

Planning for the implementation of Foundation Learning

Case study

Developing a Foundation Learning offer through collaborative provision

Introduction

The college delivers provision for learners aged 14–16 on behalf of the Learning Trust, the organisation responsible for education in Hackney. The learners have a history of difficulties engaging in mainstream school education. Current provision includes a range of GCSEs and vocational options.

The college used the first year of the Foundation Learning pilot to prepare for the delivery of personalised learning programmes from September 2009. The college recognised that a college-wide approach to Foundation Learning was needed to ensure that an effective and engaging curriculum offer were designed that would draw on the strengths of all those involved in supporting the learners.

Provider profile

Name of organisation	Hackney Community College
Location	London Borough of Hackney
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Type of organisation involved in the case study	General FE college
Approximate number of staff involved in the case study	10–15
Approximate number of learners involved in the case study	25
Level of experience at the start of the pilot	The college was new to Foundation Learning provision, although there was some familiarity with unit-based qualifications from previous work through NOCN and ASDAN.

Aims and intended outcomes

The college began the project with the following development needs:

- gaining a full understanding of Foundation Learning and the new credit-based qualifications available through the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF);
- putting systems in place to ensure the smooth running of a Foundation Learning programme, accessing the ideas and approaches that secure success from other providers;
- designing a coherent programme for learners within the Borough by aligning the work of the college with that of the Learning Trust and other associated providers; and
- considering the progression routes for Foundation Learning by looking holistically at the whole 14-19 offer to ensure that learners engaged in programmes at the college pre-16 can progress to appropriate personalised learning programmes post-16.

Implementation

The first stage of development of the programme was to bring together a range of practitioners across the college who would be involved in delivering Foundation Learning for learners aged 14-19 from September 2009. This team of teaching and support staff who would have an involvement were briefed on the main features of Foundation Learning, after which follow-up meetings were held within their teams to consider the implications of Foundation Learning on planning and delivery.

The training programme enabled the college to:

- plan a coherent approach to Foundation Learning with all those that were likely to be involved in the programme, including vocational tutors, those supporting PSD and those delivering functional skills (FS);
- consider an integrated approach to delivery where links were made between vocational delivery and FS and personal and social development (PSD);
- contribute to the development of a common individual learning plan (ILP) that ensured that learner achievement could be tracked across the whole Foundation Learning programme;
- engage with the structure and content of QCF-approved qualifications and plan a programme of work that will be delivered to learners from September 2009; and
- discuss and resolve practical implications, such as availability of workshop space for vocational learning and timetabling issues.

Through the training and planning process, Hackney College decided to introduce the National Open College Network Level 1 Certificate in Skills Towards Enabling Progression (NOCN Step-UP). This qualification, delivered

alongside FS, provided the skills base for learners that satisfied the three themes identified as being fundamental to the college's Foundation Learning offer. These themes were vocational learning, study skills, and the world of enterprise and work.

The timetable that has been created involves learners accessing two full days in vocational learning, opting for business, construction or hospitality and catering (or a combination of these where appropriate). In addition to this, learners will be developing PSD, study skills and FS.

Learners also have an afternoon per week doing PE, and the college has identified opportunities here for learners to achieve units in an Introduction to team working from the NOCN Step-UP at Level 1. In addition to this, the work placement that learners will undertake will involve input from a range of tutors to ensure that individuals are able to use evidence of their learning to support further unit achievement. Enterprise skills will be promoted through projects, including the development of the college roof garden horticulture facility.

One of the biggest challenges has been to provide a breadth of units that will enable students to develop personalised learning programmes that can secure progression to their stated destination at the end of Key Stage 4. This has been achieved by identifying a range of optional units that learners will be able to undertake according to their interests and goals.

A coherent programme that integrates the learning across the curriculum has been designed. Through the GCSE English and mathematics programme, learners will develop the underpinning knowledge of FS, which will then be applied to the wider learning activities that make up the rest of their personalised learning programme.

Successes

- An integrated programme of learning has been developed which includes the embedding of FS and PSD within the three key themes of vocational learning, study skills, and the world of enterprise and work.
- Positive buy-in from staff across the college will secure an engaging programme of learning from 2009.
- Follow-up planning activities which build on the initial training have been designed to continue to support tutors delivering aspects of the Foundation Learning programmes.

Challenges

- The main challenge the college faced was in changing existing approaches and replacing the qualifications currently used to meet new

Foundation Learning requirements; however, an enriched programme was designed as a result of this process.

- Time, as always, has been an issue, but the college maintained commitment to the training, which has been enhanced by additional bespoke advisory work offered through the Foundation Learning support programme.
- Further works is required to accommodate roll-on roll-off delivery while maintaining a stable and coherent programme of learning.
- Scheduling timetables for staff to support Foundation Learning delivery, when they are involved in a range of programmes that are in demand across the rest of the college, has been taxing.

Impact and outcomes

- A clear programme and timetable are in place for implementation in September 2009.
- Staff working on the programme are familiar with all aspects of Foundation Learning through the training they have accessed; they are well aware of the links across the three strands of the curriculum and will be actively engaged in making these links work.

Lessons learnt

- The importance of looking at a personalised Foundation Learning programme as a whole entity rather than three separate elements.
- Ensuring the buy-in and commitment of all staff involved in the programme.
- Offering the flexibility and choice to be able to ensure a personalised programme which can support the various destination plans of learners on the programme.
- A whole-organisation approach is more effective in extending choice to learners and accessing the expertise within the organisation.

Resources produced

Resource 1: Overview of QCF qualifications offered through Foundation Learning in Hackney.