

Capel Manor College

About the college

Capel Manor is a land-based Further Education college with around 3000 students, just over 800 of which are 16-18 year olds. The main site is in Enfield, North London, with additional sites in Crystal Palace, however students attend the college from boroughs across the Greater London area. The College specialises in courses including animal management, horticulture and landscaping, garden design, arboriculture and countryside, floristry and balloon artistry and saddlery and leatherwork.

At the start of the project, only two young adult carers, among the student population, had been identified. The college did not have systems in place to identify, record or monitor information about young adult carers, and no designated staff specifically to support them. The college did not have a policy on young adult carers and staff awareness was considered to be low. Recognising that they were starting from 'ground zero', Capel Manor embraced the Targeted Support for Colleges project to learn from what other colleges were doing, and above all, to identify what they needed to do on their 'journey' to improve support for young adult carers.

Capel Manor used a task-force approach, involving staff in different roles and at different levels, to drive their plans forward. This included staff involved in the development of college systems, registration, student services, the senior leadership team and governors. The Vice-Principal has been actively involved in ensuring the project has a profile and buy-in from senior management. At operational level, the Lead Mentor has played a central role in developing policies and linking together the different aspects of the project.

Being able to identify young adult carers and making links to support agencies, close to where identified young adult carers live in the Greater London area, were key aims in the college's plans for improvement. Overall, the aim was;

"...to empower [young adult carers] to be able to know that they can come into college and it's somewhere for them and that they have the support to be able to... enjoy doing their work and come out with a qualification, without having all that extra stress and worry, and not feeling like they're on their own." Vice-Principal

Provision for young adult carers

The college has made swift progress across many different aspects of support. To move quickly, the college developed a discrete young adult carers policy, using ideas from other colleges, soon after the project started. Longer term, the plan is to embed this within broader Equality and Diversity and Safeguarding strategies.

The Lead Mentor has been identified as the designated lead and is the go-to person for any learner who discloses a caring responsibility or who is identified as a young adult carer.

The college has worked hard to raise awareness about young adult carers among all staff, working with a local young adult carers' service, Enfield young People in Caring (EyPIC), to deliver awareness training to heads of school in different curriculum areas and to staff across all centres at the college's careers development day. 'Young adult carers' has been added as an agenda item at student meeting groups and the Lead Mentor attends to provide

updates on progress. EyPIC have also offered to work with Capel Manor to run a peer support group for young adult carers at lunchtimes. If successful, this will be rolled out to other centres at the college.

One of the first actions the college took was to add a tick box on the enrolment form to help to identify new students with caring responsibilities. If the box is ticked, students are automatically sent for an additional needs interview, so that support (financial and wider) can be agreed and put in place if required. Staff who might be dealing with students at the enquiry stage are trained to recognise things that a young person might say, that may identify them as a young adult carer.

If a student with caring responsibilities is not identified at the start of their time in college, there are other opportunities for them to disclose their caring role or for it to emerge through conversations with different staff. Prompts to encourage disclosure which have been introduced include posters in all centres; information on the student portal, including details of carers services; and the carers commitment form.

One of the main areas of improvement since the project began is the provision of financial support for young adult carers. The college developed a form for young adult carers to complete. One of the aims of the form is to help to build a picture of the extent of the young person's caring commitments. This has resulted in the prioritisation of young adult carers for the discretionary strand of the 16-19 Bursary.

In addition, young adult carers have been added as a separate category to achievement gap data. Although this is currently a small sample size, the college is monitoring the attendance and retention of young adult carers, compared to other groups of students, at the mid-year point, to identify whether any interventions are required and the most effective way of putting additional support in place.

Challenges

The main challenge has been locating and developing links with carers services outside of Enfield; the college believes that ideally, support for young adult carers needs to be close to where they live rather than close to where they study. Approaches have been made to invite carers services from other boroughs, including in Hounslow, Brentford and Islington, to come into college to run events for young adult carers similar to those run by EPIC. However, carers services in these areas are not always funded to deliver to colleges outside of the borough.

Outcomes

Feedback from young adult carers on the new commitment form suggests that the support put in place through the project is making a real difference to students;

"...one of the biggest things they all say is, 'you're listening and you understand and I don't need to keep telling my story.'"

The project has provided the college with the opportunity and tools to look in detail at every aspect of a young adult carer's learner journey. The college is confident that the needs of young adult carers are now embedded into the development of every policy. The new weather management policy for example, cites special consideration for vulnerable groups of students, including young adult carers, to allow them to leave early to make sure they can

get home safely to the people they care for. This is important in reassuring young adult carers that the college understands their responsibilities and the vital role they play in caring for family members.

The success of the project has resulted in increased numbers of young adult carers being known to the college (it has increase from two to twenty). Whilst Capel Manor recognises this as a 'good problem to have', longer-term the college is exploring ways to ensure that they can continue to resource and sustain support for young adult carers. The college aims to ensure that it is seen as a welcoming and supportive environment where young adult carers can achieve and progress; that all young adult carers are identified; and that comprehensive and tailored support is available to meet young adult carers' needs.

Success factors

- Having a 'task-force' in different roles and with different responsibilities, rather than a single identified lead, provided commitment at all levels of the college and helped to drive the project forward.
- Developing a discrete young adult carer policy during the initial stage enabled the college to implement key actions quickly.
- Monitoring and reporting the numbers of young adult carers at the college and collecting specific achievement gap data provides a focus that triggers intervention, if required.