

# Driving Change

Project and Evaluation Report Summary

Year 1

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## **About Learning and Work Institute**

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# Executive Summary

The [Driving Change](#) project provides targeted and intensive one-to-one support to colleges throughout the UK, to enable them to develop an effective and embedded whole organisation approach to working with young adult carers. The three-year project began in September 2019 and runs until August 2022. The project builds on positive outcomes for six colleges involved in a pilot project, [Targeted Support for Colleges](#), in 2018.

Funded by The National Lottery Community Fund (TNLCF), Learning and Work Institute (L&W) works in partnership with Carers Federation, using the Quality Standard in Carer Support (QSCS) as a framework to enable colleges to review, improve and evaluate their provision for young adult carers. The project aims to work with up to 60 colleges over the course of the project, starting in England and Wales in year 1 and extending into Scotland and Northern Ireland in years 2 and 3.

## Project approach

During year 1, L&W and Carers Federation worked with 18 colleges through to completion of the QSCS process, nine colleges in England and nine in Wales. Each college involved in the project was allocated a key contact at Carers Federation who provided them with intensive, tailored one-to-one support, between January and November 2020. The support period was extended from the planned end date, in summer 2020, to autumn 2020 to allow extra time for colleges that experienced challenges in progressing their plans due to the impact of the coronavirus pandemic.

In addition to ongoing support from Carers Federation, L&W ran eight webinars, on four different aspects of support for young adult carers. This provided opportunities for colleges to network, learn about support that other colleges were putting in place, discuss solutions to common challenges and to share good practice and resources.

A dedicated Driving Change project page, set up on the L&W website, provides information and practical resources from the project to help participating colleges provide effective support for young adult carers to remain and succeed in education.

A Steering Group informs and supports recruitment to the project, ongoing development and dissemination of key policy and practice messages emerging from the project.

Alongside the support offered through the project, L&W conducted an evaluation of the first year of Driving Change, which assessed both the process undertaken to support colleges and the outcomes and impact that this has had for colleges and for young adult carers.

## Colleges experiences of the support

Colleges taking part in the evaluation provided positive feedback on the support provided. All colleges reported that the initial assessment meeting was valuable in helping them to understand how they could formalise and embed existing support across the college as well as identify gaps in the support they provided for young adult carers. Colleges also highlighted how valuable the QSCS Framework had been in helping them to review and recognise areas for improvement. Most colleges spoke positively about the final assessment process although a small number had experienced challenges on the day resulting from the shift to online delivery, as a result of the pandemic.

The webinar sessions delivered by L&W were well attended and were highly valued by colleges as a way of finding out what other colleges were doing and as a means of sharing good practice including practical resources. Colleges have found these practical resources,

for example policy documents and other document templates, especially useful and many of these have been brought together on the dedicated project page.

The flexibility provided by the project team around timescales and in adapting support to meet the individual needs of colleges has been especially appreciated by colleges during the pandemic.

## **Progress made as a result of the project**

At the time of writing 15 of the participating colleges had completed the QSCS Final Assessment. All were successful in achieving the QSCS award. The bullet points below summarise the progress made by colleges against the eight points of the QSCS Framework. This summary draws from findings of interviews with a sample of 10 participating colleges and analysis of 15 QSCS Final Assessment reports.

**Carers policy and strategic commitment** - This was a key area of development for all colleges involved in the project. Out of the ten colleges interviewed, six have developed new standalone policies tailored for young adult carers. These identified named Carers Leads and their roles and responsibilities and set out a clear identification and support process.

**Designated member of staff** – Although most colleges already had a designated member of staff for young adult carers, their roles and responsibilities have been developed and awareness of Carers Leads has increased as a direct result of involvement in the project. The remaining two colleges have now identified a Carers Lead.

**Staff training** – All colleges have introduced or further developed staff training to raise awareness of the needs of young adult carers including creating different levels of training for different staff groups and involving young adult carers and/or carers services in co-designing training.

**Outreach and Raising Aspiration** - Nearly all colleges involved in the evaluation have introduced new activities to promote their support offer to young adult carers. Activities include creating new marketing materials, adding information to websites, improving outreach in local schools and dedicated events for young adult carers.

**Student Induction** - Colleges have enhanced their systems for identifying young adult carers including the introduction of questions on application forms and at the enrolment stage, as well as additional opportunities at induction and on an ongoing basis for young people to disclose if they have a caring responsibility.

**Ongoing Support** – Although most of the colleges had fairly well-developed support services for learners, in many cases this was not tailored to the needs of young adult carers or support was insufficiently promoted and available across the college. Through the Driving Change project, colleges have introduced new forms of support, including virtual support during the pandemic. Other improvements include the introduction of carers cards, new opportunities for peer support and a new weekly wellbeing podcast for young adult carers.

**Partnerships and Networking** – Some colleges already had some form of relationship with local carers services although the level of connection varied. As a result of their involvement in Driving Change all of the 15 colleges for whom Final Assessment reports were available at the time of writing have either developed new partnerships with carers services or strengthened existing relationships. This includes involving carers services in the implementing improvements to support identified in college action plans.

**Data Collection and Monitoring** – At the start of the project the robustness of data collection systems to monitor the retention, progression, and achievement of young adult carers, varied between colleges. A number of colleges have implemented new systems to capture information about young adult carers at the college, improved existing systems by asking for more information or put plans in place to make better use of the data they collect.

## Impact of project activities

### Outcomes

Participation in the project has resulted in a range of positive outcomes for young adult carers and colleges including:

#### College wide commitment to young adult carers

Commitment at a strategic level to young adult carers has enabled whole-organisation approaches to developing support. This has included the development of specific young adult carers policies, gaining buy in from senior management teams, providing staff training, and appointing new staff. This will ensure that support for young adult carers can be sustained and embedded across a whole college.

#### Better identification of young adult carers

Colleges have reported an increase in the number of young adult carers identified amongst their student cohort and improved processes to support self-identification of young adult carers.

#### Improved data collection and monitoring systems

Improved data collection and monitoring, combined with better use of this information, means that colleges not only have a clearer idea of how many young adult carers they have in their learner cohort, they can more effectively assess the extent to which young adult carers benefit from the support the college has to offer.

#### Enhanced support offer for young adult carers

Young adult carers are benefitting from stronger and more tailored support as a result of the actions that individual colleges have taken through their Driving Change projects such as flexible timetabling, extended deadlines, ensuring that adjustments made are consistently applied and improved partnership working with local carers services.

#### Increased awareness of the support offer

Colleges have noted an increased awareness of the support offer amongst young adult carers at the college, college staff, local carers services, as well as local schools and prospective students.

#### New or improved relationships with local carers services

The development of new relationships with local carers services and other key partners such as local authorities has led to more effective and joined up support for young adult carers.

#### Increased involvement of young adult carers

The involvement of young adult carers in shaping support, in some participating colleges, will ensure that provision is tailored to meet the specific needs of young adult carers at the college.

#### Improved networking and resource sharing

Colleges have been pro-actively networking and sharing resources throughout Driving Change. This has enabled colleges from across England and Wales to gain inspiration and learn from each other in developing and implementing support for young adult carers.