



Working with NEET young people at Wakefield College

## Highly Commended Submission - Embedding Equality & Diversity

Provider name: Wakefield College

Provider type: FE College



Provider overview: Wakefield College is the only general further education college located in and serving the Wakefield Metropolitan District and adjacent communities

Submission: Maximising participation and improving life chances for disadvantaged young people through partnership working raising aspirations and valuing the contribution of all hard to reach young people using innovative models of learning

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

The Wakefield district incorporates some of the most deprived wards in England. The demise of the mining industry left behind a legacy of isolated local communities which experience high levels of worklessness. This has contributed to a culture of non-participation in further education resulting in Wakefield having one of the lowest staying in learning rates in the country.

Consequently the high 16-19 NEET (Not in Education, Employment and Training) figures present its challenges for the local authority and education/training providers. One of the College's strategic priorities is to 'Inspire People to Learn' and through proactive strategies identifies innovative and targeted models of delivery which aim to capture, entice, embrace and support some of the most vulnerable groups of people in our local communities.

One major impact for the district was the introduction of the Entry to Employment programme in August 2003 and the College's challenging role as Lead Provider. More recent NEET initiatives such as the Local Authority's ESF Co-financed programme called 'Event' (August 2009) and the 'January Guarantee' (January 2010) provides the College with an outstanding reputation for partnership working and widening participation.

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

Meeting needs and improving choice has led the e2e partnership to work proactively with Connexions and other agencies to

constantly review, identify and match the vocational aspirations of young people with the delivery offer. The partnership's Provider Base flexes in response to identified needs.

The College has responded to flexible start provision by offering vocationally focussed e2e provision leading to full-time opportunities in January 2010. Work experience, volunteering and enrichment opportunities and the ability of learners to move within the partnership where their needs and aspirations change mid-programme, have led to a high-performing environment with a positive reputation among stakeholders.

The NEET 'Event' programme offers a wide range of engagement activities and operates from various community settings at point of need. It provides opportunities for young people to gain in confidence and make a gradual transition from community settings into more formalised learning environments. Retention has been a major challenge.

For e2e, the College introduced an induction week for all learners and used the dedicated Connexions PA as a first call for support with attendance, personal, domestic issues and substance misuse. For the NEET ESF programme, YOT supplied a dedicated worker along with Connexions support; for January Guarantee, Connexions, the Transition Mentor and the Partnership's Quality Officer have provided guidance and support to staff and learners in order to maximise participation and retention.

A Transition Mentor supports young people with partnership transfers and seamless transition to positive outcomes including Remploy, Mencap or other specialist agencies for learners with disabilities/learning difficulties.

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

In the past 7 years over 2,500 young people from the Wakefield District NEET have had access to education/training opportunities that would not have been available to them through mainstream provision. Over 1,300 of these learners have moved onto positive outcomes: apprenticeships, further learning or work. Success rates have steadily risen over the time of the programme and peaked at 55% in 2007/08.

The College is particularly proud of e2e's success rates for minority groups as outlined below and believes that this reflects the inclusive values it promotes throughout its partnerships. The success of recruitment to e2e, NEET 'EVENT' and the January Guarantee has significantly impacted on NEET figures as outlined below.

Sep 08 - Jan 09 (11.20%)

Sep 09 - Jan 10 (9.35%)

Whilst e2e is not qualification driven, learners achieved 176 nationally recognised qualifications and 2,661 milestones out of the 2,903 set during 08/09.

These milestones measure learners' distance travelled and indicate the number of barriers they have overcome whilst on programme. This year 125 e2e learners have undertaken voluntary placements and community projects. Over 60% of learners from the NEET ESF 'Event' programme have successfully progressed into further learning. This provision has received recognition from the AoC with an article being published in 'State of Colleges'.

Staff and learners have attended a reception at the House of Commons to recognise the College's contribution to the economic and

social well-being of the nation.

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

Effective and high-performing partnerships/collaborative arrangements are key to success. NEET Strategy Group, College senior management, Connexions senior management and e2e Partnership Manager meet regularly to identify potential issues, review current progress and plan for future initiatives.

An example would be the College working with schools' year 11 learners to identify those at risk of becoming NEET and providing strategies for successful transition to a range of programmes including e2e and dedicated summer school provision.

The e2e partnership management group includes Connexions Manager and Local Authority representative who meet regularly to discuss/monitor progress, quality issues and proposals for additional provision and the development/implementation of initiatives such as volunteering, work placement and enrichment.

The e2e practitioner focus group enables all training provider delivery staff to meet and share good practice; College staff have facilitated training and sharing of good practice in areas such as Dyslexia and Autism whilst other initiatives have been led by the College's dedicated e2e Subject Learning Coach.

External guest speakers are invited to deal with drugs awareness, sexual health, Youth Offending and employer engagement. It is led and supported by the College's e2e partnership staff. Extended partnerships include YOT, Barnardos, Mencap, Remploy among others.

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

The College believes that a multi-faceted approach to solving what is a multi-agency issue is the key to success and that through its various partnerships it has maximised the life chances of disaffected young people in NEET. Some examples of key activities are highlighted below.

- Seek the views and aspirations of young people to design innovative provision to attract, sustain and progress them to positive outcomes
- Provide information events to NEETs and those on feeder programmes enabling them to explore their opportunities in a non-threatening environment.
- Provide effective induction activities including the opportunities for identifying, agreeing and implementing support where learners appear to be 'at risk' of early disengagement
- Build networks of support agencies to agree, implement and review the referral, support and transition protocols
- Facilitate regular strategic meetings to ensure that people at the highest level influence the strategy for success
- Provide opportunities for sharing of good practice regarding recruitment, engagement, on-programme activities, enrichment and progression ensuring that young people receive the very best experience and chance of success.

Much of what has been learned through working with NEETs will be carried over into modelling foundation and further pre-foundation learning provision.

## Useful resources:

- ✓ [www.wakefield.ac.uk](http://www.wakefield.ac.uk) – College website
- ✓ [www.e2ewakefield.co.uk](http://www.e2ewakefield.co.uk) - Wakefield Partnership e2e website
- ✓ Connexions Partnership Agreement
- ✓ The YOT Protocol

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