Driving Change

Project and Evaluation Report

Year 2

October 2021

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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. It started in England and Wales in year 1 and has extended into Scotland and Northern Ireland for years 2 and 3. This report details the performance of year 2 of the project.

Project approach

During year 2, L&W and Carers Federation have worked with 17 colleges and college groups in total. At the time of writing, eleven of these colleges have completed the project through to the final assessment, and one college has completed and will undertake the final assessment in September 2021. Five colleges joined the project later in year 2 and are due to undertake their final assessments in December 2021 or January 2022.

Each college involved in the project is allocated a key contact at Carers Federation who provides them with intensive, tailored one-to-one support.

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 second 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 project

Colleges taking part in the evaluation generally provided positive feedback on the support provided to them by Carers Federation. They particularly valued the flexibility of the support that was offered, especially throughout the pandemic when members of staff were frequently working from home. Most colleges spoke positively about the final assessment process, including the pre-assessment meeting that they took part in. Colleges largely felt that the online format of support worked well, although some had experienced challenges with technology, for example, poor connection issues.

The webinar sessions delivered by L&W were well attended and 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 such as policy templates. Many of these resources have been brought together on the dedicated project page, however, some colleges had made less use out of this than others.

Progress made as a result of the project

The points below summarise the progress made by colleges against the eight aspects of the QSCS framework. This summary draws from findings of interviews with a sample of 8 participating colleges and analysis of 11 final assessment reports.

Carers policy and strategic commitment – Some colleges developed new standalone policies for young adult carers, and others improved or enhanced existing policies. Policies generally included signposting to Carers Leads and a clear explanation of support processes.

Designated member of staff – A small number of colleges already had a designated member of staff for carers before the project, however, many colleges created a new Carers Lead role. This has particularly helped colleges to improve their links with external services and raise awareness amongst other members of staff.

Staff training – All participating colleges have introduced or enhanced staff training through taking part in the project. For example, colleges have introduced new dedicated training modules, expanded their existing training, and created different levels of training for different staff groups.

Outreach and raising aspiration – Most colleges significantly enhanced their outreach and awareness raising activity, to promote their support for young adult carers and encourage students to disclose any caring responsibilities. Activities have included creating new marketing materials, adding information to websites, and improving outreach in local schools and during open days.

Student application, enrolment, and induction – Colleges have improved their processes for identifying young adult carers through the entire enrolment process. For example, through the introduction of questions on application and enrolment

forms, and by creating opportunities for students to declare their caring responsibilities at the induction stage.

Ongoing support – Through Driving Change, colleges have introduced new forms of support that are tailored to the needs of young adult carers. This has included one-to-one support, the introduction of carers cards, new opportunities for peer support, and introducing or enhancing the flexible adjustments for young adult carers.

Partnerships and networking – By participating in the project, some colleges have formed new or additional partnerships with local carers services, and others have strengthened existing relationships, for example, by involving them in their Driving Change action plans.

Data collection and monitoring – A number of colleges have put new systems in place to record and monitor outcomes for young adult carers, and some have also introduced opportunities for young adult carers to provide feedback of the college support, for example, through learner surveys and focus groups.

Outcomes of the project

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

- Enhanced support offer for young adult carers at college
- Increased awareness of the support offer among prospective students
- Better identification of young adult carers within the student population
- Increased involvement of young adult carers in shaping the support offered at their college
- New or improved relationships with local carers services to offer joined up support for young adult carers
- Improved networking and resource sharing with other participating colleges
- College wide commitment to developing the support for young adult carers
- Improved data collection and monitoring systems for young adult carers within the college

All 11 of the year 2 colleges undertaking the final QSCS assessment to date have been successful in achieving the QSCS accreditation. City Of Liverpool College will undertake the final assessment towards the end of September. All colleges who took part in the evaluation said that they would recommend that other colleges take part in Driving Change.

1. Introduction

Delivered between September 2019 and August 2022, the Driving Change project aims to improve the support that young adult carers receive in further education, to enable them to achieve better outcomes and fulfil their potential. At the start of the project, the aim was to work with 60 colleges across England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland over the three-year period. These target numbers have been revised in recognition of recent college mergers and the additional resource involved in supporting groups of colleges that are now significantly larger and often operating across multiple sites[1].

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 Further Education (FE) 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 2 of the project, delivered between September 2020 and August 2021. The report also includes the key findings of the project evaluation, and case studies of three of the participating colleges.

Further information on the background to Driving Change, and evaluation findings from year 1 of the project, are available here

2. Project Approach

Project delivery in year 2 was based on the model tested through year 1 of Driving Change, and developed through a pilot project, Targeted Support for Colleges. This demonstrated a range of benefits for participating colleges and their young adult carers. Key learning about what worked well from the year 1 evaluation of Driving Change was used to inform delivery in year 2. Key changes were focused on sustaining the engagement of colleges, working with colleges to maintain momentum in taking their plans forward, and offering greater flexibility and guidance to support colleges to prepare for and undertake the final assessment meeting.

In year 2, delivery of Driving Change has been adapted to provide online support for colleges at all stages of the project.

2.1 Recruitment of colleges

Recruitment in the first year of Driving Change was focused on England and Wales. During year 2, recruitment was extended, as planned, to all parts of the UK, with priority given to colleges in Scotland and Northern Ireland. In year 1, due to

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[1] Please see appendix 1 for a full breakdown of colleges that participated in Driving Change during year 1, year 2 and the target numbers for year 3

disruption caused by the pandemic, some colleges had experienced challenges in progressing their Driving Change actions plans within the project timescales. To allow for potential delays caused by continued disruption, recruitment in year 2 was brought forward to ensure that initial assessments were booked in early, maximising the support period offered to colleges.

Colleges were recruited through a variety of channels including:

- Targeted emails to college Principals in priority areas and an offer of a follow up call to discuss the project.
- Association of Colleges (AoC) Chief Executive and Area Director newsletters.
- Targeted emails to young adult carer networks to invite carers services to share information about the project with colleges.
- Information on the Driving Change project page on the L&W website on benefits for colleges participating in the project (updated to include the evaluation report and case studies from year 1 colleges) and how to apply.
- L&W social media, linked to national events such as Carers Week, and celebrating Year 1 colleges' achievement of the QSCS award and benefits to colleges.
- L&W Chief Executive's newsletter and wider L&W networks.
- Promotion by members of the Driving Change steering group.

Recruitment at the start of the year was challenging due to the uncertainty, additional pressures and competing priorities for colleges arising from the pandemic. Despite this, an initial group of 12 colleges were recruited to the project. To ensure that target numbers of colleges participating in Driving Change remained on track, a second round of recruitment was undertaken towards the end of 2020/early 2021, resulting in a further five colleges and college groups joining the project. This brings the total number of colleges participating in Driving Change to 34, during years 1 and 2 of the project.

A breakdown of the colleges that participated in Driving Change during year 2 is provided below

Colleges that joined at the start of year 2	Country/Region
North West Regional College	N. Ireland
Southern Regional College	N. Ireland
Northern Regional College	N. Ireland
South Eastern Regional College	N. Ireland
South West Regional College	N. Ireland

West Lothian College	Scotland
West College Scotland	Scotland
Cambridge Regional College	England – E
City of Liverpool College	England – NW
Waltham Forest College	England – GL
Isle of Wight College	England – SE
Heart of Worcestershire College	England – WM
Colleges that joined later in year 2	
The Manchester College Group	England – NW
Tyne Coast College	England – NE
Bournemouth & Poole College	England – SW
Derby College Group	England – EM
Shrewsbury Colleges Group	England – WM

At the time of writing, 11 of the colleges recruited at the start of year 2, have completed the project through to final assessment. City Of Liverpool College will undertake the final assessment towards the end of September.

The five colleges joining the project later in the year are making good progress with their action plans and are expected to complete the project in December 2021 or early in the new year.

2.2 Quality Standard in Carer Support framework

Driving Change uses the QSCS (see appendix 2) as a framework to work with colleges to review, improve and evaluate their provision for young adult carers.

Developed by Carers Federation, in consultation with carers, the Standard contains eight criteria and good practice 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.

2.3 Support for colleges

Each college participating in the project was allocated a key contact at Carers Federation who provided a package of support, tailored to the context and needs of the college. The support period lasted approximately 6 months and included:

- An online 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 and ad hoc support by email/telephone/video call to offer advice and ideas on implementing the action plan and overcome any challenges encountered.
- An online pre-assessment preparation meeting to help colleges get ready for the QSCS final assessment.
- A final online QSCS assessment meeting to examine how the college's support had progressed and developed since joining the project, against the eight points of the QSCS framework.

In addition, in year 2 of the project a monthly catch-up meeting with the college was introduced to monitor progress and discuss any challenges in implementing plans, share good practice and help to keep the college on track within the project timescales. A monthly support plan completed with colleges at each meeting also captured a record of actions taken by colleges throughout the support period to implement their Driving Change plan.

In addition to ongoing support from Carers Federation, L&W continued to offer wider support to colleges, as part of the project. This included:

- A series of four themed webinars, which provided opportunity for participating colleges to come together to find out what other colleges were doing on the project, share effective practice and resources, and discuss solutions to common challenges. Following positive feedback from colleges on the value of webinars in year 1, the same themes were retained in year 2. These included, identifying young adult carers, partnership working and ongoing/practical support for young adult carers.

   Previous Driving Change participants, identified as having strong support in place in relation to each theme, were invited to present at each of the webinars. A Q&A session after each presentation, and good practice shared by other colleges and L&W, provided participating colleges with concrete examples of how they could improve their own provision. 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.

A final webinar on preparing for the final QSCS assessment was delivered by Carers Federation, to provide colleges with a detailed understanding of the QSCS assessment process and the evidence required. In response to learning from year 1, when some colleges had struggled to manage the technology and present evidence coherently during the online final assessment meeting, the webinar included top tips on sharing and presenting evidence online. Carers Federation also produced a handout with guidance on the process for assessments and offered flexibility to allow colleges to undertake the final assessment in two separate sessions.

- 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 a growing bank of practical resources shared by colleges throughout the project, for example policy documents and templates to help colleges provide effective support for young adult carers.

As part of their involvement in the project colleges are required to secure commitment from a member of their senior management team to be responsible for taking the project forward. Each college is also required to identify a member of staff 'on the ground', to be the main day-to-day contact for the project – usually a member of staff designated as, or who would become, the carers lead.

Colleges are also asked to:

- Involve young adult carers in reviewing and shaping improvements, 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.

- Work to build new relationships or develop existing partnerships with local carers services to ensure a joined-up approach to improving support for young adult carers.

- Participate in a light touch evaluation, conducted by L&W. This runs alongside the project and includes taking part in qualitative interviews at the start and end of the support, and providing key monitoring data on young adult carers to explore the impact of the project on the support colleges offer to young adult carers.

2.4 Steering group

A Steering Group, set up at the start of the Driving Change project in 2019, has continued to inform and support 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, third sector organisations working with young adult carers and former participating colleges. Two

young adult carers are also actively involved in the group. Steering group members have also contributed to delivery of the project in year 2 including inputs to the webinars and support to undertake qualitative research as part of the evaluation of the project.

3. The Evaluation

3.1 Aims and methodology

L&W is conducting an evaluation of Driving Change across the lifetime of the project. The evaluation aims to:

- Assess the process undertaken to support colleges to review, improve, and evaluate their support for young adult carers to inform continuous improvement to project delivery, and;
- Explore the outcomes and impact of the project for participating colleges and young adult carers.

This section of the report provides a summary of key findings from the evaluation of the second year of Driving Change. Findings will be used to inform delivery in the third and final year of the project.

The evaluation has included a range of activities:

Initial interviews – Interviews were carried out with key contacts at a sample of eight colleges participating in year 2 of Driving Change, at the start of their engagement with the project. The interviews explored the college context, and focused on the college's current provision and support for young adult carers, motivations for taking part in Driving Change and what they aim to achieve.

Follow up interviews – These were conducted with the same eight colleges who took part in the initial interviews and were co-led by a researcher and a young adult carer who has supported the project team across different aspects of Driving Change. At the time of writing, seven of these colleges had completed their final QSCS assessment. Follow up interviews explored the college's experience of taking part in Driving Change. They also focused on the changes in support that colleges made through the project and the impact on young adult carers, and suggestions for improvement as the project moves into its third year.

Review of QSCS final assessment reports, action plans, and support plans – A review of QSCS final assessment reports for 11 participating colleges was undertaken to explore the progress that each college had made in improving support for young adult carers through their involvement in Driving Change against the eight criteria of the QSCS framework. The final assessment for one remaining college was postponed until the start of the next academic year.

Each of the 12 colleges' support plans and final Driving Change action plans were also reviewed. The support plans were completed by Carers Federation following monthly catch-up meetings with participating colleges to monitor and record progress, and to identify and capture activity over the coming month to take plans forward. The final action plans show what changes the college has put in place in relation to the different aspects of the QSCS framework, in preparation for their final assessment. The review examined how colleges had changed their provision for young adult carers, compared to aims set out in their Driving Change action plan at the start of the project.

Monitoring information – Where it was made available, the evaluation collected monitoring data from participating colleges to help assess the impact of changes introduced through the project, for young adult carers. Data requested included changes in the numbers of young adult carers identified by the college since the start of their involvement in the project, along with key performance data such as retention and achievement rates.

Peer led interviews – Peer led interviews were undertaken with three young adult carers from two participating colleges. The interviews were designed to gain an insight into young people's experiences and views on support for young adult carers at their college, including any suggestions for improvement and their involvement in the Driving Change project. These interviews were conducted by the young adult carer who has supported L&W's work on the Driving Change project. The peer led approach provided 'insider' insight during data collection and analysis, enhancing the quality and authenticity of the research. The young adult carer took part in two training sessions delivered by L&W on conducting and analysing interviews. She also received support to write up findings for this report.

3.2 Key findings

3.2.1 Colleges' experiences of the project

This section summarises feedback from key contacts at each of the eight colleges that participated in interviews for the evaluation. It focuses on colleges' motivations for getting involved in Driving Change, and their views on the support provided by L&W and Carers Federation, use of the QSCS framework and their experience of the QSCS final assessment process.

Colleges' motivations for getting involved

During the initial interviews, colleges spoke about what they wanted to achieve through the project and why they wanted to get involved. Overall, colleges wanted to create a positive environment for young adult carers, ensuring that they felt supported, were engaged, and could thrive in their studies. One college, for example, explained that they wanted young adult carers to be at the forefront of college support and to ensure that they feel empowered.

'I would like more of a focus for young carers. There's a huge amount of barriers for them, particularly with lockdown and the social isolation … I'd like them to have a voice, albeit we've got a small cohort, they're a really important cohort' (Strategic Carers Lead)

Another college wanted young adult carers to feel that the college had made a positive difference, not only to their experience at college, but to their wider personal circumstances and future life.

'I suppose, in terms of this project, [the goal] would be to have feedback from young people that we've made a difference to their lives, that the support that we've been able to offer them has meant that they have been able to achieve a qualification and skills, and I suppose to strengthen their own prospects and live independently, as well as be able to carry out their duties within their family' (Carers Lead)

Views on support offered by Carers Federation

In general, colleges who participated in the evaluation gave positive feedback about the support offered by Carers Federation. This included comments on the level and frequency of support as well as the overall approach from Carers Federation; colleges felt comfortable and reassured throughout the process.

'From the very get-go, I felt so comfortable knowing that it was about supporting us as an organisation, how we can improve the support for young adult carers, and it wasn't about being judgmental or pointing fingers at us to say we're not doing this or we're not doing that' (Carers Lead)

Colleges particularly valued the flexibility in the support offered by Carers Federation, for example, having the opportunity to contact them outside of scheduled monthly catch ups if they wanted to, either by phone or email. This had been especially useful throughout the pandemic, when college staff were often working from home.

'With us constantly changing when we were going to be in college and when we were going to be working from home, depending on the lockdowns, she [the Carers Federation advisor] was really understanding of how that might affect things. It was really helpful in that sense' (Strategic Carers Lead)

Most colleges felt that the online format of support, that was introduced during year 1 of Driving Change in response to the pandemic, worked well and meant that support was easily accessible. However, a number of colleges had found that technology could sometimes be a barrier. Examples of this included experiencing poor connection issues and struggling to share evidence online for the final QSCS assessment.

'It wasn't very clear how to get the evidence over to them. We really struggled with that … I think a bit clearer of an understanding of how to present that

evidence, and what format they would have liked to see that in, would have been really helpful' (Strategic Carers Lead)

For most, these challenges were easily resolved, however, two colleges said they would have preferred the support to be face-to-face.

Overall, colleges who took part in the evaluation were positive about the final assessment process. This included the support to prepare for the assessment and the assessment day itself. The pre-assessment meeting with Carers Federation was seen as particularly useful.

> *'So, I think, for any anxieties and things, we found that really good because we could talk about where we were at, and if there was anything else we had to do. Just so going into the assessment we felt as though we were really well prepared for it'* (Operational Carers Lead)

The final assessment process also allowed colleges to reflect on their achievements.

> *'… [The Carers Federation advisor] was just supportive in the sense that she had told us that, for the day of the assessment, it was more like a celebration of us [and] all the work that we had put into young adult carers. So, I [found] that it was really nice, just knowing that she was aware of what we had done and that we have worked so hard on it all year. And it was nice for that to be recognised'* (Operational Carers Lead)

Views on support from Learning and Work

All colleges who participated in the evaluation interviews attended at least one of the four themed webinars offered by L&W as part of the Driving Change project. Colleges said that the webinars were a useful way of learning what stage other colleges were at in implementing support for young adult carers, how different colleges were approaching the project, and as a way of sharing good practice.

> *'We've attended a few webinars as well, which has been good, because we've been listening to the experience from other colleges, how they started what they did, particularly colleges that are very similar to ours, similar numbers of young carers, that was really useful and helpful, and gave us good ideas there. And also helped us reaffirm that we were on the right track'* (Strategic Carers Lead)

Colleges particularly valued learning from the webinar presentations that were delivered by previous Driving Change participants. One college, for example, was particularly inspired by the work of another college, on their student card for young adult carers and was considering adopting a similar practice.

Colleges appreciated the flexibility provided by offering each webinar on two different dates and the ability to access recordings of the webinars if neither of these was convenient.

Colleges particularly welcomed the chance to interact with other colleges at the webinars and some of those interviewed felt that the project could have offered more opportunities for this. One college for example suggested having additional webinars throughout the project that were solely based around networking and the chance to explore with other colleges about their provision, rather than a specific topic being presented. They also suggested a 'flipped learning' approach, so that they could have more time to read through relevant material before the webinar and then have a Q&A session at the start before learning more from presenters throughout the session.

To further the networking opportunities available throughout the project, one college suggested the idea of having a college 'buddy' throughout the project, who could provide more individualised and impromptu support.

> *'I just wonder whether, perhaps going forward, it might be an idea just to havep a college buddy that's been through the project. Not onerous, not where you don't get colleges putting themselves forward, but just at the end of the phone or just someone who is in further education, a large college like ours … a big college in a city with the challenges that we face just to say, 'Just a quick query, what did you do about that? Did that help or was it just a bit of a damp squid?''* (Deputy Principle)

Colleges expressed mixed views on the support for colleges [project page](#) and resources. Those who had accessed these resources usually found them helpful and were utilising them frequently. Others were unsure about what resources were available and had made less use of this aspect of support.

> *'The resources were very useful because I like the fact that you've got different colleges and some of the things they've done, from the questionnaires and the posters, I was tapping into that quite a lot'* (Carers Lead)

Two colleges, although happy with the content of the resources on the project page, had sometimes found it difficult to navigate around them due to the volume of material that is available.

3.2.2 Challenges to participating in the project and improving support

The key challenge faced by colleges during their involvement with Driving Change was the coronavirus pandemic and the associated restrictions. The shift to remote learning meant that some colleges had not been able to take forward their plans as quickly or as fully as they would have liked. One college for example, had struggled to get a new peer support group off the ground.

> *'We were hoping that we could bring them [young adult carers] together in the college and do like a peer support group … So, inviting them in, making them a cup of tea, just getting bonds and having a chat and getting to know each*

other. So, because we're unable to do that, we find it a wee bit more challenging because it was always on Teams. And I know a lot of students, accessing Teams just for their class was difficult enough. They didn't really want to do anything extra than what they already had to do' (Operational Carers Lead)

However, other colleges reported positive impacts from the move to online provision.

'… Our communication with our students has increased massively, because we've done more virtual communication. So, we went from having only 9 young carers to having 21 throughout the project. So, for us, we deem that to be a big success really' (Strategic Carers Lead)

Colleges were hoping to see further positive outcomes from their Driving Change project in the next academic year, when reduced disruption resulting from the pandemic should be less of a barrier to fully implementing planned changes in support.

Other challenges that colleges identified in taking their Driving Change action plans forward included:

- Communicating within the college how a 'strategic' plan for support, developed through Driving Change, would turn into an 'operational' plan for staff, for example, planning staff capacity around the identification and support of young adult carers.
- Having sufficient time to implement planned changes to provision within the timescales of the Driving Change project.

'… It took that long for us to develop our staff, get our staff updated, write the policies and procedures, train our staff, and get that communicated out that this is what we were going to do. So, really, I feel that it's not until next academic year, 21/22, that we will be able to really use the systems that we have developed, and use those to support and communicate to the students' (Carers Lead)

3.2.3 Progress against the QSCS framework

All colleges had developed plans to improve support across the eight aspects of the QSCS framework, however, the extent to which they focused on different areas depended on the levels of support that were already in place. This section presents a summary of the progress that colleges made against each aspect of the Framework.

Carers' Policy

This part of the QSCS framework was a key area of development for all colleges involved in year 2 of the project. Colleges were keen to develop a strategic, whole-

organisation approach to ensure that all young adult carers at their college were being offered consistent support and opportunities.

Some colleges have developed a new dedicated policy for young adult carers as part of their Driving Change action plan. These policies included signposting to a Carers Lead and clear identification of support processes. New policies were normally developed in consultation with key members of college staff, including the senior management team.

> '*Before we engaged with Carers Federation this [carers policy] wasn't on our radar at all, which is disappointing from our perspective. Through looking at the work resources that the Learning and Work Institute sent us and help from the Carers Federation, we developed a stand-alone care policy, and some students have asked for a copy of it. It's good because it focuses your mind on what you as an organisation want to achieve and how high a bar you're going to set for the services that you're going to provide*' (Carers Lead)

A small number of colleges already had existing policies in place for young adult carers. However, through Driving Change, they had enhanced and improved these policies, for example, by expanding identification processes and monitoring systems. Some colleges had also sought feedback from their young adult carers to improve current policies, as well as accessing resources from the project page to learn from effective practice at other colleges.

Many colleges added new or existing policies to their websites. This was seen as particularly important in publicly demonstrating their organisational commitment to current and prospective students.

In addition, some colleges had made changes to policies such as safeguarding and for vulnerable learners, to specifically reference a wide range of support for young adult carers.

> '*We had a vulnerable policy from the start, and it mentioned young adult carers, but it didn't really go into detail … I think the emphasis was more around students who are in care. So, the journey throughout [Driving Change] was looking at that policy. Making it quite clear who a young adult carer is*' (Carers Lead)

Designated member of staff

A small number of colleges already had a designated member of staff for carers prior to their involvement in Driving Change, however, many colleges introduced a new Carers Lead role through their work on the project.

> '*Previously, we didn't have a designated member of staff just for young carers. We have a wellbeing team who have caseloads of our vulnerable learners … but what we have now is, we have a single point of contact for our young carers and they will triage what level of support those young carers need …*

now we've got this dedicated one person it really helps because then they disseminate things out easier. So, the single point of contact, I think, has streamlined it for everybody involved' (Strategic Carers Lead)

Introducing an identified lead for young adult carers has particularly helped colleges to improve their links with relevant external organisations, such as carers services. For example, the Carers Lead at one college had further developed the college's partnership with their local carers service to create an information-sharing pathway to ensure supported transition to college. Alongside this they run tours, events, and activities for young adult carers in college.

Having a designated member of staff for young adult carers has also helped colleges to raise awareness amongst other members of staff. For example, one Carers Lead explained how, as part of their role, they encouraged other staff to proactively think and talk about how the college's support for young adult carers could be improved. Another college spoke about the support provided by the Carers Lead to teaching staff who had attended awareness training on young adult carers, developed as part of Driving Change.

> *'My Young Adult Carers Lead said she had a lot of questions coming to her email inbox, and it's really clear that some people just don't have an understanding. And she's been able to clarify and answer those questions, which I think has been really helpful for the tutors, so they've got a bit of a better understanding as well'* (Strategic Carers Lead)

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. Some colleges had also invited their local carers service to deliver training in-college.

One college, for example, introduced a pre-recorded audio presentation which covers the signs and impact of caring, as well as outlining college support for young adult carers. All new staff members will go through this as part of their training, and it will also be delivered as part of every Staff Development Day.

> *'We've put together a Young Adult Carers training, which is just a 15-minute webinar where we talk through what tutors can expect to see, what a young adult carer looks like, what it means for them, how it impacts their education, and things like that. We put that out as a compulsory teacher training that they had to do on the last teacher training day'* (Strategic Carers Lead)

In addition, a number of colleges have accessed specific training for Carers Leads offered by Carers Federation, outside of the Driving Change project.

Outreach and awareness raising activity

Nearly all colleges significantly enhanced their outreach and awareness raising activity to promote the support they offer to young adult carers and encourage young people to disclose their caring responsibilities.

One college, for example, had added information about the support available for young adult carers to their online prospectus, developed new marketing materials aimed specifically at young adult carers and were sharing information about support during visits to local schools.

> *'We've got a section about young adult carers on [the digital prospectus]. We've got videos on there and we also…we've created our own logo, which is like a thumb's up carer friendly logo on all our promotional materials and stuff. So, our marketing team, when they go into schools, they'll discuss about vulnerable learners and mention about our young adult carers … and they tell them what support is available from having a one-to-one welfare advisor to the financial support, so they are told about that package in those discussions'* (Carers Lead)

Colleges have also introduced new awareness raising activity during open days, for example, one college had invited along their local carers service.

> *'In terms of outreach, we have, as part of this project, made established links with the young Carers Trust … So they are going to come and attend any open days that we have, so that contact and communication is established and will be developed over the next academic year'* (Carers Lead)

In the interviews with young adult carers, students mentioned that they would have liked more awareness raising throughout their college, such as posters on the walls. They explained that this would 'normalise' being a young adult carer and encourage them to come forward to ask for more support.

Student application, enrolment, and induction

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

> *'For recruitment, so beforehand, we never captured young adult carers … but … the application form was then updated so when applicants are applying they can disclose if they are young adult carers'* (Operational Carers Lead)

Having been identified through the new application process young adult carers at this college are sent information about the support available, and a link to a young adult carers video, with their acceptance letter. An automatic email is also sent to the Carers Lead informing them of any applicants who have identified as a young adult

carer pre-entry, and they then make telephone contact to introduce themselves and discuss the support available.

A number of colleges who participated in the evaluation acknowledged challenges around identifying young adult carers withing their student population, 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 additional processes in place to provide ongoing opportunities for young people to disclose. Through their involvement in Driving Change, most 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 and support team.

> *'I think now the support that's available is really high. Beforehand because there was none, probably students wouldn't have come forward to disclose or [feel it was] something to talk about. Whereas now there's much more awareness that's being promoted on the college website, on our [intranet], on our social media, and around the college building as well. I think the more people see things and hear about things the more willing they are to talk about them and more willing to come forward and they ask for help and ask for support'* (Operational Carers Lead)

Ongoing support

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

Through the project, many colleges have introduced new opportunities for young adult carers to access regular, one-to-one support from a specific member of staff. This provides opportunities for staff to build up relationships with young adult carers and for any issues or concerns to be identified early.

> *'What the project has done is we've looked at our ongoing support and just because we've got that understanding about young adult carers and what they go through … I think the most important thing is the fact they they've got that one-to-one support with a welfare advisor, who regularly checks on them on a weekly basis'* (Carers Lead)

However, a couple of young adult carers, who participated in the evaluation and both attended the same college, described how they often had to proactively approach staff for help at their college and would have welcomed more regular communication to ask if they needed any support, such as receiving an email once a month.

Within colleges which already had some support systems in place prior to their involvement in the Driving Change project, new opportunities offered for young adult

carers included peer support activities. One college, for example, reflected on how their new carers group and other social activities bringing young adult carers together had helped to support the mental health and well-being of student carers at the college.

Some colleges had plans to build on their peer support and extracurricular activities when they can resume face-to-face learning. For example, one college plans to introduce activities for young adult carers to relax and recuperate at the end of the summer term.

> *'We're looking at a reward type package … we're very mindful that this cohort have got lots of barriers and they may not externally be able to experience things, so we'll be looking to see if we can do something at the end of the year for the group as well, possibly put on for them just some fun at the end of the year'* (Strategic Carers Lead)

Most colleges also introduced or enhanced their flexible adjustments for young adult carers. This has included ensuring that young adult carers have access to adjusted timetables, extra time to complete assignments, access to mobile phones, and time out from class to attend to emergencies or if they are feeling anxious. One college explained that, through the Driving Change project, they introduced support plans for young adult carers, which allowed more scope for flexible adjustments to be made by lecturers.

> *'For the ongoing support, the key there was our setting up of the support plans so once we had identified who they were, meeting with the student, finding out what their circumstances were … Once we've completed that, we shared it with the lecturer so the lecturer was aware, and it meant then that they [young adult carers] had a bit more flexibility so they could contact us and say 'I'm under pressure this week, could you request that I get extra time with an assignment' or 'Could you contact my lecturer' for whatever reason'* (Operational Carers Lead)

A young adult carer who took part in the evaluation, commenting on similar support at their own college, said that they found it particularly helpful that a member of staff emailed their teachers to explain that they were a young adult carer, because they felt too uncomfortable to do so themselves.

Through their involvement in the project, several colleges have developed a new Carers Card, which is a tool for young adult carers to identify themselves to college staff, without having to continuously explain their situation. Colleges which introduced these cards had typically been inspired to do so through hearing about good practice at other colleges at one of the webinars offered as part of Driving Change.

A young adult carer interviewed also valued the flexibility provided by a Carers Card.

> *'… Say if I have to answer the phone in lesson and have to leave suddenly it's helpful so I don't have to interrupt lessons, I can just put it on my desk'* (Young adult carer)

However, a couple of other young adult carers mentioned that they can sometimes find it difficult to explain to teachers that their caring responsibilities might mean that they need to hand in work at late.

> *'Sometimes teachers forget that we … care for people, so they'll be like, 'well why haven't you done that?' and you can't exactly just come out and be like, because I care for someone'* (Young adult carer)

In terms of suggestions for improving ongoing support, one young adult carer who participated in the evaluation said that they would like more help with the practical side of being a young adult carer, such as budgeting. They explained that this can often be daunting as they are the sole carer in their family.

Partnerships and networking

Through their participation in Driving Change, colleges have formed new partnerships with local carers services, or strengthened existing relationships, for example, by involving them in the implementation of their action plans. Partnership working with local carers services is fundamental for both recruiting young adult carers and ensuring they are well supported whilst studying at college.

One college who took part in the evaluation explained that they have been able to access a variety of resources through their new partnership with their carers service.

> *'We knew about our local carer services a few years back … but it wasn't until we did this project, we realised that actually … we could tap into so many resources via care services, from training to support, to access to our early years' team. I think out of the whole project that's probably been the thing where the strength of our partnership groups have really improved'* (Carers Lead)

Another college has made new links with their local Carers Trust provider, including developing a two-way referral process.

> *'Our local Trust area have departments who are working with students who are carers, so we have established that contact as a local support provider. They can make referrals into us of young people that they're aware of, that they're supporting, that come to the college, and then if there is a carer that's referred to us that doesn't have an external provider, we will work both ways in terms of signposting out to them'* (Carers Lead)

Additionally, one college, who already had a long-standing relationship with their local carers service, has built on this by joining a local network of organisations

working with young adult carers that meets every month to discuss further partnership opportunities. This service supports young people not only with caring responsibilities, but also with their mental health, housing, and sexual health.

> *'We are also much better linked up with our external services. Our Young Adult Carers Lead is now part of a Champions Group, which is basically a group [within the local area] of education providers, primary school, secondary school, colleges. And they all meet together once a month, talk through what they're doing, talk through how we can link up and work together'* (Strategic Carers Lead)

Data collection and monitoring

Some of the participating colleges already had arrangements in place to monitor the attendance, retention, achievement, and progression rates 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 outcomes for young adult carers. One college, for example, has developed a section for young adult carers within their safeguarding data set. This means that they can now regularly update their Board of Governors with specific data on this group of students including numbers of identified young adult carers and the support put in place for each young person.

In addition to improving data collection and monitoring systems, some colleges have also introduced learner surveys and run focus groups with young adult carers to collect feedback on the effectiveness of services and support provided by the college and ideas for improvement. For example, a young adult carer at one college raised concerns about the service not being confidential, so the Carers Lead now ensures confidentiality is highlighted in email communications.

One college explained how they had invited young adult carers to a focus group to inform developments in support as part of their Driving Change plans. This had helped them to better understand the experiences of young adult carers and what is important for them. Information gained from the focus groups fed into the college's staff training package that they developed as part of the project, so that all staff were informed about the experiences of young adult carers.

> *'What's really good about this is, these young carers, they're in their final year with us but … they felt it was important to impart their knowledge and share. They were very open and honest, and it was great to see how they shared their lived experience and really explained the sort of things that they deal with on a daily basis'* (Strategic Carers Lead)

One college has also been developing an app for student carers and had brought a group of their young adult carers together to discuss what they might want from it.

3.2.4 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. The main outcomes from year 2 of the project are outlined below. These reinforce evidence on the impact of the project identified in year 1. Outcomes include:

Enhanced support offer for young adult carers
- Young adult carers are benefitting from stronger and more tailored support at college as a result of the various actions that colleges have taken through their involvement in Driving Change. This includes, for example, the provision of flexible adjustments for young adult carers, one-to-one pastoral support, and ensuring that support is consistently applied across a college.

Increased awareness of the support offer
- Colleges reported increased awareness of the support offer among prospective students, resulting from enhanced marketing and outreach activities both internally and externally. This has helped the colleges to become a more attractive option for future students with caring responsibilities and their parents or carers.

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 resulting from changes to application and enrolment processes, enhanced partnership working 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 and know how to support them.

Increased involvement of young adult carers
- Colleges have endeavoured to involve young adult carers in Driving Change, for example, in shaping or reviewing the support offered, through learner surveys and focus groups. The increased involvement of young adult carers in shaping provision will ensure that support is tailored to meet their specific needs.

New or improved relationships with local carers services
- Improved partnership working with local carers services has led to more effective and joined up support for young adult carers.

Improved networking and resource sharing
- Colleges have continued to share practical resources and engage with the networking opportunities offered through Driving Change. As well as sharing

good practice in developing support for young adult carers this has provided colleges with inspiration on ways to implement their plans.

College wide commitment to young adult carers
- Through the project, all colleges have been successful in gaining organisational commitment to young adult carers helping to ensure that changes to support are sustained and embedded across a whole college

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, but they can also ensure that young adult carers are accessing and benefitting from the support the college has to offer.

Each of the participating colleges reported that the project provided or helped to maintain the impetus needed to review and improve their provision for young adult carers. All colleges who took part in the evaluation said that they would recommend that other colleges take part in Driving Change.

> *'I think it's been a very worthwhile project. I'm definitely glad that we're involved in it and I'm definitely glad that it's raised awareness, and that we can do something more to recognise student carers'* (Carers Lead)

> *'We exist to serve our community … that's our job to do that, and our job is not to put barriers in the way. And I think what this project has done, is really informed our thinking, in a wider sense. And I would say that yes, actually, every college should be working towards this standard'* (Deputy Principle)

All 11 of the year 2 colleges undertaking the final QSCS assessment to date have been successful in achieving the QSCS accreditation. City Of Liverpool College will undertake the final assessment towards the end of September.

4. Key Learning from Year 2

This section sets out the key learning from year 2 of the Driving Change project including successes and challenges; lessons learned and changes to project delivery in year 3.

4.1 Successes

- The Driving Change project has made a successful transition to online delivery for all stages of the project.

- All colleges completing their QSCS final assessment have been awarded the QSCS Standard.

- Recruitment at the start of year 2 was challenging as the focus for many colleges in 2020 was responding to the impact of the pandemic. A second round of recruitment in 2021 and flexibility around project delivery timescales allowed more colleges to engage with the project and benefit from support over the year.

- There has been a high level of engagement of colleges across Northern Ireland. All FE colleges in this part of the UK signed up to Driving Change at the start of year 2. Unfortunately, Belfast Met withdrew when key contacts at the college were diverted to fulfil other roles, but the college has re-engaged for year 3.

- Additional monthly catch-up meetings between Carers Federation and individual colleges have helped to address any challenges encountered by colleges in implementing their action plans as they arise, to maintain the engagement of colleges and keep their plans on track.

- The continued involvement of a young adult carer in the project has been a key success in year 2. This has included further contributions to the webinars and supporting with fieldwork for the project evaluation, for example undertaking L&W training on research and interview skills, and then conducting interviews with participating colleges and young adult carers. Peer-led research offers new insight for the project and at the same time has provided a development opportunity for a young adult carer who has provided consistent and wide-ranging support over the lifetime of Driving Change. We will continue to explore opportunities for young adult carer involvement in project delivery and evaluation activities in year 3. The project has also benefitted from the continued support and active involvement of wider Steering Group members and former project participants including input to the webinars and support with recruitment.

- The high level of engagement with the webinars in year 1 has been maintained in year 2, supporting the sharing of good practice across participating colleges. The bank of practical resources shared by colleges at the webinars, and as part of the QSCS final assessment process, has continued to grow. These are available on the Driving Change project support page, providing inspiration and ideas both for current and former Driving Change colleges

4.2 Challenges

- Project delivery with larger colleges and college groups, often over multiple sites has placed extra demand on project resources.

- As part of their involvement in the Driving Change project colleges are asked to provide key monitoring data to help to assess the impact of support offered by colleges to young adult carers. Despite clear messaging, and earlier and more frequent communications in year 2 about the requirement and reasons for colleges to provide monitoring data, there have been continued challenges in obtaining the data requested.

- Involving a young adult carer as a peer researcher in the evaluation of Driving Change has been a positive development. Unfortunately, a relatively small number of young adult carers at participating colleges took up the invitation to take part in an interview about their experience of support on offer at their college. The Driving Change project team will continue to explore creative ways to engage with young adult carers in participating colleges over the remainder of the project.

- All Year 2 colleges have either achieved the QSCS or are making good progress with their plans leading up to final assessment later this year. However, some colleges were frustrated that they were not able to take forward their plans at the pace they would like or had to adapt improvements to support due to the continued impact of the pandemic, for example, introducing peer support activities online rather than face to face as planned.

4.3 Lessons learned

4.3.1 Learning for colleges

The year 2 evaluation has identified key learning points for colleges who participate in Driving Change going forward. This learning builds on and reinforces key success factors identified by colleges participating in year 1 of the project.

- Many colleges have successfully embraced the shift to remote learning during year 2 of the project to explore and develop new and more creative ways of engaging with their young adult carers, for example apps, podcasts and virtual peer support groups. In many cases this has helped to increase the level of engagement with young adult carers and colleges plan to continue some of these activities alongside the resumption of face-to-face events. An increasing number of colleges over year two of the project have also involved their young adult carers in reviewing and shaping changes in support and reported the benefits of this approach in ensuring that changes introduced meet the needs of student carers at the college.

- Colleges who participated in the evaluation highly valued the support on offer from both L&W and Carers Federation. Those who engaged with the webinars gained valuable insight into the support that other colleges offer and had implemented this learning into their own practice. Colleges particularly enjoyed interacting with other participating colleges at the webinars and learning from the presentations that were delivered by previous participants.

4.3.2 Learning for L&W – project delivery

- Further guidance is needed to support colleges to prepare for and undertake the QSCS final assessment. This could include providing more specific step by step guidance within the existing QSCS Final Assessment Guidelines for Colleges document developed by Carers Federation or inviting a previous Driving Change

participant to the Preparing for the QSCS Final Assessment webinar to share their experience and top tips on the assessment. Some colleges also struggled with technology, especially in sharing evidence for the final assessment. In year 3, the project team will consider the potential to deliver some assessment meetings face-to-face, subject to travel and other Covid restrictions, and explore the use of alternative technology.

- Colleges accessing the bank of resources on the project support page have found these useful but sometimes difficult to navigate due to the variety and volume of resources available. The resources have now been restructured in line with the key areas of the QSCS framework and we will review and improve the layout of the entire project page to make it easier to use.

4.4   Changes to delivery model/activities in year 3

- To support more consistent use of resources across participating colleges we will more actively promote the project support page and highlight specific resources offered. Colleges will be encouraged to access resources at the initial assessment and monthly catch-up meetings, during the webinars and through the Driving Change newsletter and additional email briefings for colleges.

- Colleges would welcome more opportunities to hear and learn from other colleges' approaches to improving support for their young adult carers. We will ensure that project activities such as the webinars maximise opportunities for colleges to exchange ideas and share good practice and explore widening access to the webinars to include former as well as current participating colleges. We will also introduce more structured opportunities for colleges to make and maintain connections both within and beyond completion of the project in summer 2022.

4.5 Sustainability

- The Driving Change model 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. Securing high level buy in from college senior leadership teams and governors to the Driving Change project helps to ensure sustained commitment to improving support for young adult carers at a strategic level.

- Year 3 project delivery includes a pilot to test the implementation of the Driving Change model with three universities in Leicestershire. This will provide key learning to support effective transition from FE to HE, to improve the support

offered to young adult carers in HE and to enable young adult carers to achieve positive longer-term learning, career and life outcomes.

- Networking opportunities delivered through the Driving Change project and facilitation of future regional and or local college networks beyond the life of the project supports continued learning/sharing of good practice and ongoing improvements in support for young adult carers in participating colleges.

- Ongoing updates to resources on the project support page and access to the page for all colleges participating in Driving Change over the 3 years of the project supports colleges to continuously improve their support for young adult carers. Following the end of the project in August 2022, this page will be made accessible and promoted to all FE colleges.

5. Case Studies

North West Regional College

North West Regional College (NWRC) in Northern Ireland has approximately 10,000 full-time students across five main campuses in the counties of Londonderry and Tyrone. The college offers a range of vocational and non-vocational courses including Higher Education, Further Education, Apprenticeships and Traineeships, and Adult Learning.

At the start of the project, there were no young adult carers identified within NWRC and there was limited support in place specifically for this group of students. Through the Driving Change project, the college was hoping to significantly improve all aspects of support for young adult carers across the *Quality Standard in Carer Support* (QSCS) framework. They also wanted to be able to raise awareness of the support available at the college to encourage more young adult carers to come forward.

> *'So, I think it's wee things maybe that would have such a big impact in supporting them … [and the initial stages of the project have] been a really good eye opener for us as well too. Just seeing how much support can be available that maybe hadn't been there before. It might have been there but it wasn't nearly as advertised so maybe students wouldn't have known about it so they wouldn't have come forward whereas if it's out there, then now they can. Hopefully, that's our plan anyway'* (Operational Carers Lead)

Support for young adult carers

The Driving Change project has helped NWRC to implement changes across all the key actions identified in their Driving Change action plan.

Policy and strategic commitment

The college developed a new, standalone young adult carers policy, including information on the barriers faced by this group of students, and the relevant support processes that have been put in place through the project. The policy also included copies of various resources that could be used by staff and students, for example, a Carers Card and a young adult carers poster that explains the signs of being a carer and highlights the support on offer.

Having a new policy in place meant that the specific needs of young adult carers were officially recognised within the college, which was particularly important after having gained buy-in from the college's senior management team and board of governors. Developing a college-wide commitment to improving the support specifically for this group of students helped NWRC to kick start and sustain the process of supporting young adult carers.

> '… Before we knew about the project, within the college, young adult carers weren't a group that we had supported before … So, I think … the most important part was sharing with staff that that's what we were going to do … So, they were fully supportive and with the board of governors, which I think it was key as long as we had the management involved and they were supportive of us working towards this. We knew then it was something that we could do, and getting our young carers policy in place I think was once of the key tasks because then it meant that it was something formal within the college and that young adult carers were aware of it' (Operational Carers Lead)

Enrolment and induction

Before the project, the college did not have systems in place to identify young adult carers through their recruitment process. Through Driving Change, the college has updated their application form to include a question about caring for someone with a disability, caring for a child, or a dependant adult.

The Management Information Systems (MIS) team then compile a list of all students who tick these boxes. An account is created for each person so that they can be sent relevant information about the support available, and a link to a young adult carers video, with their acceptance letter. This video, developed as part of the college's Driving Change action plan, is on the college's website and includes a broad definition of who young adult carers are, clear information about the college's support process, and details of the Carers Lead. The video is particularly useful for prospective students who may not recognise that they are a young adult carer.

> '[The video] gives a wee bit of information about who young adult carers are for any people who maybe are doing it and didn't realise that that was their job or their role or responsibility. So, just to raise awareness for them to think,

> *'Maybe I do that too and I could get involved in this''* (Operational Carers Lead)

As part of the new application process, an automatic email is also sent to the Carers Lead informing them of any applicants who have identified as a young adult carer pre-entry. The Carers Lead then contacts the young person to introduce themselves and discuss the support available.

Staff training and awareness raising

At the start of the project, there was limited understanding amongst staff about the needs and experiences of young adult carers, and the challenges that they might encounter at college. Therefore, as part of raising awareness for staff, NWRC developed a training package from a Carers Federation resource, which has been delivered to all Student Services staff and received positive feedback.

All new staff will also complete the training as part of their induction and within this, they are referred to a link to the young adult carer policy. This means that new staff will be aware that part of their job role is to support young adult carers. The college plan to deliver the training every two years as a 'refresh' for staff.

Ongoing support

A key change in support implemented through the project has been the introduction of a detailed and comprehensive support plan for young adult carers. The plan is unique to each student and their circumstances, and is shared with the curriculum team alongside a direct email to the student's personal tutor. Through the support plan, the college can ensure that they are tailoring their support to individual circumstances and that each student receives the relevant flexible adjustments and financial support that they require.

> *'[The support plan] meant then that they [young adult carers] had a bit more flexibility so they could contact us and say 'I'm under pressure this week, could you request that I get extra time with an assignment' or 'Could you contact my lecturer' for whatever reason, or if … they couldn't attend class one day for whatever reason that they would still get their EMA [Education Maintenance Allowance] or they would still get an authorised absence because [they have] a legitimate reason [rather than] just not attending, so it would support them too financially'* (Operational Carers Lead)

Through Driving Change, the college has also created 'Feel Good Care Packages' for young adult carers and provided take-away vouchers and coffee vouchers, to offer opportunities for young adult carers to have a break away from caring and studying. NWRC has also introduced a coffee morning for young adult carers, which was held virtually by the Carers Lead during the Coronavirus pandemic. This has allowed young adult carers to make connections and develop their own peer support networks, as well as links to the local carers service, who were also invited along.

'To start with, after we had met with them, we sent each of them a Just Eat voucher just as a 'have a night off just to order a takeaway'. I think from then they were so appreciative and just wee things like that can make a difference. I think getting them involved in the coffee morning relaxed things and they got to know who each other were too so they got more comfortable' (Operational Carers Lead)

There were two students in particular who had enjoyed the coffee morning and kept in touch with each other afterwards.

'The two students who were able to relate to each other so much … and they were planning to keep in touch so that they could just talk, and they could just offload about how they were feeling, whereas beforehand, they felt no one really understood' (Operational Carers Lead)

In addition, the college's 'Canvas' intranet now includes a peer support group for young adult carers, which is in the form of a discussion board where students can speak to each other at any time. This has also been used as a way of sharing information with young adult carers.

'It just means that they can go online and chat to each other and they can talk about whatever they want, and talk about their own experiences … and it's been a good way for us, being able to promote different things that are coming up. We were able to share their information we received from Barnardo's and Action for Children, just so that they were aware that if they didn't see social media and things' (Operational Carers Lead)

A post-enrolment survey for all students has also been adapted through the Driving Change project, as a way of highlighting to young adult carers the support that's available.

'So, we set up the Talk Don't Walk, so after they've started their course in September, they complete a survey 6 weeks in. At that point it asks, 'are you aware of the support available for young adult carers' and anyone who says no, then they're provided with the support' (Operational Carers Lead)

Partnership working

Prior to NWRC's involvement in Driving Change, they had no links with local carers services or other local partners working with young adult carers. However, through the project, the college has developed a new working relationship with local carers services, resulting in a new two-way referral process, information-sharing, and providing supported transition for young adult carers starting at the college. Carers services have also been involved in the coffee morning and will be participating in

future extracurricular activities. Their resources are available to students and their services are referenced on the college's 'Guide for Young Adult Carers'.

Involving young adult carers in improving support

The new coffee morning for young adult carers has provided a platform for them to voice their opinions and give feedback on the college's ideas for support, which has been used to inform the young adult carers policy, plans for flexible adjustments, and the development of a Carers Card. A young adult carers survey, alongside conversations in one-to-one meetings with staff, provide additional opportunities for young adult carers to share their views and feed into improvements to support.

> *'We have the Young Adult Carers survey … the last question is 'is there anything that we could do better and anything that would benefit you' as well too so they can give their opinions at that stage too'* (Operational Carers Lead)

Challenges

In common with other participating colleges, the restrictions arising from the pandemic have been a key challenge for NWRC in taking their plans for improvement forward. The move to remote learning has sometimes made it difficult to fully engage young adult carers in certain aspects of the project, such as the virtual peer support group.

> *'We had planned on … inviting them in, making them a cup of tea … and getting to know each other. So, because we're unable to do that, we find it a wee bit more challenging because it was always on Teams. And I know a lot of students, accessing Teams just for their class was difficult enough. They didn't really want to do anything extra than what they already had to do'* (Operational Carers Lead)

Outcomes

Through their involvement in Driving Change, NWRC have achieved their original goal of confidently being able to identify and provide effective support for young adult carers. This was a key change in provision at NWRC, considering that before the project, the college did not know who the young adult carers were in their student population.

> *'I think the main benefit was for us being able to identify the young adult carers and for them to realise that they are a group that deserves to be supported and for us to be able to do that for them'* (Operational Carers Lead)

Key success factors

- A key element of NWRC's plans for improvement was ensuring that the support for young adult carers is ongoing and accessible throughout their whole college journey.

'I think that as much as they know that we're there, not just having the initial meeting and setting things up, continuing to support them throughout the years is really important. Different times of the year can be more challenging for different people, so just always knowing that we're there no matter what time of the year it is' (Operational Carers Lead)

- Focusing on making a difference to the lives of young adult carers, and having this at the forefront of their minds, was also key to successfully embedding support across the college.

'Our thought from the beginning wasn't about what's going to be involved or what work it's going to take. It was, 'how this is going to impact our students'. Thinking that, beforehand, there wasn't support set up in place for young adult carers and now, there is so much support. So, it's making a difference to children's lives and that's what our jobs are and that's what we're here to do' (Operational Carers Lead)

Cambridge Regional College

Cambridge Regional College (CRC) is the largest further education college in the East of England, supporting approximately 9,000 students every year. The college has two main sites in Cambridge and Huntingdon and offers a range of courses, including vocational learning in areas such as engineering and hospitality.

Before their participation in Driving Change, the college felt that they generally offered a good level of support for young adult carers. However, this was part of a 'generalised' support package for all vulnerable learners, and so the college recognised that support could be more consistent and tailored towards the specific needs of young adult carers. Although, at the start of the project, CRC felt that they had a good idea about who the young adult carers were in their student population, they were keen to ensure that effective support was in place for these students once they had been identified.

'… Making the support a bit more individualised for young carers. At this point in time, yes, we can offer support the same way we offer all our young people and our students, but, actually, what we're trying to do is reach them earlier … What we're going to be doing, going forward is, in August, before they enrol with us, we're going to contact with them, complete a support plan with them, offer them out what they need, and link that up with their tutor so their tutor is aware of what support they might need' (Strategic Carers Lead)

Support for young adult carers

Since the project began, Cambridge Regional College has made significant progress in developing support across many different areas of the *Quality Standard in Carer Support* (QSCS) framework.

Policy and strategic commitment

Prior to Driving Change, the college already had a policy in place for young adult carers, however, this was limited in scope. The college developed the policy to ensure that it explained issues relating to young adult carers in greater depth, such as identification and support processes, and monitoring systems. The policy has also been made accessible and promoted via the college website.

Information on how to contact the Carers Lead has also been added to the existing section on young adult carers in the college's wider safeguarding policy. All new and existing staff are required to confirm they have read the safeguarding policy and HR will track and monitor staff completion. This is so that the college can have confidence that young adult carers are being kept safe and supported whilst at college.

Enrolment and induction

At the start of the project, the college was able to identify some young adult carers through transition processes established with schools and the local carers services. The college's application form also had a question to identify young adult carers, which was already in place before the project. Therefore, the main focus for CRC was to ensure that support was put in place early, once it had been identified that a student had caring responsibilities.

Since taking part in the project, the Carers Lead now checks the college's database for any young adult carers who have been identified through enrolment and makes direct contact with them to invite them to an initial meeting. In previous years, all new young adult carers received a generic welcome email, but for the start of the 2021/22 academic year, an earlier and more personal contact is planned to introduce young adult carers to the Carers Lead and help to facilitate early assessment and support planning.

Staff training and awareness raising

Before the project, the college recognised that there was a gap in their training package for staff, and a need to raise awareness of the challenges faced by young adult carers. Through Driving Change, the college introduced a pre-recorded 15-minute audio presentation which covers the signs and impact of caring, as well as college support. All new staff members will listen to the presentation as part of their training, and it will also be delivered as part of every Staff Development Day. This has helped to raise awareness among staff, which has been particularly beneficial for the enrolment team, who need to understand the signs of being a carer amongst prospective students.

> 'We've put together a young adult carers training, which is just a 15-minute webinar where we talk through what tutors can expect to see, what a young adult carer looks like, what it means for them, how it impacts their education,

*and things like that. We put that out as a compulsory teacher training that they
had to do on the last teacher training day'* (Strategic Carers Lead)

Ongoing support

A key change in support implemented through the project is the introduction of a
'Time Out' card for young adult carers. This allows student carers to identify
themselves easily and discretely to teaching staff and includes internal and external
support contact details. A young adult carer at the college explained that they
particularly appreciate the flexibility that this card provides.

> *'… Say if I have to answer the phone in lesson and have to leave suddenly it's
> helpful so I don't have to interrupt lessons I can just put it on my desk'* (Young
> adult carer)

The college also works with individual young adult carers to develop a detailed and
comprehensive Carers Support Plan. Before the project, support plans were
sometimes completed for young adult carers, but this was done as part of a more
generic support package for all vulnerable learners. The new support plan, created
around the specific needs of young adult carers, identifies required flexible
adjustments for the student, such as access to a phone, deadline extensions, flexible
start/finish times, and financial support. This can also be shared with tutors if the
student chooses to do so, which can help to reduce anxiety for young people who
may not want to speak directly to their tutors about their caring responsibilities.

The introduction of the new Carers Lead role, implemented through Driving Change,
has also led to more regular, one-to-one support for young adult carers throughout
their time at college. This allows students to build up a relationship with a specific
staff member and means that young adult carers are consistently receiving targeted
support. The Carers Lead has also created a 'tracking spreadsheet' to monitor the
level and type of support accessed by each young adult carer, and to identify what
else could be offered to support each individual student.

Partnership working

Through their involvement in Driving Change, Cambridge Regional College has
strengthened their relationships with external partners. For example, the college
already had a long-standing relationship with their local young peoples' service that
supports young adult carers with wider needs such as mental health, housing, and
sexual health. However, since taking part in the project, they have now built on this
relationship by joining a local network of organisations working with young adult
carers that meets every month to discuss further partnership opportunities. This has
also led to the college accessing useful resources shared by partner organisations,
such as 'assessment tools' that have helped in the identification of other young adult
carers.

'We are also much better linked up with our external services. Centre 33 is our accredited service in the county, and we were always quite close with them anyway because they deliver counselling, housing advice, and things like that. But from a young adult carers point of view … our Young Adult Carers Lead is now part of a Champions Group, which is basically a group … of education providers … and they all meet together once a month, talk through what they're doing, talk through how we can link up and work together' (Strategic Carers Lead)

Involving young adult carers in improving support

The college is committed to ensuring that the voices of young adult carers are heard in shaping and reviewing support. As part of Driving Change, they have established a young adult carers forum to provide information and updates on the support that's on offer, and to be a place for student carers to voice their concerns, put forward their ideas for additional support, offer feedback on potential changes to support, and meet other young adult carers. The college has already implemented ideas that have been generated by the forum, and they are also planning to further involve young adult carers in developing support moving forwards.

'We've really enjoyed the forums, actually … And we've got lots of ideas of how we can pull some little projects together with a bit of participation work. So, for example, they're the reason we got the cards. We weren't actually thinking about the cards … but we actually got requested that by one of the young adult carers in the forum … They've also recommended … that we put some ... videos together of independent living skills. Not just [aimed at] young adult carers, but that will help them specifically. So that's another really great thing they've put in there' (Strategic Carers Lead)

As part of their involvement in Driving Change, the college has also created a young adult carer Student Ambassador post. The Ambassador has been elected to the Students Union and will provide an active voice for young adult carers among current and prospective students, for example, by participating in Q&A sessions for young adult carers who are considering college. The Student Ambassador post has helped to improve the visibility of young adult carers at the college, encouraging other students to declare caring responsibilities. For example, example, another student representative in the Union has self-identified as a carer since the ambassador post was introduced.

Challenges

The main challenges for Cambridge Regional College in taking their Driving Change plans forward related to the Coronavirus pandemic and the associated restrictions. The move to remote learning has made it difficult for the college to fully engage young adult carers in certain aspects of the project, such as the young adult carer forums.

'It's so much harder to engage people when there's no face-to-face option … We really missed out on that opportunity. And that was quite frustrating because I think we would have gotten a better uptake on our forum had we have had the option of face-to-face. So, we're really hoping to see that change this year' (Strategic Carers Lead)

Outcomes

For Cambridge Regional College, the main positive outcomes of their involvement in Driving Change have been tailoring their support to young adult carers and enhancing the opportunities for these students to access regular, one-to-one support. This means that young adult carers can build up relationships with staff, and in turn, staff are able to identify any issues or concerns as early as possible.

'So, in terms of the young adult carers, the positives are, is that it's really clear to them now that they don't have to suffer in silence, they don't have to go through it alone. They've actually got someone [the Carers Lead] who's really, really understanding, really gets it and is happy to help dispose stuff set up for them' (Strategic Carers Lead)

This impact of the support offered was echoed by a young adult carer at the college:

'[The support has] been really helpful just to kind of make me feel like I'm not alone in navigating everything, every step of the way they've been able to offer support and check in' (Young adult carer)

Key success factors

- The key factor in improving support for young adult carers at CRC has been in ensuring that individual and early support is offered once a learner has been identified as having caring responsibilities. Early support was seen as particularly important for the next cohort of students who may be more anxious about starting college after extended periods of online learning throughout the pandemic:

  'I think, especially this year I'm quite worried about the next cohort that are … coming up to us who have gone through 2 school years of COVID … I think they're going to be very nervous. I think they're going to have missed a lot of socialisation … So, if we can avoid people not coming to college [because they might be too nervous] … by meeting them early and getting those plans in place, I think that's going to be a massive difference in their education' (Strategic Carers Lead)

- Making full use of the support on offer through Driving Change has also provided the college with many useful resources and templates to use in developing their support, and has helped them to improve all aspects of their provision for young adult carers.

'We had access to the webinars, and ... the online services section [project support page], which was really helpful because we put together a couple of support plans and a …'Young Adult Carers' card … We pretty much found those from the templates that were already on the resources page, which really helped us and gave us a little bit of an idea, and it really helped with doing our Young Adult Carers Policy, to get a bit of information from what other people had done, and taking that and adjusting that to our service as well' (Strategic Carers Lead)

Appendices

Appendix 1

Participation of UK Colleges in Driving Change, years 1-2 and target numbers for recruitment in year 3

Year 1	Country
Runshaw College	England - NW
Bradford College	England - Y&H
Wakefield College	England - Y&H
Leicester College	England - EM
Joseph Chamberlain Sixth Form College	England - WM
Solihull Sixth Form College	England - WM
Sunderland College	England - NE
South Devon College	England - SW
Coleg Penybont/Bridgend College	Wales
Coleg Cambria	Wales
Coleg Sir Benfro /Pembrokeshire College	Wales
Grŵp Colegau/NPTC Group of Colleges	Wales
St David's Catholic College	Wales
Coleg Caerdydd a'r Fro/Cardiff & Vale College	Wales

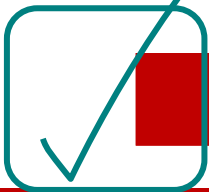|	
Coleg Y Cymoedd	Wales
Gower College Swansea	Wales
Coleg Gwent	Wales
Year 2 – joined at start of project year	
North West Regional College	N.Ireland
Southern Regional College	N.Ireland
Northern Regional College	N.Ireland
South Eastern Regional College	N.Ireland
South West Regional College	N.Ireland
West Lothian College	Scotland
West College Scotland	Scotland
Cambridge Regional College	England - E
City of Liverpool College	England - NW
Waltham Forest College	England - GL
Isle of Wight College	England - SE
Heart of Worcestershire College	England - WM
Year 2 – joined later in project year	
The Manchester College	England - NW
Tyne Coast College	England - NE
Bournemouth & Poole College	England - SW
Derby College Group	England - EM
Shrewsbury Colleges Group	England - WM
Year 3 – target numbers to recruit	
10 – 12 colleges	Across UK
3 Leicestershire universities (equates to approx 6 FE colleges)	HE pilot

Quality Standard in Carer Support Framework

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

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 'Action 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

QSCS Pack Contents

Process Chart

'Quality Standard in Carer Support' required criteria

Guidance Notes

Action Plan

Pre-assessment checklist

Carers Lead Role Description

Pattern of Care form

Sample Documents e.g. Carers Policy

Training Request Form

QSCS
Quality Standard
Carer Support

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 Action Plan

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

Working Towards status awarded

Action 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

– 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."

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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 Action 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 Action 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 Action 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.