

South Lanarkshire Council Aspire Vocational Development Programme

9 % of Activity Agreement leavers in South Lanarkshire secured a Modern Apprenticeship in 2016/17. This was higher than the national figure and follows the introduction of significant changes to the delivery of the senior phase offer in South Lanarkshire.

Activity Agreements in South Lanarkshire now form part of the Aspire Vocational Development Programme. Aspire provides a continuum of support for young people at risk of not entering a positive destination.

During the last 6 months of school young people are supported by a vocational development worker. Pupils are identified via the 16+ Matrix that has been implemented in all schools and discussions then take place at the 16+ meetings that are held in October, March and May each year. This support forms part of the pathway planning process which incorporates the GIRFEC assessment and planning principles for all young people leaving school. An initial meeting is held in school with the young person, pupil support, parents, Skills Development Scotland and any other agencies that are involved e.g. social work, CAMHS.

Before any employment support is put in place, young people are assessed using Outcome Star. An action plan is then developed and a bespoke programme of support is put in place. The aim of the programme is to remove any barriers and to assist with the transition from school into a positive destination. Support is flexible and fits around any subjects and/or SQA awards the young person is working towards. The Aspire Development Worker, pupil support and

SDS maintain close links with one another as good partnership working is vital. Young people who are completely disengaged are supported to re-engage with school where possible and/or participate in activities out with the school setting.

Post-school, Aspire supports young people through an Activity Agreement. Again individualised support is offered at all stages, helping young people to create a bespoke programme, designed to meet their needs. In line with GIRFEC and pathways planning all young people are also assessed using Outcome Star and an action plan is developed.

Both in school and post school Aspire offers:

- Group work and/or individual one to one support from a Vocational Development Worker.
- Work experience with local employers/businesses.
- Vocational tasters.
- Employability skills.
- Volunteering opportunities.
- Confidence building.
- Health and wellbeing interventions (nurturing and coaching).

A key element of Aspire both in school and post school is work experience with a local employer. For young people participating as part of an Activity Agreement this has increased MA opportunities as a progression route.

Young people seeking to move into employment are supported to identify a route they are interested in and Aspire workers seek support from local employers to create work experience opportunities that meet these needs. The team also works in partnership with the local YEI provider and utilises the Work It database to source suitable placements.

One-to-one support and group-work help young people develop the skills and confidence for a work environment and vocational tasters, such as those run in construction and hairdressing, help consolidate young peoples' preparation for their work experience placements. Workers also prepare and support the employers; briefing them on the support a young person may need during placement.

During a work experience placement trusted professionals are in regular contact with both the young person and the employer, allowing both to feel supported and any issues addressed quickly; increasing the likelihood of the placement being sustained. Assessment and pathway planning discussions also take place, exploring options for employment with the employer or within the wider partnership. Employers are encouraged to offer Modern Apprenticeships and assistance is given regarding securing the appropriate funding and completing paperwork.

Through these work experience opportunities young people gain valuable skills and are able to demonstrate the application of these skills in a workplace setting. Regular one-to-one reviews with their trusted professional support young people to recognise this and articulate their skills and experience on their CV. Work experience also helps young people to 'try out' an employment sector and make informed choices about the pipeline options available. Similarly, employers are able to 'try out' a young person and see what they can bring to their business. This is clearly having an impact,

as several have offered young people employment following a work experience placement.

Young people are also supported during the transition from Activity Agreement to an MA through aftercare; this allows support to continue and to assist with any issues that may arise during their early weeks/months of being employed. Regular monitoring and tracking through the use of case management and utilising the data hub quickly identifies any issues which partners can work to resolve. It also gives regular information on trends and patterns which the partners can use to tailor services. A key success has been the collation of several projects into one central team; all referrals come through one central point and are tracked and allocated from this point.

SARAH'S JOURNEY*

Sarah was identified through the 16+ data hub as being unconfirmed and was allocated to the post-school Aspire team. She was living in a chaotic household, lacked motivation and had low self-esteem. She began engaging with Aspire post-school and was offered an Activity Agreement. Regular one-to-one sessions took place with her Aspire worker, helping her gain confidence in herself and in the service.

As part of her Activity Agreement Sarah also took part in personal and social development group sessions. However, after a few weeks Sarah decided this wasn't for her and that she wanted to focus on finding employment. It was agreed that a work experience placement would benefit her. Preparation for this became the focus of one-to-one work. Her timekeeping and motivation gradually improved and, when she was ready, her Aspire worker arranged an opportunity with a local employer. The employer was so impressed with her performance that she was offered employment.

*Not her real name