

Planning for the implementation of Foundation Learning

Case study

Engaging learners at risk of exclusion through a planned transition to personalised learning programmes

Introduction

The focus of this case study is the transition from Key Stage 4 engagement to Foundation Learning. It illustrates the importance of partnership working and demonstrates the flexibility of Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) qualifications in accrediting personal and social development (PSD) and vocational learning.

Provider profile

Name of organisation	The Derbyshire Key Stage 4 engagement programme, known locally as Jigsaw
Location	Chesterfield, Derbyshire
Contact	Jacqui Kinch 14-19 Manager, Derbyshire Local Authority contactcentre@derbyshire.gov.uk
Type of organisation involved in the case study	Ten schools in the Chesterfield Learning Community and five in the Bolsover and Staveley Learning Community
Approximate number of staff involved in the case study	12
Approximate number of learners involved in the case study	Approximately 60 learners. Many exhibited extremely challenging behaviour.
Level of experience at the start of the pilot	Limited prior experience

Implementation

Jigsaw operates a referral process and learners are identified as being suitable for Jigsaw based on agreed criteria. The most significant of these is the extent to which the learner is considered to be at risk of exclusion and becoming not in education, employment or training (NEET).

The programme provides learners in Years 10 and 11 with the opportunity to undertake two days' learning per week off the school site. One day is focused on PSD, the other on vocational learning. Year 10 learners take part in a carousel arrangement which allows them to access a range of vocational and PSD learning opportunities. Learners work in very small groups of six to eight, undertaking six-week blocks of vocational learning on the carousel, moving between six vocational providers in Year 10. PSD learning takes place over 18-week blocks and learners rotate between two providers during Year 10. There is a strong emphasis on the development of practical skills.

Learning in Year 10 is accredited through the National Open College Network Skills Towards Enabling Progression (NOCN Step-UP) Certificate at Level 1. This provides opportunities to accredit PSD learning and vocationally specific tasters. Each provider has responsibility for specific NOCN units which contribute towards the whole qualification. Popular vocational areas include:

- Sport
- Business administration
- Construction
- Horticulture
- Childcare
- Hospitality and catering

Within the NOCN Step-UP Certificate, units are available in many of these areas. Where specific vocational units are not available, more generic employability units are used to accredit learning in the vocational area. The specific units undertaken by learners within this qualification vary based on learner needs and the choices they make within the carousel.

During Year 11, learners choose one vocational area and undertake a supported work placement in that area. They also undertake a Level 1 vocational qualification alongside further PSD learning. There is an increased emphasis on developing practical skills. Jigsaw is gradually making the transition to Level 1 QCF vocational certificates as they become available. Year 11 provides learners with an opportunity to work with staff in colleges and work-based training providers to prepare their application for post-16 learning. Staff have an extended opportunity to get to know the learners, their strengths and the areas in which they need support. The local college manages the accreditation process for the cross-project NOCN qualification. Other providers take responsibility for vocationally specific Level 1 QCF qualifications. Learners' programmes are planned using an individual learning plan (ILP) system.

During the first year of transition to Foundation Learning programmes, functional skills (FS) accreditation has not been available to learners. The plan is to make FS available from September 2009. Learners undertake mathematics and English learning during their three days at school.

The project operates a central meeting point for learners and a project coordinator works with learners. During their first week on the programme the coordinator undertakes an induction that includes planning and accompanying the learner on their travels between off-site providers. An important aim of the project was to develop learner autonomy. Learners move between different learning sites on their own using public transport.

The authority's local area curriculum groups and inclusion groups play a key role in managing Jigsaw. The Jigsaw operational management group, which includes all schools and off-site providers, meets on a monthly basis.

Challenges

- FS at the Entry Levels and Level 1 have not yet been introduced.
- Offering a more flexible Jigsaw programme which can accommodate learners on any day.
- Further development of Entry Level accreditation.

Conclusions and next steps

The authority is hoping to develop the FS element of the Foundation Learning programme that they will run during 2009/10 and develop Foundation Learning in other parts of the county. They are planning a county-wide Foundation Learning Conference in October 2009 to support schools and other providers in planning their Foundation Learning offer for 2011.