

Realising potential: insights into the design and delivery of pre-vocational programmes

City College Peterborough



This case study focuses on how City College Peterborough (CCP) responds to the needs of a number of different client groups, and emphasises how seemingly disparate work is delivered under an overarching vision and value frame, and consistent corporate and professional approaches.



Brief description

City College Peterborough places great emphasis on enabling individuals to maximize their potential, and often works in niche markets to help support the economic and social development of Peterborough. The vast majority of its young learners are vulnerable with multiple and complex barriers to education; the College has an expanding 16-18/25 year LLDD provision; and offers Day Opportunities, commissioned by Peterborough City Council, that are embedded in skills development to enable people to move towards independent living and employability where appropriate.

The college is a good provider with outstanding features. When City College was last inspected (October 2011, Grade Two overall, with Foundation Learning being judged as outstanding) OFSTED found that:

“A very high proportion of learners complete their programmes successfully. Many develop useful personal and employability skills to help them progress into jobs or further education. Attendance rates are high. Apprentices develop good levels of skills [and] most complete their qualifications in the planned time. [...] Learners improve their economic and social well-being to a good level. Closely targeted provision engages disadvantaged groups and has had substantial impact on their health, social life and employment prospects. Learners thoroughly enjoy their classes and speak highly of the wide range of personal benefits from their learning such as improved confidence and the acquisition of new skills and knowledge.”

...designed to help young learners “take responsibility for decision making through understanding where [their] true skills and interest lie”.

Effective practice - the detail

CCP's constitution, which has been endorsed by the City Council, commits the College to providing opportunities designed to reduce poverty, unemployment and social isolation and to improving health and wellbeing for some of the City's most vulnerable residents.

Overseen by a Governing Body operating under a local scheme of delegation, and with devolved funding responsibility, the College works closely with a range of local and regional partners and is highly effective at identifying and responding to local priorities.

Close liaison with the local authority and allied agencies enables information on learners with high level needs to be used to good effect, and the College staff's detailed understanding of learners' needs and behaviours is used well to support learners. One example of this is the CCP approach to "PRAG rating" its study programme cohort (224 learners in 2014/15) to identify and differentiate support needs, prioritising those most at risk of serious harm. In 2014/15, 72% of these learners were rated purple and red (of which 42% purple), compared to 64% in 2013/14, illustrating how the College is responding to an increasing proportion of vulnerable young people.

Purple	Red	Amber	Green
an identified safeguarding concern, including suicide-risk, self-harm, current depression, a serious health issue, in the care system or in Y11	an identified safeguarding concern, including learning difficulties, behaviour, emotional or social difficulties, depression, living independently or a care-leaver	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> youth offending order young parent young carer 	no safeguarding concerns identified

City College Peterborough PRAG rating

“The College works with partners to identify needs and meet them. Our key proposition is that we offer a supportive learning environment in which the individuals we work with can develop personally as well as in the acquisition of skills and qualifications – in essence, we promote well-being, and undertake work which helps in the social and economic development of the city.”

Pat Carrington
CCP Principal

16-19 learners, based at the John Mansfield Campus, are provided with a **well-supported study programme which is focused on developing individuals’ attitudes, behaviours and employability skills: the teaching team is augmented by a team of pastoral support workers, and they have recently developed a bespoke learning and study centre (“The Hangout”)** which provides an alternative learning environment where our learners can explore and build upon their day to day experiences.

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Pat Carrington goes on to explain:

“We do something similar for our younger apprentices, especially those in the 16-18 age-group, where non-attendance acts as a trigger for a bespoke package of pastoral support. Our adult learners are also vulnerable, though maybe not to the same extent: many experience poverty, lack confidence, and have negative prior experiences of education. ASB-funded work tends to be ESOL (we have a lot of learners with English language needs), English and maths, and employability training for JCP mandated clients”.

There is a small but increasing provision with the Roma community, where CCP adopt a project-based, outreach approach; and a Community Learning programme, which now includes a Mental Health pilot where the College is offering a series of workshops, co-produced and run by the Recovery College East in Peterborough (an NHS College for recovery from mental health challenges). Learners on this pilot undergo an initial assessment and participate in appropriate therapeutic recovery courses run by the NHS specialists. Pat mentions that their role is to offer tasters of different learning opportunities hosted at the College and that the College is working in partnership with Adult Social Care to equip young adults with varying degrees of disability with skills in, for example, catering, jewellery, car-washing and reception duties.

The College is also working in other ways with the City Council, for example by having a presence in designated “Can Do” areas targeting support for new arrivals; with the local police, who are seeking to recruit more people who are representative of the local community; and with agencies such as the Cross Keys Care Academy, helping them deliver pre-recruitment courses – so far we have a 30% success rate in getting people into jobs – or under a DWP Shaw Trust Work Choices contract, where the College works with employable people to help them develop their CV, application and interview skills and offer a mentoring service during their in-work induction. The provision is tailored to local needs and where staff know where the jobs are.



Pat Carrington notes that:

“Our Governing Body firmly believes the College’s mission is to work with the hardest to reach local residents, those facing the most difficulties. The impact of CCP on the city’s sustainable community, and on all strands of the Single Delivery Plan, is substantial. The service offered by CCP is to deliver learning opportunities that meet local needs and help improve the social and economic wellbeing of local residents and communities, working with families, young people and adults, with a particular emphasis on the disadvantaged and vulnerable.

The communities in which the College works are primarily those that have low skills and low aspirations, often in areas of high deprivation. Pat noted that the College doesn’t ‘cherry pick’ and only spend their public funding in the city: any work outside is either covered by full fees, or uses project funding.”

Employability programmes

CCP is part of a unique collaboration between DWP East Anglia and Haverhill, and all SFA-funded providers in the area, whereby there is a consistent and frequent offer from the National Careers Service (NCS). CCP runs two such courses, each delivered by a single main tutor:

- Short, intensive “Destination Employment” 3-day course delivered each Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday; this leads to a BTEC Level 1 Award in Work Skills, and includes job search skills, CV preparation and a mock interview; NCS runs a 1.5 hour session within this programme, which is designed to raise awareness of the service available, familiarisation with the NCS website and sign-up to Adult Directions. All learners referred from JCP are aged 19+ and have been unemployed for a minimum of 8 weeks;
- 2-week Intensive Training for Job Seekers (ITJS) programme, which CCP delivers every 6 weeks, where the clientele comprises adults who have been claiming unemployment benefit for 3 months. This covers the same ground as Destination Employment, but in more detail; ITJS also includes elements on money management, IT skills for employment, and a mind-set unit, and includes more one-to-one work which is tailored to each individual.

The College provides a part-time study programme and the ESOL team is currently in the process of developing a full-time programme of study.

“We get a very diverse group, and it’s important not to be judgmental. Some have very low confidence levels, and I try to get them networking with each other as soon as they walk into the first session. I find motivational activities for them to try - some of the on-line resources are really great with that – and get them to work out what might be a suitable job role, based on their likes and dislikes...

Wendy Hill

Course Tutor

The NCS is helpful and the learners are encouraged to sign up for one-to-one sessions as well as the group activity. As a result, the learners produce good quality documents, update their CVs and many actually apply for jobs during their time at the college, and some have been successful. Wendy gives feedback to JCP on each learner, reporting on their completion of a skills assessment and their level, passing on a copy of their CV, commenting on their attitude and identifying further training needs. The College is there to guide and to help, but in many ways “it’s a matter of peer support, the learners helping each other.”

Although not delivered as part of the above mandated courses, CCP also offers a range of free employment-related accredited programmes “for those between jobs and looking to gain new skills to help you get back into work” which are designed to meet the needs of local employers and the current job market. The College course guide for January – July 2016 indicates the following offer:

- Award in Customer Service Level 1;
- Business Administration Level 1;
- Dementia Awareness Level 2;
- Emergency First Aid Level 2;
- Food Safety Level 2;
- Health and Social Care at Levels 1 and 2;
- Mental Health Awareness Level 2;
- Supporting Teaching and Learning in Schools Level 2.

A distinctive feature of the CCP delivery of Destination Employment is the involvement of employers in a practice “speed interview” held during each course, which results in feedback to individual course members on first impressions, communication skills, confidence, presentation/attire and enthusiasm/general interest. This is followed up on a regular basis with a separate Jobs Fair event in Peterborough, where up to 30 employers with current vacancies have opportunity to meet past course participants. The last such event held resulted in 23% of attendees gaining employment.

Delivery of employability programmes has increased eight-fold at City College in the last five years, and now accounts for about 40% of the total ASB funding allocation; of this, some 90% is spent supporting the mandated programmes. The most recent government outcome-based success data shows that 45% of unemployed learners on City College provision went into sustained employment.

CCP’s mainstream programme includes vocational tasters, which have internal progression routes, and a range of sector based work academies are offered in care, hospitality and catering, and customer service – programmes result in a guaranteed interview, and the College reports a 60% success rate. The College’s Business Skills Team also works with local employers to help identify staff training and development needs of current employees, and CCP offers a range of programmes and courses to support personal and career development which can be customised to meet business goals and objectives. The current offer includes legal compliance (Health & Safety, First Aid or Food Safety qualifications), leadership and management qualifications, professional development, coaching and training courses, a portfolio of customer services programmes, and English and maths for the workplace, as well as referral to the College’s Apprenticeship programmes, NVQs and Diplomas.

Tutors encourage learners to take responsibility for their learning and to develop a level of autonomy to ensure that learning continues outside the classroom setting.

Study Skills Programme support

As indicated above, application by CCP of its “PRAG” system **has resulted in differentiated learner support being offered to 16-19 learners on study skills programmes, and implementation of a new early intervention strategy. This has included development of a bespoke learning and study centre (known as “The Hangout”) at the John Mansfield Campus, which has now been in operation for some 18 months. College managers attribute a 62% reduction in behaviour referrals to these approaches, achieved at a time when there has been an increase in the proportion of young learners presenting as having high support needs.** Positive destinations remain at 73% for Study Programmes, which OFSTED considers good for the client group served.

CCP has a strong record in this area: Foundation Skills, which preceded the introduction of study programmes, was awarded a Grade One at the last full college inspection, while the previous entry to employment programme was graded as good by OFSTED. 16-19 learner numbers have doubled in five years. The current programme, offered on a full-time basis, is designed to help learners study up to and including a level 2 qualification and recognised qualifications in English and maths. It also includes work experience or, in cases, work placements in college-based settings. Learners can choose from practical work-based vocational skills or simply work towards gaining a qualification while deciding what career path they wish to follow: occupational pathways offered under the study skills programme in 2015/16 include business administration, creative industries, hair-dressing, construction, motor vehicle, childcare, ICT, health and social care, dance, sport, hospitality and catering and uniformed services. Personal and social development features large in the programme, and each learner is allocated a dedicated support worker and offered information, advice and guidance. Learner Profile reports reflect personal development as well as educational progress.

Attendance is closely monitored and absences quickly followed up by the support worker team, who also supply pastoral help – on issues such as personal health, wellbeing, behaviour management and practical matters, financial support - outside the classroom.

“Being all about behaviour change, helping the learners understand why they are acting as they are, in ways that help them come to terms with that: learners are encouraged to keep a journal for recording home-based activity, rating their feelings and identifying positive aspects”.

Karen Falco

Learning Mentor, team leader

In some cases this has led to a rapid and sustained improvement in outcomes for learners and has also enhanced the safeguarding of learners. The end of course survey has also been improved to capture social development and other unintended personal benefits from having completed the course. Tutors encourage learners to take responsibility for their learning and to develop a level of autonomy to ensure that learning continues outside the classroom setting. The impact of this can already be seen. Peer assessment has been developed and is actively encouraged.

The Hangout has been established as an alternative learning environment that gives learners the space for independent supported study; it is used as a proactive tool that supports sustainable holistic development to enable learners to reach their future goals. Tutors are expected to interact with learners as part of their allocated teaching hours, including both in The Hangout and by taking naturally occurring opportunities to intervene and teach learners the appropriate ways to socially interact with their peers. There is a strong professional emphasis on interacting positively with learners, and The Hangout is consciously not presented as an inclusion unit model: learner use of the facility is not associated with punishment or inappropriate behaviour; the environment is conducive to learning; attendance in The Hangout is based on the voluntary participation of learners, and is accessed by a range of learners for different reasons, at different times and for different durations. Learners have access to a range of resources to meet individual needs, including anger management programmes, confidence building and use of popular media to raise awareness and provide developmental inspiration.

Building on The Hangout model, CCP has for 2015/16 created an Apple Suite where learners can continue to work on their English and maths outside of, or as an alternative to discrete structured classes: as in The Hangout, teaching staff are available to provide support.

“We have become a place of choice locally for learners with personal issues, emotional problems, behaviour management needs or learning difficulties. Learners self-refer, or are recommended to us by schools, especially those with learning difficulties, and we work with what used to be Connexions. We find that while our learners have been NEET, and therefore it’s very positive they’ve taken steps to re-engage with education, many coming to us have not had their basic needs (in a Maslow sense) met sufficiently to enable them to engage fully with the course, essentially impacting on their ability to concentrate and focusing on their learning outcomes. The learners come to us for support as much as for the learning. We of course help them to achieve qualifications and to progress – there is in-centre Level 2 provision – but essentially we offer a transition: ‘success’ is evident over two years, it’s not immediate, and it may not be in conventional terms”.

Bev Peasgood

CCP’s Senior Curriculum manager for 14-19

The early intervention strategy has delivered improvements in individuals' coping strategies (managing emotions), communication skills and aspirations, resulting in improved self-efficacy. Examples of this work include personalised programmes which include working with young people who are in a pre-awareness stage on methods to deal with anger, loss and mental health. The delivery method developed enables truly personalised learning which is not just about accredited achievements, but about developing young people's emotional intelligence and so becoming positive and proactive members of the community in which they live. From a management point of view, less time and resources are being spent dealing with reactionary behaviour management. Being mindful not to create dependency, we have been able to release more resources to support learners in their personal and social growth and help them progress in life.

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Unifying vision and consistent professional practice

Discussion with the CCP's executive management team confirms that, while the provider works with a wide range of client groups, and often delivers learning in discrete units – the John Mansfield Campus, for example, clearly has a 16-19 ethos; recent building development has resulted in a growth in LLDD provision – their adherence to a mission to work with vulnerable learners is consistent across the College. A model has been developed which “delivers the whole package” so that the provider acts almost like a “group” structure, possessing “a single mentality, but with individual service areas having their own specialisms and staff expertise”.

Importance is placed on the positive relationship between learner and tutor, and much of the work delivered places emphasis on emotional and personal development of the individual learner. Skills in the classroom are the same.

OFSTED find that learners are encouraged to achieve their potential, and provision is focused on developing both independence and employability skills - and despite very different bespoke cohorts the same background wrap-around support is available to all. Safeguarding, including a positive response to the Prevent initiative, is managed cross-college, and is both stringent and very well established.

Local employers, and the priorities of the city council, inform all provision, and the college is flexible in its response to local needs. A number of initiatives have been created to engage disadvantaged learners. Thorough assessment of learners' starting points, continuous enhancement of individual support and care for vulnerable learners and those requiring additional support, lead to high success rates, and good positive destinations/learning outcomes. The College also continuously drives to raise the standards of teaching, learning and assessment across the wide range of provision, while the Governing Body takes an active role in scrutinising performance through use of a bespoke scorecard, and by joining in learning walks. Following the OFSTED pilot of November 2014, the College has reflected the new approach to inspection in its observations of teaching, learning and assessment and now carries out non-graded short observations for tutors who were previously graded good or outstanding, as well as full observations for new tutors and the small number previously identified as in need of improvement.

Benefits for the college, for staff and for learners

Staff plan well to develop individual learners' personal, learning and employability skills through thorough assessment of learners' starting points, support needs and risk factors lead.

Learners benefit from a consistent prioritisation of supporting their development. The College's approach to targeted support has a positive impact on attendance and retention.

Learners display positive attitudes to learning, each other and their tutors and support workers.

Leaders and managers ensure that potential and current learners receive thorough information, advice and guidance and that they receive prompt support to succeed and progress.

Lessons are focused well on developing employability skills and independence.

The approach adopted by CCP secures positive outcomes, in a personal as well as educational sense.

Jesse

Adult learner featured in a recent College-produced video

“Here everybody's understanding and you feel really comfortable. It was very hard for me: the kids had left home; I had been in the family business, but that's gone, so I found myself needing to enter the real world of work. To admit to having difficulties [with literacy] was very hard for me. Everything's electronic, you need to read and write. But I met with the tutor, and it changed my life. I've never had certificates before. And I've adjusted to other people's attitudes.”

Provider background

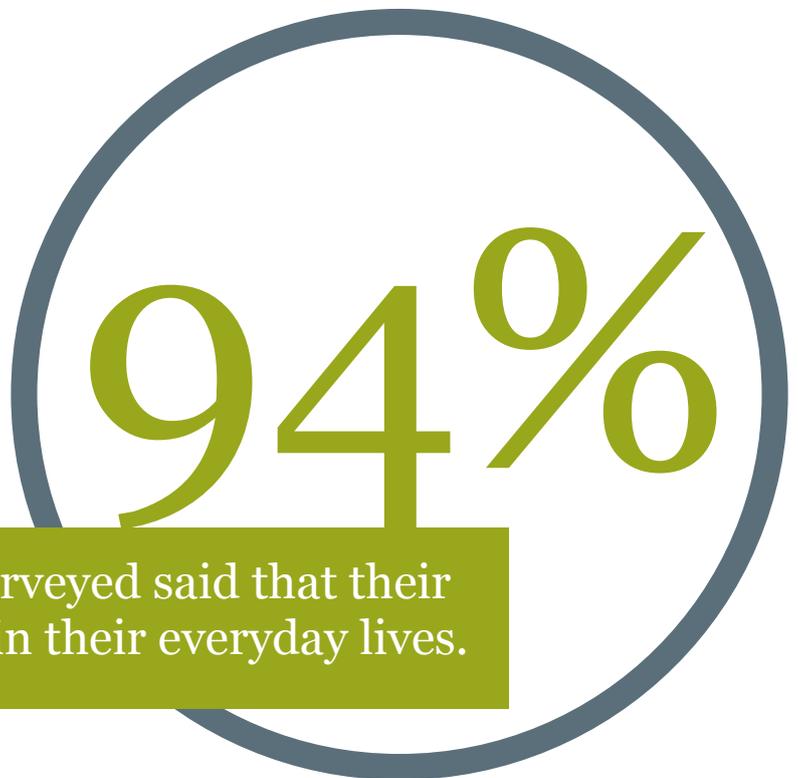
CCP is a local authority maintained provider offering a combination of 14-19 programmes, apprenticeships, classroom-based courses funded through the Adult Skills Budget (including employability training for mandated JCP clients), and Community Learning opportunities (including a Mental Health pilot). It caters for some 4,800 learners each year, and in 2014/15 received some £3.72m in funding allocations from EFA and SFA, of which about 40% related to 16-18 provision.

Learner achievement is high:

- The overall adult skills success rate for 2014/15 was 92% (national average 2013/14 88%), and 99% of learners who required additional support achieved their learning outcomes;
- Skills for life, which accounts for about a quarter of ASB-funded provision, had an overall success rate of 86% (national averages 65% for up to Level 1, and 52% for Level 2): this reflects a 20% improvement over three years, achieved by a strategy involving rigorous initial assessment and stringent ongoing monitoring and recording of learners' progress;
- The timely success rate for Apprenticeships is now 76%, compared with a national benchmark of 55%;
- 85% of Apprenticeship learners progressed into employment or further training;
- 73% of learners on study programmes achieved positive destinations, a figure deemed by OFSTED to be good for the client group served; and
- Learners with learning disabilities - 98% achieved a qualification.

All on Community Learning programmes achieved their learning goal; and 59 learners have been through the Mental Health pilot programme which started in September 2015, of whom 25% have so far progressed to further learning courses at CCP and 10% to volunteering. One learner has recently moved into employment, and courses are scheduled for a further 49 learners during January to March.

The FE Choices score for employer responsiveness is 8.5 out of 10 which places the College above its regional and local statistical neighbours. 94% of adult skills learners surveyed said that their course had helped them in their everyday lives.



Locality

Peterborough is the UK's second fastest growing city with a relatively young, ethnically diverse population which is predicted to increase by 20%, to 220,700, by 2021 and to 242,600 by 2030. 71% of residents are White British; ethnic diversity is expected to rise.

Residents of Peterborough spend more of their lives living with disability/serious ill health than average. Central wards have a markedly higher incidence of people with a life-limiting illness, while an average 25% of children living in poverty rises to 33% in parts of the city. There are concentrated areas of need for ESOL provision; "pockets" of culture-specific communities; a high incidence of homelessness/rough sleeping; and significant recent increase in the use of food-banks. The rate of under-18s pregnancy is 38% higher than the average for England; rates of self-harm in children & young people are 26% higher than the national average; and hospital admissions as a result of alcohol use are also above average. Seven in ten adults and one in four 4-5 year olds are overweight or obese.

The city has an above average unemployment rate: 7.4% of the economically active population are unemployed, compared to 6.8% nationally, and 5.4% in other parts of East Anglia. Employment in Peterborough is more concentrated in lower level occupations, and the city has lower comparable concentrations of skilled, professional and technical people than in the UK as a whole. Around 55% of the local workforce is qualified at level 2, with a further 20% qualified at level 4. Some 14% of the local workforce has no formal qualifications.

Background to the Project

This case study forms part of a suite of six which were developed between January and March 2016. They provide insights and illustrations which will be of benefit to leaders, managers and practitioners when they are:

- Developing and delivering their pre-vocational offer;
- Considering the implications for the professional development support needs of staff involved in prevocational design and delivery.

The Foundation would like to thank all six case study providers; for their time, commitment and help with the development and final production of the case study material.

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Annex 1

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