

FOR SCOTLAND'S COLLEGE SECTOR

reach



cdn

College Development Network

2023

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Innovation in working
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TEARS, LAUGHTER AND INSPIRATION

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SKILLS ON THE GLOBAL STAGE

WorldSkills competitions are boosting
prospects for young people and giving
kudos to Scotland's colleges



reach

2023

Editor

Wendy Grindle
wendy.grindle@cdn.ac.uk

Editorial Assistant

Jasmine Wild
jasmine.wild@cdn.ac.uk

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Front cover

Mona Nawaz represented Scotland in 3D game art and digital construction at WorldSkills 2022. Image courtesy of WorldSkills UK.

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CONNECT
ENGAGEMENT IS EVERYTHING

Studio 2001, Mile End
12 Seedhill Road
Paisley PA1 1JS

Tel: 0141 561 0300
Web: www.connectcommunications.co.uk



College Development Network
Airthrey Castle
University of Stirling
FK9 4LA

E-mail: info@cdn.ac.uk
Web: www.cdn.ac.uk

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WELCOME

Welcome to the 2023 issue of *Reach*, the magazine for Scotland's college sector. This issue is available as an interactive digital version and in print format too – look out for print copies in college reception areas. Both versions are packed with information and inspiration from across the sector.

In this issue we are delighted to include a guest article from Jamie Hepburn MSP, Minister for Higher Education and Further Education, Youth Employment and Training. On page 10, he explains how the college sector plays a critical role in challenging times.

We explore the ways colleges are already tackling those challenges throughout this issue. Some highlights include a look at the work of West Lothian College's Trust Project (page 29), a trauma-informed approach to supporting individuals sustain education.

Turn to page 16 to find explore how Edinburgh College is offering a ground-breaking way of preparing students to work with people living with dementia through the use of virtual reality technology.

Last year's College Awards attracted more submissions than ever before, and we

celebrate the individual winners in this issue, including the deeply inspiring story of Kian Docherty, our Student of the Year (page 11).

Our cover story is devoted to WorldSkills Scotland (page 20), which contains lots of key information about how you and your students can benefit from WorldSkills competitions – as well as showcasing some fantastic stories about the winners.

We hope you enjoy reading this issue of *Reach* magazine, please let us know what else you'd like to see in future issues, by contacting the team at marketing@cdn.ac.uk



ROUND-UP



PROFESSIONAL LEARNING UPDATES

In response to feedback from the college workforce, CDN is enhancing professional learning

Last year's workforce survey engaged with colleges about the wants and needs of the sector in a post-Covid world. Jonny Rees, Head of Professional Development at CDN, said: 'Now that people have experienced different ways of teaching and learning, we wanted to know what they needed to learn more about as well as how they wanted to learn, to enable us to support the workforce and to inform our own sector-wide activity.'

More than 20 per cent of respondents felt that they were not getting all the training they needed, with time and cost being significant barriers, and they identified many areas in which they wanted further support. College lecturers outlined that they want more subject-specific CPD opportunities, as well as pedagogy-based professional learning such as behaviour management and project-based assessment, in addition to support to improve their digital capabilities. While people feel quite confident in using their digital tools, the very large majority want further training to enhance them.

In addition, respondents wanted further support in areas of equality, diversity and mental health and wellbeing. Jonny added: 'While most college staff understand these complex areas, they identified a need for support to further develop their knowledge, especially in more diverse topics.'

Half of college staff responding to the survey felt comfortable with their understanding of Learning for Sustainability, despite being a relatively new area of focus, though there is room for improvement.

Working closely with individuals from the sector, CDN is producing 20 videos to tackle the topics

identified by the workforce survey as areas in which the workforce identified they needed more support. The first three of the 'mini bite' videos included 'Education for sustainable development: delivering a green curriculum', 'Principles and strategies for behaviour management', and 'Supporting neurodiverse learners'.

The videos are six minutes in length – long enough to contain the information that viewers need but short enough that they can be watched anywhere at any time, whether it's at a desk in between lessons or meetings, or on the bus going to or from college.

The videos are designed to fit into each college's wider professional development programme, with some institutions likely to send links to lecturers and support staff to watch individually, while others may incorporate them into training sessions.

The videos have been developed by practitioners sharing their perspectives on the topic and each has an accompanying factsheet. A series of podcasts with lecturers will also help college staff to hear discussions about research-informed practice.

The mini bites are conversation starters, helping people to own their practice and encouraging them to dig deeper into the topics. 🗣️

WATCH THE MINI BITES

Watch the videos and download the factsheets at www.cdn.ac.uk/mini-bites

ANTI-RACISM PRACTICE

This year, CDN became affiliate members of the Black FE Leadership Group (BLG) and all CDN staff participated in a day's anti-racism training with BLG.

The thought-provoking day provided allowed staff to share personal and collective perspectives and experiences relating to the opportunities and challenges around anti-racism. It introduced research, tools and conceptual frameworks developed by BLG, which helped to identify what constitutes best anti-racist practice.

BLG's ten-point plan provided a central reference which is being used to inform organisational approach and priorities. 🌟

FOR MORE INFORMATION

To find out more, visit www.blackleadershipgroup.com





CDN COLLEGE AWARDS 2022

SIMPLY THE BEST

2022 saw the largest number of submissions ever to the College Awards. The Awards ceremony is a key date in the college calendar, showcasing the impact of the sector on learners, communities and Scotland's regional economies.

Turn to pages 11, 25 and 39 to read about Student of the Year Kian Docherty, Learning and Teaching Colleague of the Year Susan McLellan, and College Colleague of the Year Evelyn Chelley.



STUDENT OF THE YEAR AWARD

Winner: Kian Docherty, City of Glasgow College

Highly Commended: Kit Connor, City of Glasgow College

Commended: Jinty Dobson, West Lothian College



MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS AWARD

Winner: Fife College

This submission offered a clear objective around student recruitment into degree pathways. It showed evidence of high impact results with a relatively low budget. Judges applauded this aspirational project as an excellent example of a marketing campaign that met the needs of the local community, linking with schools and careers teams.

Highly Commended: South Lanarkshire College

Commended: New College Lanarkshire



COLLEGE COMMUNITY LEARNING AWARD

Winner: West College Scotland

This submission demonstrated the partnership between the college, the team at Ferguslie Learning Centre and a host of external partners. The judges applauded the flexible, learner-centred approach to delivery. They were impressed that the data provided on enrolments and learner destinations shows clearly that the project is sustainable and changing lives.

Highly Commended: Fife College

Commended: Glasgow Kelvin College



DIGITAL LEARNING AWARD

Winner: Edinburgh College, VR Dementia Programme

By exploring the use of digital tools for the performing arts, this submission provided a great example of international collaboration and innovative approaches to delivery and student engagement. The judges liked the fact that plans are under way to grow the project.

Highly Commended: Glasgow Kelvin College

Commended: Edinburgh College, Call to Action

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COLLEGE COLLEAGUE OF THE YEAR AWARD

Winner: Evelyn Chelley, Borders College

Highly Commended: Gail Graham, Dundee and Angus College

Commended: Jill Leishman, North East Scotland College



INCLUSIVE COLLEGE AWARD

Winner: Edinburgh College

Edinburgh College was the first in Scotland to affiliate with the Black Leadership Group to evaluate its anti-racism journey.

This submission showed the progress achieved through collaboration with staff and students. Judges were impressed by the willingness of the college to engage in difficult conversations, and the focus on upskilling staff to ensure support for a diverse community.

Highly Commended:
West Lothian College

Commended: UHI Inverness



EMPLOYER CONNECTIONS AWARD

Winner: North East Scotland College

North East Scotland College and Shell have created an enduring relationship and track record of harnessing individual, organisational, sector specific and worldwide opportunities to address environmental and commercial challenges. This partnership stood out for the judges, with its strong approach to equalities and long-term sustainability.

Highly Commended: UHI West Highland
Commended: New College Lanarkshire



INNOVATION AWARD

Winner: Glasgow Clyde College

Glasgow Clyde College worked with NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde to ensure HNC Healthcare Practice students benefitted from joining the nurse bank, an advantage previously available only to university students. The judges were hugely impressed with this unique innovation, which fundamentally changed the way students can access opportunities.

Highly Commended:
Dundee and Angus College
Commended: Fife College



HEALTH AND WELLBEING AWARD

Winner: Fife College

This submission was a great example of a partnership, with NHS Fife, to provide support to staff and students. The project included an impressive range of workshops and events plus one-to-one support for mental health. The judges gave special mention to the clear vision, strategy, strong examples of delivery, plus great evidence of impact.

Highly Commended:
New College Lanarkshire
Commended: Ayrshire College



SUSTAINABILITY ACTION AWARD

Winner: City of Glasgow College

This submission exhibited work at City of Glasgow College to build on the successful International COP26 Maritime Hub and create ongoing opportunities in industry. The judges regard this as an excellent project with outstanding international engagement and real word impact, which amplifies Glasgow's unique role in hosting COP26.

Highly Commended: Edinburgh College
Commended: Borders College



SKILLS DEVELOPMENT AWARD

Winner: Edinburgh College

This was an excellent entry which evidenced strong collaboration between Edinburgh College, Access to Industry, schools, colleges and universities in developing a data skills progression route to help unemployed and low-income individuals find work.

Highly Commended: Perth College UHI
Commended: Glasgow Clyde College



LEARNING AND TEACHING COLLEAGUE OF THE YEAR AWARD

Winner: Susan McLellan, Dumfries and Galloway College

Highly Commended: Paul Devonshire, West Lothian College

Commended: Jenny McKenzie, UHI Moray

THE JUDGES' AWARD 2022

This year's Judges' Award went to City of Glasgow College for its Sustainability Action award submission.

You can read more about all our winners in the shortlist summaries booklet, found at www.cdn.ac.uk/college-awards-2022

Will 2023 be your winning year? Keep an eye on cdn.ac.uk for the 2023 call for entries.



ONLINE LEARNING TO SUPPORT NEW LECTURERS

Following the launch of CDN's Teaching in Colleges Today (TiCT) units in 2021, CDN's Learning and Teaching Lead Sandra-Jane Grier tells us more about the ever-widening range of free-to-use online learning materials to support the professional development of new and recently appointed college lecturers

College lecturers come into this vibrant sector often with high levels of subject specific expertise and/or professional qualifications in their subject area. However, many have either limited or no experience of teaching and assessing students, or related professional qualifications. Alongside colleges' in-house induction programmes for new lecturers, CDN's TiCT units can help build staff understanding and confidence. This can help them use their specialist knowledge of industry and their subject, to plan and deliver impactful learning, teaching and assessment.

CDN's TiCT SCQF credit rated units are unique, as they are delivered in partnership with colleges. They are also highly flexible as the timing for starting and completing the unit assessments is determined by each college. This makes the units ideal for staff on either full or part-time contracts.

All colleges in Scotland can deliver TiCT to their staff. However, even if you are a lecturer

working in a college which isn't running TiCT then you can still use our extensive learning materials on CDN LearnOnline for self-directed learning and professional development.

Delivering new units, regardless of which awarding body has developed these can be daunting for the first time, so to support colleges delivering our new TiCT, in 2021-22 we set up an online group for college-based delivery staff. This group, together with our online annual TiCT update event meant we were able to provide college staff with updated information and assessment exemplars along with marking guidance to support assessment decision making and standardisation. Recently, I have also been visiting colleges to talk to managers and staff about our TiCT units and the other learning and teaching materials on CDN LearnOnline.

For more information, please contact sandra-jane.grier@cdn.ac.uk

LEADING REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The Economic Recovery Group (ERG) is supporting the sector as it navigates partnership working within regional economies.

Scotland's colleges are playing a leading role in the design and delivery of regional economic strategies. With support from CDN's Economic Recovery Group (ERG) to further develop leadership skills in this area, colleges are going even further. The last 12 months have seen the ERG Team supporting a number of colleges as they navigate the intricacies of working in partnership with a variety of organisations in their respective regions.

Going forward into 2023 and phase 2 of the programme, the ERG team is further developing the confidence and capabilities of college leadership and boards as the sector seeks to develop inter-regional and cross-tertiary collaborations.

This provides an opportunity to deepen and intensify the support for college leaders as they heighten the role of their colleges as drivers of regional economic renewal. Pivoting and adapting to the continuing changes in their operating environment and functional economic geographies will be needed now more than ever as budgets continue to tighten.

For more information, please contact **Paul Smart, Programme Director**, at paul.smart@cdn.ac.uk

NEW FACES AT CDN

JO TURBITT



I'm delighted to join CDN as Lead for Learning and Teaching and already taking advantage of all the experiences and enjoying the depth and breadth of the sector! Scotland's college sector is bursting with ambitious, innovative and inspiring people – it's such a privilege to work with them and support them in developing their practice.

My background is a blend of performing arts, academia and a lot of gumption! I studied my undergrad at the Liverpool Institute of Performing Arts (LIPA); studying dance was tough and it's where I developed creative confidences and an inquisitiveness that still supports my work and studies.

In my 17 years at Telford/Edinburgh College I grew as an artist-facilitator thanks to a range of great colleagues and the experiences I was part of. While the predominant curriculum I delivered was dance, the underlying capabilities and capacities (creativity, collaborations, resilience, innovation, empathy) I supported students to develop required me to cultivate and apply the same attributes in my own role.

I'm really looking forward to new highlights across the coming years, including nurturing and being involved in the stories of innovative, ambitious education practitioners.

In this issue, Jo has written an opinion piece around professional development, see page 42.

PAULA CHRISTIE



I'm CDN's new Lead for Research and Enhancement. I've been working in Widening Access and Widening Participation since 2013 and have a real passion for sharing knowledge and great practice from across the sector.

My previous roles have included lecturing as well as development work and I've been privileged to work on both domestic and international projects.

Recently, my work at SWAPWest saw me collaborate with international partners from Norway, Italy and Turkey in providing inclusion opportunities for refugees through upskilling for education and employment.

An adult returner to education, I'm tremendously grateful for the valuable opportunities offered by colleges and college partnerships, and I hope my work creates opportunities for others.

A core part of my role at CDN is to coordinate and drive forward our exciting Step Forward Programme which aims to transform key strands of our research into action. I've also been involved as a joint author of the recent Pathways From Poverty Report 'Colleges for Communities' and have just completed a further detailed case study report as part of this series.

GAIL TOMS



I am thrilled to join the CDN family as Lead for Learning and Teaching and Equalities. For the past eight years, I have been an English and Communication Lecturer with Dundee and Angus College. I developed curricula to not only propagate academic skills but to holistically broaden the student experience and provide social value in learning.

My previous incarnations involved working as a learning and teaching mentor, a SHEP (Schools for Higher Education Programme) S4 tutor, teaching in HE, and serving for several years as a Children's Panellist, each role uniquely highlighting the impact that prejudice and privilege can have on our society.

I am a self-confessed perpetual student, bibliophile, and mad Labrador owner (it's the Labrador who is mad, just to be clear!) I've

even been known to pen the odd ditty and I am also learning Italian – Buongiorno!

Audre Lorde once said: 'It is not our differences that divide us. It is our inability to recognise, accept, and celebrate those differences.'

My energy, passion, research, and professional practice aims to bridge the divisions and celebrate the differences. My MLitt and PhD are in English Literature and Gender Studies, and my specialism is Modernist women writers. Iconoclastic, boho, and ground-breaking, these irrepressible artists threw out the rule book when it came to class, gender, and sexuality chanting 'make it new!' I am looking forward to channelling that energy and ethos into my new role with CDN.

COUNSELLORS ARE THE KEY TO SAFEGUARDING STUDENTS' MENTAL HEALTH

Awareness of the stresses and challenges facing students in Scotland's colleges has never been greater than it is today.

Prior to the pandemic, the Scottish Government funded around 80 trained counsellors for colleges and universities across the country. These counsellors have provided assistance to hundreds of students at crisis-points in their lives, and helped them manage the day-to-day experience of learning and coming to college.

The pandemic created scores of additional challenges but the counsellors and the wider college family adapted to ensure these potentially lifesaving services remained available to all who needed them. Since the return to a more normal period, a new set of challenges for students has emerged as they attempt to cope with fuel poverty and the price of food along with the resulting personal and emotional strains.

Colleges Scotland is in urgent discussions with the Scottish Government to ensure that, despite the financial difficulties they face, funding for counsellor provision continues and is secured for future years to ensure the sector can provide students with the appropriate help they need.

Shona Struthers, Chief Executive of Colleges Scotland, said: 'We need to plan for how we can best protect student mental health before anyone reaches crisis point and we need to understand the wide range of personal issues which can impact students' ability to learn. Counsellors allow us to do all that much more effectively.'



UHI COLLEGE MERGER WILL BE TRANSFORMATIVE

It has been almost ten years since we saw the creation of regional 'super colleges', a Scottish Government programme designed to make the sector more efficient and responsive to the needs of its students and local economies. Fast forward and we're about to see something entirely new, with the boards of management at UHI North Highland, UHI West Highland, and UHI Outer Hebrides voting in favour of merger, a move that would see the creation of a major new anchor institution within the Highlands and Islands, supporting 9,000 students and 600 staff.

Their model is entirely unique. The super college will be spread across 19 rural and island campuses and learning centres in the North and West Highlands, Skye and Outer Hebrides – an area nearly the size of Wales. They'll also remain part of UHI, itself an innovative integrated and full tertiary university partnership unique in Scotland.

According to Lydia Rohmer, Principal of UHI West Highland, who has been appointed Principal Designate for UHI North, West and Hebrides, as it will be known, this is a once in a generation opportunity to build a college of scale and impact rooted in and shaped by its communities to deliver a fairer, greener, and wealthier future. 'Our distinctive geography and sense of community is unique, and something that must be celebrated as part of this merger,' she said.

By coming together, the three colleges will create a much more sustainable and thriving new college with combined capacity and resource to grow curriculum, research, and innovation. They will also be able to do more to enhance the student experience, develop existing and new partnerships, and support employers by helping to unlock the big social, cultural, and economic opportunities in the region.

Lydia, who leads on several sector-wide and tertiary education groups including school-

college partnerships, access, articulation, and poverty, explained: 'This is about creating capacity to do more. We know we can have a transformative role in the economic revival of our region, which is on the brink of a blue and green industrial revolution. Our new college has the potential to help our region to become a renewable energy powerhouse and support the new green jobs of the future. We have a real opportunity to do more to support our fragile communities and reverse the population decline in some of our rural and island communities.'

With campuses and learning centres stretching from Caithness and Sutherland, Ross and Cromarty to Lochaber, Lochalsh, Skye and the Outer Hebrides, the merged college is ideally placed to respond to the region's key growth sectors including renewable energy, engineering, food and drink, and tourism. Indeed, with their existing expertise in engineering, environmental research, sustainable development

and tourism, and advanced manufacturing, the three colleges are already working together in these areas, along with UHI, to ensure they can meet the needs of employers.

Gaelic language will also be a priority for the merged college – the three colleges have already made a commitment

to drive forward the revitalisation of Gaelic through community-based short courses for beginners, upskilling for health, early years and social care workers, and teacher training.

The proposal is with the Scottish Government for final approval but has the support of UHI, as the Regional Strategic Body, as well as key bodies, organisations, and political representatives.

UHI North, West and Hebrides is currently working towards a proposed merger date in August 2023, pending Scottish Government approval.



COHERENCE AND SUSTAINABILITY

Jamie Hepburn MSP, Minister for Higher Education and Further Education, Youth Employment and Training, explains how the college sector plays a critical role in challenging times

Last year brought both challenges and opportunities to the college sector but, first and foremost, I am proud to see how colleges have shown flexibility through the pandemic to meet the challenges that arose. For my own part, I have been glad to be able to visit many of our outstanding colleges and meet those working and learning in the sector, witnessing some of the fantastic work that is being undertaken.

While the immediate restrictions that the Covid pandemic brought have come to an end, the economic implications, along with those of Brexit and the current high rates of inflation, mean that the future financial outlook remains challenging.

A combination of these factors has increased the demand for government support while also eroding the purchasing power of available funding, meaning that the Scottish Government Budget, before the autumn statement and at the time of writing, was worth around £1.7 billion less than when it was published in December 2021.

While the fiscal context is challenging, I will continue to work in partnership with the sector to enable colleges to continue to deliver vital post-school education. Colleges are instrumental in economic recovery and are at the heart of helping to upskill and reskill the workforce. They support community cohesion and by offering skills-based courses, colleges deliver opportunities to develop the knowledge and skills industry requires locally, regionally, nationally and internationally.

Pivotal role

Our colleges play a pivotal role in the provision of skills to help create the new workforce for a sustainable economy and to help deliver Scotland's transition to net zero. They are best placed to maintain close relationships with local employers and are able to respond flexibly to the emerging green skills demands of their regions. Given this vital role, we

must continue to work to ensure the coherence and sustainability of the provision of further education.

In 2020, the Scottish Government asked the Scottish Funding Council (SFC), in light of changing and uncertain futures caused by Brexit and the pandemic, to review how we maintain coherent, good quality and sustainable tertiary education and research. Following the publication of the *Review of Coherent Provision and Sustainability*, the Scottish Government has been working with the post school education, research and skills development ecosystem in development of the purpose and principles and I am grateful to CDN, Colleges Scotland, unions and individual institutions for their support to date.

This work is about setting the direction for the longer term, aligning and galvanising all actors and supporting reform and continuous improvement to deliver lasting change for future generations, ensuring that we continue to meet the changing demands of Scotland's learners and our future economy.

While this work is rooted in the post-school environment, we will work to learn from and take account of the findings across the broader education and skills system, including on the National Discussion on Education, the *Independent Review of the Skills Delivery Landscape* and Professor Hayward's independent review of qualifications and assessment.

We are taking a 'no wrong door' approach to engagement and will share any insights from our discussion with colleges into the relevant reviews and discussions.

I look forward to engaging with colleges and their wider networks across the country in the continuing development of the purpose and principles. 🌱





A BOY LIKE ME

CDN College Awards Student of the Year Kian Docherty left his family home with no support, but with a plan and a desire to educate himself out of poverty and deprivation

In November 2021, Kian Docherty made a frightening yet brave decision. While studying for an HND in Legal Studies at City of Glasgow College, he left his family home and declared himself homeless.

For his own mental wellbeing, to survive, he realised he had to make a change. He claims he had to 'break the generational cycle of bad life outcomes'.

Kian's upbringing is one of child poverty, abuse and neglect. This sadly resulted in his older brother taking his own life at just 19 years old. Still grieving for the loss of his brother, Kian became a young carer for his mother, who suffered from depression and a personality disorder.

He suffered tragic beginnings, but this is the journey of a young man who was determined to use the power of education to break a family cycle of alcohol misuse, abuse and neglect, and achieve his dreams.

Becoming homeless in November opened Kian's eyes to the accommodation available to vulnerable homeless people in our community, and he is keen to educate and improve life outcomes for other homeless people.

Each homeless centre has a suggestion book which is reviewed by the Care Commission. Kian has made comments in the book throughout his time there to help articulate the needs for

the accommodation, many of which are now in practice.

Kian noticed there is a deep need for education within homeless accommodation. He feels most of the residents are exceptionally vulnerable and need help with the basics in finance, time management, cooking – essential living skills – and he has been hoping to make a change in getting these sessions created in accommodations across Scotland.

Kian has been introduced to MyBNK, a charity working towards education in homeless accommodation, which offered him work educating young homeless people about financial management and life skills.

Frances McKinlay, Chief Officer of the Marie Trust, with whom Kian has been in discussion, describes his ability to see where the problems lie within the system and look for solutions to resolve them rather than accept the status quo as 'unique'.

Throughout his time in homeless accommodation Kian maintained an outstanding level of work. He achieved 'A' grades in his HND Legal Services course, subsequently being accepted to study Law at the University of Glasgow.

Kian said: 'I think the best way to describe my CDN Student of the Year Award victory was a kind of nervous elation. The anxiety that builds for any

award show is like a balloon that gets filled with more air as the event goes on, but eventually the balloon gets filled and the party can start.

'What's on the cards next? Hopefully I can do well in exam season and enjoy my time at university. The future is bright! To graduate from university will be my ultimate goal and thanks to the head start I got from the HND in Legal Studies course at City of Glasgow College, I think that's very possible.'

He continues to support homeless people in accessing education. He does this through his inspirational story, *A boy like me*, published and shared by South Ayrshire Council.

Despite a life of adversity, Kian is determined not to become the predictable by-product of his beginnings. Committed to helping others, he is actively demonstrating the 'if I can do it, then you can too' philosophy.

Kian's journey shows us that, no matter the life obstacles we face and how impossible things may seem, anything is achievable with determination and a desire to succeed.

Kian sees a positive future ahead, thanks to his desire to educate himself. 'Several months ago, I'd have told you that death was easier to foresee than success when born into my circumstances. Right now, though, anything feels possible for boys like me.' 🌟

HELPING COLLEGES SURVIVE AND THRIVE

Gordon Hunt, CDN's Senior Manager, Research and Enhancement, and Paula Christie, Lead for Research and Enhancement, discuss the importance of ensuring research is transformed into action

The CDN Research and Enhancement Centre was founded in 2021 to do three key things: to gain an understanding of the innovative and vital ways in which our colleges are supporting learners, businesses and communities; to produce research that highlights that practice; and to provide support to our college staff to adopt best practice and further develop it in a virtuous circle of innovation.

This is why we talk about research and enhancement and, for the Research and Enhancement Centre team, we will only have succeeded if our work supports colleges to survive and thrive in the challenging times the sector, and our learners, are facing.

So far, we have published reports on school-college partnerships, leadership during the pandemic, college governance and digital skills. We have also published a series of reports investigating how colleges are supporting Pathways from Poverty for learners and

communities (see page 14). While we've been doing this, we've also been working on the most important part of our work: how do we turn that research into action?

Introducing Step Forward

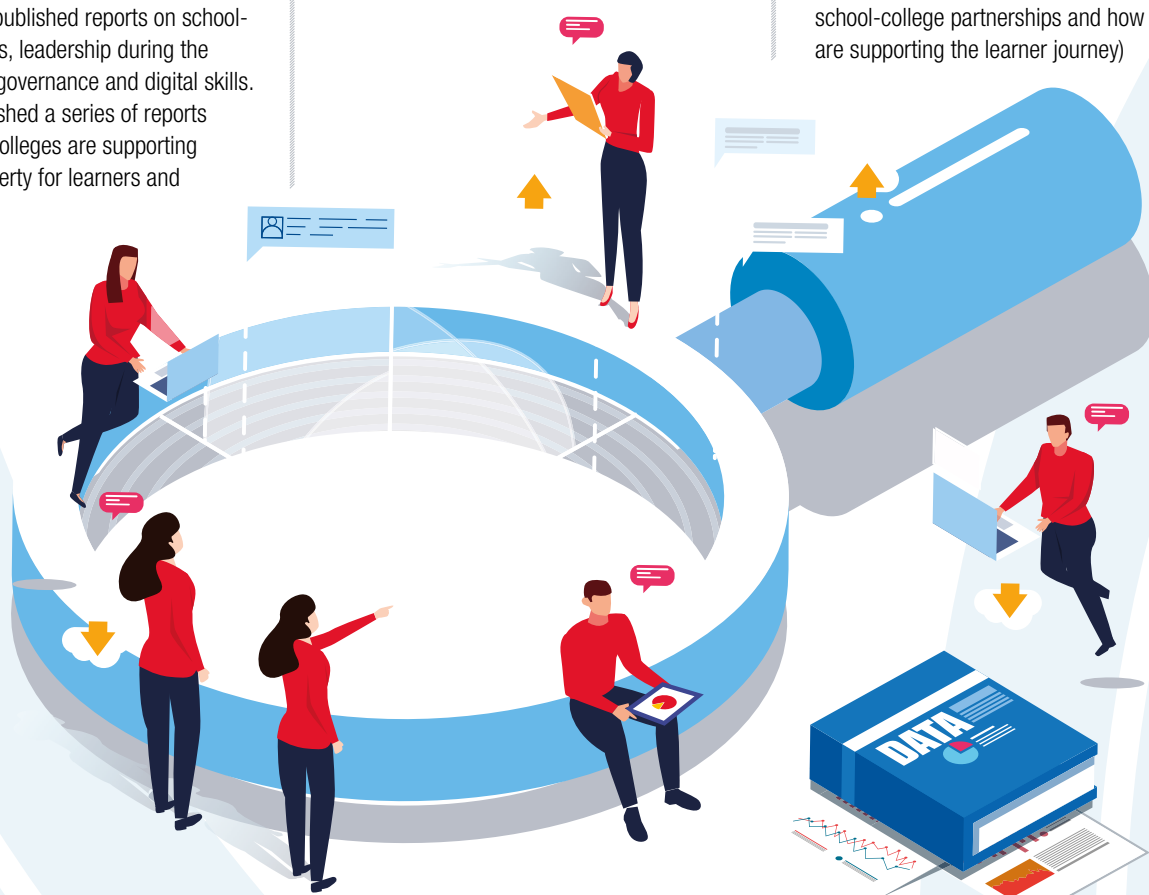
The answer is Step Forward. Designed to deliver a unique set of support interventions to enable staff in colleges to act based on our research findings, the programme is made up of a series of 'building blocks' which we are continually adding to. Our teamwork with colleges helps develop their plans and design the right approach to enable them to innovate within the context of their busy day-to-day schedules. The result is a targeted and tailored package of support and

brings an enhancement-led approach to projects and practice, supporting colleges to deliver for their learners and the communities they serve.

The support provided may include guidance, mentoring, evaluation and training to assist in the implementation and delivery of projects. Furthermore, the Research and Enhancement Centre team will also analyse, write up and export the learning and outputs from the projects, enabling college staff to share knowledge and best practice with colleagues across the sector and extending the reach of their work to regional and national level.

The initial strands of Step Forward activity have developed from and mirror the key themes of our existing research as identified in our work plan:

- The college of the future (with a focus on school-college partnerships and how they are supporting the learner journey)





- Pathways from poverty (centred on the best practice identified in our 'road map' of interventions)
- Economic transformation, net zero and sustainability (with a focus on entrepreneurship and working across the four nations of the UK).

As we develop new pieces of research, we will focus on the development themes that emerge and look for college partners to take them forward through a Step Forward project.

Built into the Step Forward model is the theme of peer support, through a commitment on the part of staff involved in the projects to share the expertise and knowledge they develop with colleagues in other colleges, so that we spread the good practice and the positive impact on learners across the sector and help provide innovative solutions for challenging times.

Next steps

Step Forward will continue to expand and evolve to meet the needs of colleges and project teams. In the area of school-college partnerships we are also working with teams at Forth Valley College and Fife College as they plan the enhancing of their existing provision.

With UHI Argyll, we are looking at how action research can enhance the fantastic work being done around access provision and reflective practice. You can read about our Pathways from Poverty work on page 14, in which we are working with several colleges to support their innovative work in supporting learners, their families and communities to engage with and sustain their educational journey.

As a tailored package of support, Step Forward is intended to evolve and change to meet the challenges of our research themes, which in turn respond to the challenges of the colleges we serve. We're at the start of the journey and we look forward to bringing our support to a college near you very soon. 🌍

CASE STUDY: STEP FORWARD AT AYRSHIRE COLLEGE

Ayrshire College has partnerships with 24 schools and works collaboratively with partner organisations to develop and implement effective and meaningful pathways for pupils in a range of subject areas.

The college currently co-delivers some modules between college and school but different schools have very different ways of approaching this.

To support the existing work undertaken by the college around both the Skills Frameworks within individual schools and the work related to the Future Skills Framework linked to full-time college programmes, college staff have signed up to develop a bespoke Step Forward project.

The project is focused on transferable skills as well as the more subject-specific vocational skills, with a particular emphasis on the ongoing development of meta-skills. The output from the project will feed into the tracking and recording of skills development from secondary schools into college in a planned and meaningful way. The learning from the project and the methods employed will be analysed by the CDN team and shared through the network of school-college partnership practitioners.

Transferable skills

Stuart Muir, a lecturer at Ayrshire College, has been working with young people as part of the school-college partnership and leads on a bike maintenance course which develops both practical and soft/transferable skills for learners. He is passionate about motivating the learners to see their full potential and supporting them in identifying the broad range of transferable skills they accrue and consolidate across the course.

Working closely with specialist mentors as part of Step Forward, Stuart has been working to develop ways to support his learners in talking about their existing skills. He also looks at approaches to support young people to be better able to identify and talk about the skills and qualities they have developed through their work on the school-college partnership programme. The hope is that the learners are better able to articulate the skills they have and can appreciate the value of their skills across different disciplines and aspects of work and learning. This in turn can benefit learners, upskilling them to perform better at interview and to be more likely to obtain jobs/further study opportunities.

The Step Forward mentoring team has provided guidance on developing an action research project and in delivering impact from activities. To date, Stuart has set up some initial conversations with learners from one of his bike maintenance groups, to see how well they are able to identify and articulate the skills they are developing through their work with him. Learners have engaged positively and the feedback provided continues to shape the project.

It is hoped that as the project develops, learners will have the opportunity to participate in mock interviews. From the interviews, it will be possible to evaluate any new activities trialled within the course to better support learners to articulate the skills they have developed and to see their relevance in relation to other areas of work/study.

Developing ideas

Stuart's work is a great example of how we are able to develop an understanding of what colleagues are trying to achieve, put in place specialist support that will help them to develop their ideas and practice to have a direct impact on their learners, and extract the learning as we go. In the process, we can support the work of lecturers like Stuart as they develop their practice to achieve the best outcomes they can for their learners at a crucial stage on their learner journey as they navigate the transition from school to either employment or further education.

Andy Convery, one of the Claire Collins Consultancy mentors who is working with Stuart, said: 'Stuart is making great progress, helping learners to realise what they're capable of and doing good action research. It's been about finding simple but effective ways to get students who don't even like picking up their pens to give feedback about how to make their learning experiences even better. I'm sure that his work will be useful to other staff thinking of doing research with similar groups.'



PATHWAYS FROM POVERTY

Paula Christie, Research and Enhancement Lead at CDN, provides an update on the work of the Research and Enhancement Centre around tackling poverty

In 2022, CDN's Research and Enhancement Centre published two reports on Pathways from Poverty. As identified within *Current Challenges and the Role of Colleges* (March 2022) and *Colleges for Communities* (September 2022), colleges have a crucial role in tackling poverty and inequality and in driving a more inclusive economy. The college student population has traditionally come from more deprived backgrounds, with colleges offering a route to connect people to the skills and experience needed to take on new opportunities to study and to work.

The third report, to be published early in 2023, *The Trauma-Informed College*, picks up on the themes and challenges and provides a detailed case study of West Lothian College's trauma-informed approach in tackling these challenges. From new and in-depth interviews conducted as part of the research, college staff, learners and community partners detail the innovative and imaginative ways in which this whole college approach to trauma has both influenced the college ethos and become embedded within partnership initiatives.

Having joined West Lothian College in 2018, Principal Jackie Galbraith is passionate about engaging young people and adults to reconnect with education and providing a safe and supportive environment for learners to thrive.

The importance of creating a safe space for learners to develop in the college is an ethos shared by many colleges and has been a cornerstone of the initiatives and projects as outlined within the *Colleges for Communities* report.

By establishing an environment in which vulnerable learners can prosper, colleges are breaking down barriers to education and widening participation, often with the benefits extending to the families of learners and the wider community. West Lothian College's approach has developed from a keen interest in the ACEs (Adverse Childhood Experiences) movement and has seen it commit to become 'adverse childhood experiences aware' as part of the college's Outcome Agreement with SFC. The college also seeks to lead with vision and empathy as part of their core strategy and this is evident within a whole-college approach to tackling issues of poverty and disadvantage.



The college student population has traditionally come from more deprived backgrounds, with colleges offering a route to connect people to the skills and experience needed to take on new opportunities to study and to work



Whole-college approach

Trauma-informed practice is commonly defined as an approach grounded in the understanding that exposure to trauma can impact an individual's neurological, biological, psychological and social development. As part of this approach, many of the staff go through mental health training and all staff at West Lothian College had the opportunity to undertake resilience training and see how that impacts students, which then informs their support for their own students. Additionally, many learners have also had the opportunity to undertake mental health training.

The success of the trauma-informed approach being adopted college-wide is evident and the ethos of leading with empathy and vision is embraced across all the different curriculum areas. Jackie Galbraith highlights that staff are passionate about this approach and are constantly thinking of new ways to contribute.

The Man Cave

One example of the college's approach highlights the work of an engineering lecturer who had expressed concern for some of his male students. Aware of the high percentage of suicides in West Lothian, he was keen to support some of those he could see struggling and find a way of supporting those who didn't want to directly access more formal support services. From this, the Man Cave initiative was set up.

The Man Cave provides a space for male students and staff to get together informally and is open to any student and member of staff. The Man Cave meets twice a week for an hour, and it's a chance to go along for a chat and maybe order pizza. Within this safe space, there is scope for those going along to open up to conversations around things that are often difficult to talk about.

The whole-college approach to trauma-informed practice has been a key driver in various suggestions for new initiatives and is very much encouraged by Jackie, who said: 'That's what I'm keen in having in the college... it's not corporate, it's not me making this happen. The strategic underpinning is there but I want lecturers and support staff, skills coaches... anybody, to grab it and just come up with the ideas and just starting things themselves.'

The Trust Project

Described in detail in *The Trauma-Informed College*, the Trust (Trauma Responsive Unique Support Tailor-made) Project is a wraparound service established to support students who have, or have had, experience of trauma in their lives. The project has three core stands:

- Helping young people back into education
- Tackling poverty for learners and their families
- Working with the justice system as a stepping stone to education or employment.

Supporting young people back into education is often challenging and it was expressed within the research interviews that external support agencies and teams can often feel that they are firefighting, particularly around the issue of school non-attendance. The positive relationships established early on within the Trust Project between the college, support agencies and learners mean that support workers feel they are able to better prepare for their young person going onto college.

Lorna Donnelly, Employment Development Officer who is seconded to Level Up from West Lothian Council Supported Employment Service, said: 'The Trust Project know what is going on in that young person's life and they are consistent in being with them on that journey. They get everything ready right from the start, and they know that young person and the young person is more secure in that.'

Initial contact is informal and creates a safe environment with positive results. A multi-agency approach to trauma adopted by the Trust Project involves issues being addressed for learners in a cohesive and beneficial way.

Steve Myer, from Aftercare West Lothian, said: 'The turnaround for me is really quick. I can come in here and within half an hour, that young person's going back into the learning environment and that's brilliant. It really does work.'

The Trust Project has extended into working with the justice system and has established routes into education as an alternative to a custodial sentence, or for those approaching their liberation date. Highlighted by West Lothian College Vice Principal, Sarah-Jane Linton, the opportunity to undertake a part-time college course upon release or as an alternative to prison aims to break the cycle for young people experiencing poverty, addiction, crime and recidivism. Read more about the Trust Project on page 29.

Direct action on poverty

The benefits of partnership working have not only been instrumental in developing additional support channels for vulnerable learners but have also facilitated opportunities to tap into financial resources to support initiatives aimed at directly combating poverty.

Engaging closely with the local authority anti-poverty team, West Lothian College has been able to secure support and funding which has had immediate impact in supporting learners struggling with the cost of living. Broader initiatives, influenced by the whole-college approach to trauma and disadvantage, have included the installation of washing machines and vouchers offered to learners for washing and drying on campus.

The college has for several years now provided breakfast and lunchtime soup and roll initiatives, providing access to meals for all students. Successful partnerships have also worked to positively impact food poverty. In partnership with The Larder, a local charity which delivers more than 150,000 ready meals to those facing food insecurity across West Lothian, a takeaway ready meal service is also available, which supports learners and their families to sustain their learning.

The Student Association has been granted new kitchen facilities which create space to allow learners to make tea and coffee, and the college kitchens have been made available to college and community initiatives. As highlighted in the *Colleges for Communities* report, these direct interventions challenge the perception of 'coming into college' as an activity solely related to learning and training.

The empathetic and trauma-informed ethos of West Lothian College is just one example of the varied and innovative ways in which colleges can have a real and direct impact on the lives of learners, their families and their communities. 🌈

To find out more, read CDN's Pathways from Poverty reports at www.cdn.ac.uk/pathways-poverty-current-challenges-role-colleges

DEMENTIA CARE THROUGH VIRTUAL REALITY

Edinburgh College is offering a ground-breaking way of preparing students to work with people living with dementia using virtual reality technology

Working in partnership with technology company Cadpeople, Edinburgh College has introduced a unique learning experience for students studying health and social care courses.

The work with Cadpeople involved the creation of a software programme which uses virtual reality (VR) technology to teach a key SQA Module in Dementia Care. Using VR, learners are able to develop their skills and understanding of working with people living with dementia.

Industry demand for qualified health and social care workers is set to rise over the next ten years, and this initiative was designed to help deliver a high-quality workforce required to address that need. Scotland's ageing and growing population is creating an urgent demand for fully qualified health and social care professionals. An additional 3,400 qualified individuals will be needed regionally across Edinburgh and the Lothians by 2024 and a further 7,800 from 2024 to 2031.

The pandemic presented two specific challenges: amplification of a skills shortage in the care sector; and the need to ensure more students could access interactive digital learning to provide a simulated experience when placements were not easily available.

The VR Dementia Care programme is at the centre of Edinburgh College's Digital Care Hub project. The vision for the Care Hub is to provide a learning space that fascinates students and fosters the skills and knowledge to inspire career pathways that will support national health and care crisis. Skills gaps and challenges informed the design of the space, with priority placed on technology-enabled care.

The development of this state-of-the-art facility and VR programme aims to transform teaching practice and aligns with the college's commitment to providing enhanced learning experiences. This commitment is outlined in Edinburgh College's

Digital Strategy 2020-2025, which states: 'The use of digital technologies will continue to become a key defining feature of the college's performance and is critical to 'future proofing' our curriculum.'

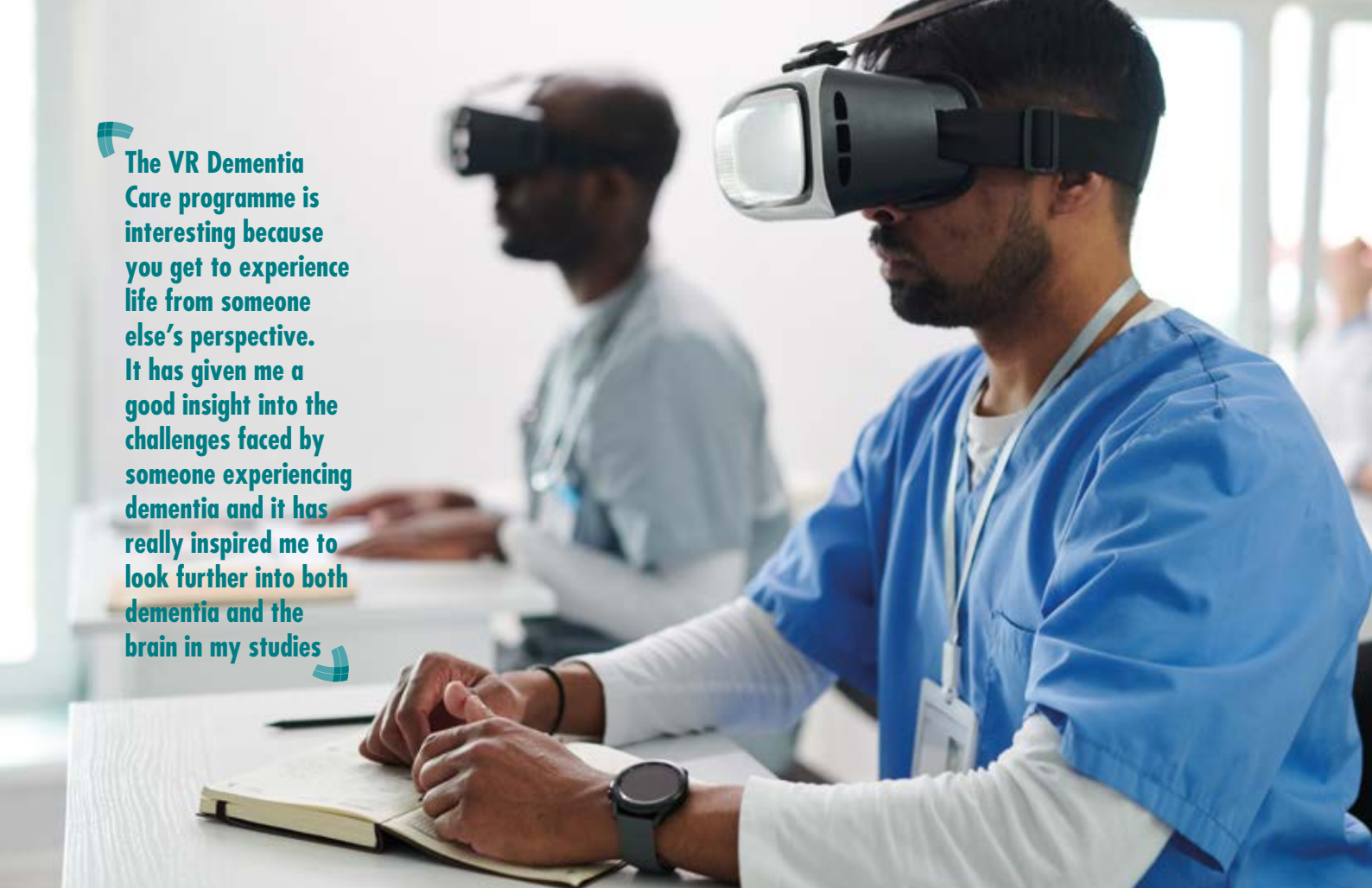
The Care Hub exposes students to many specialisms and skills challenges to equip them for a rapidly changing sector. Dementia has been a national priority in Scotland since 2007 (Public Health Scotland) and dementia care is a priority skill development area within the social services curriculum at Edinburgh College.

How the project worked

Edinburgh College partnered with Cadpeople to investigate the ways VR could provide an immersive experience, to prepare students for working with those living with dementia in our communities. Until now, preparing students with the theoretical knowledge and practical skills to work in a dementia care setting has

been limited to the classroom environment





The VR Dementia Care programme is interesting because you get to experience life from someone else's perspective. It has given me a good insight into the challenges faced by someone experiencing dementia and it has really inspired me to look further into both dementia and the brain in my studies

alongside work placement activities. The college and Cadpeople were enthusiastic about the potential possibilities of VR for extending the learning experience.

The team gathered real life interviews from people living with dementia, which added valuable first-hand knowledge and an extremely empathetic element to the VR experience. Subject experts – lecturers who have senior experience working in professional dementia care settings at Edinburgh College – were key to the design and success of the project. They ensured rigorous alignment of the course material with the module learning objectives for an accredited Caring for People with Dementia unit.

Julian Henderson, Health Professions and Social Services Curriculum Team Manager, Edinburgh College, said: 'This new VR Dementia Programme at Edinburgh College provides students with practical learning experiences, as well as exposing them to many sector specialisms which they might ordinarily miss out on without having access to specialist equipment in a health and care setting.'

'The Covid pandemic has highlighted the importance of our health and care workers across the country and this new technology will help students gain the knowledge and develop the skills that will help them excel in the sector for years to come.'

Impact and next steps

Introducing students to an immersive programme that can be integrated across the

health, social services, dental, pharmacy and counselling curriculum enables them to build their skills, working in a classroom environment fit for the digital age.

The VR Dementia Care programme has been the catalyst for providing hundreds of students (from SCQF levels 4-7) with valuable insight into what it's like to live with dementia and how it can affect someone's life, while also providing the opportunity to learn how to best care for these individuals as part of their course.

Jessica Millican, Higher Health and Social Care student, said: 'The VR Dementia Care programme is interesting because you get to experience life from someone else's perspective. It has given me a good insight into the challenges faced by someone experiencing dementia and it has really inspired me to look further into both dementia and the brain in my studies.'

Key stakeholders in health and social care partnerships, government ministers, colleges and universities have toured the facility and watched students working with the technology. They have seen how it provides active learning challenges that respond to sector skills gaps and labour market requirements.

Embedding meta skills has also been a key consideration for the design of the course and programme. Learning activities around the VR programme foster communication skills, confidence and curiosity that were impossible to achieve previously in a classroom setting. Within the VR learning space, there is also a 'soft

area' for reflection and processing, which helps support the concepts of accountability, integrity, and professional values for future careers in health and care.

Implementation of the programme has had a significant impact on teaching and the use of VR as an immersive experience for students has potential for new collaborations that will enhance training and address skills shortages across the health and social care sector.

Jonas Somerville Andersen, Managing Director of Cadpeople UK, said: 'It was a great experience working with the dementia team at Edinburgh College during the collaboration on the VR Dementia Care programme. As a provider of digital visual experiences our ability to deliver a successful product depends entirely on the input and expertise we can draw on from the subject matter experts.'

'Through our collaborative workshops and discussions with the dementia team at Edinburgh College we had a great insight into the expectations of the dementia course, as well as hands on experiences that we were able to implement into the solution. We were also very encouraged by the college's ambition towards using new technology and adaptability even among team members for whom VR was a novelty. Altogether we are very proud of the end-product and wholeheartedly believe this will make a difference for next generation of health and social care students.'



TEARS, LAUGHTER AND INSPIRATION

Embedding health and wellbeing into all that Fife College does has reaped huge benefits for staff and students

Health and wellbeing has been an intrinsic part of Fife College's organisational strategy and people plan for some years, but its importance was brought into sharp focus during the pandemic.

The results of staff surveys in 2020 indicated that between 17 and 29 per cent of staff were struggling with their stress levels, as well as their physical and their mental health. In response, the college created a distinct strategy to address the findings. It also created a new Wellbeing Team which sits with the OD and HR team.

The team developed a series of events to address the health and wellbeing of both academic and professional services staff within Fife College – covering the widest possible section of the Fife College audience. The work

of this team was recognised and shortlisted in *The Herald's* 2022 Top Employer Awards, at the CIPD awards, and at the Great British Workplace Wellbeing awards.

The college's Wellbeing Strategy creates the foundation to ensure health and wellbeing is embedded in all it does, while being championed at all levels across the college community as well as being part of how it does things and supports its people.

There has been a lot of teamwork between all the teams supporting health and wellbeing both for staff and students. With the newly formed roles, the college has been able to promote the benefits of a healthier lifestyle to staff when working from home, on campus or anywhere.

This is achieved through the OD and HR Team regularly updating the MyWellbeing page on the college intranet. Staff can refer to this at any time and it contains information and contacts

relating to topics including mental, physical, financial and social wellbeing.

Wellbeing festivals

Since the creation of the Health and Wellbeing Strategy in September 2021, the team has held four wellbeing festivals – in November 2021, February, May and November 2022.

These events offered more than 50 online workshops, talks and classes around various topics relating to mental, physical, social and financial wellbeing.

The events were held mainly online during lunchtime periods to maximise attendance. This saw an excellent uptake from staff across the college. The second festival hosted wellbeing cafés, with wellbeing experts engaging colleagues on a face-to-face basis, including a two-day mental health first aid training course.

Health assessments were also hosted in

Our speakers were wonderfully received and there were tears, smiles, laughter, excitement, inspiration, and many other emotions that brought colleagues and friends closer



collaboration with the college's occupational health provider, which offered attendees data on key biometrics, such as cholesterol, and an understanding of general health status to help tailor lifestyle choices. This was available at all campuses in-person, as well as providing remote assessments for remote working colleagues including those based in prison learning centres.

One participant said: 'The sessions are online and at lunchtime, so I've been able to participate in more events as I am not having to travel/rearrange my diary to fit sessions in.'

Another added: 'It exceeded my expectations. The sessions were all very engaging as was the presenter. As an ex-teacher I have attended many in-service events but this one was inspiring!'

Sessions were offered to managers and designed to encourage them to embrace the use of coaching skills, meaningful conversations, and leadership tools to help improve their relationships with their teams and students. There was enthusiastic uptake for these sessions, with more than 50 per cent of managers joining the workshops.

The third festival, which took place in May 2022, offered a mixture of online and in-person activities, such as sea kayaking and forest bathing. The festival ended with an inaugural Wellbeing Conference. This featured ten inspirational speakers and a networking area in which more than 30 wellbeing-related organisations engaged with participants in person. The event was sold out, with more than 300 people attending, including a mix of Fife College employees, HR/OD/Wellbeing professionals from the wider public sector and many people from the local community too.

Periklis Theologidis, Health and Wellbeing Partner at Fife College, said: 'Our first Wellbeing Conference was a terrific success, with several hundred people in attendance from the college and a whole host of external organisations such as Fife Council, NHS, and Fife Leisure.'

'Our speakers were wonderfully received and there were tears, smiles, laughter,

excitement, inspiration, and many other emotions that brought colleagues and friends closer. The vibe throughout the day was unbelievable, everyone I spoke to was delighted with the event and learned new things that they were going to take away from the day.'

The fourth Wellbeing Festival took place in the autumn and, alongside workshops and talks, there were experts on campus and colleagues could book a private and confidential one-to-one with a sleep consultant, a clinical nutrition consultant, and a medical doctor who specialised in menopause and sex.

Measuring success

Success has been measured against metrics of engagement with activities, feedback data, wellbeing survey data and social media interactions. The feedback data from an engagement survey undertaken in December 2021 was compared with the results of the December 2020 survey.

The 60 per cent survey response rate in 2021, from both academic and professional services staff, made for encouraging reading:

- Physical health – 71 per cent of staff responded positively in December 2020 and this had increased to 87 per cent in December 2021
- Work/life balance – 67 per cent of staff responded positively in December 2020 and this had increased to 83 per cent in December 2021
- Stress levels – 71 per cent of staff responded positively in December 2020 and this had increased to 77 per cent in December 2021
- Mental health – 83 per cent of staff responded positively in December 2020 and this has remained consistent at 83 per cent in December 2021. This is encouraging given the return to work and ongoing issues with covid at that time within the workplace.

Social media interactions have increased awareness of Fife College's approach to the health and wellbeing of its employees. When promoting the Wellbeing Festivals and Conference via LinkedIn, there were more than 10,000 post views

along with many positive reactions and responses from workplace wellbeing practitioners. Most importantly, almost 50 per cent of the workforce has engaged with and participated in one or more of the activities organised.

Periklis said: 'Wellbeing is at the heart of everything we do at Fife College, we are committed to supporting and developing the mental, emotional, social, and physical wellbeing of all students and staff.'

SUPPLEMENTARY ACTIVITIES IN THE FORM OF CAFES AND GROUPS HAVE INCLUDED:

- Menopause cafés – to help women understand and discuss how they are/being affected
- Loss cafés – for those coping with grief and loss
- Fife Leisure and Gym memberships
- Step-count challenge – to support daily activity through gentle exercise
- Flu jags
- Wellbeing Wednesdays – offering gentle exercise, yoga and mindfulness throughout the working day
- Women's Community Group – hosting awareness sessions every month with guest speakers to help promote health conditions such as endometriosis, body confidence and the menstrual cycle
- Social clubs/groups – this has involved the creation or reinstatement of groups to aid in colleagues' social interactions/relationships and will contribute to staff mental, physical, social and financial wellbeing. They comprise a photography club, book group, staff choir, walk-run club and a cycling club.



DEVELOPING SCOTLAND'S SKILLS TO WORLD-CLASS STANDARDS

WorldSkills UK is raising standards of vocational education and teaching

'Both in the UK and internationally, the success of Scottish competitors shows both the appetite and aptitude that young people across the country have for skills,' said Martin McGuire, WorldSkills UK Director for Scotland.



Medallions for Excellence, which are awarded to those who reach the world class standard in their skill. This impressive result saw Scotland deliver a fantastic result in digital skills, beating countries including China, Germany and Singapore.

Martin, formerly Principal and Chief Executive at New College Lanarkshire, took up the post as

WorldSkills UK's first Director for Scotland in 2019, having seen first-hand how young people, teaching staff and employers can benefit from the work of WorldSkills UK.

He said: 'By embedding the insights that WorldSkills UK gains from competing internationally at WorldSkills, we can help support teaching staff and students in accessing the latest training methodologies and frameworks that are current in industry. This, in turn, enables employers to recruit a highly skilled local workforce.'

Each year, WorldSkills UK runs a programme of national competitions in more than 60 skill areas, from chemical laboratory technician to digital construction. Edinburgh College was one of the national competition venues in 2022, hosting 12 competitions.

Audrey Cumberford, Edinburgh College Principal and CEO, said: 'It was a privilege for us to host the WorldSkills UK national finals and to welcome so many people from colleges and training providers across the UK to our Granton Campus. We saw an incredibly high standard of skills performance from all competitors, which will be of inspiration to the many young people we had through our doors to spectate.'

Jamie Hepburn, Minister for Higher Education and Further Education, Youth Employment and Training, visited the national finals at Edinburgh College. He said: 'It was great to meet the staff involved in the national finals, which provides young people opportunities to enhance their career prospects. It is tremendous that the very best students, apprentices and young professionals are competing in a host of disciplines. I know that Scotland's colleges are rightly proud of their students for their hard work, commitment and talent, which has paid off in terms of their progression in the competition.'

Scotland delivered an outstanding performance at the national finals, securing medals in cyber security, digital media production and web development.

Colleges from Scotland have consistently been included within the top performing organisations in the UK, regularly achieving the number one spot.

WorldSkills UK, part of a global movement, uses international best practice to raise standards in apprenticeships and technical education so that more young people and employers succeed. Every two years it participates in the biennial WorldSkills event, known as the 'Skills Olympics', which ultimately tests young people's ability to achieve world-class standards in their chosen skill.

The WorldSkills competitions are the largest in the world and its 85 members connect two thirds of the world's population. Countries and regions use their involvement to enhance the quality of their vocational education and training.

Scotland, while small, is punching above its weight.

At the latest WorldSkills event in 2022, which took place in 15 countries and saw more than 1,000 young people compete, Scotland had five competitors. They brought back four



Medals won by Scotland in the WorldSkills UK national finals 2022



WorldSkills UK in numbers

Engaging with more than
→ **100,000**
young people a year

Working with
→ **90%** of UK colleges and hundreds of employers and training organisations

Of the educators involved in the Centre for Excellence
→ **82%** say it has encouraged them to make changes to improve their teaching and training practice

→ **97%** of young people competing in our national finals felt inspired about their future

Martin said: 'Scotland's fantastic achievement in the national finals recognises the high level of teaching standards within our colleges and training providers. If we are to create a high value skills economy, then organisations like these are going to play a vital role in getting us there, and they need to be celebrated for their commitment to excellence for their students and apprentices.'

Scotland on the international stage

The national finalists from 2022 may be invited to join WorldSkills UK's training programme for the next international WorldSkills Competition in Lyon, France in 2024. If selected, they have the honour of joining an impressive list of young talented Scots who have showcased their skills on the international stage.

They include Callum Bonner, who won a Medallion for Excellence in painting and decorating at WorldSkills Kazan 2019.

Callum, who trained at Forth Valley College and completed his apprenticeship with Clackmannanshire Council, believes it was the confidence he gained from competing that gave him the boost needed to launch his own company, Pristine Decor, in 2019. It was recently named Scotland's best painting and decorating company.

Most recently, George Hutchison and Mona

Nawaz represented Scotland in 3D digital game art and digital construction at WorldSkills 2022.

Now studying at the University of West of Scotland, George was at City of Glasgow College when he applied for the WorldSkills UK competition. He was awarded the bronze medal at the 2019 WorldSkills UK national final and went on to be selected for Team UK. Competing in the WorldSkills Final in Korea, he was awarded the Medallion for Excellence for reaching the world-class standard in 3D digital game art.

George said the extra training from WorldSkills UK and the opportunity to work with leading experts in his field have been a huge boost to his career prospects. 'To be rewarded for something I am so passionate about is amazing. The whole experience has given me a huge confidence boost as a person and an artist, and it's going to make such a difference to my career in the future.'

Mona studied Building Information Modelling at New College Lanarkshire and now works for Balfour Beatty. The video game enthusiast from Motherwell represented Team UK while competing against young people from 14 other countries including China and Germany in the final of the WorldSkills digital construction competition in Bordeaux.

Awarded a Medallion for Excellence, Mona

was the only female in the international competition. She said: 'While my training with WorldSkills UK has taken me out of my comfort zone, it's also given me a renewed confidence and really helped me further my skills and expertise; whether that's identifying potential issues on a building plan or turning those plans into a digital model.'

'It's also provided me with the opportunity to meet likeminded people as well as businesses and employers who are on the lookout for new talent. A win, win all round, I would say.'

Martin Docherty-Hughes MP, who welcomed Scottish members of Team UK to the House of Commons, said: 'Winning four Medallions for Excellence is very impressive from a Scottish perspective, I'm delighted for all of them.'

Partnering with industry

Working with industry to ensure its programmes meet the future skill needs of employers is a key component of WorldSkills UK's work. Launching this year is the renewable energy competition. Run jointly with the Energy Skills Partnership, the competition was unveiled at the national finals at Edinburgh College, offering students an opportunity to find out more about careers in green skills.

Continues overleaf >

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Jim Brown, Director of the Energy Skills Partnership, said: 'We know there is a disconnect between the growing demand from employers for green skills and the talent pipeline available. We urgently need to address the skills gaps and the lack of awareness among young people about the new career opportunities available. That is why we are excited to partner with WorldSkills UK to launch the first ever competition in renewable energy.'

'We will work closely with industry to ensure the competition supports young people in developing the skills required by industry and we will also use the event to engage and inspire students, their teachers, parents and carers to demonstrate the wide range of careers available in different areas of the supply chain across the UK.'

From competence to excellence

A report commissioned in 2020 into Scotland and WorldSkills found that Scotland could benefit from being more committed to involvement in the WorldSkills movement. The author, Roger Mullin, found that: 'Of particular importance to the challenges Scotland faces, is the work WorldSkills undertakes in creating frameworks for skills that are driven by excellence not simply competence, developed with the involvement of international businesses not merely domestic ones, and committed to sharing international best practice.'

Martin explained: 'WorldSkills is a great deal more than an international body promoting global skills competitions, it also leads to the creation of frameworks for skills that are driven by excellence and encourage the sharing of international best practice. CDN and Colleges Scotland, as well as many other strategic advocates, see our involvement as really beneficial.'

As well as young people from colleges, apprentices from industry enter the competitions, ensuring that the content is suited to the needs of industry.

In some cases, colleges are working directly in partnership with industry. New College Lanarkshire has partnered with WorldSkills UK, Autodesk and BakerHicks, an engineering, design and project delivery company, to run the national competition in digital construction.

Laura James, Head of Scotland at BakerHicks, said: 'The WorldSkills UK series doesn't just



(Left to right) Mona Nawaz, Simona Federová, Minister for Youth Employment and Training Minister Jamie Hepburn, Director for Scotland at WorldSkills UK Martin McGuire, Connor Cruden and George Hutchinson at the Scottish Parliament

give the future stars of our industry the chance to showcase their skills, it provides them with a great training ground. By setting tests based on real-world industry challenges it provides competitors with a real insight into what they can expect once they enter the industry. And this experience for us, as employers, is invaluable.'

Laura said BakerHicks has employed a number of former competitors from New College Lanarkshire and the calibre has been outstanding. 'They really stand out from the crowd in comparison to those who enter via other educational routes. Not only do they have a knowledge and skill level that is a cut above, but they can integrate into projects and different disciplines almost immediately and have an ability to work under pressure and a confidence not normally seen at that stage in their careers.'

Another example of a college working in partnership with industry is Glasgow Clyde College. It partnered with Palo Alto Networks to help schools, colleges and universities in Scotland address the critical shortage of cybersecurity professionals. Glasgow Clyde College's work was recognised on the international stage when student Adrian Cybulski was selected to represent the UK in cyber security at WorldSkills Kazan 2019.

Centre of Excellence

Callum Bonner, the world class painter and decorator attributes much of his WorldSkills and ongoing success to his Training Manager Mike

Swan, a lecturer at Dundee and Angus College. Mike coached Callum over two years to prepare him for WorldSkills.

Keen to understand what it could do to support Training Managers in embedding the learnings from WorldSkills at their own organisations, WorldSkills UK commissioned research from the SKOPE Research Centre at the University of Oxford.

One of the key findings was that Training Managers can use their skills, knowledge and expertise from international competition involvement to bridge the gap between competence and excellence when teaching their students. However, they were not always incentivised to do so. In response to this, WorldSkills UK announced that it would be setting up a new Centre of Excellence, run in partnership with NCFE, to find ways to transfer the knowledge of training managers more widely within the college network.

The Centre of Excellence, the first of its kind in the UK, draws on WorldSkills UK's insights into global skills systems and utilises educational charity and awarding body NCFE's expertise in curriculum development to mainstream excellence in skills development.

The initiative, which launched in 2020, now boasts 48 member institutions throughout the UK, including New College Lanarkshire, Dumfries and Galloway College and City of Glasgow College in Scotland.

More than 37,000 learners and apprentices

are benefiting from the Centre of Excellence, which also sees WorldSkills UK work with colleges to deliver a professional workforce training programme that embeds world-class practices and techniques.

Of the educators involved in the Centre of Excellence programme, four-fifths (82%) said it has encouraged them to make changes to improve their teaching and training practice. The benefits for students extend beyond just honing their technical skills. Three-quarters (75%) said it has made them more determined to continue or complete their studies.

Martin said: 'The Centre for Excellence is helping to embed excellent teaching practice in these colleges. The training starts with five members of staff and that is cascaded through to others in the college. It is a growing community. At the end of this year, the third pilot year, we will introduce a new model that will ensure the sustainability of the programme.'

Other colleges and training providers not part of the Centre of Excellence can further engage with WorldSkills UK through its Innovation Network, which is designed to share best practice, benchmark performance and mainstream excellence. Forth Valley College, Clyde College, Ayrshire College, Fife College, Edinburgh College and Dundee and Angus College are all now part of the integrated network.

Commissioned by the Scottish Government, the recent Cumberland-Little report *One Tertiary System: Agile, Collaborative, Inclusive* highlighted the importance of colleges to the country's economic future. As well as advocating a focus on excellence, not just competence, the report concluded that Scotland's colleges must 'make better use of skills competitions... to open doors for our students and their economic partners'.

Martin said: 'We know employers are urgently demanding access to world-class skills to be internationally competitive. The WorldSkills UK network provides unique access to learn from other countries and transfer those insights to drive up training standards, raising the profile and prestige of skills in Scotland. It is our aim to work with more FE, HE and training providers across Scotland to successfully train more young people to meet global industry standards.'

For more information on WorldSkills UK, visit worldskillsuk.org



Richard Sagar, Team UK

Enhancing skills through WorldSkills UK at Dumfries and Galloway College

Dumfries and Galloway College is part of the WorldSkills UK Centre of Excellence programme, delivered in partnership with NCFE. It uses global insights to deliver world-class training.

Joanna Campbell, Principal and Chief Executive of Dumfries and Galloway College, previously worked at City of Glasgow College, where she held the post of Vice Principal Student Experience.

She said: 'I was involved in WorldSkills UK at City of Glasgow College and saw the benefits participation in WorldSkills UK and WorldSkills competitions brings for students.'

'Having discussed with Martin McGuire, WorldSkills UK Director for Scotland, the college applied to become part of the WorldSkills UK Centre of Excellence in 2020. We applied knowing the benefits this could bring to curriculum teams and raising standards by benchmarking against a performance excellence framework.'

'Dumfries and Galloway had previously participated in WorldSkills some time ago and it was a really successful experience, with college alum Richard Sagar winning gold at Calgary in 2009.'

Richard Sagar MBE, who was inducted into the Hall of Fame at CDN's College Awards 2020, began his career studying for his Electrical Installation SVQ Level 3 at Dumfries and Galloway College. In 2009, Richard represented Team UK at WorldSkills Calgary, competing against 32 international competitors, and winning Gold. He started up a smart building technology business, Sagar Smart Homes.

Joanna said: 'The Centre for Excellence has involved staff participating in the WorldSkills Educators Programme at New College Lanarkshire. What it has really done is sharpened our focus on embedding skills excellence and building resilience and it has also helped us to benchmark performance at an international level.'

'Colleagues are now building momentum and trying to get other lecturers involved. The next step for us is to cascade the WorldSkills UK ethos into other parts of the college and use the standards garnered from being part of the Centre of Excellence initiative to enhance our learning and teaching.'



Joanna Campbell

Dumfries and Galloway College



Continues overleaf >

WorldSkills UK participants



Alessio De Martino, City of Glasgow College, part of the team that won gold in digital media production at the WorldSkills UK national finals 2022



Mona Nawaz, New College Lanarkshire, Team UK 2022 in digital construction



Callum Bonner competing at WorldSkills 2019



Connor Cruden, UHI Moray, Team UK 2022 in plumbing and heating



George Hutchison, City of Glasgow College, Team UK 2022 in 3D digital game art



Lewis Batchelor, New College Lanarkshire, Team UK 2022 in mechanical engineering cad



Simona Federová, City of Glasgow College, Team UK 2022 in restaurant services



Jamie Hepburn MSP at the WorldSkills UK national finals in Edinburgh College, learning about the new renewable energy competition

Scottish organisations that reached and competed in the WorldSkills UK national finals 2022

- City of Glasgow College
- New College Lanarkshire
- UHI Moray
- SECTT
- North East Scotland College
- Glasgow Kelvin College
- South Lanarkshire College
- Forth Valley College
- UHI Inverness
- Glasgow Clyde College
- Fife College
- Borders College
- Edinburgh College



AN APPETITE TO LEARN

Susan McLellan, Lecturer at Dumfries and Galloway College, won CDN's Learning and Teaching Colleague of the Year Award for her professionalism and enthusiasm

Susan McLellan is described by her peers at Dumfries and Galloway College as an 'outstanding colleague who goes above and beyond as a member of the team'.

She joined Dumfries and Galloway College as a Lecturer in Health and Social Care in 2016, having graduated with a BSc (Hons) Psychology from the Open University and moving into teaching. Prior to joining the college, Susan worked within the third sector, providing support to various organisations, employees and volunteers.

Since moving into teaching full time, she has added to her professional interests, enhancing her learning and teaching skills as an external verifier, marker and member of the quality development team with SQA. She is involved in the pilot of the HNC Social Sciences, which will be moving to the HND Next Gen for 2023. She found out about her nomination for the CDN award through a colleague at the SQA. 'It was a lovely surprise,' she says.

A member of the Board of Management at the college, Susan is also on the Learning and Teaching Committee, Finance and General Purposes Committee and a working group called Let's Talk

Teaching, all voluntary roles which have had a tremendous impact and influence on learning and teaching throughout the college.

Susan is also working with the General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTC Scotland), representing lecturers in the college as the organisation revisits the teaching profession's Code of Professionalism and Conduct (COPAC).

She says: 'I really enjoy meeting people from other colleges and expanding my professional development by learning from others, as well as sharing the benefits of my expertise. I feel it is vital to be involved in work to give our students access to best practice and I really enjoy what I do. I work in a fantastic team with a wonderful, supportive manager.'

'All my classes are different, but I am particularly encouraged by students on the Access Courses, part of the Scottish Wider Access Programme (SWAP), which include units on English, psychology, sociology and values, as they may have thought traditional education is not for them but would like the opportunity later in life to study at university.'

'Many have caring commitments or have come back to us after starting a family. It is fabulous to see them building in confidence and going on to university.'

Julia MacDonald, Curriculum Manager for Health and Social Care, says: 'Susan has helped all her colleagues to improve the college's KPIs and the positive outcomes for the students. At a time when health and wellbeing is at the forefront of everyone's minds, Susan remembers to ask her colleagues how they really are, and her kind manner is really appreciated by so many.'

'Her knowledge, which she shares willingly, is expansive and current which enables other staff to improve their teaching and learning experiences for the students. She is empathetic and has a wide network of other colleagues from other colleges and is generous in sharing all her knowledge with her team.'

'She is absolutely adored and respected by the students who will go above and beyond if it is Susan who is asking. Even when circumstances are challenging, we do all enjoy working here, and particularly with Susan.'

Having completed her Masters' in Education from the University of Dundee, Susan's thirst for knowledge remains unquenched. 'I like to dig in and have a go. We are all doing more work on how to deliver online effectively. There is always something new going on to keep me busy!'



FAST TRACKED TO THE NURSE BANK

An innovative partnership between Glasgow Clyde College and NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde enabled HNC Healthcare Practice students to join the Nurse Bank, an advantage previously given only to university students

During the pandemic, NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde (NHSGGC) needed to recruit healthcare support workers quickly to help ease staffing pressures. Pre-Covid, alongside other college managers, Laura Kidger, Healthcare Senior Lecturer at Glasgow Clyde College, had met with the lead Practice Education Facilitator, David Lamont, to explore the possibility of students fast-tracking on to the Nurse Bank, though this was not usually possible for college students.

The Nurse Bank is a register of those who are available to pick up shifts, often at short notice. This was an opportunity that university students could make use of but which was not available to HNC students.

Owing to the pressure on the NHS at the time, it was agreed that HNC students could join the Nurse Bank, on the condition that certain skills had been taught. This opportunity was escalated very quickly by the NHS with a link for

students to either opt for a six-month job opportunity or apply for the Nurse Bank within the acute sector of NHSGGC.

Laura said: 'This has been an excellent opportunity for the HNC healthcare students to be able to gain paid employment that fits around their demanding course. It also gives them valuable experience in the clinical setting, building their confidence in linking theory to practice. The HNC was originally developed to upskill Band 3 health care support workers so the students have the clinical skills and knowledge required and embedded as part of the curriculum.'

David Lamont said: 'NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde in partnership with local colleges support the education and practice learning of HNC Healthcare Practice students during their programme of study. To gain additional healthcare experience, many of these students are attracted to work as HCSW on NHSGGC Nurse Bank.'

Continues overleaf >



STEPHEN WAUGH – HNC HEALTHCARE PRACTICE

HNC Healthcare Practice student Stephen Waugh joined Glasgow Clyde College as an evening student in August 2020, which enabled him to study while working as a call handler for Police Scotland. Stephen was looking to change career and knew he wanted to work in healthcare, despite having no previous experience in the field.

When Stephen was in the first year of studying the evening HNC Healthcare Practice, NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde reached out for students to take on a six-month temporary contract to alleviate staff shortages due to the pandemic. Stephen did not hesitate to put himself forward to take on this post alongside his studies and his job.

Although he was only in year one of the HNC evening class (which is designed for students who are unable to become a full-time student) he wanted to support the NHS with this work as it was something he felt strongly about. Stephen continued to attend the evening class and work in a Covid ward, where he used his knowledge and skills to deliver high standards of person-centred care.

In addition, Stephen worked at weekends in

vaccination centres, undertaking more training so that he could administer the Covid and influenza vaccinations. By securing this role, he has to date vaccinated thousands of people and has played an active role in battling the pandemic. After his six-month contract had ended, he was offered a full-time job in Glasgow Royal Infirmary where he is now employed.

While undertaking a clinical placement as part of the HNC Healthcare Practice alongside working, Stephen received outstanding feedback from his assessor. Feedback from NHS staff was also that he is very far advanced for this stage of his training, and they would welcome him back anytime to work on the ward. This is due to Stephen's thirst for knowledge which resulted in him gaining an A grade in the graded unit and passing all assessments first time.

He has also gained a place to articulate to an Adult Nursing degree at the University West of Scotland, Paisley campus.

Stephen said: 'It was extremely challenging trying to balance my evening HNC Healthcare Practice course and being able to remain in a reasonable financial position. By joining the NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde Nurse Bank, I was able to pick up shifts that worked around my



availability. I ensured that I moved around to different areas so that I could improve my learning and skill set.

'Had I not been on the Nurse Bank, then I feel that I would not have had these opportunities. I have taken this role as a chance for me to learn new things and improve on skills that I have already learnt. This experience also helped to improve my confidence and following the HNC Healthcare Practice, I articulated directly into second year at university to study for a BSc Adult Nursing degree.' 🌟



> Continued from previous page

'Having gained practice learning experience as part of their programme and having met pre-employment requirements, we were able to utilise agreed internal processes to recruit them to the Nurse Bank in a more timely manner, without the situation where interviews and induction training conflicts with college timetables. This allowed us to significantly ease pressure on our HCSW workforce.'

Benefits to students and the health sector

This innovation not only benefitted the students but also assisted the sector while experiencing great pressure as a result of the pandemic and its aftermath. It was agreed that the college would deliver the Scottish Manual Handling Passport and other foundation clinical skills - infection control, personal hygiene, BMI, PUDRA, nutrition and hydration, which are all taught as standard on the HNC – to ensure students were 'work ready' to join the Nurse Bank.

This was initially undertaken at the Louisa Jordan Hospital, the temporary hospital and vaccination centre. At this time the college was closed owing to the pandemic and all classes were online, which created further opportunities for partnership working.

Early in the pandemic the college had responded to equipment shortages in the NHS by donating beds and other equipment from its clinical skills rooms. On decommissioning, equipment from the Louisa Jordan Hospital was gifted to Glasgow Clyde College, enabling a new clinical skills lab to be set up at Cardonald Campus in 2021-22.

The HNC Healthcare Practice was already mapped to the Healthcare support worker mandatory induction standards. The college also ensured that students had an adult and child PVG, occupational health clearance and a Covid age risk assessment. This ensured that the student could then go straight into the workforce without the NHS undertaking any additional expensive, and often lengthy, workplace training and checks.

Opportunity

The majority of the 160 HNC healthcare students at Glasgow Clyde College took up this offer of employment to work around their HNC course, with many giving up existing jobs to do so. For some, this resulted in offers of full-time employment (see the student case study on page 27).

This opportunity has enabled them to undertake paid employment around their studies and to utilise and enhance their skills. It also meant they were ready to hit the ground running when they went on placement, as their skills were at a higher level than those of previous placement students. The students could also take their enhanced skills with them when they progressed to higher education.

The department expects performance indicators to improve because of this initiative, in addition to the obvious benefits it has brought to students financially and academically. This model will continue and is an example of innovation brought about by workforce demand, as well as good partnership working, that will benefit students and NHS employers for years to come. 🌟





TRUST

IS SUPPORTING TRAUMA-EXPERIENCED STUDENTS

West Lothian College's Trust Project understands that, for many individuals who have experienced trauma, there may be ongoing impacts on their lives, particularly outwith formal education.

There are three strands to the Trust Project:

- Helping students who are not enrolled on full-time courses into education or employment;
- The college's Eliminating Poverty project, funded by the Scottish Funding Council to support 200 full-time students and their families become resilient and successful; and
- Students within the justice system who are considering their chosen career as part of deferral from prosecution and ready to use college as a stepping stone.

The Trust Project recognises that support with external factors, such as low income and difficult or complicated family relationships, can have a positive

impact on their ability to sustain education and attain qualifications, which will support them to achieve better life outcomes beyond education. Referrals to the project can come from college staff, self-referral or from partner organisations including schools and youth justice.

Whole-family approach

The project takes a whole-family approach, recognising that where a family can be involved and supported to identify and work to overcome challenging circumstances, there are likely to be positive outcomes. This can include reduction of numbers of people living in poverty, increased income generation, better mental health, and better overall health outcomes for all.

A key development has been the creation of The DEN, an informal space in the college for individuals to receive more intensive and bespoke support. It is designed to enable them to become familiar with a college environment

in a more informal way rather than traditional classroom teaching.

Lecturer Joanna Hendry, who works on the Trust Project, said: 'DEN stands for develop, empower and nurture and this is what we focus on. It is a safe place where our trauma experienced students can work on their tailored programmes, build trust, form new relationships and focus on their recovery.'

Training

In addition to support services, the Trust Project has worked with a local young people's counselling organisation to provide its Mental Wellbeing and Health training to 33 staff members. This has supported them in feeling better able to understand and recognise trauma in students, be equipped and able to provide appropriate support and information, as well as signpost on to others.

Continues overleaf >



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All teaching staff have been provided with more general training and information on trauma, how it can impact behaviour and how to provide support and information to students, including how to refer to the Trust Project and other relevant college services. This included nearly 300 staff and 750 students participating in trauma awareness workshops led by developmental psychologist and research scientist Dr Suzanne Zeedyk in September 2022.

Wellness Recovery Action Planning (WRAP) training has been provided for two staff members to enable them to support individuals to carry out WRAP and help them manage and maintain their mental health and wellbeing.

Student Ross McPhee said: 'The Trust Project is good for you. If I have a problem, this is the place I want to come to, there is nowhere else! The staff are easy to speak to, understanding and they want the best for me.'

Partnership working

The Trust Project is working with partner organisations to engage with individuals who can benefit from the generalised and individual support and information it can offer. This ranges from signposting to services, help to access affordable laundry services and pre-prepared meals, through to individualised support to engage with training and education opportunities.

Partners who have referred individuals to the Trust Project include West Lothian Council's Social Work Department, criminal defence lawyers and the Scottish Prison Network, local counselling and wellbeing services, and schools. The role of partner organisations is to provide referral routes into the Trust Project and to build connections with community partners who provide opportunities for students to take part in work trials and experiences.

Making use of a variety of services can offer 24/7 support with professionals across the partnership network.

Lorna Donnelly, Employment Development Officer at West Lothian Council, said: 'The Trust Project knows what is going on in that young person's life and they are consistent in being with them on that journey. They get everything ready right from the start, and they know that young person and the young person is more secure in that.'

The Trust Project has been particularly successful in developing working relationships with different parts of the criminal justice system. Connections with a local criminal defence lawyer has enabled the referral of young people into the Trust Project with the aim of accessing training and education opportunities in the college as an alternative to custodial arrangements.

Overall, the impact of the project is incalculable to those it has supported. Students who were at high risk of continuous reoffending are now low risk, with career goals and aspirations, and they are rebuilding family relationships.

The Trust Project underpins the college's work on creating pathways out of poverty and trauma. It makes a key contribution to the ambitions of the Scottish Government's *Best Start, Bright Futures* tackling child poverty delivery plan, and the National Strategy for Economic Transformation's priority for a fairer and more equal society.

West Lothian College aims to embed the principles and practices from the Trust Project to ensure that it inspires and enables success for all people in the communities it serves. 🌍

Scotland's Stories: Let's Talk about Trauma, follows the life of Aidan Martin, graduate of West Lothian College. It features an interview with a student from the college's Trust Project. Watch it at player.stv.tv/episode/4d58/scotlands-stories

Find out more about the Trust Project at youtu.be/jUHXdl70r2o



Support

The Trust Project offers a range of support and interventions to learners who express a wish to access additional support. This includes:

- Information sharing on services and help available from Children 1st, Action for Children and other third sector partners who are on campus weekly
- Intensive and personalised support at The DEN, an informal learning environment
- Help on identifying needs to sustain education
- Referral to counselling services
- Access to support health and wellbeing and use of the college gym
- Provision of family events, relationship mediation, financial sustainability learning and help to break the cycle of poverty
- Provision of laundry tokens to use on-campus laundry facilities free of charge
- Provision of healthy meals from a local food charity available through the Student Association
- Support for job search
- Referrals to welfare and financial support services on campus.

LEEP AHEAD



A new programme at UHI Inverness has seen care-experienced young people progress into their choice of positive, sustainable destinations

LEEP Ahead (Life, Education, Employment, Personal development) is a new course at UHI Inverness, which embeds a discrete curriculum of core skills and mental health awareness within the meta skills framework.

It aims to combat barriers to learning whilst building self-esteem, refining emotional literacy, increasing personal and social skills, improving health and wellbeing, and introducing a wider curriculum experience through project-based activity.

The course was developed by specialists in Childhood Practice and Student Support Services and through consultation with care-experienced young people. It was founded on pedagogical and developmental theory; the principles of trauma-informed practice, an awareness of adverse childhood experiences, and recognition of the impact disruption and displacement can have on the development and outcomes of young people involved in the care system. The course used an innovative multi-agency approach to the 24/7 care of each individual, all of which are designed to sustain learning.

Curriculum projects were tailored to the interests of the group, including:

- Digital forensics
- Crime scene investigation
- Flour babies
- Theatre makeup
- Trashion up cycling
- Pond dipping and rock pooling
- Professional cookery
- Learning about animal care through therapy pony and puppy visits.

The impact of the pandemic was a key consideration in developing the programme and a recognition of recent research on the disproportionate impact Covid had on vulnerable groups, such as care experienced learners.

A student who had attempted mainstream programmes previously explains how she is now feeling with the supported LEEP Ahead programme. 'I feel so proud of myself on this course. My school said I have special needs, but I feel really confident about my reading and writing now. I want to work with people who struggled like me.'

The learners had no recent engagement in post-compulsory education or employment. As a group, they sustained 92.5 per cent attendance and a high level of engagement, with 90 per cent progressing to a positive destination.

Nurture is key

Case conferences were held on each student with transition plans created and implemented prior to starting. Students visited the campus and met key members of their immediate team to prepare for study. They received laptops, dongles and regular IT support to ensure digital accessibility, enabling them to study.

Lead professionals helped students obtain free travelcards and supported development of their independent travel skills and confidence prior to commencing. Third sector agencies provided wake up calls and out-of-hours support, ensuring learners were ready to study.

The course provided an opportunity to re-engage 13 learners, with just one learner not completing the programme. A high level of on-going support has ensured that each of the completing LEEP students have progressed onto other further education courses or apprenticeships and are continuing to make good progress. Lecturers report that they are among the most helpful, well attending, committed members of their classes, and can often be seen offering help and support to other learners. 🌟

Course aims

- To ensure care experienced students can redress gaps in essential skills knowledge and understanding, experienced through trauma, displacement or disengagement.
- To develop an understanding of mental health, the factors influencing mental health and coping strategies to increase resilience and support positive mental health and wellbeing.
- To support independent living by promoting healthy eating, cooking skills, personal safety, and the management of personal finances.
- To promote a sense of self through identifying personal skills and attributes and recognising areas for improvement.
- To challenge bias and stereotypes of the learner group by offering wider opportunities for personal growth and development within education and employment.



A GLOBAL GREEN SHOWCASE

City of Glasgow College became a global showcase for green technology at COP26 in 2021, with the legacy of that work continuing to deliver innovation and new initiatives

Supporting the 2021 United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP26), City of Glasgow College created an International Maritime Hub (IMH) within its Riverside campus and a Global Business Hub within its City campus.

Launched by First Minister Nicola Sturgeon MSP, the Hub brought together global leaders, delivering more than 100 key events. In the process, the college became a global showcase for green technology, green innovation and green skills for seafarers, supporting the Just Transition within the maritime industry.

The outcomes discussed at the Maritime Hub are shaping how sustainability and green innovations are being adopted into curriculum across the college's Faculty of Nautical and STEM. The Hub has also led to closer relationships with industry stakeholders and public bodies and has opened further opportunities for sustainability projects and initiatives.

Unique opportunity

COP26 was a unique opportunity for the college to engage with local, national and international stakeholders around the themes of net zero,

Just Transition, improved productivity linked to Sustainable Development Goals and new business model innovation.

While the college's engagement with COP involved many curriculum areas, a specific driver of activities was engagement through the IMH, hosted in partnership with Maritime UK.

More than 30 events took place at the college's Riverside Campus including dinners, seminars, conferences, meetings and exhibitions with key figures from the United Nations, industry, politics and education all coming together to discuss the move towards

net zero. These events provided numerous opportunities for staff and students to engage and positioned City of Glasgow College as a leading educational partner on the drive to net zero.

The Hub also hosted an Innovations Exhibition, featuring key initiatives and projects that support City of Glasgow College's approach to sustainability, showing what is happening across the whole college in terms of raising awareness of climate action and developing green skills.

Ongoing impacts

The IMH had an impact on many aspects of the college, including its overall culture. Staff and student awareness of sustainability and necessary actions to reach net zero was raised through internal and external communication before, during and after the event. Direct engagement of staff and students with the events at the IMH and the Innovation Exhibit enhanced interest and knowledge in sustainability initiatives and projects around the college.

The outcomes discussed at the Maritime Hub are directly shaping how sustainability and green innovations are being adopted into curriculum across the Faculty of Nautical and STEM. The Hub has led to closer relationships with industry stakeholders and public bodies, and has opened further opportunities for sustainability projects and initiatives.

Forty-one new international business partner leads were developed with at least eight potential new partnerships initiated. The development of these partnerships is ongoing and will continue through the next academic year. The events at the IMH have helped to

shape City of Glasgow College's vision for a new innovation centre on its campus, which is currently at the business development stage. This new Centre of Excellence will focus investment on key industries to create additional curricular proposals, while augmenting and completing existing innovation and STEM activities on site.


Renewable energies and sustainability are key focuses for innovation in this centre. Four delegations to the IMH came from six continents and 38 countries, involving 255 organisations and more than 2,000 visitors. The events also generated a significant increase in social media activity leading to increased public awareness. The daily 'Climate Fresk' Workshops hosted by the college during the two weeks of COP26 were open to all and allowed staff, students and the wider Glasgow community to participate, empowering them to become climate education leaders.

While the college's initiatives around COP26 stand out as a specific highlight, they have more importantly reinforced strategic long-term commitments to become a sustainable college.

Stuart McDowell, Head of Innovation and STEM at City of Glasgow College, said: 'Not only are we driving to achieve institutional change, but we are aiming to drive wider societal impact and change through engagement with our ecosystem. City of Glasgow College continues to address the changing skills demands driven by the need to become more sustainable across the many industries served by the college, through changing pedagogical approaches and adapting curriculum content.'

AS PART OF ITS COMMITMENT TO SUSTAINABILITY AND TACKLING CLIMATE CHANGE CITY OF GLASGOW COLLEGE HAS:

- Committed to becoming net zero by 2040.
- Reduced its carbon emissions by 33 per cent in the last five years.
- Signed the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Accord, which embeds SDGs into education, research, leadership, operations, administration and engagement activities. The first annual submission to this included four case studies.
- Invested in a 100 per cent electric vehicle fleet, ensuring a reduction of 4.01 tCO₂e in vehicle emissions per year.
- Gained Cycling Friendly Campus status and introduced electric bikes for staff to travel between the twin site campus.
- Invested in an industrial composter ensuring the diversion of all food waste from anaerobic digestion by composting directly on site.
- Stopped selling single-use plastic bottles in catering outlets and vending machines.
- Introduced a 50p charge on single-use hot drinks cups. Funds raised are being used on environmental projects.



All industries have a role to play in supporting climate change and as individuals, we can support net zero in the food we eat, the cars we drive and the products and services we consume. Therefore, by embedding sustainability in our curriculum we can not only better prepare graduates for the world of work, but we can also encourage students to be more active participants in society

DATA SKILLS FOR ALL



A collaboration between Edinburgh College and Access to Industry has led to co-delivery of a new data skills progression route

As part of the Data Skills Gateway programme, Edinburgh College and Access to Industry have collaborated on the Access Data project to co-deliver a data skills progression route, mainly through the National Progression Award (NPA) in Data Science (SCQF levels 3-6).

The Data Skills Gateway programme aims to develop a strategic approach to increasing the data skills of the population of the Edinburgh city region, regardless of gender, background or location. The skills activity brings together industry, universities, colleges, schools and other partners to help develop an integrated pipeline of skills development and progression routes into data careers.

The Access Data project supports unemployed

people in Edinburgh and those on a low income to recruit individuals who have an interest in developing digital and data skills and progressing towards data jobs.

Access Data courses

The Access Data courses aim to develop data literacy, or the ability to derive meaningful information from data. This skillset is not the same as digital literacy, although in practice, working with data often requires digital skills and other essential skills such as communication, numeracy problem solving and working with others. Because data is so crucial for organisational success, data literacy, and associated meta skills, are increasingly in demand for all employees.

The project targeted the Edinburgh and South

East City Region Deal's Data-Driven Innovation's (DDI) skills gateway priority target groups, including:

- People with a disability
- People from a minority ethnic background
- People who are neuro divergent
- Veterans
- Women.

The partnership programme developed a strategic focus on essential skills, supporting a positive culture among delivery and supporting staff in developing learners' essential skills. This is an important concept as it aims to ensure there is a parity of esteem between data science skills, essential skills and embedded meta skills in learning and teaching approaches. They are seen to be related and are developed together rather than as separate aspects of the learning



experience. This approach has become second nature to learners and staff.

How it's done

This is achieved through programmes and courses that provide one-to-one support, group-work, tutored classes and work experience – aiming to facilitate access to further and higher education, training and employment.

The programmes and courses develop essential core skills such as communication, ICT (Information and Communications Technology) and problem solving, and offer individual support that aims to alleviate wider personal barriers.

As part of the programme, delivery and support staff plan with learners, using contextualised learning and teaching approaches, taking account of the needs of learners and their development of essential skills, while making the learning experience relevant and meaningful.

Project-based and active learning activities are key to maintaining and increasing learner engagement and help learners acquire a range of essential skills. This has encouraged learners to engage in a topic and, where appropriate, it contextualises learning activity around the interest of a learner.

The programme makes good use of online resources, particularly a virtual learning environment (VLE) and Microsoft Teams to support the development and monitor learners independent learning skills. This gives them a sense of having an online presence where they can work on activities in class or elsewhere in their own time. Not all learners have access to the internet at home, but Access to Industry try to ensure that as many learners as possible have access to the VLE.

Throughout the progression route caseworkers provide students with opportunities to strengthen their employability skills and build confidence, providing ongoing pastoral support to help students tackle any challenges they face.

Access to Industry lends laptops to learners to give them access to the virtual learning environment (VLE). Online resources include set tasks, tests, quizzes, e-portfolios and personal development plans.

Magda Gucman, Access Data Coordinator, Access to Industry, said: 'Thanks to the courses

Access Data organised in cooperation with Edinburgh College, our students have had an opportunity to greatly enhance their digital and data skills. They have also had a chance to improve a number of other skills, such as problem solving and communication.'

The portfolio of data courses is helping learners gain confidence in using digital technologies in different educational, social or vocational online environments. On completion of the programme, learners gain recognised digital and data literacies and other essential skills that contribute positively to learning in life and work, as well as their and others' rights and responsibilities as data citizens.

John Leach, Lecturer at Edinburgh College, said: 'Through the Access Data Course students concentrate on developing their data science skills using digital applications at an introductory/ intermediate level. As well as learning fundamental aspects of the software, students had opportunities to develop numeracy, critical thinking, collaborative working and social skills in a class with a diverse cultural mix.

'On completion, their confidence of working in an office environment, where a data skill set would be important, was enhanced. The course also acted as a gateway to further training at a higher level to enhance their employment opportunities.'

Progress and outcomes

Learners use an online tool to update their progress in essential skills, including meta skills and employability skills - this provides an effective way to help learners understand how well they are developing appropriate essential and meta skills.

The 36-week programme was delivered between August 2021 and June 2022. Its success is evident in the attainment percentages across all courses for 2021-22: 88 per cent at SCQF level 3; 92 per cent at SCQF level 4; 85 per cent at SCQF level 5; and 100 per cent at SCQF level 6.

The National Progression Award in Data Science is available at SCQF Levels 4, 5 and 6. Learners successfully gaining the Award at Levels 4 or 5 are then able to move on to a higher level of the NPA.

There is a range of Data Science qualifications that learners can progress onto from the NPA in Data Science available at SCQF Levels 7, 8 and 9. This PDA has been designed to provide a smooth progression from the NPA.

One Access to Industry learner, said: 'I would highly recommend the Access Data course, as it helps learners gain and develop essential IT and data skills which are crucial for today's workplace. Every session is very interactive as it is classroom-based training, with ongoing tutor feedback. It has helped me acquire skills that I can put to practice at my workplace.'

After successfully completing year one, next steps are to ensure increased learner engagement and extension of the data skills progression route, as well as sharing the programme with partners. 🌈

Following the success of year one, the following has been achieved or is under way:

- Delivery of additional courses as part of the Data Skills curriculum portfolio, for example two new courses launched in October 2022:
 - Communication and Presentation Skills: Storytelling with Data
 - Introduction to Coding skills
- Learner numbers have increased by 25 per cent
- This progression route is now also being delivered as a collaborative project with Edinburgh College and East Lothian Works
- Meta skills development is now included across all Data courses
- Access Data course is providing a stepping stone on to further education, training, or employment.
- Learners have progressed to the Professional Development Award in Data Science at level 7 and progression to a job outcome when the role requires the person to be working with data.



I knew I had gaps in my knowledge and experience that the course could fill, especially relating to the links with industry and all the training the course can provide



50:50 VISION

UHI West Highland's Ranger course uses a 50:50 partnership approach to provide the practical skills employers need

UHI West Highland's Countryside Skills with Ranger Training course is delivered with a number of partners through the Nevis Landscape Partnership (NLP), a community organisation set up to care for the natural and cultural heritage and wild land areas of Ben Nevis and surrounding landscape.

The organisations forming the partnership also include the John Muir Trust, the Woodland Trust and Jahama Estates. This partnership drives the evolution of the course and provides direct contact and linkage with the partner organisations, which are involved in course delivery, student engagement and work placements.

This 50:50 partnership delivery comprises classroom sessions led by lecturers, with practical learning led by employers out in the countryside. Practical guided sessions are led by the partner organisations in the field at different locations with industry-relevant tickets such as chainsaw, brushcutter, drystone dyking or fencing, and navigation.

It's a dynamic partnership that's founded

on mutual benefit. Student learning is further supported by highly accessible digital technologies and resources.

While lecturers organise the classroom days and assessment, NLP delivers the field work, hosted and supported by different landowners. The partner organisations review content and industry topics through 'theory dialogue' with lecturers to ensure current industry requirements are met. As a result, the content is updated each year.

Flexible course content

The ongoing curriculum development dialogue between lecturers and partner organisations informs the in-year delivery plan. This dynamic course schedule and its flexible content keeps the course highly current and relevant. Partner organisations directly influence the schedule and content. For example, the Countryside rangers supported the John Muir Trust with its junior ranger programme on a joint site visit to help eradicate non-native species, honing their community education skills while they worked on conservation. This approach holds the students' interest, as well as ensuring a full set

of competencies are gained through experience in the moment, backed up by theory in class.

Partner organisations have full confidence in the competencies of the students because they are directly involved in delivering the content and facilitating their experiential learning. This 50:50 approach works well for the college and the partner organisations and ensures sustainability.

Most students already hold high academic qualifications but are underqualified in terms of practical experience. The partnership has shared objectives with the aim to train and transition highly competent students into the labour market and positive destinations. Enhanced interview days invite students to an inspirational field day showcasing the employer in situ. Students have worked together with the employer and finished the day by having an informal interview, enhancing employability skills. Last year students were supported into work with NatureScot, Forestry Land Scotland and NLP.

Student Lauren Stewart said: 'I knew I had gaps in my knowledge and experience that the course could fill, especially relating to the links with industry and all the training the course can

provide. The networks the course has with real-life land management organisations such as the Woodland Trust, the Nevis Landscape Partnership and John Muir Trust are invaluable, and the industry training qualifications are an advantage for many jobs in the conservation sector.'

Student Ellie Moore added: 'Being able to work so closely with so many potential employers during the course was fantastic. It gave us such a useful insight into how these organisations in the environmental sector work, what a ranger position would really involve day to day and provided a whole host of invaluable relevant work experience - which is what ultimately enabled me to go on and work as a seasonal ranger for Nevis Landscape Partnership.'

Adaptive pedagogy

Lecturers and instructors adapt pedagogy and use a flexible approach to evidence against learning outcomes. They ensure learning outcomes are clear so that students know how to demonstrate and apply their skills and gather the evidence as opportunities occur.

There is flexibility within the course setup to make swift changes due to weather conditions or to seize a sudden opportunity that would add value to the student experience. Lecturers gather

feedback from the students and industry to further enhance the course so that content and learning is based on industry need.

Meta skills are already embedded throughout the course. However, environmental education and specialist areas such as conflict resolution, conservation and sustainable land use are new additions. The students become aware that the demands on a countryside ranger can vary significantly in a geographical context and are encouraged to share their own experiences in peer-to-peer learning. Recently, one student shared their employer interview questions with the lecturers. The questions indicated the need for soft skills and negotiation skills, showing that the day-to-day demands of the countryside rangers are changing.

The lead lecturer combines his ranger/outdoor instructor role with lecturing, bringing multiple connections into the curriculum. As the model is built on sustained employer engagement through enhanced work experience, lecturers can continuously enhance their own CPD while they deliver alongside the partner organisations who are well known and respected industry players. Students could not wish for greater graduate attributes than their experience with respected organisations such as the John Muir Trust.

Employers further afield recognise graduates' association with these respected partner organisations. College marketing and the website links to the NLP website promotion of the Countryside Skills with Ranger Training course, with active student stories keeping interest live. Students can provide links in their CVs to their own stories displayed on this website.

Lecturer Simon Harry explained: 'What makes this course unique is both the number of partner organisations that contribute to the wide range of skills the students are introduced to and the further opportunities these organisations provide post course.'

'Students get to experience both the workings of large-scale organisations such as Forestry and Land Scotland and the Woodland Trust, through to smaller scale ones such as Nevis Landscape Partnership, all of whom play a vital role in protecting and managing our natural capital.'

'The students are also made aware of the different career paths within these organisations. We have been pleased to find that many of our past students have gone on to find employment, both temporary and permanent, following on from the course.'

Continues overleaf >





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Real-life experience

Partner organisations provide two-week work experience opportunities towards the end of the course to offer meaningful transition from the course into employment. A three-way dialogue between lecturers, the placement provider and placement student ensures that all needs are met. Careful matching ensures that the student gains a suitable placement relevant to their aspiration and that the provider can offer destination relevant learning outcomes. In turn, the industry obtains students with relevant and attractive skillsets.

One of these partnership organisations is NLP, a community organisation working to enhance the environmental and cultural qualities of the Nevis area in Lochaber.

Participation Officer Rory Stewart said: 'We are delighted to once more be working in partnership with UHI West Highland, training students in countryside and ranger skills and utilising the legacy of a previous successful collaboration

on the 2014-19 NLP Training Programme. We provide in-the-field training using real life tasks provided by ourselves or our delivery partners, while students gain complementary skills and industry training tickets through the college. This winning formula is what makes this course a real success.

'Subsequently, over the three years of the course running, we have benefitted by employing skilled and knowledgeable students as Seasonal Rangers. Not only have they brought their newly found skills to the job, but they have added their own creativity, enriching and broadening the scope of what our ranger teams do.

'A small example is a mindful engagement activity that Charlotte, one of the 2021 cohort students devised on her course for her Interpretation unit. One of her fellow students was employed as a ranger that summer and used the activity successfully with a bespoke group and the following year Charlotte herself was employed as a ranger with us and has further honed the activity.'

In addition to work experience, there are a few funded placements with NatureScot exclusively for ranger graduates, specifically meeting NatureScot needs. Graduates are interviewed for a six-month placement at the end of the course. This Ranger Placement Scheme was successfully piloted in session 2020-21 as part of NatureScot's Programme for Youth Employment.

This scheme continued in 2021-22, with two graduates working in the Creag Meagaidh and Beinn Eighe National Nature Reserves as trainee rangers.

This successful Ranger Placement Scheme was welcomed by students and the college's ambition is to replicate it with other partner organisations. Other placement schemes are being designed with different organisations.

The college is actively working to significantly enhance employer engagement and work experience in other curriculum areas by incorporating aspects of this successful 50:50 partnership approach. 🌱



A TRUE INSPIRATION

CDN College Awards College Colleague of the Year, Health Care Lecturer Evelyn Chelley, was recognised for her commitment to her family, her students, her college and the community

Evelyn Chelley has been a Health Care Lecturer at Borders College since 2008 and has trained much of the local workforce in health and social care, including students who have gone on to complete their qualified nurse training status.

Alongside this, Evelyn works as a nurse at Borders General Hospital, volunteers, cares for her mother and is an active supporter of several charities.

Evelyn maintains the highest of standards in her teaching and assessment, particularly with the HNC Healthcare Practice students. An inspiring lecturer, she also contributes to the wider community as a staff nurse at Borders General Hospital and was one of the many staff responsible for the operational management of the mass vaccination roll out across the Scottish Borders.

Evelyn is a key link between the college and further nurse training at Edinburgh Napier University and Queen Margaret University. Many of the students hoping to gain entry to the second year of nurse training are dependent on Evelyn for assessment of placement practice hours, UCAS references and link visits.

Evelyn uses her clinical assessment skills volunteering with the Scottish Mountain Rescue Service, taking part in emergency call outs and also teaching first aid for the British Association

of Ski Patrollers. She works with formal carers to look after her mother, who has dementia, and is a supporter of the My Name's Dottie Foundation, raising money for research into motor neurone disease.

'Evelyn has always gone over and above for us as a class, offering support and nurturing us all through the course. Her hard work and dedication has reflected on us and made us all who we are now, ready to take our first steps to university. Evelyn is a real inspiration to us, and I am so grateful for all the support she has offered me personally,' said Lauren Hay, HNC Healthcare Practice student.

This already makes Evelyn an inspiring colleague, but in January 2022, Evelyn's commitment to her teaching was found to be unquestionable. Following a serious accident, her son underwent treatment and rehabilitation and Evelyn needed to travel to New Zealand to care for him. She continued to teach two classes a week from New Zealand, working through the night to make the 9am UK start time, while also supporting the college in moving HNC course content from Moodle to the new virtual learning environment in a large digital transformation project undertaken by the college.

She also visited the Western Institute of Technology healthcare lecturing team, observing clinical skills classes and a demonstration of

their VLE and competency-based portfolio submissions with the intention of bringing this knowledge back to the college.

'Evelyn has always inspired students and staff alike but the commitment and dedication she displayed over the past few months has been above and beyond. Without a doubt, Evelyn's priority is supporting her son during a difficult time, but she has also found the time and energy to continue to support the students, delivering lessons, checking on placements and arranging interview materials for next year's intake.

'I am sure the student group appreciate the support they have had, and the staff team appreciate Evelyn's continued commitment,' said Joan Cairney, Curriculum and Learning Manager Care and Access.

Evelyn said: 'I'm lucky to work with a great team and, after all these years, feel fortunate to still love what I do. The mix of clinical practice and teaching means every day is different. I get to work with people at the start of their careers in care, but also to work with experts in different fields.

'It made sense to keep teaching remotely when I was in NZ, as we had all become used to this. I had great support from my colleagues, the IT team and elearning technologists. That's what it's all about – doing our best and supporting each other.'

COMMUNITY LIFELINE

Ferguslie Learning Centre provides more than just a vibrant learning experience. It has become a place where people can find out what they're good at, achieve their ambitions and change their lives

Based in the heart of Ferguslie Park, the first impression of West College Scotland's Ferguslie Learning Centre is of a warm, welcoming learning space – one which is dedicated to the delivery of community-based adult learning.

It provides local, accessible, inclusive and flexible opportunities which help people overcome barriers to learning. Crucially, it offers people the first steps for re-engaging with learning and skills. There are lots of exciting learning choices here, with the option of progression pathways and supported transitions to the next step of the journey.

Since opening its doors in June 2001, Ferguslie Learning Centre has sustained a commitment to supporting community-based learning by investing in the centre, staff and learners. It is a much-needed resource as, according to the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD), Ferguslie Park has been identified as the third most deprived area in Scotland. Around 62 per cent of the population are income or employment deprived.

The centre provides a fantastic range of supported, accessible, local and flexible adult learning opportunities at a range of levels to meet the needs of the learners. It is directly supported by an experienced and dedicated team including a head of learning communities, communities co-ordinator, centre administrator and a communities learning advisor. Further support is provided by college departments as required, including Enabling Services, Student Advisory Services, Student Finance Support, Distance Learning and expertise in nine curriculum sectors.

Learner need

The curriculum provided draws on the specialisms of the sector provision and changes each year according to learner need, employment opportunities and national agenda. For the ten-year period spanning 2019 to 2029, the top employment opportunities will be in human health and social work, professional, scientific, technical, construction, administration and support services.

Classes start later and finish earlier to accommodate caring responsibilities, disabilities and other commitments. Taught sessions are shorter than those delivered on campus and the duration of delivery varies with learner need. From IT skills to textiles, horticulture to wellbeing, the centre offers a diverse range of courses to suit all needs and learners.

Many students are overcoming barriers to education/employment such as long-term unemployment, lack of confidence, addictions, loneliness and fear of leaving the house exacerbated by the pandemic, disabilities, physical health problems and mental health issues.

Centre Administrator Kathleen Brown and Co-ordinator Marina McCracken are available every day as the first point of contact for the students. Kathleen is a local person who establishes a great rapport with learners and staff, linking the learners with provision, progression and partners.

Marina said: 'I think the courses in the centre are a real lifeline to the community and it is extremely rewarding to see the difference these courses can make to the learners' lives. Working in partnership gives us the ability





to enhance our programme and support the wider community. Many of our learners have enhanced their life skills and progressed onto further education, university and employment, which is amazing to watch and be part of their journey.'

The programme is designed to encourage students to take first steps to learning in a variety of ways:

- Less 'scary' options where there are initial non-assessed learning opportunities with progression to assessed learning.
- Practical-based subjects to facilitate confidence in learning – textile technology and horticulture.
- Accredited courses to meet employment needs, especially in the local area.
- Supported online options for those who have barriers to attendance.
- Progression pathways and transition routes for all courses with guidance provided by the communities learning advisor, who meets with each individual student to assist them with their learning journey.

Ferguslie Learning Centre links with many local and national partners, drawing on their expertise and knowledge. There is a close working relationship with the Tannahill Housing Association, located next door, and great partnerships have been established with Invest in Renfrewshire, Enable, Quarriers, Engage Renfrewshire, Renfrewshire local authority, RAMH, Barnardo's, Street League, Values into Action, Paisley Museum, Prince's Trust, DWP, JCP and Renfrewshire Volunteer Manager Forum.

The partners meet each month through the Invest in Renfrewshire practitioners forum and work together to share information, reduce duplication of provision and provide opportunities/pathways for the learners.

The last two years have been extremely difficult for everyone, particularly community learners as delivery venues have closed and lack of IT knowledge and resources during lockdown made learning very difficult. Despite this, the centre has overcome many barriers. All learners were offered an IT device, and staff personally delivered 50 devices. These were provided through Connecting Scotland funding or the college's Digital Device Loan Scheme. Staff worked very hard with learners to teach them how to use the devices and access online delivery, such as MS Teams.

Kathleen continues to provide IT support to learners, allowing them to participate in online classes. The lecturers have found innovative ways of engaging with learners such as use of visualiser cameras to deliver practical textile classes and a van used to house all resources to enable delivery of the horticulture class during lockdown. The students commented that this

Student case study – Kirsty Cairns

Kirsty Cairns, 41, was keen to take her career in a new direction. One year on, she is working towards completing her HNC in Childhood Practice.

Kirsty said: 'I knew of the Ferguslie Learning Centre but hadn't really given it any consideration as I wasn't sure if it was for me. I had seen that the college offered an online course, Caring for Children, which would help me gain a qualification that would help me take my career to the next level, but with no access to a computer at home, I wasn't in the position to pursue it.'

After expressing her interest in the course to Kathleen at the Ferguslie Learning Centre, Kathleen arranged for Kirsty to do the course through the centre, allowing her to use the centre facilities.

Since completing the course, Kirsty has gone on to secure employment at Hillview Nursery and is now working towards completing her qualification.

Kirsty said: 'Doing the course at Ferguslie has definitely helped me to get to where I am now. If I hadn't completed the course, I wouldn't be in the job that I am now and I wouldn't be working towards becoming a qualified pre-five practitioner.'

was invaluable to their mental health and being outside has really helped. This is evident in the results with the NPA Horticulture class alone. Since 2020, ten students have completed the NPA, seven have moved on to Hard Landscaping and Health and Safety in Construction Environment and the other three completed the NPA award and are still attending classes at the centre.

Kathleen said: 'The centre is a great resource in the heart of Ferguslie and very accessible to support the community to gain additional skills, build confidence and improve employability possibilities. The centre provides a safe and comfortable environment to learn, where some people have made lasting friendships and continue to support each other outwith it.'

Flexible provision

The college was flexible through 2021-22 and adjusted provision to include slightly more personal development/wellbeing and practical-based subjects. This is in response to learner need, since many learners had been extremely isolated, with an increased number suffering from depression and anxiety because of the pandemic.

The outcome for learners is evident, with many putting skills learned to good use in the community. One textiles student created pouches for her partner's hairdressing equipment while another made pencil cases for her grandchildren. Horticulture student Malgorzata Hayward is now leading and improving her local community green space at Barochan Green and imparting her knowledge to local residents.

Malgorzata and another student, Robert Muir, also volunteered to help OneRen Leisure team to tidy up their planted areas at Renfrew Swimming Baths. From supporting their families to supporting their local communities, the students have flourished and grown personally and educationally from their time at the centre.

In 2021-22, 172 learners took part in 19 classes. This is 69 per cent of the pre-pandemic number and is an incredible achievement by all. The overall retention was 85 per cent and of those learners 72 per cent have achieved a positive result.

In supporting the economic needs of the region, the college will continue to work closely with regional partners including other education providers, business leaders and Community Planning Partnerships teams to develop sustainable and relevant community delivery for those furthest from the labour market. The college is committed to delivery at the centre and knows the role it plays in supporting life chance opportunities for the local community. 🌈



FORGOTTEN TREASURE

Jo Turbitt, Lead for Learning and Teaching at CDN, challenges us to dig deep and allow our own creativity to shine through

Have you ever looked through photo albums and laughed fondly at the bad haircuts, the décor or the epic shell suits? I did this recently with a friend who was clearing out her attic; we found some absolute belters. ‘Oooft’ was uttered often, along with many ‘no ways’. Memories of good times came flooding back.

Have you ever gone back and looked through assignments from courses you’ve completed? It’s more than likely that you wouldn’t dream of it – it’s done. However, I’d like to encourage you to do just that.

Not to criticise yourself, but to find those absolute belter ideas which formed the backbone of your solution to assignments, examining challenges, questions around learning and teaching, or your responses to challenges facing your organisation.

Chances are these ideas might reignite a project that would be valuable to put into practice either for yourself or colleagues, and possibly shine light on a solution that has been sitting as a seedling in a pot in a folder marked ‘never open again’.

As a sector, we are innovative, resourceful and resilient. Year on year, as people complete courses including PDAs, TQFEs and Meds, there are nearly 100 more research projects in existence examining key, pertinent topics.

Think back

Think about days where you sit as a team planning your curriculum for the next academic year, or when you come face-to-face with a spreadsheet of PIs. Do you think back to the file tucked away that might not necessarily hold the key to enlightenment, but which might offer a starting point? If you don’t, try it.

These essays and assignments hold more insight than we remember or recognised as we were writing them. It’s highly possible that similar issues have been examined by colleagues and colleges from different perspectives.

Bringing these together and co-relating findings might not only unearth an initiative that could support areas of the sector, but it could also build connections across the country, creating a resource. We are a resourceful resource, our staff.

Questions of ‘where, when and how’ are probably popping up as you’re reading this, as they are for me as I’m writing. We have to start somewhere, and what if we started by looking at the things we’ve learnt throughout our travels? How often do we get the chance to reflect on the milestones in our development as a lecturer in a valuable, meaningful way?

We encourage our students to take chances, to learn by doing, and who can forget that wonderful interpretation of ‘fail’: First Attempt In Learning. When did we last give ourselves permission to fail as we set out to develop a new learning and teaching project? Approaching project or delivery planning with this mindset might offer the leniency on ourselves that’s needed when we want to see where an idea will lead.

I’m in no doubt that over the years projects have evolved and have been rolled out into curriculum teams to become good practice, however what about the ones that didn’t make it past the folder? Celebrating student activity and achievement in colleges is a prevalent theme of posts from sector organisations across social media. In recent years a little more has been posted which celebrates the achievements of staff.

I’m wondering what would happen though, if the recognition wasn’t saved for internal newsletters, shout outs or social media posts, but instead was demonstrated through the act, activity and action of giving staff an opportunity to grow their seedlings of ideas in incubators or brain trusts, where projects evolve off the page and are put into practice.

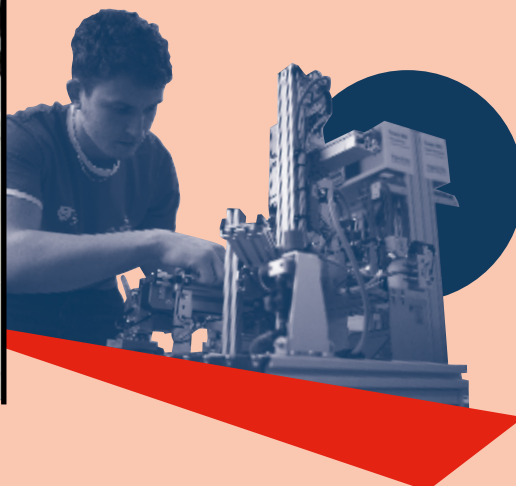
A bit of time spent looking back might avoid time wasted rethinking the wheel in the future. Revisit the folders on your computers. Rediscover your ideas and see if there are any that are feasible. The bad haircuts or epic shell suits might inspire fresh thinking. 🌈

Scotland succeeds in global competition

More than 1,000 young people competed across the globe in the 46th WorldSkills Competition. Scotland's five competitors in Team UK brought back four **Medallions for Excellence** and delivered a fantastic result in digital skills, beating countries like China, Germany and Singapore.

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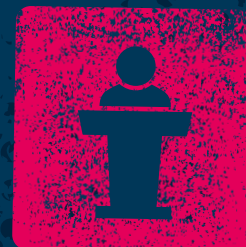
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