

## Newcastle College

### About the college

Newcastle College is a large Further Education and Higher Education College, attracting students from across the North East of England. The college has expanded to include nine other satellite sites across Newcastle, Gateshead and North Tyneside. Approximately 115 young adult carers were identified through last year's enrolment.

In June 2017, one of the college's learner mentors (now lead learning mentor) was nominated for a Carer Friendly Community Award at a Carers Week event, hosted by Newcastle City Council, Newcastle Carers and the Carers Trust. The award was in recognition of work with a learner, initially referred to the mentor for academic support. As the relationship developed, the learner disclosed that they were a carer and the mentor worked with the learner, and their family, to access support, for example local carers services, to enable the young person to progress in college. The event was an 'eye-opener' for the pastoral team and underlined where support was missing for young adult carers at Newcastle College.

Before their involvement in the Targeted Support for Colleges project, the college had already started to make changes to improve support for young adult carers, for example changing the enrolment form to allow new students to disclose their caring role. However, the project provided opportunity, and support, to focus on other areas where improvements were needed; in particular, the development and implementation of a young adult carers' policy. Overall, the team wanted young adult carers to be confident that support was there if they needed it.

*"I think one of the simple things is just having it consistent in terms of the message that the college is supportive...so that every learner feels that they have that support and have a great experience, here, at college, regardless of what they're dealing with outside of college."* Carers lead

The pastoral manager also hoped to share achievements and learning from the project to model improvement in support for young adult carers with other colleges in the Newcastle College Group.

### Provision for young adult carers

Since the project began, the lead learning mentor has become the designated lead for young adult carers. The lead mentor within each of the college schools is the main point of contact and champion for young adult carers and staff in that area.

Together with the lead mentors, the carers lead has developed a policy on young adult carers that will slot into existing policy documents. The policy includes, for example, information about the type of caring responsibilities a young adult carer might have and how this could impact on their learning, the roles of the carers lead and other lead learning mentors, and a list of 'flags' for teaching staff to help them to identify if a student in their class might be a carer.

An e-learning module, developed by Newcastle City Council, on services provided by the local authority for young adult carers has been rolled out to learning mentors, progression

coaches, student services and the safeguarding team. This will be followed by face-to-face training delivered by the carers lead, including, from September 2018, sessions with teaching staff as part of their Continuing Professional Development (CPD).

Early in the project, the team visited a young adult carers group at Newcastle Carers to talk about what they were doing, get feedback on what young adult carers would find useful and what barriers they felt they had in college (and at school), and explore what the young people might want from a young adult carers' card. From this feedback, the college has developed a young adult carers support plan.

When a young adult carer is identified and wants support, the lead mentor in their school works with the young person to develop a support plan. This captures information about, for example, the learner's caring role, day-to-day routines and challenges faced in college, how long they have been caring for someone and their links with carers services. This helps the pastoral team to tailor support to the needs of the individual young adult carer and reduce the chances of a crisis situation occurring. At this point, the learner is also able to access a young carers card.

Information for existing and prospective students on the support provided for young adult carers has been added to the college's website, and a number of new awareness-raising activities are planned for the coming year. For example, lead mentors will attend freshers' fair events, alongside local carers services, during next year's induction week to promote their services. Over the course of the project, the college has developed stronger relationships with Newcastle Carers and established a new partnership with the young adult carers services in Gateshead.

At advice and guidance and open evenings, prior to the start of the new academic year, the college records details of the students attending, including, if they wish to disclose, that they are a young adult carer. Before they start in September, these young people will be invited to a Keep Warm Event, tailored to young adult carers. This will provide an opportunity for young people to come into college, find out where services are located, meet the pastoral team and talk about the support provided, supporting their transition into Further Education.

## **Challenges**

The commitment of the pastoral team, from the manager through to the network of champion learning mentors, has meant that changes to improve support for young adult carers have been made with relatively few problems.

## **Outcomes**

Although services have always been available to young adult carers wanting support, particularly since the college introduced more systems to identify students in caring roles, the project has enabled the college to develop and offer more specific support which is tailored to the individual needs of young adult carers.

Delivering awareness-raising activities in different parts of the college, for example the finance team, is encouraging staff who may previously have had limited knowledge about young adult carers, to consider what they offer and what else they could do, in their roles, to provide support.

### Success factors

- Having a network of champion lead learning mentors, supporting by a central carer's lead, has enabled the college to embed changes across all of its schools.
- Visiting the local young adult carers group and consulting them on their needs and barriers in relation to college has enabled lead mentors to develop more tailored and bespoke support for young adult carers.
- Identifying young adult carers during open evenings means the college can provide support for them to make a successful transition into Further Education.

