

00:00:05:19 - 00:00:18:05

Paula Christie

I'm delighted to introduce Jeanette Dobson from West Lothian College. Jeanette is a former learner at the College and now works as a peer navigator on the Trust Project. Thanks for joining us today.

00:00:18:14 - 00:00:20:07

Jinty Dobson

Very welcome. Thank you.

00:00:21:13 - 00:00:52:05

Paula Christie

It's great to have Jeanette here to talk about some of the themes picked up in the report. The report is the third in the Pathways from Poverty series published by CDN and is entitled Reading with Empathy and Vision and Insight into West Lothian College. And I wonder if you could talk to us about some of the direct actions that are highlighted in the report to tackle poverty and to help learners sustain the role of women in college?

00:00:52:17 - 00:00:58:07

Paula Christie

What is the college doing and what does that really mean for women coming in to college?

00:00:58:07 - 00:01:16:17

Jinty Dobson

Janet So as I think for me, I'll go back to when I was a learner. So I think for me, college was like a safe, a safe space. So and I think when you get up in the morning and the first thing you think about, obviously your belly is rumbling and stuff like that, you know what I mean?

00:01:16:17 - 00:01:34:11

Jinty Dobson

And you're just thinking right until get to college and get my stuff ready. And you've got all that's running through your head until your anxiety time, even at the door in the morning. Anyway, sometimes with some folk aim. And then when you get to college, just in all that, you've kind of got your breakfast there and you've got a couple of you know what I mean?

00:01:34:11 - 00:01:52:09

Jinty Dobson

You can just sit down and chill in the canteen and just until basically 9:00 your class starts and then you know, you've had free breakfast. And yet regardless whether that be a toast and a cup of tea or coffee or boil the portage and a cup of tea and coffee, you know that that's you can set up for the day.

00:01:52:09 - 00:02:04:23

Jinty Dobson

So it makes all the difference to day in the morning, regardless to whether you're rushing at the door to get the cut or whether you're just trying to get to college and get. Absolutely. And so it does mean a lot to the students.

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Paula Christie

That's something that's perhaps not always recognised, that it's really expensive for many people to travel on to college and it's maybe taken for granted that that's an easy thing to do and also to set yourself up in the morning with the breakfast. But the reality for many students says that is perhaps not affordable and that they're starting their day there when the experience they haven't had something to eat.

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Jinty Dobson

So I think for many students and we're slowly and certainly a poverty has gotten worse and I don't know if that started with the pandemic or whether it's just today, we in general students. But I know for me, I've always been skint as a student, and I think the toast and the tea and the morning is just like, you come and you know you're going to get something to eat before you go to class.

00:02:52:11 - 00:03:12:03

Jinty Dobson

And I think that is a big worry for some students and how they're going to manage that. Because you think of it, you think like, Oh my God, I've not had any or you've been rushing a bit this morning and it's just a godsend that you know, that you've got someone who in your belly, regardless to whether that be your porridge of toast and your tea and coffee.

00:03:12:10 - 00:03:38:04

Jinty Dobson

So you know that you've got something, you know what I mean? And you know, stop until lunchtime. So it does make all the difference, I think, for students. And and I just I just think that I can imagine the college with it at now. Does that make sense? So but it's definitely worthwhile and it's definitely a good and good centre for a to know that if you're for the good, start to get there, you know what I mean?

00:03:39:10 - 00:04:00:21

Paula Christie

And the report highlights that there are many initiatives which will be in college across the sector indeed, but West Lothian College, there are a number of direct actions the college has taken to tackle food poverty. We talk about the soup in a row and there are partnerships with local agencies in the local community to help tackle food poverty.

00:04:01:11 - 00:04:24:09

Jinty Dobson

So at the college, we do a free soup and a role as well for every student. And yeah, again, that's another. We hope you'll join us. A lovely homemade soup. It's always a home. It's a soul that the staff in the kitchen and amazing the people they serve. But I mean, the students love it. We go through ports and ports and ports that like and at ease.

00:04:24:15 - 00:04:43:14

Jinty Dobson

You know what I mean? And it does make all the difference. Yeah. Again, you can be starving at lunchtime. You've got heavy day ahead of you. I mean, some of these courses are a physical as well as men are, you know what I mean? And that just so helps you get when you're doing your budget. We sit in your role as well and, and it's always felt good.

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Jinty Dobson

Nassau was full of eighties and so I it's definitely good so you're guaranteed to definitely get your two meals a day at the college, you know what I mean? So even if you know and or you can afford to eat and during the day or at night time we also provide a lotta meals. So this is like Singapore said meals and dame.

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Jinty Dobson

So we've got a partnership with a lot and they bring us a meals every single Tuesday as it used to be on Monday. But it's a choose dinner and every student can basically go and feed themselves and the family. So at least three portions a week. And if you needed more, the latter with you would get out of federal and they would see it out.

00:05:25:12 - 00:05:48:22

Jinty Dobson

So then they would just take over that. But every week you're entitled to three meals a week for you and your family. So if you've got say, you've got two kids and yourself, get a single parent or you've got a husband and you've got two kids and maybe hobbies, no working or whatever, you know what I mean? And you can take a meal here for you, your husband and your two cats, and that's like three, three days meals.

00:05:49:12 - 00:06:02:01

Jinty Dobson

So it really does make a difference to people's lives. I've used that myself. So and because I'm so scared, what can and I'm still scared, but I know it does make sure that the friends.

00:06:03:06 - 00:06:27:14

Paula Christie

And this partnership working is something that is really pulled out through the reports, not just a stark report, but across a series of reports that we've done on on Pathways from Poverty and in the case study with with law, then what is a part and it's this whole college approach to tackling the issues that that women have and that communities and families of learners face.

00:06:28:01 - 00:06:50:16

Paula Christie

More and more winners are coming to college with complex needs, and that's been identified. I know that you are directly involved with the Trust project, which is discussed in the report, and you're supporting a broad range of learners as they take what we highlight to be a very large and often quite frightening step for women to come back into education.

00:06:50:16 - 00:07:00:21

Paula Christie

Did you talk mortars about this approach, this whole systems approach and the idea of reading, vision and empathy outwith school and college?

00:07:00:21 - 00:07:23:12

Jinty Dobson

So I think West Lothian is second to none with the support system that they've put in place where people are genuinely well, I needed to put myself suffer with dyslexia. And I came back actually as a mature student. And so therefore I hadn't had a lot of skill. And so we have students coming through, we call it like nobody start.

00:07:23:12 - 00:07:47:19

Jinty Dobson

There's so many issues that students have hit it with Will. Then they can come through the door and it doesn't matter whether your background is criminal justice, it doesn't matter whether you are suffering in the House. We can try and do your best to help. We can try and find the services if we do provide the service because we have a lot of services coming in the college and working from the college.

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Jinty Dobson

So because people are at college up to date, it's like I've so my criminal justice guys, they, they can have appointments coming out that year. And so sometimes we can get the social workers at the college and we can get them like CMC workers, council workers and stuff like that. We can have them come in on a set appointments for the students and I mean we have homeless students every day present to us every single day.

00:08:13:03 - 00:08:43:10

Jinty Dobson

I think there's somebody new every single day and we're very much in touch with a basically the council to try and re accommodate these people and rock trust as well. We have lots and lots of things to give them a different stakeholders to come into the college as well. And them. So what we try is we try and eliminate all the stresses that somebody has and the life and we try not to do it so that we can get the help for that person and all.

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Jinty Dobson

They have to really be a strong up at college and that's all we ask them. And so we feed them. We will we see their needs, we provide services for them and and then we can send them back at the door again to the next of kin. They may come back, but it's like a safe haven for most people.

00:09:03:16 - 00:09:19:17

Jinty Dobson

A college. It's not just college for people, you know, like people say, Oh, I'm going to college there. It's not just whistling. It's not just the college. It's like a family, you know? And we look after our students will look after their staff, even the students look after the staff. And it's just amazing. It's just a brilliant few.

00:09:19:17 - 00:09:37:04

Jinty Dobson

Yeah. And and we all do get together. You know, it would be work if we never all played those part in a Am I? But we're still in college. It's just so amazing. The second demand with support that they give and we want go that extra length to time help students.

00:09:38:01 - 00:10:14:22

Paula Christie

The series of Pathways from Poverty reports highlight just how transformative college can be for winners and providing opportunities for for women's futures. But the reports also talk about how transformative and indeed essential it is to have the right support. Employees to be able to sustain willing for those learners coming to the college. Indeed, the case study report mentions it in Martin, a former women at Wesleyan College who has seen fit, recently, went on TV and is now a successful author.

00:10:15:12 - 00:10:40:02

Paula Christie

And he's talked quite publicly and quite openly about, you know, college being a place which changed his life really was a major thing in helping him tum his life around. And he's overcome many challenges. He's very open. And he spoke about his own experiences of addiction and trauma. And do you agree that colleges as more than just somewhere for you come to him?

00:10:40:02 - 00:10:46:03

Paula Christie

That is somewhere that offers opportunities and safety for people coming through the doors?

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Jinty Dobson

Definitely. I mean, we have all walks of life like Cassie. I mean, we have people who have had addictions. I mean, I was addiction myself and for many, many years. And college basically changed my life. I came back as a mature student than myself, but I came back as a mature student. We many, many problems, many, many. SS many, many childhood and stuff that happened in my childhood.

00:11:11:16 - 00:11:33:12

Jinty Dobson

And just let me understand that, you know, I just didn't understand it then. Never seen it as like what we call know as exists, which childhood adversity is a And when I came back to Wesleyan College, I just, well, I'm clearly still here, no work. And so it's a place where you don't want to leave because you feel so secured here.

00:11:33:12 - 00:11:57:18

Jinty Dobson

And you know that there's somebody somewhere that can help you with something. And so we do really like cats who are coming up that hightailed it problems, you know, and the trauma that goes on in people's lives and, you know, like they look like every other student walking in the door. But when you stepped in and you actually take the time to listen to these people, you know, you've delays that have all sorts of problems going on.

00:11:58:00 - 00:12:18:06

Jinty Dobson

And if we can eliminate some of these problems or eliminate some of the and so eliminate the poverty that that and or eliminate the if we can get them counselling and like there's all sorts of things going on, you know what I mean? There's actually so many that people couldn't even actually they lost them all and I. So it's your job to find.

00:12:18:21 - 00:12:34:02

Jinty Dobson

Well, it's partly my job to find out what's going on for a person or a person or an old person or a young person. And, and it's my job to get to the ends and see that and try and find the services or if we can, at the time think the services that can help.

00:12:34:19 - 00:13:12:02

Paula Christie

That's amazing. And it really is inspiring to see that trauma informed approach in action, to see that embedded in a whole college approach to trauma building and the idea of empathy and support building and that scaffolded support. And you can quite clearly see it as drawn out. And the report, just the phenomenal impact that that can have for women returning to college and for anyone who has maybe seen college just as somewhere that you go to and somewhere that you go to get qualifications, is it more than that?

00:13:12:12 - 00:13:15:12

Paula Christie

What would you say coming to college actually means?

00:13:17:00 - 00:13:41:13

Jinty Dobson

So I think coming to college means, I suppose it's different for everybody. And so the reasons why you come to college, we've got kid experience kids who've had a really, really hard time in life and we've got mature adults, we've had families, we've got all different walks of life who come through that door and, you know, but at the beginning for them, it's just going back to learning.

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Jinty Dobson

And they have these anxieties and they have these pressures and we have these child killers and all that kind of stuff going on, you know, and as soon as the what do they do? They realise, well, you know, I'm so glad that I'm I'm so glad I made that step and I'm so glad I made that change in my life or I'm so glad I plan to change my career and really make some money myself and move forward.

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Jinty Dobson

And I feel that that's what we're still in college. It's a step in the right direction where you want to be and I mean, college might be the end, the end all for some people, which for me, as I'm quite happy with, I am right now. I think some people can progress university and really make a school of their life, you know, whereas last year they probably think I could never go back to college.

00:14:26:07 - 00:14:47:23

Jinty Dobson

Like too much stress is just too much pressure. Now. We eliminate all that for people and we let people understand that that is what we do as a college as well. We're not just here for the

education. We're here as part of our family, you know, and know and family. So I would definitely urge people, make that step and come back to college.

00:14:48:02 - 00:14:57:04

Jinty Dobson

If you want to change your life and you want to change your career or you want to make changes, but changes in your life, get back in that door to college. And that's where it all starts for you.

00:14:58:23 - 00:15:03:03

Paula Christie

I think that's the great place to end. Thanks so much for that. Really inspiring.

00:15:03:03 - 00:15:04:08

Jinty Dobson

Thank you so much.

00:15:04:14 - 00:15:07:11

Paula Christie

And congratulations to our school and for all the hard work.

00:15:07:17 - 00:15:30:03

Jinty Dobson

Thanks so much. Thank you. Speak to you soon, Paula.