



Skills for Work CASE STUDY

Early Education and Childcare Intermediate One and Two

Aberlour Child Care Trust (Children's Services Training and Assessment Centre) offered the initial pilot in session 05/06 in partnership with Hazlehead Academy and Cairn Training. When Hazlehead was joined a year later by Aberdeen Grammar School, Harlaw Academy, Torry Academy, Northfield Academy, St. Machar Academy and Oldmachar Academy for the second year pupil numbers rose to 92.

Rationale

Aberdeen boasts an extremely skilful and experienced training and learning sector for delivery of Early Years and Childcare Vocational training programmes.

Feedback from local employers involved in staff recruitment and training suggested that working links should be established with schools in order to promote the children's services sector effectively and appropriately.

It was also recognised that there was a need generally to raise awareness of the importance of childcare as a specialised job and not just one that anyone can do. In this sector, the future workforce will require a combination of appropriate skills and aptitudes to help to deliver positive outcomes for children.

The timely introduction of Skills for Work Courses was welcomed as they offered new learning opportunities to prepare pupils for the world of childcare work – outwith the traditional college route.





Partnership Arrangements

Hazlehead Academy and Aberlour gained SQA approval to deliver Intermediate 1 and 2 awards for session 05/06 with funding coming from the 'Determined to Succeed' budget. Aberlour increased delivery in the following session through additional arrangements with new partner schools.

The Partnership Agreement created the standards for delivery and this involved a team teaching methodology in the Home Economics Department, course delivery in school by Aberlour tutors and a timetable for Quality Assurance activities such as course planning, internal verification and ongoing evaluation for continuous improvement.

An Early Years Working Group, established within Aberdeen City Council, had responsibility to oversee the pilot programme and also the widening participation.

Delivery Approaches

From the outset, participating schools worked with Aberlour to produce course choice information for pupils and parents. Pupils were then selected not only on academic ability but also, and crucially, based on their interest in a career working with children.

Induction activities outlined the benefits of participation to pupils who were also introduced to Aberlour's established methods and approaches to course delivery. During this phase, pupils had a mixture of class-based learning activities and workplace experiences.

Pupils were asked key questions about the course including whether or not what they were learning would suit them and if it would fit into their ideas for a future career.

On timetables, the schools were able to choose the course level and timescale while Aberlour/Cairn Training provided tutors to fit. Similarly on staffing when schools chose between participating in a 'team teaching' approach, involving partnership with an Aberlour tutor, or course delivery entirely by Aberlour.

Assessment strategies involved the use of National Assessment Bank materials. Lessons and new learning support were designed by Aberlour tutors to provide interactive and experiential learning opportunities that took pupils' needs into account.

The course helped to set up good working links between school and local employers across the broad provision of children's services in Aberdeen. As this is an ongoing development, an increased participation and input from employers is keenly anticipated.

Aberlour have outlined specific challenges in delivering the course in schools by vocational tutors, pointing out that schools have a major role to play in promoting Skills for Work courses. In order to improve the quality of the course, assessment materials will be adapted to maintain relevance.

Equally, Aberlour highlighted a need to ensure that vocational tutors have the appropriate skills, qualities and qualifications to make sure schools have confidence in the quality of service.

Employability Skills

With a strong background in vocational education and training, as well as tutors with up-to-date direct practice and knowledge of working with children, Aberlour's course delivery ensured employability skills were fully integrated into each lesson plan.

The feedback from pupils is that they recognise that the employability skills developed are generic and will benefit them in any area of employment.



“ I know about the different types of play and understand more about how children learn and develop. I'm able to see things from their point of view and I've learned how important it is to be a good role model ”

View from a candidate

Centre Evaluation

Formal evaluation is carried out as part of Internal Verification procedures, which include input from pupils, teaching staff and senior management. Tutors attended Parents' Evenings where they took the opportunity to seek parental feedback.

Pupils have been positive about the course and said they had enjoyed visits to childcare centres, experiencing contact with children and undertaking the tasks associated with organising visits to local childcare settings and play areas.

Teachers' reaction has been equally positive but there has been a mixed response from parents. Some expressed concern about their children's choice in undertaking a vocational qualification, but they were reassured when they saw the quality of work pupils had to produce.

Local employers have been supportive as they recognise that the potential for a better skilled workforce is being developed.



Future Delivery Plans

The Aberlour Trust is keen to create flexibility in the programme to enable pupils to achieve their potential. As a result, it plans to seek approval to deliver Higher Early Education and Childcare.

It has a vision for the future and that is to create Early Education Learning Communities involving pupils, parents, employers and learning providers.

Advice

Clear partnership agreements are required, which are allied to careful timetabling to allow for visits to childcare settings, workplace experience plus careful selection of pupils.

“This course is going to build the future workforce and improve the lives of the children that pupils will come into contact with – including the lives of their own children”

View from an Aberlour tutor

