

# Education and Lifelong Learning



The Scottish  
Government

## Production of Case Studies of the Delivery of Skills for Learning, Skills for Life and Skills for Work



# **PRODUCTION OF CASE STUDIES OF THE DELIVERY OF SKILLS FOR LEARNING, SKILLS FOR LIFE AND SKILLS FOR WORK**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### The research aims and approach

The study was commissioned by The Scottish Government (2007–08) to highlight good practice in delivering practical, applied or vocational learning provision for all pupils. The findings are intended to inform a paper on the delivery of skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work being prepared as part of the implementation of Curriculum for Excellence (CfE). The study had several key objectives:

- To identify and select five case studies of provision for young people who require More Choices and More Chances (MCMC). These were selected to illustrate a range of provision in different contexts and identified as examples of good practice by a range of key stakeholders across Scotland. The case studies were:
  - **North Lanarkshire Council:** Local authority-wide partnership between schools and college.
  - **Highland Council:** Local authority-wide partnership between schools and local employers.
  - **Glasgow City Council:** Local authority-wide Vocational Learning Strategy, including specific unit provide strategic guidance and broker school/ college partnerships and university links.
  - **Angus Council:** School Cluster model involving bespoke vocational learning centres to facilitate and sustain provision of vocational learning.
  - **Oatridge College:** College–school model with outreach provision for schools via skill centre and significant support for councils and vocational providers in rural/remote areas of Scotland.
- To gain a detailed understanding of the activities and achievements of the organisations, partnerships or programmes within the case studies
- To identify the factors influencing success in each case study and assess how any challenges had been addressed.

The research methods varied to suit the case study contexts but generally involved interviews with providers, pupils, parents and scrutiny of providers' own evaluations and monitoring information.

### Policy context

Curriculum for Excellence (Scottish Executive, 2004a) is a major programme for ensuring improved delivery of learning and teaching for children and young people between the ages of 3 and 18. This programme seeks to ensure that all young people, on leaving school, have acquired the relevant skills for learning, skills for work and skills for life. Curriculum for Excellence provides the framework for the values, purposes and principles of education in Scotland, and aims to ensure that pupils develop the four capacities enshrined within it, to become: confident

individuals, successful learners, effective contributors and responsible citizens. *Skills for Scotland, A Lifelong Skills Strategy* (Scottish Government, 2007) highlights the importance of Curriculum for Excellence in the development of individuals' vocational learning and employability skills needed for the world of work, and in providing the foundation for skills development throughout life. It sets out the Scottish Government's commitment to ensuring that Curriculum for Excellence provides vocational learning and the employability skills needed for the world of work, and is the foundation for skills development throughout life. These skills should be embedded across all curriculum areas including more practical or applied learning and specific opportunities such as Skills for Work qualifications.

The new relationship (or 'Concordat') between the Scottish Government and local government has important implications for local authorities, schools and partner organisations. Rather than specific ring-fenced funding allocations being provided for particular education objectives, local government will contribute directly to the delivery of key commitments that relate to agreed National Outcomes. Giving more school pupils opportunities to experience vocational learning is one of twelve specified commitments in the concordat with COSLA and the Spending Review settlement to local authorities reflects this.

Funding for the Scottish Funding Council also reflects its responsibility to fund college courses, including courses for school pupils and it is expected that local authorities will continue to work in partnership with colleges, local employers and others as appropriate to deliver more vocational opportunities for school pupils.

### **Models of vocational learning**

- a) Schools mainly sending pupils to partner colleges to participate in courses delivered by lecturers. Colleges involved in this model were often involved in supporting pupils with special needs, including Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties (SEBD), to deliver limited but focused vocational learning programmes. A variation of this model included a central unit to co-ordinate the demand from schools for vocational learning and match it with available college provision, high levels of demand being a major issue across the case studies.
- b) Schools mainly providing vocational learning in school with college lecturers teaching courses, sometimes jointly with teachers (North Lanarkshire).
- c) Schools working with a range of providers, but mainly employers, to provide vocational learning and experience for pupils (Highland).

While these were the main models, in each category there were also variations according to local need. The research also found that colleges were sometimes supporting vocational learning provision that was geographically distant. Much of this input concerned helping providers in remote areas to set up quality assurance systems and providing internal verification and induction.

### **Purpose of vocational and skills learning**

Stakeholders generally noted that, while vocational learning should promote

vocational skills and employability, it also had to articulate with the four Curriculum for Excellence capacities, not only preparing young people for the world of work, but also promoting wider interests and helping them to ‘find out about themselves and express themselves’. Key policy and strategic informants reported that employers frequently mentioned the importance of ‘soft’ skills, and motivation and attitude to work, as objectives for effective vocational learning.

## **Outcomes of vocational learning**

Across the case studies, a wide range of reported outcomes were attributed to vocational learning in the case studies:

- Improved performance in modules and units of work.
- Gaining broader skills, particularly team working, communication skills and self confidence, thus increased employability and generic life skills.
- Increased vocational skills relevant to local economy.
- Increased aspirations and awareness of employment opportunities.
- Improved behaviour in and out of school, improved attitudes to school and motivation to learn and marked improvement in school attendance.
- Increase in positive destinations, including employers often create jobs for suitable young people following a placement.
- Improved employer attitudes towards young people, greater employer awareness of school provision and stronger links between employers and schools and their communities.
- For employers, an opportunity to promote their business to prospective employees.
- Increased parental interest in school work and involvement in the life of the school.
- Where pupils from different schools and communities learn together in a college, vocational centre or host school, this has helped to reduce ‘territorial rivalries’ and promote tolerance.

Positive outcomes for pupils were seen as particularly evident where school–college partnerships had been established for some time, and staff, pupils and parents had become familiar with what vocational learning could offer, and how schools and other providers could best work together.

## **Features of good practice**

Across the vocational learning case studies there was consensus among key informants on what characterised and promoted good practice in delivering skills for learning, life and work through vocational learning. Such provision should:

- Be engaging, relevant and credible to young people.

- Be flexible, holistic, integrated and designed to meet the needs of young people, their communities and employers.
- Provide practical skills and experiential opportunities with work– related activities.
- Offer progression routes.
- Include partnership work between schools colleges, training providers, employers etc.
- Involve staff who have the appropriate skills to deliver vocational content and are motivated to work with young people.
- Offer credible accreditation for young people and be accredited with nationally recognised qualifications.
- Have appropriate guidance, rigorous selection criteria and interviewing of pupils.
- Be inclusive and accessible.
- Be quality assured, including using integral monitoring and evaluation that informs planning and delivery.

Some strategic stakeholders and teachers argued that quality vocational learning should also be school-based where possible, and delivered in partnership with others such as colleges where not possible. However, other stakeholders believed that vocational learning was enhanced when delivered in colleges or facilities outside of school.

Across all of the case studies, colleges and their partners drew on their links with relevant Skill Sector Councils, the SQA, HMIE and other key bodies to ensure provision reflected recognised standards and articulated with the curriculum and local and national policies.

## **Challenges**

The research highlighted a number of challenges facing vocational learning provision. Perhaps the most significant of these, for providers and their partners, was developing sufficiently responsive programmes, with appropriate infrastructure and resources to meet the rapidly increasing demand for vocational learning. Other challenges included:

- Time taken for pupils to travel to/from college can negatively impact on wider timetable.
- Capacity issues: i) a limited number of students can go to college because of colleges' capacity to meet demand for certain vocational course; and ii) schools' ability to provide vocational learning courses in-house depending on facilities and teachers' vocational learning expertise.
- Rural schools' can have limited access to colleges to enhance their vocational learning provision.
- Perceptions concerning the parity of esteem of vocational courses compared

with 'mainstream' subjects. Stakeholders across colleges and schools believed that while parents' and teachers' attitudes to vocational learning courses were becoming generally more positive, there was still a need to tackle the broad cultural perception that vocational learning is a lower priority than acquiring academic qualifications.

- Recognition of achievement: vocational Skills for Work courses were often seen as having 'less parity' compared with other assessments in that they were 'just pass or fail' which led some to argue that pupils, parents and employers could not assess the 'level of achievement'.
- Vocational learning provision was generally effective in engaging with young people of various abilities and from a range of backgrounds and circumstances. However, gender differences in course choice were evident with girls being much more likely to participate in care courses, beauty and hairdressing, and boys to choose construction, crafts and automotive maintenance.
- CPD issues concerning subject knowledge and the skills required to deliver vocational courses and content: pupils referred to the need for lecturers or teachers to have vocational experience in the subject they were delivering in order for them to have relevant knowledge and skills, and thus, credibility. Joint teaching approaches with teachers and college lecturers working together can build their respective capacities to teach vocational learning for young people.

## **Sustaining good practice**

Given the increasing demand for vocational learning provision, those involved in planning and providing such learning were exploring ways to build capacity and infrastructure to respond to increased demand, as well as looking at strategic planning to explore ways to embed and sustain vocational learning provision. However, some strategic stakeholders' comments suggested that people at all levels were having to develop a new mindset on funding and sustainability within the context of the Single Outcome Agreement. A theme emerging across the case studies was that schools were looking to promote sustainability of vocational learning and integration within their curriculum by promoting the capacity of teachers to deliver vocational learning and developing greater levels of joint delivery and partnership working between teachers and lecturers.

## **Some issues for consideration**

Across the case studies there was evidence that vocational learning was promoting positive outcomes for young people. The research findings demonstrate that key stakeholders responsible for planning and delivery shared the view that, while vocational learning should promote vocational skills and employability, it must also articulate with the four Curriculum for Excellence capacities, to promote broader skills; particularly team-working, communication skills and self-confidence, employability, and generic life skills.

To effectively provide vocational learning with these characteristics, at a time when the demand for such provision is growing and the funding landscape is changing,

local authorities, providers and their partner organisations are increasingly looking to a more coordinated service infrastructure, to effectively deploy provision, expertise and resources. Links with relevant Skill Sector Councils, the SQA, HMIE and other key organisations is helping to ensure provision reflects recognised standards, and articulates with the curriculum and local and national policies.

There is an, as yet unresolved, issue concerning vocational Skills for Work courses being seen as having 'less parity' compared with other qualifications, in that they are assessed as 'just pass or fail', which some argue, makes it difficult for pupils, parents and employers to assess the 'level of achievement'.

Finally, the key themes arising from the case studies of vocational learning and the initial sensitising research raise a number of questions for those interested in promoting the skills of young people, particularly practitioners. A number of these reflective questions are highlighted below:

- What helpful lessons can I take from the case studies presented in this report?
- Are there elements of these approaches that I am already following in my own practice?
- What changes would these approaches mean for me, in practice?
- What lessons can I learn from these in terms of dealing with challenges and obstacles?

# 1 INTRODUCTION

This report summarises the main themes to emerge from a study commissioned by the Education, Information and Analytical Services Division, The Scottish Government to highlight good practice in delivering practical, applied or vocational learning provision for all pupils. The findings are intended to inform a paper on the delivery of skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work being prepared as part of the implementation of Curriculum for Excellence.

## 1.1 Policy context

Curriculum for Excellence (Scottish Executive, 2004a) is a major programme for ensuring improved delivery of learning and teaching for all children and young people between the ages of 3 and 18. This programme aims to achieve a transformation in education in Scotland by providing a coherent, more flexible and enriched curriculum from 3 to 18, wherever that learning is taking place. It seeks to ensure that all young people, on leaving school, have acquired the relevant skills for learning, skills for work and skills for life. Curriculum for Excellence provides the framework for the values, purposes and principles of education in Scotland, and aims to ensure that pupils develop the following four capacities:

- Successful learners
- Confident individuals
- Responsible citizens
- Effective contributors.

While Curriculum for Excellence aims to promote learning, attainment and achievement of young people, Learning and Teaching Scotland highlight that it also stresses that pupils should 'achieve on a broad front, not just in terms of examinations' (Learning and Teaching Scotland, 2008). This means supporting children and young people to acquire the 'full range of skills and abilities relevant to growing, living and working in the contemporary world'.

*Skills for Scotland, A Lifelong Skills Strategy* (Scottish Government, 2007) highlights the importance of Curriculum for Excellence in the development of individuals' vocational learning and employability skills needed for the world of work, and in providing the foundation for skills development throughout life. It sets out the Scottish Government's commitment to:

Ensuring that Curriculum for Excellence provides vocational learning and the employability skills needed for the world of work and is the foundation for skills development throughout life.

Achieving parity of esteem between academic and vocational learning, recognising that vocational learning is a valuable alternative to the academic pathway and important to all.

The Scottish Government is, therefore, committed to providing all children and young

people with opportunities to develop skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work through Curriculum for Excellence, and to giving them opportunities to apply these skills in the workplace. These skills should be embedded across all curriculum areas including more practical or applied learning and specific opportunities such as Skills for Work qualifications. In this report we have used the word 'vocational' to cover such learning opportunities because this is the phrase which is most often used by those delivering such learning. In this context the word covers the delivery of a range of skills which young people will need in their life and work, including the development of pre-vocational, enterprise and employability skills, personal skills, high levels of cognitive skills and the opportunity to put learning into a practical context.

The new relationship (or 'Concordat') between the Scottish Government and local government has important implications for local authorities, schools and partner organisations. Rather than specific ring-fenced funding allocations being provided for particular education objectives, local government will contribute directly to the delivery of key commitments that relate to agreed National Outcomes. While these National Outcomes are directed by the Scottish Government, local authorities have greater autonomy in how they meet these outcomes and address local needs. Every council, therefore, will enter into a Single Outcome Agreement (SOA) with the Scottish Government, which will include the contribution the local authority will make to delivering the national strategic objectives, outcomes and indicators.

This means that local authorities will have to ensure that funding and resources are in place to address the National Outcomes, which include specific reference to education, lifelong learning and skills development, and to employment opportunities, and which articulate well with the four capacities that underpin Curriculum of Excellence: successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors.

The Concordat also highlights that efforts to promote vocational learning/skills will include 'working in partnership with colleges, local employers and others as appropriate to give more school pupils opportunities to experience vocational learning'. Funding for the Scottish Funding Council has taken into account the role of colleges in delivering vocational learning opportunities through school-college partnerships.

Giving more school pupils opportunities to experience vocational learning is one of twelve specified commitments in our concordat with COSLA and the Spending Review settlement to local authorities reflects this. Funding for the Scottish Funding Council also reflects its responsibility to fund college courses, including courses for school pupils. It is important that local authorities work in partnership with colleges, local employers and others as appropriate to deliver more vocational opportunities for school pupils.

Fiona Hyslop, Scottish Parliament Written Answers Tuesday 18 December 2007

## **1.2 Research aims**

The study had several key objectives:

- To identify a range of examples of good practice using electronic/literature

searches, desktop research and exploratory discussions with key stakeholders, including the Scottish Government.

- To select a suitable number of good practice case studies from the range of identified candidates for further review. These covered a variety of different types of approaches to service provision.
- To gain a detailed understanding of the activities and achievements of the organisations, partnerships or programmes within the case studies under review.
- To identify the factors influencing success in each case study and assess how any challenges had been addressed.
- To write up the case studies in a format suitable for publication, to be agreed with the Scottish Government, that will be able to inform the preparation of a guidance paper on the delivery of skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work within Curriculum for Excellence.

Particular areas of interest within these objectives included:

- How stakeholders defined good practice in practical, applied or vocational learning for all pupils.
- Examining the contributions of partner agencies.
- Explaining why and how the case study examples were successful and the extent to which they are sustainable and transferable.

The case studies are not intended to be definitive or exhaustive; rather, they aim to be illuminative, highlighting examples of good practice to provide ideas and stimulate debate to help inform policy and practice. The research has highlighted a number of challenges facing the delivery of this type of provision. Where possible, this study has reported on how providers and their partners have addressed, or are striving to address, such challenges. It also highlights stakeholders' views on broader issues facing vocational learning.

### **1.3 Research approach**

The study adopted a number of interlinked but largely concurrent strands. These were:

**Preparatory strand:** Inception discussion with funder and scoping activity, including interviews with a limited number of key informants to identify good practice candidates and issues pertinent to the research objectives.

**Strand 1:** Literature search/desk study to identify examples of good practice.

**Strand 2:** Five in-depth case studies of identified good practice for vocational learning. The age range to be covered within the case studies covered the 14–19 group was to reflect good practice in working with those still in compulsory education. Each case study involved gathering sufficient information to address the research objectives and involved some or all of the following: interviews with key provider and partner staff, focus groups with young people involved in the provision and observations of provision. Often providers' own monitoring and evaluation evidence

was also utilised. Typically, providers and strategic stakeholders could draw on robust monitoring data and information on provision and outcomes. In addition, local authorities, colleges and schools had also conducted focused surveys of young people and parents to better assess needs and levels of satisfaction.

**Strand 3:** Thematic analysis and reporting of qualitative material and synthesis of key themes concerning good practice.

Further details of the case studies and the range of evidence collected are provided in Appendix 1.

## **1.4 Structure of the report**

The report is arranged into two main sections. The first includes a preface to the case studies, looking at some of the main themes and issues to emerge across the five cases, which might usefully inform practice and/or require consideration by practitioners and policy-makers. This section also includes findings and insights that emerged from research literature and interviews with key informants conducted during the initial exploratory stage of the research. The main focus of the report is the presentation of five case studies selected to represent good practice in delivering skills for learning, life and work through vocational or applied learning for all young people. Within each case study, the findings are arranged under headings reflecting key areas of interest to the study: the experience of pupils and outcomes, an overview of provision, factors influencing provision and finally, future developments and sustainability.

## **2 DELIVERING SKILLS FOR LEARNING, LIFE AND WORK THROUGH VOCATIONAL LEARNING FOR ALL**

The vocational learning case studies showed that in many cases, provision had developed at a pace following national strategies that included a focus on promoting generic skills, and were, in particular, guided by the vision embodied in Curriculum for Excellence with its emphasis on a broad, flexible general education and a focus on outcomes. This integrated curriculum covering ages 3 to 18 was seen by learning providers across the case studies as providing opportunities to develop skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work for all young people at every stage. Also highlighted as influential was the focus in recent years on employability and enterprise which had been facilitated by *Determined to Succeed*, which recommended that vocational learning should be available for all pupils over the age of 14 and should be linked to a relevant qualification.

Initially, a number of the vocational learning programmes had been pioneered as ways to engage with those requiring more choices and more chances. Then in *Curriculum for Excellence, Ministerial Response* (Scottish Executive, 2004b), the then Scottish Executive made a commitment to a phased introduction of Skills for Work qualifications with the aim of broadening vocational learning opportunities for all young people.

Recently, the OECD review (OECD, 2007) included recommendations to the Scottish Government that referred directly to vocational education and learning:

- That, as a matter of national policy, vocational courses be accessible to all young people in schools from S3, and that sequences of study be developed spanning the compulsory and post-compulsory years. (Recommendation 8)
- That the Scottish Government support school-based provision of vocational courses where local authorities seek to implement this model within the framework of the national innovation plan. (Recommendation 9)

As vocational learning and the development of skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work for all have become a key policy focus, the case study providers and their partners offered opportunities to a broader range of their pupils, and not just those requiring more choices and more chances. While the case study providers shared an equal commitment to providing vocational learning for all, there were interesting differences in their approaches to issues such as staffing, learning and teaching methods, and sustainability.

### **2.1 Characteristics of good practice**

Across the vocational learning case studies there was consensus among key informants on what characterised good practice in delivering skills for learning, life and work through vocational learning. Such provision should:

- Be engaging, relevant and credible to young people
- Be flexible, holistic, integrated and designed to meet the needs of young people, their communities and employers
- Provide practical skills and experiential opportunities with work-related activities
- Offer progression routes
- Include partnership work between schools colleges, training providers, employers etc.
- Involve staff who have the appropriate skills to deliver vocational content and are motivated to work with young people
- Offer credible accreditation for young people and be accredited with nationally recognised qualifications
- Have quality instruction
- Have ease of accessibility
- Be quality assured and informed by routine monitoring and evaluation.

National policy representatives and other key stakeholders also highlighted many of these characteristics during the initial exploratory interviews during Strand 1 of the research. Some argued that quality vocational learning should also be school-based where possible, and delivered in partnership with others such as colleges where not possible. However, other stakeholders believed that vocational learning was enhanced when delivered in colleges or facilities outside of school.

Across all of the case studies, colleges and their partners drew on their links with relevant Skill Sector Councils, the SQA, HMIE and other key bodies to ensure provision reflected recognised standards and articulated with the curriculum and local and national policies.

### ***Purposes of vocational learning***

Stakeholders generally noted that, while vocational learning should promote vocational skills and employability, it had also to articulate with the four Curriculum for Excellence capacities. This is in line with the commitment in *Building the Curriculum 3* that all children and young people are entitled to opportunities to develop skills for learning, life and work through Curriculum for Excellence. Indeed, a common theme emerging from the case studies was that vocational learning should prepare young people for the world of work, but also promote wider interests and help young people to ‘find out about themselves and express themselves’.

A number of stakeholders in one local authority stressed that the OECD report (OECD, 2007) highlighted the need for good practice in vocational learning to include aiming to provide such learning in school and post-compulsory learning. Key informants reported that employers frequently mentioned the importance of ‘soft’ skills, and motivation and attitude to work as objectives for effective vocational learning.

### ***Inclusion and participation***

Those professional stakeholders interviewed across the case studies stressed that inclusion and equal opportunities were features of their provision. Most thought that their provision was effective in engaging with young people of various abilities and from a range of backgrounds and circumstances. However, gender differences in course choice were evident. For example, overall, girls were more likely to participate in care courses, beauty and hairdressing, and boys to choose construction, crafts, automotive maintenance etc. Across the vocational learning case studies, there were, however, small numbers of girls involved in courses such as construction and automotive maintenance, and some boys doing, for example, hairdressing courses.

Some providers were seeking to address stereotypical course choices. There were accounts of programmes where traditional gender participation patterns were being actively addressed. For example, one person cited 'Girls into Engineering'. This had been set up in Dundee College to 'reach out to schools, local providers and other training providers to try and engage girls in engineering courses'.

### ***Guidance and information***

In all of the case studies, providers actively delivered guidance to young people concerning vocational learning choices, to enable them to make appropriate and informed choices. However, a common theme to emerge from the case studies was that practical, applied or vocational courses were often oversubscribed. Focus groups with young people confirmed that while guidance on the options was adequate across the case studies, it could be very disappointing to find that places were limited.

## **2.2 Models of provision**

There was variation in the approaches, or models of provision, adopted by the case study learning providers. An overview of the providers is presented in Appendix 1, but their provision can be characterised as one of the following:

- a) Schools mainly sending pupils to partner colleges to participate in courses delivered by lecturers (Glasgow, West Lothian). Colleges involved in this model were often involved in supporting pupils with special needs, including social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (SEBD), to deliver limited but focused vocational learning programmes.

*We believe that the whole experience of going out into college, that whole life experience, with all its little challenges, like transport, etc is beneficial. The young people prefer this and have told us in evaluations that they prefer it to school and like it. They feel they are treated more like adults. The world of work, therefore, will not be a million years away for them when they leave school. We've also built in other elements to it such as employability and work experience. This whole package we consider is a big life skills opportunity for them. We see a big difference between S3 and S4. So we're hoping to grow the young people that will be employed locally.*

Local authority vocational manager

A variation of this model included a central unit to co-ordinate the demand

from schools for vocational learning and match it with available college provision, high levels of demand being a major issue across the case studies.

- b) Schools mainly providing vocational learning in school with college lecturers teaching courses, sometimes jointly with teachers (eg North Lanarkshire).

*[Vocational learning] should be seen as part of the school curriculum...seen as a subject you would choose in your school. [Having it provided in school] provides ownership by the school but in joint partnership with colleges. It then reflects the school's ethos and takes into account child protection issues... It is also a more effective use of time. For example, it can take one hour twenty for a round trip for some, so that is a block of two periods wasted. College is not appropriate environment for most of the target age group... colleges are not designed for 12–14 year olds – by and large it's an adult environment. College lecturers who teach in schools can also benefit: they're part of the school community. Teachers and lecturers benefit from joint working and training. For example, developing restorative practices and effective pedagogies for young people... The other advantages are in the school delivery is seen as part of the comprehensive mainstream provision of the school... if pupils have additional support needs we can address these. Teachers know the pupils better than college lecturers.*

Local authority quality improvement officer

- c) Schools working with a range of providers, but mainly employers, to provide vocational learning and experience for pupils (Highland).

*[College-based delivery] was...a huge commitment with pupils leaving home at 6.30 in the morning so it was not an ideal provision for them. They are spending a huge amount of money on transport and we would rather put the money into a local area and have local delivery of Skills for Work so... we went into partnership with business and asked them to support... But we are very conscious now that there is not going to be one solution for everywhere in the area and we will have to tailor it according to the needs of the school and the needs of the local area and the provision that happens to be there.*

Local authority development officer

While these were the main models, in each category there were also variations according to local need. For example, if necessary, a college that mainly provided courses for pupils on site would also deploy lecturers to schools on an 'outreach basis'. This was usually to support pupils in special educational needs schools. In some local authorities, there was a move towards increasing the capacity of teachers to deliver vocational learning and Skills for Work qualifications in schools. This was seen as helping to promote the sustainability of vocational programmes. However, college staff were still felt to be necessary, to provide guidance and accreditation.

College stakeholders recognised the need for schools and their partners to address the demand for vocational learning, but suggested that having only teachers deliver vocational learning might be limited to particular vocational areas. They argued that in some vocational subjects, teachers were unlikely to have the vocational experience required to teach with the necessary credibility. In addition, unless there was a major investment in schools to provide effective workshops and areas to develop vocational skills, schools would still need to access the resources and facilities available in colleges.

The research also found that colleges were sometimes supporting initiatives and provision that were geographically distant. For example, one college in West Lothian was working with Highland Council, their schools, networks of large estates, training providers, and businesses, including farmers, as well as with providers in the Shetland Isles and the Crofters Commission to support 'remote vocational learning'. Much of this input concerned helping to set up quality assurance systems, providing internal verification and induction.

### **2.3 Views on the outcomes of vocational learning**

All stakeholders across the various models, whether at strategic, provider or learner level, believed that there was evidence that vocational learning was having positive outcomes for learners. Providers conducted routine monitoring and evaluation, which involved gathering information from staff, pupils and often parents. This often involved canvassing the views of other partner stakeholders such as employers and supporting organisations. One local authority stakeholder reported that:

*Evaluation is embedded in the process for all courses. Feedback from pupils, staff and parents and youth forums show it's successful. We get recommendations; for example, some kids say that they don't get enough hands on experience in horticulture. We do telephone interviews with parents, those who we are able to, and ninety plus percent feel it has made a positive difference for their children across all of the programmes. So young people in surveys and forums are also very positive. As they get into second year of the mainstream programme we see big changes...they're more aware and want more employability input.*

The findings from provider-conducted evaluation and monitoring were maintained over time in summary form and, in many cases, available for the research team to examine. However, such data and information were not always available for scrutiny, and the researchers sometimes had to rely on the word of provider stakeholders.

Across the case studies, a wide range of reported outcomes were attributed to vocational learning in the case studies. These can be summarised as follows:

### ***Key reported outcomes of vocational learning across the case studies***

- Improved performance in modules and units of work, with those in one local authority showing 'almost a 100% pass rate'.
- Gaining broader skills, particularly team working, communication skills and self-confidence, thus increased employability and generic life skills.
- Increased vocational skills relevant to local economy.
- Increased aspirations and awareness of employment opportunities.
- Improved behaviour in and out of school, improved attitudes to school and motivation to learn and marked improvement in school attendance.
- An increase in positive destinations.
- Improved employer attitudes towards young people, greater employer awareness of school provision and stronger links with the schools and their communities.
- For employers, an opportunity to promote their business to prospective employees; and employers will often create jobs if they find the right person.
- Increased parental interest in school work and involvement in the life of the school.
- Where pupils from different schools and communities learn together in a college, vocational centre or host school, this has been seen to reduce 'territorial rivalries' and promote tolerance.

Again, providers were usually able to refer to their own research and monitoring to provide evidence for such claims, and the accounts of various stakeholders interviewed across the case studies reiterated these findings.

Positive outcomes for pupils were seen as particularly evident where school–college partnerships had been established for some time and staff, pupils and parents had become familiar with what vocational learning could offer, and how schools and other providers could best work together.

#### ***2.3.1 Pupils' views on their reasons for participation and the impact of their vocational learning***

Most pupils involved in case study focus groups were participating in vocational learning because they wanted to go on to find employment in the same or a similar field to that covered by their course. These pupils sometimes had family members who were working in the same vocational area and this had inspired them.

Others wanted to go on to higher education to pursue their vocational area further or were doing the course to obtain broader skills. Some thought that their vocational courses provided skills that could be used to get employment should they discover that higher education was 'not for them'. For others, vocational courses were seen as enhancing their Highers and improving their CV for entrance to university; for example, doing construction courses in the hope of going on to study architecture, or

doing childcare courses which might help them access a medical degree at university. Some saw vocational courses as simply offering a route to broader life skills, which is in line with the focus on skills for learning, life and work policies.

Whatever their motivation for doing their vocational courses, pupils across the case studies were largely satisfied that their experience had provided skills that would help them find work. Stakeholders believed that where schools understood how colleges could address pupils' needs, the selection of pupils was more appropriate and dropout was less likely to be an issue.

Pupils' parents were particularly supportive of vocational learning and encouraged pupils to take courses. College staff and teachers reported that often parents would complain if their child did not get a place on the (often over-subscribed) courses. Overall, parents appeared to greatly value the need for their children to acquire vocational skills, which they believed would promote their chances of employment.

## **2.4 Factors promoting successful vocational learning**

A focus of the present research was to explore why the case studies were successful – what were the underlying reasons for that success – and also to highlight some examples of positive outcomes. Across the case studies, similar themes emerged concerning the main reasons underlying successful and effective vocational learning. Not surprisingly, some of these reasons overlapped with characteristics of successful provision as noted in Section 1.1.

Some selected key features of successful provision across the case studies are highlighted below.

### **2.4.1 Effective tutors**

The importance of having lecturers, trainers and teachers who have the required subject skills, the motivation to work with young people, and an ability to engage with them, was highlighted across the case studies.

In summary, vocational learning should ideally have:

- A pupil-centred teaching and learning approaches.
- Appropriate facilities, equipment and space in which to provide courses.
- Adequate material and financial resources to provide and sustain courses.
- Sufficient numbers of motivated teachers, lecturers and support staff who are able to teach young people with a range abilities.
- Courses that provide recognised qualifications, but also valuable experiential learning that promotes generic life skills and employability.
- A clear understanding across partners concerning their respective objectives, capacities and ways of working.
- Integral monitoring and evaluation that informs planning and delivery.

*You have to have the right tutors. People who want to work with young people... There are 'naturals' who work well with young people and we pick these and provide appropriate CPD, to facilitate working with schools, articulating with curriculum, child protection issues etc. While we encourage other tutors to get involved, it is not mandatory...they are self-selecting...those who have an interest and motivation in this work. As this type of provision becomes more mainstream, new lecturers will have an expectation to be involved in this type of teaching. If it were put into a Teaching Qualification in Further Education (TQFE) as a standard it would help provide such lecturers.*

College representative

Pupils often referred to the need for lecturers or teachers to have direct, practical experience in the subject they were delivering in order for them to have the relevant knowledge and skills, and thus the credibility to teach it. For example, the comments of one group were typical:

*You need people who have already done the job...who have direct experience of the profession. This helps...they know what they're talking about.*

S3 group doing construction, plumbing, electrical, painting and decorating

There was some debate over whether training and professional development could enhance the abilities of college personnel to teach school pupils. In two of the cases studies, there had been systematic CPD available to college lecturers concerning teaching school-age young people. Managers and lecturers generally saw such training as useful and effective. However, there were examples in one local authority where additional CPD opportunities had been offered to help college lecturers address behaviour issues for under-16 year olds, but there had been little uptake. The local authority representative was uncertain why there was a low uptake, but expected more interest in such training as the interest in vocational and practical courses increased.

#### **2.4.2 Effective partnership working**

Another consistent theme arising from the case studies concerning facilitating factors for effective vocational learning was the importance of partnership working and communication. Most partnerships had developed via school-level networks; however, in some areas where there the local authority had a central co-ordinating role, partnerships were more likely to be promoted strategically and to reflect policy objectives. Key partners involved included local authorities, sector skills councils, employers, Careers Scotland, and Scottish Business in the Community. Some of these partners were important in developing links with employers to support vocational learning and work experience. Local regeneration agencies promoted networking, including services that could further promote young people's employability skills, and articulated compulsory education strategies with those for post-16 year olds.

In one case study, vocational learning programmes were seen as benefiting from having a secondee from Careers Scotland who had helped develop an employability pack and related events. This person's own links with employers and knowledge of Careers Scotland policies and developments had been particularly helpful.

In rural areas, the contribution of employers to supporting vocational learning opportunities was frequently highlighted and valued.

*Employers are fantastic in their support to facilitate vocational learning and experience for young people via their work places for no cost to the schools. They're not involved because they are looking for cheap workers, because the young people, while picking up skills and experience, often add no real capacity to the employers' business during most of their time at their placement.*

Course verification representative

### **2.4.3 Joint teaching**

In one of the case studies where lecturers visited schools to provide vocational courses, examples of joint teaching had developed. There were clear benefits for school teachers and college lecturers when working together, particularly when this involved joint teaching and planning.

*We have cooperative learning approaches for staff and staff are involved in CPD sessions. So lecturers and teachers are learning from each other. Specialists in vocational areas and subjects are imparting their knowledge to teachers and teachers are imparting teaching strategies for young people.*

Depute headteacher

Such liaison between teachers and college lecturers and joint delivery of courses has helped to address issues where lecturers have been initially reticent about teaching young people because of pupil behaviour issues. In some cases, such issues had led to a high turnover of lecturers willing to deliver vocational learning courses to school pupils. However, the longer school–college partnerships were in place, the more likely it was that this issue had been addressed through CPD and joint teaching. Indeed, where teachers worked with lecturers in association with the school–college co-ordinator, they had been able to explore effective approaches to promoting positive behaviours.

Joint teaching, therefore, appears to provide a particularly effective strategy to address pupil behaviour while at the same time ensuring specialised vocational content can be provided by the lecturer. Ideally, teachers are not present to 'police' the lesson but are actively contributing to the teaching process. However, their knowledge of the pupils and awareness of school sanctions was seen as maintaining an orderly environment, conducive to learning. Other measures to support lecturers' teaching of pupils included developing a handbook for lecturers on school procedures. Stakeholders involved in joint teaching approaches had found it had enhanced the repertoire of effective learning and teaching approaches of teachers and college lecturers as well as promoting teachers' subject knowledge.

### **2.4.4 Appropriate guidance and addressing drop out**

Across the case studies, stakeholders stressed the importance of guidance and selection procedures to ensure that pupils were making informed choices concerning their learning. It was seen as important for college lecturers to attend interviews and parents' information evenings which focused on vocational learning options. If

possible, where local employers were involved in provision, their attendance and input at information sessions was greatly valued by parents. Providers found that clear guidance and selection procedures, often involving pupil interviews, were important to ensure that pupils made appropriate choices and that the courses matched their needs and abilities.

*We have built in a more robust referral system. So we find that the teacher talks to the young people to see if it is for them – attrition is usually in the first term they then make their mind up. If it's not for them – they can drop out and get back into a Standard Grade.*

School-college co-ordinator

#### **2.4.5 Assessment**

The majority of vocational learning provision involved SQA-assessed Skills for Work qualifications, with the majority of the assessment being on-going and practical. There were also simple written and oral tests, presentations of evidence of work and some class work. One teacher noted that many pupils were comfortable with this approach and that many did not realise that they were being assessed. Where necessary, support was provided for those pupils who had difficulty with written assessments.

Self-reflection exercises and evaluation were found to be useful to assess pupils' progress in employability skills. Vocational courses for those with additional support needs usually did not involve qualifications but some did. For example, at one college, pupils with additional support needs were able to obtain the Royal Caledonian Horticultural Society's Certificate.

A notable issue across the case studies was the fact that vocational Skills for Work qualifications were not seen as having parity with other assessments in that they were 'just pass or fail', which led some to argue that pupils, parents and employers could not assess the 'level of achievement' (senior local authority representative). There were also implications, it was stressed, for schools' standing in terms of their qualifications 'performance'. Secondary Headteachers were concerned where increasing numbers of pupils were dropping a Standard Grade to do vocational courses that provided pass or fail grades and, therefore, did not reflect their level of achievement. This pressure meant that in one local authority, schools were running vocational courses in one column when previously they would have provided two, so that 'just one Standard Grade would be affected', thus reducing the impact on the school's qualifications profile. Interestingly, the issue was not about the possibility that colleges would get the credit for the Skills for Work passes at the cost of schools, but rather an anxiety among teachers that a pass in these courses was seen by parents and others as somehow ambiguous compared with Standard Grades

The NFER Skills for Work evaluation (Spielhofer & Walker, 2008) indicated that offering Skills for Work qualifications within existing option columns would help signify parity of esteem and promote participation. The report also found that colleges and local authorities were beginning to take active steps to challenge perceptions of Skills for Work qualifications.

Local authority representatives also highlighted the issue of ‘ungraded passes’ for pupils and their parents.

*We are piloting Health and Social Care at Higher Level with a college doing Intermediate 1 and 2 early education and child care...within the Skills for Work framework, but it is an ungraded Higher just like all of the other Skills for Work qualifications. But for a young person who is looking at getting grades will be disappointed. So we're saying do these courses have to be ungraded especially when there are very able young people doing them? It's a pass...a SCQF Level 5 pass but it doesn't show the quality of pass. This is an issue with parents.*

Local authority vocational co-ordinator

There were also frequent comments from teachers and local authority representatives concerning the fact that not all vocational courses were accredited by the SQA, notably beauty and automotive maintenance. Some schools had therefore adopted strategies where beauty courses were combined with hairdressing in order to get the unit assessment for beauty but also the Intermediate award over two years for Hairdressing. There was also concern in one local authority that there were large numbers of pupils receiving recognised industry standard qualifications, but that this did not show in the SCQF framework.

In one local authority, there were plans to increase the status of vocational learning further and to articulate it with progression routes to higher education.

*What we also want to do with vocational learning is put it on a pathway for higher study by working with the University of West of Scotland. We're piloting at a high school, looking at the sports leadership course there as a route to the sports degree in association with a university. Also, the University of West of Scotland is looking with us at a Forensics course. We are considering the idea that we might even provide the first units of the University course in sixth year study.*

*There are also similar developments with music sound production. We're looking at raising the level of 'cognitive demand', to move away from the label of vocational learning as being less academic. For example, doing construction should also be about young people doing vocational courses with aims of becoming architects, middle managers, planners, budget officers etc. We're working with our link partners to explore these possibilities.*

Local authority representative

In another local authority, pupils doing vocational courses were also acquiring ‘industry badges’. For example, those doing sports courses were also put through the National Pro Lifeguard qualification or the Junior Sports Leader’s qualification, and those doing hospitality were put through an elementary hygiene course. These additional qualifications were seen as promoting the employability of those who wanted to work in particular industries. For those who did not want to go into these types of employment, they were still very useful in helping them to get summer jobs.

In this same authority, the Stepping Up programme was being introduced. This was not a qualification as such, but a programme for measuring wider achievement for pupils including those with additional support needs. Similarly, a Youth Achievement Award was being developed which would be provided in association with Youth Scotland and, while similar to the Duke of Edinburgh Award, it would be levelled within the SCQF.

## 2.5 Sustaining good practice

In every case study, particular challenges had been addressed in developing vocational learning programmes. However, perhaps the most significant of these for providers and their partners was developing sufficiently responsive programmes, with appropriate infrastructure and resources to meet increasing demand for vocational learning.

Comments across the case studies concerning sustaining vocational learning generally emphasised that, given the increasing value placed on such provision, local authorities were working to allocate appropriate funding and resources.

*It's about reshaping some of those budgets in the slightly longer term to ensure we can continue... There are lots of financial pressures but you hold close what you see as important. It's been successful, it would have been difficult politically to sustain if it were otherwise. It is important for key people involved in the planning and the implementation of the approach.*

Senior local authority representative

In another local authority, a similar viewpoint existed. Until recently, this particular authority's vocational programme was funded entirely by money from European grants, community regeneration and the community planning partnership. From the start of April 2008 the council has mainstreamed the vocational programme within its overall education budget. This is seen as recognising the value of vocational learning, helping to embed it as an integral part of provision.

However, some strategic stakeholders' comments suggested that people at all levels were having to develop a new mindset on funding and sustainability within the context of the Single Outcome Agreement. For example, some stakeholders including those at strategic level still thought that if their provision was seen as working well then it would either attract government funding or be successful in securing other sources of external funding.

A number of issues and challenges emerged from interviews with stakeholders across the case studies concerning meeting demand and sustaining provision in the future. These included:

- As pupils and parents have increasingly seen the value of vocational learning, the demand for courses has increased. In one local authority courses for the forthcoming year were oversubscribed by about 200 young people. Those involved in planning and providing vocational learning were, therefore, exploring ways to build capacity and infrastructure to respond to this demand as well as looking at strategic planning to explore ways to sustain provision. Stakeholders believed that these challenges were not unique to their partnership but common across Scotland.
- To help meet demand, for example, in terms of specific skills and courses such as rural vocational skills, some schools were turning to colleges located outwith their own authorities. There was evidence of creative partnerships involving employers, colleges and schools spanning considerable geographical distances.

- As vocational learning provision expands, partners highlighted that supporting infrastructure and organisation had become complex. Considerable effort and resources were required to maintain this. There were, therefore, issues about developing school infrastructure to ensure pupils have the same choices across schools. As one teacher stated: ‘a challenge is to re-design the infrastructure in schools...vocational learning cannot be on an ad hoc basis... If you have spare classrooms its okay for you; if you don’t, how do we make sure young people get the same chances?’ Local authorities in the case studies were, therefore, mindful of the need to reflect the requirements for school-based vocational learning as new schools were being built, or where they were being modernised. For example, providing multi-purpose workshops and salons so that the physical capacity to deliver vocational courses is built-in.
- A theme emerging across the case studies was that schools were looking to promote sustainability of vocational learning and integration within their curriculum by developing greater levels of joint delivery and partnership working between teachers and lecturers. There was also a hope that more teachers could be trained by colleges to deliver specialist subject content. This, however, was not seen as a way to remove the need for lecturers. Indeed, stakeholders generally thought that it would be difficult to deploy sufficient teachers with specialised vocational skills and knowledge of employers’ requirements, and that currently, college lecturers were more likely to possess these attributes.
- In some cases, schools and local authorities suggested that the mechanisms that helped to determine the allocation of funding to schools and colleges should be examined to ensure that these were based on ‘best value for money’. One senior strategic stakeholder suggested that ‘the charges that the local authority is paying for college staff time are still too high and that there should be school–college parity’. College stakeholders acknowledged that this was an issue, but that colleges had particular costs that were not always evident to schools.
- One depute principal of a college highlighted that despite the generally similar aims of vocational learning across Scotland, there were different approaches and funding streams at local level. This meant colleges had to be flexible. It was suggested that ‘a holistic approach to funding might be helpful to longer-term planning’. Others highlighted that this stressed the need for authority-wide co-ordination of resources and funding by partners.
- Stakeholders across colleges and schools believed that while parents’ and teachers’ attitudes to vocational learning courses was becoming generally more positive, there was still a need to tackle the broad cultural perception that vocational learning is a lower priority than acquiring academic qualifications.
- Vocational learning needed be seen as having equal standing to academic learning. Indeed, for some, there was still a contradiction in national education policy where vocational learning for all was advocated, but the ‘system prioritises academic attainment... Intelligence is seen as equivalent to having academic qualifications’. (College Assistant Principal)

# Case Studies

## 2.5.1 North Lanarkshire Council

### Key aspects

- In-school provision through school–college partnerships.
- Local authority-wide strategic approach, fully integrated with other services.
- Initial scepticism amongst teachers, parents and children has been overcome and a key focus is now on meeting the high demand for places. Demand has increased due to a combination of factors, including strategic direction at local authority level, highly visible and positive outcomes for pupils, addressing staff needs for course delivery and the involvement of numerous relevant partners.

### Vocational learning provision

The main model of vocational learning involves college lecturers teaching courses in schools, sometimes jointly with teachers. Vocational learning (a 2 year block for S3–S4) is co-ordinated centrally by a small team who negotiates delivery between colleges and schools. One school is piloting a vocational column in their timetable, which will mean a vocational course for every pupil.

Professional stakeholders involved in this case study see vocational learning in broad terms; vocational courses aim to articulate with Curriculum for Excellence and promote the four capacities. Therefore, while vocational learning is seen as preparing young people for the world of work, it is intended that pupils will also 'develop wider interests, build their confidence, be able to express themselves and find out more about themselves'. This also means that young people's skills are not limited to the vagaries of the local labour market.

For these reasons, holistic vocational learning is seen by strategic partners including local authority, schools, colleges and employers and training providers as very relevant for all pupils. Reference was made to the OECD report (OECD, 2007) which stressed that vocational learning and training should have a broader focus and facilitate participation in school and post-compulsory schooling. Therefore, vocational learning is also thought to have the potential to facilitate more successful participation, reduce exclusions and absence rates. This view of the role and potential of vocational and applied skills learning was common across teachers and strategic stakeholders and is in line with current policy objectives.

Representatives of the local authority and schools in this case study believe that having college lecturers providing vocational learning in schools provides the most appropriate learning for the target age group and has wider benefits.

*[Vocational learning] should be seen as part of the school curriculum...seen as a subject you would choose in your school. [Having it provided in school] provides ownership by the school but in joint partnership with colleges. It then reflects the school's ethos and takes into account child protection issues... It is also a more effective use of time. For example, it can take one hour twenty*

*for a round trip for some, so that is a block of two periods wasted. College is not appropriate environment for most of the target age group... colleges are not designed for 12–14 year olds – by and large it's an adult environment. College lectures who teach in schools can also benefit: they're part of school community. Teachers and lecturers benefit from joint working and training. For example, developing restorative practices and effective pedagogies for young people.*

*One of the big advantages is we're not paying for young people to travel to college so once the infrastructure is in place it is cost-effective, just paying for one lecturer. The other advantages include the in-school delivery is seen as part of the comprehensive mainstream provision of the school... if pupils have additional support needs we can address these. Teachers know the pupils better than college lecturers.*

Local authority representatives

*Pupils did not have to go to college and away from their friends; it is still part of the mainstream school experience. Participants and their peers can see their success.*

High school depute headteacher

Within the overall model of vocational learning there are examples of particularly innovative partnerships and developments to provide quality vocational learning. In one school a professional kitchen and restaurant has been established financed by North Lanarkshire Council's Regeneration budget which has enabled pupils to take Intermediate 2 Professional Cooking. A college lecturer and a professional chef also helped to deliver other hospitality courses. A range of enterprising activities also serves to further develop pupil skills and motivation.

Another school is working in partnership with the MITIE Group plc<sup>1</sup> and Motherwell College to create Scotland's first in-school Construction Skills Centre to be funded by the private sector. This recruits young people into 'real vocational training with real employment prospects while they are still in school'. The MITIE Group has converted the Centre's space within Caldervale High School and provided the tools, equipment and protective clothing needed to train youngsters in a full range of construction skills. The company has taken its commitment a stage further by encouraging its employees to act as skills tutors and career mentors to the centre's pupils.

Recently, developments have included working with higher education institutions such as the University of West of Scotland to develop vocational courses that articulate with access routes to higher education. This would, it was stressed, increase the status of vocational learning further, and articulate it with progression routes to higher education.

*What we also want to do with vocational learning is put it on a pathway for higher study by working with the University of West of Scotland. We're piloting at a high school looking at the sports leadership course there as a route to the sports degree in association with a university. Also, the University of West of Scotland is looking with us at a Forensics course. We are dallying with the idea that we might even provide the first units of the University course in sixth*

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<sup>1</sup> The MITIE Group plc is one of the UK's largest companies, providing facilities, property and engineering services for some of the biggest public and private sector businesses.

*year study. There are also similar developments with music sound production. We're looking at raising the level of 'cognitive demand', to move away from the label of vocational learning as being less academic. For example, doing construction should also be about young people doing vocational courses with aims of becoming architects etc. middle managers, planners, and budget officers. We're working with our link partners to explore these dimensions.*

Local authority representative

## **Young people's experience and outcomes**

Young people across North Lanarkshire schools are able to access a range of vocational learning provision, with the main focus being Skills for Work qualifications. However, increasingly, the local authority, schools and partner services are working to extend and enhance the scope of courses to facilitate articulation with further and higher education provision as well as access to other accredited opportunities.

Secondary schools are providing a focus on vocational experiences in S3 and S4 through a dedicated vocational options choice column to help prepare young people for employment or training. Other option choice columns include a range of vocational inserts (eg digital photography and institutional banking). The schools have strong partnerships with colleges, but the emphasis is on in-school delivery and sustainability. Teachers deliver a range of vocational courses in the school with staff from the college. Teachers and pupils reported that courses promote employability skills and motivation. Pupils were particularly positive about those vocational learning experiences that take place in simulated professional environments. Parents are closely consulted about vocational developments, which helps secure their support.

Teachers, college staff and employers see creating vocational and practical learning opportunities that meets employers' demands as addressing youth unemployment and disengagement. Partnerships between the public, private and educational sectors to address practical skills needs is helping to develop centres of excellence and a relevant education system to benefit the local community.

Demand from pupils for vocational courses has increased. Some pupils were doing these courses because they wished to progress into similar types of employment upon leaving school. Others wanted to progress to further and higher education but thought that the vocational courses would help them to access HE and FE courses that would eventually lead to professions such as medicine or architecture. Others simply saw the courses as a way to broaden their experiences and obtain life skills. Whatever their motivation, pupils reported a range of benefits from their participation in vocational learning.

Teachers and other adult stakeholders reported positive outcomes of vocational learning for pupils that included:

- Marked improvement in school attendance.
- Performance in modules and units of work at almost a 100% pass rate.
- Broader skills, particularly team-working and communication skills.
- Increased self-confidence, working as a team and improved social skills.

- Positive destinations including employment with local employers. School/college/employer partnerships are providing career opportunities for pupils before they leave full-time education (for example, the partnership between schools and the MITIE Group plc and Motherwell College).
- The in-school provision delivered in partnership with colleges, and also that which involves placement with employers (including shadowing and experiential learning approaches) has given young people a chance to develop and demonstrate skills that can 'open pathways' to employment.
- Figures for 2005 revealed a 4% increase in the actual numbers of school leavers getting a job, and this was partly attributed to the various developments in vocational learning and partnerships.

Pupils' comments highlighted the range of positive outcomes they and their parents saw emerging from the courses:

*If you do get a trade it gives you experience.*

*It helps give you skills if you need to do things around your own home or if trades people are doing things in your house you know if they are doing it properly...*

*My parents think it is a good start it gives ideas about what types of work we might like, gives us better prospects. They're very supportive.*

*The teachers and lecturers are good, they've been in trades... know what they're talking about...the equipment is good, like you'd find in work.*

S3 pupils

### **Key factors involved in success**

The key reasons for the success of vocational learning in this case study were seen as being:

- Developing learning content and approaches that 'meets the needs of pupils and is seen as relevant to their world and the world of work'.
- Having active experiential and team-working learning methods that were effective for learning and promoted engagement of pupils of all abilities.
- The overall integrated school-based model.
- Support and buy-in from strategic level management.
- Pupil selection and guidance procedures for courses.
- Co-ordinated provision and partnership working.
- Providing CPD and joint teaching to enhance pedagogical skills.
- Securing the support from pupils, parents, teachers and college staff.

### ***Some key factors in more detail***

Across the case study particular factors emerged that were seen as enhancing and facilitating effective vocational learning.

## **Obtaining support from stakeholders**

Initially, teachers, parents and children were sceptical about the value of the vocational courses. Teachers felt that an increase in vocational courses would 'dumb-down the curriculum'. The local authority and schools, therefore, put effort into communicating the benefits of the courses and underlying aims and ethos. This, along with the emerging positive outcomes for those pupils involved in vocational learning has meant that parents and pupils have come to value the experience, seeing it as promoting employment prospects and motivating young people. Parents are, therefore, increasingly very eager for their children to be involved. Similarly, pupils of all abilities have had the opportunity to see the impact on their peers, and generally see vocational learning as very valuable.

Pupils and parents are provided with clear literature on vocational options. Teachers and college lecturers also talk to parents at S2 parents' evenings. Parents and pupils also get a chance to discuss course options in school. However, many vocational courses are oversubscribed and so teachers and college staff interview pupils. Pupils report that the interview is useful in terms of helping them to decide whether they want to do the vocational course, as well as helping them develop useful interviewing skills. The interviews, therefore, are a selection process, both for schools and pupils: for the schools, teachers and other partners use interviews to establish pupils' interest and motivation for the course; pupils are encouraged to use the interviews to find out more about the options to see if they are really what they want to do.

## **Addressing staff needs and skills to deliver vocational learning**

Some college lecturers were initially reticent about teaching pupils because of the anticipated behaviour issues. Indeed, at the outset there was an issue of high turnover of lecturers because of discipline issues. In response, teachers have worked with lecturers and college school co-ordinators to raise awareness of school context and to promote positive behaviour strategies. A handbook for lecturers on school procedures has also been produced. Now lecturers work successfully in schools, and colleges have bought into the approach and believe they have developed appropriate effective learning and teaching approaches.

A further strategy that has assisted with classroom management, as well as with the sharing of professional knowledge and skills, has been the introduction of joint or team teaching. This is seen as working very well with teachers and lecturers learning from each other, and has meant that college staff were beginning to see themselves as part of the school community.

*In North Lanarkshire, staff are used to cooperative learning approaches and a range of CPD sessions are available. So lecturers and teachers are learning from each other with specialists in vocational areas and subjects imparting their knowledge and teachers imparting teaching strategies for young people.*

Vocational learning co-ordinator

## **Partnership working**

The vocational learning programme is part of the wider Lifelong Learning Working

Group which promotes partnership working to support vocational opportunities and deployment of resources. This is a North Lanarkshire partnership group with representatives from NLC Learning & Leisure Services, NLC Housing & Social Work, NLC Regeneration Services, local colleges, voluntary sector organisations, Job Centre Plus, Routes to Work, etc. It is chaired by the Executive Director of NLC Learning & Leisure Services. The various partners work together holistically with a remit that includes promoting pathways to employment and ways out of negative destinations. The vocational learning programme also articulates with local regeneration services that aim to promote opportunities for post-16 young people.

Vocational learning and other aspects of education, therefore, draw on a diverse range of partners for advice and access to vocational opportunities. These include colleges, universities, voluntary sector agencies, council social work and health services, local employers, including the Council's local direct labour services, and learning and leisure services. Careers Scotland provides case workers and advice on vocational learning.

A specific school-college steering group comprising NLC Learning & Leisure Services, a secondary headteacher, and a senior manager from each of the three local colleges, and chaired by the Head of Education Quality & Development helps to match schools' vocational learning demands to Colleges' capacity and to ensure funding is in place.

### **Future developments**

Looking to the near future, the main issue facing this case study was meeting demand, ensuring quality provision and expanding the range and level of opportunities. As pupils and parents have increasingly seen the value of vocational learning, the demand for courses has increased with places for 2008/09 being oversubscribed by about 200 young people. This, along with Scottish Government plans to expand vocational learning, means that those involved in planning and providing vocational learning see challenges in terms of building capacity and infrastructure to meet this demand as well as identifying funding to sustain provision.

Measures intended to address some of these challenges include:

- To help meet demand, particularly in terms of rural vocational skills, another college located outwith the local authority, has been brought into the partnership. Again, lecturers from this college came into the schools.
- As new schools are built or where they are modernised, the physical capacity to deliver vocational courses will be built-in. For example, multi-purpose workshops and salons will be provided. It was noted, however, that there are issues about developing school infrastructure to ensure the same choices across schools. As one teacher stated: 'a challenge is to re-design the infrastructure in schools... vocational learning cannot be on an ad hoc basis...if you have spare classrooms its okay for you; if you don't, how do we make sure young people get the same chances?'

- The key to a sustainable approach was seen to be the development of more joint/partnership working between teachers and lecturers. There was also a hope that more teachers could be trained by colleges to deliver specialist subject content. This, however, was not seen as a way to remove the need for lecturers.
- Various sources of funding across the local authority are being explored to ensure that the plans for vocational learning are realised. One strategic local authority representative highlighted the importance of success as a driver for sustainability.

*[There are] lots of financial pressures...but hold close what you see as important. Because it's been successful it would have been difficult politically to sustain if it were otherwise. It is important that key people are involved in the planning and the implementation of the approach*

Senior strategic local authority representative

## 2.5.2 Highland Council

### Key aspects

- Partnership between schools and local employers in a predominantly rural location where access to colleges is limited.
- Local authority-wide strategic approach, involving various partners.
- The programme has had highly visible and positive outcomes. Employer involvement has had to be nurtured, but can be seen to be to everyone's mutual benefit. With increasing uptake by pupils, as the provision becomes more successful and demand grows, there is a need for more employers to become involved.

### Vocational learning provision

Before Skills for Work qualifications, Highland already had a vocational programme supported by Inverness College with a number of young people going to college one day a week to do some kind of vocational qualification. At that time the range of courses depended on what colleges could deliver. It was clear that there needed to be an expansion in vocational learning and the question of capacity arose. The available college provision could not meet the requirements of 29 secondary schools and pre-specialist schools across a very large geographical area. Given the distances involved, pupils who were able to attend often had to travel very early with long round trips and considerable expense involved.

Therefore, due to the need for local delivery of Skills for Work, the Council went into partnership with business and asked them to support delivery of vocational learning. The key role of the employers is to provide placements, site visits, industry background and insights to support vocational courses. However, the Council is conscious that there is not one solution for all and provision will be tailored according to the needs of the school and local area and the provision that happens to be there. Courses can be provided by local employers, in school or at college. Currently, there are about 70 employers/business partners involved in supporting the delivery of vocational learning. These vary widely in scale and nature of work and include farmers, dry stone dykers, crofters, the Forestry Commission and fish farmers. The employers do not receive money for their role, unless it is a one-person business and some support is required to cover expenses.

In addition to the Skills for Work qualifications there are options involving Awards Scheme Development and Accreditation Network qualifications (ASDAN) and the Princes Trust awards. Scottish Progression Awards are also available in the schools, but not via employers.

Schools work with guidance from the local authority Skills for Work co-ordinator to identify and work with a partner. There is a Template Partnership Agreement and a lot of help for schools to maintain those partnerships. There is a work-related learning policy, video case studies, guidance for schools on all work-related learning,

health and safety, information on Skills for Work and how to work with partners and business engagement in this context.

For the employers and business partners, the Council has provided training in teaching approaches and techniques, to help those who have no prior teaching experience or limited background in training. The Council also assists schools in conducting the assessment to ensure providing partners are appropriate and have the capacity to provide the required input.

Pupils apply to do a course and the respective college staff and/or employers are involved in the application and selection process. Pupils are interviewed for places, and then attend an induction day where they do health and safety and other basic training, and in the run up to the summer they then visit the different partner businesses and have an opportunity to change their mind. Following the formal start of the programme there is almost no drop out.

Currently, it is mainly employers involved in construction, roofing, hospitality, and sport and recreation that are involved. This reflects the main employers in the area and jobs for which there is a shortage of employees. The local authority and schools take care to ensure that the employers have the required resources and means to provide learning and to develop young people's wider skills for learning, life and work, not just those necessary for their professions.

Provider partners are involved with schools' information evenings, or 'social afternoons' for parents to provide details prior to enrolment in the courses. Employers have been particularly active in the process, often giving presentations, which have been highly valued.

### **Nature of participation**

The nature of pupils' involvement with provider partners will vary depending on what they are interested in pursuing. In some cases, this might involve going out to a provider in small groups of around two or three, for about five weeks and then rotate to the next placement. This reduces the burden on employers and allows pupils the opportunity to see a wide range of relevant businesses that are in their local area. In other cases, there may be eight pupils on a course but divided up to focus on different aspects of work (for example, estate maintenance teams and farming).

Most schools are providing vocational learning using a half-day per week, with a single period at school to review a diary of their placements and cover supporting class work. Much of the learning is experiential but course materials have been developed by the schools with support from the local authority to reinforce what pupils learn on placement.

In other areas of Highland Council where access to colleges is feasible, vocational learning provision includes work experience in S4 and a programme of Careers Education from S1 to S4/5/6. Senior pupils can opt for a full vocational programme in any year from S4 to S6 with one-third core subjects in school and two-thirds vocational assignments (one day at FE college, one day of work experience and two mornings of SQA Skills for Work qualifications). Rural skills and construction skills are options for S3/4. Some schools include outdoor education courses from S3

upwards. There are also community sports leadership awards in S1, S5 and S6, and opportunities to develop links with local businesses in tourism and leisure via Celtic Fringe. Pupils can also complete Junior Sports Leader awards, a John Muir Trust Award and do various coaching/work-related qualifications.

### **Young people's experience and outcomes**

The process typically involves pupils developing a close working relationship with their vocational provider, usually a local employer. The young person spends half a day every week for two years with a local employer. They are able to move from one site to another if their learning goals require this. Care is taken during planning to ensure that the experience meets the planned Skills for Work outcomes for each participant. The experience involves playing an active role in the everyday work of their placement employer. Teachers, pupils, employers and parents see the fact that the approach involves 'real work' rather than simulation as a major strength. This experiential learning and supporting school-based work is also geared to promote wider employability skills.

- Key positive outcomes for the participating young people were identified by local authority personnel, teachers, employers, parents and pupils as including:
- The development of vocational skills related to a range of local employers' needs, as well as the development of wider skills for learning, life and work
- Access to employment opportunities with pupils going on to gain employment with businesses involved in the programme
- Acquisition of broader employability and life skills, time keeping, CV preparation and team working
- Improved self-confidence and self-reliance
- Improved behaviour, attitudes to school and work and better attendance across participating pupils for whom these were issues previously
- Pupils reporting improved awareness of possible employment choices, and higher aspirations providing positive role models for some of the young people
- In some cases, there have been reports from social workers on how the experience has helped some pupils deal with their mental health issues.

Participating pupils have often enjoyed the experience so much that they offer to stay on using their own time to gain more experience. Pupils can also obtain a reference from their placement employer, which is often seen by pupils and parents as more influential locally than one from a teacher.

Employers' attitudes towards young people have also improved along with their understanding of qualifications and school programmes. Employers also report stronger links with the schools and their communities. Local businesses have benefited from their involvement; for example, some local estates find it difficult to recruit local young people into their businesses but through the programme, they get an opportunity to promote their business to prospective employees. Importantly, the local authority Skills for Work Co-ordinator reported that local businesses have

created jobs in the past when they have found a suitably trained person.

Parents were initially apprehensive because it was a new initiative, but once pupils were engaged their parents have been supportive. Given the high turnout at parent information sessions for the programme, parents appear to be actively involved in their children's subject choices. These information sessions can be conducted in the evening or afternoon and are facilitated by the schools, and parents attend along with their children to discuss opportunities with teachers and employers. Parents and employers frequently express the wish that such a programme had been in place when they were at school.

### **Key factors involved in success**

Notable factors involved in the success of the programme to date are seen as including:

- The provision is tailored to the needs of the individual pupils.
- Interest and goodwill from business and employers.
- Shared working across Council, schools, colleges and employers.
- Excellent support from the Sector Skills Council for land-based industries which has helped to get businesses engaged.
- Guidance and training provided by the Council for schools and employers.
- Having key people in place to coordinate provision and 'drive it forwards' and committed staff involved in managing and supporting the programme, including the local authority Development Officer, Skills for Work Co-ordinator staff and Rural Skills Strategy Group.

### **Future developments**

Funding has been provided for each school to deliver Skills for Work qualifications within the programme framework, and there are plans to look at how best to sustain the programme within available funding. The local authority is disseminating the positive outcomes to promote support from schools, employers and other partners as initial funding for the provision ends and the Single Outcome Agreement mechanisms become embedded. The SQA strategy group that meets in Highlands and Islands is focusing on how to support rural vocational learning for young people given the relative lack of college provision.

Challenges include:

- As the number of pupils who wish to be involved increases, the schools will have to locate more places with existing and new employer partners.
- Further integrating the programme into the curriculum, rather than as an add-on.
- Promoting the involvement of girls and young women. Currently, participation in the programme reflects the male-oriented land-based industries.

### 2.5.3 Glasgow City Council

#### Key aspects

- Centrally co-ordinated school–college partnerships, involving a local authority team responsible for project managing all elements of school–college arrangements, including matching pupils to college places, and overseeing their progress, the quality of provision and the collation of performance and achievement data.
- Local authority-wide strategic approach, integrated with other education, skills and employment strategies.
- A very well-established programme, with colleges and schools understanding how to get the most from their partnership. Initial scepticism has been overcome by sustained, highly visible and positive outcomes for pupils.

#### Vocational learning provision

Across the whole local authority, there is now a wide range of vocational subjects offered to school pupils in S3 and S4 through partnership with local colleges, Council departments and other providers. The local authority's Vocational Training Unit acts as a 'broker' between the schools and colleges to ensure the best match between available college provision, schools' requirements and pupils' needs. Selection and referral of pupils is left to the schools on the basis of who would benefit most. Schools refer young people onto the programmes and the Unit liaises with colleges on their behalf, collating transitional information on pupils' attendance, 5–14 levels and any additional support needs. This transitional information allows colleges to tailor provision to pupils' needs. For example, the 5–14 levels allow dialogue with colleges to highlight pupils' reading age, etc. An appropriate vocational learning style can also be negotiated to meet pupils' needs, and support provided in school to reinforce the vocational work.

Each programme has a 'taster' session prior to the main programme starting in August of the new session. These tasters usually take place in May or June of the previous session and allow the young people, college staff and internal training providers to experience something of the content, and familiarise themselves with one another.

The Mainstream vocational learning programme provides around eleven vocational options that are predominantly Skills for Work qualifications – one is still a Scottish Progression Award and another Scottish Vocational Qualification (SVQ) in Administration. In most cases where Skills for Work qualifications are available, these will be delivered. Most of the programme is delivered by nine Glasgow colleges, but Clydebank College is also involved. The programme has been running for about six years and every year approximately 600 young people from S3 are involved (about 10%). The system is now maturing with colleges and schools understanding how to get the most from their partnership.

Pupils in S3–S4 take part in Glasgow's Vocational Training Programme with S5–S6 pupils attending college courses as part of the curriculum (part of Determined to

Succeed and Curriculum for Excellence commitments). There are various patterns of attendance dependent on the needs of the pupils and the design of the programme; mainstream pupils attend a half to one day per week, Christmas leavers may attend full time college placements, and Enhanced Vocational Inclusion Programme (EVIP) full time young people attend as an alternative to school in S4. One school highlighted its Culinary Excellence programme, which has allowed pupils to cook for Gordon Ramsay and work in top hotels and restaurants. In this school, S6 pupils can also spend one day at week at Glasgow Caledonian University studying Fashion and Brand Retailing. In another school, the Enterprise and Employability Officer works with staff to embed vocational education and employability skills across the curriculum and life of the school.

The vocational programme is managed by six co-ordinators covering five geographical areas. Each is responsible for particular vocational subjects and liaises with a number of schools. These co-ordinators manage quality assurance, assess the implementation of programme progress, reporting and monitoring. In addition, there are six assessors who deliver sport and horticultural awards. In all, there are about 45–50 people, including bus escorts, administration staff and vocational coaches for the local authority's EVIP.

Having central co-ordination of school–college partnerships has helped to develop provision that addresses strategic goals and provides more effective partnership working with strategic stakeholders. Providers report that this organisation of provision had also:

- Promoted articulation with the five key objectives of Learning Glasgow, Healthy Glasgow and other related city-wide strategies, and programmes such as Scottish Enterprise Glasgow contracts: Training for Work, Skillseeker, Modern Apprenticeship and the Council's Traineeship Programme, the MCMC avoidance strategies, Workplace Literacies & Lifelong Learning. This also facilitates progression with the Council's post-16 vocational and employability programmes.
- Promoted articulation with national policy initiatives, Determined to Succeed, Curriculum for Excellence, MCMC strategy and the Skills Strategy.
- Allowed schools to respond to How Good is Our School and HMIE inspection. 'We have given schools and partners information to show that they can respond to these audits'.
- Enabled college staff's professional development issues concerning teaching younger pupils to be addressed.
- Encouraged ongoing monitoring and evaluation of the various programme strands.
- Allowed inter-agency support to be deployed when necessary.
- Allowed for greater economies of scale, and reduced potential competition between partners.
- Fostered wider and enhanced employer and partner links.

In the vocational programme, the vast majority of pupils drop a non-core Standard Grade and there are three periods a week, with two being spent in college and one vocational period in their school. There are taster programmes available before the

programme starts in August. A supporting EMPLOY-ability! programme developed with Careers Scotland is delivered back in school that provides insights on preparing for interviews, CVs and learning about particular businesses and industry.

Once a year, at the end of S3, there is also an Industry Insight event with support from Scottish Business in the Community. This sees employers visit pupils in schools to talk about their businesses and the types of skills and qualities they value as employers. In S4 pupils work with careers advisors to complement the EMPLOY-ability work, and are interviewed on the basis of an application that they complete. Employers interview pupils in their own premises and the pupils and their parents receive constructive feedback from the exercise.

The vocational training staff co-ordinate with delivery partners to produce a twice-yearly report on students' progress, attainment and achievement. If there are any issues with pupils during their time with the college, the Unit will co-ordinate with the school and provider, the best resolution to these. Teachers are encouraged to visit pupils in the college and develop a dialogue with college staff.

### **Young people's experiences and outcomes**

The vocational learning provision has a strong focus on ensuring that there is clear educational gain for participating pupils, with courses leading to accredited qualifications. The programme has seen vocational attainment greatly improve over its duration and an increase in positive destinations. Some of the key outcomes for young people recently completing vocational learning opportunities include:

#### ***Mainstream vocational learning***

- 78% of pupils achieved the full qualification ranging from a score of 100% in mainstream Administration to 63% in Engineering
- A range of additional sector-specific qualifications were achieved including the Welcome Host, Junior Sports Leadership and CITB initial assessment awards
- When comparing mainstream cohorts 2003–05 and 2005–07, attainment levels show significant improvements over the period with an increase of 42% between the two groups. A number of key factors contributed to this, most notably, improved selection, support and delivery processes.

#### ***Supported Vocational Programme i.e. those young people who require additional support for learning***

- 84% completion rate and 76% attainment rate.

#### ***EVIP young people who are looked after/and or accommodated, have social work involvement or have significant social, emotional or behavioural difficulties***

- 64% completion rate and 86% progression to positive destination.

**The EMPLOY-ability** component of the programme helps develop characteristics valued by employers

- The employability and work experience aspects of provision are highly valued by young people and their parents. The whole experience is seen by stakeholders as promoting employment prospects but also promoting personal growth.
- Other key positive outcomes for the participating young people were identified by local authority personnel, teachers, employers, parents and pupils as including:
  - Progression to employment when the young person is ready and opportunities arise. Close links between providers, employers and related partners facilitates vocational pathways and guidance.
  - Teachers in one school report that the 'vocational training programme's impact is reflected in the destination statistics' with 13% of leavers entering training and 6%, employment. In addition, 45% enter higher education and 25% further education, with all leaver destinations above average.
  - Pupils' involvement in XL Prince's Trust work has resulted in one success for pupils including, in one school, the nomination of one as Young Person of the Year.
  - Young people consistently report benefiting from going out to college, with the life experience it provides, such as challenges like negotiating transport, and feel they are treated more like adults. They believe they can access resources and learning opportunities not normally available in their school.
  - Pupils and teachers report that as the second year of the courses begin, pupils are more aware of vocational choices and are demanding input to promote their employability skills such as job interview simulations and CV preparation.
  - An annual Employability Event takes place across the city where all vocational pupils undertake mock interviews with employers in the sector in which the young people have been training. This is a highly valued experience for young people and employers alike. Not only do young people have to prepare and present for interview, the employer is real and unknown to them. The central team then provides them (and their parents and teachers) with feedback on their interview and application performance.
  - Local authority co-ordinators receive feedback from parents, teachers and lecturers that indicates that the vocational learning is not only promoting achievement but also their maturity. One co-ordinator stated: 'The world of work, therefore will not be a million years away for young people... We're hoping to grow the young people that Glasgow will employ.'

Annual surveys and qualitative research conducted by the local authority of parents and pupils shows that over 90% of parents feel it has made a positive difference for their children across all of the vocational programmes. Other routine monitoring data collected by the local authority has shown increased attainment and positive destinations.

## **Key factors involved in success**

The main factors responsible for the programme's success are outlined below:

- Stakeholders' shared an understanding of the aims and processes of the programme, which facilitated partnership working. In particular, the local authority and partners have taken measures to explain to parents and young people what the programme and Skills for Work qualifications offer. This is seen as promoting participation.

Because it appears in the SCQF everyone understands where it comes from, it's very clear and understandable... it allows people to understand why their child can drop a Standard Grade and do a Skills for Work course instead so they can see the value of it.

Local authority vocational learning co-ordinator

- The centrally organised programme allows effective co-ordination to match college resources to school and pupil needs with integrated quality assurance, monitoring and evaluation.
- Having the vocational learning programme embedded in a wider range of education and social regeneration strategies. This has promoted the ability of respective partners to address the needs of client groups.
- More effective referral by teachers of pupil candidates and matching of pupils to particular courses by the unit.
- Variations that have been made to the level of the qualifications and also, with regard to internally delivered courses, the improvement of internal verification systems.
- Enhancing vocational qualifications and skills by offering additional accredited practical experiences and training that employers will recognise.

## **Some key factors in more details**

One of the important factors highlighted by stakeholders was 'winning the hearts and minds of teachers and college staff'. For some teachers, the initial challenge was to stress to them that the courses were not a vehicle to place the most challenging students. As the programme has demonstrated positive outcomes for participants, teachers have become more positive and less anxious about HMIE inspections and the credibility of the courses. For colleges, a challenge was to work with some lecturers who required convincing to establish common goals, and for schools, colleges and strategic partners to understand how the funding works. Initially, the programme was seen as expensive, but negotiation between the institutional stakeholders has been important in addressing this issue.

The co-ordinated nature of the programme facilitates partnership working which greatly enhances the responsiveness of the programme.

*The partnership includes schools and colleges obviously, but also Careers Scotland, Scottish Business in the Community who work up the employer links for the different employer activities we have. The local regeneration agencies work with us on networking to enhance employability. Careers Scotland have been very good with a secondee helping to develop*

*employability packs and events...this person has a clear understanding of Careers Scotland strategies and their links with employers which is also very useful.*

Strategic stakeholder

Evaluation is embedded in the process for all courses, based on feedback from pupils, staff and parents. Youth Forums have proven very successful in helping to develop recommendations on improving aspects of the programme. There are also networks of meetings between schools, colleges and the Unit to monitor and refine the programme.

In addition to the Skills for Work qualifications, the programme can also provide pupils with 'industry badges'. For example, for those pupils doing vocational sports course, the Unit can put them through the National Pool Lifeguard Qualification (NPLQ) or the junior sports' leaders qualification. For those doing hospitality courses, they can access an elementary hygiene course and training on the 'Fidelio' hotel booking system. These are seen as complementing the Skills for Work qualifications and greatly adding to the prospects of those pupils who wish to work in a particular industry. For others, they can help obtain summer jobs.

### **Future developments**

Some of the challenges facing the development of the programme have included:

- Multi-agency co-ordination
- Time to consolidate and turn reactive to pro-active
- Ensuring funding is in place to promote sustainability.

The model is seen as sustainable by teachers and the local authority managers responsible for coordinating the vocational programme. Until recently the programme was funded entirely by money from European grants, community regeneration and the community planning partnership. From the start of April 2008 the Council has mainstreamed the vocational programme within its overall education budget. This is seen as recognising the value of vocational learning helping to embed it as an integral part of provision.

The vocational learning programme will also include links with social renewal to facilitate closer links between pre- and post-16 employability co-ordinators in each area to ensure more effective transitions for young people. The Vocational Training Programme intends to expand its delivery of *Step It Up*, a process programme (rather than a qualification-based one) for measuring and facilitating measurement of wider achievement, and this will clearly enhance aspects of the vocational programme.

The Council's vocational training programme can be seen as ensuring that this learning is for all young people and more diverse forms of provision are being developed to promote access. For example, there are plans to deliver the *Youth Achievement Award* through Youth Scotland, similar to the Duke of Edinburgh's Award, but levelled on the SCQF.

The Council was successful in 2003 in securing Cities Growth funding.<sup>2</sup> Part of this funding was used to cascade the vocational model to the other authorities that were part of the *Clyde Valley Action Plan*. Funding for this ended in June 2008. The process appears to have worked well, but feedback and monitoring is required to see what impact it has made and how the authorities have addressed sustainability.

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<sup>2</sup> In 2003, the Scottish Cities Review was launched, requiring city councils to take the lead in preparing ‘City Visions’ which reflected the role of cities in their wider metropolitan regions. Implementation of the city region strategies was facilitated through the introduction of the Cities Growth Fund (CGF) provided by government. The Fund historically allocated 75% of funds to projects in Glasgow with the remaining funds distributed around neighbouring authorities under particular project themes.

## 2.5.4 Angus Council

### Key aspects

- College, vocational learning centre and inter-school partnerships, co-ordinated at the school-cluster level.
- Emphasis on promoting generic skills which improve later employability of pupils.
- The school-based vocational learning centres are central to the programme as they promote accessible and sustainable provision in an environment that helps develop employment skills. A new phase of the authority's development plan will see the vocational learning centre model spread to other school clusters.

### Vocational learning provision

The main aims of the provision are based on providing young people with generic skills that promote their employability and to do this within a real world context for learning. It is also seen as important to engage young people with learning for life and to raise awareness of wider choices. The range of vocational learning in Angus and the increasing range of accredited vocational opportunities are available to pupils in S3 and S4. Vocational learning participation has increased from 227 to 241 pupils between 2006/07 and 2007/08. These pupils are also registered as college students.

Vocational learning in Angus Council has been recognised as an example of good practice for a number of years, having been cited in government policy documents and praised by HMIE. An HMIE report on the inspection of the education functions of Angus Council (2007) highlighted the key strengths of the authority and recommended:

That the authority should continue to implement fully the vocational centres within secondary schools to maximize the quality of attainment and achievement, particularly for young people at risk of not proceeding to further education, employment and training.

Cited by Angus Council, 2007

All Angus schools currently have access to accredited work-based vocational learning for S3 and S4 pupils through a well-established partnership with Angus College. Here pupils can do a range of vocational courses including catering, construction, motor vehicle maintenance and hairdressing.

One issue concerning the provision of vocational learning at the College is that children have to travel from outlying areas and the College has two block afternoons each week. Therefore time at college can infringe quite significantly on subject time in other curricular areas. For example, children can be out of PSE or PE or erode where they had a period above the requirements, ie English or Maths. Many parents were anxious about this. This along with the fact that applications from pupils are double the number of places available for vocational learning opportunities has

meant the need to further enhance the ability of schools to provide vocational learning for all. Therefore the Council has developed vocational learning centres at:

- Forfar Academy, which opened a dedicated facility in October 2007 (offering Skills for Work qualifications in Construction (Int 1/2), Hairdressing (Int 1&2) and Rural Skills (Int 1&2). Approximately 140 S3–6 pupils from Webster’s High School and Forfar Academy currently use the facility but it is open to pupils from any school in Angus.
- Brechin High School, which opened a dedicated facility in 2008 (offering construction, early education, childcare and ICT courses). The facilities will also be made available to pupils of Montrose Academy and other local schools.

Pupil Council members have been involved in aspects of the design of the centres. Although both centres are located on school campuses, they have separate entrances, are purpose built for vocational learning and have their own signs. Pupils from schools are taught separately but mix socially. It is planned that they will be taught together eventually. In addition to their use during the school day, the facilities are available in the evening, thus adding value to the local community and supporting the transition to post-school training opportunities.

Angus College staff deliver courses at the centres and the college will eventually close its outreach centre and move provision and services from there to the vocational learning centres. Courses will be delivered to the local community via the vocational centres. Increasingly, teachers and college staff are providing joint teaching, which is seen as offering a professional development opportunity for staff who wish to develop their skills and expertise.

The development of the two vocational learning centres has allowed various skills to be promoted in an environment that simulates the workplace, but also allows schools and colleges to work in partnership to ensure sustainability.

By providing an additional vocational learning centre in Brechin the availability of vocational learning to pupils can be extended to better reflect local needs and employment opportunities. Feedback from participating pupils as well as school and college staff was very positive. Particular enhancements to provision were seen by professional stakeholders as including:

- More work experience placements
- Specialist quality professional input to promote skills and engage with young people (including chef competitions and cookery demonstrations)
- Open days and taster days
- Education and business partnerships.

The benefits of providing vocational learning in a college environment were seen including an environment in which some children can develop maturity, self-confidence and employability skills. In developing the vocational learning centres, the schools and the college have strived to maintain this effect, keeping the environment and relationships close to that of the college.

Angus College and partner schools work in close partnership with the Construction

Industry Training Board (CITB), Construction Skills. Together they promote construction as a career and encourage participation from both primary and secondary school pupils with an initiative called Construction in the Curriculum. Local employers, Angus Council, Angus College, Careers Scotland and CITB are all involved in the initiative, which aims to promote Angus pupils' craft and design skills with a school award system which includes a cash prize to each of the Council's secondary schools in recognition of students' efforts in Standard Grade craft & design.

Other examples of active employer involvement in Angus Council's vocational learning includes Geoservices, a multinational oil and gas company which has provided input into the College's HNC framework and also facilitated pupil visits to the company, visiting speakers, school and college CPD, development of materials and the joint development of short courses.

Employer input is set to expand with their involvement in the validation process of Higher National qualifications, helping to shape the curriculum to meet company/industry needs, and addressing skills gaps.

### **Young people's experience and outcomes**

There has been very positive feedback from young people involved in vocational courses in Angus schools. Pupils reported that they enjoy being treated as adults and this is reflected in their motivation to learn.

Teachers report that pupils in S3 have developed practical skills that will provide a useful insight into employment and certain trades and have access to follow-up courses offered by local colleges.

Teachers also believed that because pupils from different schools are learning together in the vocational centres this has helped to address local 'territorial rivalries' and has promoted pupils' social skills seen as useful for employment. Monitoring by the local authority also indicates that course retention rates for those involved in the school-based vocational learning centres are likely to be better than those for the courses provided solely at the local college. Teachers speculate that this is possibly because there is less travel involved.

College lecturers report positive outcomes for those involved in vocational learning which include:

- Across all subject areas, learners have built on their prior knowledge and experience, and have made good progress in deepening and extending their knowledge and understanding.
- Learners have also grown in self-confidence and self-esteem and have acquired social skills as well as positive attitudes and skills for lifelong learning.
- Most learners have developed very good team working skills, supporting one another, and working co-operatively and effectively together.
- Almost all learners have developed vocational and employability skills through, for example, the encouragement of entrepreneurial skills, life skills and work

experience. Learners have been successful in competitions in construction crafts and catering.

- Learners in most subject areas have developed a range of citizenship skills through, for example, volunteering in the community, fund raising and other events.
- The majority of learners who have completed their vocational courses have been successful in achieving their qualifications.

### **Key factors involved in success**

Some of the main factors seen as responsible for the success of the vocational programme include:

- The implementation of school-based vocational learning centres which promote accessible and sustainable provision in an environment that helps develop employment skills.
- On-going guidance and support for pupils participating in the vocational learning.
- Effective partnership working and 'joined-up thinking across the Council, college, schools, businesses and other organisations that allows sharing of expertise, and access to plan and implement relevant and credible courses'.
- Communication with parents including parent information sessions.
- Joint staff development and provision of CPD for staff, including child protection issues to ensure those involved in providing vocational learning have appropriate knowledge and skills to teach young people and to deliver particular vocational subjects.
- Quality assurance, monitoring and evaluation systems that inform provision.
- The Education Development Service, schools and the college have been involved in the vocational learning planning and implementation group which promotes ownership, and fosters shared goals.

### **Future developments and sustainability**

Schools across Angus are developing their capacity to offer school-based accredited vocational qualifications, mainly Skills for Work. This forms the focus for the third phase of the Councils' vocational learning development in 2008/09 and beyond. The plan for this third phase is, over the next three years, to help schools other than Brechin and Forfar to develop their own provision. This is unlikely to involve purpose-built centres to the same extent, but rather the up-skilling of staff and modest refurbishment.

Further Council-wide developments to promote sustainable vocational learning that are planned or are in progress include:

- The provision of a 3-year 'innovation fund' for schools to promote more school-based vocational learning provision.

- Course choice and timetabling is being adapted to allow vocational courses to be more fully integrated into the option choice process.
- Quality of learning experience is being addressed through CPD for interested school staff with more shared training for school and partner staff.

Introducing increased quality assurance measures both in school and at college.

Part of working towards a more sustainable future is seen as 'changing the balance and relationship between schools and college staff'. There will be a continuing role for college staff and business partners, but also an increasing role for teachers as there is a move from courses being wholly college-delivered to a blend of school and college.

Partners involved in vocational learning are exploring ways to encourage greater participation in vocational courses and to articulate provision with those hoping to go on to university so that courses enhance their CVs and course prospects. For example, rural skills courses are seen as useful to help access veterinary medicine at university.

## 2.5.5 Oatridge College, West Lothian

### Key aspects

- Rural vocational learning provision through dispersed school–college partnerships.
- High degree of adaptability to schools' requirements and flexibility regarding delivery.

The issue of diminishing numbers of skilled rural workers in the locality has been raised by employers in West Lothian. Oatridge College is a leading provider of land-based vocational skills and one response to this need has been to work with schools and employers to provide a progression route to land-based careers. The specialist nature of the College's provision has also enabled it to establish partnerships in other parts of Scotland.

### Vocational learning provision

The College works closely with schools, through visits by groups of pupils and teachers, to 'enhance knowledge of food production and life in the countryside'. Simulation and 'taster' courses are available, focusing on the range of land-based sectors covered by the College. Work experience opportunities are provided for school pupils in areas such as farming, green keeping/golf course management and in rural engineering workshops

The diminishing numbers of skilled rural workers in the locality has been raised by employers in West Lothian. The College is a leading provider of land-based vocational skills and one response to this need has been to work with schools and employers to provide a progression route to land-based careers. Senior management across the partnership believe they are succeeding in this goal.

About eighty percent of the College's vocational learning provision for schools is in rural-focussed Skills for Work qualifications. Local schools send pupils to the college to do courses. The exception to this is provision for those with global needs and, recently, to provide rural skills for a school in another local authority. In such cases lecturers will go out to schools to deliver courses.

In addition to the Skills for Work qualifications, the College helps to promote self-confidence, and generic employability skills. This provision has been further developed for those with global needs through courses which often utilise the College's Suntrap Centre. Such courses have been seen as successful in promoting 'life changing experiences which have been small steps towards independence'. These courses can provide gardener certificates.

The College is very active in supporting schools in remote and rural areas of Scotland outwith its own local authority. For example, the College is working with Highland Council area via that local authority's schools liaison officer. In Highland Council, the relative lack of local college provision has meant schools have relied more on local employers to provide vocational learning opportunities. (See Case

Study 2.) However, there is still a requirement for quality assurance systems, internal verification and training and induction of those providing learning. Oatridge College has, therefore worked closely with Highland Council and their network of large estates, businesses and farmers to provide these services. Similar networks have been developed with Shetland and the Crofters Commission. Recently, the College has formed a partnership with a school in North Lanarkshire, which required rural vocational learning courses but was unable to locate the required provision in local colleges.

### **Young people's experience and outcomes**

Where vocational learning provision has been established for around three years in schools there is a high demand for courses from pupils and interest from parents. Currently demand is outstripping availability of places and candidates are interviewed wherever possible. Pupils see getting a place on the courses as a privilege and this is reflected in their commitment to attendance and learning.

Generally the courses see a good mix of male and female pupils in some contrast to courses supported in other rural areas such as Highland where there is a clear gender divide with males doing the more practical outdoor engineering etc. courses. Pupils can participate with a range of academic abilities.

Teachers and lecturers report that pupils enjoy the practical applied nature of the learning and activities provided by the College. They enjoy being treated as adults and feel it offers a realistic work environment which promotes their awareness and skills concerning employment. Pupils do related paper-based work in their schools.

Teachers and college staff see the vocational learning as having an impact on young people's skills (particularly those related to local rural employment), as well as improved team working and broader life-skills. Such outcomes are more likely to occur in those schools where the partnership has been established for some time and stakeholders have been able to embed provision, learn how to work together and address needs.

*Retention of students is good with low drop out rate... There is an indication that where schools understand how the college can address pupils' needs and fit with their curriculum than selection of pupils is more appropriate and drop-out is less of an issue.*

College management representative

One example is Broxburn Academy, which has been working with the College for three years and has seen pupils progress from courses into various local rural employment such as green-keeping, and land-based engineering. College lecturers believe that pupils would not have considered these careers, but their awareness was raised by their vocational learning experience, enabling them to make more informed choices. Teachers and college personnel saw the positive outcomes of vocational learning for pupils as including:

- Increased vocational skills relevant to local economy
- Improved behaviour in school and motivation to learn

- Increased aspirations and awareness of employment opportunities
- Increased employability.

Scottish Funding Council reports on school college partnership work have documented the College and school partnership as being successful in engaging with pupils and improving their vocational as well as academic skills since 2006. For example, where the pupils came to the College to undertake units in hydraulics, welding and diesel engineering.

A number of these pupils initially displayed challenging behaviours. However, an innovative programme, which involved designing and fabricating engine frames and completely stripping down and rebuilding diesel engines, fully engaged the pupils. One major benefit of the programme was the recognition by the pupils of the importance of the use of numbers when designing steel structures and setting the valves and timings for engines.

[http://www.sfc.ac.uk/information/info\\_circulars/sfc/2006/sfc6306/sfc6306.html](http://www.sfc.ac.uk/information/info_circulars/sfc/2006/sfc6306/sfc6306.html)

### **Key factors involved in success**

The key reasons for the success of vocational learning in this case study were seen as being:

- Flexibility to accommodate the type of learning programmes schools are looking for
- The provision offered by the college offers 'very practical skills and experiential opportunities' valued by employers
- It is a relatively small college with small tutor to learner ratios, this allows very personal learning approaches
- College lecturers are seen as experts in their field
- Partnership working and good communication with schools has been crucial in ensuring schools and co-shared goals. Most partnerships are via the schools networks, eg Careers Scotland and councils including: West Lothian Partnership, North Lanarkshire council and other partners including Sector Skills Council and LANTRA the Sector Skills Council for the environmental and land-based sector
- Employability reviews of pupils done by lecturers in close liaison with teachers
- Senior college personnel work closely in a consultation role with the Skill Sector Council and SQA which provides valuable insights and feedback which informs the College's own vocational learning provision.

### ***Some key factors in more detail***

Across the case study, one important factor that emerged that was seen as enhancing and facilitating effective vocational learning was the commitment and skills of staff. Stakeholders stressed the need for having 'the right tutors...people who want to work with young people'. Those involved in teaching pupils were self-selecting from those who had an interest and motivation in this work. Lecturers who were seen as naturals, who could work well with young people, were encouraged to teach vocational learning and were provided with appropriate CPD. This focused on working with schools, articulating courses to schools' curriculum and child protection issues. As vocational learning has become a key part of College provision new lecturers increasingly have an expectation to be involved in this type of teaching. One management stakeholder suggested that this process would be facilitated by putting it into Teaching Qualification in Further Education (TQFE) as a standard.

The College expects one member of staff from schools to come along to assist with the delivery of vocational courses. Usually these are learning/support assistants but it can be a teacher. This joint-working enhances the skills and awareness of school staff and teachers. With school staff seeing different teaching and learning styles and opportunities. Usually, such staff are very interested.

### **Future developments**

A key issue for the future development of the Colleges' vocational work is adapting to meet the demand from schools for courses. Given the nature of many of the vocational courses, the ratio of lecturers to pupils has allowed careful supervision for health and safety purposes (more so than for adult learners) with about ten students to one tutor. Of the College's two main vocational course 'routes': a) animal-based; and b) horticultural/agricultural-based, the latter has far less safety risk associated with it and is, therefore, more amenable to school programmes.

Local employers are keen on employability skills, particularly the young person's ability to work as part of a team, and value the courses the College offers. College stakeholders highlighted that many local employers are small-to-medium enterprises (SMEs) and 'know little about qualification frameworks'. There is, therefore 'a need to raise awareness of qualifications but also a need to raise education's awareness of employer needs'.

### 3 CONCLUSION AND SOME REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

Across the case studies there is evidence that vocational learning was promoting positive outcomes for young people. While there was diversity in how vocational learning was provided across the various case studies, the research findings demonstrate that key stakeholders responsible for planning and delivery shared the view that, while vocational learning should promote vocational skills and employability, it must also ensure it articulates with the four Curriculum for Excellence capacities to promote broader skills, particularly team-working, communication skills and self-confidence, employability and generic life skills.

To effectively provide vocational learning with these characteristics, at a time when the demand for such provision is growing and the funding landscape is changing, local authorities, providers and their partner organisations are increasingly looking to a more coordinated infrastructure, provision and services to effectively deploy provision, expertise and resources. However, some strategic stakeholders' comments suggest that stakeholders at all levels are having to develop a new mindset concerning funding and sustainability within the context of the Single Outcome Agreements.

Links with relevant Skill Sector Councils, the SQA, HMIE and other key organisations helps to ensure provision reflects recognised standards, and articulates with the curriculum and local and national policies.

There is an as yet unresolved issue concerning vocational Skills for Work qualifications being seen as having 'less parity' compared with other qualifications in that they are assessed as 'just pass or fail' which some argue, pupils, parents and employers find it difficult assess the 'level of achievement'.

Finally, the key themes arising from the case studies of vocational learning and the initial exploratory research raise a number of questions for those interested in promoting the skills of young people, particularly practitioners. These reflective questions are highlighted below:

- What helpful lessons can I take from these case studies?
- What messages do the case studies carry for school subject development in related areas such as craft/construction, PE/sport, home economics/hospitality?
- How might lessons from these case studies be applied to develop practical/ applied elements relevant to ALL young learners?
- Are there elements of these approaches that I am already following in my own practice?
- What changes would these approaches mean for me, in practice?
- What lessons can I learn from these in terms of dealing with challenges and obstacles?

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## **Appendix 1: Overview of evidence and case studies**

### **Range of evidence from Phase 1**

This Phase focused on gathering insights and providing an overview of flexible learning and support. The interviews in particular elicited information on examples of good practice, and confirmed/consolidated criteria for determining good practice and the contextual issues concerning the research topics. This information also highlighted case study candidates for Phase 2.

- a) Examination of literature to inform research questions and instruments.
- b) Electronic pro-forma focussing on criteria for good practice and candidates received from:
  - Peter Beaumont (Scottish Government, Lifelong Learning)
  - Rosemary Whelan (Scottish Government Determined to Succeed team)
  - Charlie Penman (Scottish Government Adviser)
- c) 'Informal' information provided via email:
  - Hugh Wylie (Midlothian Council)
  - Jim Anderson (Angus Council)
- d) Semi-structured face-to-face or telephone interviews focussing on criteria for good practice, key issues and candidates conducted with the following key informants:
  - Cherry Briggs (Reid Kerr College)
  - Peter Connelly (HMIE specialist concerning Skills for Work Qualifications)
  - Peter Hancock (Scottish Government )
  - Col Baird (Scottish Government : School/College partnerships)
  - Lesley Joyce (SQA: Key role in Skills for Work and part of the SfW Project Management group)

## Phase 2: The case studies

Case study	Model adopted	Sources of evidence
<b>1. North Lanarkshire</b>	Local authority-wide partnership between schools and college.	Interviews with, Head of Education Quality & Development, Quality Improvement Manager, Vocational development officer, secondary headteacher, local employer representative. S3 pupil focus groups (x2), use of internal evaluation findings and documentation.
<b>2. Highland</b>	Local authority wide partnership between schools and local employers	Interviews with Local Authority Development Officer, Skills for Work Co-ordinator. Use of internal evaluation findings and documentation.
<b>3. Glasgow City Council</b>	Innovative, Vocational Learning Strategy including LA brokering school/ college partnership and university links	Interviews with local authority vocational manager, use of internal evaluation findings with evidence from pupils teachers and parents and other documentation.
<b>4. Angus Council</b>	School Cluster model involving bespoke vocational learning centres to facilitate and sustain provision of vocational learning	Interview with Quality Improvement officer, college representative. Use of internal evaluation findings and documentation.
<b>5. Oatridge College</b>	College-school model with outreach provision for schools via skill centre and significant support for councils and vocational providers in rural/remote areas of Scotland	Interviews with assistant principal, lecturer, headteacher, teacher co-ordinating Skills for Work. Use of internal evaluation findings and documentation.

**Note:** Given provider timetables, convening pupil focus groups was difficult and for most of the case studies the researchers relied on providers' own evaluation evidence that included pupil and parental data and information. Fortunately, providers were particularly active in monitoring and evaluating activities at the focus of the respective case studies.

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