



Federation of Awarding Bodies final response to the Department for Education's call for evidence on post-16 qualifications at Level 2 and below.

The Federation of Awarding Bodies is the representative association for vocational and technical awarding organisations (AOs) with 106 regulated organisations in full membership ranging from large generic AOs and EPAOs to those working in specific occupational areas, including professional bodies. Our members operate across a wide range of vocational/technical sectors and provide high quality qualifications and end point assessment to support learners to progress into, and within, their chosen sector.

This evidence submission is provided on behalf of the Federation's membership following a consultation and information event, three focus group events and further discussions with several members. A draft of this submission was made available to members for feedback before submission. While a range of views from member views have been collected, AOs are a diverse community and our members may make individual submissions containing their own perspectives and emphases. We support the individual submissions provided by our members, which include rich detail and different areas of emphasis depending upon the focus of each authoring organisation.

We have provided a summary response to the Call for Evidence that highlights some key arguments and points made by multiple members in our engagement activities. Examples and illustrative case studies are also provided to support these points.

In our response, we particularly highlight 'what works' for learners at level 2 and below who have faced challenges in their lives that have disrupted their learning and those who may not be looking to progress onto higher level study. Learners may have spent time outside of mainstream education or have SEND, learning difficulties or disabilities. Learners studying at level 2 and below are not a homogenous group and this knowledge must inform the Department's reflections on the future of educational provision. There is not a 'one size fits all' approach to education that will be inclusive to all learners.

Entry level and level 1 play a vital role in engaging and motivating learners from a diverse range of backgrounds – enabling achievement in life, work or further study

- Members highlighted the important of entry level qualifications in providing a way to engage (or re-engage) learners with education. Rebecca's story in Case Study A is a typical example of a learner who has become disengaged with formal education while dealing with a difficult family situation and mental health challenges. Engaging with the Prince's Trust Entry 3 Level Certificate in Employment, Teamwork and Community Skills gave her the chance to develop skills, make friends and develop the confidence in her written work to progress towards an employment goal (as a teacher) through further study at college.
- Working towards achieving qualifications at the entry level is an important motivator for those who have not engaged with formal education for some time. Josh's Story (in Case Study A) describes how 'gaining this Prince's Trust qualification means a huge amount to Josh as it is the only qualification he has'.
- Entry and level 1 qualifications also assess skills that may not have been explicitly covered in mainstream schooling and equip learners for life, work or further study. The learners in Case Study B all describe the key role played by their entry 3 qualifications in Learning, Employment and Progression in preparing them for supported internships –



equipping them with the knowledge they needed for independence, managing finances and travelling to work.

- Good outcomes at entry-level are not just focused on the development of academic or workplace progression. A special school in Surrey noted that good outcomes at entry level for their learners were developing the skills needed for each learner to progress onto the next stage in their life, which could include a focus on behaviour, emotional and social needs, cognition, communication, sensory and physical (e.g. through occupational therapy) development. They stated that more choice in entry 1 qualifications would be one of the most effective ways to ensure good outcomes for more learners.
- When considering the entry level suite of qualifications in the context of the post-16 qualifications review, it's important to acknowledge that some learners will never 'transition' to level 3 (some may never reach level 1). Having three levels at entry ensures that all learners can start a programme of learning at a level where it is possible for them to achieve and progress. If this provision was lost or defunded, there is a real risk that providers will not be able to support a large tranche of learners.
- Some centres use entry level and introductory vocational qualifications as a means of supporting learners who have started on a course and then found they were not on the right programme - in other words, that they can continue to develop useful skills until they can enrol on a more appropriate programme the following academic year. This enables retention and progression, rather than learners leaving feeling a sense of failure.
- Where entry level provision is modularised, this gives learners the opportunity to progress, collecting certificates and feedback along the way and allowing them to exit the programme when they're ready.

There is no 'one size fits all' solution for English and maths. The range of existing qualifications in the landscape are valuable in meeting the needs of different learners and further flexibilities would make the offer even more inclusive.

- ESOL and Functional Skills English serve different purposes and meet differing needs of learners. First language English learners studying at level 1 or level 2, for example, often have a more limited vocabulary than those who are learning English as a second or additional language. ESOL learners are likely to have a 'spiky' profile with, perhaps, strong speaking and listening skills and weaker written skills. The structure of ESOL qualifications caters for this whereas Functional Skills assesses at the same level across all skills.
- The approach to teaching ESOL and Functional Skills is necessarily different with ESOL having a much stronger focus on e.g. grammar and teachers holding specialist ESOL teaching certificates/diplomas (e.g. Trinity Diploma in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages).
- ESOL can be used as a progression route to Functional Skills or GCSE with level 1 and 2 ESOL needed to progress to GCSE. Funding is often the reason why learners who speak English as a second or additional language take Functional Skills. Learners may also have concerns about unconscious bias with ESOL qualifications (e.g. in the job market) because they mark the holder out as not being a first language English speaker. We feel that further work is required to raise the profile of ESOL qualifications with employers to avoid this and ensure that they are widely recognised.
- Flexibility in English and maths provision and 'on demand' assessments are desirable because they allow learners to engage when they're ready and using a mode of delivery



(paper-based, online) that suits them. Modularised and ‘stepping stone’ qualifications enable learners to focus on specific skill areas.

- Further flexibility is needed to meet the needs of all learners. One alternative provider we have spoken to, the Really NEET Project, supports ‘hard to reach’ learners in Yorkshire and London. 77% of their 2020 cohort (13 learners) arrived with no English or maths qualifications on enrolment yet 100% of the cohort achieved at least one maths Functional Skill qualification and 77% at least one English Functional Skill qualification after being supported by the project. However, of these qualifications, only 15% of English and 46% of Maths were at Level 1 or above. The exam-based approach to Functional Skills makes it challenging for some learners to show that they are able to work at the same level as their peers. These are learners who favour kinaesthetic and visual learning styles and the provider has found that when questions are explained to them visually or put into a practical task, their results increase dramatically. The provider believes that if exams suited these learners, they would be closer to reaching the Government’s target of 60% of the learners achieving Level 2. Case studies of four Really NEET learners are provided in Case Study C to further describe the challenges that some learners face in accessing the current provision. Further thought must be given to how we make English and maths qualifications accessible to **all** learners. These are key qualifications that are needed to open up opportunities for work or further study.

Qualifications at level 2 and below equip learners with the knowledge and skills to enter the workplace or progress within their place of employment

- Level 2 is an entry requirement for many jobs/roles and these qualifications build the knowledge, skills and behaviours required in the workplace.
- In addition to occupationally focused qualifications, much level 2 learning by adults is about developing the transferable skills employers want – they provide the flexibility required for adults to move into different roles as market needs shift.
- Level 1 and 2 employability qualifications are valued by employers as demonstrating the qualification holder’s ability to communicate, work individually and as part of a team, follow instructions and show up for work at the required time. These qualifications also show that a learner has successfully completed a period of training which gives employers confidence that they can complete any in-house training required. A video case study of one learner, taken on at KFC after achieving such a qualification, can be viewed [here](#).
- For office work, in particular, ICT user qualifications are valuable in demonstrating or developing digital literacy skills that are often requested in job advertisements (e.g. having good knowledge of the Microsoft Office package). We were surprised to see the suggestion in the Call for Evidence that entry and level 1 provision via the new Essential Digital Skills qualifications was considered sufficient provision in this area. The new qualifications allow learners to demonstrate some user skills but qualifications at level 2 enable the use of more advanced software features required in the workplace e.g. automating tasks using Microsoft Excel.

We must look at existing study programmes and ‘what works’ when considering how learners will transition to level 3.

- The Call for Evidence asks whether a ‘new form of transition programme [could] be the best way to support progression for 16 to 19 year olds who want to study at level 3 but



are not quite ready to progress and do not plan to take a T Level.’ A new type of programme is not required to prepare learners for level 3 because flexible study programmes already exist and have been developed over a number of years by providers to effectively transition learners to level 3.

- Qualifications at level 2 and below are recognised and trusted by learners, employers and professional bodies whereas the alternatives lack this credibility and may also be more challenging to deliver. For example, non-regulated schemes such as RARPA are admin heavy (requiring training, standardisation and auditing to ensure reliability) and digital credentialing is a new innovation that is not widely understood or recognised by employers yet.
- Learners who struggle with formal academic education at school or college benefit from having the opportunity to engage with hands-on, vocationally orientated (and flexible) provision at level 2 and below. The Park Community School in Havant provides learners with the opportunity to develop construction skills alongside academic school subjects. A case study from the school describes the impact on one of their former learners: ‘one student was struggling with their more academic subjects and was on the verge of failing. Because of courses like this we took him out of some areas of study and just focussed on the LASER Level 2 Progression Qualification for employability in Construction skills. He successfully completed this course and is now is studying an engineering qualification at college with the hope of becoming a mechanical engineer in the navy’. The learner explains, ‘I would not be where I am now without the support of the teachers and this level 2 course. Although construction is not the same as to what I want to do, I would not have been accepted to college without the practical skills I learnt on this course.’
- Vocational qualifications are useful in providing learners with a pathway to progress to either further study at level 3 or employment if they’re resitting or taking qualifications at a lower level. For example, learners studying LIBF’s Level 2 Award in Financial Education can take it alongside resit English and maths GCSE in their first year of sixth form education. Learners have used this as a transition to level 3 learning, going on to study a level 3 in Financial Studies alongside their other level 3 choices. This is a pathway seen in colleges and sixth forms across England and has also led to learners progressing onto employment within the financial sector after successful completion of all courses.
- Some qualifications are designed with maximum flexibility of delivery in mind to enable the provider to bespoke study programmes to effectively meet learner needs while having the scaffolding required for ease of delivery. For example, the AIM Qualifications suite of AIMVOCs qualifications are an introductory suite of vocational qualifications (entry 1 through to level 2) designed around the 15 occupational route maps. They can be delivered in educational or industry settings and providers can flexibly deliver parts of the qualifications at different levels to support learners with a spiky profile. Optional employability, maths, literacy and ICT content can also be added where required. For this particular suite of qualifications, the majority of registrations are at level 1 (53%) and 47% of learners are aged over 22.
- Different sizes of qualification meet differing learner needs. For example, certificates can provide a route of ‘stepping stones’ through to level 3, enabling learners to understand the progress that they are making. Flexibility is important in engaging learners and ensuring that the study programme meets their individual needs.
- In reflecting on how learners are prepared for study at level 3, it’s important that level 3 provision is considered holistically with Access and work-based learning/apprenticeships included. Traineeships offer a valuable route through to an apprenticeship, providing work experience and basic knowledge and skills (including qualifications in some instances).



Members report that learners looking to transition to an Access course are already facing reduced options in the specialist provision that helps them to get ready for the course (combining introductory subject-specific content with qualifications in English, maths and study skills).

- Where a WBL route might be considered most appropriate for some sectors (e.g. creative industries, horticulture), consideration needs to be given to whether appropriate work placements or apprenticeship options are available. Where sectors are comprised of predominantly smaller employers, qualifications combined with a work placement may be as close as a learner can get to learning 'on the job' because employers are not in a position to take on apprentices. To respond to this challenge, many creative industries qualifications are work based but within the confines of the school or college. For example, performances or behind the scenes work in theatre or music can be undertaken in the college to enable on-the-job learning without the need to secure external placements. This model of learning is essential in developing skills for industry.
- When describing 'what works' in existing study programmes, members highlighted elements that promote self-reflection of skills/ behaviours gained which can help to boost confidence, identify achievements and gaps/next steps.

Effectively supporting students with special educational needs, learning difficulties or disabilities at level 2 and below

- Flexibility is key in effectively supporting learners with SEN, learning difficulties and disabilities. There are a variety of ways that learners can demonstrate their capabilities. Enabling flexibilities in, for example, the mode of assessment can be the difference between learners achieving or not.
- Some learners will be able to progress onto level 3 and beyond whereas others may struggle to achieve higher than entry level. Flexibility and structured levels support learners in accessing provision at the appropriate level and progressing onto further study, work or into independent life in a way that meets the needs of each individual. It may be that learners need a little more time than others to progress (e.g. two or three years to complete a 'one-year' course) and funding should account for these differences.
- Vocationally focused, accessible provision empowers learners to progress and meet their goals in life, further study or work. Case Study D describes the path taken by one learner with autism and ADHD who was able to qualify as a car mechanic and progress onto work in a local garage. Z attended the sixth form centre at a special school for one year, completing a car maintenance and employability programme that provided the 'important indicator' of his achievement and demonstrated his readiness to undertake study at levels 2 and 3 in a mainstream college environment.
- Learning is not always linear and therefore, modularised/unitised approaches to delivery with appropriate scaffolding can support learners with SEN/learning difficulties in progressing.
- Greater incentives, financial or otherwise would encourage more apprenticeship providers to work with adults with SEND/learning difficulties or disabilities. This is recommendation 5 in the Mencap report (2019) on improving access to apprenticeships, [Access All Areas](#). Mencap also make a good case (recommendation 1) for widening the flexibilities on maths and English currently available to those with an EHCP. For learners with SEND/learning disabilities or a cognitive disability (diagnosed via an appropriate



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assessment), maths and English can be a stumbling block that stands in the way of achieving an apprenticeship where these skills may not be essential.



Appendix 1: Learner case studies

Case Study A: Three entry-level Prince's Trust Learners

Rebecca's story

Twenty-one-year-old Rebecca spent a lot of time at home with her partner. She volunteered with charities and attended dance groups but only ever went to places she knew well and avoided going anywhere new. She suffered with poor mental health, post-traumatic stress disorder and self-harm due to issues with her family.

Rebecca joined a Prince's Trust Team programme in Toxteth in January 2019 to improve her confidence and to make more friends. She enjoyed every aspect of the course, particularly helping out at the local youth centre as part of the Team's community project. She managed to get a work placement at the primary school where she had gone as a child and loved trying out the role of teaching assistant. This motivated her to want to achieve her English qualification as she had passed some GCSEs whilst at school but not GCSE English.

Rebecca found that working towards The Prince's Trust Entry 3 Level Certificate in Employment, Teamwork and Community Skills gave her the chance to develop skills and reflect on the experiences of the programme. She enjoyed the fact that the work was varied and hands on. Gaining this qualification has given Rebecca confidence in her written work and she will now go to college to complete Level 1 in English so that she can work towards becoming a teacher. Her ambition is to teach in a primary school and raise money for charities close to her family issues.

Joe's story

Eighteen-year-old Joe left school with no qualifications and no ambitions or goals. He didn't claim any form of benefit and was completely dependent on his mother. He was extremely unsociable, shy and unsure of himself. Joe never discussed any particular trauma but was very easily led. Joe was referred to The Prince's Trust Team programme at Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service in January 2019 by his engagement worker who thought it might help him improve his confidence and prepare him for employment.

Joe really enjoyed being a member of Team Prescott 3. He benefitted from all aspects of the programme and said that he most enjoyed being part of something, gaining more confidence and feeling as though he had finally found himself through the chance to explore his strengths and weaknesses.

Joe greatly appreciated the chance to gain his Entry 3 Prince's Trust Certificate in Employment, Teamwork and Community Skills. He admitted to struggling with the written work due to his low level of literacy, language and numeracy. He also struggled with his speech and hearing. However, with the support of the Team Leaders and other Team participants he stuck at it and was very proud to achieve this qualification.

Joe plans to go for a hearing test as this was identified as a barrier to his learning and confidence. He told his Team Leader that this had always been the case at school but that no other professionals had identified it. He told them that instead he chose to stay quiet in class so as not to bother the teachers. Joe's literacy and numeracy have improved dramatically and he is



now actively looking for work and considering an apprenticeship. His goal is to get qualified in whatever he decides to do and be able to provide for his family.

Josh's story

Sixteen year old Josh left school in North Wales at the age of 15 and relocated to Liverpool with no qualifications. He cares for his mum and sister, is NEET and suffers with Irlen Syndrome. A nurse helping the family noticed that he was very isolated and becoming reclusive and thought that it would be good for him to interact with people his own age and enjoy being a teenager. When Josh joined The Prince's Trust Team programme in Bootle in January 2019 with Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service he struggled to make eye contact or communicate with anyone. However, he gradually got used to the sociable environment and started to make friends. He loved feeling part of a team and gained a lot more confidence.

Working towards The Prince's Trust Entry 3 Level Certificate in Employment, Teamwork and Community Skills was a struggle for Josh as his Irlen Syndrome made it difficult for him to read and process information. He found it difficult to write but learnt a lot from the content of the course. It has a huge challenge for Josh to deliver a speech as part of the Presentation Skills unit but he felt proud when he succeeded in doing this.

Gaining this Prince's Trust qualification means a huge amount to Josh as it is the only qualification he has. It has given him the belief that he can achieve more in his life with the right support. Josh's handwriting has improved significantly, as has his grammar, and this has made him believe that he can go on to achieve another qualification.

Josh is currently on a training course to further improve his employability skills. He remains in contact with the other Team members via social media, has become a lot more independent and travels more than he used to. His goal is to do an apprenticeship and gain full time employment.



Case Study B: Pathways to Independence and Supported Internship learners from Farnborough College of Technology



Farnborough College
of Technology

CASE STUDY CONNOR FRASER HITCHEN

AGE: 20

**COURSE: Pathways to Independence
and Supported Internship -
Farnborough College of Technology**



A course for young people aged 16-25 who may have attended a school or college provision for students with additional learning needs. The aim of the course is that of enabling students to gain generic work skills, improve social skills and gain independence whilst trying out a variety of vocational options and attending supported work experience. The classes are small and friendly with learning support available. The course can last up to two years but in some cases students may only need one year to gain the skills to move on to another college course or supported/openwork. Students attend weekly tutorials and reviews are held with students, parent/carers and relevant support agencies to discuss future steps.

Why did you do this course?

I did the Pathways to Independence course after visiting the college to see what courses were on offer. I enjoyed my time on the Pathways course because of the lecturers and how good the College is. The course was easy to access and the timetable was flexible. I did the Supported Internship and it had links with the local hospital. I got my work placement there and really enjoyed it.

How has the course helped you achieve your goals?

I grew up and became much more confident in my abilities.

What was important about getting a Laser Entry level Extended Certificate/Diploma in Learning, Employment and Progression (Entry 3)?

The subjects covered all the topics that I needed to learn about to help me become independent.

What are your plans for the future?

I'm now a general porter at the hospital covering all departments and helping with patients and I enjoy everything about it.

"I really enjoyed the time I spent at college, I got lots of support and doing my course helped me get my job at the hospital". - Connor Fraser Hitchen

"Connor was a delightful member of the class, he was always so polite and considerate of others. He was very keen to get a job and his wonderful people skills have made him successful in the role he has acquired. It is so gratifying to see how he interacts with the patients in his role as a porter and we are so pleased that the hospital recognised his valuable skills". - Mary Campbell (Personal Tutor)



CASE STUDY MARY ANNE QUINCEY

AGE: 19

**COURSE: Pathways to Independence
and Supported Internship -
Farnborough College of Technology**



A course for young people aged 16-25 who may have attended a school or college provision for students with additional learning needs. The aim of the course is that of enabling students to gain generic work skills, improve social skills and gain independence whilst trying out a variety of vocational options and attending supported work experience. The classes are small and friendly with learning support available. The course can last up to two years but in some cases students may only need one year to gain the skills to move on to another college course or supported/openwork. Students attend weekly tutorials and reviews are held with students, parent/carers and relevant support agencies to discuss future steps.

Why did you do this course?

I always struggled with maths at school, but the tutors really helped when I asked and I got much better at English. When I was at college, you felt like an adult, the tutors remind you what they expect of you. I am really pleased that I have done the Supported Internship Course as otherwise I would be sitting at home doing nothing after college. Now I am working in a nursery and it is really good for me.

How has the course helped you achieve your goals?

I feel that I became more confident

What was important about getting a Laser Entry level Extended Certificate/Diploma in Learning, Employment and Progression (Entry 3)?

I didn't really know much about handling money, travelling and cooking on a budget. Getting my Laser qualification has taught me lots of different things which helped me become more independent.

What are your plans for the future?

I hope to get even more hours at the nursery and I am very excited about that.

"The support at FCOT has been really great and I loved my time at college". - Mary Anne Quincey

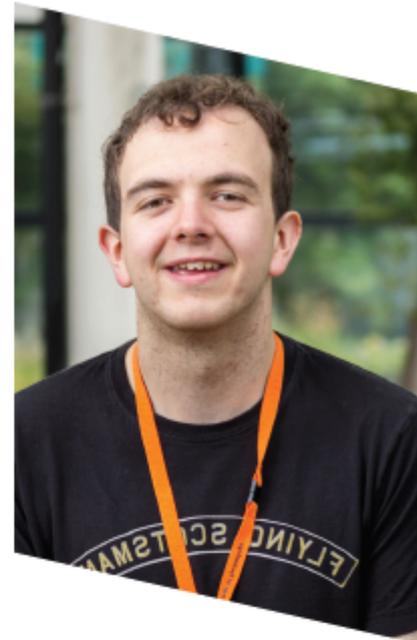
"Mary Anne was part of the first group of learners to undertake the Laser qualification. She always wished to work with children and strived really hard to achieve this aim. She gained a work placement in a local nursery and they were so impressed with her that they offered her a part time job after her course was finished. We were so pleased that we were able to support Mary Anne to gain the skills she needed to find the job she always wished for". - Mary Campbell (Personal Tutor)



CASE STUDY PETER STUBBINGS

AGE: 20

**COURSE: Pathways to Independence
and Supported Internship -
Farnborough College of Technology**



A course for young people aged 16-25 who may have attended a school or college provision for students with additional learning needs. The aim of the course is that of enabling students to gain generic work skills, improve social skills and gain independence whilst trying out a variety of vocational options and attending supported work experience. The classes are small and friendly with learning support available. The course can last up to two years but in some cases students may only need one year to gain the skills to move on to another college course or supported/openwork. Students attend weekly tutorials and reviews are held with students, parent/carers and relevant support agencies to discuss future steps.

Why did you do this course?

I did Pathways to Independence and this made me more independent with finding my way around. I made progress with my maths and English and I showed my work at the photo exhibition. I went on the residential and although some of the activities were a bit scary, I had a go at everything. I really enjoyed it and had a good time during those two years making lots of new friends. I did the Supported Internship and it was a really good course. You came in to college some of the days and do a work placement for the rest.

How has the course helped you achieve your goals?

By becoming more independent

What was important about getting a Laser Entry level Extended Certificate/Diploma in Learning, Employment and Progression (Entry 3)?

The things that I did for my Laser Certificate helped me learn about the skills I needed to get ready for work such as travel and budgeting.

What are your plans for the future?

My work placement was at Frimley Park Hospital doing Housekeeping where I cleaned the scanners, the outpatients and the streets using the cleaning machine. I am now working there full time.

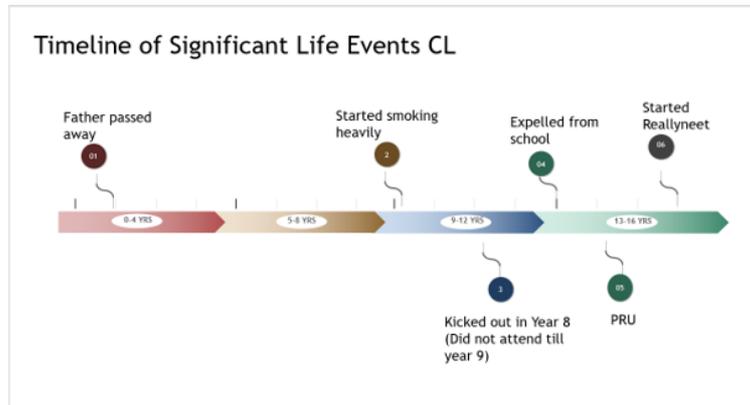
"I really enjoyed my time at college and doing my course has helped me get paid employment." - Peter Stubbings

"Peter was a very enthusiastic member of the class and his group were the first group of learners to undertake the laser qualification. His work placement was so successful and we were delighted when he was offered a paid post. This was fully deserved and it is wonderful to see how his confidence has grown over the three years at college". - Mary Campbell (Personal Tutor)



Case Study C: Really NEET Project learners

Learner Case Study 1



Previous Education

CL attended a mainstream secondary school until year 8, he then didn't attend an educational setting until year 9. He then attended a PRU which was on the same site as his mainstream school. CL felt that at school, teachers 'had it in for him'. He said he tried at school, but was often sent out of lessons for what he considered to be silly things.

Education at Really NEET

CL is a very willing able student. He always engages in lessons and is a pleasure to be around, often when others have left the classroom he will still be working on his maths / English. CL works well with others in the class, often supporting the person he is sat next to. CL's work in class is usually correct, he will ask if he needs help, although he often grasps the concept quickly. CL is adamant he wants to pass his Maths exam at Level 2, as his ultimate goal is to become a joiner.

Exam

CL has completed a Level 2 mock exam at Really NEET which he struggled with, his marks were very low, this does not reflect his ability in class.

Learner Case Study 2

SH has been diagnosed of having learning difficulties, autism, and ADHD, he is also known to the educational psychology service, due to concerns about his motivation to learn and his patterns of behaviour. It was identified that there were strengths and weaknesses in his speech, language and communication skills. He has been reported as having low confidence and self-esteem and struggles with speaking to unfamiliar people and managing his stress and anxiety. SH was provided with an individual educational package to encourage learning, achievement and self-esteem within small groups. SH thrived within the Really Neet provision. Within two years he gained Functional Skills qualifications at level 1 & 2 in maths. He also achieved level 1 English in the writing paper. He found it incredibly difficult to complete the English reading paper within the given time. Due to his meticulous precision, he could not complete more than one task. I sat invigilating his mock exams and noted he was too slow to complete. Another reason was that he is just not interested in the text content. He could not engage himself with the task. His



autism could not allow his conscious to complete questioning he showed no interest in. He was clearly capable.

Learner Case Study 3

TB was diagnosed with ASD and social communication needs, social, emotional and mental health needs. He finds changes in routine difficult to cope with. He would get anxious and verbally aggressive. His EHCP stated, 'He can only work for short periods of time'. 'His cognitive abilities are approximately average, and he had the potential to attain well in areas of interest'.

Mental health

Starting Point

TB has difficulty complying with adults. He can be verbally abusive and has disruptive behaviours. TB demonstrates high anxiety and often swears to himself to calm situations.

Education

Starting Point

TB achieved Functional Skills level 1 mathematics and level 2 English literature in a previous educational setting.

Progress

TB has achieved level 2 English writing and level 1 mathematics in 2018-19, his initial assessment was Entry 3.

TB was a very capable learner, who had shown progression within the right educational setting. However, TB refused to complete preparation work for the speaking and listening part of his English exam. He would pace around and become verbally aggressive. He could not see the point of the exercise. If there had been another option for TB to achieve his qualification he would have passed. TB did not complete the task.

Learner Case Study 4

LT was a learner who enrolled on an employability traineeship programme I was tutoring in 2018 for a previous employer.

LT lived independently with her girlfriend and had experienced problems with her immediate family to the point where she had been told to leave the family home. Although she was still on speaking terms with her sister and mother, LT was not in contact with her father.

LT was diagnosed with ASC and ADHD while attending mainstream school, where she was supported in class. She suffers with anxiety and depression and takes medication for this. LT is financially vulnerable and has problems with handling and sorting money. She has attended a programme to support her with money handling and is supported by her girlfriend in paying for her home bills, mobile phone and shopping.

LT has attended community-led and educational provisions, including The Prince's Trust's Programme and a day care centre for adults with learning disabilities where she now volunteers



one day a week in an arts and crafts organisational role. LT has displayed aggressive behaviours in the past and has been excluded from provision in her area for breaking furniture and verbal aggression to members of staff. LT was offered support from social care and appointed a social worker. However, this relationship broke down, leaving LT feeling unsupported, misunderstood and unwilling to accept another social worker.

Initially LT was withdrawn and not very communicative with myself or her peers. This developed positively in a short space of time and LT became more confident and vocal. However, she still displayed signs of anxiety and would often become insular and resistant to responding to questions or discussion.

LT was frustrated that she had to attend the course under provisions outlined by her work coach at Pontefract job centre.

LT was aware of her negative behaviours and worked hard to amend these through conversations and interventions with myself, her work coach, her mother and members of staff at the day care centre. I am unaware of any support from other organisations such as CAMHS or advocacy services.

Part of LT's traineeship included work experience for 40 hours. In this time, LT worked at a local gardening centre. She thoroughly enjoyed her time there and positive reviews were fed back to me from the manager.

As the course developed, LT became more responsive and sociable with her peers. Her work was of a high quality, particularly in English and she often led group discussions.

Achievement

LT had left school with an F in maths and English. LT enjoyed her voluntary work at the day centre and work experience at the garden centre. LT enjoys drawing and has brought in her sketch book of Manga drawings. She became careful with money and this usually was spent on drawing materials. LT wanted to become an illustrator and had submitted her CV to various organisations.

Starting Point

LT came to the traineeship with an initial assessment of Level 1 in maths and English. LT displayed good cognitive skills in both subjects, especially in her written English work and would often write stories to accompany her drawings. LT was comfortable with her peers in the classroom after an initial reticence to engage in work and discussion.

Impact on Learning

LT displayed a high level of understanding and produced high quality work which matched her initial assessments, although she did not like the thought of having to sit exams at the end of the traineeship and often brought this up. This was marked as a cause for concern.

Progress.

As part of the traineeship programme, learners were required to sit mock exams prior to the actual exam. This was conducted in a classroom environment. LT was visibly concerned during the mock exam and did not adhere to the conditions, such as talking and breaking off for a walk. LT did pass the mock English exams in reading and writing which were marked as 78% and 85% respectively but did not pass her maths mock exam, her final mark was 55%.



Attendance

LT had an excellent attendance record as time for her volunteering duties were allowed. This was consistent throughout the programme. LT also attended one-to-one sessions with myself in maths. On occasions where LT was unable to attend, which were mainly signing-on times at the job centre, she would always inform me beforehand.

Mental Health

LT was initially reluctant to engage with peers and demonstrated behaviours that suggested she was not comfortable in the classroom learning environment. These behaviours also led LT to leave the classroom or be disruptive by talking above others in class. This diminished quickly and LT was instrumental in producing a classroom code of conduct. This was important to LT and she demonstrated ownership of this by berating her peers. LT was aware that this was not a school environment and would take 'time-out' breaks when she felt anxious.

Housing

LT enjoyed living with her girlfriend in her flat but, because of her financial vulnerability, has found it difficult managing her money. This had improved a great deal over time and LT became much more aware of her financial responsibilities. She did not want to re-connect with her father, although she had a good relationship with her sister and her mother.

LT's needs were being met in regard to her family life and she had a good network of friends, including people she had made friends with on the traineeship course and The Prince's Trust Programme.

Outcome

LT sat her maths and English exams. She passed both her English exams, although, notably she did not perform as well as she did in her mock exams. She did not get the required grade in maths. The structure of the traineeship suited LT to some degree as it was mainly informal and continually assessed. There was a marked difference when it came to taking her actual Functional Skills exams and although she displayed a level of confidence in her English exams, she felt overwhelmed and pressured in her maths exam. I believe that LT could progress with her English and maths results and move to a higher level as her classroom work demonstrated knowledge and understanding of her assessed level in both subjects. In a reflective conversation, LT told me that the exam questions didn't really mean much to her and she couldn't understand why the questions were not relatable. She also didn't like the fact that she had to sit for a long time and keep quiet as she took the exams and that she could have done better if the questions had been about something she was interested in.

Reasonable adjustments were explained to LT such as taking breaks and someone appointed to be her scribe before the exams. LT did not like the thought of this and she did not think this was necessary as she had 'neat writing' and wanted to show that she could do it by herself. LT also mentioned that she didn't like being sat on her own and that we had to put 'Exam in Progress' signage on the door.

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Functional Skills Tutor – Really NEET Project



Case Study D: Learner Z from St George's School, Isle of Wight

Z joined St George's Sixth Form having been home educated for a number of years due to bullying in mainstream school. He had Autism and ADHD which meant that he found social situations quite difficult. Z was very interested in mechanics and chose to do Car Maintenance at Level 1 using the LASER Learning Employability and Progression qualification. He achieved at a high level and went on to college after one year to gain his level 2 and level 3 qualifications before gaining employment in a local garage.

Z took the Car Maintenance course as it was his area of interest and he was able to use the course as a foundation for building upon in college with level 2 and 3.

The course helped Z to move into the higher level courses at college and ultimately progress into employment.

The advanced certificate in Level 1 Introduction to Car Maintenance served as an important indicator to the college that Z had achieved at a good level and it enabled him to go straight into the discrete Level 2 and 3 course. The college instructor said that Z was the best student he had ever had.

Z wants to own his own garage one day.