

## Selby College

### Tracking the aspirations of foundation level learners



Selby College is a general further education college and the main provider of post -16 education and training in the Selby area. We aim to be an outstanding provider of education and training by ensuring access to learning for all people in our rural area. One of the ways we aim to fulfill our mission is by listening to the views and comments of our learners in order to fulfill their needs and expectations.

A survey of our foundation learners was taken in October 2010. Prior to 2010 these foundation learners had been on E2E programmes and we wanted to check that the changes we had made in light of the introduction of the requirements of foundation learning had been sufficient and suitable. We were particularly interested in whether we were supporting learners appropriately in light of their aspirations.



#### Two areas were considered:

- the learner experience and the programme they were interfacing with, and
- the management of foundation learning across the college.

#### Actions taken in light of the survey:

- A more personalised programme of study for each learner was designed
- Each learner was allocated one member of staff ('mentor') to oversee each learner's personal programme of study and their progress. This gave each learner one named person that the learner could refer to, who would work with them on their initial learning plan, ongoing review etc.
- A greater consideration of learner aspirations when designing their programme of study – particularly in regard to helping the learner appreciate how their programme would support them to develop the skills and gain the qualifications they need in order to work towards their aspirations. This was supported by the introduction of more short tasters to make learner programmes more relevant and engaging.
- The Individual Learning Plan (ILP) to include softer skills and the personal and social development aspects of the learner's programmes (including general behavioural issues) became the focus for some learners across all areas of their programmes of study. For some learners it is these 'softer skills' which holds them back from success and moving forward.

- Communication between staff supporting learners was improved via use of an electronic tracking system. This has the option of sending information once but it reaching everyone who supports each learner.

### **Findings March 2012**

As part of the Green Paper Project it was decided to revisit these learners and find out if the changes had made the positive difference we had hoped and then to make any further changes that might be required.

13 learners (chosen at random) were invited to a focus group to discuss their programmes of study in relation to their aspirations. Discussion was followed by the completion of a questionnaire (which could be handed in anonymously).

Responses showed a significant improvement in the perceptions of learners in comparison with the earlier group in October 2011. This suggests that the changes we had made had had a positive impact on learner perception of the suitability of their programmes of study. Learners stated a range of aspirations and all were on suitable courses.

It is recognised that all learners need ongoing support to plan their route to fulfil their aspirations. In a few cases learners' aspirations were unrealistic and the foundation learning team continue to work with these learners to ensure that their career goals are achievable and suitable.

One finding of great significance gleaned from the second survey was the learner awareness of the importance of functional skills. All learners involved were clear about their importance. The team of staff supporting foundation learners continue to use this to engage learners in one of their less popular areas of their programmes.

### **Looking at the figures**

This is an area of college which had traditionally had excellent retention and achievement results and the changes have improved these figures further. For example progression from Entry 2 to Entry 3 programmes is now 80 % and 100 % of our Entry 3 learners have applied for Level 1 courses for next year.