



**ELLS COMMITTEE POLICY REVIEW OF SEN:**

**PART THREE: TRANSITION**

**EVIDENCE GATHERING:**

**NOVEMBER 22<sup>nd</sup> 2006**

*This paper contains information relating to the discrete provision for students with learning difficulties and disabilities at Entry Level.*

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## **Context:**

Coleg Sir Gâr is one of the largest Further Education Colleges in Wales and is the largest provider of higher education in further education in Wales. It was created in 1985 from the merger of four institutions across Carmarthenshire. The College became a Corporate Institution in 1993.

The College has developed a comprehensive and broad range of academic and vocational education and training programmes at further and higher education level. This ranges from entry level to postgraduate level, so providing a service to the whole learning community. Increasingly the College is also providing for 14-16 learners who attend the College. The College also provides work based learning and programmes on behalf of Job Centre Plus.

It has approximately 13,000 learners of which some 3,000 are full time and 10,000 are part time. Approximately 850 are Higher Education learners.

The curriculum is managed by 9 Faculties and Training Services. Programme Area 16, Independent Living Skills, is within the Faculty of Foundation and Community Education.

Entry Level courses make up a significant proportion of the provision within the Faculty. One full time section leader, four full time and four fractional tutors staff the department. In addition, a team of ten educational support assistants provide support to learners across three campuses.

Pupils are referred from mainstream and special schools. Almost all have had statements of special educational need. Many lack formal educational qualifications and are unclear about career routes. A significant number have had poor attendance at school. Some display challenging behaviour and have been excluded from school. Most have poor basic and social skills, and lack confidence and self esteem.

This year 60 students are enrolled on full time courses. The department also offers a wide range of part time provision. Part time learners include adults with learning difficulties and disabilities as well as pupils accessing college from school.

The department is busy, thriving and successful. Estyn awarded the department Grade 1s for outstanding features in both April 1999, and December 2003. It also gained the Professor John Tomlinson Beacon Award for Inclusive Learning in 2000.

The indications from our quality assurance is that the department is maintaining standards as well as further developing high quality provision for all its learners.

## **1. Transition from school to college:**

### ***Good practice:***

- Regular contact with special schools and comprehensive schools
- Very good links with the Careers Service
- Early identification of potential learners
- Attendance at school leavers' reviews
- School/college taster days
- School to college link course for years 10 and 11

### ***Constraints:***

The transition process begins in Year 9 when post 16 options are discussed during pupil reviews. It would be advantageous for the FE sector to get more involved at this stage. Although procedures are in place, for a variety of reasons the flow of information from SENCOs is variable, and over-dependant on referrals.

Residential college is discussed at the transition review but many parents prefer their child to attend the local college. Early identification of students who may require 1:1 support means that evidence can be gathered to prepare an application for exceptional funding. There is also an apparent anomaly, whereby those students who choose to attend residential college can return to their local college for further education, However, if students come to their local college first, they cannot then access funding for residential provision.

## **2. Transition from Entry Level:**

Students progress within Entry Level, and are on discrete provision for up to 3 years. Every student has a carefully negotiated individual programme of study, which leads to Edexcel qualifications in Life Skills or Skills for Working Life.

### ***Good practice:***

- Skills for Working Life students choose at least 2 vocational options to follow out of 9 routes that are available across three campuses.
- Preparation for work is embedded into the course as a core unit of study.
- Work related experience is an integral part of the final year programme.
- The course has bilingual elements. The use of the Welsh language is actively promoted.
- Every student has regular interviews with a specialist careers adviser.
- Students' academic and personal progress is carefully tracked.
- Parents/carers attend Consultation Evenings following progress reports.
- Annual Reviews ensure that everyone is aware of options and opportunities. A multi agency panel comprising tutors, support staff, Careers Service, Social Services, supported employment agencies, training providers meets with students and parents/carers to discuss the next steps.

**At the end of this time learners move onto:**

- further education within the college mainstream
- training
- voluntary work
- supported employment
- open employment

**Case studies:**

**Entry Level to further education within Coleg Sir Gâr.**

Student A came to the department in 2003 from a special school. He progressed from the OCN Introduction to College course onto the Edexcel Life Skills course, and finally onto the Edexcel Skills for Working Life course. In September, he was accepted onto an OCR Foundation course in IT, where he is one of a group piloting the Welsh Baccalaureate at this level.

**Entry Level to training:**

Student B came onto a Skills for Working Life course in 2005 from a mainstream school where he received a high level of support due to SpLD. He was unsure of his next step and decided to sample work during the summer to help make up his mind. A successful placement at Jewsons Building Merchants was extended and a Workstep placement may enable him to remain on the staff.

**Entry Level to voluntary work:**

Student C has Downs Syndrome. He came to college in 2003 from a special school. He completed the Introduction to College course, and the Edexcel Life Skills course. He now comes to college as a part time student on Tuesdays and Wednesdays, attends a STEPS project in Cross Hands on Mondays and Thursdays, and works as a volunteer at the RSPCA every Friday. He has a varied and fulfilling week, culminating in a volunteer placement where he is valued and much appreciated. This led on from work related experience whilst at college.

**Entry Level to employment:**

Student D has hemiplegia. She had an ambition to work in the care sector, and enjoyed successful placements in a variety of care settings whilst at college. She was referred to Carmarthenshire County Council's Workstep programme and on leaving college went to work at a Residential Home. Her parents were extremely supportive and transported her to work by car. The Workstep placement was so successful that a specific job was created for her. She learnt to drive with help from Access to Work, and is now completely independent using a specially adapted vehicle. She is doing NVQ's in the workplace and comes into college for day release.

### **Constraints:**

Providing safe and relevant work experience should be an entitlement for every student. However, it is over-dependant on good will by college staff and partner agencies. Notwithstanding, the last two years have been particularly successful due to a European funded project entitled "One Way to Opportunities." This partnership between Carmarthenshire County Council, the Shaw Trust and Mencap enabled job coaches to accompany students out into carefully selected workplaces.

Work Preparation courses were offered. Risk assessments and health and safety checks were carried out. The project ended in April 2006. The sustainability of such projects needs to be looked at further.

Currently, the college's "Youth First" project employs a work placement officer. She is helping a small number of Entry Level students to gain work related experience. This project is also short term funded, and again issues of sustainability arise. The Transition Service now provides some job coaching.

*Job coach support is essential for the following reasons:*

- *tasks are agreed and learned in advance of the placement, and knowledge and skills are gradually passed on to the learner.*
- *employers are reassured by the presence of a supportive job coach and mentor.*
- *individuals are more confident about going into an unfamiliar environment accompanied by someone they know.*
- *regular liaison between work, college and the home informs all parties.*

Issues surrounding benefits is almost always a concern to parents and carers. Many students and their families are in receipt of benefits. Waged work is perceived as a threat to their entitlements.

These situations require confidential, impartial advice from benefits advisers. This can provide the re-assurance that working will not only mean improved financial security, but advantages such as raised confidence and self esteem and the social benefits of being in employment.

### **Conclusion:**

From a college perspective there appears to be a strong multi agency approach in Carmarthenshire. For instance, to assist people with SEN through the Transition phase. However, for every success there are numerous individuals for whom plans have not materialised or have broken down.

Open employment is the ultimate goal. The many steps needed to reach this goal need very careful planning and co-operation from the college, supported employment agencies, Disability Employment adviser and Careers Service.

To gauge success more accurately, some form of impact measurement could be implemented. This would enable positive outcomes to be measured and disseminated at each stage.

The sustainability of schemes needs to be further evaluated. Careful tracking at regular intervals and offering advice and guidance whenever it is required would be a huge step forward. This would enhance the training needs, employability and potential of these individuals.