

Reinvigorating Curriculum Design

Case Study



Project title: Designing an innovative curriculum to engage with the unemployed and hard-to-reach

Stockton Riverside College is a college at the heart of the Tees Valley, with a vision to be the college of first choice for learners, employers and communities. The College were keen to design, develop and implement three innovative programmes responsive to addressing the needs of individual learners that would attract the hardest to help and the hardest to reach (NEETS and the unemployed).

Worth reading if you are interested in:

- Hard-to-help and hard-to-reach learners (NEETS and the unemployed)
- Working with partners and learners in the co-development of programmes
- Learner incentives
- Delivering QCF unitised Award programmes
- Pre-apprenticeship programmes

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Participating organisation(s):

Stockton Riverside College, Connexions, Youth Offending Service, Holme House Prison

What the project set out to do and why

Following a review of the curriculum offer, Stockton Riverside College recognised that it needed to improve the offer to specific groups of the unemployed. The College has a history of developing support programmes for the unemployed and NEETs but it wanted to adopt a different approach based upon successful project delivery that could add value to the existing curriculum offer.

Programmes would be co-designed by partners and learners with the aim of increasing engagement, retention and achievement.

The college proposed the development of 3 specific programmes:

Programme 1: Pre-apprenticeship Occupational Studies Programme. A six-week programme delivering a number of QCF Awards across a range of vocational curriculum areas. Focused on 16-18 year old NEETs.

Programme 2: Mayor's Award / Certificate in Personal Development and Contribution to the Community. Working with offenders through QCF units which would prepare them for a follow-on programme.

Programme 3: Preparation for Work. A wider-key-skills programme to support hard-to-reach NEETs who are also young offenders serving a community licence.

Key features for all programmes were the commitment to work with partners and potential learners in the design and development of the programmes, and progression beyond programme completion.

What the project has achieved so far

There were regular meetings with a range of project partners. These included Connexions, the Local Authority, Youth Offending Service, Holme House Prison and Jobcentre Plus (JCP).

Of the three programmes, Programme 1 has had the most success to date. Programme 2 is yet to start and Programme 3 has only attracted 4 learners so far.

This case study will focus on Programme 1.

Programme 1, the Pre-apprenticeship Occupational Studies Programme, was developed in partnership with Connexions and was informed by discussion between the partners and a focus group of potential learners to identify a wide range of QCF curriculum pathways. Programme development was also influenced by the need to provide something different from a classroom-based approach and the recognition that learners may respond to incentives.

In tandem with support from the Connexions service, learners were offered a range of curriculum pathways focused around QCF Awards and with incentives such as free travel, luncheon vouchers and weekly attendance allowances. There were also achievement bonuses for early Award achievement at two weeks, achievement of the Award and a cash bonus on completion of the programme.

Working with a number of curriculum staff across the College, the range of pathways developed included two overarching routes: Services to Industry, and Services to People.

Each of these had subsets of course programmes.

Services to Business :

Course A:

Brickwork
Carpentry and Joinery
Painting and Decorating

Course B:

Electrical
Engineering
Motor Vehicle

Services to People

Course A:

Hair and Beauty
Hospitality and Catering
Travel and Tourism

Course B:

Retail (with fashion)
Customer Care (with Call Centre)
Business Administration

Course C:

Health and Childcare

The pathways have been delivered in blocks of QCF units so it is possible for learners to achieve an Award in a two-week period. Learners have the opportunity to achieve two or three QCF Awards in total.

So far, there have been 72 starts on the programme, with differing start and finish times. A further 57 learners invited to attend did not do so, and 21 learners are no longer interested.

The College have made a progression offer that Connexions has agreed to partly fund for incentives. The intention is to progress learners that have completed an Award onto a preferred Certificate qualification over a further nine-week programme. Learners that complete a full Certificate will be then invited to enrol on full-time provision in September 2012.

Some initial feedback from learners evaluating the programme is available. The findings are as follows for 30 out of the 72 starts:

- Factors influencing why learners joined the programme: progression to further learning cited as the main reason rather than the incentives.
- Factors influencing learners remaining on programme: the tutor and the course content overrode incentives as main reasons.

What the project still needs to do

Programme 1 has a number of successes in terms of qualification achievement but the intention is to understand what has worked well and, where learners dropped out, to discover reasons for this to support curriculum review. The College will continue to conduct surveys of learners to identify what has worked well, what could be improved, and to explore progression intentions and outcomes.

There is recognition that the approach of delivering blocks of QCF units has been an incentive for learners to achieve. Careful planning with curriculum staff and discussion with learners will be needed to be able to respond to the likely demand for follow-on Certificate programmes which may only have small learner numbers.

The College has recognised that it could do more to develop employer engagement which would benefit the pre-apprenticeship programmes.

Work is continuing with Holme House Prison to develop Programme 2 which will be targeted at inmates who could achieve a mix of QCF units which may support them in progression onto a follow-up programme such as the Prince's Trust scheme. There have been a number of logistical issues to be resolved in relation to the Prison working with a local college that is not their OLASS partner in seeking to support inmates who may be local to the area.

What the project wants to share with other schools, colleges and training providers

The following resource is available at the end of the case study:

- Recruitment flyer for Programme 1.

Key learning points

- Involvement with learners in the co-design of programmes provides an insight into their preferred curriculum offer.
- Delivery of QCF Award qualifications in two-week blocks unexpectedly provided motivational incentives to succeed and was the preferred curriculum delivery option.
- Working in close partnership with the Connexions service provided an opportunity to recruit learners and put together a package of learner support incentives.
- Once a programme has been initiated to engage unemployed learners, there is a need to develop follow-on programmes or progression links to maintain their engagement.
- Initial feedback from learners indicates that the incentives did not feature as key factors for joining or staying on programme. This is to be explored further.

Pre Apprenticeship Programmes

£ Learn to earn!

Are you 16-18 and not in education, training or employment?
We can offer you a qualification and work experience!

£ PLUS an allowance of £10 per week £

AND achievement bonuses up to

£70*



Carpentry/Joinery
Brickwork
Painting & Decorating

Health and
Childcare

Engineering
Motor Vehicle
Electrical



Travel & Tourism
Hospitality & Catering
Hair & Beauty

Retail (with fashion)
Business Administration
Customer Care (with call centre)

£ FREE travel - FREE lunch - FREE equipment* £

*subject to eligibility and programme requirements

Please call for details 01642 678634 £


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