



# Activity Agreements Opportunities for All

## The influence of the Activity Agreement approach on in-school delivery for young people in the senior phase

### Key elements

In Fife, the Activity Agreement approach has influenced the delivery of an in-school transition programme for young people in the senior phase.

These transition programmes are offered to the most disengaged young people and enable the 16+LC teams to identify early those young people who, without support, are the most likely to move into a negative destination post-school.

The support comes from a place on an 'Icebreaker' programme. Run by Community Learning & Development (CLD), they aim to give young people the foundations to begin thinking about what they want to do when they leave school.

The Icebreaker programme supports the implementation of key aspects of Curriculum for Excellence (Building the Curriculum 4), which sets out young people's entitlement to support in the senior phase that helps them effectively engage with opportunities for skills development and to make informed choices about their future.

There are strong links between Icebreaker and Activity Agreement programmes. Both are delivered by CLD and the strong partnership links developed will mean that where appropriate young people will go from Icebreaker onto one of the Activity Agreement Rolling Programmes, delivered at locations across the area.

The benefits of early identification and their role and approach in supporting young people in the senior phase were realised by CLD and partners while planning for the Activity Agreements pilot. CLD were aware of the difficulties in contacting young people after they had left school and that young people would be more likely to engage if they had been identified, prepared and had built relationships with workers whilst they were still at school. This in-school approach allows the planning process to start before they leave school.

### Delivery

Young people are identified and referred by their school in the first term of S4 and programmes are timetabled to run in preparation for both Christmas and summer leavers. This timing also allows CLD staff to input into discussions at 16+LC meetings where a range of partners consider leavers who require support to move into a positive destination. Each Icebreaker programme runs for 6-8 weeks, usually over three or four days a week and is delivered off-campus. This can often be a challenge for young people who may already have disengaged from school and their attendance on this important learning journey is recognised by counting as school attendance.

The programmes are delivered through a combination of groupwork – confidence and team building activities that interest and challenge – and individual support. Additionally, one-to-one time is used to provide information, advice and guidance (IAG).

CLD funds Icebreaker from Fife's Fairer Scotland funding and the youthwork budget and allocates a set amount to each of the 19 high schools.

Icebreaker Programmes have been running alongside Activity Agreements now for two years. It has been a resource intensive process, not just to engage and work with young people, but to manage expectations within the partnership and clarify referral criteria. The programmes continue to develop in response to the needs and interests of young people and to better demonstrate education learning outcomes. The goal is for Icebreaker work to begin earlier in a young person's time at school.

### Impact

The IAG aspect of the Icebreaker programme plays a vital role in the senior phase of Building the Curriculum 4, helping young people to better understand their skills and interests and their relevance to learning, life and work. As a result, young people on Icebreakers have returned to school, made applications to college and made informed choices about accepting key worker support to undertake an Activity Agreement.

Many young people participating in Icebreaker will go on to undertake an Activity Agreement. For these young people, the Icebreaker makes the transition smoother, i.e. 'breaks the ice'. They know staff, are familiar with how programmes are delivered and have a good idea about what they are signing up to. This continuity between the two programmes has been crucial to the successful sign-up rate of young people to Activity Agreements post-school.

Icebreaker has reduced the number of young people disengaging around the transition period and, seen alongside Activity Agreements, has increased the number of young people moving into a positive destination. This model – the offer of a first step learning opportunity to those furthest from the labour market, following a period of preparation and support to help them access that offer, undoubtedly reflects the spirit of 'Opportunities for All'.

Beth Hall, Activity Agreement Coordinator, Fife Council says; *"The implementation of the ice breaker approach in schools, reflecting the post-16 Activity Agreement approach has undoubtedly had an effect on Fife's SLDR. Without this intervention all those who engaged would have been unlikely to make positive transitions on leaving school."*