



Activity Agreements Opportunities for All

The impact of a skills pipeline approach for a young care leaver

Context

North Ayrshire's approach to delivering Activity Agreements has been to create a skills pipeline, linking individual needs to opportunities at a local level. What they have achieved for young people entering Activity Agreements is a continuum of employability activities, taking young people from initial engagement to progression onto employment or other positive destination. Consistent support is offered by a Trusted Professional to guide young people through the different stages in this transition period.

The partnership's use of the local pipeline of delivery can be demonstrated through Ryan's journey from first engaging with the Education and Skills department through to employment.

Ryan had been in care from the age of nine, in children's homes and then young people's units. He had been involved with drugs and alcohol abuse had been a big factor in his life. Ryan's school attendance had suffered and he left school with low qualifications. He had also started offending. Ryan was referred for an Activity Agreement by his through-care worker. As someone who already had a strong working relationship with Ryan, she was ideally placed to support Ryan through the Activity Agreement as his Trusted Professional.

Key elements

The North Ayrshire approach is to offer a choice of established training courses supported by individualised provision determined by the needs of the young person. Through the Economic & Learning partnership North Ayrshire Council works with partners to co-ordinate local Activity Agreement provision with a view to avoiding duplication of effort and effective targeting of all available resources. Additionally, the Council uses national and local labour market information to influence decisions on procurement of provision. This allows the partnership to identify sectors where there are jobs in North Ayrshire, and to offer industry specific courses which take young people along the skills pipeline. One of these sectors is hospitality.

Ryan's Activity Agreement began with an 'Introduction to Hospitality' programme, run by Springboard, a third sector organisation specialising in training and employment services for the hospitality, leisure and tourism industries. Through the assessment process it had emerged that Ryan had a love of cooking and would, one day, like to be a chef. This 2-day course gave Ryan an opportunity to explore the hospitality sector through visits, presentations and hands-on activities. It gave Ryan a first taste of the industry and a chance to begin to focus on what he wanted to do.

Moving along the skills pipeline, Ryan was then offered the opportunity to progress to an IWISH (Into Work in Scottish Hospitality) 13-week employability programme and Ryan took up the challenge. Again run by Springboard, this course was designed to bring Ryan closer to the labour market through interactive learning, valuable work experience and the chance

to obtain vocational qualifications. Ryan showed himself to be a quick learner, but, as is a common factor for young people undertaking an Activity Agreement, he very obviously had many issues which caused him to be easily distracted. Consistent support from his Trusted Professional kept Ryan focused and he completed the programme.

The partnership works closely with Activity Agreement providers and local employers to maximise the opportunities for jobs and placements that can be made available to young people along the skills pipeline. Organisations such as Springboard offer crucial links with the industry. Springboard prepares all placement employers for their role to ensure that they understand the nature of both the Activity Agreement programme and the young people on placement. The IWISH programme secured Ryan a placement within the hospitality industry, in the kitchen of a local hotel. The employer supported and mentored Ryan during his placement and was so impressed by Ryan he wrote him a positive reference on completion of the placement.

Impact

Ryan's participation in an Activity Agreement made him more confident and he learned to modify his behaviour in different social settings. The activities helped him to improve his skills in searching and applying for jobs, hone his team building skills and he came across as a natural leader. Ryan also gained vocational qualifications in First Aid, Food Hygiene, Health & Safety, Alcohol Awareness and Customer Care. But most of all Ryan excelled at the practical cookery sessions and this confirmed his desire to become a chef. Because of his Activity Agreement, and the support he had received along the way, Ryan was able to apply for and secure a Modern Apprenticeship as a Catering Assistant in a local school. Additionally, support was provided to get Ryan his own tenancy.

Since completing his Modern Apprenticeship Ryan has secured permanent employment – doing what he was inspired to do by his Activity Agreement – chef. He has relocated to accept this live-in position, showing his commitment to creating a positive future for himself away from the negative influences in his life.

The skills pipeline approach is being recognised across the partnership, within Senior Phase developments such as a more personalised curriculum for *all* learners, improved vocational experiences, developing better links with employers/businesses and refreshing work experience programmes and enterprise activities in schools. Ryan's journey demonstrates the impact of North Ayrshire's pipeline approach, of organisations working in partnership to ensure participation and progression of young people.

Ryan is determined to overcome the challenges of his past and now sees a future for himself. He said '*I just want to get on and be successful*'. Fiona Colley, Project Manager at Springboard feels sure he will.