* young people. Even though much of the focus is on meeting the needs of the NEET group, we have found that the principles of effective practice identified here can be replicated more widely to other groups of young learners. The key question raised through this study is whether effective practice can be replicated within existing resources or whether it is about adopting new approaches.

With the exception of one example (Manchester City Council) one key group of young people which did not arise explicitly in the literature review or through the case studies were those that fall within the "not known" category despite their numbers being large in some areas. While Connexions services do spend a lot of resources on their MI systems to ensure this group is as small as possible, and the targeting of provision in community settings is often designed to identify "not known's", numerically this category can sometimes be as large as the NEET group.

## 2.2 Engagement

### 2.2.1 *Engage with young people at an earlier stage and at key transition points*

A key point that is consistently raised is the need to engage with young people at a much earlier age, and in particular at an early opinion forming stage. The literature review identified the following effective practice<sup>1</sup>:

- Working with a range of partners to identify those young people in need of additional support at an earlier age.
- Working with primary school children to embed higher aspirations at an earlier stage in their learning.
- Working with primary schools that feed into secondary schools with high levels of NEET.

From our case studies, we also found evidence of the value of engaging young people at an earlier age. It is an approach, for example, that has been adopted by The Brokerage Citylink in their programme aimed towards raising awareness of work related opportunities in the finance and business sector. Their Working in the City/City 4 A Day programme has provided Year 8 students from schools in the City fringes with the opportunity to experience working life in the City. As highlighted in the case study reports, it consists of a one day programme of activities including: a presentation on the location and history of the City and the types of companies operating here now; a tour of two City companies and an opportunity for the students to talk to City employees in a range of roles; and a team building exercise based on what has been learnt during the day. To date the programme has been met with enthusiastic responses from the young people and their teaching staff.

Early intervention has also proved effective in raising aspirations and providing young people with relevant information to inform future career choices. The Merrill Lynch Enterprise and Entrepreneurship programme engages young people from Year 8 and delivers a range of activities that gives young people a greater insight into the sector. This has enabled young people to identify the skills necessary to be successful in the sector and make informed educational decisions to support their career choices. In addition the activities, many of which are based in the Merrill Lynch offices in London, are inspiring and motivate young people to work hard to achieve the skills and qualifications necessary to work in the sector.

Sheffield Hallam University's Raising Aspirations suite of programmes includes interventions with different groups of young people at different levels, needs and ages. Whilst some of its efforts are focused on young people in FE, it is also working with younger pupils. Staff interviewed as part of the case study visit expressed their interest in working with younger pupils to make them aware of higher education at an earlier age so: *"It is not isolated and becomes part of a process. Even though they are a long way off it is something to aspire to and is seen as achievable"*. The University is building relationships with pupils early on and are also using the extended curriculum to work with pupils outside of school hours. Identifying HE as a potential and viable option at an earlier age is particularly important with young people who live in families and communities with little or no participation in HE. Sheffield Hallam University is planning to extend this work into primary schools.

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<sup>1</sup> Key references include: White et al (2007); SHM (2006); Thomas et al (2008); IPPTA (Date unknown); and Hoggart et al (2005).

A key area of effective practice also relates to targeted support during transition stages which are critical points for young people particularly for those with an increased risk of disengagement. The literature review and stakeholder interviews identified<sup>2</sup>:

- Learner activities with employers and HEIs ahead of key transitions points.
- The use of trained mentors to work with young people with low aspirations.
- Enhancing the support of IAG providers ahead of key transition points.

It is challenging to properly join up interventions across these transition phases as provision is largely funded in segments. This makes continuity harder to guarantee. A constant relationship with a trusted worker is one of the most effective ways to help a young person through one of these transition points; however it is very often this type of support which is difficult to fund or is spread too thinly to ensure high quality support and smooth transitions.

Nevertheless, a number of examples were identified in the case studies. The City 4 a Day and Enterprise and Entrepreneurship programmes provide targeted and detailed information on particular sectors in order to inform choices at Year 9 and year 11 transition points.

ESF funded activities through the Youth Participation Programme in the North East region focus on support for students at critical transition points across an entire region. This comprises 12 projects (one in each local authority area) and the main aim is to increase young people's participation in learning through locally defined and delivered interventions focusing on: provision to support progression into mainstream learning; work to prevent young people disengaging; support for young people during periods of learning transition; and work to reengage those young people NEET.

### **2.2.2 Provide for the specific needs of the different sub-groups within the NEET category**

The NEET term is problematic as it refers to different groups of young people with a range of different and often multiple needs of varying intensity. Perhaps the most significant distinction to make is between those who move into and out of NEET (frictional) and those who remain NEET in the long term. The latter group make up a minority of the NEET group overall and have different needs. However, a key issue is how to identify and target support to those who most need it without going through a formal assessment of each individual child. The literature review identified some examples of effective practice:

- BME and gender specific initiatives such as encouraging women into construction and men into childcare. (e.g. SHM, forthcoming 2009 and GHK, 2008b)
- Targeting specific support to address the specific barriers of particular groups, especially childcare. (e.g. Fanceschello et al, 2008)

For example the LSC South West commissioned research to address the lack of engagement of BME young people onto apprenticeship programmes, which was less than 1% of the Apprenticeship cohort. A key aspect of this research was to bring young people from BME communities together with other key stakeholders to generate practical ideas for increasing the participation of BME young people in Apprenticeships. The event proved successful with over 50 stakeholders attending

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<sup>2</sup> The bulk of evidence from here was provided through the stakeholder interviews as well as through an evaluation GHK conducted of the Doncaster 14-19 Pathfinder. (GHK 2005d).

from FE, WBL and employers, and a number of innovative initiatives were identified, through the consultation, such as the need to develop a peer network to provide role models for BME young people. (SHM, forthcoming 2009)

Further to this, information provided by the Prince's Trust as part of the peer review process suggested that targeting specific groups can be an effective method of engagement, especially where there is a longer term route into mainstream provision. The Prince's Trust has had some success in moving women into traditional male employment. Their 'Get Into' Programmes are jointly run with different sector employers e.g. Get Into Construction with Carillion and Get Into Logistics with DHL. These programmes have proved successful because they have been able to target recruitment including for example the provision of female only programmes. In addition, 'Get Into' programmes stand out from other employment courses by including an informal learning style and offers of real work experience and some jobs. The perception of the programme as offering something different has proved important to young people.

Another example of targeted provision is LEAP, a national programme developed and delivered by the LSC for young parents/parents to be. A good example of how this provision has been delivered in the North East was evidence in one of our case studies i.e. the Stockton-on-Tees Teenage Pregnancy Support Service. In response to the recommendations of a report commissioned in June 2006 by Felicity Shenton titled "Barriers to Education, Training and Employment for Young Parents in Stockton-on-Tees" the aim of the provision is to tackle the increasing numbers of teenage parents who are Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) in Stockton-on-Tees and to engage these young parents in learning activities to improve their social, financial and emotional well-being. It also about providing them with the necessary toolkit to be effective parents, to prevent future unplanned pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections and to progress into further training, education and employment. The programme engages with young parents through outreach with local schools and with the local Children's centre to provide a flexible, relaxed and informal learning environment for learners. The flexibility of provision plays an important role in overcoming barriers to learning as young parents can arrange sessions around existing commitments. The project has also established a peer support programme that trains young parents who have accessed the programme to support other young parents that have commenced on the project. This helps develop trust and is a powerful way of communicating the benefits and key messages of the programme.

The Compact Scheme as part of the Raising Aspirations project (The Sheffield Hallam University Case study) offers support in the application and transition process to students who face particular barriers to progression to University. The scheme provides enhanced support for these students during the application and admissions process and beyond. Students must meet specified criteria to be eligible for extra admissions support. Being Looked After or a Care Leaver was added to the criteria in 2006. The project carries out a number of activities to encourage those young people in care to apply to university under the Raising Aspirations umbrella (see above). The two day event, 'A Taste of Uni' has been cited by young people and Local Authority staff as being effective in raising aspirations due to its interactive approach. Sheffield Hallam and Local Authority staff believe that it is important to physically bring young people into a university environment as this is an effective way of breaking down their barriers to HE. This is effective because young people are able to explore what being a student is, their lifestyle and the type of work they would do at university. The two day visit is a hands-on and interactive experience and the young people take the activities

seriously. This also breaks barriers down with the foster carers who themselves may be a barrier to the aspirations of young people in their care. Some foster carers may not have experienced university themselves or do not know of anyone who have been and therefore may not see it as a viable option for the young people in their care.

### **2.2.3 An alternative offer to mainstream schooling**

A key element to engaging and raising the aspirations of young people, particularly those currently disengaged from learning, is for the offer to be something that is not associated with their experience of formal schooling, yet importantly still linked to the mainstream so that re-engagement is possible and encouraged. The literature review identified the following key points<sup>3</sup>:

- Some young people valued the opportunity to study outside of school in different learning and other environments and that alternative provision is most effective when it directly leads onto further learning or training and is not an end in itself.
- An effective technique used by a number of providers is the offer of interesting and diversionary activities as a 'hook' to engage young people such as various sporting or leisure activities. It was found that individually tailoring such activities and situating them within a multi-agency approach was important in terms of engaging young people in meaningful learning. As a minimum such activities can help participants establish a routine and be better prepared for an educational setting.
- Vocational provision is most effective when delivered in an appropriate environment and learning style conducive to the skills being taught i.e. practical and hands on.
- The use of virtual, peripatetic and distance learning to broaden the curriculum, especially in smaller schools has provided effective. This can include the delivery of learning programmes via ICT.

For young people who are struggling or disengaged from school low aspirations are reinforced by feelings of inadequacy and failure, which for many is associated with their experience of formal schooling. With the Princes Trust xl clubs, for example, they provide an alternative programme but still within the school setting. They operate in schools on a 'closed' 2 year programme (age 14-16). The group of young people meet for at least 3 hours per week and, guided by an xl club adviser, they are encouraged to work together to achieve goals relating to their education, training and future lives. Some xl clubs are also run in youth clubs and secure units. Evaluations of xl and similar programmes such as Skill Force have demonstrated that they increase motivation, improve school attendance and reduce exclusion rates.<sup>4</sup> (info provided by peer reviewer PL)

The Young Apprenticeship programme is a good example of a successful alternative to exclusively classroom based learning. The North East Young Apprenticeship programme has performed well in terms of attainment, performance and in meeting the needs of young people.<sup>5</sup> In addition to this, the Increased Flexibility Programme (IFP)

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<sup>3</sup> Key references include: GHK (2005b); Cook (2005) Derbyshire County Council E2E (2008): [http://www.derbyshire.gov.uk/education/youth\\_service/e2e/default.asp](http://www.derbyshire.gov.uk/education/youth_service/e2e/default.asp); Ofsted 2008a; and Sanford et al 2008.

<sup>4</sup> Source: Peer reviewer Prince's Trust.

<sup>5</sup> Source: Peer reviewer LSC North East Region

offers a vocationally focused programme delivered in collaboration with schools, colleges and work based learning providers. The national evaluation of the second cohort of IFP learners suggests that the programme can usefully contribute to engaging learners in post-16 learning (Golden et al, 2006). As noted in the evaluation, while an Ofsted inspection in 2005 identified issues with the sharing of prior attainment with partner organisations and ensuring quality among all partners, the response from learners was very positive, with a large number of colleges reaching capacity and restricting the number of places. Motor vehicle, hair and beauty and construction programmes were particularly popular. The programme was also seen to provide wider benefits to students, attitudes, behaviours and social skills.

Darlington Education Village, as demonstrated through one of the case studies, uses a variety of programmes to engage with different groups of learners including a Personalised Learning programme for students who have difficulty engaging with the curriculum taught in the classroom. This programme uses outdoor activities to encourage students to stay in school and to learn and re-engage in the curriculum. One of its aims is to: *“Develop a sense of self esteem and self discipline, allied to a positive ethos of community involvement and responsibility”*. To this end it runs a number of leadership programmes designed to develop leaders amongst the student body and develop role models for other pupils. It runs a Prefect programme for Year 11 and also the University of the First Age's Student Leadership Programme, and its Facilitators Programme. In addition it runs the Cornenius Project, a project funded through the European and Culture Lifelong Learning Programme calls for the active involvement of pupils from partner schools in different countries leading young people to active citizenship by endorsing the Olympic principles and values. Teaching through good examples and intercultural dialogue, the project helps pupils to become better persons and active European citizens.

#### **2.2.4 Use of mentor, role models and peer support to encourage engagement**

The use of mentors, role models and peer support to encourage engagement and raise the aspirations of young people both one to one and in group settings was shown through the literature review and stakeholder interviews to be increasingly recognised as effective<sup>6</sup>:

- Mentors and role model support needs to be in the context of funded pathways to employment and training.
- Having a supportive/trusted adult or peer e.g. youth workers/mentors is valued by young people. Establishing a wide volunteering network has proved useful in order to get the right match of individuals.
- Targeting this type of support at young people where it is seen to be most effective, such as, young Black males is well documented.
- More generally, mentors and role models through a peer support model have been used to expose young people to wider possibilities as well as to develop young people's literacy and numeracy skills. For example, one programme targeted boys with good ability but who are disillusioned or underachieving. It involves fathers or significant males via a monthly forum. Another involved young parents and parents to be.

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<sup>6</sup> Key references include: Hayward et al, (2008); Gutman and Akerman (2008); REACH (2007); Van de Graaf et al (2008).



- Providing learning in group settings has helped to provide a mechanism to better stimulate individual aspiration through contact with and support from peers and non-peers alike. Bringing together young people from a variety of backgrounds can also be beneficial for all team members in terms of raising awareness and increasing resistance to negative peer pressure. Developing group work in this way can be resource intensive, requiring time and particular skills in facilitating group dynamics.
- Group work does not necessarily preclude individual tailored support as this can be developed within a group setting or by setting aside time for this.

Involving both teachers and students in a range of exercises aimed towards raising the aspirations of young people in the areas of business and finance was found to be effective through most of the case studies for this study in terms of ensuring enhanced and sustained engagement of teachers, which in turn benefits pupils. For example, the Brokerage programme, which, as described elsewhere in the report, is aimed towards raising the aspirations of London's students by providing them with opportunities to learn about the City and the financial sector, engages both teachers/career advisors and pupils in business games, such as a mock-trading game and in-tray exercises. This gave young people the opportunity to learn key skills in enterprise and business in an informal environment. The engagement of accompanying school staff has the added benefit of updating their knowledge and understanding about current work practice.

Group work is a key feature of the University of the First Age's approach. Their Student Leadership programme is based on young people working together in teams to develop their confidence and leadership skills. When this programme was delivered at Darlington Education Village, the school invited young people from other schools to take part. The University of the First Age's Student Learning programme involves training young people to set up and deliver their own learning to young people, without any assistance from adults.

A key element of the Darlington Education Village, in particular, is creating student leadership role models for other pupils. It is important that role models work at a variety of levels for both those being the role models and those looking up to them. For example, at a practical level only Year 11s can be prefects, but also not all Years 11 have the attributes to be prefects so there are other exemplar roles that pupils can play. The UFA's Leadership programme includes students from other years, the school has Arts and Culture Ambassadors who work with Ambassadors from other schools, and the Comenius project is a pan-European citizenship project. This combination means that different types of pupils can be involved in role model programmes, and this breadth means that different types of students can relate to different types of role models.

The Enterprise and Entrepreneurship programme gives young people the opportunity to be mentored and supported by volunteers at Merrill Lynch. This has had a positive effect on local young people who themselves may not have relatives or friends who work in the City of London, and demystifies preconceptions of the sector, which in turn raises their aspirations that they too can progress within this highly competitive area.

As part of its Raising Aspiration activities, Sheffield Hallam University runs The Graduation Project (see [www.thegraduationsproject.co.uk](http://www.thegraduationsproject.co.uk)) which produces case studies of successful local graduates from non-traditional backgrounds, showing their progression route and experiences. The emphasis is on: *"If I can, you can"*. Case study posters are distributed to schools and colleges. In addition, school and college

students, their teachers and parents are able to use the dedicated website to view a variety of case studies by school / college and subject studied along with sources of information. This website receives around 500 hits a day. Peer support is a key part of the its care leaver programme where friendships are facilitated amongst students with similar backgrounds and experiences

### **2.3 Initial assessment – informed and realistic**

Initial assessment is a critical point in the learner's journey. It is about undertaking a meaningful diagnosis to get the right people engaged with the right provision in the first instance. However, it is only the first point in what should be a regular and on-going review of progress and further goal setting. The literature review identified that<sup>7</sup>:

- Providers require relevant information about the young person to ensure they can make informed judgments about their needs.
- Initial assessment should go hand in hand with initial IAG, and the young person needs to be fully informed and empowered to make decisions.
- The design of resulting individual learning plans and later learner reviews is important for providers and learners and should be done in a participatory manner.
- E2E is a good example of a resource rich, flexible initial assessment period.

An important aspect of the initial assessment process is receiving accurate and appropriate information about the learner from their previous provider, or from other support organisations. The introduction of common assessment tools across agencies will certainly help the smooth flow of information, both about the individual and the types of provision available at a local level. However, the most effective referrals are made by people who have developed a relationship with a young person and know them well enough to judge "readiness" and appropriate start points.

Taking a practical and realistic approach to target setting has also proved effective in raising young people's aspirations particularly with young people in the NEET group. However:

- Realistic target setting is important, particularly with disadvantaged learners.
- There is also a need for robust monitoring of academic, personal and social progress, and close collaboration with primary schools and other services for children and young people as an early warning system for disaffected young people.

For one project (The Future:proof Framework, Sheffield City Council) the use of a particular assessment and target setting tool – the Rickter Scale - has proved effective in positively engaging young people and motivating them to take ownership of their own goals and learning plans. As part of an initial assessment process and on-going review, young people with support of the staff set their own goals and are able to see their learning journey. It is an assessment and evaluation tool that uses motivational interviewing techniques to: raise self awareness, build self-esteem, motivate action planning, aid goal setting and provide feedback on progress made.

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<sup>7</sup> Much evidence for this section was available through the stakeholder interviews for example Suffolk LSC and Princes Trust. Key references also included: GHK (2008a); Ofsted (2008a) and Ofsted (2008b).

## **2.4 Learning programme**

### **2.4.1 Contextualised learning**

The provision of contextualised learning is important in terms of making sure young people's aspirations fit the local economic context as well as contribute to wider market demands. As part of this providers need to be able to fully exploit local and wider opportunities as appropriate. This can have important practical implications:

- In those areas where young people progress into seasonal or casual employment, providers could develop provision in these sectors and deliver these when they are not working (Rolf, 2008).
- Engaging local employers in order to develop work related learning activities and highlight job opportunities has a positive effect on engaging and motivating students, particularly in rural communities and for lower skilled people whose travel-to-work areas tend to be smaller than those with higher level skills. (DCSF, 2008b)
- 'Universal' approaches can be used in different ways and with different target groups in terms of age and ability such as:
  - the Young Apprenticeship programme, which provides a successful alternative to KS4 provision for motivated students; programmes aimed at directing young people into science based subjects using visits and special events, practical and demonstration sessions, mentoring and work placements (Ofsted, 2006); and,
  - the Key Stage 4 Engagement Programme which offers a personalised programme, including a significant work-based component, for those learners who are underachieving, have poor attendance levels and are at risk of disengagement. (Cowen and Burgess, 2009)

Two of the case studies examined for this study, Working in the City/City 4 A Day and the Enterprise and Entrepreneurship Projects, provide useful examples of how local economic employment opportunities provide the basis for targeted provision and work related learning. Both are focused on building the skills of local young people to gain employment in the financial sector within the City of London. The projects look to address the disparity between the affluence in the city and the high unemployment and low aspirations of the surrounding communities in which it is based. Both projects have been successful in engaging with and recruiting volunteers within City institutions to participate in the in order to provide mentoring, facilitate workshops and develop projects for local schools that raise awareness of employment opportunities within the area and teach young people the skills necessary to gain employment with these large and successful corporations.

More generally a focus on sports, arts and media, entrepreneurship and practical subjects/options was a common feature in our case studies, especially in raising the aspirations of hard to help young people. Providers recognised that they needed a broad offer if they are to engage with the needs of their learners, and for learners to engage with a variety of progression routes – academic/non-academic, traditional/non traditional subjects.

### **2.4.2 Practical/work related learning and the acquisition of key skills**

A key finding to emerge from the case studies and the literature was that for young people to successfully engage in a programme and therefore to be exposed to new

opportunities and the acquisition of key skills, it is important that learning sessions are fun, active and interactive and that with respect to work placements support is on-going.

The literature review and stakeholder interviews identified a rich seam of provision:<sup>8</sup>

- Offering young people the chance to work with employers and build effective relationships allows them to learn and practice new skills in a realistic environment. For example, involving teams of students from a primary school, secondary school and a college in researching and learning about the issue of climate change, how they could improve the energy efficiency of their school and then pitching these ideas to a panel of judges in a Dragon's Den-style event.
- Work placements and work related learning needs to be with an appropriate employer or organisation. As part of this on-going support needs to be provided for both the learner and the employer.
- Barriers to work placements include resource issues for employers, especially SMEs. Providers have overcome these by targeting employers in growth sectors, those with recruitment needs, and also Third Sector organisations. Financial incentives for employers also have a role.
- Employers should be engaged in leading on and designing work placements so that they are both meaningful for the learner and useful to the employer. In particular, programmes need to be designed to highlight how the acquisition of basic skills benefits young people in the longer term. Embedding literacy and numeracy in practical and 'hands-on' activities is an important part of this.
- NEET young people respond better to 'strong vocational alternatives'. The new Diplomas are seen by some as weak vocational learning opportunities unless they can be delivered to meet the needs of different learning styles and in the right environment.
- The acquisition of employability skills is not just an issue for low achievers but also includes other groups of young people, for example, those on Gifted and Talented programmes.
- Work experience based on real work situations, exposes the young people to the broad opportunities found in the sectors. For example, interviewing professionals and practitioners at a range of levels, work shadowing, mini placements and giving formal presentations to the employer.

In terms of the case studies, Darlington Education Village has established links with a local music centre and organises visits to the music centre to not only develop students' musical skills but also their literacy and numeracy skills, for example, students are asked to cost the food for the cafe and organise marketing campaigns for the centre. This approach utilises outside learning environments to provide learners with different learning experiences.

The Future:Proof case study (Sheffield city Council) funds projects which deliver a range of practical fun sessions which include: outdoor physical activity-based inductions, work placements, work taster sessions and visits to employers. Work placements and taster sessions were viewed especially positively both by staff and young people because they allowed young people to test out what kind of careers they

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<sup>8</sup> Much of the evidence for this came from the stakeholder interviews. Key references include: Hayward et al, 2008; GHK, forthcoming, 2009; and Reach, 2007.

could follow as many do not always know what they exactly they want to do or what they would enjoy doing.

The Merrill Lynch programme provides a useful case study of providing work related learning within the context of business and financial skills. As outlined earlier in the report, this programme works with secondary school pupils from years 8 to 12 in the Tower Hamlets area of London and delivers a range of finance and business focused activities delivered through classroom activities, presentations and life skills training. The key areas of effective practice were:

- Delivering provision in a business setting, which was shown to motivate young people and give them a better understanding of the area of work. The majority of provision is delivered in the Merrill Lynch offices in London. This provides an inspiring learning experience for young people, who have not experienced a similar work environment. This was also a key finding from the case study work we did with The Brokerage service. This programme also delivered provision in on-site venues provided by City of London businesses. Corporate meeting rooms were used to inspire young people and to provide them with an opportunity to see the City from an insider's perspective. The young people interviewed found this a positive part of the project, as they enjoyed experiencing a professional environment.
- The integration of presentation and enterprise skills into programmes from a young age, which has delivered a visible improvement in performance. The beneficiaries found the business games very stimulating, and the young people were motivated by the more interactive learning style. All the young people interviewed said their favourite activity was the product design activity where they had to design and market a product that they developed themselves. Learners found the presentation competition valuable *"it helps build our confidence with public speaking."*
- Staff interviews and CV workshops, which have given young people a clearer understanding of the sector and a greater understanding of the diverse nature of the workforce. It has also provided valuable advice to support young people in making academic or employment choices. The project team and teaching staff found that the programme had a big impact for the young people and also for Merrill Lynch. The schools participating in the programme have seen significant improvement in SAT results, and in addition young people demonstrate improved confidence, presentation skills, entrepreneurial skills and the students now more motivated with a better understanding of the sector.

From the case studies those programmes that engage with employers to facilitate enrichment activities and business-led initiatives to raise young people's understanding of enterprise and entrepreneurship have proved successful. For example, the City for a Day programme engages with large blue-chip businesses such as Merrill Lynch, City Bank and UBS to deliver workshop sessions that provide young people with a better understanding of the sector and the skills needed to work in the area. The young people found this to be very valuable, as it gave them an insight into the workings of business and the career paths of professionals within the sector which informed their education and career choices.

### 2.4.3 *Delivery that is flexible and incremental*

The literature review identified flexible and incremental delivery as a key aspect of effective practice<sup>9</sup>:

- There is a need, especially for the NEET group, for flexible delivery such as flexible starting dates or bridging provision as not all learners want to or can start a course in September. There was also evidence of summer schools providing a much needed continuum of learning activities for Year 11 pupils who otherwise were at risk of dropping out.
- Other examples of flexible delivery included: the involvement of different training providers to address different needs, for example, personal and social development, and basic skills; offering provision in a variety of non-threatening informal learning environments/locations and a range of teaching/learning styles; and focusing on one programme area for a day or half a day instead of moving from subject to subject within a school day.
- Such provision should be bolstered by the development of the Qualification and Curriculum Framework (QCF) as it should enable learners to build up qualifications from course units that are more appropriate to them, can be transported between providers and employers, and are built up over a longer period of time when the learner wants.
- Disadvantaged learners in particular need to keep motivated and one way of doing this is identifying realistic goals for them to progress to on a regular basis (see initial assessment above) and rewarding learners for achieving these goals.
- Awards and accreditation for both 'hard' and 'soft' skills (such as social and personal skills) encourage young people to take more responsibility in selecting, planning and leading activities based on their interests, aspirations and potential.
- There was much evidence of providers (especially at the Foundation Level) developing their own internal qualifications or using external ones to accredit small steps in learning achievement at regular intervals.

Implementing flexible provision is often perceived as logistically difficult and resource intensive. E2E providers deliver roll on roll off provision that is tailored to meet the needs of individuals, and third sector providers in particular have demonstrated expertise in delivering flexible provision through ESF and discretionary funding. For example the LEAP project enables young people to choose to work in a group or individual basis, and at a suitable time in the week which is convenient for them. The modular nature of the programme enables learners to start at any time, to a learning plan that is agreed with the provider and the learner.

In delivering a learning programme, flexibility is particularly important when engaging vulnerable young people facing multiple barriers to learning. The 'Up 2 the Mark' project delivered by NACRO as part of the wider Future:proof Framework (funded by Sheffield City Council) supports young offenders into learning and takes a holistic and personalised approach where young people receive a combination of emotional support and support with basic skills. In practice this may mean engaging with the young person for an hour or two a week initially to help address their barriers to

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<sup>9</sup> Key references include: GHK 2008a; GHK, 2005e; Ofsted, 2008a; Ofsted 2008b; Akhtar, 2008; Searle, 2007; Lumby, 2007; UK Youth/YAA awards: <http://www.ukyouth.org/whatwedo/Programmes/YAA/>; and Manchester City Council, 2008.

learning until they are ready to engage for longer. These personalised approaches to learning are resource intensive because the engagement process will be lengthy but for some vulnerable young people these are essential to their engagement.

## **2.5 Support to students**

### **2.5.1 *Impartial, realistic, tailored and responsive information, advice and guidance***

A number of key effective practice principles relating to IAG were highlighted in the literature and through stakeholder interviews.<sup>10</sup> IAG should be:

- At the right level, delivered in the right learning style and in the right environment for it to be effective and heeded.
- Specific, impartial, realistic and provided on a one-to-one basis and provided by experienced and knowledgeable advisers who understand the world of work.
- Focused on ensuring all young people are provided with IAG at the ages of 11, 14 and 16 years.
- Informed by appropriate information and the communication of that information in order to better understand need.
- Multi-dimensional, recognising potential range of support needs and involve signposting to other, more appropriate organisations. This requires IAG being linked into multi-agency ways of working e.g. delivering IAG where the young person is.
- Embracing. A key group whose needs are often missed are the large number of young people who drop out of high level education, quickly identifying and responding to their needs is really important in maintaining and raising aspirations/engagement.

Sheffield Hallam University under its Raising Aspirations activities has a number of different programmes aimed at providing tailored IAG to different groups of young people. Whilst the overall focus is on addressing real and perceived barriers of young people to participating in HE from non-traditional backgrounds, there are different approaches to this. The Compact Scheme and other activities focus on looked after children and care leavers. Sheffield Hallam University also works with a wide range of schools and colleges in its catchment area using different approaches in raising aspirations to HE participation. In addition to its Raising Aspirations work, the University's recruitment includes: Clearing, Open Days, HE fairs and conventions, student ambassador scheme and student led campus tours The transition support and mentoring consists of: The Compact Scheme, Aimhigher mentoring, Buddy Bank and the Student Preparation Programme

### **2.5.2 *Flexible and tailored support based on trust and respect***

Effective practice identified through the literature emphasised the importance of developing trusting relationships between young people and adults in order to build the confidence and in turn raise the aspirations of young people. In particular it was found that<sup>11</sup>:

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<sup>10</sup> Key references include: CBI Stakeholder; LSC Y&H Stakeholder; Suffolk LSC stakeholder; Thomas et al, 2008; Davies, 2008.

<sup>11</sup> Key references include: City and Guilds Stakeholder; Searle, 2007; Lumby, 2007; GHK, 2005b.

- Some programmes include a designated trusted adult with whom they build a strong relationship founded on advocacy, brokerage and support. Often this is the first time that they have had this kind of relationship with an adult in their lives.
- A trustful relationship should be based on mutual respect and with space for reflection by both groups of people on their own behaviour and reactions.
- Learning should be a co-operative venture between adults and young people.
- Practitioners should understand the individual, particularly so for those that have become disengaged from the education system.
- Support should be provided in a flexible and tailored way.
- Staff support and development is also important.

These points are illustrated well by the Future:proof Framework Case Study (Sheffield City Council), where staff reported that once young people were engaged, it was crucial to gain young peoples' trust, because if the trust is there then young people will stay engaged. One of the key approaches to gaining young peoples' trust – as identified by the workers - was by consulting with young people on the delivery of the training and checking whether it was on the right track. On a weekly basis ETL tutors talk with young people and ask whether what is being delivered is right, whether anything is not working and what they would rather be doing. Although there is a set programme to follow, staff reported that they have to be flexible and make changes if the programme is not working.

Darlington Education Village's approach is based on developing a trusting relationship at all levels, including with its local community. A key element of this is Student Voice, which involves pupils in school decision making. Young people are involved in a number of select committees – school dinners, green issues, pupil behaviour, teaching and learning standards – which make recommendations to the school council, on which two pupil representatives sit.

The approach taken by Sheffield Hallam University and its partners when working with looked after children is one of respect, which is valued by the young people concerned, for example by signposting to (rather than hand holding through) appropriate services and support. One care leaver said: *“they treat you more like a friend and are less formal, for example, the way that the support is delivered, explaining it and receiving the advice. Some people can be condescending but I never got that feeling here.”* He went on to say that the support provided by the Care leaver Co-ordinator has been important to him in adjusting to university life.

Indeed, many vulnerable young people such as young offenders, Looked After young people, care leavers, and young parents experience multiple barriers to engagement which include: mental health issues, family breakdown, domestic violence, sexual, physical and emotional abuse, and bereavement. Such issues can act as a barrier to engaging in, and staying engaged in employment, education or training – a key part of which is often not having the space or motivation to think ahead and plan for the future. Sheffield City Council and its Future:proof Framework provides an example of tailored pastoral support. As described earlier in the report, the Future Proof Programme is a series of activities targeted towards young people aged 16-18 year who are NEET. In recognition of the need to support young people to cope with such circumstances, the programme funds an Education Psychologist as a resource for all the projects. This dedicated post provides emotional training sessions such as on problem solving, anger



management and self management and also one-to-one counselling for young people. Staff reported that this was a valuable service and provided young people the space to talk through their problems so that they can put them aside and move on to concentrate on their learning. This was echoed by the young people themselves. One tutor reported that a number of young people would have dropped out of the programme had they not received the support of the psychologist. (Source: Case Study fieldwork).

The extent to which such support is provided can vary according to needs and such an interventionist approach may not always be appropriate. For example with Sheffield Hallam University they offer a range of support mechanisms which are effectively promoted to students. However, it is up to the students themselves whether they take them up.

## **2.6 Review of progress – pro-active tracking and empowering young people**

A key principle of effective practice identified in the literature and through the stakeholder interviews was the need to pro-actively track progress in order to stimulate and reaffirm engagement in a way that captured both personal development and attainment.<sup>12</sup> A key part of this was is empowering young people to lead on and make decisions about the programmes they are engaged with.

- As previously highlighted in Section 2.4.3 for young people who already have low motivation, practical barriers can become reasons for not persevering. Taking a 'stepping stone' approach allows the learner to see an achievable goal and provides practical assistance to reach that goal. This can include both 'hard' and 'soft' outcomes.
- Involving young people in the review process and showing them their successes is important in supporting their continued engagement and building trust. This can also get young people to share important personal information which can help inform next steps and as well as future options.
- By giving choices and responsibility to young people about their learning they are also more likely to take ownership of their actions and consider their true potential.
- Final reviews should incorporate an 'exit strategy' outlining future options and support.

Empowering young people and involving them more in the decisions which affect their support and provision is central to the support offered by University of the First Age and what has been developed at Darlington Education Village. Importantly the involvement of young people operates at a range of levels so different groups and types of young people can be empowered; staff are also pro-actively engaged in these processes, either directly in the training itself or simply understanding, recognising and 'giving space to' what the young people are trying to do. This shows young people their opinions are valued by staff; this in turn increases their confidence to express their views.

As highlighted previously, the Rickter Scale assessment tool as used in the Future:proof Framework provides an effective tool for on-going review in such a way

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<sup>12</sup> Key references include: GHK, 2003; GHK, 2005a; Van de Graaf et al, 2008; Princes Trust Stakeholder; [www.dcsf.gov.uk/14-19/neet](http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/14-19/neet); Virtual Learning Academy Research, 2008.

that young people can take ownership of the process. It measures soft outcomes and distance travelled. It covers all aspects of the young person's life and covers family/home life as well as education and learning. The Rickter Scale is a physical tool – a hand-held board - which is used during the initial assessment and review meetings. It is accompanied with computer software which enables project staff to capture the baseline, review progress and note action points. Progress made by young people can be viewed in the form of graphs and charts by young people themselves. Most importantly, it was felt that the Rickter Scale encouraged young people to set realistic and achievable goals. Staff found that if young people had realistic aspirations then they were more likely to remain committed to the programme and succeed.

## **2.7 Completion - Celebration of achievement and linking into mainstream accreditation**

An important element in raising aspirations as identified through the literature review and stakeholder interviews, especially for those who have never received certificates, qualifications or other recognition in the past is<sup>13</sup>:

- The use of end of course awards and celebration events where learners can invite friends, family and/or carers.
- The use of awards can also be effective in measuring 'soft' outcomes and can be of value to employers.
- The importance of having a clear handover/exit strategy including final review and reflect sessions, with a degree of 'what next' planning with their project staff.

Equally important however is ensuring that this does not lead to a "plethora of certificates" syndrome which, as far as an employer is concerned can be meaningless. The introduction of the Foundation Learning Tier and the emphasis on progression pathways will address some of this.

Other ways in which the completion of a programme can lead to recognition and progression is by linking into formal qualifications. Two of the case studies provided examples of how the work completed by school students through their projects effectively linked with the national curriculum and therefore contributed to formal qualifications including GCSEs proving to be an important motivating factor for both the students and the teachers. For example, the Merrill Lynch programme linked accreditation to the national curriculum so that students' achievements on the programme were recorded in a portfolio which could then be accredited to give them a qualification equivalent to a GCSE 'B' grade. Similarly, the Brokerage programme (City of London) linked all of their activities directly into national curriculum content about economic wellbeing.

## **2.8 Progression and after care – on going support and tracking**

Progression is not always about 'getting a job' but should also include further skills development and an appreciation of the value of learning. The FLT includes progression pathways appropriate for learners where progression into Level 2 learning is not a realistic option.

For providers delivering on a contract basis a programme usually has a clear end point after which focus is on the next cohort of young people. The literature review found that the relationships and activities which have lifted aspirations can be difficult to maintain

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<sup>13</sup> Key references included: <http://www.ukyouth.org/whatwedo/Programmes/YAA/>; GHK, 2005a.

beyond the life of a programme unless support continues after the programme. This is where other support professionals can play an important role, for example, Connexions PAs can maintain contact during and beyond a programme and by being party to the successes and aspirations experienced on the programme, the worker is better placed to help the young person continue that journey.

- The Integrated Employment and Skills agenda recognises that learners, especially previously unemployed learners, can often need support in the first few months of employment or the next step up in learning.
- The 'step up' to higher levels of learning can often be difficult. Including higher units in the learners programme can facilitate this progression by exposing learners to higher levels of learning, and different delivery and assessment styles.
- The QCF should also allow learners to be taking different units at different levels reflecting their different abilities in different areas.

In this context, identifying destinations and monitoring regression is therefore important, particularly for disadvantaged learners:

- Some programmes include self evaluation forms so young people can see how far they have travelled and put in place action plans to work towards their next set of goals.
- The use of accurate tracking systems to monitor the destinations of young people at each stage of the guidance and entry system allows for the effective targeting of resources and provision on those most at risk of not participating.

## **2.9 Conclusion**

This section has identified a range of effective practices at each stage of the learner journey drawing on the literature review and the case studies. The next section highlights those areas of effective practice that cut across all aspects of the learner journey.

## **3 CROSS CUTTING ISSUES**

### **3.1 Introduction**

This section now turns to those areas of effective practice which underpin all aspects of the learner journey ranging from the need to collaborate at the strategic and provider levels to the need to involve young people and parents in delivery. As with the previous section the key points from the literature review and stakeholder survey are summarised and supplemented with additional findings from the case studies.

### **3.2 Collaborative delivery at strategic and provider levels**

An important dimension underpinning many recent programmes aimed towards raising the aspirations of young people is collaboration between agencies and providers to ensure integrated delivery of learning<sup>14</sup>:

- Collaborative delivery underpins the 14-19 phase of learning and the development of Diplomas, recognising that that it is unlikely that any one provider will be able to deliver all of the Diploma streams.
- However, there are few examples of effective practice in collaborative delivery unless it is specifically funded. This is often because it is logistically difficult but also because funding and policy often militates against collaboration. The 'sixth form presumption' is one example of this i.e. the presumption that high performing 11-16 specialist schools with a vocational specialism wishing to establish a sixth form should be allowed to do so. This potentially undermines collaboration with other FE providers.
- It is important to get strategic commitment to collaboration in order to develop widespread buy-in and linkages into other areas.
- It is important that where external providers deliver training that learners are selected appropriately. Some training providers feel that they are being given school's most difficult learners rather than learners who would most benefit from their offer.
- Resources need to be invested in staff time to manage and co-ordinate collaborative activities.
- A dedicated NEET coordinator with strategic responsibility has been appointed to good effect in some areas.
- In some areas NEET activities have been aligned with other initiatives, for example, Sustainable Community Strategies, Learning Activity Agreements and City Strategies.
- It also important to align funding in order to target particular areas, groups of learners, identified problems and take a co-ordinated approach. Often disaffected and disadvantaged learners face multiple barriers and so one approach may not work.

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<sup>14</sup> Key resources include: DfES, 2005; Perry and Fletcher, 2008; Manchester City Council, 2008; Hayward et al, 2008; DCSF, 2008a; DCSF 2008b; SHM, 2006; Thomas et al, 2008.

- A multi-agency approaches can helped over reliance on a single partner and so reduce delivery risk and provide a more holistic service by identifying and filling gaps.
- Underpinning collaborative working is the need for effective communication, sharing of good practice, and information/data sharing to identify learners early and target provision.

The Brokerage project which provides a range of activities including a taught programme, interviews with City employees, and businesses skills exercises to school pupils Years 8 - 12 in underperforming schools in 11 London Boroughs provides a useful case study of collaborative delivery at provider level involving employers and schools working together. The following lessons for effective practice were highlighted particularly in terms of engaging and maintaining links between schools and businesses:

- Utilising the skills of partner agencies to “add value” and help “open doors”. This includes working with Business in the Communities, The Corporation, Education Business Partnerships and Aim Higher who have supported the programme to recruit groups of learners.
- The need for direct marketing and on-going out-reach activities including attending local networking events such as careers fairs/business meetings and establishing and maintaining contacts within individual schools and businesses. Underpinning this is the need to have an understanding of the local area. This is particularly relevant in inner London, where the project team have found that it is much easier to get young people to engage in sessions if they feel you “know what they are about”. The combination of outreach in schools and local careers fairs with workshops in corporate venues, allows project staff to become familiar with the young people's local environment and to understand nuances between boroughs.
- The need to understand and respond to the resource implications such a programme has for both schools (in terms of administration and staff time) and businesses (in terms of providing venues and staff time). There is the need to provide additional support and guidance to ensure buy-in from both sides. For teachers it is about offering advice about how to promote the programme to senior management and minimising the administrative burden on schools wherever possible. This includes providing support and regular contact at convenient times and setting achievable timescales. For businesses it is about tailoring the programme to fit with their needs, such as by using volunteers for only one hour and on their own premises; this minimises the impact on businesses and enables more volunteers to participate from all levels of the organisation.

Darlington Education Village works with a range of other providers and organisations to develop its offer to its pupils:

- Local employers recruit apprentices from the school which has resulted in low NEET figures for young people leaving the school.
- Local employers sponsor a year group and are involved in mentoring and coaching students. Young people not only benefit from learning from employers and experiencing the world of work but have roles models to inspire them.

- The school works in partnership with business partners to get them ready to be education providers, providing alternative, fun learning experiences for young people. For example, the school is currently working with the Darlington Forum Music Centre to contract teaching for students who would attend sessions at the Music Centre instead of school. The school acknowledges that the facilities and expertise available at the Music Centre are far better than those available at the school and recognises they should not spend resources within the school when better alternatives already exist. Linking with the Music Centre will not only gives young people access to state of the art resources but will provide alternative learning provision for young people who find it difficult to engage with learning in a classroom environment. Darlington Education Village also make available their up to date TV studio facilities to the Music Centre and other schools.
- Pupils from other school have also been involved in its University of the First Age Facilitation programme.
- Darlington Education Village has trained staff from other schools and community members in MIDAS training (minibus certificate).
- The school has an outdoor Forest which other schools can use, they fund a staff member who runs that facility and who teaches the groups out there.

By adopting a multi-agency approach, Sheffield Hallam University works with a range of partners, including The University of Sheffield, Aimhigher, Sheffield City Council, neighbouring local authorities and schools and colleges in South Yorkshire and adjacent areas. Work is targeted at those from non-traditional HE backgrounds within a roughly 50 mile radius of the University. The approach consists of a progressive and sequential series of activities with schools and colleges. Sheffield Hallam University and Sheffield University both run care leaver programmes. Whilst there is no formal overlap in these programmes, they meet regularly in order to share good practice, lessons learnt and their different approaches. Sheffield Hallam University's Outreach and UK Recruitment Team lead on Raising Aspirations work. There is a dedicated University Care Leaver Support Co-ordinator who sits within the team, supporting work with Look After Children as one aspect of their wider role. They offer information, advice and guidance to care leavers interested in progressing to the University act as a link between care leavers and their Local Authority (LA) and organise raising aspirations visits into the University for Looked After Children through schools and LA's. There is also collaborative working with The University of Sheffield who also have a dedicated Care Leaver worker who has similar responsibilities i.e.: sustained support and impartial advice throughout the student's time at University; acting as a link between the student's local authority, the student and the University; helping the student access support from the services available across the University; and acting as the student's personal support contact. However, the emphasis at Sheffield Hallam wherever possible is on developing and embedding activity which supports Looked After Children throughout the pre-entry cycle, during transition to HE and during a student's time at the University.

### 3.3 An enhanced role for schools and Connexions in tackling NEET

A key issue raised in the literature was the crucial role schools can play in taking ownership of and tackling young people NEET. Connexions services also have a key role to play. A number of areas of effective practice were identified<sup>15</sup>:

- Local authorities can usefully support schools with high NEET levels such as by leading on planning, review and implementation meetings with head teachers and developing resources for wider use e.g. Manchester City Council.
- The development of early warning systems through the robust monitoring of academic, personal and social progress of individual pupils coupled with targeted support and close collaboration between partner schools and support organisations has proved effective in some cases.
- Indeed, the role of the Connexions service is key in helping to engage young people NEET. Examples include: establishing integrated youth service provision or 'one stop shops'; enhanced outreach work; enhanced powers to tackle NEET young people; and use of skilled brokers and advisors along with a highly efficient and accurate Client Caseload Information System.

Darlington Education Village has significantly reduced the proportion of its school leavers who have become NEET. At Darlington Education Village *"...each and every student is encouraged to appreciate learning and to reach their full potential"*. The school offers a range of activities aimed at different learners with different ability levels (the Education Village incorporates a special school). The secondary school offers a personalised learning programme for students who have difficulty engaging with the curriculum taught in the classroom. This programme uses outdoor activities to encourage students to stay in school, to learn and engage in the curriculum. The school also seeks to establish links with parents/carers and the community.

There are also examples where Connexion services have worked closely with individual schools identified as high NEET producers, such as in Swindon where schools and colleges have produced implementation plans to incorporate key elements for a framework on good practice in the early intervention and prevention of young people NEETs. The framework was developed from a study to identify risk factors for young people to enable the early identification of those at risk of becoming NEETs, followed by key areas of action to address barriers to participation. (Hughes and Opie, 2008)

### 3.4 Commissioning based on thorough needs analysis

Through the literature, evidence shows that strategic and integrated commissioning at a local level is more effective when based on the identification of need<sup>16</sup>:

- Strategic, in-depth needs analysis can identify the composition of a target group, its dynamics, geographical distribution and overall numbers.
- Research can also identify what support structures, or combination of support structures are needed for different learners.

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<sup>15</sup> Thomas et al 2008; Manchester City Council, 2008; CBI, 2008. DCSF, 2008a; Connexions Devon and Cornwall, 2006a.

<sup>16</sup> For example, Connexions Devon and Cornwall, 2006; Manchester City Council, 2008, Porter and Seeley, 2008.

- Sharing of information between organisations can also help identify target groups or particular issues. For example, the sharing of DWP data allowed one LAD to focus on issues around families and inter-generational claimants.

Commissioning decisions for the Future:proof Framework (Sheffield City Council) are made by a multiagency Strategic Commissioning Group. The role of the group is to ensure that the programme links into wider strategies and structures in the city as well as ensuring that services are commissioned to address gaps in provision. For example, the group maps NEET data against current NEET provision to identify gaps and then commissions services in locations with little NEET provision and services to target specific vulnerable groups.

### **3.5 The provision of financial support to those who need it**

Removing financial barriers to learning is a core issue for many potential learners. The literature review found that the following approaches had been effective:

- Providing financial support to meet identified barriers e.g. childcare. (Fanceschello et al, 2008)
- The use of financial incentives to reward participation and attainment. For example, in the Activity Agreements pilot, young people aged 16 and 17 who had been NEET for at least 20 continuous weeks received an allowance in return for completing a series of activities tailored to their individual needs and designed to move them towards learning and employment. This approach was found to be effective in supporting NEET young people (Hillage et al 2008).
- Targeting of financial support to meet specific, identified needs of learners. (Maguire, 2008; Maguire and Rennison, 2005; GHK 2007)
- Providing financial incentives to employers to engage with NEET young people. (What Next? 2008)

We also found evidence of this through the case studies. The Driving Ambitions project delivered by ETL Ltd as part of the Future:proof Framework (Sheffield City Council) uses a range of incentives to target the different needs in order to engage with NEET young people. As well as EMA, these include reimbursement of costs associated with travel, books and general subsistence and also the provision of free driving lessons (young people can get up to 10 free driving lessons based on their attendance and behaviour) together with financial support to pay for a provisional driving license. As one project staff member explained, the project has been designed to ensure that the young people do not have to pay for anything.

Similarly, whilst most of the support offered to care leavers by Sheffield Hallam University was pastoral, financial support was of practical importance. Some young people do not have financial management or budgeting skills, and this can be exacerbated for some disadvantaged young people. At Sheffield Hallam University and the University of Sheffield, care leavers are offered bursaries to provide further financial support.

### **3.6 Involvement of young people in design and delivery**

A key element of effective practice identified in the literature and stakeholder survey is involving young people in the design and delivery of provision<sup>17</sup>:

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<sup>17</sup> References include: GHK, 2008c; Hewton et al, 2008; TFFC, 2008.



- This helps create ownership of the learning, can breed confidence about making decisions about future achievement plans, can lead to increased skills and enables the service to fit more effectively with what young people want.
- It helps learners' boost their confidence and expectations of what they could do.
- One programme gave young people access to funds that they can use to take part in positive activities related to sports, media, arts, recreation, educational and residential activities. They were involved in developing aspects of the delivery approaches and were consulted about the activities included in the offer.
- Another introduced young people to the principles behind fundraising and work in the third sector by setting up mini-charities. While it does not seem to target particular groups of young people, it does serve to provide new opportunities for children in schools, which otherwise they would not have access to.

Involving young people in the running of the school is fundamental to the approach of Darlington Education Village. Whilst the school does have formal mechanisms for this, for example, a school council and select committees focusing on particular issues, they run a range of programmes which encourage pupils to develop their self-confidence and leadership skills so that they can take a proactive involvement in the life of their school at a variety of levels.

### **3.7 Parental/carer engagement**

Given the strong association between parent's aspirations for their children and their children's achievements (more so than socio-economic background) work to support parents/carers in developing high aspirations for their children is crucial<sup>18</sup>:

- This is particularly the case for parents/carers with young children and for those families experiencing unemployment perhaps over a number of generations. It is also important to engage extended families and carers.
- The importance of parents/carers in motivating and supporting young people to make career choices was also seen as an important enabler to raise young people's aspirations, particularly among vulnerable groups such as BME and Looked after Children.
- Examples identified in the literature include: the provision of taster and information sessions for parents/carers; a training programme for foster carers in facilitating educational progression and achievement; a multi-agency approach to providing family-centred IAG in order to reduce the number of young people NEET including the development of a family support plan.
- It is important for schools to communicate well with parents/carers around initiatives aimed at re-engaging pupils in order to build of trust between students and parents/carers. A no blame approach with parents/carers coupled with fully involving students and parents/carers in the process increases confidence in decisions that are made.
- Parental engagement requires resources and specific skills. Professionals need to be trained in supporting parents/carers to raise their aspirations.

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<sup>18</sup> References include: Cabinet Office, 2008; Gutman and Akerman, 2008, Reach, 2007; Ofsted, 2008a; Ofsted 2008b; Lindsay et al (2008)

Darlington Education Village recognises the importance of engaging parents/carers in the education of young people and its impact on raising young people's achievement and aspirations. It has developed a number of approaches to engage parents/carers with the schools and young people's education, for example:

- Operating a parent/carers forum which has 50 parent representatives. The group share their views with the management team on changes they would like to see introduced at the school.
- Encouraging positive parenting is a priority over the next 3 years. The school has employed a Community Outreach worker who undertakes activities with parents/carers in the community to raise parents/carers' aspirations, increase their basic skills, encourage positive parenting and better relationships between parents/carers and their children. Staff at the school believe that raising the aspirations of parents/carers and their interest in their children's education would lead to better educational outcomes for young people. Some of the themes that are covered with parents/carers include: healthy eating, parenting skills, basic skills, lads and dads sessions, and mums and daughter sessions.
- Darlington Education Village offers free family swimming sessions at its swimming pool as a method of engaging with parents/carers. Currently, 90 parents/carers attend the swimming sessions with their children every week.

Often parents and carers can be a major obstacle affecting young people aspirations in aiming for HE, especially if they live in communities where few people have gone to university in the past. A key element of Sheffield Hallam University's Raising Aspirations work is engaging with carers to help them to see HE as a viable option for children in their care by inviting them to visit the university.

### **3.8 Addressing the needs of young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities**

The aspirations of young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are affected by a range of factors including: whether they go to mainstream or special schools, their teacher's expectations of them, access to information about options open to them and peer effects<sup>19</sup>:

- In special schools, young people's choices were more dependent on their learning difficulties and/or disabilities rather than their educational or career aspirations; whereas those attending mainstream schools were more likely to aspire to go into employment and higher status jobs.
- Policies and practices within schools can impact on the aspirations of young people with disabilities. Effective practice in relation to disability include: development and improvement of services for disabled students; inclusive learning, teaching and assessment; raised expectations of teachers of young people with disabilities; developing policies and procedures to meet and include the needs of disabled students; access to information for disabled applicants and students about the careers and educational options available to them; and raising awareness of disability issues at all levels across the institution, thereby promoting understanding and ownership and securing long-lasting cultural change.

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<sup>19</sup> References include: Davies, 2008; Fairbridge Stakeholder; Suffolk LSC Stakeholder; Oxford and Cherwell Valley College: <http://www.ocvc.ac.uk/about-foundation-studies>.

- The above practices need to be underpinned by: staff development sessions and materials; informal contacts and discussions; disability 'champions' on courses and in departments; the work of committees and line management arrangements; and awareness-raising amongst the student body.
- Some programmes involve key workers, outreach and development workers to support learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities raise their aspirations, engage with higher levels of learning and get jobs. One programme employed Job Coaches to support individual learners, which included a person centred assessment of their needs and aspirations, and those of the employer. Learning took place in a number of settings and was linked into Train to Gain.

### **3.9 Conclusion**

This section has identified the core issues that underpin all aspects of the learner journey with respect to raising the aspirations of young people. The following section now looks at the implications these have for policy and practice.

## 4 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The aim of this study was to identify and document existing examples of effective practice in raising the aspirations of *ALL* young people and in particular to help the LSC and its partners increase their understanding of what specific strategies, programmes and interventions are effective. To this end we reviewed the evidence base through a number of methods including a systematic literature review, a stakeholder survey and six in-depth case studies around the full range of strategies and interventions that have been used in an attempt to raise young people's aspirations.

### 4.1 Conclusions

The study raised a number of key points about the need to understand young people's aspirations, the many and varied forces which influence them, and the approaches which can serve to raise individual horizons. Our specific conclusions regarding the different steps in the learner journey have been provided in previous sections – here we draw together the 'high level' findings before presenting our recommendations.

Firstly it is important to take a step back and ask what we mean by raising aspirations and why it is important. The Cabinet Office report (2008) defines them as being about: inspiration, information, self-esteem and self-efficacy. It also argues that aspirations are complex and multi-dimensional and distinguishes educational aspirations from broader aspirations. It states that parents/carers and children alike tend to think holistically about their futures in terms of 'being happy' and that disadvantaged young people do not have fundamentally different aspirations from their more advantaged peers. However the report, citing a range of other studies, also highlights that there is a difference between what people can hope to achieve and what they can expect to achieve, particularly with respect to the relative deprivation of the locality in which they reside and their individual capabilities.

The case studies show how approaches to raising aspirations must consider the broader socio-economic environment in which they are set, and the importance of offering support at different levels, times and settings to be effective for individuals with different needs and aptitudes. Both the primary and secondary evidence collected showed how many aspects of the 'process' of learning can inherently contribute to the raising of individual aspiration – and can play a dual role in:

- The raising of individual aspirations – such as through exposure to new opportunities, exploring possibilities, exposing to others beyond individual peer groups; and
- Providing a mechanism to support their realisation – such as through the achievement of qualifications, enhancing individual employability, and supporting progress towards labour market re-integration.

The study also showed that while specific interventions to raise aspirations can be effective (notably with those whose aspirations and ambitions are particularly low), the raising of aspirations more broadly should not be seen as discrete activities but as an essential component of all interactions with young people around the process of learning. While many other factors can influence individual aspiration levels, learning can play a key role - and importantly one which cannot begin too early or end too soon. Hence our recommendations include actions to be taken which lie beyond the LSC remit, but where the potential for influence exists around early years education,

primary/secondary transition points and support for families more widely. The challenge of raising aspirations for young people, NEET or otherwise, consequently demands that a more systematic, sustained and holistic approach is taken, including the use of partner expertise and the sharing of information between FE and schools, within which learning is a key vector for 'self-improvement' in the broadest sense.

Raising aspirations is about changing young people's attitudes, building their confidence, and increasing their self-awareness. It is also about ensuring that the support is there and that the learning systems are in place to stimulate and realise young people's aspirations. A key question for providers is often how to re-package learning so that those who are currently disenchanted are motivated to engage. Indeed high levels of young people NEET has served to highlight that educational systems need to be reformed, for example, by creating more appropriate options, widening choice, developing more flexible and tailored delivery methods, providing better and more targeted financial and non-financial support, and addressing specific barriers. Procedural changes may also have a role to play, such as the more effective tracking of young people to ensure positive trajectories, once established, are maintained through targeted interventions.

Raising young people's aspirations is important to the LSC given its aim of ensuring that young people have the opportunity to gain skills and qualifications and participate in learning that excites and motivates them as part of its remit to invest in high quality education and training to build a skilled and competitive workforce. As stated in the research specification for this study the LSC is committed to increasing the number of young people participating in education and narrowing the gap in educational achievement (LSC, 2007). It is this agenda which informs the LSC's interest in understanding more about what works in helping young people to aspire to appropriate and where relevant stretching learning programmes.

#### **4.2 Key recommendations for effective practice**

- *Take a strategic approach*

Single providers cannot deliver everything; ideally they need to operate within a joined up framework, both strategically and operationally. When case study providers and their partners were able to clearly identify what the main aims and objectives of their organisation were and to situate their strategies and programmes within this, it led to a holistic and systematic approach to their work with young people. This meant that particular programmes and initiatives could be identified and developed within a strategic framework that allowed for activities to operate at different levels and in different domains (community, family and the individual) but working to common aims and objectives. In practical terms, this systemic approach facilitates effective practice because it identifies priorities, resources and responsibilities; it also maximises synergies with other initiatives and external partners and allows for greater flexibility and responsiveness. In this context replication of effective practice is therefore not necessarily about repeating specific interventions, but understanding the need for a strategic approach and working to the strengths of a given organisation.

- *Work with young people to raise their aspirations at a much earlier age*

A key finding was that in order to be more effective there was the need to stimulate aspirations among young people from primary school age, but particularly at the primary to secondary transition point. The provision of effective IAG to support career progression coupled with enhancement and enrichment activities, both targeted and universally applied, can provide the crucial stepping stone to raised aspirations at the

post-14 and post-16 stages. We echo the recommendations of the Cabinet Office report (2008) regarding the need to provide targeted support to parents/carers at key transition points for their children; increase IAG for parents/carers and children; and importantly target initiatives for children aged 11-14 years. We would also emphasise the importance of identifying those at risk of disengagement early and providing targeted intervention.

- *Personalise provision, targeting and assessment*

Much of the evidence in this study inevitably draws on interventions focused on re-engaging young people NEET. The effective principles that underpin these approaches equally apply to approaches required universally for all young people including those already engaged but not necessarily reaching their full capacity. Provision for all young people needs to be appropriate, responsive, reflective, tailored, customised, flexible, and learner directed. For example, there needs to be a greater amount of roll on roll off provision, and more active engagement of businesses to develop enrichment activities. Perhaps most significantly, providers need to create progression pathways that meet the needs of the individual and their aspirations. Young people respond differently to different learning styles and will be at different points in their learning journey. Needs analysis must therefore inform the commissioning of services to ensure services respond to the needs of young people - particularly of those groups that traditionally face multiple barriers to engagement. This will ensure that the right people are directed to the most appropriate provision to realise their ambitions. Fundamental to this is also providing effective IAG and other support to ensure that participation for young people is as straightforward as possible. The more difficult it is to participate for a young person – particularly someone who is already disaffected - the lower the participation rate. Also critical is the underpinning information, especially effective mechanisms for tracking young people pre, during and post intervention, and communicating information effectively between organisations. Individual learning plans with realistic and achievable goals that are regularly reviewed can motivate young people to achieve and raise their aspirations. Pastoral care and support services are a crucial part of this.

- *Involve young people in the design and delivery of interventions*

The involvement of young people in design and delivery is perhaps one of the more challenging aspects of effective practice, but at the same time potentially the most fruitful. By enabling young people to have such a role can help ensure ownership, enhanced motivation and more appropriate provision. As a minimum, service delivery organisations can regularly consult with young people to ensure training and learning is responsive to their needs. Programmes need to be flexible so that they can be modified to the needs of young people which will increase engagement.

- *Engage parents and carers*

Given the strong association between parent's aspirations for their children and their children's achievements (more so than socio-economic background), work to support parents/carers in developing high aspirations for their children is crucial. This is particularly the case for parents/carers with young children and for those families experiencing unemployment perhaps over a number of generations. The importance of parents/carers in motivating and supporting young people to make career choices was also seen as an important enabler to raise young people's aspirations, particularly among vulnerable groups such as BME and Looked after Children.

- *Resource staff development*

As evident in the report, if raising and realising aspirations is about working to influence individual behaviour in the context of wider influences, then staff in all spheres of a young person's life (e.g. school, Connexions, YOTs) need time, space and training to develop the skills necessary for working with young people. This needs to be acknowledged and resourced. It also needs to be targeted to both strategic managers and front line delivery staff.

- *Facilitate networking and dissemination of effective practice*

Currently it seems that many of the organisations identified in this study are not necessarily linking up with similar agencies and sharing good practice. Nor is there evidence to suggest that such organisations are drawing on inputs from quality assurance agencies such as Ofsted and the Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS). This is a gap and there is a need to exploit the wealth of expertise and learning that exists among providers. The wider world is seeing a growth in informal social networking and some of these mechanisms could be applied to disseminate and share effective practice at a more informal but a more responsive level.

- *Recognise and reward effective practice*

The rewarding of achievement has been identified as an important element in helping to raise the aspirations of young people and this should also apply to providers as well. Mechanisms should be established that serve to identify, recognise, value and reward effective practice more formally at a variety of levels, for example, through LSC or Local Authority awards.

- *Fund effective practice*

The majority of those organisations identified as delivering effective practice were reliant on peripheral rather than mainstream funding. A number of initiatives referred to, are no longer in operation or will soon cease to be. With staff moving on, this can lead to a loss of expertise within the workforce. To ensure sustainability and the development of a body of evidence to support this work and commissioning strategies into the future, there is the need for sustained mainstream funding.

To conclude, this study has identified that there is a great deal of effective practice being delivered by providers to raise the aspirations of a diverse range of young people facing different barriers. Often providers are working in isolation or in small personal groups, and without dedicated sustained funding. There is great potential to share and learn from this body of work in further developing effective practice across the whole learning and skills sector.

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## **ANNEX 1: CASE STUDY - ENTERPRISE AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP PROGRAMME, MERRILL LYNCH**

**Name of organisation:** Merrill Lynch

**Date of visit:** 24<sup>th</sup> February 2009

**Data sources/methodology:**

The case study team visited a session held at the Merrill Lynch building in Central London. The team observed the session, interviewed the young people participating in the programme and the project manager, volunteers and the Education Business Partnership, who are the delivery partners for the project. This was supplemented by a telephone interview with the Head of EMEA Philanthropy.

**Overview of project**

**Rationale, aims and target group**

The project was developed to respond to the need to raise aspirations, improve levels of achievement and reduce worklessness among young people in the capital. Merrill Lynch in the USA had previously developed programme materials centred on financial literacy and business skills, and was keen to support an educational initiative in London that was tailored to meet the need of the local community.

This project built on a volunteering scheme that Merrill Lynch ran in a primary school in Tower Hamlets, where staff at Merrill Lynch gave sessions in schools to support core skills in literacy and numeracy. Senior management at Merrill Lynch were impressed by the positive feedback received from volunteers; they wanted to deliver a long term programme but reduce the time commitment for the volunteers to make it more accessible, particularly to those at a managerial level. The focus on Enterprise and business skills was in order to support the Government initiative to increase the range of enterprise provision available to young people but also because it fit with the bank's core expertise.

The programme manager met with the local Education Business Partnership (EBP) who felt that there was a gap in enterprise provision for 11-14 year olds, and Merrill Lynch wanted to deliver complementary provision that supported local young people from primary school to university. The aims of the project are to:

- Improve their understanding of business and business techniques including financial literacy;
- Enhance their personal skills and self-confidence;
- Support improved academic achievement;
- Improve levels of attendance amongst participating students where possible.

Merrill Lynch has worked with Tower Hamlets schools since 1999. The Merrill Lynch Enterprise & Entrepreneurship ("MLEE") Programme itself has been running for 4 years and is now in its fifth.

**Project activities and the types of approaches used**

The project runs a range of enterprise and business focused initiatives for young people from year 8 to year 12, which are aimed at developing skills in enterprise and financial literacy. We witnessed a 'speed interviewing' activity, where young people interviewed staff at Merrill Lynch to gain a greater understanding of the range of roles and different skills of individuals working in the

City of London. Other activities include presentation competitions and enterprise projects where young people are given a simple initial premise and are then required to develop, market and sell a product. Provision is delivered in school time and also at weekends and holidays.

In the last year the programme has consisted of over 50 activities, for which 2,300 students were enrolled, many enjoying several days of MLEE activities each year. In four years, over 10,000 student enterprise days have been delivered.

One of the first activities young people are given is to create and launch a product. This activity allows the students' leadership, creative, communication, presenting and team-working skills to come through. Students also took part in *Scenes of the City* – which involves creating art work which they have to market and sell. The students develop a business plan and have to sell the art work themselves. In Year 8 students participate in a budgeting activity as by that age they are likely to own a mobile phone, therefore need to know how to budget their spending. Year 9 students have activities related to international currency. Overriding all these activities is enterprise. The main aim is to inspire young people to be successful – Merrill Lynch has a diverse workforce and volunteers are from all levels and departments within Merrill Lynch, and are from a range of ethnic backgrounds from all over the world – thus breaking down barriers as students get to meet successful people from across the globe.

The majority of provision is available to all students in the school, with the exception of the presentation competition where selected representatives take on other schools to reach a final. Students typically engage on the programme at year 8, where they receive a portfolio that they add to with their own work and which can lead to an NCFE qualification in Enterprise Capability, which is the equivalent to a GCSE 'B'.

Merrill Lynch delivers the programme in partnership with the EBP for Tower Hamlets. The EBP is responsible for engaging with schools and plays a key role in ensuring the programme complements provision delivered by partners such as Young Enterprise and Cranfield Business School. Merrill Lynch is responsible for the delivery of provision. The project manager provides a substantial part of her time in managing the programme, and volunteers at all levels give their time to support the project.

For the last year of the programme the project narrowly under spent its budget of approximately £130,000. However, this figure does not include the cost of the volunteer time, which brings significant added value to the programme.

### **Examples of Effective practice**

**Engagement of beneficiaries** The programme is targeted at schools in the Tower Hamlets area. The programme engages with learners in their early years of comprehensive school, as the project believes that it is vital to raise the aspirations of young people at an early stage which will then subsequently have an effect on their other school work.

Another key challenge of the project is to engage with volunteers within the organisation, who play an integral role in the programme. The project has found that the main barrier to engagement is time constraints, and so an important aspect of the project is the amount of work done by the project team to minimise the impact on volunteers. Volunteer time is broken into blocks which only require a few hours' commitment per session, and induction and briefing sessions are delivered succinctly so the volunteer time is minimised. This enables individuals to volunteer from all areas and at all levels of the company, which provides a more rounded experience to the young person as well as a positive experience for the volunteer.

### **Delivery**

The activities take place in local schools and also at the Merrill Lynch offices in central London. The visits to the Merrill Lynch offices in particular received very positive feedback from learners,

many of whom have not experienced a similar work environment and felt that the venue was inspiring and motivated them to try to work in a similar environment. An additional benefit of delivering the programme in the Merrill Lynch offices is that it gives young people an opportunity to see firsthand the range of occupations and nationalities employed in the sector. This complemented the interviews with volunteers to give young people a greater understanding of the diverse nature of the workforce and break down negative stereotypes.

### **Effective partnership working**

During the inception of the programme Merrill Lynch quickly realised that they couldn't deliver the programme on their own, and therefore worked with key partners to build relationships and share expertise. This has led to a very effective relationship with the local EBP, which has facilitated the relationship with schools and was one of the first organisations to pilot the NCFE Enterprise Capability qualification. The project now looks to share best practice with other organisations, and information and support is shared with other EBPs.

### **Course content**

The provision delivers a range of business-related activities that improve business skills to enable young people to gain a greater understanding of the sector and to develop the skills required to progress in the area. The beneficiaries found the business games very stimulating, and the young people were motivated by the more interactive learning style. The majority of young people interviewed said their favourite activity was the product design activity where they had to design and market a product that they developed themselves. The young people said they enjoyed this task because it was creative and enjoyable.

Another key aspect of the programme was the emphasis on presentation skills that is embedded over all years of the programme. Business activity challenges required students to give a presentation to the rest of the group, and some of the group were participating in a presentation skills competition between schools. Learners found this very valuable *"it helps build our confidence with public speaking"* while acknowledging that *"it was very nerve-wracking"*. Teachers felt that there was a very big improvement in the presentation skills of those that took part. The project team said that the emphasis on presentation skills was because being able to present yourself well is a key skill to work in the City of London.

### **Achievement**

Students' achievements on the programme are recorded in a portfolio which can be accredited to give them a qualification equivalent to a GCSE 'B' grade. This enables young people to leave the project with a record of the work they have done and a qualification that will support their entry into the job world.

### **Progression and after care support**

The students found that the project gave them a far better understanding of the skills and qualifications required to work in the sector. A key part of this was the speed interviewing sessions, where young people interviewed ten Merrill Lynch volunteers to understand more about their role and the path they took to find their current job. The interviews also helped young people understand the range of roles that are available within the city, not just the traditional banking and business law employment routes. Groups at year 8 will ask questions on *"which options did you take for GCSE"* which demonstrates that the information provided by volunteers will help inform educational and career choices. The students value the advice of people with firsthand experience of the sector.

Sessions for Year 12 students focus on preparing young people to apply for jobs, such as a CV workshop and mock interviews.

### **The impact of the programme**

The project team and teaching staff found that the programme had a big impact for the young people and also for Merrill Lynch. The schools participating in the programme have seen an improvement in SAT results, and in addition young people demonstrate improved confidence, presentation skills, entrepreneurial skills, and have a better understanding of the sector. However, underpinning all of this is the impact of the programme on raising the aspirations of young people and motivating them to progress and succeed in this very competitive sector.

Merrill Lynch found that the programme has been a very positive experience for volunteers, and has improved their communication skills from having to present to big groups of young people. The programme also helps the company to support its local community and has been a positive experience for the project team who have won a number of awards, including the Lord Major's Dragon Award and 'Employer of the Year' at the London Education Partnership Awards in recognition of the programme's work with Mulberry School for Girls.

### **Lessons Learnt**

A key challenge to the project was to engage with volunteers to support the programme. This proved difficult at first but the project found that by gaining support from senior executives, managers were more likely to release staff and staff were more likely to participate.

### **Challenges and recommendations for future practice/replication**

The challenge during the current financial crisis is maintaining the level of support and contribution from volunteers. However Merrill Lynch has found that the programme is a very effective selling point to new recruits who are now more and more interested in CSR policies.

The only disappointing aspect to the programme that was raised by some young people was the limited time that the students spend on the programme. A key challenge will be in expanding the provision to meet the interest from new and existing learners and schools.

It was also commented that while the project raises young people's awareness of the financial sector, it does not do the same for other sectors such as sport, arts and drama. A key challenge for partners will be to source additional programmes raising awareness of other sectors to compliment the offering to young people.

The key areas for replication are:

- Delivering provision in a business setting, which was shown to motivate young people and give them a better understanding of the area of work.
- The integration of presentation and enterprise skills into programmes from a young age has delivered a visual improvement in performance.
- Staff interviews and CV workshops have given young people a clearer understanding of the sector and provided valuable advice to support young people in making academic or employment choices.



## ANNEX 2: CASE STUDY - FUTURE:PROOF FRAMEWORK, SHEFFIELD CITY COUNCIL

**Name of organisation:** Sheffield City Council

**Date of visit:** 10<sup>th</sup> February 2009

**Data sources/methodology:**

- Interview with Future:proof Framework Programme Developer
- Interview with ETL Delivery staff
- Focus group with 7 young people enrolled on the ETL Driving Ambitions programme
- Interviews with 2 young people attending the NACRO Up 2 the Mark programme
- Focus group with 4 organisations involved in the delivery of Moving on Up programme
- Observation of Future:proof Strategic Commissioning Group

**Overview of project**

Sheffield City Council (SCC), Lifelong Learning & Skills secured £2million from the Learning & Skills Council and the European Social Fund (ESF) to develop a programme which funds targeted work with young people between the ages of 16 and 18 who are not in education, employment or training (NEET). This project has been branded the Future:proof Framework and aims to enhance and complement existing services for young people NEET, as well as offering new activities specifically designed to meet the needs of these young people that are not currently being met by existing services.

The Framework began in September 2008 and will run until March 2010 and funds around 25 projects which aim to ensure young people have the support they need to take up learning, training and employment opportunities available in the city. It brings together public, private and voluntary sector partners to deliver a range of projects, including arts, media, sports, vocational, basic skills, re-engagement, support, and personal and social development activities in a range of locations around the city. Some projects target specific NEET groups, for example, young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, Black and minority ethnic young people, women and young offenders.

Commissioning decisions are made by the Future:proof Framework multiagency Strategic Commissioning Group.<sup>20</sup> The role of the group is to ensure that the programme links into wider strategies and structures in the city as well as ensuring that services are commissioned to address gaps in provision, for example, targeting locations with little provision and targeting specific vulnerable groups.

The Future:proof Framework has been influenced by learning from the **Moving On up** initiative. Moving On Up was a reengagement programme that aimed to engage vulnerable groups<sup>21</sup> and support them with attendance, raising self-esteem and addressing barriers into work or learning. The initiative was an accredited programme where young people worked towards the City and Guilds 3071 Self Development Through Learning qualification at Entry Level 3. Project activities included: reengagement, team building, preparation for learning, group and one to one sessions

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<sup>20</sup> Which includes representation from key strategic partners including LSC, Connexions, voluntary sector, private training providers, Integrated Youth, Further Education

<sup>21</sup> Initially working with Looked After Children and Care Leavers and then extended to work with other vulnerable groups.

with educational psychologists, vocational tasters and Pebble Pad delivery<sup>22</sup>. Throughout the programme young people had dedicated support staff to assist and support them. Furthermore, young people's progress was evaluated using the Rickter Scale motivational assessment and evaluation tool.

Between April 2007 and December 2008 Moving On Up worked with 52 young people who were working towards a qualification; 20 young people achieved a qualification; and 48 young people who achieved positive outcomes.<sup>23</sup>

The model adopted by Moving On Up was recognised as an effective approach in engaging vulnerable young people in education, employment and training. The initiative terminated in December 2008, however, the approaches that were deemed to be effective were taken onboard by the Future:proof Framework. Namely, these were: partnership delivery, education psychologists (to break down barriers to engagement), use of vocational taster sessions, personalised learning focussing on progression and assessment tools encouraging the planning and evaluation of learning and personal and social development and evaluation tool and dedicated support staff.

The following are examples of projects commissioned through the Fututre:proof Framework:

### ***The Driving Ambitions programme***

The ***Driving Ambitions*** programme for young people delivered by Employment Training Links Ltd (ETL) is a 15 week programme for young people aged 16 to 18 who are NEET. The programme aims to support young people to take up employment through: developing young people's basic skills; developing their confidence and motivation; supporting young people to develop their CV, apply for jobs and prepare for interviews; and provide work placements and training in warehouse and logistic, including: forklift training, warehouse and storage and warehouse / plant operations.

The programme offers young people certain incentives to retain their engagement with the programme including Education Maintenance Allowance and free driving lessons. Since November 2008, the programme has engaged 48 young people of which: 9 young people have passed the forklift training and 12 young people are currently doing Heavy Goods Vehicle training.

Young people on the programme identified a number of benefits of attending the programme, these included: gives them something positive to do, help to keep them off the streets, they gain skills and qualifications, gain social skills and make new friends. Attending the programme had raised the aspirations of some young people, for example some young people stated they wanted to enter into employment (construction, gym instructor), whilst others stated they would like to undertake further learning and training at college (counselling, driving instruction, health and social care).

### ***The Up 2 the Mark programme***

The ***Up 2 the Mark*** programme delivered by NACRO is a support programme to that helps young offenders realise their potential and progress in to a positive future. Young people attend for 16 hours for 12 weeks where they receive one to one support, vocational taster sessions, and numeracy and literacy skills. The programme also offers wrap around support to all mainstream provision.

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<sup>22</sup> A new ICT based personal development portfolio called Pebble Pad which young people could use to create a CV, upload their work, create a blog and communicate with tutors and peers.

<sup>23</sup> *ESF Funded Pre-E2E Programme to Engage 16-18 Year Olds NEET April 2007-March 2008*, Sheffield City Council

Up 2 the Mark works with young people who have suffered a range of issues including: family bereavement, domestic violence, witnessing knife and gun crime, coping with family members involvement in the criminal justice system, alcoholism, feelings of abandonment, offending behaviour and mental health issues. Two young people that were referred to the programme by their probation officers, both reported since attending the programme they believed the programme has had positive impact on their lives and has raised their aspirations. One young person stated that attending the programme has boosted her confidence. She is learning basic skills on the programme and is now making applications to college to enrol on a health and social care course. Her future plans are to become a midwife. She sees the Up 2 the Mark programme as a way out of offending behaviour and helping her to realise her plans. Another young person reported that attending the programme keeps him away from bad crowds and it has helped him to start thinking about his future. At present he is uncertain of what he wants to do, however, the project is helping him decide on a future career by organising for him to attend various vocational taster sessions.

As far as the Future:proof Framework is concerned, project staff welcomed the opportunity to be part of the initiative and appreciated the added value of being part of the Framework as opposed to delivering a project on their own. Projects particularly welcomed the networking opportunities provided through the network meetings organised by Lifelong Learning & Skills. These meetings provide a forum for projects to find out what services other projects are delivering, opportunities to share learning and support each other with arranging work placements. Projects were also very appreciative of the counselling services which they can access for participants engaged in programmes commissioned through the Framework.

### ***Examples of Effective practice***

There are a number of approaches and method adopted by the Future:proof Framework and the projects it supports that are particularly effective in raising the aspirations and expectations of young people. These are described below in relation to some of the stages of the learner journey.

### ***Removing barriers to learning***

As mentioned above many of the young people the Future:proof Framework engages with are extremely vulnerable and include: young offenders, Looked After young people, care leavers, and teen parents. These young people often experience multiple barriers to engagement, including: mental health issues, family breakdown, domestic violence, sexual, physical and emotional abuse, and bereavement. Understandably, having to cope with such difficult circumstances prevents young people from engaging in, and staying engaged in employment, education or training. Recognising the need to support young people to cope with such circumstances and thus remove their barriers to learning the programme has funded **education psychologist** as a resource for projects to draw on, to provide emotional training and support to young people. The education psychologist deliver group training sessions on problem solving, anger management and self management as well as one to one counselling sessions. Staff reported that this was a valuable service and provided young people the space to talk through their problems so that they can put them aside and move on to concentrate on their learning. This was echoed by the young people themselves. One tutor reported that a number of young people would have dropped out of the programme had they not received the support of the psychologist.

Project staff also reported the need for a **holistic approach** to training for the high end NEET young people (for example, those facing multiple barriers to learning). A holistic approach was defined by project staff as training that is not structured around a formal qualification and therefore enables young people and the programme to deal with problems outside of learning that prevent young people for learning. In addition to a holistic approach, project staff also believed a **personalised approach** was required to the delivery of learning. This approach recognises that **one size does not fit all**. Staff explained that with the high end NEET young

people, learning has to start where they are at in their learning journey. In practice this may mean engaging with the young person for an hour or two a week to help address their barriers to learning until they are ready to engage for longer. These personalised approaches to learning are resource intensive because the engagement process will be lengthy but for some vulnerable young people this is essential to their engagement. The Up 2 the Mark programme delivered by Nacro takes this holistic and personalised approach to learning where young people are given the support to address personal problems as well as supporting young people with basic skills needs and realising their potential. This is illustrated further in the boxed example below:

***Case study: Personalised approach to removing barriers to learning***

Amy<sup>24</sup> was consuming large amounts of alcohol which led her to becoming involved in offending behaviour. She was referred to the Up 2 the Mark programme by her probation officer. Initially she attended the project for a few hours a week where she got the opportunity to talk through her problems with a psychologist as well as learning basic skills. Gradually she attended the programme for longer periods and the project worker talked with Amy about her future plans and together they drew up an individual learning plan. Amy explained that coming to the project has helped her to think about her future. Now that Amy's basic skills and personal issues are being addressed she is applying to colleges to study Health and Social Care so that she can fulfil her future aspirations of becoming a Midwife.

***Engagement***

The use of **incentives** was viewed as important by staff in engaging young people NEET. The Driving Ambitions programme delivered by ETL Ltd used a range of incentives to engage young people including: EMA, free driving lessons (young people can get up to 10 free driving lessons based on their attendance and behaviour) and financial support to pay for provisional driving license. One project staff member commented that this was an attractive programme for young people because they don't have to pay for anything - their travel, books and even their lunch is paid for. The programme is also delivered in multiple locations to improve access. Staff reported that once engaged it was crucial to **gain young peoples' trust**, because if the trust is there young people will stay engaged. This was illustrated by the fact that some young people travelled 15-20 miles to attend the training during the recent heavy snowfall! One of the key approaches to gaining young peoples' trust was by consulting with young people on the delivery of the training and checking whether it was on the right track. On a weekly basis ETL tutors talk with young people and ask whether what is being delivered is right, whether anything is not working and what they would rather be doing. Although there is a set programme to follow, staff reported that they have to be **flexible** and make changes if the programme is not working in keeping young people engaged.

***Initial assessment and review of progress***

A number of project staff reported that the Rickter Scale was an excellent tool for initial assessments and reviewing the progress of young people. The Rickter Scale is a motivational assessment and evaluation tool that uses motivational interviewing techniques to raise self awareness, build self-esteem, motivates action planning, aids goal setting and provides feedback on progress made. It also measures soft outcomes and distance travelled. The Rickter Scale is a physical tool – a hand-held board - which is used during the initial assessment and review meetings. It is accompanied with computer software which enables project staff to capture the baseline, review progress and note action points. Progress made by young people can be viewed by graphs and charts.

<sup>24</sup> Pseudonym has been adopted to protect the identity of the young person

Staff stated that the Rickter Scale initial assessment covers all aspects of the young person's life and covers family/home life as well as education and learning. For the various statements young people rate (1-10 scale) where they are currently at and where they would like to be. The statements are re-visited at various points throughout the training to show progress and whether goals have been met. Staff commented that the tool was very effective in raising young people's aspirations because it **positively engages young people and motivates them to take ownership of their own goals and learning plans**. Young people are motivated to progress and achieve goals because they set the goals and are able to see their learning journey. Another strong point of the Rickter Scale is that it allows young people to **set realistic and achievable goals**. Staff were concerned that often young people have unrealistic expectations and some people working with young people raise their expectations too high and when they are unable to achieve them the young people give up.

### ***Content of learning programmes***

Staff believed that to effectively engage young people NEET it was very important for the training **sessions to be fun and active**. One staff member commented that ***“you have to do practical stuff. Young people don't want to sit in a classroom. They want to be out doing positive things like visiting places and doing work experience.”*** Projects funded by Future:proof deliver a range of practical fun sessions which include: outdoor physical activity-based inductions, work placements, work taster sessions and visits to employers.

**Work placements and taster sessions** were viewed very positively both by staff and young people. Work placements enabled young people to try out different careers and often helped them in deciding which path to follow. Furthermore, The Driving Ambitions programme has incorporated a module on career progression in the training programme. During this module young people are encouraged to think about their about career aspirations and develop action plans on how they will get there.

### ***Lessons Learned***

The following lessons were shared by staff involved in the Future:proof programme:

- *“One size does not fit all”*. A range of interventions are required to raise the aspirations of young people NEET. Young people respond differently to different learning styles and will be at different points in their learning journey. Therefore, there needs to be a range of interventions to engage young people.
- Working in partnership to deliver services collaboratively is key to ensuring a range of different interventions are delivered by appropriately qualified people.
- Needs analysis must inform the commissioning of services to ensure services respond to the needs to young people.
- Organisations delivering service should regularly consult with young people to ensure training and learning is responsive to their needs. Programmes need to be flexible so that they can be modified to the needs and young people which will increase engagement.
- Pastoral care and support services are crucial to support young people's learning. Young people need access to trained professionals who can work with them to address barriers to learning.
- Individual learning plans with realistic and achievable goals that are regularly reviewed can motivate young people to achieve and raise their aspirations.

## **ANNEX 3: CASE STUDY - LEAP TEENAGE PREGNANCY SUPPORT SERVICE, LEARNING AND SKILLS COUNCIL, NORTH EAST**

**Name of organisation:** LEAP: Learn Educate and Progress, Teenage Pregnancy Support Service

**Date of visit:** 5 March 2009

**Data sources/methodology:** Focus group with 7 members of the management and delivery team:

- LSC project manager
- Provider Development Manager (NEET)/ Policy and Planning Adviser, LSC North East
- Connexions Personal Adviser
- Tutor and verifier of OCN units
- 3 Teenage Pregnancy Advisers, Teenage Pregnancy Support Team

Focus group with 8 service users

Tour of centre where the project is delivered

### **Overview of project**

The project was designed to tackle the increasing rate of young parents who are not in education, employment or training in Stockton, which is above the regional average and was also intended to address a gap in provision for young parents. The project links in to national and regional NEET reduction strategies. Prior to the project, young people were attending the centre and completing units of learning that were not accredited. It was felt that they should be given the opportunity to gain some form of certification and so the Learn Educate and Progress course was developed that offers a range of Level 1 OCN units.

The aims of the project are to engage young parents and parents-to-be in learning activities to improve their social, financial and emotional well-being and provide the necessary toolkit for young parents to be effective parents, to prevent future unplanned pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections and to progress into further training, education and employment. Although the initial target group was young parents and parents-to-be not in education, employment or training between the ages of 13 and 19, the project has worked closely with schools to engage young people within education who are at risk of becoming NEET.

The project is based within a Sure Start Children's Centre and offers ten short courses specifically developed for young parents: Pain Relief and Labour, Ante Natal Care, Sexual Health Awareness, Preparation for Hospital, First Aid Awareness, Recognising Illness in your Baby, Budgeting and Money Management, Independent Living Skills, Building Confidence and Self Esteem and Preparation for Training, Education and Employment. The project is currently developing a new unit entitled 'Lads to Dads' for young fathers. The courses are accredited by the Open College Network and are normally delivered in two-hour sessions at the Children's Centre. Each unit is 10 hours of work and flexibly designed so learners can dip in and out. Basic skills training and developing self confidence are embedded within the curriculum. Ongoing information, advice and guidance are provided in the form of one-to-one sessions.

Young people can choose to do as many or few of the units as they wish and there is a high level of flexibility in terms of how the unit is delivered. Young people can choose to learn in an individual or group setting, for example, and the two-hour session is scheduled at a time

convenient for the young person, which can vary from week to week if necessary. Young parents can bring their children to the session.

The project focuses on addressing wider barriers to learning by providing young parents with access to specialist advice relating to housing, benefits and family breakdown. As well as the specific LEAP activities, project participants have access to other activities run by the Teenage Pregnancy Support Service, such as art and craft and drama workshops.

The project was a pilot that ran from November 2007 until March 2008. It received additional funding and has therefore continued until present.

The delivery team comprises two Teenage Pregnancy Advisers who wrote the learning units and share responsibility for delivery; an additional tutor responsible for delivery of OCN units and a Connexions Personal Adviser who is based on-site one day per week. The budget for the pilot phase of the project was £18,000 and was funded by the LSC. At the end of this funding period, the project was awarded an additional £16,000 for a further year by the LSC, as well as funding from the local authority. The project team consider the project to be gradually becoming mainstreamed.

Strong partnership working is one of the project's key success factors. The project works collaboratively with Connexions, the PCT (nurses, midwives, doctors and health visitors), Brook and the Youth Service. All of these agencies provide referrals and there is a particularly strong link with Connexions, who provide a Personal Adviser to be based at the Centre one day a week: *"she comes here once a week and that is really important because the young people know her and she gets to know them. It means that Connexions is not a faceless service. They might not be ready to be referred to the project but by being on site, she has knowledge of who they are and what they're doing"*. The project also links in to local 14-19 delivery partnerships.

### **Impact to date and future plans**

The main impact to date relates to self esteem and confidence building. In the words of one of the delivery team: *"young parents are often socially isolated when they come to us. They've lost touch with friends and have faced a lot of judgement and prejudice. They come to us and do our courses and it's mainly about building confidence. They are different people when they exit the service to when they come in"*.

With increased confidence, young parents view their future more positively: *"When they first came to us, a lot of the young people didn't want to do anything. They didn't see coming to us as a means to progression. They would say 'I'm a parent, and that's it'. The project has changed the way they think about their future. They started asking questions about college and their options. This wouldn't have happened without LEAP"*. A young mother agreed, commenting: *"If I'd stayed at school, I wouldn't be where I am now. I wouldn't have done my GCSEs and be at college now. I'm doing a course in catering"*.

The current year's project targets are:

- 25 young parents to achieve Level 1 or 2 qualifications
- 10 young parents to progress to further education
- 10 young parents to receive IAG sessions

At present the project is on track to meet these targets. In terms of future plans, the management and delivery team would like to work more on developing progression routes. Some colleges offer flexible start dates and many are changing their curriculum offer to increase flexibility and accessibility. These sorts of measures are helping young parents to realise their aspirations of going to college. The project team would therefore like to build on this and work more collaboratively with providers to advise them on ways in which they can support young parents to enter a mainstream learning environment. They currently hold data on the number of young

people that are offered a place on FE courses but are not easily able to collect data about acceptance or attendance. They would like to develop their tracking systems and to improve their dissemination of success stories.

### **Examples of Effective practice**

#### ***Removing the barriers to learning***

Lack of self esteem and confidence is a major barrier to learning and the flexible, **relaxed and informal learning environment** has been particularly important in addressing this issue. There are coffee rooms with sofas, televisions and games consoles where young parents can relax and talk to each other and there is a kitchen stocked with food and drink so that young people can prepare basic meals and snacks for themselves. This encourages independent living skills at the same time as creating a safe and welcoming environment. A member of the delivery team explains that *"we establish a relationship of trust with young parents and that means they enjoy being here"*. The ethos of the project is to provide a non-judgemental and supportive space. This is particularly important because of the prejudice and stigma faced by most young parents. A service user describes her experience of LEAP: *"It's better than school here, more relaxed. You feel comfortable to say what you feel and think, it's not about what you're meant to think. And it's good to be around people in your situation"*.

The project **addresses some young parents' perception of further education as impractical or unaffordable** throughout the course. This is done through the Preparing for Education, Employment and Training unit and also by informing young people about their Care to Learn entitlement as early as possible so they are aware that there is funding available to support them.

#### ***Engagement***

The project has a multi-pronged approach to engagement which has proved successful. The strong **partnership working** that underpins the project leads to referrals from a number of different agencies such as Connexions, the Youth Service and the PCT. The 7 service users we interviewed had heard about the project through different sources (doctor, support worker, a parent, an information leaflet, a Sure Start home visitor and school). Marketing materials are circulated widely and used to increase awareness of the project's services. This layered and broad approach ensures that as many young parents as possible are informed of the service.

The project's **physical location within a Sure Start Children's Centre** has contributed significantly to its effectiveness in engaging with young parents. It has made the referral process smoother and means that young parents have access to a wide range of specialist services in one location. The Children's Centre is one of a cluster of buildings that include a nursery and a school for teenage parents.

The fact that **engagement with the project is voluntary** is important in making young parents feel autonomous and empowered through their choices. The project team recognise that many of the most vulnerable young people they work with may not be ready to begin working on OCN units immediately and so they do not exert pressure and allow them time to decide when they will begin to take the units.

#### ***Content of learning programme/alternative provision as a bridge to re-engagement***

The **flexibility of the learning programme** is an important feature of the project's success. The fact that young people can choose whether they learn in small groups or on their own and, similarly that they can choose which units and how many they wish to take helps to build confidence and ensures that an individualised learning programme is offered for each beneficiary. The flexibility to timetable learning sessions according to the convenience of the young person and also to bring their child is also important in overcoming practical barriers to learning.



### ***Involvement of young people in design and delivery***

The project is developing a **peer support programme** which trains young parents who have been engaged with LEAP for some time to support other young parents who are newcomers to the project. This approach helps to develop confidence and trust and is a **powerful way of communicating the benefits and key messages of the programme**.

Young people on the LEAP project are involved in **writing a newsletter**, the Stockton Teenage Pregnancy Information Newsletter. This is a positive activity that encourages young people to celebrate their achievements and also helps to make sure the newsletter is relevant and interesting to its target audience. Young people are regularly involved in the evaluation and monitoring of the project by giving their views in focus groups.

### **Lessons Learned**

The project has experienced **difficulties in supporting young parents in their transition from the project to further education, employment or training**: *"They get comfortable here and attached to staff. Moving them on is difficult"*. The project offers a nurturing, safe and relatively small environment which develops self esteem and encourages independence. However, this can also cause beneficiaries to be anxious about moving on to larger, more structured and formal learning environments. The project hopes to ease this transition by working more collaboratively with other providers and encouraging them to offer taster courses and to come in and meet young people prior to enrolment. Ideally, they would like somebody within the Teenage Pregnancy Support Team to be dedicated link person with other providers.

### **Challenges and recommendations for future practice /replication**

The delivery team believe that the project could be replicated elsewhere with an appropriately-skilled team and agencies involved. Their main focus for future practice is working more closely with other providers and disseminating LEAP success stories to increase the project's profile.

## **ANNEX 4: CASE STUDY - RAISING ASPIRATIONS PROJECT, SHEFFIELD HALLAM UNIVERSITY**

**Name of organisation:** Sheffield Hallam University

**Date of visit:** 26th February 2009

**Data sources/methodology:** The case study team visited Sheffield Hallam University. The team interviewed Sheffield Hallam University, The University of Sheffield and Sheffield City Council staff as well as one student who is a care leaver.

### **Overview of project**

#### **Rationale, aims and target group**

Sheffield Hallam University is committed to and highly involved in raising aspirations work. This work is focused on encouraging progression into higher education (HE) for pupils who face real barriers or perceived obstacles. Raising Aspirations activities work to address issues which pupils and their parents believe may exclude them from HE, for example, those with concerns about ability, finance or personal circumstances. The geographical area around the University includes many deprived areas with varying progression rates to HE and pockets of low aspirations. The main role of the Raising Aspirations work is to provide information and activities that can present HE as an option by increasing contact between pupils and students, their parents/carers, and HE institutions. The key aspect of the Raising Aspirations work is increasing contact between HE institutions – particularly using the University's Student Ambassadors (made up of current Sheffield Hallam University students) and pupils and their parents, via schools and colleges. For GHK's case study, there was a particular focus on Looked After Children. Traditionally, very small numbers of care leavers progress to HE. Figures from 2001 illustrate that only 1% of care leavers progress to HE. Sheffield Hallam University is a leader in its provision of activity and support to encourage care leavers entering HE. The University was one of the first HEI's to be awarded the Frank Buttle Trust Quality Mark as a recognition of its commitment in increasing the number of young people entering and succeeding in HE. A key element in this is the University's organisation wide approach, it's raising aspirations and transition support work has since been developed and embedded across the work of the pre-enrolment area. .

#### **Project activities and the types of approaches used**

Under the Raising Aspirations umbrella, there are three different types of activities that take place:

- Raising Aspirations activities which include the Cash Course, Get Ahead Aimhigher Roadshow, Looked After Children and Care Leavers visits, master classes, The Graduation Project, Professor Fluffy, Student Ambassador programme, Uni4u visits and University Experience Evenings. The looked after children element of the project began as an initial research project but has developed into a much broader initiative and is an important element of the University's widening participation activities;
- Recruitment activities which include Clearing, Open Days, HE fairs and conventions, student ambassador scheme and student led campus tours; and,
- Transition Support and Mentoring which includes The Compact Scheme, Aimhigher mentoring, Buddy Bank and the Student Preparation Programme.

By adopting a multi-agency approach, Sheffield Hallam University works with a range of partners, including The University of Sheffield, Aimhigher, Sheffield City Council, neighbouring local authorities and schools and colleges in South Yorkshire and adjacent areas. Work is targeted at those from non-traditional HE backgrounds within a roughly 50 mile radius of the University. The approach consists of a progressive and sequential series of activities with schools and colleges. . For example, the University has developed a calendar of events and contact for Looked After Children. This consists of a range of activities for various age groups: for Years 9 to 11, events include: introduction to HE/student ambassadors, routes into FE and HE, subject specific activity, campus visits, a two day summer school, careers events, and scenario days, among many others. For Years 12 and 13, events and contact include: a letter to partnership schools informing them of LAC support, letters to partnership schools/colleges informing them of the Care Leaver Bursary and possible training sessions for carers about FE and HE. Another element of the project is the Compact Scheme, which offers support in the application and transition process to students who face particular barriers to progression to University. The scheme provides enhanced support for these students during the application and admissions process and beyond. All schools and colleges within the University's Associate School and College Partnerships are members of the Compact Scheme and can recommend students who fulfil certain criteria to apply through this. Any Looked After Child - regardless of school / college - can apply through the Compact Scheme.

### **The delivery team and project structure**

Sheffield Hallam University's Outreach and UK Recruitment Team lead on Raising Aspirations work. There is a dedicated University Care Leaver Support Co-ordinator who sits within the team, supporting work with Look After Children as one aspect of their wider role. They offer information, advice and guidance to care leavers interested in progressing to the University , act as a link between care leavers and their Local Authority (LA) and organise raising aspirations visits into the University for Looked After Children through schools and LA's. There is also collaborative working with The University of Sheffield who also have a dedicated Care Leaver worker who has similar responsibilities i.e.: sustained support and impartial advice throughout the student's time at University; acting as a link between the student's local authority, the student and the University; helping the student access support from the services available across the University; and acting as the student's personal support contact. However, the emphasis at Sheffield Hallam wherever possible is on developing and embedding activity which supports Looked After Children throughout the pre-entry cycle, during transition to HE and during a student's time at the University.

### **Budget and funding sources**

Work with Looked After Children is supported by the HEFCE premium funding which is directed towards outreach activity and through Aimhigher. A large part of the cost is absorbed in staff time. Aimhigher also contribute to specific projects and events while the Faculty of Health and Wellbeing within the University also lead on specific activities. Much of the work is reliant on short term funding streams which is an ongoing issue for everyone involved in this area of work.

Finance issues were also highlighted as an area students needed assistance with; some young people do not understand money/ budgeting, have problems with paying bills, rent or fees on time, and experience delays in getting money from their local authorities (local authorities act as a corporate parent, and bureaucratic delays sometimes mean that university fees are not paid on time). Both universities offer bursaries for students who need financial assistance; The University of Sheffield notifies care leavers of its Access to Learning Fund which awards students with two £500 instalments per year while Sheffield Hallam University awards a Care Leaver's Bursary of £1500 per taught year.

### **Links into wider strategic structures/strategies/ Partnership working**

In terms of the wider strategic structures, Sheffield Hallam and its partners have a well rounded approach, connecting a strategic widening participation group and the Area Partnership Committee which is responsible for Aimhigher South Yorkshire. This demonstrates Sheffield Hallam's long term commitment. Moreover, the project is very well connected at a strategic level, with the backing of the Vice Chancellor demonstrated through his involvement in the Frank Buttle Trust Monitoring visit. Sheffield Hallam also has a strong ethos and history in regional regeneration. As mentioned above, Sheffield Hallam University has a close working partnership with The University of Sheffield, which began quite early on in the life of the Looked After Children project. Both universities work together to raise awareness of looked after children with external and internal clients. Like Sheffield Hallam University, The University of Sheffield support care leavers in pre-enrolment and adjusting to university life. Students have a dedicated pre enrolment single point of contact in the Care Leaver Coordinator. Once they have enrolled they are given a named contact to support and signpost them throughout their time at University. Both HEI's identify care leavers through their UCAS application forms; this is a recent development, previously the Universities had to rely on the student's personal tutor or through any financial support they might have received which meant that care leavers were sometimes not identified, or only identified when a particular issue arose.

There are other issues in developing a programme which targets looked after young people or care leavers, particularly in identifying them so support can be targeted at them. In particular, school staff do not always know whether their pupils are looked after because they are not identified as such, there is also no identification of the cohort in some other schemes. In Sheffield, the profile of Looked After Children has been raised in the last few years through a City-wide project aimed at raising the GCSE results of these learners. Every school in Sheffield now has the responsibility to look at predicted grades and outcomes of pupils in care as well as to support Looked After Children in their studies in order to enhance their access to FE and HE.

### **Impact to date and future plans**

Sheffield Hallam University has raised the aspirations of young people to consider HE through a two day event called 'A Taste of Uni', for Year 9 and Year 10 pupils. Feedback from those that participated was positive, giving young people an insight into university life which has helped to inspire them to raise their aspirations. Moreover, Sheffield Hallam and Sheffield City Council staff interviewed as part of the case study gave examples of the impact interventions have had on young people. One female student who had not attended school for three years is now at university and a male pupil who attended one of the summer schools has ambitions to gain 13 GCSE results and is pushing himself to go to university.

In terms of future plans, Sheffield Hallam staff said that they will continue to consolidate activity into all services, making it more embedded and sustainable. Staff also expressed their interest in working with younger pupils to make them aware of higher education at an earlier age so: *"It is not isolated and becomes part of a process. Even though they are a long way off it is something to aspire to and is seen as achievable"*. Therefore, the University is building relationships earlier on and are also using the extended curriculum to work with pupils outside of school hours.

Sheffield Hallam University have outlined future plans for Looked After Children and Care Leavers for 2009/2011 within its Raising Aspirations work. These include continuing to build on Local Authority relationships; developing a cycle of visits in conjunction with events in existence at Sheffield Hallam and The University of Sheffield; taking part in Foster Care training and helping to support the Local Authority through information sharing; developing a suite of Looked After Children focussed presentations to take to schools and colleges as part of Uni4U visits (again, to support the sustainability of this work); creating strong links with LAC workers within schools and colleges; having an identifiable cohort of Care Leavers which proceed through the

Compact Scheme; ensuring all new starting Care Leavers are known to the team and are aware of support; and continuing to develop good relationships and effective communication with on course support.

**Examples of Effective practice:** The Compact Scheme is designed to help support those students who face real barriers in progressing to University. Students must meet specified criteria to be eligible for extra admissions support. Being Looked After or a Care Leaver was added to the criteria in 2006. Work with Looked After Children includes a number of activities aimed at encouraging young people in care to apply to university (see above). The two day event, 'A Taste of Uni' has been cited by young people and Local Authority staff as being effective in raising aspirations due to its interactive approach. Sheffield Hallam and Local Authority staff believe that it is important to physically bring young people into a university environment as this is an effective way of breaking down their barriers to HE. This is because young people are able to explore what being a student is, their lifestyle and the type of work they would do at university. The two day visit is a hands-on and interactive experience and the young people take the activities seriously. This also breaks barriers down with the foster carers who themselves may be a barrier to the aspirations of young people in their care. Some foster carers may not have experienced university themselves or do not know of anyone who have been and therefore may not see it as a viable option for the young people in their care.

The University runs The Graduation Project (see [www.thegraduationproject.ac.uk](http://www.thegraduationproject.ac.uk)) which produces case studies of successful local graduates from non-traditional backgrounds, showing their progression route and experiences. The emphasis is on: *"If I can, you can"*. Case study posters are distributed to schools and colleges. In addition, school and college students, their teachers and parents are able to use the dedicated website to view a variety of case studies by school / college and subject studied along with sources of information. This website receives around 500 hits a day.

The approach the University and its partners adopt when working with Looked After Children is one of respect, for example, by signposting to (rather than hand holding through) appropriate services and support. One care leaver said: *"they treat you more like a friend and are less formal, for example, the way that the support is delivered, explaining it and receiving the advice. Some people can be condescending but I never got that feeling here."* He went on to say that the support provided by the Care Leaver Co-ordinator has been important to him in adjusting to university life. One suggestion he had for improvement, was to develop a support network of other care leavers at the University. When this care leaver started University, he was put in contact with one of the other care leavers with whom he was able to develop a friendship and this has helped him to reduce his stress levels. Moreover, he would also like to mentor other young people starting the University who have been in care.

The project is delivered from the viewpoint of the student's journey. It also adopts a well structured, centralised and strategic approach, which means that the model can be replicated elsewhere. A key success factor has been the input from the main partners. Another important fact is working with care leavers at an earlier stage in order to embed HE as a viable option and helping them to address any barriers before they arise, rather than when they arise. This in itself is difficult as Universities are increasingly required to support IAG work in schools and colleges, which provides little time for early outreach activity.

Ideally, if funding were available, the University would like to open their outreach activities out to younger age groups, such as 8 or 9 year olds. There are a wide range of young people who could benefit from similar support, for example, vulnerable girls with low self-esteem, and young boys at risk of offending by getting them to focus on what they could achieve. The earlier young people (even as young as primary school age) are exposed to these types of interventions and support, the better, as they are more likely to see university as part of their vocation. Mentoring

was also mentioned as another important support mechanism; but is possibly the most resource intensive activity run by Universities and requires additional funding which has to date, been short-term in nature. Although very expensive it is very effective when targeted at key groups.

## ANNEX 5: CASE STUDY - UNIVERSITY OF THE FIRST AGE AND DARLINGTON EDUCATION VILLAGE

**Name of organisation:** University of the First Age

**Date of visit:** 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2009

### **Data sources/methodology**

- Interview with UFA Chief Executive
- Interviews with 3 staff at the Education Village, Darlington
- Interviews with 4 young people

### **Overview of project**

The University of the First Age (UFA) is a national education charity based in Birmingham. UFA aims to create an 'open' university for young people and uses innovative and creative approaches to training teachers and other professionals to enrich and extend learning for young people aged 5-25 years. UFA is not about HE but aims to raise the aspirations of young people at all levels by improving their confidence and self-belief through exciting and positive educational experiences.

The UFA works with a range of professionals who work with young people, these include: teachers, police, YOT workers, youth workers. Activities delivered by the UFA include:

- **Training for adults.** Training is delivered to teachers and other adults who work with young people to raise achievement. The *Fellowship programme* is delivered mainly to teachers (70%) and other professionals and adults working with young people. Each programme is tailored to local needs but generally the training involves providing adults with a bank of tools to engage young people to raise standards and achievement.
- **Young people's leadership and participation in learning.** Activities delivered to young people to develop their skills and capacity to support others with their learning. The *students of today, leaders of tomorrow* course gives young people the opportunity to develop their leadership skills.
- **Young people's activities.** Range of fun learning activities delivered to young people which include: Super Learning Days (off-timetable days helping young people discover how they learn best); UFA Club (extended out of school learning activities); and Summer Challenge (one-week themed challenges i.e. murder mystery or the world in a week).

UFA has 8 staff in different locations across the country. To date, UFA has worked with 50 Local Authority areas reaching over half a million young people and training 2,500 adults. One of the organisations the UFA has worked with is the Education Village (EV) in Darlington. This is a unique institution which houses a 200 place nursery and primary school, a 900 place secondary school and a 220 place special school. Although the schools are separate (for example, and each is has its own OFSTED inspection) they operate as a single organisation. There is one management team and one governing body for the three schools and resources and budgets are pooled. The schools came together as the EV in 2006. Prior to this the secondary school had issues with student behaviour and low aspirations. The EV operates with a largely disadvantaged catchment and decided to take a holistic and systemic approach to meeting the needs of pupils, and its place in the local community. One aim was to get pupils and their parents/carers to invest a lot more of themselves in their education and has adopted a number of approaches to improve the behaviour of young people and raising their achievement levels and aspirations. These have included:

- Student voice – Involving young people in decision making. Young people are involved in various select committees and make recommendations to the school council i.e. school dinners, behaviour, green issues, teaching and learning standards.
- Prefect – Young people in Year 11 are identified to become role models for other students based on their behaviour, and approach and ability to influence others. The Prefects duties include break time duty and duties during parents evening and other school ceremonies.
- NCSL Student Leadership programme (Students of today: leaders of tomorrow) – This is a course run by UFA to inspire young people to become leaders in their school and communities.
- Facilitators programme - UFA delivered training to 7 teachers over two days and then teachers delivered the training to young people. Two students (Arts and Culture Ambassadors) from other secondary schools were invited to attend the training. The school is hoping to have a larger roll out of this with 60 young people receiving the training in every year group.
- Personalised learning programme – for students who have difficulty engaging with the curriculum taught in the classroom. This programme uses outdoor activities to encourage students to stay in school, to learn and engage in the curriculum.
- Establishing links with parents and the community – this includes outreach work with parents to promote positive parenting and raise the aspirations of parents and encouraging parents to use the swimming pool at the EV with their children as a method to engage parents with the schools.
- Establishing links with local businesses and employers – including inviting key businesses to take part in enterprise activities at the EV, arranging apprenticeships for students, and local business people acting as mentors for students.
- Creative learning experiences out of the classroom – including at the *Music Centre*, where young students can learn about music, maths and marketing out of the classroom and the *Forest* which is the EV ecology site where students can undertake ecological activities.
- The Comenius Project – a project funded through the European and Culture Lifelong Learning Programme calls for the active involvement of pupils from partner schools in different countries leading young people to active citizenship by endorsing the Olympic principles and values. Teaching through good examples and intercultural dialogue, the project helps pupils to become better persons and active European citizens.

As far as the UFA based training is concerned, this has only recently been delivered at the EV and therefore it is too early to assess its impact. However, feedback from teachers, school managers and pupils has been very positive and they believe it will have a huge impact on learning.

However, a key element of EV's approach is its holistic nature and there have been a number of impacts resulting from the combination of activities mentioned above. These include: improved behaviour and attendance of students, improved student achievement, increased young people's confidence and aspirations and improved the EV's engagement with parents and the community.

### **Examples of Effective practice**

#### ***Removing the barriers to learning and encouraging engagement***

Staff at the EV believe that a holistic approach to learning is required to encourage engagement in learning and raise young people's aspirations. The holistic approach adopted by the EV goes beyond the curriculum and includes establishing links with the local community and parents



through outreach work, working in partnership with employers and businesses to deliver the curriculum and developing young people's leadership skills. This approach recognised that young people have different learning styles and therefore delivers varied learning activities target different young people.

The UFA training is focused around removing barriers to learning and encouraging engagement. The training encourages teachers to develop supportive, respectful and equal relationships with young people which will create the right environment for learning to be effective. Staff at the EV believed that the UFA's approach to training was effective because they work with both the teachers and young people which engenders the buy in of both students and staff.

The EV has focused on developing leadership skills of students because staff believe this will help raise the aspirations of young people. Staff reported that developing leadership skills in students is important because it stretches young people and they realise what they are capable of achieving; it encourages a culture of self-worth amongst young people and in the school; and young people who demonstrate leadership skills can act as role models for other students.

Some of the learners at the EV come from very disadvantaged backgrounds and often their ability to learn is affected by what is happening at home. The school recognises this and provides extra support for these learners.

### ***Partnership working***

Another key approach adopted by the EV to raise the aspirations of the students has been to develop partnerships with local businesses and employers. The EV has developed links with employers and businesses and has engaged them in a range of initiatives to support young people's development. For example:

- Local employers recruit apprentices from the school which has resulted in low NEET figures for young people leaving the EV;
- Local employers sponsor a year group and are involved in mentoring and coaching students. Young people not only benefit from learning from employers and experiencing the world of work but have role models to inspire them; and
- The EV works in partnership with business partners to get them ready to be education providers, providing alternative, fun learning experiences for young people. For example, the EV is currently working with the Darlington Forum Music Centre to contract teaching for students who would attend sessions at the Music Centre instead of school. The EV acknowledges that the facilities and expertise available at the Music Centre are far better than those available at the EV and recognises they should not spend resources within the EV when better alternatives already exist. Linking with the Music Centre will not only give young people access to state of the art resources but will provide alternative learning provision for young people who find it difficult to engage with learning in a classroom environment.

### ***Involvement of young people in design and delivery***

The EV has a strong commitment to involving students in decision making and acting on their recommendations. This shows young people their opinions are valued by staff and the management team, this in turn increases their confidence to express their views. The EV has established structures to support young people to take part in decision making and these include the school council and select committees which report to the senior management team.

### ***Parental/carer engagement***

Recognising the importance of engaging parents in the education of young people and its impact on raising young people's achievement and aspirations, the EV has developed a number of approaches to engage parents with the schools and young people's education. For example:

- The EV operates a parent's forum which has 50 parent representatives. The group share their views with the management team on changes they would like to see introduced at the EV.
- Encouraging positive parenting is a priority for the EV over the next 3 years. The EV has employed a Community Outreach worker who undertakes activities with parents in the community to raise parents' aspirations, increase their basic skills, encourage positive parenting and better relationships between parents and their children. Staff at the EV believe that raising the aspirations of parents and their interest in their children's education would lead to better educational outcomes for young people. Some of the themes that are covered with parents include: healthy eating, parenting skills, basic skills, lads and dads sessions, and mums and daughter sessions.
- The EV offers free family swimming sessions at its swimming pool as a method of engaging with parents. Currently, 90 parents attend the swimming sessions with their children every week.

### **Challenges and lessons learned**

Potential barriers to replicating the UFA approach identified were:

- Resource issues, these are mainly in-kind (staff time, staff training and development, and rooms etc.) but also some additional funding, and;
- The need for organisations to change their ways of thinking and working, and this can be a much larger hurdle. Change can be disruptive and schools would have to cope with having teachers out of the classroom (a resource issues) and accepting different ways of doing things in order to implement the UFA approach

A key advantage of the UFA work is that it is intended to have a multiplier effect. The approach involves training trainers and young people who can in turn train or influence others. For example, the EV invited teachers from other schools to the Facilitators programme so that they could cascade the training in their own schools. Furthermore, the leadership programme is intended for young people to look up to other young people and hopefully this will influence their aspirations and so you create a virtuous circle.

Staff at the EV shared the following lessons they learnt when implementing approaches targeted at raising young people's aspirations:

- A holistic and systemic approach is very effective. Schools need to take an overview of who they are, what they do and what they need to do to maximise the engagement, attainment and aspirations of their pupils and identify what specific interventions, programmes, support etc. A holistic approach goes beyond the curriculum and works with the community, parents, employers and developing young people's leadership skills. As one member of staff stated: *"you can't raise the aspirations of young people by yourself; you need to do it in partnership"*.
- The planned changes need to be part of school development plan so that there is commitment to implement the approaches across the whole school.
- One-off activities will not work. It needs to be a long term on-going process with allocated resources.
- Getting the buy-in of staff and young people to any changes is essential. This will help them to feel part of the process which will increase the likelihood of success of initiatives.
- It is critical to work with parents to raise their aspirations which lead to raised aspirations of their children.

## **ANNEX 6: CASE STUDY - WORKING IN THE CITY/CITY 4 A DAY, THE BROKERAGE CITYLINK**

**Name of organisation:** The Brokerage

**Date of visit:** 10<sup>th</sup> February 2009

**Data sources/methodology:** Semi-structured interviews with project manager; observation of a workshop held at a City bank for Year 12 students followed by interviews with beneficiaries, accompanying school teacher and workshop leaders.

### **Overview of project**

The Brokerage aims to raise the aspirations of London's students by providing them with opportunities to learn about the City and the financial sector in general. Although they may live in close geographical proximity to the City, many inner London students will have little awareness of career opportunities in the City and may lack the confidence to apply for jobs within the Square Mile. The Working in the City and City 4 a Day programmes aim to capture the interest and attention of young people early in their educational journey and to inform them about the range of roles that exist. By breaking down negative stereotypes and informing young people through some form of direct experience of the City, the project aims to motivate young people to seek employment in the City of London. An underlying principle of the project is to maximise support from City businesses with minimum inconvenience. The target group is Year 8-13 students in inner London boroughs.

The programmes help participants to understand what the City is, the challenges and rewards awaiting young employees and the core skills that are needed in the City. It includes a taught programme, the opportunity to interview volunteer City employees, businesses skills games and exercises, and recruitment exercises, which develop young people's skills in CV writing, job applications and interview techniques. The programme is broken down into three half-day workshop sessions, which reduces the time implications for volunteers and institutions. The Brokerage also runs an outreach programme that supports careers, enterprise and employability sessions in schools. Examples of activities include staffing a stall so students can ask about working in the financial sector, running an activity about employability skills and acting as a speaker at an event.

The project runs in 11 London Boroughs, including ten of the most deprived: Camden, Greenwich, Hackney, Haringey, Islington, Lambeth, Lewisham, Newham, Southwark, Tower Hamlets and Westminster. The Brokerage offers services outside of these areas for a fee. The workshops are delivered by 2 key members of staff and the work is overseen by a project manager, who is also responsible for employer engagement. Core funding for the project is provided by UBS, while Deutsch Bank funds the outreach activities.

The project works successfully with a range of partners such as Education Business Partnership Offices, Aim Higher, Business in the Community and the City of London Corporation in order to engage schools. Approximately 75 companies and 117 inner city schools have participated. 8000 young people have visited City companies and 7000 have taken part in activities in schools.

### **Examples of Effective practice**

#### **Engaging with beneficiaries**

A key challenge to the programme is to engage schools to take part in the workshops. The project achieves this by direct marketing, attending local networking events such as careers fairs and establishing a contact within local schools. The project has found that using these channels

of promotion is important in order to enable new schools to engage with the project and also to encourage existing schools to send greater numbers of learners onto the programme.

The project has found that the main barriers for engaging with schools are:

- Lack of resources within schools to facilitate day trips
- Turnover of staff in schools, leading to a change in the key contact
- A lack of understanding within schools of the benefits and needs of the programme

The project addresses these barriers by providing support and guidance to staff in schools looking to participate in the programme, offering advice about how to promote the programme to senior management and minimising the administrative burden on schools wherever possible. The delivery is conducted wholly by the Brokerage staff and volunteers, but teachers do need to supervise young people during travel to and from workshops. As an additional incentive, participating schools are not required to pay any fees.

Schools select students who they feel will benefit most from the intervention. Generally, Year 12 learners tend to have a particular interest in finance and are likely to be undertaking business-related A-levels. Younger age groups tend to have a broader range of interests and abilities. These are accommodated within the programme, which raises awareness of all the different occupations within the City including cooks, cleaners, front desk and security, not just the better known roles such as analysts, traders, lawyers and accountants.

### **Engaging with businesses**

Another key challenge to the programme is engaging with businesses in order to provide a venue for workshops and staff volunteers. Although a number of City institutions place significant emphasis on Corporate and Social Responsibility (CSR) and are looking at ways of supporting their local community, the programme does have a resource implication for businesses, which may be a disincentive to participate. In order to overcome this potential barrier, the project is marketed to businesses through literature and also direct contact with City employers at networking events. A factor that has been instrumental in engaging with businesses is that one of the project managers has experience of working within the City and therefore understands the needs and issues that face City businesses. Being 'culturally-attuned' has enabled the project to broker better links with businesses and tailor the programme to be easier for businesses to engage with. For example, the use of volunteers for only one hour and on their own premises minimises the impact on businesses and enables more volunteers to participate from all levels of the organisation.

**Delivery location** – The programme delivers provision in on-site venues provided by City of London businesses. Corporate meeting rooms are used to inspire young people and to provide them with an opportunity to see the City from an insider's perspective. In addition, enabling young people to visit a City institution helps to break down negative gender and ethnicity stereotypes of the individuals who work in the City. The young people interviewed found this a positive part of the project, as they enjoyed experiencing a professional environment and valued the change from the normal school premises. Project staff commented that young people were generally well behaved and motivated to learn.

### **Content of learning programme**

The taught session was delivered through an interactive PowerPoint presentation, with questions and group discussions to stimulate the learner. The presentation was well-received by learners, and the short (1h 30 mins), interactive format engaged learners and helped to keep their attention. Feedback from an earlier evaluation of the programme suggested that the earlier presentations were too long and students sometimes became distracted.

The volunteer interviews gave young people the opportunity to ask questions to individuals working within the City to get a better understanding of their role, what they like and dislike about the role, and how they got the job. The young people are free to ask any questions that they are interested in. The beneficiaries interviewed felt the opportunity to lead the discussion in small groups gave them all the opportunity to contribute and ask questions that they felt were relevant. They thought the activity helped them to understand more about different jobs in the City. The interview format was effective in developing confidence and interpersonal skills.

Business games, such as a mock-trading game and an in-tray exercise, give young people the opportunity to learn key skills in enterprise and business in an informal environment. Accompanying school staff are also invited to take part in the activities and therefore the workshops have the added benefit of updating the knowledge and understanding about current work practice of teachers and careers advisers.

All of the activities described form a coherent programme of learning that links directly into national curriculum content about economic wellbeing. This is attractive to teachers and encourages them to engage with the programme and also ensures that the activities are not stand-alone but enrich the beneficiaries' wider learning.

### **Learner progression**

The project increases young people's understanding of their career opportunities and the nature of job roles within the finance sector. It helps to equip them with the knowledge required to make educational and career decisions. For those that are interested in a career in the City of London the programme plays a key role in raising aspirations and motivating young people to progress to further study.

### **Lessons Learned**

The programme has identified a number of key lessons learned that has shaped the direction of the project. These are:

- Utilising the skills of partner agencies to “add value” and help “open doors”. The Brokerage runs programmes based on its own activities in partnership with Business in the Community, the City of London Corporation, EBPs and Aim Higher to help them achieve their goals relating to local young people.
- Understanding the local area. This is particularly relevant in inner London, where the project team have found that it is much easier to get young people to engage in sessions if they feel you “know what they are about”. The combination of outreach in schools and local careers fairs with workshops in corporate venues, allows project staff to become familiar with the young people's local environment and to understand nuances between boroughs.
- Understanding the needs of teachers. It is necessary to understand the needs of teachers and to ensure that the administration of the programme is done in a way that is convenient and non- intrusive. This includes providing support and regular contact at convenient times and setting achievable timescales. The biggest risk to the organisation is if schools do not attend organised workshops, which not only is a waste of staff resources but also gives a negative impression of the project to businesses, which can make it more difficult to book future sessions.
- Ongoing recruitment. Engagement of schools relies to a large extent on relationships with individual teachers and links can be broken if the key point of contact leaves the school. In order to ensure that there are always sufficient numbers of schools to take part in workshops, ongoing engagement activities are necessary. The project therefore conducts outreach and networking activities throughout the year and attends any relevant local events.

