

## 1.2 Lancashire Collaborative Network – The Empower Project

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### **Lancaster Collaborative Network Institutions:**

- Lancaster County Council
- UCLAN
- Edge Hill University
- University of Cumbria

There were 3 target groups following consultations:

1. Pre-16 students in years 9-11 -> **Empower Academy**. Care leavers needed to have a very clear introduction early on.
2. Mature Care Leavers 18+ -> **Hothersall Lodge**
3. Social Workers, Foster Carers and Supporters of CLA and CL students because practitioners are key influencers and supporters-> **Upskilling Empowering Practitioners Conference**

### **Empower**

For year 9 and 10s. LA students on a year long programme visiting campuses between 10am and 2pm. focusing on a study skills development to support the entire journey of their education. Launch and celebrations in May and the programme was structured as a series of visits. Carers took responsibility to get student on campus.

### **Launch Event**

The launch event was a polit for stdents and supporters held at Lancashire County Council's HQ in Preston. Student Ambassadors led a workshop for student attendees and a presentation for supporters. There were 15-20 students.

Although we offered help with transport costs, there was no uptake of this. The themes on the day were selected through conversations with practitioners and care leaver students.

### **Evaluations**

Were conducted on all 3 strands. There were gaps in between visit day. To mitigate drop offs, we developed a brand for the programme – the 'Empower Academy' which created a sense of unity and cohesion. Materials were sent after the launch event including a quiz so on first day back everyone had completed the quiz, answers were given and ensured 'keep warm activity'. Communications were sent to supporters and 'students' which reminded them about the length of the programme.

## **Day 1: Campus visit @ Edge Hill**

Welcome and meet/Greet. All met each other at meet/greet event.

- Split students from supporters and had their own session delivered by Edge Hill transition staff who worked with care leavers then had campus tour.
- They were given a general intro to HE.
- Participated in university 'Escape Room' activity with puzzles and clues. Visited tech hub with computing students.
- Even spread of students – 5 girls and 5 boys.
- Had meeting after evaluation. Feedback was positive. Staff across universities/network didn't attend each other's campus events but all attended at the start and end.

### **Hothersall Lodge Events – for mature learners**

- Located at the outdoor education centre
- Event programme involved the morning HE workshops and an afternoon on the outdoor assault course
- Provided an in-depth intro and routes into HE, overview of student finance, student life, and careers/employability. This coincided with national care leavers' week.
- Evaluation – positive feedback and attendees enjoyed the careers and employability session.

### **Empowering Practitioners Conference**

- Covering routes into HE, Student Finance, Student Support Services.
- 60 Foster Carers, Social Workers etc.
- Mix of presentations delivered by HEI and SLC staff.
- Workshops on Personal Statements, Building Resilience in Students and a Student Life Talk.
- Sparked good debate. Eye opening event for professionals and didn't previously know a huge amount of financial support in HE for care leavers.
- Promoted the student community and sense of belonging.
- Over lunch there was a networking session and 1-2-1 talks with university staff
- Surprised by the broader group that turned up – Barnardo's, Virtual Schools and not just Social Workers and Carers. Catered for a range of needs through online promotion.

## **Timeline**

- May 2018 – conversations and identified priorities.

- July-September 2018 – talked to partners about staff, time and money contributions.
- October 2018 – 1<sup>st</sup> Empowering Practitioners Conference (Horshall Lodge).
- November 2018 – January 2019 – Evaluation of content delivered by planning Empower Academy.

### **Overall challenges:**

- Arranging meetings and ensuring right people got to meetings.
- Held in LCC Heads at Preston Office.
- Locations of meetings.
- Cost – who pays for what? Fortunate that people were very good at making decisions.
- Data sharing – ongoing issue. UCLAN holding data which putting on HEAT. Dietary, medical info, contact info still tricky. Getting close and have data sharing agreement now.
- By having events on campus people completed forms themselves.

### **Successes:**

- Strengthened relationships with LCC and go to more events with them more than ever – KS4 events.
- Increased impact on students.
- 4 collaborative partners lightens the load in terms of costs.
- Expansion project e.g. fosters carers network in Cumbria.

### **Questions?**

Q: “How did you go about choosing the subject area?”

A: They needed to be interactive so chose the Escape Room as an ice breaker allowing everybody to participate.

Q: “What are the key differences to care leaver accessing SLC and a non-care leaver student?”

A: Had different representatives of SLC at events and the main messages were make sure you tick the boxes to receive bursaries and packages. Didn't talk about individual university support but general trends. Sparked a good debate in the audience about whether care leavers should apply for a full loan if they receive so much additional support?

Q: “You say Year 9 and Year 10 – was there more from one year group or was it a mix?”

A: It was a real mix.