

Activity Agreements within the wider delivery of senior phase support

East Ayrshire Council have put in place a School Transitional Support Team to work with young people at risk of disengaging from education and those who have already done so. Young people are offered one-to-one support from the team. The team works in partnership with schools, offering young people an alternative, informal, environment in which to engage. Key to the success of this approach is early intervention in-school and sustained support post-school. Rebecca is one young person who has benefitted from this approach.

Rebecca was a non-attender at school, likely to leave without qualifications. She lacked confidence, aspiration for her future and had few peer group friendships. She was referred to the School Transitional Support Team at the age of 15 by her guidance teacher.

Rebecca was allocated a transition support worker who met with her to begin building a trusting relationship and explore how to offer her a senior phase that met her needs. Rebecca was clear that she would not return to school so they agreed that the support would focus on opportunities where she could interact with her peers and explore her interests and options to re-engage with mainstream pathways post-16.

Rebecca participated in various informal activities during the week, including creative arts, which she had identified an interest in. She also attended one-to-one sessions with her support worker, where she spoke about her anxieties towards formal education. Her family placed little value on education and the process of helping her make up her own mind about her future was part of the support she received. Within this Rebecca and her support worker talked through different jobs in creative industries and the routes into them.

Rebecca eventually agreed to undertake 5 Access level 3 qualifications, to give her greater options for progression. The in-school partnership allowed Rebecca to undertake the course work in an environment where she felt safe, with her support worker to work through the materials with her. Rebecca quickly saw progress, gaining the qualifications and realising that it was the formal environment of school she found threatening, not learning. Her support worker Margorie Harvie said "this was a huge turning point for Rebecca, who had been a girl that had given up, with no hope for a qualification. For the first time saw she was capable of achieving something."

As she approached her compulsory school leaving age Rebecca agreed to participate in an Activity Agreement. East Ayrshire's approach to delivering senior phase transition support enabled continuity of support post-16, easing the transition from school to Activity Agreement. This allowed Rebecca to continue working with her support worker, who became her Trusted Professional for the purpose of her Activity Agreement.

Rebecca began her Activity Agreement with the support of someone she already trusted. She had begun to increase her confidence and had identified a goal to work towards – employment in the creative industries. She also had the minimum qualifications to apply for college courses in this field.

Given the timescales for college applications, Rebecca's support worker helped her to apply for several college courses at the start of her Activity Agreement. The Activity Agreement was then tailored to giving her the confidence, experience and knowledge she needed to secure and sustain a place. Rebecca's activities included spending some time in a hairdressing salon and undertaking a 'Try out the trades' course with Action for Children, with ongoing one-to-one support.

Rebecca secured a place on a full-time hairdressing course. Her support worker maintained telephone contact with Rebecca after she started, enabling her to provide support and liaise with college staff when, after 6 months participation, Rebecca found herself unable to cope with the pressure of formal assignments. Rebecca finally decided to leave the course early and her support worker was able to quickly re-engage her in an Activity Agreement where she focused on increasing her experience in a work-based environment as a route to employment. Rebecca's goal of working in the creative industries hasn't changed and she is now ready to move further along the pathway to employment.

The East Ayrshire model for senior phase transition support allows young people in need of support to be identified early in-school and to receive consistent and sustained support post-16, resulting in fewer young people being lost at transition points. This approach allows over 90% of young people who complete their Activity Agreement to progress to formal learning, training or employment.