



Sarah sharing her work at Forest School during the Y11 LAC transition programme



Lloyd and the Pledge to LAC/CL

Category Winner - Embedding Equality & Diversity

Provider name: Doncaster College

Provider type: FE College

Provider overview: Doncaster College is the largest provider of FE in South Yorkshire

Submission:

- We provide a full time dedicated support service for looked after children and care leavers wanting to access FE
- Young people's voices shape and influence the service

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Outline of E&D-related challenge(s) or obstacle(s) faced and why they needed to be addressed:

There is a NEET (not in education, employment or training) culture amongst LAC / CL (looked after children and care leavers) in Doncaster.

National Indicator 148 (the % of care leavers aged 19, who were looked after on 1st April in their 17th year in EET) shows Doncaster to be the worst performing authority in South Yorkshire over the past 6 years. To meet this cohort's educational need is certainly an E&D challenge, first highlighted by Sonia Jackson (1987). Jackson and subsequent research noted that certain features of the care system such as inadequate corporate parenting and failure to prioritise education can lead to impoverished educational experiences for this cohort.

There is an encouraging national focus on HE but little emphasis on the value of FE. Doncaster College appointed an Educational Champion for Looked After Children (ECLAC) in November 2008. At this time we held no record of LAC / CL learners. The ECLAC consulted young people about their experiences of FE and responses showed similar themes. The theme of other people not understanding care was prevalent amongst all responses. Feeling their lives are too complicated to consider or remain in FE was another strong message.

Groundwork, planning and interventions put in place to tackle highlighted issues :

Outreach work continued as young people's thoughts and experiences are central to the

development of the service.

In response the consultation themes the ECLAC service worked with agencies and colleagues to offer and co-ordinate support for young people wanting to access FE, whilst raising awareness of Doncaster College provision and services.

One young person told the ECLAC "I just want people to understand how hard things are for me sometimes". With this firmly in mind we invited LAC / CL learners to become involved in events and activities to inform other young people, colleagues and partner agencies about care and experiences, which in turn has developed confidence, enabled young people to use their care experience in a positive way and increased their participation in College.

Approximately one third of Doncaster College LAC / CL learners have been involved in these types of activities and training.

When appointed the ECLAC noted there were no forums for young people or a (statutory) Children in Care Council (CICC). The ECLAC service partnered with the local authority Children's Rights Service to found a CICC held at Doncaster College. This helped raise educational aspirations and break down barriers identified in consultation work.

The CICC has the support of the DMBC Director for CYPS and the E&D committee at College. Through this vehicle 5 young people have applied and been successful for the 2010/2011 intake. The service has supported 4 full time LAC / CL volunteers who have worked alongside the ECLAC to develop provision.

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Impact the provider has achieved - quantifiable, distance travelled, how the good practice has benefited a range of stakeholders:

Young people referred to the service are tracked. At the end 2008 / 2009 24 LAC / CL achieved their qualification and of these, 16 planned to progress at College. 12 enrolled in September and of these 10 achieved their qualification in 2009 / 2010. The total number of LAC / CL to complete their qualification in 2009 / 2010 is 31, an increase on the previous year.

Statistics only tell one part of a young person's journey. One young woman Claire * was referred to the ECLAC service by her friend who was a care leaver learner. Claire was 19 and had not engaged in education since she was 14. Claire enjoyed College and her literacy improved but she left us in April. Statistics show Claire as someone who hasn't achieved yet her learning and contribution cannot be underestimated.

Anecdotal evidence is just as valuable, for example the smile on one young woman's face as we took her horse riding for the first time or the laughter from young people climbing trees in Forest School.

The service has benefited stakeholders by collaborating to develop the services offered to this cohort. The service has co-facilitated a 9 month transition programme, with Connexions and the LACE team, for all looked after Year 11's living in Doncaster. The leaving care service has a growing awareness of FE and more of their young people are accessing our provision. The CICC has been successful and will continue with young people setting the agenda.



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How partnership working and/or knowledge sharing have enhanced performance and impact:

The Year 11 transition programme, held at College, has enabled young people to explore their post 16 options, develop study skills, build relationships with each other and take part in confidence building activities.

The aim of this programme is to reduce the likelihood of 20 Year 11 LAC becoming NEET at 16. Of the 20 young people, 15 have applied to College. This programme enables the ECLAC to build a relationship with the young people and the professionals working with them. The ECLAC, with consent, informs course leaders of LAC applications to ensure maximum support from the start.

The ECLAC service supports College colleagues working with LAC / CL to provide a positive College experience, qualification achievement and progression. Knowledge sharing amongst the Student Union team has raised awareness of this cohort and some LAC / CL access the Common Room and enrichment. All LAC / CL will be targeted for cross College enrichment opportunities in the next academic year.

The ECLAC service has delivered training to College colleagues with care leavers making a significant contribution. Together with the support delivered to this cohort across College, we are developing an ethos of awareness of this group's needs.

Lessons learned through the outlined activity and further related development plans:

One key lesson learned is that supporting this cohort is more than one person's role; meaningful support is a whole College community responsibility. The service already has cohesive management and is well placed in the Counselling and Welfare department.

One planned development is the adoption of the local authority Doncaster Pledge to LAC / CL. Doncaster College is a partner in this work and the launch of the Pledge will be held at College on 29th June. Following the launch, LAC / CL learners will decide on how College will embed this and how outcomes will be measured. Outcomes and targets will be monitored by the E&D committee.

The inclusion of LAC / CL volunteers is essential to the service and future plans include again offering placements for care leavers in 2010 / 2011 and also a Social Work student placement from Sheffield Hallam University.

One point in future plans are a possible Modern Apprenticeship and / or paid seasonal work for a care leaver in addition to continuing promoting volunteering. Above all the service and College are committed to listening and consulting with LAC / CL as it proven to be the most powerful tool to work with.

Useful resources:

- ✓ Promoting the achievement of LAC, statutory guidance for local authorities March 2010
- ✓ Taking Care of Education Harker 2004

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