

## Looked After Children

# SDS Coaching - Preparation for Positive Destinations! North Lanarkshire Council

### Contact for Enquiries

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Working in partnership with Skills Development Scotland (SDS), North Lanarkshire Council started a pilot project to help young people in children's houses progress to positive destinations.

## Background

North Lanarkshire were aware that some young people in children's houses were not in positive destinations, sometimes due to, for example, an identified work or learning placement falling through. The young people needed additional support to help overcome barriers and setbacks.

Working with SDS, the Council started a pilot project in one children's house in August 2014 and then was rolled out and offered to the other houses in October 2014. This involved an SDS work coach working alongside residential workers to develop a relationship with the young people as well as develop their skills.

## Key Activities

The two young people involved in the pilot were not in further education or employment and were not engaging with SDS or other. By delivering an outreach service in familiar surroundings and having access to residential staff for information, a more comprehensive service could be delivered to the young people.

This 'joined up' approach was a huge factor in the pilot's success. The work coach and the young person discussed what activity they would do next and the residential staff could reinforce and support them in that activity until the next SDS engagement. The contact between the work coach and the residential staff was helpful, and continued even when the young people did eventually enter suitable placements.

## Benefits and Impact

The whole engagement process raised residential staff's awareness of the world of work and available opportunities. It also helped SDS staff to become more aware of the needs of Looked After Accommodated Children (LAAC) young people and the work of residential staff.

The outcomes for the young people were that they sustained work placements; they gained belief in themselves and felt that they were able to contribute to society. They had an increased sense of responsibility, increased activity levels and gained social skills from their peer group. The house manager felt that the confidence one of the young people gained enabled him to undertake more and more tasks on his own and during the process was also able to move into his own tenancy successfully.

This targeted support dramatically improved outcomes for the young people. The two young people in the pilot project were supported into positive destinations where they remained.

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## Learning

The joint working went really well with both SDS staff and residential staff learning from one another. This also meant that learning was reinforced for young people and that staff knew exactly what the young people were working on. Time investment was longer and more significant than first anticipated.