



SOCIAL CARE

The Melton Learning Hub

Summary

The Melton Learning Hub is a youth support initiative that offers alternative learning to young people who have become disengaged with learning. It is also a centre for community focused learning, whereby residents of Melton Mowbray can use the centre for a variety of courses, sessions and events.

Our vision has been to draw together all the public-sector agencies working with these young people and work together to help them experience success and become good citizens who contribute to our community. They will be given the opportunity to gain accreditation and develop the skills for work, the capacity to sustain relationships and to live fulfilling lives. This has brought the potential for early gains but much greater longer

term benefits as we develop proactive approaches and ways of intervening to break cycles of deprivation and anti-social behaviour. Young people, their parents and the community are now able to participate in a wide variety of alternative learning activities ranging from ICT to motor mechanics.

The success of this initiative has already been recognised, with the Melton Learning Hub winning Market Town awards for best strategic and partnership working and for the best regional initiative.

Improvement through efficiency



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Project background

The Melton Learning Hub is close to the town centre and a true multi-agency facility which combines a garden area with social and learning facilities. Converted from a gymnasium, it is a modern, single-storey, red-brick building, dedicated to the day to day support and development of students who might otherwise lose contact with education.

In the day, the Learning Hub is designed to engage the hardest to reach. In the evening, it offers a broader range of services for young people by working with parents and young people, helping to build relationships and improve parenting skills through practical activities.

With this facility in place, local schools have made a commitment to inclusion – a public undertaking supported by governors and the community that education matters too much for any student to be permanently excluded from school or learning opportunities. Schools now work to change very challenging behaviour through use of the Hub.

When you arrive you are surprised by the quality of the environment. It is attractive, colourful, positive and celebrates success – it is still a part of the school and enables young people to achieve and feel connected with and proud to be a part of our learning community. Outside students have built a patio area and they routinely look after the garden. Inside there is a workshop, lounge and kitchen. Visitors enter via the reception, which is staffed on a rota by young people attending the centre.

The Hub is a 'revolving door' – some young people will spend considerable time and may end their formal education there. Others pass through for a short time to enable them to be supported in reintegrating with learning and, following that, may just drop into the Hub for one or two mentoring sessions a week. Every student in the centre has an individual plan, negotiated, agreed and reviewed. There is a commitment for parents and carers to engage from the start. Wherever possible they agree and support a contract and participate in sessions to hear about progress. In turn they receive mentoring support to help them in their new role and, finally, come to a graduation type event to celebrate successes.

Young adults who have found school difficult to engage with have told us that they want to know about health issues 'not by being lectured but talked to and real information from people who have been there or who know what they are talking about'. As a result we propose to develop the use of peer teaching. This matched wider research which endorses that young people are often most willing to learn from people two years older than them.

A typical programme for a student who might once have been permanently excluded includes some of the following:

- Peer teaching and support to develop life skills around issues such as alcohol, drugs, smoking and pregnancy
- Inclusion in a group project, for example, in building garden furniture in the workshop – discussing the customer's needs, costs and meeting deadlines, with the income reinvested in the centre
- Participating in a college-based programme
- Working in a small group with a tutor to do literacy and numeracy work linked with the project and gain accreditation
- Work-related learning through work placement and active involvement of local businesses
- Opportunities to gain qualifications in relevant areas with transferable skills achievable in a discrete period of time, for example, in food hygiene, manual handling or first aid at work.
- Group work with health and social services on building relationships undertaken with parent(s) and other strategies to promote physical and mental health and well being
- Work with the police/YISP/YOS to build trust and positive relationships and responsibilities
- Other multi-agency work, for example, on dealing with conflict
- Work with a personal tutor to agree and review the programme
- Work with a community friend, ideally an older person with strong interpersonal skills and time to give
- Work on a sports leaders programme to develop and use coaching skills within the local community
- Work with Connexions, LEBC, the Princes Trust and Youth Service to raise aspirations and directions for development
- Wider programmes, such as managing conflict, offered by a range of agencies.

Students negotiate how the centre should be used, learn to hold each other accountable and take on leadership roles. A kitchen/recreation area provides a location where they can drink coffee and learn vital social skills. There are possibilities to engage in mentoring and supporting, for example in the special school, or in providing services for older people in the community.

Key to the success of the Hub will be the sense of services from agencies 'surrounding' young people and their families, not separately intervening. In this way, the Hub is the physical manifestation of multi-agency partnership, with social services, police, health, the Borough Council, the Youth Service, Chamber of Commerce, Connexions and schools/college having a stake and, across the week, a presence in the programme of activities.

Partners involved

- Melton Borough Council
- Leicestershire Constabulary
- Leicestershire County Council
- Leicestershire Education Business Company
- Melton, Rutland and Harborough Primary Care Trust
- Children and Young People's Service
- Leicestershire Youth Service
- Connexions
- Leicestershire Education Department Student Support Services
- Long Field High School
- John Ferneley High School
- Birch Wood – Melton Area Special School
- Brooksby Melton College
- King Edward VII Technology and Training School
- The Braunstone Motor Project
- Youth Inclusion and Support Project
- Voluntary Action Melton
- Healthy Learning in Melton
- Rural Community Council
- Senco Support and Outreach Provision
- Fun and Families
- Leicestershire Cares

Objectives

Our over-riding commitment is to help young people be healthy; stay safe; enjoy and achieve; make a positive contribution; and achieve economic well-being - the aspirations of 'Every Child Matters'.

In the short term we want young people at risk of permanent exclusion to:

- Improve self-esteem, self-confidence and experience success
- Remain a valued part of our learning community
- Be better supported by family and friends through effective engagement with the programme
- Experience support and encouragement through a nominated 'friend' drawn from a group of adult volunteers with time to give and successful experience of parenting and/or work with young people
- Build secure basic skills and skills to enable them to get on with people, succeed, and enjoy life
- Gain employment and/or training leading to recognised qualifications

- Make a positive contribution to our community
- Engage in sport, physical activity
- Adopt a healthy lifestyle by stopping smoking, eat healthily, improving sexual health, and avoiding drug and alcohol misuse
- Reduce dependency on local services
- Improve physical, mental health and quality of life
- Re-engage in learning and, wherever possible, reintegrate into school
- Become good citizens and good role models for their peer group
- Reduce incidence of ASBOs and contribute to the local crime reduction strategy.

We also want to enable parents, carers and friends to:

- Develop skills in setting boundaries and in providing guidance and support
- Improve mental health and well-being of families

Benefits achieved

We propose to measure the success of the Hub in the following ways:

- Students achieve at least a 90% attendance level in Hub sessions
- Permanent exclusions across secondary schools reduce to zero
- There is a significant reduction in anti-social and criminal behaviour
- Students working at the Hub evaluate their experiences positively
- Parents, carers and friends provide evidence of positive impact
- Every student gains formal accreditation of learning at 16
- Students find and stay in employment
- At least 25% commit to further learning post 16
- Health evaluation indicates significant and sustained improvements in life-style.

Critical success factors and lessons learned

With regards to young people, this project brings the potential for early gains and long term benefits as proactive approaches and ways of intervening to break cycles of deprivation and anti-social behaviour are developed. This work will support the 'respect' agenda, impact on personal achievement and lead to higher levels of economic development and future prosperity. In turn this will enable us to build a stronger community with higher levels of participation and volunteering.

To achieve this referral process and curriculum has been put together. Melton's secondary schools will be tasked to identify young people who would benefit from the intervention that the Hub can offer. These individuals and in some cases their parents will be interviewed to ensure both ourselves and the young people/parents involved feel that the Hub will provide a useful benefit in the lives of those identified. An assessment matrix will then be completed on the individual, so that specific areas of need are identified and a programme tailored to the needs of the individual can be constructed. In some cases this may tackle a persons attendance and attainment levels, where as other people may have a programme that focuses on their behaviour in the community.

A targeted offer of curriculum will be put in place, which is a four tier proposal.

Tier One targets young people who are disaffected from any type of learning within a mainstream setting. These individuals will be in Hub on a full time basis and will gain qualifications in skills for working life and life skills. This tier will be aimed at helping young people improve educational and personal achievement and will increase health and well-being to raise aspirations. A partnership of formal and informal educators will work together to meet the specific needs of specific young people.

Tier Two is aimed at young people who are finding the breadth of curriculum challenging. Also young people who are having specific problems regarding social skills and may be facing problems in the wider community. These young people will spend 50 percent of their working week in the Hub and the other 50 percent in mainstream schooling. This will help the young people to remain in mainstream schooling and also be actively engaged in family and community life.

Tier Three is aimed at young people who have been identified as presenting challenging behaviour in both the school and the community. These individuals will be in the Hub for a six week period, which will reintegrate them back into mainstream schooling, but will allow them to gain additional qualifications along the way.

The **Forth Tier** is for both young people who are having any kind of problems at school, at home or in the wider community and for those who are having no problems but simply like the idea of the Hub and would like the opportunity to access its facilities. This will help to emphasize that the Hub is not only for those who have behavioural problems. This tier will also allow for advocacy and signposting to partner organisations and agencies.

It is widely believed that this is the best way to achieve our outcomes, because it meets the needs that have been identified by the young people and their parents. It also allows young people to achieve more and improve their economic well-being which will cause a reduction in the future derivation in Melton Mowbray as less people will have poor health, more people will have good educational attainment and therefore economic disadvantage will be reduced.

With regards to parents and the wider community a proposed offer has been drawn up which offers twilight, evening, holiday and weekend community based programmes at the Hub. This will improve community relations and will improve parent-child relationships as members of the community will be able to gain information and guidance on a wide range of areas. We have currently put together a list of organisations and agencies who have dedicated some of their time to helping deliver professional courses and advice. For example, the Youth Inclusion Support Project would like to run reprimand clinics and group work from the centre and the Braunstone motor project would like to run a push bike and small motor repair centre for both parents and young people.

It was agreed that a series of basic records should be made that can be used in a statistical manner:

- Gender of users, age of users, ethnicity of users, health problems of users, disabilities of users, progress made by those attending the Hub.
- Length of stay, numbers of families affected, numbers using the Hub at weekends and in the evening, numbers referred, numbers accepted, numbers gaining qualifications, numbers completing courses, numbers using each tier, number of partners involved, number of organisations accessing the Hub

These would then be supported by the assessment matrix, which produces two scores; one at the beginning of their Hub experience and one at the end. These scores should be recorded and monitored.

A baseline assessment will be put together to identify the wider impact of the Hub on the community. To complete this two initial data sets are required. Data from September 2004 to August 2005 and data from September 2005 to August 2006.

The following list identifies what will be included in the baseline assessment and who has collected the information.

- Anti-social behaviour statistics (Melton Borough Council)
- Teenage pregnancy data (Primary Health Care Trust)
- Youth Offending connected to not in education, training or employment (Youth Offending Team)
- Prolific offenders (Melton Police)
- Unemployment (Connexions)
- Further education (King Edward VII School and Connexions)
- Drug and Alcohol statistics (Drug and Alcohol Action Team)
- Housing/Homelessness data (Melton Borough Council)
- Smoking (Primary Health Care Trust)
- Chronic diseases (Primary Health Care Trust)
- Exclusion rates (King Edward VII School and Educational Welfare)
- Location – postcodes of Hub users will be mapped by the Hub leader so that patterns of location can be measured and compared to Melton SOAs.

For some of the above it may be possible that a target age needs to be identified to narrow down the results. Where this is the case the age range should be between 14 and 16. Each category measured will need to be treated individually and should be connected to a statement which explains why and how the category is being measured. It is also important to note the source of the data and how it has been collated so that we have a nationally recognised framework. By completing an impact and evaluation database we will be proving that the Hub project is benefiting a hard to reach group, who are in some shape or form disadvantaged.

Both young people and parents will also be asked about their experiences at the Hub and the differences it may have made. A questionnaire will be designed to fulfil this need. All of the above information will be collected yearly and analysis will be shared with all partner agencies/organisations in accordance with data protection legislation.

Transferability

This project is unique, but one in which we believe should be used as a model of best practice. The first time the local MP visited the Melton Learning Hub, he said:

“I am impressed by the partnership of agencies in this scheme. It is a fantastic initiative which will harness the energies of youngsters in a very positive way. It is a model which has its origins in Melton, but I believe it will be copied by many others across the country”

Alan Duncan,
Member of Parliament for Rutland and Melton

Project need

Multi-agency meetings, with regards to the Melton Learning Hub have been held on a regular basis. Following on from the survey that was produced by King Edward VII School, partner agencies were asked to identify what need they would have for such a project, in relation to their own aims and objectives. The following was identified:

Melton Borough Council - Identified that there are currently no facilities in Melton that offer classes to improve parenting. Especially parents who have disruptive or anti-social children.

The index of multiple deprivation (2004) identified a priority area in Melton Mowbray where 1,180 people within this area are perceived as poor in the poverty and social exclusion index. These people are considered to have poor health, poor educational attainment and are economically disadvantaged.

Melton's Schools/College - Identified that Melton only has one comprehensive school and it does not currently offer any form of an alternative learning package. Ke7 has recently been recognised as one of the worst schools in the country for truancy.

Youth Offending Service - Identified that in 2005, crimes committed by young people in Melton, which were to some extent caused by problems with the individuals lack of engagement in education, training or employment cost a minimum of £216,360.

Youth Inclusion Support Project - Melton's youth worker is not currently located in the area and the family centre would be her new base.

Connexions - Identified that there are currently 107 young people in Melton are NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training). This equates to 14.7 percent of Melton's youth population.

Primary Care Trust - Identified there are 16 teenage mothers in Melton that are NEET.

Melton Police - Identified that Melton has 14 prolific offenders, all of which gained no qualifications at school.

Furthermore, a selection of young people were consulted on two occasions to identify their needs. On the first occasion Connexions conducted a questionnaire. In summary this told us that:

- There are all sorts of reasons for losing touch with school and learning, such as personal issues, boredom or bullying
- GCSEs often seem irrelevant – and waiting two years for success is just too long
- Relationships with teachers may make things worse – they embarrass you and will not give you a chance or a fresh start.

Young People told us that they want:

- Individual programmes, small groups, a sense of belonging and a chance to shine
- Someone to talk to on a regular basis to see how they are doing.
- Discipline and knowing where the limits are
- Work that is relevant and positive with short-term goals, which recognises that they are not bad people
- Relevant issues such as pregnancy, drugs and alcohol education from young people who have been through it themselves
- Opportunities to work together and lots of work experience
- Work that does not always involve writing
- Outdoor, practical activities
- The chance to do some GCSEs
- Being part of a school, which is proud of what they are doing.

An alternative learning and family centre was then identified as a solution and in a second consultation the young people were asked what they would like from such a facility. Several suggestions were put forward and the refurbishment of the Craven Lodge sports hall has been based around what the young people want.

Quotes

“This is a fantastic venture for Melton, which we believe will benefit young people and their future careers and, in the long term, help to reduce anti-social behaviour and truancy in and around Melton”

David Cowell,
Centre Manager

“This is a unique scheme nationally. It is aimed at those children for whom school is meaningless, and who lose their way and maybe get caught in a deep-seated culture of anti-social behaviour. It is a totally new education experience which will improve life chances for young people. It will be nothing like school and as well as learning vocational skills there will be social initiatives aimed at preventing teenage pregnancies and talks about the dangers of drugs”

Chris Williams,
Head Teacher at King Edward VII School

“I have been involved with this scheme since the start and I think it is absolutely brilliant. If we can excite and encourage some of these young people who are bored and hang around the streets causing trouble to get involved then it will be very important for the future”

Inspector Rob Folwell,
Melton Mowbray Local Policing Unit

Contact

David Cowell
Centre Manager
Melton Learning Hub
tel: 01664 564 967
email: david.cowell@ke7.org.uk