



Activity Agreements Opportunities for All



The integration of Activity Agreements into existing local structures

Context

The South Ayrshire Council More Choices More Chances (MCMC) Strategic Partnership provides direction and guidance to partners working with vulnerable young people within the Opportunities for All framework. This strong partnership network supports the on-going work of the Council's Skills Towards Employment Project (STEP). STEP aims to improve the employability skills of young people who face specific barriers into entering employment, education or training.

The STEP service is well established in South Ayrshire and valued by partners, with a clear track record in supporting young people with barriers to progression. The introduction of Activity Agreements gave STEP the opportunity to expand its services with the partnership recognising the need to avoid developing additional structures.

Key elements

STEP is a key partner in transition support for young people. The project is involved in the MCMC partnership groups, having a key role in the identification of young people most likely to need additional support to access a positive and sustained destination. As part of this transition planning STEP is also involved in engaging with targeted young people while they are still at school, contributing to assessment, planning and arranging extended work placements where appropriate. The existing partnerships between STEP and the MCMC partners has enabled Activity Agreements to be smoothly integrated into a well-established system for identifying young people in the transition phase. The inclusion of Activity Agreements, because they are a positive school-leaver destination, has increased STEP's profile among partners and as an option choice within the referral system.

In addition to their established role in identifying young people STEP had been using an approach, similar to Activity Agreements, to deliver a range of provision to support young people to progress into positive destinations. STEP workers also provided the Trusted Professional role of individual support to participants.

Activity Agreements through STEP combine practical support with participation in groupwork programmes, such as

personal development, 'STEP into' vocational tasters (such as STEP into Care, delivered in partnership with Ayr College) and short life tasters in specific activities such as first aid, hair and beauty and sailing. Although STEP aims to develop and deliver its own learning provision, young people are also linked into local provision and work placements. Where appropriate, young people's learning is recognised through accreditation.

Impact

The introduction of Activity Agreements has enabled STEP to offer young people greater flexibility through increasing the range and scope of available provision. This includes the commissioning of individualised activities to meet young people's needs. In addition, the integration of Activity Agreements has led to new partnerships and strategic planning to increase participation of young people from outlying communities such as Troon and the South Carrick area including Girvan. Previously, STEP services tended to be delivered centrally in Ayr, with young people from rural areas less likely to engage. A partnership with Girvan Youth Trust was developed to prioritise widening the range of provision for young people from that community. Where appropriate, young people from Girvan are also supported to access provision in Ayr – something that the project encourages, given the nature of the job market and ultimate requirement to travel to employment or college.

Activity Agreements have also allowed STEP to create a stronger staffing resource and extend the individual trusted professional support. Douglas Hashagen, Opportunities for All Co-ordinator, says *"such opportunities have enabled STEP to continue to expand their support services to young people on Activity Agreements. The impact of this can be seen in the project's retention rate and on the high number of young people who progress onto a positive destination"*.

Allan Swan, (Manager, STEP), believes that the integration of Activity Agreements into STEP has had positive outcomes for young people: *"As processes were well established and staff had excellent experience of working with young people from the client group the impact on young people has been clear – STEP promotes a flexible approach which is successful in keeping young people engaged and achieving outcomes of positive progression"*.