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**CASE STUDY:** ANNIESLAND COLLEGE: AN INTRODUCTION TO  
EARLY EDUCATION AND CHILDCARE

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## Rationale

In 2002, the Education and Childcare Workforce Survey revealed that, not only were there around 2300 unfilled childcare posts across Scotland, but that only 62% of childcare staff in Scotland held some form of qualification.

Anniesland College has been helping to increase the number of qualified childcare workers by offering the Introduction to Early Education and Childcare programme. And with Glasgow identified as one of seven NEET hotspot areas, we also wanted to re-engage young people who have either become disaffected by, or disengaged from, the learning process.

We therefore developed a bespoke curriculum to meet the learning needs, styles and career aspirations of disaffected young people that would lead to SQA qualifications. This curriculum includes SQA's National Progression Award (NPA) in Playwork and Childcare at SCQF level 5, Core

Skills Units, and a Practical Writing Skills Unit. It aims to:

- improve the employability of the learners by giving them access to a nationally-recognised SQA Group Award
- create a progression route to registration with the Scottish Social Services Council
- foster and develop vocationally-relevant skills through practical training

## Engagement

Designed with a clear progression pathway to registration with the Scottish Social Services Council, the Introduction to Early Education and Childcare programme is marketed to young people who may be 'quietly disaffected' and who may have 'issues around motivation, confidence and soft skills'. Specialist or targeted interventions are not always available for this group.

Anniesland's curriculum includes the NPA in Playwork and Childcare, together with SQA Core Skills, and can be adapted to suit a wide range of learner needs and learning styles. Learners who struggle with the curriculum may, with guidance and support, obtain recognition for those elements where they have been successful (eg the six Units of the NPA). So even if learners only partially achieve, it still equates to a positive and meaningful learning outcome that enhances self-confidence.

Good collaboration between the departments for Social and Community Studies and Learner Development contributes to a supportive learning environment, which helps develop confidence, self-esteem and strong group dynamics amongst the learners.



We also work with providers to embed a practical training placement within the course framework (one day each week over 24 weeks). Regular college-placement liaison enables us to assess some of the practical elements within the placements – which helps to contextualise the learning experience and make it meaningful and vocationally-relevant.

## Successful course delivery

As mentioned previously, we aim to create a student-centred, supportive learning environment within which learners can develop confidence and self-esteem.

Using citizenship as a focus for the SQA Core Skills: Working with Others Unit, the students take part in learner-directed fundraising tasks for local organisations – and in doing so develop skills they can use in employment.

We use a secure class-only social network website which the students helped to develop. This has led to improved access to staff for the learners and enhanced group interaction and cohesion amongst the first cohort of 12 students, who were from four different schools. It also provides a means of expression for learners who are not comfortable in group settings.

We also apply new technologies throughout the course but especially within Working with Others and Practical Writing Skills as these Units are particularly suited to using ICT. We also have an Anniesland College Childcare 'Bebo' page with hyperlinks to the Virtual Learning Environment and college website. It also features links to educational websites and video clips, to exploit the opportunities presented by this informal technology as a portal to formal learning.

Students have said:

'The lecturers and tutors understand me more. It's hard but if you want to end up with the qualification you just have to stick in.'

## Assessment approaches and flexible assessment

SQA has used aspects of the workplace Unit Working with Children and Young People to pilot e-portfolio assessment. Students compile coursework reports and reflective accounts of workplace practice using the Mahara e-portfolio system. Social networking and messaging within an educational context are added features of this method of assessment. They support learner engagement while enhancing group interaction and cohesion.

Using ICT to support learning and teaching also promotes the development of skills that are transferable to practice within early years' settings – eg recording observations of children's progress.

## Progression

The NPA was embedded within the course framework because of the endorsement of suitability for support worker registration it received from the Scottish Social Services Council.

This Group Award at SCQF level 5 also offers learners a meaningful incentive and manageable goals, depending on individual learner needs. It is a nationally-recognised qualification which can be used to secure employment within the childcare



sector, or to pursue a vocational approach to further study in a related field.

Learners who achieve the NPA and Core Skills Units can progress to the National Certificate in Early Education and Childcare at SCQF level 6 within Anniesland College.

‘This course is adaptable to a range of learner needs and learning styles. This means that partial achievement of the course can still equate to a positive and meaningful learning outcome for candidates.’ (Tutor)

## Future delivery plans

We plan to develop this course by forging collaborative partnerships with employers in order to create a progression route to employment and further vocational training.

## On reflection

The main challenges that we experienced were:

- allocating time to integrate assessments
- funding and staffing constraints when setting up the e-portfolio system

These challenges were met, in part, by development time funded by the GOAL (Greater Opportunities and Access to Learning) project.

It is critical not to underestimate the value of developing ‘softer’ skills such as time-keeping and team working.

Offering learners the opportunity to inform the learning process had a positive impact on their motivation and levels of engagement. By using student preferences (eg for social networking), we benefited from:

- enhanced group interaction and cohesion
- increased accessibility to staff
- increased student participation – by providing a means of expression for all learners including those who may not be comfortable in group settings