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## Promoting students' aspirations: Nottingham City Secondary Education Partnership

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### Brief description

This example shows how Nottingham City Secondary Education Partnership is helping schools to find the best suited placements by using its contacts and arranging bespoke training packages for students who have specific aspirations.

### Overview of the partnership

Nottingham City Secondary Education Partnership (NCSEP) is a partnership of 12 secondary schools and academies located in Nottingham City. The partnership is committed to improving outcomes for all pupils, including those who experience significant barriers to learning and achievement. NCSEP's approach is to take corporate responsibility and accountability for these young people and operate an improvement, behaviour and attendance strategy. The registration, quality-assurance and monitoring of alternative provision is part of this multi-faceted strategy. It allows the partnership schools and academies to make informed decisions about who they commission to provide alternative packages for young people.

### The good practice in detail

Arranging high-quality experiences which take students into the working world beyond the school gates takes time, effort and resources. Yet many students value enormously the opportunity to spend time developing their knowledge and skills in activities linked to possible future jobs and careers. The benefits of such provision are widely acknowledged, especially in motivating and engaging those students who may be less interested in traditional classroom learning, or those who have a passionate interest in, say, catering, sport, car mechanics, or working with animals. To ensure that such benefits are achieved, a school has to:

- secure provision of a high quality

- match the provision closely to the student's interests and aspirations
- monitor and evaluate carefully the success of the placements
- ensure that students are able to make good progress in other aspects of their curriculum, particularly in gaining English and mathematics qualifications which are so important to their future careers.

Education outside of school, arranged either by the local authority or the learner's school, is called alternative provision. It can range from pupil referral units (PRUs) and further education colleges to voluntary or private-sector projects. 'Alternative provision', 'alternative education' and 'alternative education provision' are all ways to describe this type of provision for pupils outside mainstream and special schools.

## The process

Alternative education placements in Nottingham City are coordinated exclusively through a city-wide education partnership: 'Nottingham City Secondary Education Partnership'(NCSEP). The partnership offers a high level of service to local schools to help them find the best suitable placements and draws upon the contacts and expertise generated through its wide involvement with training providers and further education programmes. It assists, in exceptional cases, in arranging bespoke training packages for students with specific interests and aspirations. Referrals are checked systematically, and both the school and the partnership take joint responsibility for considering needs, allocating provision and closely monitoring the outcomes.

Schools have access to all commissioned providers through the education partnership database. The partnership completes a safeguarding and health and safety checklist as part of a broader annual compliance visit for each placement. The partnership also makes regular, quality-assurance evaluation visits to ensure that the quality of the provision can be maintained or developed further when required.

Prospective students undertake a pre-visit with school staff and their parents to look around, discuss course requirements and identify needs.

The provider receives a standard referral form about each prospective student from the school and education partnership which includes:

- their education profile relating to attainment and progress;
- attendance information;
- exclusion history;
- SEND profile;
- social profile;
- the involvement of any external agencies;
- reason for referral;
- other at risk indicators;
- qualifications required as an outcome of the placement;
- interests and aspirations.

A live, online system enables attendance and punctuality to be recorded as it happens, together with regular updates on the students' academic and personal progress. Attendance

and punctuality over time are recorded within these updates. This enables designated staff at school to follow up issues or concerns quickly. This ensures that all students on alternative placements can succeed and gain relevant qualifications.

## The service provided to schools

Nottingham City schools have a long history of using alternative education providers to broaden the curriculum from 14 to 19 and to respond to the diverse needs of its student community. It is widely felt that while school is the best place for most students to learn, for some more vulnerable young people, an education that takes place partly outside of school is more appropriate.

NCSEP ensures that when learning takes place outside of school, the health and safety and well-being of students are maintained. It manages this through a city-wide partnership. The partnership inspects all of the city's alternative provision annually to ensure learners are safe and that the quality of provision, including teaching and learning, meets a minimum standard as defined by the city's 14 to 19 Partnership. All learners aged 14 to 16 are only placed within alternative provision that has undergone this stringent process and, as a result, has been recommended by NCSEP's Quality Assurance Management Group.

The partnership only lists alternative provision in Nottingham that has successfully met the minimum requirements of the partnership's Quality Assurance process. To view the current approved list of alternative provision in Nottingham, schools need to register with NCSEP.

Providers, too, need to register with the partnership to be able to offer a placement to any student at a Nottingham City school. The city-wide agreement is that young people aged 14 to 16 should only be placed in provision which has been approved and their details listed on this website. In meeting these standards, providers will have:

- successfully been through a compliance and quality-assurance process
- agreed to work in collaboration with schools within the city-wide quality framework
- been measured against the Common Inspection Framework.

As a result, a strategic response can be found to respond to the demand for placements in the city. This is a local solution to seeking, registering, checking and vetting placements. It provides a central point for schools and providers to come to and it avoids replication and competition across the city. It ties all schools and providers into a provision map and enables all partners to influence what provision is offered in Nottingham. The result is a comprehensive and responsive programme designed to meet the current demands in the area.

## The providers

City schools and academies have high expectations of all young people who live in Nottingham. They want to ensure that they are safe, receive a good education and are equipped with the necessary skills that will enable them to succeed in work and life.

To achieve this, the Nottingham headteachers' partnership (NCSEP) has agreed that annual verification and evaluation visits will be conducted with all providers offering alternative provision to young people living in Nottingham. To become an approved provider of alternative education in Nottingham, the provider will have to demonstrate that they:

- meet the criteria as set out in the Compliance Quality Assurance and Safeguarding Checklist and SQA
- deliver teaching and learning, which is at least good or outstanding
- will monitor attendance and progress using the Collaborative Learning Manager (CLM) online data system
- agreed to continue to improve their service by attending courses run by NCSEP.

## The schools

Schools wishing to refer students to alternative provision have to complete the online referral form. Once submitted, the partnership will check it and forward it on to the relevant provider.

It is the responsibility of the school, before placing a learner onto alternative provision, to ensure that a detailed Safeguarding and Quality Agreement (SQA) is in place and signed by, both, the home institution and provider.

The SQA sets out a framework for 14 to 19 provision delivered by external providers in Nottingham City Schools. Its aim is to:

- safeguard learners participating in off-site programmes
- raise attainment
- widen progression opportunities.

The purpose of this Agreement is to:

- ensure that all partners understand their roles and responsibilities in arranging and delivering collaborative provision
- confirm that by being signatories to this Agreement, all partners agree to work together to provide quality learning experiences for young people
- confirm partners' commitments to fulfil their statutory duties of care and safeguarding of learners which is outlined in the safeguarding checklist completed by all providers.

## Resources

The [website](#) contains downloadable resources about Quality Assurance Process, CLM data system, Progression, Qualification Support, Training Events and Training Resources.

The **search facility** has been specifically designed for schools seeking to place learners into alternative provision within Nottingham. Schools can search under a number of characteristics: qualification, awarding body, qualification level and post code.

Each provider sets out a full description of its provision, together with contact details. Most importantly, there are links to the essential quality-assurance files which contain three key documents: Quality Assurance Compliance Visit; Quality Assurance Evaluation Visit.

As a result of this support, alternative providers are offering a more effective service and there are better links between them and schools. Success rates are rapidly improving across Level 1 and Level 2 courses in vocational areas including engineering, construction, sport, media, music technology and hairdressing. Nearly all students make progress into further education, training or apprenticeships, often in related, vocational areas. Improved success

rates for students on these courses are anticipated to make a significant contribution to each school's GCSE pass rates. Overall, school attendance has improved over time, and this is reflected in the attendance records of many students on the off-site programmes.

## The provider

Should you wish to discuss the work of NCSEP in more detail, please contact using the information below.

Contact: Anna White – Strategic Director for Inclusion, Nottingham City Secondary Education Partnership (NCSEP)

E mail: [a.white@fernwoodschoo.org.uk](mailto:a.white@fernwoodschoo.org.uk)

Or visit: [www.alternative-provision-nottingham.co.uk](http://www.alternative-provision-nottingham.co.uk)

To view other good practice examples, go to: [www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/goodpractice](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/goodpractice)

Are you thinking of putting these ideas into practice; or already doing something similar that could help other providers; or just interested? We'd welcome your views and ideas. Get in touch [here](#).

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