

## Foundation Learning in action project report

### Stockton Riverside College Learner-led Foundation Learning

#### Project introduction

The introduction of the new Diplomas, Foundation Learning and the raising of the school leaving age are recent government initiatives to increase the participation, retention and achievement of young people especially in the area of employability.

This project used a collaborative, learner-centred approach to investigate how Foundation Learning could engage, motivate, and meet the needs of entry to employment (E2E), not in employment, education or training (NEET) and other learners who are at risk of disengaging. It explored how learners can take control of their own learning through having an opportunity to participate in the development of the curriculum to meet their needs and address their perceived barriers to learning.

#### Region

North East

#### Provider profile

Stockton Riverside College is an ambitious, forward-looking, dynamic beacon college and is a major provider of further education within the Tees Valley.

The college is dedicated to delivering high quality provision and preparing learners for employment, enterprise, higher education, independent living or enhanced lifestyles.

It offers a broad curriculum in 14 of the 15 sector subject areas, and a variety of full-time and part-time academic, pre-vocational, vocational and work-based learning courses including apprenticeship and personal and community development learning (PCDL) programmes, entry to employment (E2E) and a substantial employer responsive programme.

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## Project objectives and intended outcomes

The project aimed to work through a partnership of learners and staff at a pupil referral unit (PRU), the New Start programme (part of a national initiative to motivate and re-engage 14–16 year olds who have dropped out of learning or are at risk of doing so) and departments across Stockton Riverside College to identify and develop a programme which responded to the needs of learners through a Foundation Learning provision. The project would inform planning for the year ahead and support a whole college strategy of implementing relevant and robust Foundation Learning programmes, supporting and informing transition from current provision to new.

### Objectives

- To gather learner views to inform the planning and implementation of Foundation Learning and support the transition from current practices to more flexible, personalised programmes that meet learner needs.
- To seek tutor views regarding what they consider to be the barriers and the priorities for learners on Foundation Learning programmes and to gather information on successful practice in meeting learner needs to improve subsequent Foundation Learning provision.

### Project activities and approach

For the consultations, we identified:

- Twenty five staff that were involved with or taught Level 1 and/or Entry level programmes. Arrangements were made to meet in small groups or on a one-to-one basis to complete a questionnaire (Appendix 1).
- A sample of 50 learners attending either the college or partner organisations. The sample initially consisted of volunteers but efforts were made to supplement this with representatives of our learner population. The relatively small sample size allowed time to conduct semi-structured interviews with the learners based around a set of themed areas (educational experience, reasons for course choice, barriers related to their study or needs, career aspirations and plans, issues concerning motivation and attendance, improving the learning environment, preferred learning styles). Questions were differentiated for two age-groups, 14–16 (Appendix 2) and 16+ (Appendix 3).

The consultation findings are summarised below.

### Staff questionnaires

- Responses suggested an agreement that Foundation Learning can engage marginalised learner groups in developing personal, social development, vocational and functional skills.
- Good practice within the college was identified in relation to provision of appropriate learning programmes, learner support and progression routes for foundation level learners.
- In terms of widening participation, Foundation Learning was viewed as a positive pathway for learners.
- Overwhelmingly, perceived barriers related to a lack of learner confidence, motivation and support, and a lack of appropriate information, advice and guidance. It was reiterated that learners working at this level often require a high level of support with English and maths and/or had personal and social problems that impede their learning. This meant that tutors have to spend more time with the young people to help with these problems or to signpost them to the most appropriate support organisation. Tutors felt it was important to take a holistic approach to young people at this level.

- Core modules linked to personal, social and vocational development were viewed as being a positive boost to learner confidence and motivation and therefore impacted on retention and achievement. Feedback was highlighted as an important aspect in terms of motivating and supporting the learners and considered best achieved through tutorials and through question and answer sessions in class.
- One area of concern highlighted was the lack of knowledge staff had regarding Foundation Learning; they required more professional development and support if they were to implement the Foundation Learning model successfully.

### **14–16 questionnaires**

- Responses suggested an overwhelming interest in employment and apprenticeships and relevant learning opportunities to support these routes.
- Transition days and taster days at college were popular as the young people felt that it was less intimidating to attend college in small groups before they left school to get to know their way round the college buildings and meet staff. They also indicated that it would be useful to have information sessions through visits from the college into schools.
- There was a wish for additional help to be available in the classroom to support individual learners who may be struggling with maths, English etc.
- There was much interest in financial incentives, such as the education maintenance allowance (EMA), and that all learners were able to access this.

### **16+ questionnaires**

- Responses here also showed that learner aspirations were directed towards qualifications and employment opportunities.
- A financial incentive (e.g. EMA) was identified as being important to support retention.
- Portfolio building and practical activities were the preferred means of achieving qualifications.
- When asked what would improve their attendance; responses indicated that good relationships with peers and tutors were significant factors.
- Overall, respondents were satisfied that their learning needs were being addressed. As with the 14–16 learners, they identified additional support in the classroom as being important.

In summary, the relationship between the learner and the learning provider was a key factor in engaging and retaining learners. Identifying and addressing specific learner needs was important, together with good employer links to build employability skills and facilitate transitions into employment.

We used the findings to inform:

- The development of different models of Foundation Learning programmes incorporating the three components of vocational skills, personal and social development (PSD) and functional skills (Appendix 4). The models illustrate in simple terms the number and type of components and the number of guided learning hours (GLH) each component is allocated. Using such models, teaching staff started to map how some of the learning could be cross-referenced across the three components, and began to develop more personalised and flexible delivery strategies.
- The introduction of vocational tasters for 14–16 learners to help them choose appropriate courses and to support their transition into college. Young people are now able to access a 14–16 vocational choice programme, transitional days and taster sessions in areas such as construction, art and design, pre-uniformed services etc.

- The production of a booklet *Understanding Foundation Learning* for young people, parents/carers, employers and staff which explains both Foundation Learning and the QCF.
- The development of an internal curriculum catalogue listing appropriate learning for 14–16 learners at Stockton Riverside College and including components of learning from the Foundation Learning catalogue. We have found this useful for sharing with partner organisations in a bid to support their work in implementing Foundation Learning pathways for 14–16 learners.

## Evaluation and impact

There were a number of challenges faced after completing the initial research. Generally, staff had a limited understanding of Foundation Learning. Some staff were reluctant to consider other ways of delivering the vocational component of Foundation Learning as they may have delivered the same qualification in the same format for a long time and perceived that it did not require changing.

To raise general staff awareness, presentations were given on the Qualification and Credit Framework (QCF) and Foundation Learning to all staff and partner organisations to provide an understanding of the need to design personalised, unit-based programmes that are flexible enough to meet the individual needs of learners including the accommodation of spiky profiles.

Our new curriculum approval processes involved two panels focusing on Foundation Learning; one panel focused on our 14–16 offer and the other on our 16–19 offer. Each panel reviewed proposed Foundation Learning pathways for each vocational area within the college and discussed the flexibilities and individual learner planning that would be needed. This process has raised awareness of Foundation Learning amongst teaching staff and helped them evolve the existing curriculum to incorporate the needs of an effective Foundation Learning provision.

Through other LSIS supported research, we understand how, in the current economic climate, competition for work has increased and employers are looking for more ‘value for money’ from their employees. Young people need to learn ‘how to work and survive in the workplace’ rather than train for a specific and single career. This presents young people who already have barriers to learning with even greater challenges in gaining and maintaining employment. The focus on employability and personal and social development in Foundation Learning will help address such challenges through the accreditation of a mixture of units to enhance these skills supported by information, guidance and employer engagement. The project has raised awareness that providers need to review current Entry and Level 1 provision to meet the needs of these learners and to meet the requirements for Foundation Learning programmes.

Regular meetings are now being held with partner organisations to continue implementation of a joint Foundation Learning provision that ensures progression routes for 14+ learners to appropriate post-16 provision.

We have high expectations that the new programmes and the flexibilities offered by Foundation Learning will assist our staff to improve the tailoring of learning programmes to individual learner needs. The process will be monitored throughout the next recruitment and induction period.

## Next steps

- The flexibilities ultimately adopted to meet individual learner needs in the new academic year will be monitored for success, and good practice will be disseminated to other staff and partners. It is recognised that staff will need to embrace a different learning culture and way of working as learners may not be segregated into one delivery area for learning. Instead, their learning programme may be mapped across several delivery areas thus requiring a more holistic approach to learning.
- We intend to review entry points and the duration and flexibility of class times to enhance engagement and increase retention and achievement.
- We will continue our staff development and training to reinforce the ethos of the Foundation Learning model, with emphasis on employability skills as a fundamental feature in successfully supporting and motivating learners to gain unit and qualification accreditation, and a successful progression route. As part of this, we will be reviewing the professional development needs of those staff whose primary role is not teaching functional skills but who are involved in the teaching of English, maths and ICT.
- We are working with LSIS to take forward an increased focus on employment and employability in our provision.
- We will be encouraging different departments and curriculum areas to work together to optimise the delivery of Foundation Learning programmes. This will require clear channels of communication and information updates to staff so that they feel involved and valued in a time of change.
- If internal resources to offer flexible opportunities are constrained (we may have areas where opportunities are limited once full personalisation is underway), we will need to consider how partnership working can expand and improve the Foundation Learning offer available to learners and seek to use it to join up 14–19 progression opportunities and assist with the transition from schools and PRUs to college.
- We will explore different teaching and learning strategies to enhance engagement and motivation and ensure that learning styles are included in each learner's learning plan.

## Key messages for other providers

- Staff training and development is vital:
  - Capture and consider what staff already know and understand then find ways to help them to develop their knowledge and build on their strengths.
  - Presuming knowledge is unwise – we learned much about the extent of staff knowledge by asking direct questions during the one-to-one sessions.
  - Simple presentations of what exactly the learners will be undertaking and who is responsible for following this through with each learner are crucial.
- Internal partnership working is as important as external partnership working.

## Appendices

### Appendix 1

Staff questionnaire

### Appendix 2

14–16 learner questionnaire

### Appendix 3

16+ learner questionnaire

### Appendix 4

Example of a Foundation Learning programme

## **Appendix 1: Staff questionnaire**

1. What is your job title?
2. What age range of learners do you work with?
3. How do you feel Foundation Learning can engage and maintain marginalised groups in education and training?
4. Do you have any ideas/examples of good practice of how we engage learners and retain them?
5. How can Foundation Learning widen participation?
6. What is your perception of the barriers preventing young people accessing and completing Further Education?
7. In relation to the previous question, how can Foundation Learning help to address any such issues?
8. How can staff meet learning needs in Foundation Learning?
9. Do learners approach you for any type of careers advice and guidance?
10. Do learners have the opportunity to provide you with feedback regarding their learning? If so, how and in what format does this feedback take?
11. Is feedback used to inform learning practices? If so, how?
12. Currently what do you do to overcome these barriers?

General Comments:

Thank you for completing this questionnaire

**Appendix 2: 14-16 learner questionnaire**

**1. What do you want to do when you leave school?**

- Job       Further Education course       Training Programme       Apprenticeship       Other (please give details below)

**2. What would you need to do the above?**

  

**3. How do you like to learn?**

- Practical Activities       Tests       Portfolio Building       Assignments       Other (please give details below)

**4. What do you hope to get from a course?**

  

**5. Would you feel comfortable attending an interview at College on your own?**

- Yes     No

  

**6. What things put you off attending a College course?**

  

**7. Would you like to visit the College to see what courses are on offer and have a look around?**      Yes     No

  

**8. Would you prefer something else which would help you learn what courses the College offers?**

  

**9. How do you think you could be helped to attend College?**

  

**Thank you for completing this survey**

**Appendix 3: 16+ learner questionnaire**

**1. What do you think are the benefits of coming to College?**


**2. Is learning fun?** (please comment below) Yes  No


**3. Why do you come to college?** (please comment below)

Money       Qualifications       Job       Other

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**4. How can we improve the offer/experience?**


**5. In terms of a career or job, what would you like to be or do?**


**6. How do you like to learn?** (please comment below)

Practical activities       Tests       Portfolio Building       Assignments       Other


**7. What stops you from attending college?**


**8. What would stop you from staying on a course?**


**9. Do you think your needs are being met?** (please give details)


**10. What do you want to get out of attending college?**


**11. How could your experience be improved?**


**Thank you for completing this survey**



## Appendix 4: Example of a Foundation Learning programme

### E2E Progression Programme (Foundation Learning)

<b>UNIT TITLE:</b>	Developing Customer Service Skills
<b>Level</b>	1
<b>Credit Value:</b>	3
<b>Unit Code:</b>	HC4/1/QQ/019

<b>Learning Outcomes</b>	<b>Assessment Criteria</b>
<b>The Learner will:</b>	<b>The Learner can:</b>
1 : Understand the benefits to the organisation of good customer service.(1.1.5; 1.1.6)(SLc/L1)	1.1 : Identify examples of good practice in customer service. 1.2 : Outline reasons why good customer service is important for an organisation.
2 : Understand the possible consequences of poor customer service.(1.1.5; 1.1.4) (SLc/L1)	2.1 : Give examples of how poor customer service can impact upon: a) customers b) the organisation c) staff. 2.2 : Outline how poor customer service can have an impact on the reputation of an organisation.
3 : Understand the value of first impressions.(4.1.1) (SLc/L1; SLd/L1)	3.1 : Indicate why it is important to make a good impression. 3.2 : List and outline ways of creating a positive first impression when communicating: a) face to face b) on the telephone c) in writing (including by email).
4 : Understand positive verbal and non-verbal interaction with customers.(3.1.1; 3.1.6; 3.1.7) (SLlr/L1; SLc/L1; SLd/L1)	4.1 : Identify appropriate and inappropriate ways of communicating verbally with customers in commonly met situations. 4.2 : Give examples of types of non-verbal communication. 4.3 : Demonstrate ways in which non-verbal communication can be used positively to support face-to-face communication.
5 : Understand that respect for the individual is at the heart of good customer service.(2.1.4; 5.2.2) (SLc/L1)	5.1 : Outline why it is important to maintain customer confidentiality. 5.2 : Indicate ways in which s/he can respect individual customer needs from a diversity of cultures and backgrounds.
6 : Understand his/her role in dealing with complaints from customers.(6.1.1; 6.1.2) (SLc/L1)	6.1 : List and outline the types of workplace situations in which complaints are commonly made by customers. 6.2 : Identify appropriate people that need to be informed in response to a complaint made by a customer. 6.3 : Identify the details that need to be recorded of a complaint by a customer. 6.4 : Give examples of positive ways of dealing with complaints made by customers.

<b>UNIT TITLE:</b>	Understanding Diversity within Society
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<b>Level</b>	1
<b>Credit Value:</b>	3
<b>Unit Code:</b>	HE4/1/QQ/009

<b>Learning Outcomes</b>	<b>Assessment Criteria</b>
<b>The Learner will:</b>	<b>The Learner can:</b>
1 : Understand the meaning of the term 'diversity'.(Rt/L1; SLc/L1)	1.1 : Give a simple definition of the term 'diversity'. 1.2 : Identify at least three diverse groups.
2 : Demonstrate an awareness of diverse groups and practices.(SLlr/L1; Ws/L1)	2.1 : Identify at least three examples of how groups may differ from one another, for example, religious beliefs and cultural practices. 2.2 : Outline different practices in relation to the above, for example, food, drink, clothes, festivals and relationships. 2.3 : Give a reason for at least one of the practices identified.
3 : Demonstrate an awareness of similarities between groups.(SLlr/L1)	3.1 : Identify similarities across a range of groups.
4 : Be aware of the importance of respecting diversity.(SLd/L1)	4.1 : Give at least two examples of a lack of tolerance of diverse groups within society. 4.2 : State why it is important to respect diversity in terms of tolerance.
5 : Recognise the contributions of diverse groups to society.(Wt/L1)	5.1 : Give examples of the contribution(s) different groups/individuals have made to society, for example, art, literature, music, food and language. 5.2 : Identify advantages of living in a diverse society.

<b>UNIT TITLE:</b>	Health and Safety Awareness in a Working Environment
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<b>Level</b>	1
<b>Credit Value:</b>	1
<b>Unit Code:</b>	HC4/1/QQ/020

<b>Learning Outcomes</b>	<b>Assessment Criteria</b>
<b>The Learner will:</b>	<b>The Learner can:</b>
1 : Demonstrate awareness of Health and Safety procedures and equipment. A1, A2 (PC6; PC3)	1.1 : State the correct procedure for reporting accidents and potential hazards. 1.2 : State the correct response in relation to two emergency situations. 1.3 : Identify the location and use of emergency equipment, for example, fire/emergency alarm, first aid box.
2 : Observe safe working practices. A2 (P5; PC6; PC8)	2.1 : Select and use relevant safety equipment or clothing for particular tasks. 2.2 : Behave in a safe and acceptable manner, for example, maintaining a clean and tidy work area. 2.3 : Use safe manual handling techniques, as appropriate.

<b>UNIT TITLE:</b>	Preparation for Work
<b>Level</b>	1
<b>Credit Value:</b>	3
<b>Unit Code:</b>	HC4/1/QQ/021

<b>Learning Outcomes</b>	<b>Assessment Criteria</b>
<b>The Learner will:</b>	<b>The Learner can:</b>
1 : Identify and explore possible career options.(Rw/L1; Rs/L1)	1.1 : Investigate recorded career option/s which suits his/her requirements. 1.2 : Outline limitations of a criminal record on career choice.
2 : Understand employers/trainers' needs and expectations. (Rt/L1; Wt/L1)	2.1 : List needs and expectations for employers for options recorded. 2.2 : List needs and expectations for trainers for options recorded.
3 : Complete a job/training application form and C.V. (Rs/L1; Wt/L1; Ws/L1; Rw/L1; Ww/L1)	3.1 : Complete two simple application forms in a correct and legible manner. 3.2 : Complete a simple C.V. including essential information.
4 : Understand how careers services and other agencies can assist in providing advice and information.(SLlr/L1; SLc/L1; SLd/L1)	4.1 : Record the ways in which agencies can assist. 4.2 : Identify how to access these agencies.
5 : Understand how to conduct him/herself at interview.(Rt/L1; Wt/L1)	5.1 : Present and conduct him/herself appropriately in an interview situation, including appearance, manner and conduct.
6 : State how to identify job/training opportunities in a local area.(Rt/L1; Rs/L1; Ws/L1)	6.1 : List the sources of information available in a local area.
7 : Prepare a simple realistic career action plan for future job/training.(Wt/L1; Rs/L1; Ws/L1)	7.1 : Produce a simple realistic action plan for job/training for the short term giving options.
8 : Understand the purpose of records of achievement/progress files and their content.(Rt/L1; SLlr/L1; SLc/L1)	8.1 : Describe the contents of records of achievement/progress files. 8.2 : Explain the importance of these.

<b>UNIT TITLE:</b>	Developing Personal Learning Skills
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<b>Level</b>	1
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<b>Credit Value:</b>	6
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<b>Unit Code:</b>	HB1/1/ QQ/029
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<b>Learning Outcomes</b>	<b>Assessment Criteria</b>
<b>The Learner will:</b>	<b>The Learner can:</b>
1 : Demonstrate an understanding of the brain.(SLc/L1; Wt/L1; Rs/L1; Ww/L1; Ws/L1)	1.1 : Identify and list at least three important facts about the brain. 1.2 : State how this is relevant to his/her learning.
2 : Understand how learning takes place.(SLc/L1; Wt/L1; Rs/L1; Ww/L1; Ws/L1)	2.1 : Outline how s/he has learnt something and say how it worked. 2.2 : Identify and list the best ways for her/him to learn.
3 : Show awareness of his/her own learning profile.(SLc/L1; Wt/L1; Rs/L1; Ww/L1; Ws/L1)	3.1 : List different learning styles. 3.2 : Identify and outline own preferred learning style. 3.3 : List strategies for learning more effectively.
4 : Make plans to use the learning to learn skills to aid learning in other subjects.(SLc/L1; Wt/L1; Rs/L1; Ww/L1; Ws/L1)	4.1 : Identify, plan and undertake two learning tasks. 4.2 : Set realistic targets to achieve in each learning task. 4.3 : Record own learning and state how the targets are being met. 4.4 : Outline how the learning took place.

<b>UNIT TITLE:</b>	Recognising Own Skills for Personal Development
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<b>Level</b>	E3
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<b>Credit Value:</b>	3
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<b>Unit Code:</b>	HB1/E3/ QQ/022
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<b>Learning Outcomes</b>	<b>Assessment Criteria</b>
<b>The Learner will:</b>	<b>The Learner can:</b>
1 : Recognise his/her own strengths and weaknesses.(SLc/E; Wt/E)	1.1 : List his/her own personal strengths. 1.2 : List his/her weaknesses.
2 : Recognise his/her own skills and investigate ways of self-improvement.(SLc/E; Wt/E)	2.1 : List personal skills learned in life, work and education/training.
3 : Acknowledge his/her own skills and investigate ways of self-improvement.	3.1 : Describe his/her current life situation. 3.2 : Identify key important personal relationships.
4 : Develop the ability to make positive decisions.(SLc/E)	4.1 : Using examples, identify pros' and cons' for making a choice in a given situation. 4.2 : Make simple choices in a positive and constructive manner.
5 : Set personal objectives and make action plans for self-improvement.(SLc/E)	5.1 : Identify at least two of his/her own personal short-term goals.