

# Driving Change

Project and Evaluation Report

Year 1

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## Executive Summary

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

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

### Project approach

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

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

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

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

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

### Colleges experiences of the support

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

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

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

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

## Progress made as a result of the project

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## Impact of project activities

### Outcomes

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

#### **College wide commitment to young adult carers**

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

#### **Better identification of young adult carers**

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

#### **Improved data collection and monitoring systems**

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

#### **Enhanced support offer for young adult carers**

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

#### **Increased awareness of the support offer**

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

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

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

#### **Increased involvement of young adult carers**

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

#### **Improved networking and resource sharing**

Colleges have been pro-actively networking and sharing resources throughout Driving Change. The project has enabled colleges from across England and Wales to gain

inspiration and learn from each other in developing and implementing support for young adult carers.



# 1. Introduction

## Background

Young adult carers are young people aged 16-24 who provide unpaid care to someone, usually a member of their family, on a regular basis. They may care for a parent, sibling, grandparent or other relative who has a disability, long-term illness, mental health problem or other condition which results in a need for care, support or supervision.

A caring role can have a significant impact on a young person's experiences, outcomes and long-term life chances. Research indicates that carers miss five per cent of school days because of caring and caring interferes with a quarter of all school days (Sempik and Becker, 2013, 2014). On average, young adult carers achieve the equivalent of nine lower GCSE grades than other young people (The Children's Society, 2013) and a quarter of young adult carers in school say they cannot afford to go to college or university (Carers Trust, 2014). These barriers to learning result in young adult carers being three times more likely to be NEET (not in education, employment or training) compared with other young people the same age.

Young adult carers who are able to progress into further education are more likely to miss days at college because of their caring role. They may need to come in late, leave at short notice or take time off and are five times more likely to drop out of college than their peers.

## Aim of the project

Delivered between September 2019 and August 2022, the Driving Change project aims to improve the support that young adult carers receive in further education in order to improve the outcomes they achieve and to give them fair opportunity to achieve their potential. Over three years the project will work with up to 60 colleges across England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

Funded by The National Lottery Community Fund (TNLCF), Learning and Work Institute (L&W) works in partnership with Carers Federation (CF), to provide targeted and intensive one-to-one support to enable colleges to develop an effective and embedded whole organisation approach to working with young adult carers.

This report provides an overview of the activities carried out during year 1 of the project, the key findings of the project evaluation and case studies of two of the participating colleges.

## 2. Project approach

Driving Change is based on a successful delivery model that was developed and tested through a pilot project, Targeted Support for Colleges, which was completed in 2018. Support offered through the pilot resulted in positive outcomes for the six participating colleges. These included more tailored and comprehensive support for young adult carers, increased confidence amongst staff to identify and support young adult carers and improved attendance, retention and progression rates.

### Quality Standard in Carer Support Framework

Driving Change uses the Quality Standard in Carer Support (QSCS – please see appendix 1) as a framework to enable colleges across the UK to review, improve and evaluate their provision for young adult carers.

Developed in consultation with carers, the Standard contains eight criteria for organisations to work towards:

- Carers Policy and Strategic Commitment.
- Designated Member of Staff.
- Staff Training.
- Outreach and Raising Aspiration.
- Student Induction.
- Ongoing Support.
- Partnerships and Networking.
- Data Collection and Monitoring.

### Steering Group

A Steering Group informs and supports recruitment to the project, ongoing development and dissemination of key policy and practice messages emerging from the project. The Steering Group comprises representatives from the college sector and organisations working with young adult carers including carers services in England and Wales, Carers Trust and Carers Trust Wales, Association of Colleges and Colleges Wales, Barnardo's, Carers Federation and former participating colleges. Two young adult carers are also actively involved in the group. Representatives from the college and young adult carer sectors in Scotland and Northern Ireland will be invited to join the Steering Group from the start of year 2.

### Recruitment of colleges

During year 1 of Driving Change, recruitment was focussed on colleges in England and Wales. Colleges in Scotland and Northern Ireland will be prioritised in recruitment during years 2 and 3 of the project.

To support recruitment the project was promoted through a variety of channels including:

- L&W Chief Executive's newsletter.
- L&W's Young Adult Carers sector newsletter as well as wider L&W networks.
- Association of Colleges (AoC) Chief Executive and Area Directors newsletters.
- Targeted emails to young adult carer networks to invite carers services to share information about the project with colleges.
- An L&W press release which resulted in coverage in [TES](#) and [FE News](#), and social media.

In addition, Steering Group members Solihull College and Carers Trust Solihull, who were involved in the pilot project, along with a young adult carer at Solihull College supported the production of some short films to promote Driving Change to colleges. These are included on the Driving Change page on the L&W [website](#). The films highlight the benefits of taking part in the project and the impact of effective joined up support for young adult carers.

The project attracted significant interest and 25 colleges were initially recruited across England and Wales, more than twice the original target for year 1. To ensure that all colleges expressing an interest in the project were able to engage, without impacting on the quality of support, the project team adopted a staggered delivery plan with support for colleges beginning throughout January, February and March 2020 rather than January/early February. The high number of recruits means that the target numbers for college participation in the project has been more evenly profiled over the three years, rather than building up to supporting and completing the project with a large number of colleges in the final year. The higher number of recruits also allowed for potential drop-off.

18 of the initial 25 colleges completed the project through to final assessment at the end of year 1, nine in England and nine in Wales. College recruited included General FE and Sixth Form Colleges and were from a range of locations.

England	Wales
Runshaw College	Coleg Penybont/Bridgend College
Wyggeston & Queen Elizabeth College	Coleg Cambria
Bradford College	Coleg Sir Benfro /Pembrokeshire College
Wakefield College	Grŵp Colegau/NPTC Group of Colleges
Leicester College	St David's Catholic College
Joseph Chamberlain Sixth Form College	Coleg Caerdydd a'r Fro/Cardiff & Vale College
Solihull Sixth Form College	Coleg Y Cymoedd
Sunderland College South Devon College	Gower College Swansea
South Devon College	Coleg Gwent

Seven of the initial 25 colleges dropped out of the project. Some of these colleges left the project in the spring, due to the impact of the coronavirus pandemic, which resulted in for example reduced staff capacity or changing priorities. Other challenges impacting on college's ability to sustain engagement with the project included college mergers and/or restructuring. One of these colleges is re-engaging with Driving Change in year 2 of the project.

Driving Change is also working with Warwick University to pilot how the Driving Change model might work or be adapted for a higher education setting. This work is continuing into year 2.

## Support for colleges

Each college involved in the project was allocated a key contact at Carers Federation who provided a bespoke package of support. This included:

- An on-site initial assessment meeting to review and discuss current provision for young adult carers at the college.
- Advice and support to develop an action plan to address identified areas for improvement across the eight criteria of the QSCS Framework.
- Regular, ongoing support by email/telephone/video call to discuss progress and offer advice and ideas on implementing the action plan and overcoming any challenges encountered.
- A pre-assessment preparation meeting to help colleges get ready for the QSCS Final assessment.
- A final QSCS assessment meeting to explore how the college's support had progressed and developed since joining the project, against the eight points of the QSCS Framework. Final Assessment meetings were scheduled to be delivered face to face but due to social distancing and travel restrictions, and the fact that many staff in colleges were homeworking, all Final Assessments were delivered online through video platforms.

Within the planned delivery model, support is provided by Carers Federation for a period of 4-6 months. This would have seen year 1 of Driving Change ending in August 2020. However, a number of colleges experienced challenges in progressing their action plans within the original timescales due to the disruption caused by the pandemic. To support colleges to complete the project through to the Final Assessment, additional support was provided where needed to help colleges prepare for the assessment, alongside flexibility around timescales. This has resulted in QSCS Final Assessment meetings continuing into the start of the 20/21 academic year.

In addition to ongoing support from Carers Federation, the project also offered:

- Access to a private dedicated project page on the L&W website bringing together relevant resources from L&W, Carers Federation and partner organisations and links to other sources of information. The page also provides access to practical resources shared by colleges throughout the project, for example policy documents and templates to help colleges provide effective support for young adult carers.
- A series of four webinars each delivered twice, on different days of the week and times, to encourage attendance. These enabled participating colleges to find out what other colleges were doing on the project, network, share effective practice and resources and discuss solutions to common challenges. Each webinar had a different theme, informed by findings from the pilot project and feedback from initial assessment on areas which colleges had identified as less well developed in their provision. These included: identifying young adult carers, partnership working and practical support for young adult carers. A final session on preparing for the Final QSCS Assessment was also delivered and gave colleges an in-depth understanding of the QSCS assessment, the evidence they would be required to present and the subsequent award process.

The webinars included inputs from colleges that took part in the pilot project and from colleges known to already have strong support in place for young adult carers, for example Nottingham College. This provided participating colleges with concrete examples of practice that they could introduce in their own contexts and the difference that it can make. A young adult carer, currently a student at one of the pilot colleges, also presented at two of the

webinars. Recordings of the webinars, participant presentations and, in agreement with individual colleges, practical examples of resources were shared with participating colleges after each webinar. Recordings are also available on the private project page on the L&W website.

As part of the support offer, colleges were required to secure commitment from a member of their senior management team who would be responsible for taking the project forward and to identify a member of staff 'on the ground', who was or would be the college's lead for young adult carers. Colleges were also encouraged to involve young adult carers from an early stage of the project to help shape improvements to support. This might include for example, asking young adult carers to review a draft action plan and as the work progresses to provide feedback on the impact of changes implemented. This helps to ensure that support put in place through the project is tailored to the specific needs and experiences of young adult carers at each college.

Finally, to explore the difference that the project makes to the support colleges offer to young adult carers, colleges were asked to take part in an evaluation. This included qualitative interviews and sharing of key monitoring data on young adult carers.

## 3. The Evaluation

### Aims and methodology

L&W is conducting an ongoing evaluation of Driving Change across the lifetime of the project. The aim of the evaluation is to assess both the process undertaken to support colleges and the outcomes and impact that this has for colleges and for young adult carers. This section of the report provides a summary of key findings from the evaluation of the first year of the project. Findings will be used to inform delivery in years 2 and 3.

The Driving Change evaluation has included qualitative interviews with key contacts at a sample of participating colleges, analysis of completed action plans and, where it was made available, monitoring information about young adult carers enrolled in colleges.

**Initial interviews:** To capture college's starting points, baseline interviews were carried out with a key contact at 10 colleges at the start of their engagement with the project. This was generally the Carers Lead at the college, or in some cases, a senior manager in the student support team. These interviews focused on contextual information on the college; their experience of being recruited to the project and the initial support offered by the project team; their current provision and support for young adult carers; and what they were hoping to achieve through the project.

**Follow up interviews:** Follow up interviews were conducted with 6 of the colleges who completed their final QSCS assessment with Carers Federation. These interviews explored the college's experience of Driving Change, the changes in support that colleges implemented through the project, the benefits to young adult carers and to the college, as well as suggestions for improvement as the project moves into a new year of delivery.

**Review of final assessment plans:** A review of 15 of the participating college's QSCS Final Assessment reports was undertaken to explore the progress that colleges had made as part of Driving Change, in comparison to the aims and plans set out in their initial action plans.

### Key findings

#### Colleges' experiences of the project

This section summarises feedback from key contacts at each college that participated in the evaluation. It focusses upon the support provided by L&W and Carers Federation, and colleges' experience of the QSCS framework and assessment.

#### Views on support offered by Carers Federation

Participating colleges each took part in an initial assessment meeting with a key contact at Carers Federation, which marked the beginning of their participation in Driving Change. Colleges found the initial assessment meeting highly valuable for a number of different reasons, depending on the level of support they already had in place for young adult carers.

All colleges emphasised how important the initial meeting and QSCS Framework had been in helping them to review their existing support and identify where improvements were needed. Most colleges explicitly reported that when they joined Driving Change, they were not simply looking for another accreditation and were pleased that Driving Change offers more than this by working directly with colleges to implement real change to improve their support offer.

*'I think from the very beginning we were really keen that if we were going to go for this type of award and work with this project we'd like it to mean something and that*

*would reflect in the practices and potentially in the experience of the students attending college. It's been a really positive experience in terms of it allowed the time for us to do that and stand back and reflect how students who are young carers experience education with us at that current time, and then involving them in terms of how we move forward and improve some of that provision for them.'* Carers Lead

All colleges reported that the initial assessment meeting was valuable in helping them recognise how they could formalise existing support that was sometimes provided on an ad hoc basis and make this more consistent across the college. The initial assessment was also viewed as useful by colleges to identify particular gaps in the support they provide for young adult carers.

One college explicitly commented on the format of the initial meeting, which took place face-to-face. They liked that they were able to hear about the project first hand, felt that it made it more genuine and reported that it was an accessible process.

*"She came out to introduce the project to us and explain it in person, because it's fair enough being sent an email or an information pack, but to put that human side to it..."*  
– Carers Lead

Carers Federation provided each college with ongoing, one-to-one support over the course of Driving Change. The type of support has varied from regular one-to-one telephone calls or video conferencing, sharing guidance and information with colleges by email, and responding to ad hoc queries from colleges.

Colleges who participated in the evaluation offered positive feedback about Carers Federation's approach. Most commented that the flexible approach taken to supporting colleges has allowed them to fit this work in alongside other college priorities, and in turn has facilitated their ongoing engagement with the project.

*'I think it was pitched right for us, [at] that first meeting we had with [representative from Carers Federation]. They were at the end of an email or phone call if we needed it and provided useful feedback on the action plan that we provided. So, if we needed further support with the action plan, I'm sure we would have had that.'* – Carers Lead

The flexible approach to support taken by Carers Federation worked particularly well during the coronavirus pandemic. For example, one college reported that they were worried about their ability to achieve the milestones they had set out in their action plan. However, they reached out to Carers Federation who were able to provide reassurance and guidance. The college then felt able to proceed with their action plan:

*"We had the initial meeting with [representative from Carers Federation] and she was really informative about what we needed to do and we went through all the points that I needed to work on and focus on, and then lockdown happened then, so I think I emailed just saying, 'So much has happened, so I'm a bit concerned I haven't moved forward enough,' but she was really reassuring, and came straight back and emailed through some support and overarching notes of the meeting that we previously had, and then booked in a phone call, so she was able to allay my concerns... Then really I just kept to the timeline then of what we needed to do and when."* – Carers Lead

Another college, which had been going through some restructuring and was struggling to fully commit to the project, reported how pro-active guidance and encouragement from Carers Federation was important in them being able to progress with their action plan.

*'It was good. When I got myself in gear, I did a first draft of what I thought where we were, and I sent that over. She had a good look at it, and she was honest. She said, 'Yes. 70% of this is really good. There are some areas there which you could improve on.' Which is really good, because then she gave us direction. 'Why don't you start thinking about this sort of thing? Other colleges have done that sort of thing.' So, that really opened my mind up again. Yes, so the support there was great.'*  
– Carers Lead

Most of the colleges who participated in follow up evaluation interviews shared positive feedback on the final assessment process, including support to prepare for the assessment, the assessment day itself and the process for getting feedback to achieve the accreditation. Carers Federation delivered a webinar focused on preparing for the final assessment, which was positively received by all.

*'The last webinar was focused on that assessment visit, which was good. We went through the process and what the expectations were, and that was followed up with that individual conversation with our assessor, in terms of what she did in advance, what evidence they would be expecting... Really helpful, supportive, and the follow-up feedback that we got afterwards.'* – Carers Lead

Two colleges, who participated in follow up evaluation interviews, mentioned challenges associated with the final assessment process. One college suggested that it would have been helpful to have more guidance, or a template agenda, provided to them ahead of the session to help with their preparations for the final assessment. The college were aware of the types of evidence they needed to provide but felt that a suggested structure for the session itself would have been helpful.

*'...I would have liked more instruction, really, on how to represent the progress we'd made. So, I ended up using our action plan that we'd set out in the first place and I put an additional column on it and I put progress against each point. So, maybe just a little bit clearer in terms of what we needed to submit might have been useful.'* – Carers Lead

Some colleges experienced challenges with completing the final assessment process online. For example, one college reported that the online assessment was more tiring compared to a face-to-face visit. They had found it difficult to navigate between multiple documents online throughout the assessment and found this a little bit frustrating. This also made it more of a challenge to present evidence in a coherent way.

In future, the Driving Change project team will consider how the online final assessment is delivered. For example, the assessment could be delivered in two shorter sessions, rather than one longer session. The final webinar on preparing for the final assessment could be a good opportunity to provide more detailed guidance and best practice in preparing for the assessment. This could include examples of how colleges present their evidence, and opportunities to hear from colleges who have previously taken part in an assessment.

Finally, whilst many aspects of remote support have worked well, the team will consider delivering future assessment meetings face to face, subject to travel and social distancing restrictions.



## Views on support from Learning and Work

L&W hosted four webinar sessions, each of which was focused on a different aspect of support for young adult carers. All but one college who participated in the evaluation interviews attended at least one of the webinars.

The webinars were highly valued by participating colleges as a way of learning what stage other colleges were at in their provision for young adult carers, how different colleges were approaching things and as a way of sharing good practice. One college, for example, was inspired by the policy work that another college had presented during a webinar. They have since developed a policy tailored to their college, based on learning from the webinar and facilitated networking with the other college by L&W.

*'It gave me ideas, listening to other colleges, like Solihull, for example, when they did their presentation. Then, when I followed up on those statements with the individuals from, say, Solihull, or [representative from L&W] put me in touch with another organisation, another college, about something. That was really helpful in terms of getting things off the ground.'* – Carers Lead

The focus on specific themes for each session, highlighting different areas of the QSCS Framework, and input from other colleges already recognised as providing strong and comprehensive support for young adult carers, was identified as particularly helpful.

Participating colleges also appreciated the flexibility that was offered to ensure those who wished to attend a webinar could do so at a suitable time for them. The webinars were hosted at different times and the recording made available soon after each session. Colleges also commented on the variety that the webinars offered, not only the range of topics covered, but that different perspectives were included, such as different staff roles, carers services and young adult carers themselves. All colleges particularly valued hearing directly from young adult carers.

*'There was that flexibility so for each webinar there were two dates on offer and all the resources were provided... It was a chance to discuss and ask questions. The content was right, the speakers or the examples provided where those that had been involved in the first round of the pilot, so they could talk through their experience and share some of the resources they had developed. That was really useful for us in this second phase... young carers spoke about their experience, and that was really helpful. They were pitched right, there was flexibility and there was the sharing of resources afterwards... It was useful to network with other colleges that were involved, that was really helpful.'* – Carers Lead

The majority of colleges reported that the webinars were comprehensive and provided useful learning across all areas of the QSCS Framework. A small number of colleges provided suggestions for additional themes for webinars that could be taken forward into the next year of the project, for example good practice or training on the role of a Carers Lead.

Participating colleges across England and Wales have had to adapt to distance and online learning as a result of the coronavirus pandemic. Two colleges in particular suggested that future webinars could focus on sharing learning and best practice for supporting young adult carers undertaking distance learning.

All colleges had access to a dedicated private project page on the L&W website containing relevant resources from L&W, Carers Federation as well as external links. They also had access to practical resources shared by colleges throughout the project, for example

templates to help colleges provide effective support for young adult carers (also on the private web page). A number of colleges explained that the resources that were made available immediately after each webinar and through the dedicated L&W resource page, encouraged them to put their ideas into practice. College staff particularly valued the fact that resources had been trialled and tested by other participating colleges.

*‘...if I was working through the action plan and developing initiatives and resources myself, I was able to take ideas from other institutions that had already trialled it, and dovetailing it into what I was doing as well, so I wasn't having to rethink the wheel all the time.’ – Carers Lead*

Another college illustrated how access to the dedicated resource webpage has fed into the development of their new staff training modules.

*‘We used some of the resources to create our own training module, and we also used it for our communication to staff when we were launching, and we did that through our news channels. So, yes, I think, for me that was the most useful part. – Carers Lead*

### **Challenges to participating in the project**

The key challenge that all colleges faced during their involvement with Driving Change was the coronavirus pandemic and the accompanying social restrictions that were put in place across England and Wales. Colleges were dealing with a rapid move to online delivery and support provision which meant that some of their priorities had changed, at least during the earlier part of the year. As a result, some initial assessment meetings were postponed, or colleges requested extensions to their submission dates for their action plans. Colleges reported that the flexible and adaptable approach that L&W and Carers Federation have taken throughout Driving Change has enabled them to continue their participation in the project.

Despite the challenges presented by the pandemic, some colleges explained how the move to distance learning has actually enabled them to progress quicker with some aspects of their action plan. Some Carers Leads found that they had more time to spend on desk-based tasks, given that they were spending less time on face-to-face or more practical tasks. As such, they found they made huge progress with actions in their plan related to policy focused work, developing marketing materials and enhancing their data collection systems.

Other colleges however, highlighted specific challenges related to the move to distance learning and support provision. For example, some colleges had found it more difficult to consult with young adult carers about specific aspects of their action plan. Another college reported that the pandemic made it more difficult for them to form the small working group of staff they had intended to drive their action plan forward. This was in part due to the wider college context, in that the college was going through a restructure whilst also adapting to distance learning.

One college lead highlighted challenges in finding time to work on the project on top of their existing role, particularly due to the fact that they were also going through a departmental restructure.

### **Progress against each of the eight points of the QSCS Framework**

Colleges' progress in developing their support for young adult carers was measured against the eight points of the QSCS Framework. All colleges had plans in place to either improve or

enhance support across the Framework, however the extent to which they focused on the different areas depended on the existing levels of support that were in place. This section presents a summary of the progress that colleges made in improving their support against each point as a result of their participation in Driving Change.

### **Carers policy**

This part of the QSCS framework was a key area of development for all colleges involved in the project. Prior to their involvement, all colleges had some degree of support in place for young adult carers, but many were aware that this was inconsistent across their organisation. As such, colleges were keen to develop a strategic, whole-organisation approach to ensure that all young adult carers were being offered the same support and opportunities, no matter which curriculum area or geographical location they were studying in.

Out of the fifteen colleges who had completed a final assessment at the time of writing, eleven colleges had developed new standalone policies for young adult carers, which included identifying named Carers Leads, their roles and responsibilities, and a clear identification and support process. As no previous policy existed at these colleges, they were normally developed in consultation with key members of staff such as the wider pastoral team, senior management staff as well as with young adult carers. Colleges who participated in interviews emphasised their efforts to include young adult carers in their policy consultations, however this was difficult in some circumstances due to social distancing restrictions in place as a result of the coronavirus pandemic.

One college already had existing policies in place for young carers, however through Driving Change, they developed a better understanding of the distinct support needs that young adult carers can also have and have since redeveloped this policy into a Carers and Young Carers Policy. The remaining colleges have existing policies in place such as a Safeguarding Policy, a Student Financial Support Policy and a Vulnerable Students Policy which now clearly reference a wide range of support processes for young adult carers. Some of these colleges also have plans in place to develop specific policies for young adult carers in the future.

### **Designated member of staff**

Analysis of QSCS final assessment reports shows that eleven out of 15 colleges already had a designated member of staff for carers prior to their involvement. The remaining four identified a Carers Lead through their work on the project. In each of the colleges, the Carers Lead has been the main member of staff responsible for delivering the project and for implementing the changes needed to secure the QSCS accreditation.

Carers Leads are normally the first point of contact for identified young adult carers. A key part of their role is to ensure that young adult carers are receiving the support they need from college, by providing one-to-one support and by ensuring that student support needs are met by facilitating the link between young adult carers and tutors, curriculum leaders and other relevant student services.

Where colleges have appointed a Carers Lead, a tailored description of this role has been added to their roles and responsibilities. New Carers Leads have undertaken training on the support needs of young adult carers and delivered training to other college staff. They have also been involved in specific activities such as developing a new induction pack for young adult carers.

Some Carers Leads, who were in post prior to the project, have taken on increased responsibilities including developing new staff training, introducing focussed outreach and marketing activities, and improving enrolment and induction processes.

Having explicit leads for young adult carers had enabled colleges to run awareness raising sessions with staff, give inputs at student meetings, deliver presentations at induction sessions about the support on offer to young adult carers and make links with other college teams. Having a key contact for young adult carers had also enabled colleges to improve their links with relevant external organisations, most notably carers services, but also local authorities and other local providers.

### Staff training

All participating colleges have introduced or enhanced staff training as a result of Driving Change, for example by introducing new dedicated training modules, expanding their existing training or creating different levels of training for different staff groups.

One college who already had mandatory training for new staff about the needs of young adult carers have developed a more in-depth training package for frontline support staff to improve student identification and to enable student intervention teams to be positive advocates for young adult carers. At another college, it is now mandatory that all staff complete role relevant training on an annual basis. Key staff, such as the Carers Lead and Carers Champions across curriculum areas and the Intensive Support Team, will attend more comprehensive training to prepare them for their specialist roles which includes training delivered by the local carers service.

A number of colleges who participated in the evaluation shared examples of creative approaches to awareness raising activity and training across the college. One college has ensured that they involve young adult carers in delivering training for staff, using their individual stories to raise awareness of the challenges that young adult carers experience. Another college has created a training video in collaboration with the local carers service for new staff as part of their induction which includes information about young adult carers policies, college support and external services.

### Outreach and awareness raising activity

Nearly all colleges involved in the evaluation have significantly enhanced their outreach and awareness raising activity to promote the support they offer to young adult carers. The aim of this is to highlight that young adult carers are welcome and will be well-supported at the college, and to encourage young people to disclose their caring responsibilities. Colleges have taken a range of actions to do this, such as creating new marketing materials, adding information to websites, improving outreach in local schools and putting plans in place to host events dedicated to young adult carers. One college for example, is currently developing an interactive prospectus which will include a newly created video with information about the Carers Lead and the support that the college can provide. Colleges have also taken action to ensure that new materials are fully visible to students at the college, for example by displaying these at campus visits and guidance interviews for new potential students.

A number of colleges have taken action to enhance their school outreach activity. This has involved Carers Leads improving internal working relationships with school liaison staff and involving them in training sessions to raise awareness of the needs of young adult carers. This will help to ensure that school liaison staff can tailor their school outreach activity in schools so that prospective students are aware of the support that colleges can provide for

young adult carers. One college reported that they have committed to starting their outreach work with younger school year groups, and to involve young adult carers at the college in this activity so that potential students have positive role models.

In addition to schools, all colleges have undertaken outreach activity to develop new, or enhance existing, partnerships with local carers services. Partnership working with local carers services is fundamental to both attracting young adult carers and ensuring they are well supported whilst studying at college. One college, who found it challenging to access all schools in the local area, is currently working with the local carers service who have good links with local schools. They hope this work will help raise awareness of the support provided; and better support young people during their transition to college.

Finally, some colleges have plans in place to host open days and events such as coffee mornings during Carers Week, with the aim of raising awareness of the support they provide to young adult carers. Whilst coronavirus has halted face-to-face events, it has also created an opportunity for some colleges to develop virtual resources for events such as Open Days. Adaptations have also been made to other planned activities, for example, one college has incorporated Q&A sessions with student carers into an online enrolment event using creative online tools such as whiteboards and “sticky notes”.

### **Student application, enrolment and induction**

Colleges have enhanced their processes for identifying young adult carers through the entire enrolment process, including the introduction of questions on application forms and on enrolment forms, as well as additional opportunities to declare caring responsibilities at college induction.

Two colleges have developed a new application and enrolment form which asks potential students if they are a young adult carer, alongside a clear explanation of what this means. Another college has reviewed the wording on current documents and plan to adapt these for the 2021/22 academic year.

A number of colleges who participated in evaluation interviews acknowledged the challenges around the identification of young adult carers, recognising that there may be a significant number who do not disclose caring roles at the start of their college journey. As a result, they have put a range of additional processes in place to provide ongoing opportunities for young people to disclose if they have a caring responsibility. For example, at one college, Pastoral Mentors meet with students on a weekly basis for personal tutor sessions. Pastoral Mentors have received training about young adult carers’ needs and are able to ask questions that may help a young person to disclose a caring role. These regular sessions help to build trust, which also increases the chances of a young person declaring. Another college has developed a survey for student carers to complete throughout the academic year. This asks for feedback and suggestions on the support offer, communications, referral processes and peer support groups. This will be available on the college intranet and widely publicised for all students to access throughout the year, providing ongoing opportunities for students to declare a caring role. A number of colleges have ensured that support is widely publicised across the college through marketing materials and the college intranet, to encourage young adult carers to contact the Carers Lead.

### **Ongoing support**

Prior to Driving Change, all colleges involved in the project had some level of support in place for their learners, including young adult carers. However, this varied by college. In some cases, it was fairly generic, and not tailored to the specific needs of young adult

carers. Where tailored support existed, it was not always consistently in place or promoted across the college.

A small number of colleges have introduced new opportunities for young adult carers to access regular, one-to-one support from a specific member of staff. At one college for example, the Pastoral Team now has regular and ongoing contact with young adult carers throughout the academic year, including at regular mentoring sessions. Although this support would normally take place face-to-face, it has been taking place virtually throughout the pandemic. These meetings provide opportunities for staff to build up relationships with young adult carers and for any issues or concerns to be identified early.

For colleges who had strong support systems in place already, ensuring that there is a consistent, college wide approach to providing tailored support and making flexible adjustments was a priority. This has included, for example, ensuring that young adult carers who need it can have adjustments made to their timetable where possible, extra time to complete assignments, time out from class to attend to emergencies or if they are feeling anxious, and access to mobile phones. One college has worked to ensure that adjustments are agreed between tutors and Achievement Support Workers who review these with young adult carers at regular one-to-one meetings. Another college has introduced A Pattern of Care Form to be completed with a young adult carer at any stage, once they are identified. This form ensures that any adjustments and considerations are discussed and agreed with teaching staff to meet individual student's needs.

A number of colleges have developed a new Carers Card which is a tool for students to identify themselves to college staff, highlighting that they may require flexible support, such as authorised absences or access to mobile phones. Colleges who had introduced these cards had been inspired to do so through the online webinars offered by L&W during which one of the pilot colleges had shared the example of their carers card.

Some colleges have used Driving Change to put on extracurricular activities and opportunities for peer support amongst young adult carers. Whilst this area has been challenging to progress during the coronavirus pandemic, colleges have been creative in ensuring that young adult carers have opportunities to meet. For example, one college has created a dedicated Google Classroom for young adult carers, who now meet on a monthly basis via videocall. Another college runs a carers support group via an app that young adult carers download on their mobile phone. Many colleges have plans in place to build on their extracurricular activities, such as coffee mornings, when they can resume to normal face-to-face learning.

### **Partnerships and networking**

Driving Change has enabled colleges to form new or additional partnerships with local carers services, or to strengthen existing relationships, for example by involving them in the implementation of aspects of their action plans.

One college has made new links with two local carers services as a result of Driving Change. In the future, these organisations will attend college Freshers events, as well as share support information and promotional material. The college anticipates that the development of these effective working relationships will lead to a two-way referral process and joined up working to support young adult carers to access carers groups, and better signposting to regional support. Some colleges with long-standing and effective working relationships with their local carers' services have built on these by involving them in Driving

Change. For example, one college has worked closely with their local carers service on developing a young adult carers policy.

Colleges have also increased their networking with a wider range of organisations. In addition to reaching out to their local carers service, one college has made good links with local schools as well as local authority family intervention services and social care teams.

### **Data collection and monitoring**

A small number of the participating colleges already had some arrangements in place to monitor the attendance, retention, achievement and progression of their young adult carers prior to their involvement in the project. The robustness of these systems differed by college, and as such, colleges identified a range of actions to improve them.

A number of colleges have put new systems in place to record and monitor outcome for young adult carers. One college for example has developed a new database which allows data on young adult carers to be broken down at college, campus, course or individual level. This data will enable the college to better understand the impact of current support for young adult carers and to inform future developments in support.

Another college introduced a new Pattern of Care Form which collects information about individual young adult carer's personal circumstances. This information is now fed into the Support Register which captures young adult carers who have been identified through their application or at later points in the academic year. Another college, which had a data collection system in place already, has improved this to allow better identification and breakdown of the data they collect about young adult carers. This is now used by the Student Services team to monitor individual student progress and achievement. This data and information will now be included in broader college-wide reporting processes.

In addition to improving data collection and monitoring systems, some colleges have also introduced learner surveys for young adult carers. For example, at one college, the carers lead has introduced surveys which can be analysed according to specific criteria e.g. student experience, or participation in extracurricular activities. They also conduct focus groups with young adult carers which can be used, for example, to identify the impact caring has had and the effectiveness of support provided by the college.

### **Outcomes for colleges and young adult carers**

Taking part in the Driving Change project has resulted in a range of positive outcomes for colleges and young adult carers. Each of the participating colleges reported that the project provided the impetus needed to review and improve their provision for young adult carers. The main outcomes are outlined below.

#### **College wide commitment to young adult carers**

All colleges have been successful in gaining organisational commitment to young adult carers which has enabled whole-organisation approaches to supporting this group. This has included the development of policies, gaining buy in from senior management teams, providing staff training, and appointing new staff. This will ensure that support for young adult carers can be sustained and embedded across the whole college.

#### **Better identification of young adult carers**

Colleges involved in the evaluation have reported an increase in the number of young adult carers identified amongst their student cohort. This has been enabled by a range of factors, including better promotion of the support offer, having a named Carers Lead, enhanced

partnership working and referral processes with local carers services, as well as the delivery of staff training. These activities have made it more likely that a young adult carer will identify themselves and that tutors are better informed to recognise a young adult carer.

### **Improved data collection and monitoring systems**

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

### **Enhanced support offer for young adult carers**

Young adult carers are benefitting from stronger and tailored support at college as a result of the various actions that colleges have taken throughout Driving Change. This includes for example the provision of flexibility with timetables, extended deadlines, one to one pastoral support, ensuring that adjustments made are consistently applied and improved partnership working with local carers services.

### **Increased awareness of the support offer**

Colleges reported an increased awareness of the support offer amongst young adult carers, college staff, local carers services, as well as local schools and prospective students. This increased awareness has been enabled by enhanced marketing and outreach activities both internally and externally, combined with the recognised QSCS award. This will ensure that the college becomes a more attractive option for future students with caring responsibilities and their parents or carers.

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

The development of relationships with local carers services and other key partners, such as local authorities, has led to more effective and joined up support for young adult carers. Through newly developed relationships with the local authority, one college explained how they have been able to flag when a young person requires external support.

*'Our partners, in terms of the local authority, are now engaging with us, so we've had examples already where we've got, say, a young carer who is having real challenges and actually needs some external support for the family. We've been able to flag that now to the local authority support to put that in place.'* – Carers Lead

### **Increased involvement of young adult carers**

Colleges have endeavoured to involve young adult carers in Driving Change in meaningful ways to improve their support offer. All had plans in place to involve young adult carers in either shaping or reviewing the support provision, such as through virtual advisory groups or focus groups. Some colleges have co-produced marketing materials, videos for open days, and training for college staff with young adult carers. The increased involvement of young adult carers in shaping provision will ensure that support is tailored to meet the specific needs of young adult carers in the college.

### **Improved networking and resource sharing**

Colleges have been pro-actively networking and sharing resources throughout Driving Change. The project has enabled colleges to network and gain inspiration from other colleges across England and Wales, as well as share good practice in developing support for young adult carers.

*'It was also nice to know that, if I did need anything, there were people that I could contact as well. I did make contact with one of the other colleges and ask them for*



*some advice around something that they'd set-up. They'd got a young carers card system, so I asked them how they'd done that, and they shared some information with me, and we were able to adapt our own from that information.'* - Carers Lead

## 4. Key Learning from Year One

This section sets out the key learning from year 1 of the Driving Change project including successes and challenges; lessons learned and changes to project delivery in year 2.

### Successes

- Effective promotion of the project resulted in a high level of recruitment of colleges.
- All colleges completing their QSCS Final Assessment have been awarded the QSCS Standard.
- The flexible approach taken to supporting colleges has allowed the majority of colleges to maintain engagement with the project despite the challenges presented by competing college priorities, most notably, responding to the impact of the coronavirus pandemic.
- There has been a high level of engagement with the webinars during the first year of the project which has supported networking, the sharing of good practice across participating colleges and in particular the sharing of practical resources to help colleges provide effective support for young adult carers. A unique bank of resources, shared by colleges following the webinars and during the Final Assessment process, is now available on the private project webpage. This will be added to and developed as the project progresses. This process has also supported the development of relationships between individual colleges who have contacted each other to share learning following the webinars.
- The involvement of young adult carers in the project, including on the Steering Group, in the production of [short films](#) to promote the project, writing a [blog](#) as part of the project activities for Carers Week and in particular, the contributions to the webinars has been a key positive in the first year of the project. This has really helped to bring home to colleges the impact and benefits to young adult carers of improved support.

### Challenges

- The impact of the coronavirus pandemic, for example key staff involved in the project being absent from work, or diverted to fulfil other roles has presented challenges in maintaining contact with colleges. In addition, some colleges have struggled to maintain momentum in taking forward their action plans.
- Flexibility around project delivery timescales was essential in year 1 to support as many colleges as possible to complete the project. However, the completion of some Final Assessments in autumn 2020 means that end of year 1 project activities have overlapped with initial activities in year 2, placing extra demand on project resources.
- Challenges including college closures and remote learning have resulted in limited evaluation activities with young adult carers in year 1. This will be addressed in the year 2 project plan. Opportunities for colleges to involve young adult carers in shaping and reviewing changes in support have also been impacted, although some colleges have successfully embraced the shift to online delivery to explore new ways of engaging with their learners, including young adult carers. This has provided learning for the Driving Change project team on how we might engage with young people in more creative ways for the remainder of the project.

## Lessons learned

### Learning for colleges

The evaluation has identified a number of key learning points for colleges who participate in Driving Change going forward:

- There was a consensus amongst colleges who participated in the evaluation that gaining the support of senior leaders within the college was fundamental to their ability to progress their action plan and implement real change for young adult carers. For most, gaining strong senior management buy-in has been key in raising awareness of staff across the college and embedding the changes made through the project, which is crucial in ensuring sustainable impact.
- Having a working group made up of staff with different roles and responsibilities, rather than a single identified lead, was key to some colleges successfully implementing their action plans. For example, one college explicitly highlighted the importance of involving the pastoral team and young adult carers in developing their young adult carers policy, as well as involving the marketing team to advise on the best approaches to raising awareness of the support offer. This approach secured widespread buy-in and commitment to the project. It also meant that the resource needed to work on the project is spread across different people.
- All colleges who took part in the evaluation benefitted from involving young adult carers in shaping the improvements to support or by gathering feedback from young adult carers on changes made. Creative approaches to involving young adult carers, such as directly involving them in contributing to the production of videos or podcasts have proved particularly effective.
- Colleges who participated in Driving Change highly valued the support on offer from both L&W and Carers Federation. Those who engaged with the webinars gained valuable insight into practice and support that colleges across England and Wales have in place and had implemented this learning into their own practice. Colleges highlighted the importance of fully embracing all aspects of the support on offer to ensure that colleges get the most out of Driving Change.

### Learning for L&W and Carers Federation - project delivery

- Clear messaging and management in relation to timescales and proactive engagement is needed to ensure colleges stay on track and maintain the momentum to drive forward their action plans. In year 2 we have introduced scheduled monthly catch ups between individual colleges and their Carers Federation contact to monitor progress and identify and address any challenges that arise as early as possible. This is particularly important given the likely continued impact of coronavirus over the current academic year.
- A relatively small number of colleges responded to requests for monitoring data on their young adult carers. In some cases, this data was not available as systems were not yet in place to record or report specifically on young adult carers. However, greater clarity from the outset about the requirement and reasons for colleges to provide monitoring data as part of their involvement in the project should help to increase the return rate in future. This will strengthen evidence on the benefits of participation in Driving Change and support recruitment later in 2021.
- More detailed guidance and a proposed structure for the QSCS Final Assessment sent in advance of the meeting, would help colleges to better prepare for the assessment.

Changes to the format of online assessments will be considered going forward, for example having two shorter sessions rather than one longer session, alongside the option to return to face-to-face assessments. More structured examples of good practice in preparing and presenting evidence will also be included as part of the Preparing for QSCS Final Assessment webinar.

- Colleges have benefitted from the exchange of practical resources to support their own practice in working with young adult carers. Many of the templates and other documents added to the project resource page were collected, with the agreement of colleges, through the Final Assessment process. We will explore additional opportunities to develop this aspect of the project in years 2 and 3. This might include for example asking or encouraging colleges at the recruitment stage, for agreement to share resources as part of their involvement in Driving Change.

### **Changes to delivery model/activities in Years 2 and 3**

- Recruitment of colleges to participate in the project during year 2 has started earlier – from the end of the 19/20 summer term – to enable Carers Federation to get Initial Assessment meetings booked in as early as possible and to start the period of ongoing support in autumn/winter 2020. This will help to mitigate against any drift in colleges progressing their plans resulting from the pandemic or other challenges in moving the project forward.
- Initial recruitment of colleges for Year 2 of the project has been positive but feedback from the Association of Colleges and from individual colleges invited to take part in the project suggests that this is still a difficult time for colleges to take up new initiatives such as Driving Change. To address this, we will be undertaking a second wave of recruitment early in 2021 to bring more colleges on board, whilst ensuring that new recruits still have sufficient time to complete the project within existing timescales.
- A key focus for Driving Change is promoting the involvement of young adult carers and local carers services in shaping and improving provision. This helps to ensure that any support put in place through the project is tailored to the specific needs and experiences of young adult carers at each college. The evaluation has revealed innovative and inspiring practice in some colleges in engaging with young adult carers, particularly during the pandemic. However, feedback from Carers Federation suggests that some other colleges are less confident about how to communicate with and involve young adult carers. For Year 2 of the project we are developing a short top tips guide for colleges on creative ways to engage young adult carers. A second resource will focus on effective partnership working with local carers services and other organisations working with young adult carers.

### **Sustainability**

- The Driving Change model, through which colleges use the QSCS Framework to review, improve and evaluate their provision across all aspects of support ensures that colleges take a whole organisation approach to developing their provision for young adult carers. Embedding effective support across the college in this way helps to ensure more positive and sustained outcomes for young adult carers.
- As part of their involvement in Driving Change, colleges are required to identify a member of their senior management team to be responsible for taking the project forward and implementing the college's action plan. Senior management team awareness and commitment to improving support for young adult carers is also a key

aspect of the QSCS Framework. All colleges are required to work towards and evidence progress in this area as part of the QSCS Assessment process. By securing high level buy in from college senior leadership teams and governors the Driving Change project helps to ensure sustained commitment to improving support for young adult carers at a strategic level.

## 5. Case studies

### Wakefield College

#### About the college

Wakefield College in West Yorkshire is the largest education provider in the area, with approximately 8,000 students. The college offers courses at a range of levels including A-levels, vocational courses and apprenticeships, adult learning, and Higher Education courses. The college has sites in Wakefield City and at Castleford

Before the project started, the college felt that when they identified a student with caring responsibilities, they generally offered good support. However, they recognised that this support was inconsistent across the college.

Whilst the wellbeing team was increasingly encountering students caring for siblings or parents with mental health, drug and alcohol problems, they recognised that it was unlikely that they were aware of all the young adult carers in their student population. As a result, when the college joined Driving Change a key focus for the project was improved identification of young adult carers and mechanisms to ensure more consistent support across the college.

*“this is one of the reasons we wanted to take part in the project because we have a system at the minute where it's self-declaration by students through enrolment, but we've not enforced through our enrolment process what the definition of... young adult carers is. I don't think we can put hand on heart and say what that is at the minute, and that's one of the things that we need to get to, actually identifying who that cohort is and what support we need to put in place for them.”*

Although being able to identify young adult carers was a priority, the college acknowledged that talking through the QSCS Framework at the initial meeting had helped them to recognise other areas of the Framework where they could improve their support for young adult carers.

#### Support for young adult carers

Since the project began Wakefield College has made good progress in developing support across many different areas of the Framework.

#### Policy

The college has developed a comprehensive standalone young adult carer policy which is available to all staff through their Virtual College and has been included in training for new staff. Lockdown has prevented plans to directly involve young adult carers in shaping the policy, but Wakefield was able to take inspiration from a policy document shared by Solihull College following one of the Driving Change webinars.

A Carers Lead has also been identified, whose roles and responsibilities include developing and delivering training for staff across the college.

#### Induction

The college were keen to tailor their enrolment and induction process to ensure young adult carers could be identified and support put in place from the start of their time in college. A new enrolment form includes a question about caring responsibilities, and an explanation of what being a young adult carer means. As a result, 68 young adult carers have been identified at the start of the 2020/21 autumn term. Once a student is identified as a carer they are added to a young adult carer group communications list and supported to complete a Pattern of Care form. The student's young adult carers status is also flagged on the college's data management system. The college emphasise that this increased awareness of who their young adult carers are, has been key to ensuring that effective support is in place;

*"We are able now to have all of us, including our heads of curriculum, our support leads...to go on the system, [to] be able to see who the young people are that have identified themselves as being young adult carers. We're able to see which curriculum areas they're in, which site they're on. ...So, [the Carers Lead] alongside youth workers are now able to consistently keep in touch with those young people.*

Although the college already had a robust data management and monitoring system in place prior to joining the project it was not able to make effective use of data on young adult carers due to the lack of accurate data on numbers of carers in the student population. As a result of improved processes to identify young adult carers and increased numbers flagged on the system more meaningful data on attendance, achievement and retention is now being used as part of monthly Student Experience Team meetings to review identified student carers and identify those at risk of dropping out.

### **Staff training and awareness raising**

Before the project started the college did not provide specific training on young adult carers. New training, developed as part of the Driving Change project, includes online young adult carer awareness training for all staff as part of the induction process, more in-depth training for frontline support staff to improve student identification as well as awareness raising across teaching and curriculum teams. As part of this awareness raising activity the college has developed an interactive prospectus including a video for young adult carers which provides information about the Carers Lead and the support the college can provide. The video is also used as part of the induction process.

### **Ongoing support**

A key change in support implemented through the project is the introduction of a carers card for young adult carers. This allows student carers to identify themselves easily to teaching staff and ensures that adjustments can be made, for example changes to timetabling where this has been possible or extra time for assignments. The college has also adjusted the qualifying criteria for the bursary fund to best support young adult carers. To ensure they receive the support they are entitled to, young adult carers are flagged to Finance as a priority group through the colleges report system.

Young adult carers have also been a focus of college activity to support students learning remotely during the pandemic. For example, young adult carers are on the priority list for additional IT equipment purchased by the college to ensure vulnerable learners can continue to engage with their learning.

### **Partnership working**

Prior to their involvement in Driving Change, the college had identified that there was a lack of local support for young adult carers but had struggled to make effective links with the local

authorities across the different districts from which students who attend the college are drawn. Through the project the college has joined forces with the local authority in Wakefield to focus on young adult carers as a priority group. As a result, the college has forged a strong working relationship with the local authority and now sits on a strategic working group to improve the local offer for young adult carers.

### **Involving young adult carers in improving support**

Wakefield are committed to ensuring that the voices of young adult carers are heard in shaping and reviewing support. As part of the project they have developed a survey for student carers to provide feedback on their experiences of support and learning and to identify what they would like in relation to different aspects of support. The survey is about to go live and will be available on the college's Moodle for students to access throughout the year.

*"We've been able to ask them what they want from the college in terms of support so that we're not assuming that this is the right thing for everybody, because they've all got different needs, obviously, but we've kind of got a standardised approach"*

### **Challenges**

The main challenges for Wakefield have arisen from the pandemic. This meant that during the Driving Change project the college was juggling different priorities and had to adapt some of the planned changes in their action plan. For example, the QSCS initial assessment meeting coincided with an extended enrolment period. The lack of face to face engagement with young adult carers due to lockdown also made it difficult to fully engage young adult carers in the project in the way the college had hoped to.

### **Outcomes**

For Wakefield College the main positive outcome of their involvement in Driving Change is that they have achieved what they hoped to through the project; they now have consistent processes in place to identify and support young adult carers across the college. However, they stress that coming to the end of their time on the project does not mark the end of their journey to improve support for young adult carers.

*"I think it's on-going. I think it's just the start, to be honest. We've achieved what we set out to achieve in terms of our structure and the mechanisms, and everything else, and getting that standardised approach and some consistency, but we've got meetings booked in throughout the year for the project team, so we will continually go back to the plan...things will constantly change"*

The college had already started looking at their recruitment system for the next academic year for example, so that young adult carers who are prospective students can be identified and the college can talk to them early on about what support they can offer.

### **Key success factors**

- Having a Driving Change project team, including senior managers and the Carers Lead, meant the college could drive their action plan forward at all different levels and through different areas of the organisation. The college strongly recommended this approach to colleges joining the project in the future.

*"...if it was, for example, a manager in [a college's] student services, [if it's] their job to put this in place, I could see them hitting brick walls with it. I think if you can do something in terms of making sure you get the buy in at different*



*levels and...create that project team so that everybody is aware of the action plan and everybody is aware of the things that you need to achieve, and everybody does their bit with that, I think you're going to get a much more successful outcome with it."*

- The college already had effective relationships with schools to support the transition of young adult carers into college but had struggled to make effective links with other local partners. Allowing sufficient time to build these relationships, in this case, with local authorities, was seen as vital to make support work for young adult carers.
- The college perceived that making full use of the support and resources on offer through Driving Change has enabled them to get the most out of the project and improve all aspects of their provision..."*use those networks, really, and don't try and do it in isolation."*

# Coleg Penybont | Bridgend College

## About the college

Coleg Penybont/Bridgend College is a multi-site college in Wales offering post-16 education and 14-16 Junior Apprenticeships. The college has approximately 2,500 full-time and around 6000 part-time students. Bridgend was 2019 TES FE College of the Year and is a 'Double Excellent' inclusive college

Whilst the college already had relatively well developed support in place for different groups of learners they hoped that getting involved in Driving Change would enable them to develop new ideas and support, and provide a form of quality assurance that they were doing everything they could for their cohort of young adult carers.

*"I think it's just trying to make sure we've tightened everything up so that it's robust support that's available for young carers, exactly the same as other vulnerable groups within college."*

At the start of the project, identification of young adult carers was a key issue for the college; they acknowledged that the numbers of young adult carers known to them were probably much lower than the actual numbers in their student population.

Very few young adult carers approached the Student Wellbeing Team directly for support. Most young adult carers were identified over the course of the academic year through disclosure to tutors. The college had introduced measures such as regular tutor reminder cards to promote ongoing awareness and consideration of the needs of vulnerable students and the support available. However, when a young person self-identified, tutors weren't always passing this information on:

*"A lot of our tutors... are absolutely fantastic but it was identified that they may not always fully understand what the term 'young carer' means, why it is important to refer to Student Wellbeing and what support is available to young carers."*

As a result, increasing staff and student awareness of the support available and more consistent and clear information to engage young adult carers, were key targets in the college's plans for improvement. Developing the college's data collection and monitoring processes to allow reporting on outcomes for young adult carers was also a focus of the college's Driving Change action plan.

## Support for young adult carers

Driving Change has helped Bridgend College to implement changes across all the key actions identified in their action plan.

### Student induction

The college has introduced a question about caring responsibilities, including an explanation of the term 'young carer' and what support is available to them, as part of the enrolment process. If it is identified that a student has caring responsibilities, this information is passed directly to the Wellbeing Team so the college can identify early on who is a young adult carer and offer appropriate support from the start of their time in college.

The college has also undertaken further work with tutors, to ensure that when a young person does tell them about a caring role, they know how to pass the information on, who to pass it to and are confident to do so without fear of breaking confidentiality.

## Ongoing support

Another key development in the college's support for young adult carers is the introduction of a student pass, which has been embraced by both students and staff. Having attended one of the Driving Change webinars, in which a young adult carer from Solihull college spoke about the benefits of having a carer's pass in college, Bridgend College has introduced their own version. The card, which sits behind a young person's ID card on their lanyard, provides young adult carers with a simple way to identify themselves and ensure that considerations and adjustments are applied, for example if they need time out of a lesson or to keep their phone on without needing to explain themselves each time. Bridgend refer to this as a 'student', rather than a 'young adult carer' pass. In developing support for young adult carers, or other vulnerable learners, the college is careful not to attach labels to young people, to reduce stigma:

*"I've called it a student pass, and it's got an explanation about what it means to be a young carer. It means that they've got additional responsibilities at home, they might be 5 minutes late, they might need to leave 5 minutes early, and it's got all the Student Wellbeing information at the bottom of the card... it hasn't got, 'Young carer,' or, 'Wellbeing' written on it. It's got the Bridgend College logo and 'Student pass,'. There is only very small writing that explains for them, just to hand to their tutor ... We had a student that said she didn't have anything like this in her school and it's really reassuring to know that the support is set up and ready for her, so that was really good."*

In developing their support, Bridgend has made innovative use of technology to support young adult carers, especially during the pandemic. The college has introduced a Google Classroom, a free online classroom, specifically for young adult carers. Once it has been identified that a student is a young adult carer the college links them into the classroom which provides access to relevant advice and information about support at the college and external sources of support, such as helplines and information about local services. This is an example of good practice that will continue beyond the restrictions caused by the coronavirus pandemic.

The college has also established a Carers Society to facilitate peer support for student carers, so that *"at least they know there are other people there who are in a similar position to them, they're all learners in college."*

## Staff training and awareness raising

Bridgend College already had well developed processes in place before the start of the project to raise staff awareness of the needs of vulnerable learners, although this was not specifically tailored to the needs and experiences of young adult carers.

Developing their action plan for Driving Change has enabled Bridgend to focus on their messaging to raise awareness of the needs of and support available to young adult carers, particularly during the pandemic. Since the start of remote working the college has developed a new online poster aimed at supporting wellbeing. The poster which is circulated via social media, invites young adult carers, or anyone concerned about a young carer, to get in touch for a chat.

*"it's just consistently repeating that message throughout the academic year, either through the workshops or, we use social media a lot to promote messaging. We use the screens around college. We do a lot of inductions, so we go into the groups*

*and we explain... and the tutors are there and we [tell them] all the support that we can offer.”*

Through their involvement in the project, the college has successfully explored new approaches to engaging with young adult carers. One of these is a podcast for young adult carers developed with staff from Bridgend Young Carers. The podcast discusses issues such as what it means to be a young adult carer, how the pandemic might be affecting them and self-care during this period. The podcast, which is hosted on seven different platforms also aims to raise awareness of support for carers both inside and outside the college and helps to identify the college as “carer-friendly”.

## **Data collection and monitoring**

At the start of the project the college lacked systems to record and report specifically on young adult carers. A new database system which includes an identifier for young adult carers enables data to be broken down at college, campus, course or individual level. This will help to provide the college with the evidence needed to assess the impact of current practice in supporting young adult carers and to inform future developments in support.

Over the coming months, further changes are planned, including a Young Carer Group to provide peer support and opportunities for young adult carers to review and shape future developments.

## **Challenges**

The pandemic has presented a range of new challenges for colleges, including the shift to online delivery and supporting the mental health and wellbeing of students during remote learning and periods of lockdown.

As a result, the key challenge for Bridgend has been time to progress their plans to improve support for young adult carers. The flexibility, reassurance and additional support provided by the Driving Change project team has been key in helping them to remain engaged with the project and achieve good outcomes.

## **Outcomes**

One of the main positive outcomes for Bridgend College, as a result of their involvement in Driving Change has been the increased level of engagement with their young adult carers. The college has found that young adult carers can sometimes be reluctant to ask for support; they are often quite independent and may not seek help until things reach crisis point. The improvements in support implemented through the college’s action plan and increased messaging about the support available has helped to build rapport with young adult carers.

The success of the Google Classroom in particular marks a real step forward in the college’s relationship and level of engagement with this cohort of students. Since changes were introduced, conversations with young adult carers indicate that student carers feel reassured and are confident that they can access support;

*“ they feel safe, because they know the support is there if they need it, so we're not pushing it on them, we're not saying, 'You have to do this' but we're explaining to them about all the support that is available if they need it.”*

## Key Success factors

- A new enrolment process has enabled the college to identify young adult carers earlier and ensure they are able to access support straightaway.
- Using technology, including the Google Classroom and the podcast with Bridgend Young Carers, has been particularly effective in raising levels of engagement with young adult carers, especially during the pandemic.
- The development of an action plan provided the college with a focus and the impetus to improve their support for young adult carers.

*“The action plan has focused us and we’ve had the time and space to get new strategies developed and implemented for our students and staff to access.”*

# Appendices

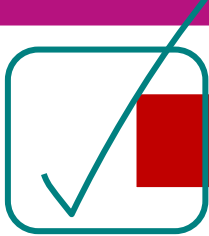


Delivered through the Driving Change project, with the support of The National Lottery Community Fund

## Employment

## Health Services

## Schools



## Further & Higher Education

# QSCS

Quality Standard Accreditation in Carer Support  
**‘Working Towards’** pack for FE and HE Providers

Name of lead contact:

Organisation name:



## What is the QSCS?

The 'Quality Standard in Carer Support' for Colleges and Universities has been developed to recognise and further best practice in supporting students with caring responsibilities. Completion will enable providers to:

- Improve support for young adult carers, thereby potentially increasing retention, attendance and achievement rates
- Demonstrate to external agencies and potential students a commitment to tailoring support to meet the needs of all learners
- Evidence an awareness of the challenges faced by young adult carers in education and commitment to improving their experiences, opportunities and outcomes

There are eight quality criteria to work towards on the 'Achievement Plan' provided. We will provide a bespoke package of information, support, training and resources to support your organisation to achieve the Standard. For any further information please email [QSCS@carersfederation.co.uk](mailto:QSCS@carersfederation.co.uk)

### QSCS Pack Contents

Process Chart  
'Quality Standard in Carer Support' required criteria  
Guidance Notes  
Achievement Plan  
Pre-assessment checklist  
Blank Assessment Report  
Carers Lead Role Description  
Pattern of Care form

# Standard Process

## Registration Period and Initial Assessment

- Initial expression of interest
- Registration details provided
- Initial telephone consultation
- Meeting to introduce the Standard and complete Initial Assessment
- Discussion around training needs and support options
- Support to develop the QSCS Achievement Plan

## Working Towards (Recommended completion time is 4- 6 months)

- Working Towards status awarded
- Achievement Plan commences
- Telephone/email support provided
- Invitation to QSCS workshops
- Any training organised and implemented
- Assessment date arranged
- Pre-assessment checklist completed

## Assessment

- Plan submitted
- Assessment completed in person (2 to 3 hours)
- Report compiled and sent within 21 days of assessment
- Awarded or recommendations made for re-submission
- Re-submission made within 28 days
- Awards are valid for 3 years then re-assessment is required
- Awarded organisations can display the QSCS logo and can be listed on the Carers Federation website





# QSCS – Eight Achievement Points (FE & HE)

**1 Carers Policy & Strategic Commitment**

**2 Designated Member of Staff**

**3 Staff Training**

**4 Outreach & Raising Aspirations**

**5 Student Induction**

**6 Ongoing Support**

**7 Partnerships & Networking**

**8 Data Collection & Monitoring**

# Quality Standard Accreditation in Carer Support

## Working towards the QSCS

The standard and affiliating resources have been developed by carers and have been designed to be as 'user friendly' as possible. The resources should allow for flexibility so you can tailor the accreditation to your organisational structure. The process may also support with the reviewing and development of other policies and procedures.

The Carers Federation can draw on years of experience of supporting carers in the community and are therefore well placed to support the process. We are here to support and provide you with all the necessary tools you may need to successfully achieve the accreditation.

### The Difference between the Quality Standard in Carer Support and other accreditations and charters:

- The QSCS has been developed by carers for carers
- The QSCS has been developed through consultation and piloting over a 10 year period
- Carers Federation have years of experience of delivering a diverse range of services to support carers and work with health providers, schools, colleges, universities and employers to improve opportunities for carers
- We will provide bespoke support and training that meets the specific needs of your organisation
- Assessment is carried out in person by an experienced assessor
- Organisations can make their commitment visible by displaying the QSCS logo and certificates

*"We are proud to care for all students and particularly for those, who as Carers might just need that extra guidance, support, or a listening ear. Thanks again so much, we've enjoyed the journey, and this validates our efforts and importantly intent for our young people."*

*"We are delighted to be awarded the Quality Standard in Carer Support Accreditation, It will provide further impetus to keep moving forward and improving our services for Young Adult Carers"*

*"I am delighted to be involved in the Quality Standard because it doesn't just support the carers in our workforce; it has helped us to demonstrate our overall commitment to staff and promote flexible working."*



## Frequently asked questions:

### How long is the Quality Standard valid for?

Once you have achieved the Quality Standard in Carer Support your accreditation is valid for 3 years. To be re-accredited you can submit an updated QSCS Achievement Plan and we can re-assess for a small admin cost.

### What about training for our staff?

You may have your own in-house training that you are able to deliver; we can offer advice regarding this. We can provide you with a range of training options including access to online training. We are happy to discuss your requirements during your initial assessment or throughout the process.

### How long does it take to complete the Achievement Plan?

We would recommend that you aim to complete your plan within a 4-6 month period. You may find you already have some of the criteria in place within your organisation. We will support in providing you with appropriate templates, resources and relevant information. We can discuss timescales with you if you require greater flexibility.

### What support is offered throughout the process?

Initially our team will visit you to discuss the QSCS in more detail, answer any questions you may have and support you to develop your Achievement Plan. They will also visit the college to undertake the Final Assessment. During the accreditation process we will offer support via email, telephone and Skype. In addition there will be opportunities to access focused online workshops providing opportunities for networking and sharing best practice. If you contact us and we are not available someone will respond to your query within a 48 hour period.

### How will the assessment take place?

Once you have completed your pre-assessment checklist and are confident that your plan is complete you are ready to arrange your assessment visit with the QSCS team, assessment usually takes about 2 to 3 hours. We advise that you collate all evidence in a file ready to present to the assessor at the agreed time. Following the assessment our team will complete a 'Provider Assessment Report'; this will outline how you have met the criteria and where not, will highlight any further evidence required.

### How long will it take to receive our Assessment Report?

We will send you your report within 21 days of your assessment.

### What if we don't achieve the accreditation?

There is support at the pre-assessment stage to minimise the likelihood of this happening. However, if you are unsuccessful the team will feed back what further action needs to be taken to ensure you can be re-assessed and can achieve the standard. You can re-submit your plan and any additional evidence required via email within 28 days and receiving your assessment report outcome.