



Introduction

During the latter part of 2015 and the first months of 2016 the Foundation, with active support from

encouragement in the CAVTL One Year On Report (published in November 2014) to give further consideration to the particular characteristics and features of pre-vocational (as opposed to vocational) programmes, which was considered to demand a particular set of considerations about design and content which **are different from those related** to vocational provision ;

accelerating moves to local determination of FE and skills needs, devolution of associated funding and responsibility for the pattern of provision, and the introduction of localised commissioning models, and

identification of “second chance” learning as one of the two key functions of further education in the BIS Dual Mandate paper issued in March 2015, which **envisaged “an FE sector confident** and capable of reaching into its local community, joining up Ministerial Skills Funding Letter (December 2015) as addressing the needs of the most disadvantaged and which suggested this would require partnership **working flexibility, a clear** accountability framework and **a robust informal learning of** er which supports the hardest to reach to take steps back into life and work.

This work has been informed by impending changes to funding, notably **the potential enhanced flexibilities afforded by creation of an adult** education budget.

Desk-based research, visits to six providers identified as demonstrating effective practice, and an invitation seminar have led to the publication of a suite of case studies and supporting papers, now available at:

www.excellencegateway.org.uk/search?content=pre-vocational+&=Search

This paper is offered as a further output of the inquiry, and is designed for use by providers who are involved in, or considering, the design and delivery of pre-vocational programmes, especially those addressing the needs of disadvantaged learners. The paper is also likely to be of interest to those responsible for planning and commissioning local provision, and policy makers.

The provider response

Providers visited, and seminar discussion, suggest that a meaningful response to the needs of those learners identified as “pre-vocational” by this inquiry requires:

- a clear, values-based institutional mission;

- a welcoming environment and learner-centred ethos;

- a co-design approach to programme planning, to stimulate engagement and to ensure relevance;

- an integrated approach to teaching, including curriculum design and delivery, developed together with professional colleagues and partners;

Goal setting and progress reviews

an individualised programme, based on robust initial and diagnostic assessment and a recognition of prior educational attainment and experience, with value placed on that;

A focus on employability, but not necessarily employment

programmes which include an emphasis on functional employability processes, including job search, CV compilation, interview technique etc., where these have not been previously covered;

unlike mainstream vocational education and training, pre-vocational programmes are unlikely to be focused on a specific occupational sector, but may include consideration of the type of work sought (e.g. office based vs workshop, customer facing or “behind the scenes”, etc.) and/or offer a range of “taster” sessions/“inspirational visits”;

programmes will however include opportunity for familiarisation with the world of work, and will where possible include assignment to in-house simulated work environments, social enterprises, placements or external work experience with suitable employers;

work experience should be subject to rigorous quality assurance, such as that available via the Work Experience Quality Standard operated by Fair Train;

providers should additionally consider what support they can provide

pre-vocational programmes for disadvantaged learners will be developed, **delivered and supported by empathetic staff carefully selected on account of** their values and commitment, and an ability to forge positive relationships and model desired behaviours;

teaching and support staff are likely to adopt a team-based approach to delivery, and will need to be released to give time to effective co-ordination of the work of staff;

programmes will be learner centred, relevant, activity-based and responsive;

delivery is likely to be offered in a flexible way, to maximise accessibility, and will incorporate blended learning opportunities to encourage learner independence.

Leadership and management considerations

As implied from the above listing of features and characteristics of high quality pre-vocational provision, work on this agenda carries a range of challenges **for institutional leadership and senior managers. Intrinsic expenditure on** intensive initial and diagnostic assessment coupled with regular progress reviews, **“planned-in” flexibilities, small group sizes, the use of specialist staff** teams and securing necessary wrap-around learner and learning support are compounded by the costs of partnership working with a range of providers and **other agencies, and liaison with a mix of funding sources, often with distinct** monitoring and reporting requirements. This means the institution needs to have a strong, clear, values-based commitment to this area of provision, including governance arrangements which generate a strategic preparedness **to commit resources that may well occasion internal cross-subsidy and/or** creative generation of additional external income. This is likely to be based

securing an organisational ethos which welcomes experimentation and
creates opportunities for curriculum development and innovation;

encouraging all staf – individually, in teams, across and beyond the
institution to subject their work to continuous review and, through
the proactive application of rigorous quality assurance processes, aim to
improve the standard of work undertaken;

sharing successful practice, both internally and more widely in the locality,
and embedding of ective approaches in other areas of curriculum design
and delivery;

engaging learners formatively in their curriculum choices, selection of work
experience placements and review of progress, so that there is a genuine
element of co-design in the activities undertaken, leading to learners
expanding their horizons for action;

celebrating learner achievements;

promoting the wider benef ts of successful pre-vocational work with
disadvantaged learners within the locality.

These are issues which merit attention by providers already engaged in
pre-vocational provision, by organisations considering developing such
provision, and by bodies responsible for commissioning a local pattern of
FE provision, where options for a specialist service unit/organisation focused on
the engagement of and progression by disadvantaged learners of all ages might
be worthy of consideration.

The Foundation wishes to thank the following for their engagement in this inquiry:

Providers visited

Wolverhampton Adult Education Service
WMC – The Camden College
City College Peterborough
Humber Learning Consortium
Bedford College
Newcastle City Learning

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City Gateway, for its work on a Skills Profile (home.citygateway.org.uk)

ELATT, for sharing its work on developing relationships with businesses that are trying to fulfil their corporate social responsibility. Together they create bespoke programmes that benefit both learners and the businesses

Fair Train, for its development and management of the Work Experience Quality Standard

Learning & Work Institute for sharing its work on The Citizen's Curriculum

Women's Technology Training Limited (Blackburne House Education), for its work on helping women from disadvantaged backgrounds develop confidence and skills that prepare them for work, further education or training

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Jenny Williams, ETF

⁵ See Ofsted Good Practice Example at https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/468860/East_London_Advanced_Technology_Training_-_good_practice_example.pdf

⁶ See <http://www.fairtrain.org/quality-standard>

⁷ See <http://www.learningandwork.org.uk/our-work/life-and-society/citizens-currQ> steO w