

## Stourbridge College

# Personalised timetabling to enable integration into the mainstream



### Background to our approach

Stourbridge College had, for many years; been successful in integrating learners with additional needs into mainstream college programmes, in particular those learners on the autistic spectrum. However, as more learners with a variety of additional needs were applying from mainstream, rather than specialist schools, we needed a more flexible approach to the curriculum we could provide.

In particular, it was becoming evident that a small number of learners applying to college did not easily fit into one curriculum area. This was mainly due to them possessing good academic ability, but requiring social, personal and travel skills development.

### What we did

To address this, we worked closely with our local Connexions Personal Advisers, to identify such learners and develop a personalised timetable across curriculum areas. Our aim was to provide a holistic approach to their learning needs, requiring a strong collaborative approach from all parties involved.

Our students can attend lessons within their chosen vocation from level 2 upwards (with 1-1 support where necessary), but attend lessons in personal and social development within a more discrete provision (small class size), where extra support is provided to support communication and other developmental areas, such as independent travel.

### How this works: case study

The way this works can be illustrated by the experience of one of our students, Alex O'Dwyer.

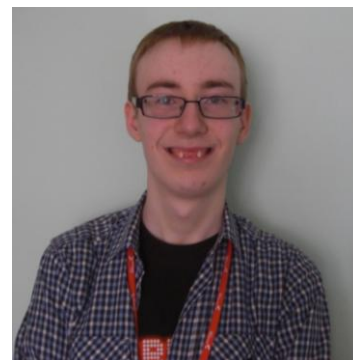
Alex attended a mainstream school with extensive learning support. His academic ability was such that he could access a level 2 programme, but he needed to develop his social and travel skills.

Alex attended 3 interviews/assessments at college to enable all staff that would be involved with him to meet and plan an effective timetable. Alex's personalised timetable also gave enough information for the College to plan the amount of additional learning support that would be required.

Alex's Individual Learning Plan is kept on a centralised college database so that all lecturers across programmes can access and update this. He works to targets that encourage him to achieve both academically and socially, monitored by his personal tutor. His parents are kept informed by attending parents' evenings in both of the curriculum areas in which he studies.

Alex says he is very happy with this approach:

*'It's excellent. I didn't mind coming in for lots of interviews. I have made new friends in both areas (business level 2 and discrete provision) and am hoping to move onto level 3 Business next year.'*



*Alex O'Dwyer - learner*

Alex's parents have provided the following profile which demonstrates the benefits that Alex has gained:

- Alex is autistic and his challenges include dyspraxia and ataxia. Vision and poor spatial awareness severely restricts Alex's mobility and independence essentially making any form of dynamic, unrehearsed independent travel impossible. Hence he needs to be escorted most/all of the time.
- Despite these challenges Alex underwent main school regime. Although Alex attained GCSEs it was evident he was not a candidate for A levels and /or university.
- Alex needed to find an environment and placement capable of coupling academic, social, functional and interpersonal skills teaching.
- Stourbridge College has provided a tailor-made course which straddles a BTEC Business Studies course curriculum with that of pastoral development at an individual level whereby both academic and social development needs are fulfilled.

### **How our students benefit**

Learners report that they are happy with the support they receive which can be 1-1 in class and at break/lunchtimes where necessary. They feel part of mainstream college life, but also well supported to develop other skills.

Staff report that:

- Personalised timetables are working well and learners make good progress.
- Giving the extra pastoral and social development support gives learners the skills to prevent them from becoming vulnerable and time to mature.

- Personalised timetables provide a smooth transition for those learners who are not quite ready socially for the hectic college life and environment, but need to be stretched academically.
- Timetabling issues can arise, but with willingness and flexibility from each curriculum area these can be overcome.

The set up can be a time consuming process and not always an easy journey, as several meetings are required to ensure all curriculum areas are involved and timetables do not overlap. However, the outcome is that learners are retained, achieve and successfully progress.

### Hints and tips

- Make sure you gather as much information as possible from the learner, parents, Connexions and school.
- Invite the learner in to spend a day in each curriculum area before making a collaborative final decision.
- Liaise closely with your funding officer, to ensure that the correct funding is claimed, as we have had to set up codes specifically for individual learners.

### Want to know more?

More information about Stourbridge College's approach to supporting learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities can be found at [our website](#). If you'd like to know more about our approach to personalised timetabling, please contact Lynn Glazzard, Programme Area Manager, on 01384 399678 or at [Lynn.Glazzard@stourbridge.ac.uk](mailto:Lynn.Glazzard@stourbridge.ac.uk).