

Stepping Up and Stepping Forward

Learning Insight 5

The system is working more collaboratively;
creating innovative and purposeful networks
supports learners



What do we know?

The aim of the [Children's Services Co-operation Act \(Northern Ireland\) 2015](#) is to promote co-operation between certain public authorities and others as they deliver services aimed at improving the wellbeing of children and young people. During the pandemic many organisations set aside individual and sectoral interests in order to work collectively for the common good. Multi-agency approaches demonstrated that we can deliver curriculum and support programmes of wraparound individual and social care in a more holistic and effective way. For example, evidence from some of the European Social Fund projects indicates that providers work closely with employers to create opportunities for learners with complex and multiple additional needs to enter the workplace. Many learners benefit from accessing mentoring services and support such as coaching for interviews. These collaborative and connected ways of working meet the individual needs of these young people effectively and support them more holistically.

What have we learned?

Educators worked vigorously to provide continuity of learning remotely, while supporting learners and their families emotionally, pastorally and practically. In discussions with inspectors, schools reported significant levels of collaboration including peer support and with other schools. For example, communities of learning emerged within and between schools, colleges and other organisations: benefitting learners, parents and the local community being served.

Many of these networks and support partnerships helped learners with all of the pertinent issues affecting their ability to learn. In January to March 2021, for example, over 10% of young people aged 16-24 were not in education, employment or training (NEET). To support these young people, existing multi-agency work was intensified to help meet their needs. This support included: assistance with accommodation needs, universal credit applications, preventing substance addiction, counselling, and family support.

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DE's Continuity of Learning programme enabled support services, employing authorities and the ETI to work together effectively in the interests of learners. The Education Authority, Comhairle Na Gaelscolaíochta, the Controlled Schools' Support Council, the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools and the Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education, along with ETI, showed willingness and enthusiasm in taking on additional roles, such as the cross-organisational link officer role, which was valued highly by schools. Consultation with schools enabled ETI and others to learn more about the challenges organisations faced which, in turn, helped inform policy and enabled the dissemination of effective practice.

Many useful [resources](#), training opportunities and tailored advice were offered to help schools, FE colleges and work-based learning providers overcome the extraordinary challenges facing education and training at that time. Learners benefitted from the collaboration of their teachers and tutors which resulted in the increased use of remote learning platforms. Consequently, the use of shared teaching approaches and resources supported learners both pastorally and academically, particularly during the periods of lockdown.

The Continuity of Learning programme, together with the significant amount of collaboration within and between schools and other learning organisations indicated that working well together brings significant benefits for learners and educators alike.

What will help us move forward constructively?

A key challenge for government departments, education and training organisations and others is how to collectively strengthen the processes for working well together. Nurturing trust, being willing to cooperate and realising the benefits created for learners are necessary principles for effective collaboration.

Learners have benefitted from collaborative approaches and it is important that this continues and grows. Many gains emerged from the organic collaborations between organisations that were necessitated by the challenges of Covid-19. Leaders and teachers managed to find many solutions locally to address particular needs and they shared these with one another, building good levels of trust and co-operation. It is important that we continue to work collaboratively in the best interests of all learners, retaining and building upon the many new and revised practices that have emerged since the onset of the pandemic.

Featured resources

Content audit

[Audit this published content](#)

We publish regularly a range of resources, including evaluative reports identifying good and innovative practice, to help support organisations in addressing successfully the challenges within education.

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- Further Education, Work-based Learning, European Social Fund - A guide for effective action planning
 - ETI consultation on the delivery of remote learning
 - Considerations for planning and self-evaluation in the academic year 2020-21
 - Remote and blended learning: curricular challenges and approaches
 - Education and Training Inspectorate Webinars - Video-on-Demand for teacher professional learning
 - The Inspection and Self-Evaluation Framework (ISEF)
 - ETI Remote Learning Advice (Pre-school and Primary)
 - Continuity of Learning: Guidance for Primary School Leaders and Practitioners Moving to Blended Learning in the Primary School
 - Safeguarding - Remote and blended learning: challenges and approaches
 - Safeguarding



Providing Inspection services for:
Department of Education
Department for the Economy
and other commissioning Departments



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Going forward, the ETI will continue to act as an impartial voice in education and training, speaking for learners through our evaluation of provision, stimulating educational debate and building capacity through inspection activity, including district engagement and undertaking thematic evaluations, and regional initiatives, such as, the 'Empowering Improvement – Stepping Forward Together' Project.