

Recognising and Articulating progress

Lara Williams from Scottish Borders Council Activity Agreements shares their approach to recognising and articulating young people's progress in moving towards the labour market.

Every young person participating on an Activity Agreement is given the opportunity and support to undertake a journey that will take them closer to the labour market. The route they take, the distance travelled and the things they discover on the way are unique to the individual. Some parts of the journey are harder to articulate than others – the road taken may not be marked on the official map or the things they discover may not be in the official guide-book, but in the Scottish Borders we believe all progress should be recognised and valued.

Preparation for the journey is key. As Trusted Professionals we use the one-to-one sessions to increase individual motivation and confidence to achieve and promote a positive attitude to learning. As Trusted Professionals we are there throughout the young person's journey, helping to equip them with the knowledge, understanding and skills to plan and manage their own learning, including making effective and sustained transitions within and between education, training and working life.

For us, recognising and articulating progress and achievement starts from the very beginning of the Activity Agreement journey. As part of the assessment process young people are encouraged to consider their strengths and existing skills. One tool we use for this is the STAR approach. Young people are asked to describe a situation they have been in, what they had to do (the task), what action they took (including what skills and qualities they used) and what the result was. Introducing young people to this structured way of reflecting on their experiences helps them recognise and articulate their skills and qualities in relation to a specific outcome, role or task – a skill they may be required to demonstrate as they move closer to the labour market and attend interviews.

This process of developing the young person's ability to recognise and articulate progress continues throughout the Activity Agreement. All young people on an Activity Agreement are given a Learning Journey folder. This includes activities that the Trusted Professional supports the young person to undertake, to help them develop, recognise and articulate their achievements as they move through their Activity Agreement. The folder also assists young people to best present those attributes they have relevant to further education, training and career goals. They are encouraged to record their skills and knowledge including those that are not formally recognised in national qualifications/ certificates. As young people move towards progression, they are encouraged to bring all this together and write their personal statement and CV.

The intention of this folder is to encourage young people to use it even when their Activity Agreement is finished. It will hopefully encourage young people to present themselves better and become a resource they can use to articulate their achievements.

Scottish Borders Council offers a wide range of opportunities to gain skills and knowledge including those that are not formally recognised in national qualifications/ certificates. Trusted Professionals help young people to make choices tailored to each individual's vocational pathway. Our programmes not only support the young people with soft skills such as timekeeping and how to behave in the workplace, but also ensure they are confident to contribute and sustain their world of work. Among the range of topics covered are, confidence building, driving theory, health and wellbeing and employability skills. We also utilise national awards and frameworks where this is relevant to the young person's journey. This includes DofE, SQA units, Saltire Awards and Youth Achievement Awards.

As Trusted Professionals we are committed to moving young people closer to the labour market; from helping them develop the motivation and positive attitude to embark on their learning journey to recognising how far they have travelled and what they have gained along the way.

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