

## Foundation Learning champions' training programme

### Building and strengthening partnerships

This handout provides some examples of effective partnership working across the learner's journey. Are there any key messages for your organisation that will help strengthen existing partnerships or develop new ones to support high-quality Foundation Learning provision?

#### Referral agencies and external IAG providers

*Training provider that has recently 'converted' its provision from Entry to Employment (E2E) to Foundation Learning*

We ran a briefing session for all the agencies that refer to us, that's primarily Connexions staff, but also schools who send learners our way. We explained our new courses and pointed out some of the key changes from the old E2E programme. We also designed a short leaflet for learners, parents and carers setting out our offer so that the agencies had something to hand out.

We now send out a termly update and are planning to put together a set of Foundation Learning success stories that the agencies can pass on to learners. We see them as key partners in getting our message out to those who need it most.

#### Initial assessment

*FE college running discrete provision for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities*

This group must be one of the most 'over-assessed' in the whole learner population. We decided that the first step in our initial assessment process should be to gather existing data so that we only needed to 'fill in the gaps' where information was not readily available.

We have a 'transition worker' who visits all the learners in their last term at school and works with their teachers to create a pack of information about each of them. She also visits the families so that we can start to build up a picture of the whole person from more than one perspective.

This allows us to hit the ground running when the learner arrives at college so that they are straight into meaningful activity rather than more assessments!

#### Programme planning

*Large FE college with sizeable Level 1 provision*

Traditionally in our college, there has not been sufficient progression from Level 1 to Level 2. We were actively recruiting externally for Level 2 courses without giving proper thought to the progression of our own Level 1 learners. This is a story of internal partnerships and of building them where they really should already exist!

We conducted a thorough review of our Level 1 curriculum, involving the vocational tutors who deliver at Level 2. We wanted to identify the:

- vocational skills the tutors were looking for (not that many, it turned out)
- personal skills, especially learning skills, the learners needed to succeed at Level 2 (quite a range)
- actual level of functional skills needed (different for different vocational areas).

As a result the college re-wrote its entry requirements for Level 2 courses to better reflect what was really needed. On the advice of the Level 2 tutors, we are now including some Level 2 units in our Level 1 courses and in some cases the Level 2 tutors are involved in their delivery.

We are now looking forward to much better progression rates between Level 1 and Level 2 courses.

## Delivery partnerships

*Small voluntary-sector organisation*

We specialise in helping adults to re-engage with learning after an episode of mental ill health. Our programme has always had some key skills and some personal and social skills but our vocational offer has been very informal and constrained by our facilities.

We decided that a personalised Foundation Learning programme would be a good route for some of our learners and that we were best placed to offer a secure base for them. We had the right staff to offer functional skills and personal and social development but needed help on the vocational front.

We have teamed up with a local training provider who offers administration, hair and beauty, catering and construction courses. We gave them some introductory training on working with people with mental-health difficulties, discussed what we needed and then let them get on with it.

We still oversee the whole programme, monitoring the learners' progress and, crucially, providing the right kind of support but we've left the vocational bits to the experts.

## Support

*Work-based learning provider new to Entry and Level 1 provision*

We've always been an apprenticeship provider, offering training at Levels 2 and 3 to learners based in the workplace. We decided to dip our toe in the water with Foundation Learning and offer a pre-apprenticeship programme to some learners we would normally turn away as not ready for Level 2.

We weren't initially aware of the kind of support that we would need to offer or what it would be like to have them on the premises 3–4 days a week! We quickly realised that we would need to do some sort of audit of support needs and work out which we could meet in house and where we would need to involve others.

We have employed our own learning support assistant for the group and arranged some training sessions for our advice and support manager (who also delivers the personal and social development element of the course).

We have made links with a range of other support agencies, numbers for which are displayed in the learner chill-out room (also new!). They include agencies that can give advice on benefits, housing, drug and alcohol misuse, counselling services and childcare. Where necessary, we will support learners to contact these agencies and with their permission share appropriate information.

One interesting outcome is that some of our apprentices have also been making use of these services.

## Facilities and resources

*Adult and community learning (ACL) provider offering Preparation for Work courses to adults with a learning disability*

We were criticised in an inspection report for not offering our learners enough experience of the world of work. It's hard to get these kinds of experiences for our learners, most of whom have quite complex disabilities, but we knew it was important if we were going to be able to say hand on heart that our course was preparing them for supported employment.

We hadn't had much luck in engaging with employers ourselves so we decided to try to work through one of the supported employment agencies that had been successful in finding our ex-learners employment. They gave us access to their database of 'sympathetic' employers, all of whom had already had some disability awareness training. In some cases they did the introductions for us too.

Now we have employers visiting our training centres, learners going on visits to the workplace and learners on work experience and on placements. Last week one of our learners got a Saturday job as a result of a 'working interview' with one of the employers from the database.

## Assessment and evidence collection

*An OLASS provider working with learners in prison*

Education in prisons is often seen as quite separate from everything else that's going on – just something that a prisoner does on Tuesdays and Thursdays. We wanted to get all of those involved in the prison thinking about the people they were working with not just as prisoners but also as learners.

We have designed a learner progress tracking system that allows learners with jobs in prison to collect evidence towards their qualification. It's nothing fancy – just a series of recording sheets and templates for witness statements – but it means that a learner working in the kitchen, for example, can collect evidence towards a unit in working with others. It's been quite hard work persuading all the different staff on board but we are getting there.

It's helping learners to see the jobs they are doing as opportunities to develop, not just as a way of earning a few pounds. And it's helping prison staff to understand a bit better what the learners get up to on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

## Transition from a Foundation Learning programme

*These short statements are taken from a range of the providers reflecting on how partnerships can support learners to make an effective transition from their FL programme.*

- We have got local colleges and training providers to guarantee our learners an interview for a Level 2 course so long as we are prepared to recommend them.
- Where learners progress to a Level 2 course within college, for the first 6 weeks they are welcome back in the base room of their previous course where they are encouraged to discuss how they are getting on and to identify any possible support needs that are not being met.
- We have begun working with supported employment agencies in the last term of our programmes so that learners can get to know a support worker or job coach and begin the search for work before they leave us.
- We ensure that all conceivable credits are claimed for and that, wherever possible, the receiving organisation is aware of how the learner plans to build on them
- We plan to give our FL learners priority for places on our apprenticeship programmes where they have achieved their FL qualifications.