'SQUARE PEG – SQUARE HOLE' PERSONALISED CURRICULUM

EMCETT PRACTITIONER LED ACTION RESEARCH PROJECT

A project on personalising the curriculum by

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June 2014

BERA good research practice guidelines adopted throughout this research project – http://www.bera.ac.uk/publications/guidelines specific permission received through Linkage College for photographic material and quotes.

'SQUARE PEG – SQUARE HOLE' PERSONALISED CURRICULUM

Linkage College offers both residential and day provision and delivers personalised study programmes based around employability or independence, along with specialist support from highly trained teaching and support staff, personal and academic tutors, speech and language, communication and behaviour specialists. Linkage College uses a wide range of strategies and provisions to motivate stretch and challenge and enable learners. Linkage College works with Linkage Residential Services and Employment Services to ensure outstanding outcomes for all. Linkage College has two campuses within Lincolnshire and is currently opening another campus in Lincoln and a working partnership with South Staffordshire College will be opening in September 2014

Our Specialisms:

Down's syndrome, Autism, Asperger syndrome, Williams syndrome, Fragile X syndrome, speech and language difficulties, hearing impairment, epilepsy, MLD, SLD.

Age group catered for: 16-25

Course start dated and duration: Flexible - dependent on individual student need. Standard programmes run over a 38 week academic year but we do provide a 52 week curriculum dependent on individual need.

General information about the College:

Linkage College is an Independent Specialist College and one of the few colleges in the country to be rated as outstanding for student outcomes by Ofsted inspectors. We are one of the longest-established specialist colleges in the UK and are able to meet the needs of young people with a variety of learning disabilities/difficulties.

Curriculum:

By mixing our unique blend of classroom sessions, realistic working environments, work experience and student enterprise activities, you can be confident of success, shown by our track record of some of the highest qualification success rates in the country. We have an enviable reputation of exceeding expectations of what you can achieve when you first join us. Our choice of qualifications and skills development activities concentrate on individual need, focused around Independence and Employment.

Our students enjoy a range of courses, including retail, hospitality, customer service, business administration, performing arts, horticulture, media, maths, English and ICT. Not only that, Linkage also offers an exceptional level of work experience and enterprise opportunities. Learners gain invaluable hands-on work in our Enterprise facilities and work projects which includes: Wood'n'Stuff, Blooming Baskets, The Bistro, Image Factory and our two cafes – Linkage Green in Mablethorpe and the Gatehouse in Manby near Louth. Students also develop work skills through work experience placements with a wide range of local employers.

Specialist Resources:

Linkage College has established a very successful bespoke provision for individuals on the autistic spectrum who have complex needs including communication difficulties and anxiety disorders. The provision is a stepping stone for individuals who would ordinarily find it difficult to move straight into our specialist college environment.

The Learner engagement team at Linkage is a multi-disciplinary in-house team providing an extensive range of specialist support for a wide range of learners with differing needs. The team currently includes; personal tutors, emotional learning facilitators, a holistic therapist and a behaviour consultant. These teams work together with the clinical team; comprising speech and language therapists, makaton specialist, a physiotherapist, two consultant psychiatrists with expertise in learning disability, children and adolescents, a dual qualified practitioner (learning disability and mental health) and an educational psychologist; both advise on a variety of strategies relating to behaviour management, mental health issues and teaching and learning.

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'SQUARE PEG – SQUARE HOLE' PERSONALISED CURRICULUM

Acronyms

STAR	Specialist Transitionary autism resource
ASC	Autistic Spectrum Conditions
MLD / SLD LDD	Moderate / Severe Learning difficulties and disabilities
PECs	Picture exchange communication system
ILS	Independent living skills
PSD	Personal Social Development

Helpful hints to guide you through the project

Contact details:

linkage.org.uk

Synopsis

Learners with very severe and complex Autistic Spectrum Conditions (ASC) emotional, sensory and behavioural difficulties have been difficult to place and excluded from education. The methodology of 'fitting the learner' into the accreditation available has undoubtedly contributed to a lack of 'educational value' placed on this cohort of learners and will open up the social care / education debate. During the 13/14 academic year I have developed and implemented a competency based curriculum for Personal Social Development (PSD) that has replaced the banks of accreditation previously used. The competency areas collaborate with industry recognised competencies, four of the seven competencies have 10 levels, 5 pre-entry and 5 entry level to level 2, and all have option of personalising targets to meet everyone's needs.

Contents:

'SQUARE PEG – SQUARE HOLE' PERSONALISED CURRICULUM

Autistics are the ultimate square pegs, and the problem with pounding a square peg into a round hole is not that the hammering is hard work; it's that you're destroying the peg – Paul Collins (Google images 2014)

This **research project aims** to assess the extent that a bespoke personalised competency based Personal Social Development curriculum has had on engagement and achievement for this cohort of learners during the academic year 2013/14, essentially has a 'square peg fitted into a square hole'

Learners with very severe and complex Autistic Spectrum Conditions (ASC) emotional, sensory and behavioural difficulties have been difficult to place and often excluded from education in favour of social care provision. The methodology of 'fitting the learner' into accredited learning programmes available has undoubtedly contributed to a lack of 'educational value' placed on this cohort of learners.

NEW PROVISION FOR LINKAGE COLLEGE

The introduction and successful management of the first Specialist Transitionary Autism Resource (STAR) house at Linkage College has ensured that learners with severe complex and challenging behaviours who have been difficult to place and excluded from educational learning opportunities, benefit from effective personalised teaching, learning and assessment with a new competency curriculum that has been well matched to individual needs and interests at any given point in the development process further enabling community integration, tolerating and engaging in new experiences, meaningful employment projects and increased socialisation.

This innovative development is helping to re-define personalised inclusive education for all. At this time, particularly, when local authorities throughout the country are drawing up plans and training staff to deliver the national autism strategy, we feel we have a lot to offer the local authorities nationally in terms of what works for young people with high needs ASC. We are bringing together the concept of 'enabling' physical environments, extended transition pathways and personalised curriculum, in a service that is delivering remarkable results and has the potential to inform how support services are developed nationally.

SUCCESS AND POPULARITY OF LINKAGE STAR PROVISION

Ofsted inspectors (Feb 2013) highlighted this particular work in helping to deliver 'outstanding' outcomes for learners. Ofsted say that students participating in this specialist provision make 'very good and sometimes outstanding progress, particularly in managing their anxieties and other barriers to engage in formal learning.'

'In the specialist provision for students with autism and very high levels of need, skillful teachers choose the activities carefully, so that they relate to everyday life. One student was observed learning to use switch technology to turn on his music player, so that he could use it unaided in his room, something he had not previously been able to do.'

Ofsted (Feb 2013)

Such has been the success and popularity of Linkage College's first STAR house, that the service has now expanded to include two further provisions.

The concept of a physically enabling 'environment' is central to the development of this provision. The first STAR house was physically designed to accommodate four residential students in a combined living and learning environment to give them a 'stepping stone' into the wider environment of college and care. The idea is that students live and learn in the same building that offers consistency and familiarity through the environment, learning activities designed to build confidence, comfort and capability and consistency of care from a team of specially-trained teaching, pastoral and clinical staff who work closely together.

WHAT'S DIFFERENT?

'He seems to be progressing in a positive way with communication, personal hygiene and listening' Parental Quote 2014

A process of thorough pre-entry, initial, formative and summative assessment identifies realistic and appropriate long term destination goals and creates a highly personalised learning programme delivered through a competency curriculum which supports learners to achieve their personal ambitions and aspirations.

Our whole aim is to offer bespoke learning programmes with personalised curricula to young people who have demonstrated that with the right environment and support, achievement goes beyond all expectation so that these young people and adults are enabled to lead fulfilling and rewarding lives.

'We've noticed he is lot more vocal and happy' Parental Quote 2014

NEW DEVELOPMENTS

Pilot project launched

During the academic year 2012/13 a pilot STAR curriculum was delivered with successful outcomes for STAR learners, however this version of the personalised curriculum was not far reaching enough, lacked standardisation and was open to interpretation. Whilst the concept was sound there were particular difficulties concerning programme funding, progression routes, validity and wider understanding of the concept.

Study Programmes Arrive!

The introduction of the Study Programme methodology in 2013 enabled providers to structure the learning programmes into two categories, Independence or Employability. This needs to be coherent, appropriately challenging and supports the progression of the individual. The Wolf report (March 2011) identified a perverse incentive to include large numbers of qualifications within a student's programme which often lacked currency with employers. Students with learning difficulties and disabilities (LDD) can be exempt from qualifications within the study programme if their needs are better met and progression better supported through non-qualification activity.

The introduction of study programmes and traineeships from 2013/14 represents a significant change in the education and training offer for young people aged 16-19. The key features of these programmes are based on many of the recommendations in the 2011 Wolf Report. They are central to the Government's reform of 16-19 education and an important contribution to its commitment to raising educational attainment and achievement, particularly as the age of compulsory participation in education or training is being raised to 17 for 2013/14 and to 18 in 2015.

The broader study programme approach offers providers substantially more freedom in designing their full-time course provision, and is backed by a reformed funding system that is learner-led rather than programme-driven

'COMPETENCY FRAMEWORK'

STAGE 1

During the academic year 12/13 a pilot project was run to gauge the impact of personalised curriculum targets for the STAR cohort of learners. (See below) This pilot produced 100% achievement rates for the STAR cohort; however this curriculum lacked a framework, standardisation and progression routes.

❝The principle is competing against your-self. It's about self- improvement, about being better than you were the day before. ❞
Steve Young (Google quotes 2014)

STAR CURRICULUM

First version of STAR curriculum

Decision Making	
Personal Hygiene	To identify a need to use the toilet
	To wash hands after using the toilet
	To develop desensitisation to hand drier
	To identify when to clean teeth
	To identify when to shower
	To identify when to wash hair
	To identify when clothes are dirty
	To participate in personal care routine
	To close the door when using the toilet

Making choices	To point to chosen item
	To pick up chosen item
	To use pictorial choice card
	To demonstrate clear yes or no choice
	To demonstrate clear happy or sad choice
	To demonstrate clear like or dislike choice
	To demonstrate preference from 2 items
	To demonstrate preference from 3 items
	To demonstrate preference from 4 items

Social relationships	
Communication strategies	To sign a greeting to another person
	To ask for help using sign
	To say hello to another person
	To say goodbye to another person
	To ask for help
	To use PECs to greet another person
	To use PECs to communicate need / choice
	To combine two communication methods

Interaction with others	To share personal space with another person with support
	To share personal space with another person
	To share personal space with more than one person with support
	To share personal space with more than one person
	To accept presence of familiar visitor
	To accept presence of unfamiliar visitor
	To remain in classroom for 30 minutes

KEY OUTCOMES OF 1ˢᵗ PILOT

The new cohort of STAR learners required a very personalised curriculum targets at a level not provided by awarding bodies. The first trial version of the STAR curriculum (as shown). This trial then led to the development of the competency framework and the development of 7 key competency areas

4 competencies areas to have 5 pre-entry levels and 5 post-entry levels

3 competency areas to have 5 post-entry levels

Substantive qualifications at Level 1 and Level 2 (technical competency)

'COMPETENCY FRAMEWORK'

STAGE 2

During the academic year 13/14 the pilot project was extended to incorporate 7 competencies popular with the employment market. A framework was designed for all 7 competencies (See below). Each framework has been assessed using the RARPA (recognising and recording progress and achievement) methodology. Learners are able to relate all aspects of formal and informal learning to their progress record until they achieved full competency. It has been important to establish comparable levels for the competencies against National Standards to ensure a robust standardization system. (Please see next page for comparable levels) Further developments have been needed to make the recording of achievement less onerous and to establish a cohesive and valid assessment system. Social Relationships – Understanding and demonstrating how to interact with others to produce positive and fulfilling relationships. Example of one competency framework

| STAR A

With 1:1 support | STAR B

With 1:1 support | STAR C

With 1:1 support | STAR D

With 1:1 support | STAR E

With 1:1 support | STAGE A

With support | STAGE B

With occasional support | STAGE C

With occasional prompts | STAGE D

Independently | STAGE E

Independently |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Responds to own name

Gains attention from another using non-verbal approaches | Participation in conversation with another is fully prompted

Tolerates another for a short period of time

Uses assistive methods of communication to gain attention | Responds consistently to familiar people with prompts

Shows interest in unfamiliar people

Gives reactions that show willingness to interact with others

Responds to others with emerging assistive communicative confidence | Joins in conversations in preferred way with familiar people willingly

Communicates preferences consistently answering direct questions

Gives effective responses to simple questions

Discusses self with others and can make requests from others

Recognises extreme emotion in others | Is proactive in initiating conversation with others

Actively seeks company of others for an extended period of time

Greets people and uses emerging conventional communication

Uses growing vocabulary of key words related to conversation subject | Communicates issues that relate to their experiences to familiar people

Accepts and nurtures a close circle of friends

Uses and reads facial expressions / body language and responds appropriately

Makes requests, asks questions and communicates own opinion | Takes turns in conversations and listens to others

Recognises boundaries and differences between friendship and professional relationships

Supplies potential solutions to friendship problems / disagreements with others

Identifies subjects and actions that could cause conflict | Demonstrates awareness of the social conventions of discussion and conversation

Identifies and respects differences in others

Identifies possible consequences of breaching boundaries in relationships

Recognises other's needs and responds to them | Communicates clearly and effectively in a way that suits the audience using a wide and subject specific vocabulary

Recognises that others have different beliefs, attitudes and interests and values other's opinions

Adapts behaviour to suit different roles and situations showing fairness and consideration to others

Recognises unfair situations and contributes solutions

Acts as an advocate for others | Demonstrates the ability to:

learn from experiences of others, listens perceptively evaluating content

observe and control behaviour to successfully participate in social relationships

put things into context and solve problems with others

anticipate future possibilities based on past experience

Make significant contributions to discussions, taking a range of roles moving the discussion forward |

'COMPETENCY FRAMEWORK'

STAGE 2

Comparable Level Indicators for Competencies against National Framework Standards

Personal Social Development / Independent Living Skills	Comparable Level	PSD accredited Courses	Functional Skills	Employability
STAR Stage A-D	Pre-Entry Level	Competency Framework	Competency Framework	Social Enterprise work Projects
STAR Stage E / Stage A	Entry Level 1	Personal Progress	Personal Progress The Cambridge Award City and Guilds Functional Skills	Social Enterprise work Projects
Stage B	Entry Level 2	ASDAN PSD	The Cambridge Award City and Guilds Functional Skills	Stage B Competencies
Stage C	Entry Level 3	BTEC Performing Arts BTEC Art DofE Bronze ASDAN PSD	The Cambridge Award/Cert City and Guilds Functional Skills Maths/English/ICT Creative Media Award/Cert	City and Guilds Vocational Qualifications Employability and Personal Development
Stage D	Level 1 GCSE D-F	Sports Leaders Award BTEC Performing Arts BTEC Art DofE Silver ASDAN PSD	The Cambridge Award/Cert City and Guilds Functional Skills Maths/English/ICT Creative Media Award/Cert	City and Guilds Vocational Qualifications Employability and Personal Development
Stage E	Level 2 GCSE A-C	Sports Leaders Award BTEC Performing Arts BTEC Art DofE Gold ASDAN PSD	The Cambridge Award/Cert City and Guilds Functional Skills Maths/English/ICT Creative Media Award/Cert	City and Guilds Vocational Qualifications Employability and Personal Development

'COMPETENCY FRAMEWORK'

STAGE 3

Left panel

Competency Area	Social Relationships
Stage STAR B	It is expected that at this level that once fully prompted a learner will be able to communicate with another person but not consistently or for a prolonged period of time

At the beginning of a STAR B competency in Social Relationships a typical learner might be isolated from others, remains passive or resists friendships

It is expected that a STAR B learner will develop the competency to participate in a fully prompted conversation, tolerate another person for a short period of time and uses assistive methods of communication to gain attention

Aim 1	Participate in a fully prompted conversation
Aim 2	Tolerate another person for a short period of time
Aim 3	Use assistive methods of communication to gain attention

Behavioural Indicators	Range	Scope of Evidence	Assessment Methods
Participate in a fully prompted conversation	In at least 3 different environments	College, Home, Community	Observation, Witness Statements, ROA
Tolerate another person for a short period of time	With one familiar person With one unfamiliar person	College, Home, Community	Observation, Witness Statements, ROA
Use assistive methods of communication to gain attention	With one familiar person With one unfamiliar person	College, Home, Community Makaton, PEC's, Communication aids	Observation, Witness Statements, ROA

Right panel

Assessment Record

Learner name	Competency area	Stage	Start date	Summative end date
	Social relationships	STAR B		

Behaviour indicator	Scope	Formative assessment Date and Sign matrix	Summative assessment Date and sign matrix
Participation in conversation with another is fully prompted	Home		
	College		
	Community		

DECISION MAKING

RECOGNISING AND RESPECTING OTHERS

DEVELOPING SELF

COLLABORATION WITH OTHERS

Stage 3 of the competency framework now has defined and comparable standardised levels and a standardised assessment record. Each competency has a developed range and scope to assist the deliverer and ensure competence is recognised and recorded throughout the learner's entire education and social journey in all environments.

DEVELOPING SELF

MANAGING OWN TIME

SAFETY AWARNESS

'COMPETENCY FRAMEWORK'

READ ALL ABOUT IT!

This action research project is concerned with the STAR learner cohort. Whilst this group is not excluded from the competencies of Safety Awareness, Recognising and Respecting Others and Managing Own Time, the following four competencies have been developed with 5 pre-entry levels that are considered most appropriate for this cohort of learners. Each competency area has a set of behavioural indicators that must be assessed and completed for the competency area and level to be achieved. The following example is based upon a STAR stage B competency level.

Social Relationships

Understanding and demonstrating how to interact with others to produce positive and fulfilling relationships

Collaboration with Others

Has a shared vision that puts the desired team outcome first, is clear about targets and priorities and agrees these together. Includes all members ensuring that nobody feels left out or undervalued

Decision Making

Makes clear, consistent, transparent and timely decisions

Developing Self

Sets well defined and realistic personal goals
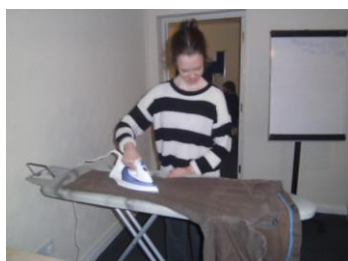
'We know he is learning independent living skills really well' Parental Quote

'COMPETENCY FRAMEWORK'

RHETORIC

Stage 1 - Pilot project initiated in 2012 – using existing pre-entry level accreditation PSD / ILS curriculum altered to meet the needs of the new STAR learner cohort. The new cohort has considerable emotional, sensory and behavioural difficulties and the current curriculum and accreditation does not meet their needs. The staff team explored the immediate needs of each learner and put together a mini curriculum that addressed immediate needs, for example toilet training, accepting a new person in the room, desensitising individuals from their sensitivities. Whilst this methodology had good grounding and intention it lacked co-ordination and standardisation. This made tracking progress and securing further funding difficult.

Stage 2 – Development of competency framework in 2013 – research from employment markets informed the competencies chosen. Each competency was then given a descriptor and behavioural indicators were defined appropriate to stage level. Four competencies were chosen to have 5 pre-entry levels with behavioural indicators based on the needs and potential development of this cohort of learners. PSD and ILS curricula were re-written to set targets at the appropriate levels for the behavioural indicators. RARPA process was set in place and a record of achievement process implemented to compile a portfolio of evidence for each learner. Whilst the framework was set there was further development needed to ensure standardisation across delivery, the competency stages required comparable levelling to meet the needs of commissioners understanding and tracking of progress, and ensuring all staff were aware that all learning and development contributing to the achievement of the behavioural indicators in a holistic manner.

Stage 3 – 2014 - Development of 'competency accreditation' pack in 2014 that includes explanation of comparable levels against other accreditation, range and scope, descriptor of skill set before and after to establish correct competencies and levels at initial assessment stage. Further development on personalised curriculum, competency framework supports personalised target setting and all learning is attributed to meeting the behavioural indicators of each competency set. Move from 'classroom' teaching and meeting 'accreditation targets' which often stifled creativity within session planning as the learners were taught in relation to the accreditation targets they needed to meet to achieve. Learners are now able to maximise their strengths within environments that suit their needs whilst being encouraged and supported to further develop themselves, their tolerances, practical skills and ambitions.

Stage 4 – 2015 complete 'accreditation' working packs, with a robust assessment system, use, define and develop during 2015 academic year. Plan to secure accreditation status in 2015, prepare packs for marketing including training.

'COMPETENCY FRAMEWORK'

REALITY

On entry STAR Learner receives all or most education within the STAR house, often refusing to mix with other learners and will not engage in a wider environment

Often taking until their second year at college, a STAR learner begins to accept transition to the STAR education unit on each main college campus, and will begin to engage with others and accept new learning environment

During a third and final year at the college a STAR learner will be integrating into college life and using the main campus with confidence. Some learners will be accessing a social enterprise work placement, and will be adhering to rules and routines

Extensive transition process supported by Linkage College. Learners are now less reliant upon high levels of support and are moving to other FE opportunities, supported community living and supported employment

Force field analysis (Kurt Lewin 1946) is a method of analysing the positive and negative forces acting on a process. It then allows an organisation to see what positive forces need to be reinforced and what negative forces need to be dealt with. The following diagram, positive and negative forces on either side demonstrated the forces at work for this particular project and not as an organisation as a whole.

DRIVING

RESTRAINING

Staff commitment

Quality culture

Willingness to improve

Personalisation of provision holistic delivery ethos

Restrictions on funding

Investment in specialisms

Lack of wider understanding

within funding arenas

Value of education for pre-entry

cohort

STUDENTS SPEAK!

In order to gain opinion about the new competencies from the STAR learner cohort it was necessary to observe behaviour and engagement on and within all learning activities. Staff have kindly kept a record spanning one month and including 120 hours of education activity per learner. Staff have also been able to identify the particular activities the learners have engaged in most. For example painting, cooking, ipad. The graphs displayed show either learner happy and engaged or unhappy and disengaged in the following areas: PSD, ILS, Functional skills, Community activities.

The entire STAR cohort consists of 12 males and 1 female. 10 of 13 surveys were returned equating to 77% return rate.

The cohort included 9 males, 1 female equating to 90% of the STAR cohort being males as is correlated by the condition – ASC affects more males than females (National Autism Society). 3 non-returns are also male.
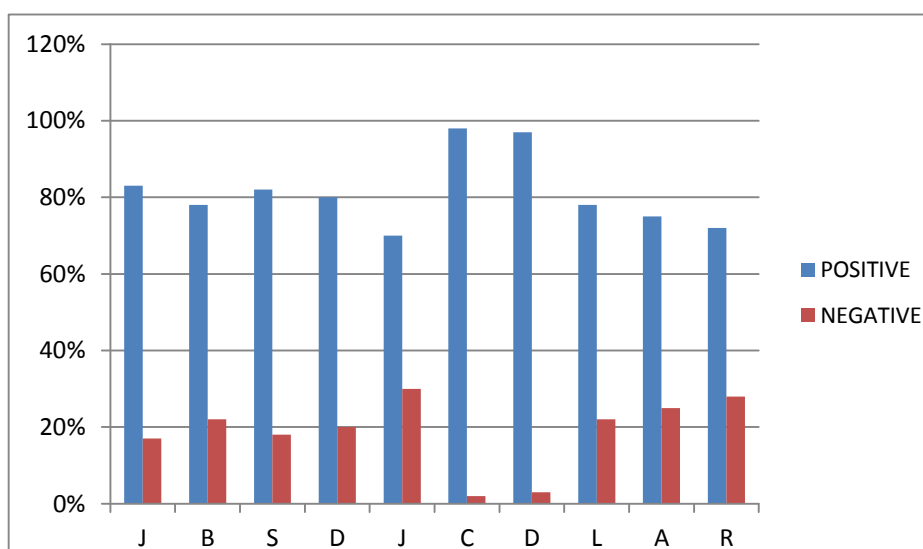

'The reduction of incidents, both in frequency and severity would suggest he is happy and feels understood and supported by staff. His programme is increasing his independence whilst reinforcing current skills so they become transferable. This is happening in a gradual way suitable to his level of concentration, motivation and behaviour limits. The programme focus is appropriate for his long term goal'. Parental quote 2014

Average overall positive engagement equates to 975 of 1200 hours this equates to 98 hours per learner (82%)

Average overall negative engagement equates to 225 of 1200 hours this equates to 22 hours per learner (18%)

This is a good indicator that the competency framework is enabling flexibility and personalisation for each individual. 2012/13 records demonstrate average attendance and engagement was 85%, however sessions were mainly within the STAR house and not in multiple environments as now. 2014 records indicate a decrease in behaviour linked to anxiety and a reduction in physical behaviour. This cohort of learners has also demonstrated progress to new environments as highlighted in later charts.
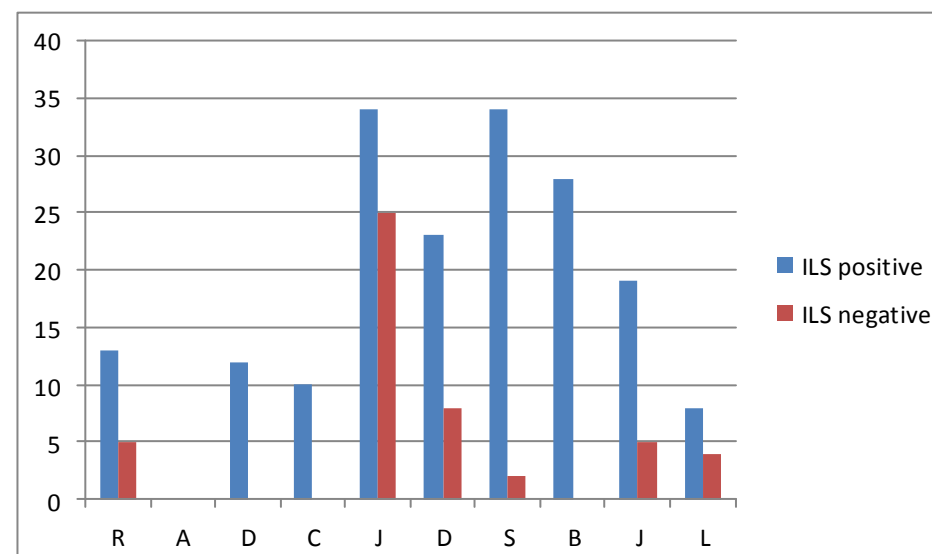
STUDENTS SPEAK!

PSD positive
PSD negative

0 -100 = % (R,A,D,C,J,D,S,B,J,L) = learner identification labels
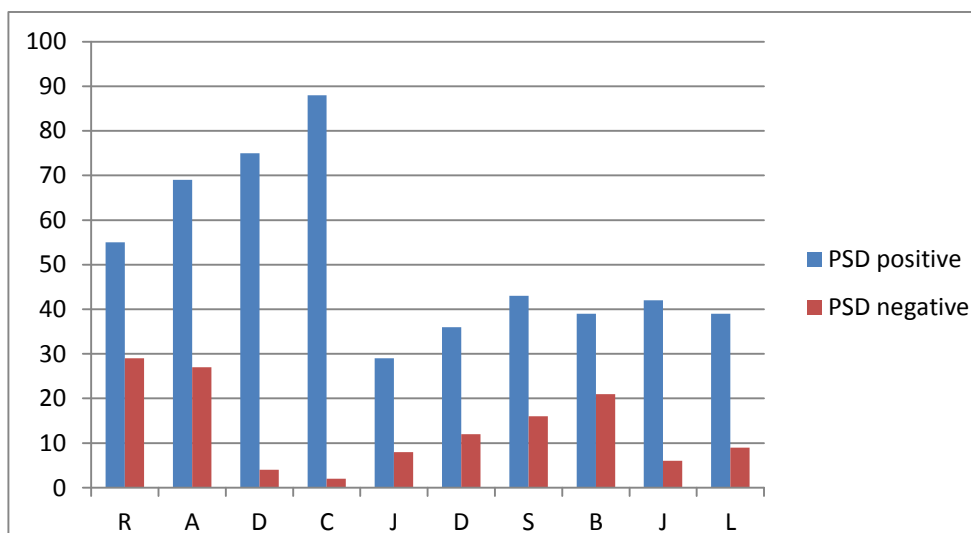
Personal Social Development: overall average of 651 hours of 1200 equating to 54% of the survey time. There is an overall positive average of 515 hours (79%) and an overall negative average of 136 hours (21%)

Personalised curriculum activities include: Art, games. Gardening including stocking the sensory garden with bird boxes and wind chimes, sensory games and room, motor bike project, tea making, recycling, shredding, group discussions. This cohort also created art work for a community exhibition selling 20% of work to private buyers.

ILS positive
ILS negative

Independent Living skills: overall average hours of 230 hours of 1200 hours equating to 19% of the survey time. There is a positive overall average of 182 of 230 hours (79%) and an overall negative average of 49 of 230 hours (21%)

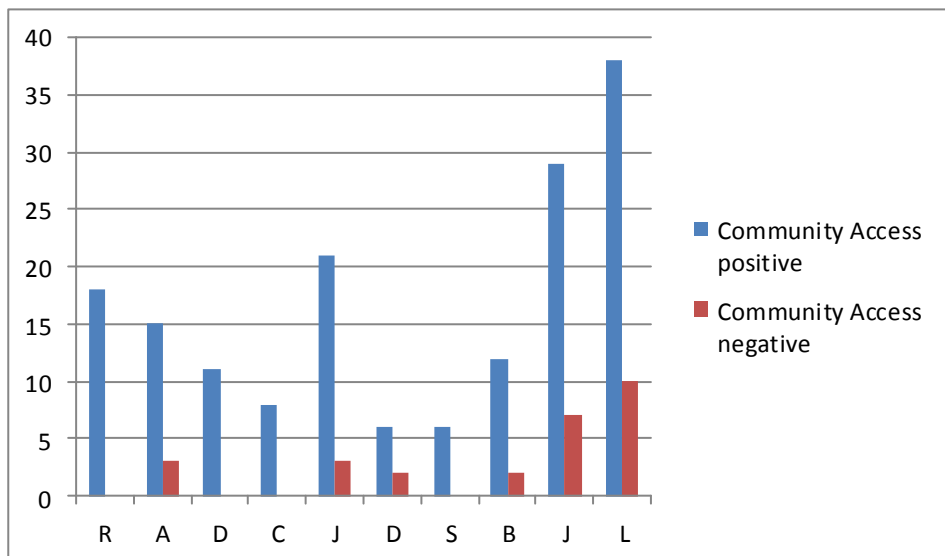Personalised curriculum activities include:

Supported meal making, house tasks

Healthy eating (many learners have particular dietary sensitivities)

Road safety, shopping etiquette, payment for goods

Toileting - , personal hygiene, safety issues, toleration of clothing,

STUDENTS SPEAK!

Community Access: overall average hours of 191 hours of 1200 hours equating to16% of the survey time. There is a positive overall average of 164 of 191hours (86%) and an overall negative average of 27 of 191 hours (14%)

Personalised curriculum

Swimming, gym, trampolining, horse riding, walking, cycling, work experience, shopping, disco, youth club, theme parks, cultural activities, library
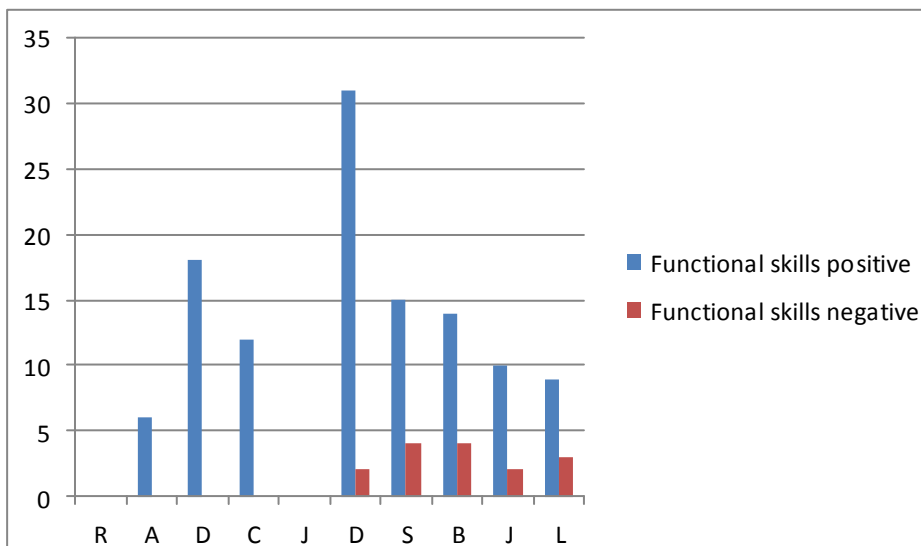
Functional Skills: overall average hours of 130 hours of 1200 hours equating to 11% of the survey time. There is a positive overall average of 115 of 130 hours (88%) and an overall negative average of 15 of 130 hours (12%)
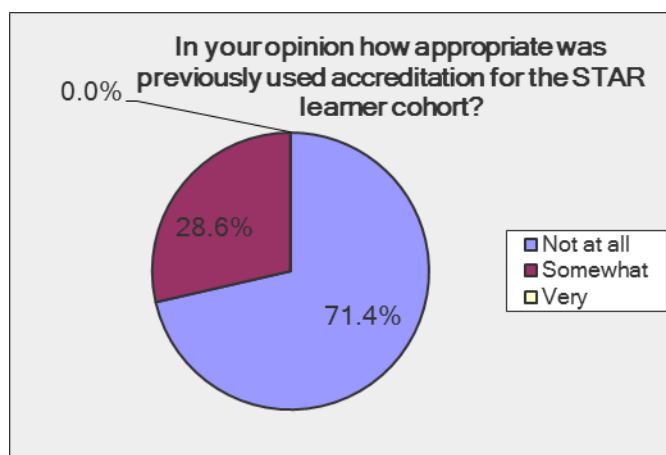
Personalised curriculum

Ipad, specialist apps, internet, Skype, ICT, total communication strategies

STAFF SPEAK!

| In your opinion how appropriate was previously used accreditation for the STAR learner cohort?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Not at all	71.4%	5
Somewhat	28.6%	2
Very	0.0%	0
Why? Comments:		7

Staff commented that previously used qualifications did not meet the needs of individual learners, however those units that practical based and had an emphasis on group participatory work were beneficial. Some learners 'got a lot' out of the units, using technology in the home and community, preparing for work, managing own money and road safety. Rigidity and structured nature of the qualifications did not truly reflect the achievements that were made by the individual. The learner would not understand what they were doing. It was very difficult to personalise and get 'buy in' from the learners for something as complicated as accreditation. This meant nothing to the learners and was almost a tick box exercise for external agencies rather than student progress.

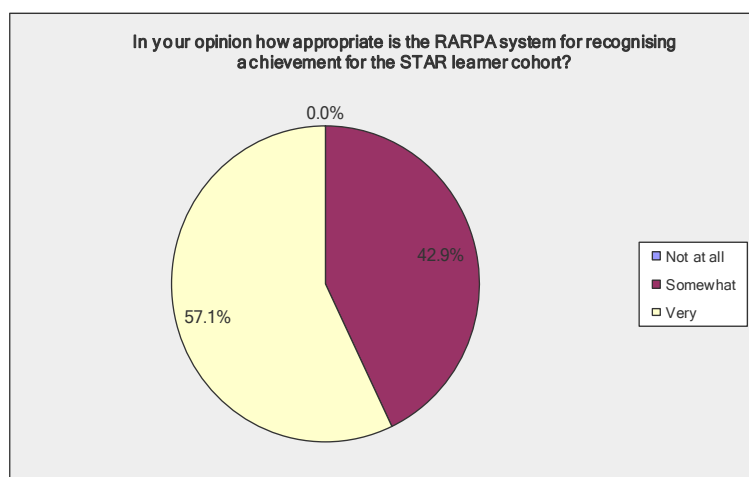| In your opinion how appropriate is the competency based curriculum for the STAR learner cohort?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Not at all	0.0%	0
Somewhat	28.6%	2
Very	71.4%	5
Why? Comments:		7

In your opinion how appropriate is the competency based curriculum for the STAR learner cohort?

Not at all	
Somewhat	28.6%
Very	71.4%
	0.0%
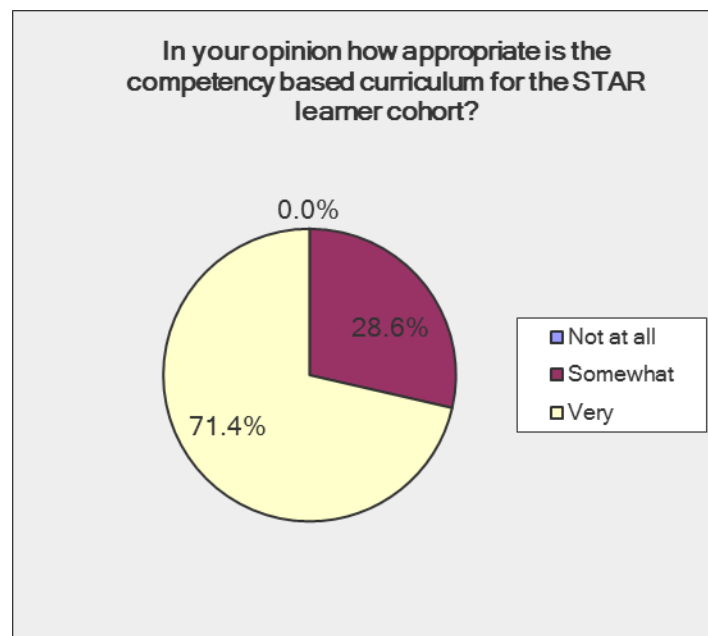
'We are able to personalise targets, add targets, and further develop targets. I nearly ticked very good, but that would suggest it does not need reviewing at all. I like the system and feel the majority of targets are appropriate, however there is a lack of subject specific targets'. 'Flexible and fluid which is able to show the small steps that have been achieved to reach the bigger goal'. 'Learner does still not necessarily understand the competence they are doing'. 'It gives the opportunity to identify the areas of priority for development, working on these in a flexible way, meeting the needs of the learners through a range of activities within the college, home and environment'. 'The competency based curriculum for STAR learners is far more appropriate. It allows individuality and personalisation for each individual. It shows far more progress rather than an arbitrary measure such as accreditation and therefore fits the learner's needs to a greater degree'.

In your opinion how appropriate is the RARPA system for recognising achievement for the STAR learner cohort?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Not at all	0.0%	0
Somewhat	42.9%	3
Very	57.1%	4
Why? Comments:		6

In your opinion how appropriate is the RARPA system for recognising achievement for the STAR learner cohort?

Not at all	
Somewhat	42.9%
Very	57.1%
	0.0%

'We are able to record any successful achievement within the competency structure'.

'Requires less learner created evidence'.

'RARPA allows timely evaluation and feedback to individuals and is far more appropriate than accreditation'.

In your opinion do the behavioural indicators within the competency framework accurately reflect skill sets needed to consistently develop increased confidence and independence for the STAR learner cohort?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Not at all	0.0%	0
Somewhat	28.6%	2
Very	71.4%	5
Why? Comments:		5
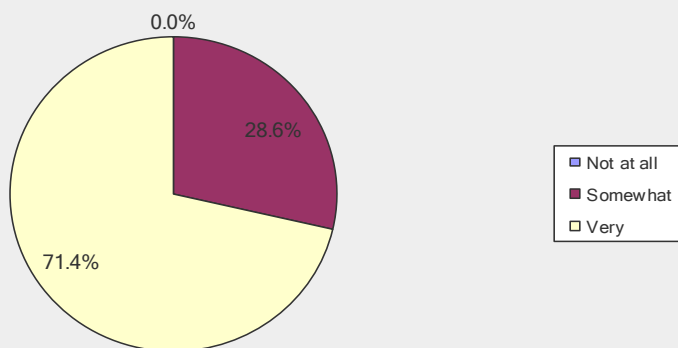
'The competencies reflect the development of social skills, communication and interaction with others. These skills are vital in achieving a greater sense of independence for individuals and making choices within their lives'.

'Learners work on priority areas which develops their skill sets and increases their confidence as they become as independent as possible within routines of daily life'.

'They are far more tailored to the students than an accredited award. They allow key areas of the learning to be highlighted and achieved'.

In your opinion has the system of personalising the competency framework curriculum targets aided learning and achievement for the STAR learner cohort?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Not at all	0.0%	0
Somewhat	28.6%	2
Very	71.4%	5
Why? Comments:		7

In your opinion has the system of personalising the competency framework curriculum targets aided learning and achievement for the STAR learner cohort?

- Not at all
- Somewhat
- Very

0.0%
28.6%
71.4%
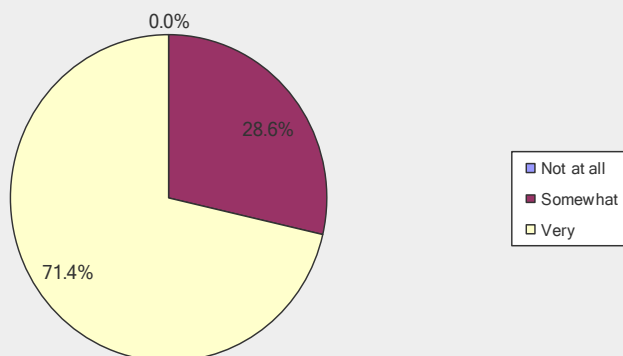
'Definitely – it is much more personal to the learner and there is more scope to generate further targets individualised to meet learner's specific needs'

'There needs to be greater personalization – we have the opportunity to make bespoke individualised curricula which I feel has not been fully explored and implemented'

'It has enabled us to show a wider range of achievement for individuals who have found conventional or structured accredited learning difficult to complete or engage in'.

'The activities can be tailored to the learner's interests and it enables learners to try new activities and return to them if not at first successful'.

In your opinion are the STAR learner cohort more engaged with the competency framework than previously with accreditation?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	85.7%	6
No	14.3%	1

In your opinion are the STAR learner cohort more engaged with the competency framework than previously with accreditation?

- Yes
- No

14.3%
85.7%
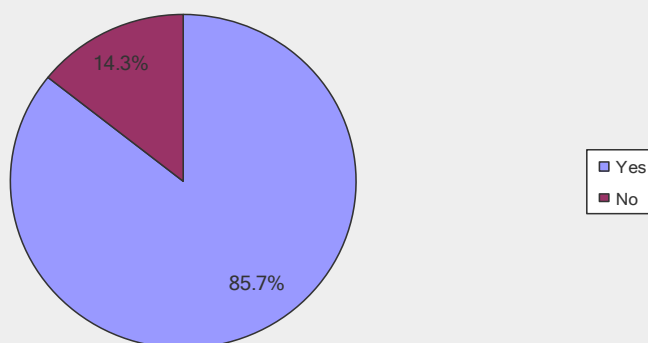
'Have seen signs of maturity, much improved behaviour and results. She is becoming more independent. Her attendance and time keeping has improved. Programme is keeping her interested, engaged and on task. Overall delighted with progress' Parental comment 2014

Please indicate approximate increase in engagement in sessions

'I would say on average 75% but this is dependent on individual and task'

'Anything between two minutes to an hour depending on the learner and the circumstances of the day'

'Each STAR learner has attended more sessions ad all have been transitioned from the STAR houses to the complex needs area on college sites, local community and in some instances main college campus'
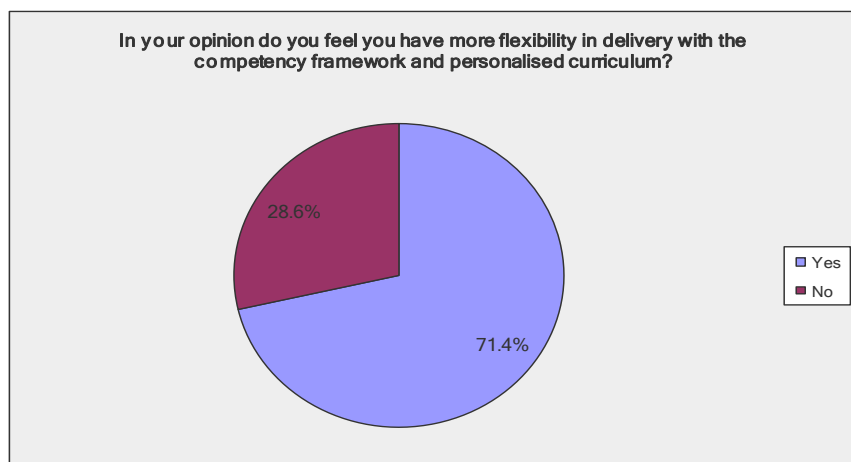
'Approximately 90% increase, other 10% lack of engagement may be because of behaviours and anxieties'

Please indicate approximate increase in length of time engaged on task

'In my opinion the length of time has increased from 10 minutes to 25 minutes'

'Depends on each learner and on contributing factors beyond our control but probably up to 15 minutes which is outstanding'

In your opinion do you feel you have more flexibility in delivery with the competency framework and personalised curriculum?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	71.4%	5
No	28.6%	2

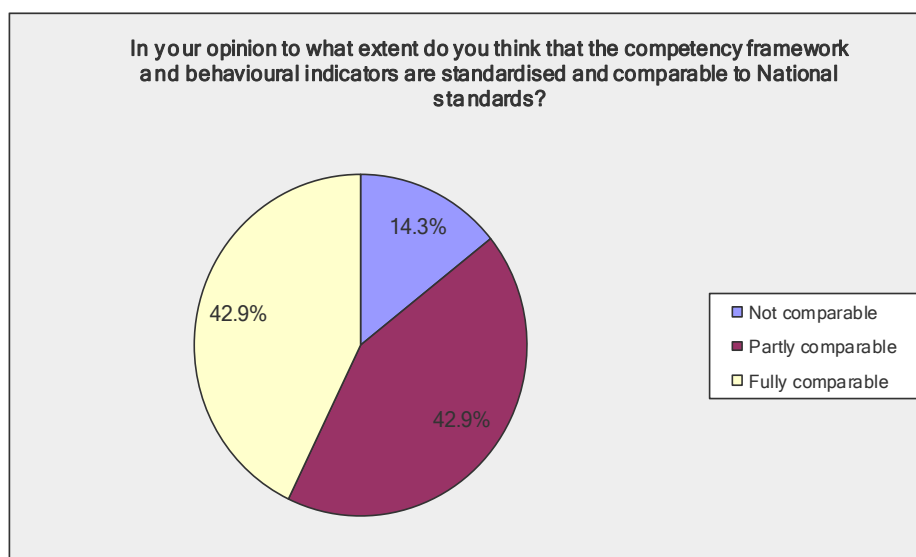**Please give examples of improved flexibility**

'If something isn't working then it can be changed to suit learner need'

'Each learner has an individualised timetable and sessions to suit their needs, which allows each learner to take part in more sessions they are more likely to enjoy'.

'Sessions can be very flexible and relate to individual needs and likes. Wider scope of activities and tasks can be related to the competency targets'.

'Allowing individual interests to shape competency, for example, a student who enjoys walking can do this activity whilst undertaking Safety Awareness, Social relationships, Collaboration with Other and Developing Self competencies. Therefore learner engagement really increases as they can link learning to existing skills and interests'.

In your opinion to what extent do you think that the competency framework and behavioural indicators are standardised and comparable to National standards?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Not comparable	14.3%	1
Partly comparable	42.9%	3
Fully comparable	42.9%	3

In your opinion to what extent do you think that the competency framework and behavioural indicators are standardised and comparable to National standards?

14.3%
42.9%
42.9%

Not comparable
Partly comparable
Fully comparable

Since the introduction of the competency framework and curriculum would you say your teaching practice has become more experiential?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	71.4%	5
No	28.6%	2

Since the introduction of the competency framework and curriculum would you say your teaching practice has become more experiential?
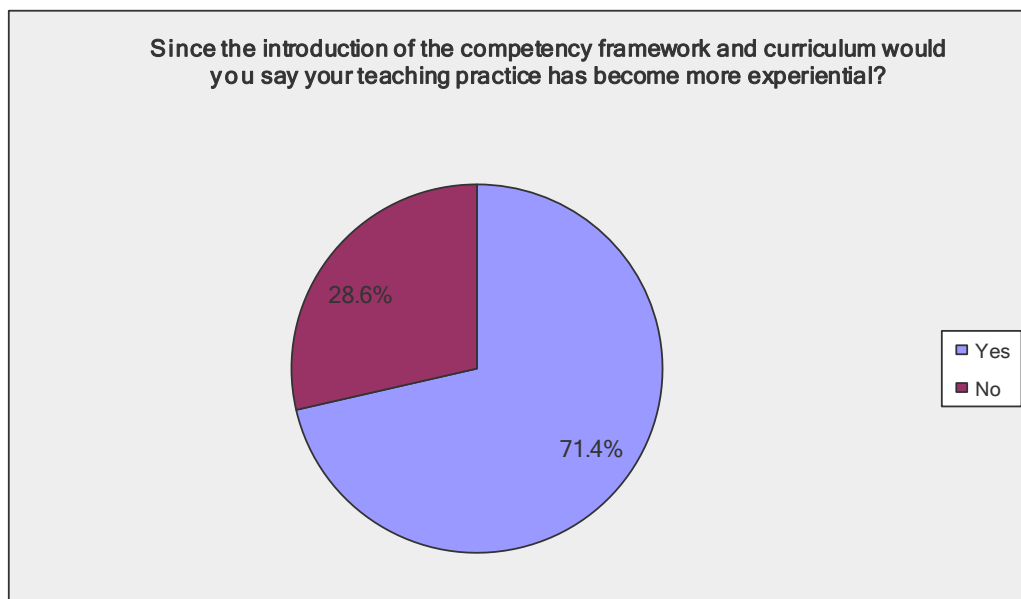
Please comment on new activities / approaches learners have engaged in

'More 'hands on' and more specific to learner need than previous curriculum and accreditation. Work based activities where there is a visual and realistic outcome for the learner rather than box ticking'.

'Building a good communication environment and allowing learners to explore and investigate and interact with people, often seeing the skills beyond the actual learning task/goal (interaction, communication, participation and engagement)'.

'Learners are now accessing new activities, community activities and venues, they are travelling further afield, new education settings'.

In your opinion which competency/s has been the most useful for STAR learners' personal development and achievement?

'All'.

'Collaboration with Others'.

'Communication and Social Relationships work particularly well together'

'Safety Awareness and Developing Self'.

Conclusions

This project has demonstrated the need for collaborative management and recording against the competencies from all areas of our provision. This ensures every learner has equal access to achieving their priority competencies in a variety of environments. This then demonstrates transferability of skills. During my management of this process it has been apparent that this has not been consistent practice across the provision and has raised a training need alongside stage 3 and 4 of the competency framework development process.

Access to innovative activities and a personalised timetable structure has proven to support the competency framework; however this is true for only 71.4% of survey participants. 28.5% of participants felt that is opportunity to further personalise activities, curriculum targets and levels for the STAR learners.

During the development of the competency framework and subsequent programme developments it has become more apparent that there needs to be a greater understanding about complex ASC within the wider educational community and therefore adequate and appropriately funded placements for this cohort of learners. This may lead to a greater investment in complex educational provision rather than a reliance on lifelong adult social care provision.

A great deal of work has been done on promoting bespoke programmes and the competency framework to funding authorities, but it appears that non-accredited routes of learning may not be as transparent for auditing as the National Qualification Framework.

A recent OFSTED visit (2013) supported the STAR provision and teaching and learning methodology with 'often outstanding outcomes for this cohort of learners'.

This project has I feel demonstrated that study programmes have opened up educational flexibility and this has enabled realistic and achievable programmes to positively impact upon an individual in a manner meaningful to each person. Originating from the Wolf report, non-accredited learning has enabled learners to add competency depth and breadth to their learning and life practice rather than proceeding in a cyclical movement within the same accreditation level.

The competency framework discussed within this project supports independence by focusing on personal attributes and qualities that are holistic and transferable, not isolated skills. 86% of survey participants stated an increase in learner engagement because of the competency framework and innovative delivery methods, there was an increase in experiential teaching practice, and more depth and breadth to activities on offer.

Competency Framework

Key areas for further development

Overall this project has demonstrated that the competency framework has been a positive move forward for capturing and recording incremental achievement for a complex cohort of learners. However further development is needed particularly on the key issues raised below:

- CPD continues to be required on RARPA and holistic assessment methods

- Recording of achievement needs to be less onerous

- There is a need to establish a cohesive and valid assessment system that includes standardised range and scope

- The comparable standardisation process needs to be continual moderation when there is development and extension of personalised targets

- There is a need to further develop STAR level curriculum targets across all curriculum areas as there is seen to be a lack of subject specific targets outside of PSD / ILS provision

- Complete competency assessment packs that will aid ease of delivery and recording of achievement without losing flexibility and personalization as this project has defined accreditation as not meeting individual needs

- Develop marketing and training plan

REFERENCES

This project has been developed and supported by the Foundation's Practitioner Research Support programme and the East Midlands Centre for Excellence in Teacher Training (emCETT)

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