Key Stage 4 Engagement Programme

Making the programme work for your students
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Introduction

The purpose of the Key Stage 4 Engagement Programme is to maximise the presence, participation and achievement of young people who show a distinct lack of interest in education or in progressing to education or employment with training post-16.

The programme aims to motivate these young people through a strong work focus. It is not intended for those young people whose needs are provided for in other ways.

The messages in this guidance have been drawn from lessons learnt and generously passed on by those schools, colleges, local authorities, learning and skills councils, training providers and other organisations that have been involved in the pilot phase of development in 2006/7.

It should be read alongside the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) template, which sets out the components of the programme, and other published QCA guidance, particularly on:

• designing a personalised curriculum for alternative provision at key stage 4
• work-related learning
• key stage 4 for students with learning difficulties
• planning, teaching and assessing the curriculum for pupils with learning difficulties
• 14–19 curriculum.

All of this guidance can be found on the ‘11–16 schools’ section of QCA’s 14–19 learning website at www.qca.org.uk/14-19/11-16-schools/.

The engagement programme does not operate as a separate, narrow set of learning opportunities and experiences but is an integral part of a cohesive, coherent and overarching entitlement curriculum.
In Birmingham and Solihull, the Key Stage 4 Engagement Programme has been developed as a logical extension of an earlier, locally developed key stage 4 Entry to Employment (E2E) programme. This earlier programme was set up in 2004 with funding and direction from the Learning and Skills Council, to expand the scope and diversity of the local work-focused learning offered to young people within the context of a broad and balanced curriculum. As the scheme documentation says, ‘it is important that work-focused learning becomes an integral part of a 14–19 curriculum entitlement framework that will support local collegiate developments and associated delivery plans.’
Who is the programme for?

We need a strong work-focused route designed specifically to motivate those 14- to 16-year-old young people who are at the most risk and who we know would be motivated by a different learning environment. These young people may include those with poor records of attendance and behaviour, who are most in need of an improved offer of this sort, but are least likely to be attractive to employers.

*14–19 Education and Skills White Paper, February 2005*

This description encompasses a diverse range of learners. However, all are underachieving; their behaviours or circumstances are a barrier to learning or their individual characteristics are not well suited to the setting or curriculum on offer. They range from the potentially able to those identified as having learning difficulties or disabilities (LDD). Whatever the reasons for underachievement, these young people will have a variety of individual learning and other needs, which can be met by the work focus of the programme.

The students are at key stage 4 and may be on the roll of a mainstream school, an academy, special school or a pupil referral unit. The programme should be offered to those who are likely to benefit from its particular employment-focused structure and should not be used for students who have dropped out entirely, or who can access a substantial programme at GCSE level. The programme should never be a ‘parking’ place for those students who are not ‘playing the school’s game’.

The biggest single barrier to learning for the target group is often a lack of interpersonal or social skills. For example, the inability to work in a group or relate to a sympathetic adult hinders learning and personal growth, and can even undermine just the sort of vocational placements that would otherwise match a student’s learning needs. Students who are becoming disaffected or disengaged from their learning find it hard to see the point of learning or even to understand that learning is about them.

Given the broad nature of the target group, care must be taken to ensure that an artificial ceiling is not placed on student progress and achievement within the programme. Once students become engaged with their own learning, rapid
progress and higher levels of achievement are likely and programmes should include structures to support this kind of acceleration. For some, this will mean transition back into a more school-based programme to allow them to access a broader range of opportunities.

These young people have an entitlement to an appropriate curriculum. In order to design this, planners need:

- a clear view of the target group
- high expectations of what is possible for them to achieve
- careful management of contextual and environmental factors.

**CASE STUDY**

In Newall Green High School, Wythenshawe, students all began the programme at level 1 within a Quantica Business Administration course, but where one individual’s profile of progress suggested that she was capable of higher achievement, she was rapidly moved onto a level 2 programme within a term of beginning year 10.

Similarly, at King’s Heath Boys School, Birmingham, students enrolled on the programme regularly achieve level 2 qualifications, despite the often problematic nature of their school history in previous years.
Student selection

It is essential to recruit the right students to the programme and the process of recruitment must be an affirmative and empowering experience for potential students and their families. Professionals involved must ensure it is experienced as such.

If it is presented as a ‘deficit’ programme – for example you or your child are being offered this because he or she is ‘unable’ to participate/achieve within what are seen as the normal school programmes such as GCSE courses – then expectations will be adversely affected from the start. The situation will then require considerable recovery and indeed may never be fully recovered within the programme’s timescale.

In Greater Manchester, within the GM Power key stage 4 programme managed by Manchester Solutions, students are identified for inclusion in the programme through reference to a range of transparent criteria, known to all stakeholders. These criteria attempt to frame selection for the programme in a positive way in relation to learning styles, emphasising that the programme is most suitable for those with a kinaesthetic learning preference. Students with these characteristics typically make up most of the target group and tend to underachieve within traditional educational programmes where their learning styles are not well catered for.

These criteria are:

- disaffection from formal schooling for academic or social reasons or both
- disengagement from formal schooling
- low self-esteem and self-confidence
- low basic skill levels
- a high level of interest in a specific occupational area.

The key target group are both identified and given a positive way of thinking about themselves and their experience to date within regular educational settings.
In Warwickshire, the 14–19 development officer wrote to all headteachers informing them of the project and inviting nominations. This indicated that candidates were to be selected on the basis of underachievement, low attendance, poor progress in relation to their potential and those who the school felt might be at risk of permanent exclusion. Most students were approached by their school and informed about the programme. They, along with their parents, were invited to visit the relevant centre. Candidates who expressed a preference for a specific occupational preference were matched to the relevant provider.

When the young people were interviewed for the programme, they became competitive and thought they had earned the right to be on the programme. A rigorous scoring system was employed so that when the young people received their feedback, they felt special.

It is also important to consider the perception that local communities – particularly the young people themselves – have of the programme. Although this perception is partly shaped by the marketing and communication strategy adopted by programme managers (whether at school or area level), word of mouth is more powerful, particularly within disadvantaged areas, where confidence in formal communication may be traditionally low.

The experiences of young people and their families within each programme will therefore affect the way it is talked about in their local communities. Where this has been a positive experience, recruitment for subsequent years becomes less of a problem, with many students within the target group self-selecting, and programme managers perhaps having to turn away students for whom the programme was not originally intended. Such has been the perceived success of many of the pilot schemes, it is highly likely there will be greater competition in future years and the selection process will need to become even more rigorous.
Effective assessment of student needs

The identification of diverse student starting points and the range of key development areas require a systematic but flexible approach to assessment. Records of previous attainment and information about student interests or learning styles may be patchy or non-existent, and the students themselves may be resistant to assessment activities, which they may see as yet another opportunity to demonstrate failure.

Experience shows that it is worth investing time and resources right at the beginning in a specifically ‘person-centred’ process, whereby:

- a constructive and empathetic relationship is formed between the young person and a key adult
- within the context of that supportive relationship, the young person is encouraged to reflect upon and begin to articulate their own dreams, interests and aspirations
- some initial (perhaps exploratory) learning goals are clarified with the young person, which can be used to inform ongoing evaluation
- some initial learning strategies are developed with the young person, based on what are emerging as personal strengths and preferences for learning styles
- the importance of ongoing review – and of learning from the inevitable false starts and mistakes that will occur – is established as a key principle for ongoing revision of personalised programmes
- opportunities afforded by work or training placements are anticipated in advance, for example the use of a reflective log, workbook or profile to capture information and to reflect on learning.
This initial assessment can be carried out in a range of ways and in a variety of contexts, depending on local circumstances. It might be done by support staff, learning mentors, teachers or external agencies.

Evaluation of the overall effectiveness and the fitness for purpose of the programme can then be based in part on this personalised assessment information.

Other indicators include:
- changes to student attendance rates
- levels of disaffection
- anti-social behaviour
- ‘softer’ outcomes related to student/parent/carer attitudes
- ‘client satisfaction’.

Most important is whether in both the short and long term, the programme is working to reduce the number of young people who are going on to become ‘NEET’ (not in education, employment or training) post-16.

If these numbers are not reducing, then programme managers need to question whether:
- the existing programme is working to improve the engagement and achievement of those young people who have been involved, ie does the programme need revision?
- at least some young people who should be involved in the programme are not being identified and recruited, ie does the selection process need revision?

Changes should then be made to improve the situation, based on evidence of what works.

CASE STUDY

In South and West Norfolk, the aim is for all students to be assessed by their Connexions personal adviser at the start of the programme to give:
- initial information to inform planning of programmes and activities
- a baseline for assessment and evaluation of distance travelled by individuals and the cohort.

The information gathered to inform planning includes a detailed assessment of student learning style preferences as well as functional skills levels.
Entitlement to the key stage 4 statutory curriculum

The national curriculum at key stage 4 has become progressively more flexible, but there are still some core entitlements that must be secured for all learners. These should not be prejudiced by an engagement programme and should be achievable within its diverse settings.

The aim is to create a personalised, holistic programme for each student that incorporates the statutory curriculum, the work-focused component and other elements. Students will follow the statutory curriculum in the way most suitable for them and manageable for their school. Some students will follow the statutory curriculum in regular classes, some in special contexts, and for some it will be an integral part of the programme, but the programme should not be experienced or delivered as a bolt-on that sits alongside the national curriculum. Rather, it needs to be an effective means of providing the ‘motivating and engaging route’ that the 14–19 White Paper outlines. Programme planners should remember that the statutory curriculum itself contains considerable flexibility to adapt programmes so that learning opportunities match learning needs. More information on the national curriculum inclusion statement can be downloaded from www.qca.org.uk.

The programme should be sufficiently flexible for students to be able to join it at any time during years 10 and 11 (roll-on) and to return to full-time examination courses if appropriate (roll-off).

For some students, there will be the need for an introductory period, during which not all of the statutory curriculum might be covered, to re-engage the young person with learning. The QCA inclusion statement not only allows but requires this – and in any case, it is not an issue if a student does not follow the statutory curriculum for a period, so long as the programmes of study are covered within the key stage.

The curriculum for those within a Key Stage 4 Engagement Programme may best be thought of as a ‘curriculum of (or for) identity’ – built upon the idea that all experiences within the programme contribute to the definition of the individual’s
identity. This may be a definition of part of their social identity or of their occupational identity, and hopefully would result from experiences of enjoyment and success.

This might be affirmative (I can do this, I am good at this) or it might clarify what they are not (I am not a plumber or an actor). It will teach them this identity is not fixed and can change.

The Kingswood Partnership of six schools – one of five partnerships in South Gloucestershire – has been established for some time and has participated as a Pathfinder in recent 14–19 developments. In 2007/8, the partnership will embark on a fully coordinated ‘diploma’ timetable into which the engagement programme will be fully integrated. From September 2007, students will be able to pick general, principal, additional and specialist learning blocks. Currently, it is considered that the students on the engagement programme have a fragmented experience when back in school.

The engagement programme currently operates within one of eight lines of learning (to increase to 14 lines in 2007/8, using existing accreditation). Therefore this is just one of many possible lines of learning and flexibility, and movement between lines is facilitated. In these circumstances, the aspiration of ‘roll-on’ and more particularly, ‘roll-off’ for these young people, may be better realised.

The curriculum is coordinated across schools and by ensuring two days in common for off-site activity, students are able to receive their full statutory curriculum entitlement in the other three days. There is a ‘principal learning’ day of 5.5 hours to enable collaboration across the partnership but personal development and generic learning, which are timetabled in half-day blocks, need not be scheduled across the partnership. Additional/specialist learning includes a wide range of possible models and is offered within a half day.

The notion of roll-on, roll-off can only be a reality if and when the curriculum is truly flexible and able to accommodate the changing needs and circumstances of the young people concerned. Full cooperation and coordination both of the timetable and curriculum offer are preconditions if true progression, both lateral and horizontal, is to be realised. The structure planned for Kingswood allows additional/specialist learning for all students – engagement programme students included. Effectively, the term ‘engagement programme’ becomes redundant and all students will follow one of 14 programmes. For this partnership, the foundation learning tier is considered crucial to the successful integration of the curriculum.
The importance of functional skills

The skills needed to function as an adult in our complex technological society must be systematically and progressively developed over an extended period of time. They will not develop within this target group unless sustained attention to their development is planned for and well managed.

The QCA template says that:

• the development of functional skills must be given high priority
• learners will be most successful when they see the relevance of these to their future
• there will be school-based and work-focused opportunities to develop functional skills, and delivery will not necessarily come from a teacher
• where possible, students will be encouraged to take qualifications in English and mathematics.

Schools may organise functional skills as discrete sessions, but these students are better motivated by more challenging and context-based approaches.
Learners will be most successful when they see the relevance of learning these skills to their future.

CASE STUDY

In Norwich, the programme manager for Norfolk County Council has developed an innovative approach to the delivery of the functional skills elements of the programme within a series of motivating vocational contexts.

Working with the programme manager, five local employers/providers – Open Road (a motor vehicle maintenance trainer), Norwich Young People’s Theatre, Norwich City Football Club, Cinema City (a multiplex venue) and Whitlingham Outdoor Education Centre – have devised a series of 10 units of study that systematically assess and address functional skills within real-life contexts and provide structured support and guidance from two dedicated mentors to ensure progress.

Each unit lasts for between 12 and 14 weeks and can be accredited through the Getting Connected framework.
Personal development

Young people’s sense of self and self-esteem are at the heart of their ability to make the most of the skills, knowledge and understanding they acquire from both informal and formal learning opportunities.

Four key principles guide the personal development aspect of the programme:

• attention to personal and social development and support is at least as important as any vocational focus

• focus on self-esteem – the building of self-esteem and confidence is key to the re-engagement of these young people, particularly over the longer term

• use of non-formal awards – the findings from E2E action research showed that non-formal awards significantly enhance the learning and personal and social development of learners

• experience of interacting with adults other than teachers, particularly in the wider community.

As part of the 14–19 reform programme, a set of personal, learning and thinking skills has been developed. In conjunction with the functional skills of English, mathematics and ICT, these generic skills support preparation for life, learning and work. The personal, learning and thinking skills framework comprises six groups of skills that aim to make learners:
These skills have been embedded in both the statutory (subject) curriculum at key stages 3 and 4 and threaded through qualifications at all levels. They are particularly strongly represented in the new programmes of study for personal wellbeing, and economic wellbeing and financial capability. Their development is essential to the success of the Key Stage 4 Engagement Programme.

An intensive ‘preparation for work’ course is a significant feature of many engagement programmes. These focus on personal and social development and the personal, learning and thinking skills, particularly those which relate to team working and collaboration with other people. These may be provided by either the local college or by a training provider.

**CASE STUDY**

In Warwickshire, all centres have reported that students have matured and grown in confidence since joining the programme. Learners speak with enthusiasm about the programme and feel they are treated as adults when in the working environment. They ask informed questions about the tasks set and are keen to receive feedback from their tutors. They are fully involved with the work and engage with the tutors. All tutors remark that learners are rarely late and that they are always informed of absence.

In Bristol, a local training provider plans and runs a six-week induction and preparation for work programme that runs throughout the autumn term and into the spring. This allows for flexibility in meeting individual student needs with some students needing more time to adjust, as well as keeping group sizes manageable. It also supports the identification process in enabling students to ‘roll on’ to the programme in the course of the key stage.

In neighbouring South Gloucestershire, a course with similar objectives incorporates an outward-bound, team-building element with competitions between teams.

In Hackney, the local business partnership plays a pivotal role in the management of the programme and runs a six-week ‘Ready 4 Work’ block, followed by a one- or two-week placement that, where possible, is linked to the student’s favoured vocational area.
Motivating students using the programme’s work focus

The work-focused component is an essential part of the programme for all students, and there are many benefits of a series of vocational contexts for learning.

For the learner to get the most out of each context and situation, careful planning is needed and a responsive attitude is required. This may take a variety of forms depending on the local economy, safety issues, transport options and the capacity and willingness of employers to participate. It also depends on who is managing the scheme, their background in working with local employers and training providers and their position within the school hierarchy.

Wherever possible and appropriate, the intention is to provide work-focused placements of at least two days a week. Some programmes have one day work-related and the other day work-based. Placements can be difficult to organise, particularly where there is strong competition from the post-16 sector for available providers. However, successful programmes stress the value of nurturing relations with a major local employer (see the ‘Engage employers locally’ section below).

For those responsible for managing work-focused placements – whether on a school, local area or regional basis (as by GM Power in Greater Manchester) – it is important to match individual students’ needs and interests with the requirements of work placements.

The purpose of the work focus is to offer as real an experience of work as possible so that it enables students to:

- develop knowledge and understanding of the world of work and the economy
- see the relevance of their work in school to the world of work
- gain skills for employability and an understanding of their importance in the workplace
- understand and experience the day-to-day expectations on employees, their working practices and environments, their rights and responsibilities and the rights and responsibilities of employers
- develop knowledge of the range of progression and career opportunities available to them and the qualifications, skills and attributes required
In Bristol, the engagement programme is currently overseen by the Connexions Service, which has secured the direct involvement and support of the local city council. The coordinating team worked to secure the support of both the council’s chief executive and the departmental heads, and appointed a coordinator to work directly with the council to organise and oversee placements. Locating the coordinator directly with the employer overcame the technical problems that the council’s own human resources department faced when trying to manage work placements in addition to their routine personnel activities.

Focused development work by Connexions, including events such as a training session for supervisors, was positively received by the council employees who were to be involved with students. This has led to a wide range of placements and a high level of commitment to both the students and this programme. The use of a dedicated staff member (physically located with the employer) has meant that the scope of the programme has been extended, pulling in a wider range of placement types. It has also been improved by the opportunity to focus on the supervisor–student match and the quality of support to individual students. The preparation of students for entry to the workplace has also received the full and active support of the city council.

- develop and practise functional skills in English, mathematics and ICT and understand how these are necessary for employment
- develop and practise personal and social skills and gain confidence and self-esteem.
The work focus is an important driver to motivate students to engage with learning and understand its relevance to life and employment. There is evidence that experience of the world of work can be highly motivating for disaffected learners. However, it is not the work context alone which is intrinsically motivating, but the quality of support, guidance and training that the young person receives within that context.

CASE STUDY

Terry is painfully shy. He finds it difficult to make eye contact and lacks confidence. He had attended his pre-employment training course regularly but found working in the group particularly difficult. Activities to build confidence and team building had seemed to help the boys in the group. Terry had not shown much interest, but the suggestion that a placement related to graphic design might be a possibility provoked a positive response and soon a placement was secured working alongside the borough's IT department, within the design section.

Within a couple of weeks, Terry was showing signs of progress. He surprised his supervisors and himself by his level of skill and understanding of graphic design and its potential. He was beginning to relax in company and to find his way around the workplace. He still found meeting the gaze of others difficult but the patient and persistent efforts of his supervisor, colleagues and the Connexions key worker were beginning to yield results.
Some students, particularly at the start of year 10, may not be initially ready for the full work placement.

These students may be prepared for this part of the programme by a range of activities including:

- workplace visits, work shadowing and work simulation
- mini-enterprise
- mock interviews
- visitors and talks
- learning in college
- learning with training providers
- e-learning.

The work focus must be appropriate for the student. In any area, the widest possible choice of options should be available to learners.

- As much as possible of the work-focused component should be in the workplace, and where that is not immediately possible, it should remain a longer-term aim.
- There will be a strong emphasis – given the kinaesthetic learning style preferences of most of the target group – on practical, as opposed to theoretical, learning.
- All opportunities will be open to all students regardless of gender, ethnicity or ability. It is essential to avoid gender stereotyping, and when considering placements for disabled students, it may be necessary to adapt the job or occupational role so that the individual’s strengths and weaknesses are taken into account, while ensuring that he or she is still doing ‘real work’.
- Taster courses (a series of placements with different employers) are an appropriate way to help identify opportunities best suited to individual students.
- Work experience can be highly motivating and provide valuable learning especially when focused on enterprise capabilities. However, preparation must be thorough and include taking reality checks in terms of expectations with both learner and employer. Ongoing support and monitoring must be consistent to ensure that this component integrates with the rest of the programme.
• Participating employers need to know, accept and understand the needs of students being placed with them. Proper introductions and preparation are crucial, along with guidance on any ‘reasonable adjustments’ (within the terms of the 2005 Disability Discrimination Act) that may need to be made.

• For rural areas, the provision of a work-focused element may be particularly challenging and some creative solutions may be needed. Rural programme managers need to contact and liaise with other rural programme managers in order to share ideas and solutions.

CASE STUDY

Norfolk faces many of the challenges common to rural areas in securing the entitlement of students to work-focused aspects of the programme. County council programme managers have developed creative solutions to the problems of getting students to appropriate placements that match their needs, interests and aspirations. In the south and west of the county, where population density is at its lowest and availability of providers is most limited, instead of transporting the students to a number of diverse and far-flung settings – which would mean, in some cases, many hours travelling each day – they have arranged for a number of employers to come together in a single location on one day per week, and offer a coordinated programme of work-focused activity.

CASE STUDY

In Greater Manchester, taster courses are organised on a regional basis with a range of providers, offering a breadth of choice and a degree of flexibility that would be harder to achieve on a more local basis or a smaller scale. In Birmingham and Solihull, vocational tasters are used by the consortia to ‘switch on’ reluctant learners to learning, for example working with 20:20, an alternative provider in South Birmingham.
The purpose of the work focus is to offer as real an experience of work as possible.
Engage employers locally

The commitment and enthusiasm of employers is a notable feature of the most successful programmes – whether this has been secured at school, local area or regional level. Where this invaluable resource has been systematically engaged by programme managers, some remarkable changes can occur. A key factor in securing this commitment is the involvement of major local employers in management and steering groups for the local area.

CASE STUDY

In Newall Green High School, Wythenshawe, one of the two assistant heads responsible for the programme has, over many years, built up an extremely impressive range of high-quality links with local employers. These not only allow him to tailor work placements to individual student profiles, but also to integrate the school’s work-related learning activity with local regeneration programmes involving some of the students’ families.

In Swindon, the area manager for McDonald’s initially became involved in the local authority’s programme steering group and saw the potential to achieve his company objectives as well as make a contribution to the local community and economy. He has therefore committed significant resources to the development and production of a set of guidelines on work experience for use by his own company’s employees and students. This provides a template for similar developments with other employers.

In Greater Manchester, GM Power has built trust and confidence with a wide range of local and regional employers over a number of years and has consistently been on hand not only to resolve any emerging problems but also to anticipate and prevent predictable problems from occurring at all – such as through the development of standard approaches to contracts, quality assurance and risk assessment.
Accredit learning where possible

Accreditation is as important to this cohort of young people as to any other, both as a motivational tool and as an aid to positive onward progression. This may be through national qualifications, including GCSEs, entry level certificates, basic and key skills qualifications, NVQs and a wide range of vocationally related qualifications. Programmes should be creative in their choice of qualification opportunities.

A full list of qualifications which may be used by learners under 16 is available at www.dfes.gov.uk/section96/. National qualifications and their units can be searched by keyword at www.openquals.org.uk. However, it is not expected that students would access a full set of qualifications (six or seven GCSEs) on this programme.

There are also informal education awards that can provide recognition in areas such as employability, working with others, problem solving, self-awareness and independent living. The awarding body validates measurement of progress towards and completion of individuals’ particular learning goals and personal targets. The National framework for non-formal educational awards, published by the National Youth Agency for the Network for Accrediting Young People’s Achievement, provides an overview of a wide range of such awards (see www.nya.org.uk) although it is not a comprehensive list. In addition, many providers have developed their own schemes for recognising achievement.

In many programmes the practical skills and learning that underpin them, developed through vocational courses and work placements, are accredited through vocationally-related qualifications. Similarly, extended work placements, or courses in real-work environments in a further education college where students are developing occupational competence, are often accredited through an NVQ or units. In many programmes, young people are building a portfolio of diverse qualifications, awards and in-house certification.
At a training provider (motor vehicle maintenance) in Bristol – used by the South Gloucestershire partnerships – young people undertook an online competence test in car maintenance, receiving instant assessment towards a vocational accreditation. If they did not succeed on that occasion, they would be able to resit within a relatively short period. Most students were also working towards accreditation for the ASDAN Certificate of Personal Effectiveness (CoPE) award as well as national qualifications in the statutory core curriculum.
Effective management

Local partnerships may decide who is responsible for the operational and strategic management of the programme, and for this there is a need to keep the central purpose of the programme in view at all times. This programme also requires a high level of partnership working and collective management.

The local authority and LSC are jointly responsible for delivery of the programmes but will need to engage with other partners. Strong local partnerships, with strong leadership, are key to effective delivery. They provide a wide range of teaching and learning locations, ensure effective support for learners and facilitate communications between stakeholders. In many cases, the school will need to identify the key players in such partnerships, and their roles, and engage people at both strategic and operational levels.

In Hackney, paired visits (school and local authority) to see the young person in situ during the summer term of year 10, together with discussion with the young person, parents/carers, key workers and tutors, enables a judgement to be made about the suitability of continuing a similar arrangement into year 11 – or prompting another path to be planned.
It is important that schools in the locality work in partnership with each other. In achieving this, the role of headteachers is vital to:

- ensure responsibilities for the programme’s management are appropriately allocated within their school to facilitate partnership working – this is likely to require significant engagement by the leadership team since learning mentors (who are responsible in many cases for the school-based programme) are unlikely to have a broader curriculum overview or decision-making authority.

- find some way of creating a representative and accountability structure among themselves to ensure that decisions taken by programme steering groups are observed by individual schools.

Other probable partners in the programme include:

- training providers
- employers and employer organisations
- education business partnerships
- trade unions
- youth offending service
- voluntary sector organisations
- youth groups
- Connexions
- further education colleges
- award organisations
- youth services.
Management: the school’s role

Students remain on the roll of their school or pupil referral unit, so school managers continue to be responsible for establishing an appropriate programme, monitoring its delivery and ensuring that the necessary quality assurance processes are in place. When, as in many cases, the programme is delivered partly or totally by other institutions, including in the workplace, the school will need to establish effective liaison arrangements. It is the school’s responsibility to monitor attendance and punctuality and follow up unauthorised absence or lateness. Meanwhile, school-based managers are also responsible for putting in place an effective transition plan for the young person when he or she moves on from the programme.

CASE STUDY

Southwark local authority has instituted an e-registration system – this is an online, web-based management tool that allows a prompt response to absence. A senior staff member at Sacred Heart school, a key worker to 11 students, relies heavily on this system, and in the event of absence immediately rings the parent/carer. The students are ‘literate’ in the system and, as a result, absence has been kept to a minimum.

Management: a college’s role

Further education colleges are having to adapt to a rapidly changing environment within which they have to recruit and retain students for their own courses post-16 and develop relationships with a number of schools as clients for the work-related elements of programmes.

The demands of the Key Stage 4 Engagement Programme, in pilot areas, are shaping the development of provision in these settings by:

- giving greater emphasis to the personal/social development opportunities offered by their settings
- setting up their own mentoring arrangements for students coming in for one or two days per week
- developing new vocational facilities to meet the demand from schools not currently being met by employers and training providers.
Within the pilot areas, several different approaches were adopted towards the management of schemes by different local authorities and county councils.

**CASE STUDY**

At Swindon College, they have been running work-related school links courses for years 10 and 11 since 1993, with courses open and accessible to both mainstream and special school students.

Vocational areas offered within the 2006/7 Key Stage 4 Engagement Programme include: childcare, carpentry, bricklaying, painting and decorating, environmental landscaping/gardening, catering, beauty therapy and/or hairdressing, plumbing, and motor vehicle maintenance.

In addition, the college offers GCSEs in vocational subjects and ‘infill’ opportunities across a range of other subjects. The construction-related courses have been developed in response to local employment market needs as well as the profile of student interest – which fortunately coincides on this point.

Also, as part of the development of a Key Stage 4 Engagement Programme, the college has been reviewing its approach to engaging with parents/carers/families of the young people on the programme – recognising the importance of this strand of its work.

In Warwickshire, training and advice have been offered to college tutors and support workers to help them manage 14- to 16-year-old pupils. This has included courses on behaviour management and diversity issues.

**Strategic management**

Within the pilot areas, several different approaches were adopted towards the management of schemes by different local authorities and county councils.
Regional management is rare, but in Greater Manchester, GM Power, a work-focused learning programme managed by Manchester Solutions, takes responsibility for a number of aspects of programme management.

CASE STUDY

In Norwich, as part of the first phase of development within the Norfolk County programme, a steering group has been set up which includes representative headteachers from local secondary schools.

According to the headteachers on this group, their commitment has been secured by three key factors:

• the clear and unequivocal focus on learners being at the heart of the process
• a genuine partnership approach led by the county staff
• the delegation of the majority of funding to schools, which allows the ‘money to follow the student’.

In Hackney, the steering group has secured the services of the parent of one of the young people on the programme. His close involvement in the programme and active participation via the steering group is proving a powerful asset.

CASE STUDY

Non-profit organisation Manchester Solutions runs the GM Power programme for 10 local authorities and 1,440 learners in the Greater Manchester region. As part of this programme it:

• processes application forms to providers
• liaises with schools
• arranges interviews and start dates
• manages contracts with providers
• organises training for providers
• monitors reviews of progress and achievements
• ensures that health, safety and criminal record checks are carried out as necessary.

These address many of the issues that individual schools and local authorities within the pilot find problematic.

Manchester Solutions also acts as the intermediary for any issues students, schools, providers and employers have, and help to resolve problems as they arise.
Encouraging self-evaluation

A programme designed to improve the outcomes and life chances of such vulnerable learners must be subject to rigorous, systematic and ongoing evaluation by local partnerships to ensure that it is:

- achieving its key objectives for the young people concerned
- providing good value for money – especially where significant resources have been allocated.

If it is not doing so, local partnerships must be prepared to review and change the programme.

The evaluation of learner progress, and therefore programme effectiveness, cannot be ‘tagged on’ at the end of a programme – it must be a central focus from the start and used to inform planning, for both individuals and programme development, at every stage.

The focus is on a personalised concept of development and on ‘distance travelled’.
The Key Stage 4 Engagement Programme will be effective if it builds confidence and self-esteem, and develops further opportunities to help young people address these key [career and lifelong learning] issues for themselves – albeit with support.

Key stage 4 engagement template
Using progression to measure success

The key success indicator is that at the end of key stage 4 the young people remain in education or move on to training or employment with training.

The national evaluation will focus on student progression and this will be a key issue in determining future funding. However, if we wait until the end of the key stage to evaluate the success of any particular programme, then it will be too late for those students who have moved on to something else. Partnerships need to attend to a set of wider, and in some cases, interim measures to tell if the programme is on course to do what it is intended to – and to make changes if it is not. These may take the form of process indicators or outcome indicators.

Process indicators

There are a number of process indicators that can help to determine whether a particular programme is likely to produce improved outcomes for students:

- High-quality information, advice and guidance are crucial and are available throughout the programme, with the support of the Connexions Service.
- Ongoing assessment for learning with support and regular feedback to students and families.
- Opportunities are provided to obtain qualifications and accreditation with real currency in functional skills, the vocational element, personal and social development and other curriculum areas as appropriate. The foundation learning tier is central to this.
In Medway, students can gain the Plus Certificate, accredited by the National Open College Network. It draws on the student’s wider interests, in and out of the classroom, participation in active citizenship and work-related learning, and also accredits the portfolio. The Plus is awarded at three levels:

• participation
• making decisions, using your initiative
• leadership.

Student responses include, ‘It recognises the amount of work I actually do and the number of activities I am already involved in’; ‘It really boosts your confidence and self-esteem’; ‘I was able to see which skills I was using and how I could improve’; ‘My part-time work and hobbies counted towards the certificate’; ‘It’s all about me, so building my portfolio was simple.’

Most of the programmes used ASDAN as an accreditation mechanism alongside basic skills and in some cases GCSEs.
• There is also a wide range of non-formal awards. These are motivational and aspirational, and give students recognition for units of learning.

• The programme is person-centred and based on a student’s interests and enjoyment in order to enhance confidence, trust, relationships, personal development and motivation.

• Specialist help, such as speech therapy and dyslexia support, is available if needed.

• Careers advice and planning within the programme is regular, of high quality and based on realistic expectations. All students on the programme have access to a Connexions personal adviser or guidance specialist.

• The wider interests of students are recognised. This may include volunteering and other extra-curricular opportunities outside the formal school curriculum. The expertise and experience of the voluntary sector is harnessed to support this aspect of the programme.

Outcome indicators

Areas that can be assessed to give interim information on outcomes include:

• functional skills, including skills in English, mathematics and ICT

• attitudinal skills, such as increased motivation, confidence, self-esteem and enterprise capability

• personal skills, including improvements in timekeeping, attendance or personal hygiene

• practical skills, such as the ability to manage money.

There are a number of ways to provide evidence of such achievements, including ongoing, recorded review sessions, portfolios of evidence and recorded observations. Questionnaire-type measures are also used, which often include scales (such as from 1 to 5). These provide a standardised measure that is easy to administer and support as well as drawing on and enhancing the ‘student voice’. There are also a number of positive achievement measures available commercially or free of charge on the internet.
However, there are **summative outcome measures** that should be applied. Monitoring and evaluation arrangements will focus strongly on these. The key measures include:

- qualifications achieved
- awards achieved
- attendance levels on the programme
- trends in exclusions
- progression into further learning post-16 or employment with training; for many young people this will mean into Diplomas or apprenticeships.

Taken together, the process indicators, positive achievements and outcome measures will give a clear picture of the success of the programme. Progression routes are also important and successful participants will complete key stage 4 and progress to further learning, training or employment. Above all, they will be able to engage with society and function as successful members of it.

**CASE STUDY**

In South Gloucestershire, students are ‘baselined’ according to a set of attributes and aspects and a profile kept on an ongoing basis. Both student and parent/carer participate in its development and contributions are made by the key worker and Connexions adviser. The work experience log book has been used to incorporate evaluation on the part of the student. Students are also encouraged to participate in surveys and self-evaluation. Among the feedback so far elicited from year 10 students about the impact of the ‘work to learn’ programme are: ‘I don’t shout any more, I talk’ – year 10 girl at risk of exclusion in year 9; ‘Neil smiles now’ – same girl of male colleague.
Determining success locally

All this guidance can hope to do is to point you, as a person responsible for developing and managing particular aspects of your local programme, towards some useful lessons learned from the experience of others. It also encourages you to reflect and draw upon your own experience of what works best for the young people in this target group.

The key to making such a programme work lies in the quality of partnership that is created between the different stakeholders in your area – and the extent to which this enables you to tap into the expertise, resources, goodwill and creativity of your partners. Because of its essentially person-centred philosophy, the Key Stage 4 Engagement Programme will always involve ongoing collaborative problem solving in relation to individuals, their needs, aspirations, interests and emerging sense of social and occupational identity. The strength of your partnership will be measured by its ability to remove whatever barriers (personal, organisational or contextual) stand in the way of each young person achieving their personal goals and then setting themselves ever more challenging ones for the future.
As Hackney moves into its second year, the Learning Trust is seeking to ensure that the Key Stage 4 Engagement Programme becomes self-sustaining once dedicated funding ceases. It has therefore taken a number of steps to encourage schools to be proactive in initiating, designing and brokering provision and in sustaining a process of monitoring and review. It is using its newly formed 14–19 partnerships to develop locally appropriate solutions.

**Proposed model for 2007/8**

- The Learning Trust will continue to provide strategic direction with the support of the Steering Group.
- Connexions and Inspire! (the business partnership and provider of the Ready to Work / Ready to Learn programme) will continue to deliver support as per Phase 1.
- All pupils on the programme will follow the Ready To Work / Ready To Learn programme and have the opportunity to follow an extended work placement sourced and supported by Inspire! Schools will make a pro rata contribution from the age-weighted pupil unit (AWPU) towards this placement.
- The three 14–19 partnerships will play a greater role in the operational management of the Key Stage 4 Engagement Programme.
- Pupils currently in year 10 will continue their placement if at another provider. However, this is conditional on schools taking responsibility for monitoring their pupils via an appointed caseworker as per the terms of the Key Stage 4 Engagement Programme. If desirable, the Learning Trust will provide a caseworker to act on schools’ behalf with schools part-funding on a per capita basis. All year 10s should have a review/transition meeting with their provider and school.
- Partnerships will be responsible for ensuring that all identified pupils on the programme have full access to their curriculum entitlement. This may be delivered at the home school, at another school in the partnership or at another provider sourced and funded by the home school. This may include participation in the Wider Opportunities curriculum programme (ie attending college for one day a week to follow a vocational course). This element would be funded partly by the school at 20 per cent of the AWPU.

**CASE STUDY**
Developing case studies

As the programme develops, we are committed to building up a set of detailed case studies exemplifying good practice. Some can already be found on the QCA 14–19 learning website at www.qca.org.uk/14-19/.
About this publication

Who’s it for?
Managers, teachers, work-based learning providers and employers involved in developing, managing and delivering aspects of their local Key Stage 4 Engagement Programmes

What’s it about?
Guidance, supported by case studies, on developing, managing and delivering the Key Stage 4 Engagement Programme

What’s it for?
It supports the Key Stage 4 Engagement Programme, helping disaffected young people to achieve their goals and set themselves new, challenging goals in the future.

Related materials
QCA Key Stage 4 Engagement Programme template
Key stage 4 engagement programme factsheet (QCA/07/3091)

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