Intervention Case Studies

These case studies are drawn from the research data to illustrate how individual educators tailored their strategies from the Intervention Handbook to their contexts and cohorts.

They give a flavour of what the intervention looked like in practice, how the young people responded and the key learning points for the educator involved.

1 Intervention 1: Personalised Plans

8 Intervention 8: Learning Pathway and Careers Advice

1 hour per week, 1:1, 1 term

EAL Tutor, Teaching Assistant, Intervention Support Worker, Careers Staff

Personal Challenges, Institutional Factors

Improved Confidence
Happier about learning
Feeling positive about the future
Building skills
Trusting supporting adults
Improved English
Building supportive relationships
Gaining qualifications
More enjoyment of free time

Summary

Corinne, the LA's EAL Advisory Tutor identified a group of refugee students in Years 9 and 10. Post-16 transitions are often difficult for this group because language barriers impact their attainment and can prevent them attaining the minimum GCSE requirements for the courses they wish to take.

Clare adapted her existing outreach language support sessions to focus on exploring their career interests and motivations. Together, they made highly visual pathway maps and word mats. These mapped out the different routes the student could take, depending on their exam results and gave them access to vocabulary relating to their chosen pathways and careers.

"I didn't know what courses I need to do next year so it helped me know what I could do next"

Why the Intervention was successful

Clare identified 3 key factors as central to the success of the intervention

- Being flexible
- Personalising the sessions to the student
- One-to-one conversations and support

"The point of the session was to be exploratory I think and to respond to what they were interested in."

Being flexible and personalising the content of the session to the individual students were seen as critical to the success of the sessions. Personalising meant being guided by the young person's interests and responses. This was not just about focusing on their chosen career, but also about being open to them changing their mind about which career or course they focus on, taking time to chat and check in with them and developing authentic, positive and trusting relationships.

"As soon as she saw that I was spending time on whatever it was she wanted me to look at, that I wasn't just, I hadn't pre-planned the session that I was just going to do with her regardless of what she said, I did what she asked for really, and with all of the others as well."

Engagement increased as time went on. At first, one student appeared reluctant to engage and missed sessions. Clare persisted and saw a dramatic shift in attitude once the student realised the sessions would

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focus on her interests. For other students, engagement deepened as they opened up to her about their specific challenges or about their genuine personal interests.

Learning point 1: Make roadmaps of alternative routes in case the typical one is not open to them

"Sometimes they have to go on a really round-about route because they might have a lot more steps that they have to go through to get to that point on the road. So it made me think….obviously we need like more roads, a different road A, road B, road C."

EAL learners face additional language barriers so may not be able to achieve course entry requirements in the short term. Mapping a pathway A, pathway B and a pathway C reassures them that they can achieve their goals even if they cannot achieve the grades and are a valuable tool in managing students expectations. It helps them plan for potential disappointment and be ready with an alternative next step. It is important that students have access to and ownership of this journey plan, whether that is having digital access to it, taking a photograph of it, or being able to take it away. They and their families may have little knowledge of the UK educational system, so these roadmaps give them a record of other ways forward at a later date.
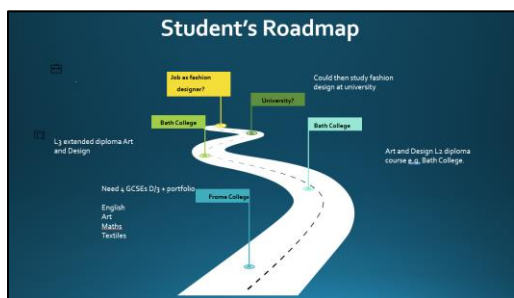
Learning point 2 : Navigating cultural barriers

"You have to navigate the different cultural things going on as well, like you're navigating parental expectations alongside their expectations and then what the actual curriculum offer is and what they can do at school."

This group of learners started the sessions choosing to talk about very traditional careers, such as medicine or law. Over time, it became clear that, for several of them, these were the dreams and aspirations of their parents. The sessions gave them the opportunity and vocabulary to connect with what motivated them and explore what educational and work possibilities this might lead to.

Informal conversation during session also allowed them to unpick specific barriers they faced in lessons, and ask for advice on what they might do. Understanding why a teacher might be entering them for a foundation rather than a higher tier, how to approach a conversation with the teacher about it, how speak to teachers to ask for help were three key examples of ways in which the sessions helped them get more out of their time in lessons.

Learning point 3: Unlocking motivation through ownership

"When I actually thought about this idea (interior design) I was like oh my god that's so exciting. And then it just helped me, I liked everything about it." (YP4)

The personalised nature of the support, allowing individuals to explore careers that specifically motivate them, alongside focused EAL language support positively impacted all the students in terms of their feelings, relationships and future plans in a powerful and positive way. They reported feeling more confident, motivated and in control as a result of the sessions.

Developing the intervention

The 1:1 nature of the work is integral to the personalisation. Working with more students at once would be ineffective and dilute the impact.

Steps to increasing impact could include:
• Disseminating more widely to the other staff through meetings
• Disseminate the learning points with the Syrian Resettlement Team and Post-16 Advisor
• Liaise with School Improvement Team to raise profile of EAL pupils and appropriate careers guidance
• Translate existing careers materials and web pages for EAL students and families

Case Study 2: Family Support and Engagement

5 Intervention 5

Class Teacher, Tutor, Teaching Assistant

Trusting supporting adults
Building supportive relationships
Improved Confidence
Happier about learning
Feeling positive about the future

Change observed after 3 weeks.
30 minutes a day

Institutional Factors
Family Circumstances

Summary

Layla, a class teacher in a school for young people with Social, Emotional and Mental Health challenges, all of whom had EHCPs and many of whom had been previously excluded or had negative experiences in mainstream settings. She was facing challenges in motivating her class who didn't enjoy school. She noticed the school would tend to contact home with negative news. Parents generally did not answer her phone calls or emails and there was little response from letters home. When students broke rules they made comments like 'don't call home,' suggesting they associated this with negativity and punishing. As students travelled in from various towns, there was little interaction with parents.

Laura focused on introducing a structured reward system for her class, visibly rewarding them with small treats like chocolate bars and on personally making regular positive contact with home via phone or email. Breaking a cycle of negativity and aiming to replace it with something more positive and constructive helped build trusting, supportive relationships. Developing this collaborative approach with home created opportunities for parents and young people to start to open up about their individual challenges and concerns and discuss their hopes for the future.

"I didn't anticipate that the parents would respond so quickly in such a short period of time"

Why the Intervention was successful

Laura identified 3 key factors as central to the success of the intervention

- Demonstrating that she cared for the young people through her actions and language
- Altering language when she spoke to parents.
- Being consistent in how she contacted parents and rewarded students

"I think they felt like they weren't alone and I think that's massive because I know a lot of parents feel isolated because there aren't enough support groups for those adults and I think its about giving them that opportunity to have that voice"

Parents responded very quickly to feeling cared for by a representative of the school. After just three weeks, Laura noticed that parents started to answer the phone when she called and email her back. These opportunities for conversations meant they started to talk to her about problems they had been having with their child's behaviour, seeking suggestions and opening a door for Laura to suggest ways they might

tackle it together. They also shared positive news from home that Laura would not have otherwise known, giving her greater insight into her students. Parents were particularly pleased to have something positive to talk to the child about when they got home from school.

"I think after three positive phone calls they are more like 'I'm going to pick up the phone… I really need something positive because that might actually help me build my relationship back up when they get home."

Students started to ask her to phone home if they had been rewarded, others started to talk more about their lives and interests outside school.

Learning point 1: Altering language used when contacting home

"Instead of saying 'your child needs to be in school,' I would say 'I really want your child to be in school."

Thinking about the language you use when contacting home is important. Subtle shifts in language helped break the cycle of negativity and enable a positive, trusting relationship. Speaking in positive terms about *wanting* to have the young person in school puts the onus on the teacher. In contrast, the statement 'your child needs to be in school,' conveys that the reason is simply that they *must* attend. It is an impersonal demand and demonstrates no warmth or interest. It puts the onus on the child and parent. For parents/carers who are facing multiple challenges, are lacking adequate support or have low confidence, this can be heard as yet another thing they are responsible for, failing at or struggling to achieve.

Using positive language to talk about challenges, targets or aims was key. Some key principles about the kind of language you might use are:
- *Asking questions which seek their opinion rather than statements that…*
- *Talk about what you want and why you want it, rather than saying they must, have to, need to*
- *Address them as experts in their own child*

Learning point 2 : Being consistent in how you communicate and reward

Some students may find being visibly rewarded uncomfortable or embarrassing at first. Consistency so they come to know when to expect it, and see others being rewarded for the same things, meant this class quickly adapted to the new approach. As with any change, it can take time for everyone to get used to it, and to establish how it works best for the group. If you see an issue with how it is working, it is best not to just change the system, but to speak to the students and get their input so that these tweaks aren't perceived as inconsistency or moving the goal posts. *

Laura found it was a concerted effort to establish this contact with home as a consistent, regular occurrence. For teachers and teaching assistants, finding a regular time slot and sticking to it can help. Middle leaders and leadership teams could support this by making it possible for staff to prioritise this contact, whether that be by increasing time available for it, providing the means to do it easily or reducing another demand to make time for this one.

"You're not asking tutors and teachers to do any more than what you're doing already, you're just asking them to prioritise."

This intervention was undertaken by one teacher with her class over a period of 1 term. Although the impact was quick and dramatic, it is not an one-off, short term intervention. After leaving her job, and the class, at the end of the academic year, she checked back to see how things were and found that the approach, and the benefits had not been sustained.

To maximise, sustain and scale-up the impact, she identified the following as necessary:
- Buy-in from the Leadership Team and/or Pastoral Team to establish this practice
- Support teachers to identify time to make this contact and prioritise it
- Start the approach as early as possible – don't wait until Year 10 and 11
- Being consistent in contacting home and being realistic about how much regular contact is sustainable

* Its important to note that, for some students, notably for those who have a PDA profile (pathological demand avoidance), rewards may not work and be counter productive. For these students, praise and reward may be perceived as a demand and create distress, resistance and refusal. You might explore whether giving choice over the nature of the reward helps, or you could seek advice from parents about or an organisation with expertise in this area (e.g PDA Society: https://www.pdasociety.org.uk/life-with-pda-menu/family-life-intro/helpful-approaches-children/) about what works for that individual. Giving clear explanations and reasons is always helpful, but for some young people, a reward based approach will not be effective or positive.

Case Study 3: Support for Young People's Learning Outside of the Formal Curriculum & Blended Media Mentoring

❷
❻ Interventions 2 and 6

Virtual School Officer

Improved Confidence
Happier about learning
Gain qualifications
Feel positive about the future
Trust supporting adults
Enjoy education more
Planning for the future
Sense of choice in work/study

Weekly 1:1 ongoing

Personal Challenges, Social Relationship Factors

Summary

Lawrence, a Virtual School Officer worked to re-engage young people who were NEET and in care. The cohort she identified were Post-16 and had negative views and a mistrust of professionals. They faced a range of challenges. Many had SEND and EHCPs, being from marginalised groups such as GRT, mental health issues, low literacy and maths skills, attachment issues from earlier experiences and a lack of stability in their housing/ placements.

Lawrence used the 1:1 sessions to offer a range of non-formal and informal learning, widening their experiences and providing opportunities to discuss aspiration and contextualise tutoring to their individualised lifelong learning pathway. They sought out short courses which enabled these often highly mobile young people to complete a course, gain accreditation and experience success in a short time frame. She worked flexibly, adapting her mode of engagement to suit the individual young person.

"Obviously I learnt new things like proper decent information, not just about like any random stuff, it was actually stuff I really need to deal with. […] I didn't think "oh I just want to leave now", do you know what I mean."

"I didn't know what courses I need to do next year so it helped me know what I could do next"

Why the Intervention was successful

Lawrence identified 3 key reasons that the interventions was successful
- Flexibility
- One-to-one informal and individualised support
- Persistence – going the extra mile and never giving up

"I don't have any major targets and deadlines. I don't say we've got to do this by this point because I'm not restricted to a term path, we have to complete this module in this term and I think that's the difference. There's no pressure of deadlines because there isn't any. Yeah, I will say we need to ideally meet this target by the end of this half term, but there's no consequence if we don't, there's flexibility and I think that's the key thing."

These young people faced numerous personal challenges that impacted on their ability to remain engaged in the intervention, particularly around self-confidence and motivation, which are key risk factors that the intervention aims to address. Flexibility was critical in terms of adapting courses to the individual, rescheduling

sessions if the young person felt unable to attend for any reasons (within reason to avoid this constantly reoccurring) and keeping communication and contact frequent and in ways that suit the young people, such as sending text messages or phone calls to remind young people of their sessions the day before.

For some learners, ASDAN courses worked well, but for some Lawrence needed to find different opportunities which were more appropriate, and was willing to consider any short course that would make learning accessible, manageable and engaging for the individual.

"I didn't actually get any qualifications in school, I got nothing […] I'm a very up and go person, I'm more than capable of doing things, it's just the sitting down and writing side of things wasn't, I wasn't capable of doing that, that's not me…I wasn't able to concentrate"

Informal, individualised support were critical to building trust and rapport, as well as to enable the degree of personalisation necessary to enable re-engaement. When the young people were experiencing such pressures and challenges in other aspects of their lives, low-pressure learning engagement was vital.

"it's not a lot of pressure do you know what I mean, like when you're in college it's like all this pressure, get your work done and like just do it all the time and you can't miss like a session or anything, but with LP it's more flexible and it works around my timetable and stuff."

Going the extra mile to ensure young people could access learning was a key aspect of success identified by both the young people and Lawrence. This includes aspects like providing a nurturing and supportive relationships that extends beyond the job description at times, organising transport, organising college visits at transition. It also involved being willing to do things differently and seeking out new opportunities. Persistence, continuing to reach out and reschedule when young people didn't turn up or do what they agreed to do, over time, demonstrated care and reliability to the young person. Continuity and commitment were of critical importance given how many professionals have come and gone in the lives of these young people.

"L never gave up on me, even when I was hard to get hold of"

Learning point 2: Adapt the mode of communication to suit the young person and their situation

The pandemic and lockdowns meant contact with young people became even more challenging. It also underscored the importance of remaining in contact with the young people given their additional isolation. Lawrence would try different means of communication to find out what worked best for each young person. For some, sitting together on screen to work through tasks together was effective. However, for others, this did not work at all. Some young people responded best when she emailed the work to them and let them send it back when it was done. Others preferred to discuss on the phone. Blended media mentoring, working over different platforms with young people to maximise the learning and engagement opportunities was an unexpected but invaluable outcome of Lawrence's flexible approach.

"that was something I didn't expect from those two young people either. I thought they'd really engage face-to-face better, but I think it's whether or not that young person's social, if they're really active in their social life, they're much less more likely to meet me for the session. That's when I would be offering another option,

Lawrence highlighted the unexpected benefits of online engagement for some of her young people. For one young man, it safeguarded her from him and enabled him to continue to engage. This online engagement enabled them to feel more comfortable, working alone in his own safe space. Over time, it became clear that the violent outbursts and aggression were resulting from challenges with working in

"I've got anxiety of going outside, I'm quite a confident person but if I go outside, it's quite a different, I'm not very keen on going outside now and again, especially night times and that. [...] But also, just being a little bit confident talking to people [...] more and more but finding a nice relationship I was able to be more comfortable in talking to her with how I am as well."

Another important consideration is where the sessions take place. For many young people, Lawrence felt 'home' was not the best place. In some circumstances, issues and conflicts within the accommodation could disrupt the session. Meeting elsewhere to be able to focus worked better. For other young people who struggled to leave their bedrooms however, home based learning was essential.

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Developing the intervention

Lawrence identified some key issues to consider in further developing and improving the intervention.

- Introduce additional ways to help learners recognise what they are achieve so it happens every few weeks. Even some short courses feel too long for young people who are very disengaged and have low confidence. Certificates or recognition after each module or section would enhance recognition of their progress and achievement
- Recognise the disruption holidays cause for these young people and plan for this. Young people were seen to need a routine to remain engaged, so holidays posed a real problem as they adopt other rhythms. Being prepared for this and planning for it where possible may help.
- Explore flexible funding routes as funding restrictions can pose additional barriers in being able to offer disengaged young people access to non-standard courses and opportunities that they are particularly interested in.