Further Education Engagement in SEN Reforms
Leicester College
Case Study

Personalised learning programmes

Learners are continuously assessed through the ‘Recognising and Recording Progress and Achievement’ (RARPA) process. The curriculum offers personalised learning opportunities through participation in a range of learning activities designed to develop communication, self-determination, social relationships and citizenship.

Key points from the new legislation

All college students with an Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan should follow a coherent study programme up to the age of 25, if their educational or training outcomes are yet to be met. This programme should provide stretch and progression and enable the young person to achieve the best possible outcomes in adult life. The student should also be able to access mainstream programmes if appropriate. Colleges need to ensure their study programmes enable the student to:

• Progress on to higher-level study and not repeat learning they have successfully completed.
• Take rigorous and substantial qualifications.
• Study English and maths.
• Participate in meaningful work experience and non-qualification activities.

For students not taking qualifications, colleges should provide high-quality work experience and non-qualification activity that prepares them for employment, independent living, being healthy adults and participating in society.

More information can be found in chapter 9 of the Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice: 0 – 25 Years.

Planning for the reforms

The college is prepared for the changes resulting from the reforms as staff were involved in local and regional preparations for adulthood groups and contributed to the local offer, and their partnership with the local authority has helped with staff development at management and workforce level.

The college has the infrastructure in place to meet the needs of SEND learners and is continuously revising the curriculum to ensure it is fit for purpose. To support this, the college is developing a more consistent approach to SEND learners across the college, supported by professional development on the reforms for all staff. Recently the college has extended its offer to include learners with profound and complex learning difficulties in its bespoke, individually-tailored study programmes for students.

1. Link provision

Forward-planning and relationship-building are key to providing high-quality person-centred services that meet learner needs. If a truly personalised learning programme is to be created this requires the college getting to know the young person and their family and the young person having a clear idea of exactly what the college has to offer. Leicester College believes that the earlier these links are established, the more successful students’ experience will be:

• Links can start as long as three years before a learner becomes full time in college. They involve visits by the college to the school and by school to college. During this time
inclusion staff work closely with LSAs at school to gather vital information about learners, their preferred learning styles, communication needs, medical and physical needs etc.

• Learners start to attend college for a few hours a week and then move on to a few days a week. This means that college staff are familiar with the learners and the learner and their parents are familiar with the college.
• The learners attend the school-centred review and college sessions with support from their school. This approach empowers the learners to become confident in the college. Over time, the school will take a step back as the college takes the lead.
• College staff meet and liaise with the families to ensure the provision suits the young person, and this relationship is maintained whilst the young person is at college.
• Families are also involved in the person-centred reviews held by the college, along with the speech and language specialist, outreach workers and the occupational therapist. The parents are proactive in these reviews as they are already familiar with the college as a result of the college’s work with local schools.

2. Designing and delivering person-centred bespoke study programmes for learners ranging from those with Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties to those working at Level 1

• To ensure a consistent approach is taken to reviewing, developing and improving provision, the college has revised all course aims to meet the four Preparation for Adulthood themes (citizenship, social relationships, self-determination and communication) and ensures the correct terminology is used in all literature and documentation.
• The person-centred curriculum allows learners to choose from a wide range of options which support the four areas listed above. Options include: music, drama, art, sensory stories, my community, exploring the environment etc.
• Within the E1-L1 provision, work experience is delivered both within the college and externally. There is also provision for learners to move to individual programmes where the majority of their timetable is in external community work placements, such as with the City Council, in hospital services or with Remploy.
• The team work closely with the Learner Engagement and Enrichment Team to ensure that, wherever possible, learners take part in college-wide enrichment activities.

“One:1:1 support and the learner having a person-centred curriculum/lesson.”

One parent when asked what educational activities are working best for the learner said in a recent college survey

Delivery of bespoke person-centred programmes relies upon effective initial assessment and ongoing review:

• Developing a personalised curriculum starts with a six-week initial assessment period to identify the learner's requirements. The assessment includes information from schools, families, carers and other agencies such as physiotherapists and speech and language therapists. Learners take part in a variety of sessions in different settings. In this six-week period, the learners explore different aspects of the course, discuss their preferences and are supported to choose their options and develop an individual timetable. Staff meet together to discuss progress, interests and possible routes for learning and this information is shared with the team and with parents/carers.
• Ensuring the young person remains at the centre of the decision-making process is paramount, so staff hold a person-centred review where the young person, their family, carers and other professionals get together with the programme lead who facilitates the review. The learner’s programme of study, progress and targets are discussed, and where necessary the information results in changes to the personalised timetable.

Certain structural changes have facilitated this move to bespoke learning programmes:

• The staff structure has been revised and there are now six programme leads, one of whom leads on the SEND reforms to ensure these are effectively implemented and progress is monitored.
• Creating more individualised and flexible programmes have meant that staff need to be deployed in different ways and that staffing levels and timetable offers have had to be
adjusted. This has required close work with the college financial department.

It has also required staff training in specific areas:

• The college provides staff training around the person-centred review and person-centred programmes. The success of this training has helped the team of lecturers and inclusion workers understand how to set up the curriculum.

Avoiding potential pitfalls

• The reforms require a range of organisations and people to work in partnership and a good working relationship with schools, parents and carers to build up trust. There is a great deal of sensitive personal information in the EHC plan, so trust is essential.
• There is a need to ensure close cross-college liaison about all aspects of learner services. For example, student services assess learner needs, so their information needs to be included when designing bespoke programmes.
• Attendance at reviews can be problematic, so to improve attendance, the college has attempted to find alternative ways of conducting the reviews, such as doing a home visit.
• Another challenge has been ensuring the young person takes part in the review – so the college has used different media such as video evidence which the young person has been able to access using switches.
• If learners are to have access to a bespoke personalised programme which includes accessing sessions across the college, all college staff need to be made aware of the SEND reforms and have relevant training.

Some next steps

• The college will continue to be involved in Pathfinder groups and local and regional events, and the Programme Lead responsible for the reforms will continue to liaise with other agencies and plan how to further personalise the curriculum offer.
• The college plans to further develop and improve partnership working by building new school links for learners at levels E2 and E3; timetable information sessions for all learners and develop the parent forum.

The impact of the programme

• The college has been using a person-centred approach for several years and has found it results in higher learner satisfaction and improved achievement.
• To facilitate the approach, SEND provision has moved from an outreach campus to one of the main campuses, which means learners and staff can access the main facilities and be a part of the larger college.
• The college has started to hold parent and carer forums once a month on a Saturday morning whilst the young person is participating in a sports activity. A recent topic at the forum was about the reforms and the implications for young people and their families.
• In order to improve their services for SEND learners, the team is discussing and exploring how to further develop the curriculum, the resources required to do this and the implications for the college.
• The reforms have brought about a positive culture change for the college and attitudes towards SEND provision have become far more inclusive.