

CEIAG Case Study: DURHAM SIXTH FORM CENTRE

The School

Durham Sixth Form Centre is the largest post-16 school in the North East of England (and 1 of 6 nationally) with over 1,000 students on roll.

The Centre was opened in 1913 and was a former Girls' Grammar School which was converted to Sixth Form accommodation in 1983. In addition to the original building, there is now a Science Block; a 210 seated Theatre; the Hunter Resource Centre; Visual Arts Centre and Freemans Quay Leisure Centre, which opened in September 2008. A new leased site was also opened in 2008, Riverdale, which is a short walk from the main building.

Students enrol at Durham Sixth Form Centre from over 40 different secondary schools from across County Durham, Sunderland and Northumberland.

Durham Sixth Form Centre's percentage pass rates are well above the National Average and students make good progress. In August 2014, the Centre celebrated a 100% pass rate (one or more A-levels or equivalent); 99% pass rate (two or more A-levels or equivalent); 93% pass rate (three or more A-levels or equivalent).

The Centre operates according to values which they feel help to determine the culture, ethos and atmosphere. The values are:

- high quality, inspirational teaching and learning;
- excellent support, care and guidance;
- personal and professional integrity;
- ambition and progress for our students, our communities and ourselves.

Career Education, Information, Advice and Guidance (CEIAG)

The Centre has an excellent Careers team which was evident throughout the Investor in Careers (IiC) CEIAG Quality award recent re-assessment (see Quality below). Durham Sixth Form Centre's Careers Information, Advice and Guidance team supports the students into higher education, employment preparation or chosen future pathways.

The Centre employs two fully qualified careers advisers (Level 6 Diploma in Careers Guidance and Development) who have distinct roles in providing IAG for those students wishing to progress to HE, and IAG to those students who wish to progress to employment or training as post 18 option. CPD for all Careers staff is identified through their appraisal system and they are all members of the CDI (Career Development Institute).

An external professional guidance provider is used from A-level results day through to the end of August to deal with the UCAS clearing and adjustment process. In addition the Centre has access to a trained cohort of sixth form staff, an Improving Progression CEIAG adviser from the local authority, the Youth Progression Team and advisers from Teesside University.

Prior to entry to Durham Sixth Form Centre, students have an initial assessment based on their individual ideas for the future and once enrolled they follow one of two programmes geared towards Higher Education or employment and training. However there is flexibility for students to change programmes. Both programmes have been audited against the 'Durham County Best Practice Criteria'.

The CEIAG programme is differentiated to meet student needs and increase aspirations. Students who are considering (for example) a career as a Doctor, Dentist, Vet, Social Worker or work within the NHS follow an excellent 'So you Want to Be ...' programme which equips them well for their HE application. Students with special educational needs are targeted for additional support, a range of which is on offer including physical support for disabled students attending university visits, and confidence building for students with mental health issues.

Students not considering HE or considering a Gap Year follow a taught programme which identifies their strengths, skills and academic abilities in conjunction with developing their employability skills.

The Centre has completed an audit of careers work within each subject area and there is strong dialogue between the Careers Department and subject staff. Students have access to good resources with software programmes accessible through the website and a good coverage of posters around the centre. They can have as many careers interviews as they require and are issued with an action plan outlining their next steps. Students can self-refer or may be targeted through pastoral leads. This was an action from the Centre's previous Investor in Careers assessment '*to increase the 1 to 1 opportunities available to students*' and (according to the 2015 reassessment) it has been met to a '*very high standard*'.

Evaluation & Students' Views

Evaluation is a strong point for the Centre, which has carried out numerous evaluations of the careers programme including staff, parent and student surveys plus the Local Authority 'DASH' survey. Survey Monkey is used to evaluate events and providers/exhibitors also provide feedback.

The Careers Education programme is audited using the County Durham schools and colleges Best Practice framework and the careers department self-evaluates the programme against the School Development Plan on a regular basis. One recent action taken as a result of evaluation has been the improvement in the tutorial time programme. 'You Said – We Did' is also used and information sheets are produced to demonstrate what students are saying. Following student requests more subject specific careers talks are planned for the future.

The Centre's Careers programme is really appreciated by the students, who were all confident and enthusiastic about their futures. The students believe that they receive an excellent service '*which has opened our minds and really made us think about the future*'. The majority of students continue their studies into university, whilst some take up employment or apprenticeships, and others stay into Year 14 where they offer some Level 4 courses.

ENGAGING EMPLOYERS?

Strong links have been developed and maintained with employers, HE establishments, the voluntary sector and training providers. Excellent and innovative practice was demonstrated and particularly re the work with Durham Cathedral, James Cook Hospital and Durham Constabulary. Students are given the opportunity to gain experience with the employers and the students believe it considerably strengthens their UCAS applications.

CEIAG Quality

Durham Sixth Form Centre first achieved the Investor in Careers CEIAG Quality Award in June 2011. The Centre successfully achieved reassessment in April 2015.

The liC Assessor identified (in the 2015 re-assessment) that the Centre may wish to look at evaluating the impact of employers who deliver sessions/presentation for quality assurance purposes. He commented –

“This was an excellent submission for liC reassessment. Durham Sixth Form Centre could be used as a template for effective CEIAG in a FE setting. I witnessed many examples of excellent and innovative practice. The infectious enthusiasm and commitment of the staff was very apparent throughout the assessment.”

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