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Title: Never Ever Say No! - College Clearing House Inclusion Project

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West College Scotland

Abstract: The Scottish Government Social Inclusion strategy aims to create a more successful country by increasing sustainable economic growth. It regards young people as key to future economic success and made commitments to them in their Opportunities for All strategy by pledging to: 'offer a place in learning or training to every 16-19 year old who is not currently in employment, education or training'. West College Scotland (WCS) has been tasked with supporting this strategy by supporting efforts to eradicate one particular problem in the Region, that of young people who are defined as 'not in education, employment or training'. The topic is of particular personal interest because I am a programme leader at WCS.

Instead of making a positive contribution to reductions in NEET figures, it has recently become apparent that recruitment processes at WCS may, inadvertently, be having a negative effect on them. Most of the Faculties use screening and/or interviews to recruit, leading to hundreds of rejection statements being sent to applicants. Alarmingly the vast majority of these 'unsuccessfuls' fall into the NEET category. As well as this, these rejected applicants are not being referred to other youth support agencies, and perhaps worse still, not even referred to other potentially suitable programmes within the College itself. But perhaps most concerning of all is the fact that the College is presently failing to meet its overall recruitment targets.

This project is asking: What specifically happens to applicants who are being rejected? The

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problem seems to be that there is no strategic networking taking place between departments and between external stakeholder agencies. Some programme leaders regard their 'rejection' decision to be their final responsibility in the application process. However, if an applicant was applying to Higher Education and was unsuccessful they would at least have an option of gaining an alternative place via a clearing system. The aim is, therefore, to develop a College Clearing House System that would forever eradicate negative rejection outcomes. This will, in turn, provide an inclusive service to young people by providing them with additional and enhanced options and opportunities, as well as supporting overall efforts to reduce NEET figures in the region. The plan is to disseminate project findings via social networking and training days.

With this in mind, the Conference presentation will focus on the application process, application form itself. It will include 3 short activities:

1. Welcome and Introduction Video: this activity will provide background and context of the project and historical context of NEET, so that delegates will be able to understand its relationship with Inclusion.
2. Presentation: this activity will briefly explain present College recruitment procedures so that the delegates can take part in the third activity.

Interactive Recruitment activity: this activity will involve delegates in part of the actual recruitment process used by the College so that they can get an idea of the significance of making an application decision.

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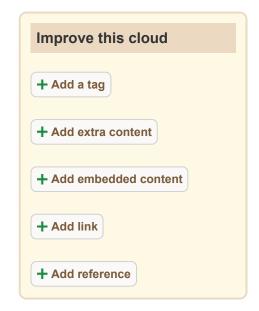
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Annette Hendley
10:24pm 20 January 2019 Permalink

Hi Patrick

The problem seems to be that there is no strategic networking taking place between departments and between external stakeholder agencies.

Lack of proper communication seem to always play some roll when things go wrong. This is such an important issue as rejection can have such an effect on ones self image, and this age group is especially vulnerable. A set of alternative options will for sure help to motivate them and make sure they find something they can succeed in.

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I am looking forward to your presentation.

Kelly Williams
3:39pm 21 January 2019 Permalink

Hi Patrick,

it has recently become apparent that recruitment processes at WCS may, inadvertently, be having a negative effect on them.

It will interesting to find out what evidence you gathered to come to this conclusion and is an uncomfortable finding I'm sure for your college, interesting to see how you plan to tackle the problem. I'd also ask where/what the potential learner/applicant voice is here? I'd be keen to hear also (as it's an area of professional interest) what an *inclusive service* will look like in your context.

All the best with the presentation preparation!

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patrick shearer
11:22pm 21 January 2019 Permalink

Hi Annette and Kelly,

Thanks for tuning in :) I think it is sometimes, very easy, when 'we' find ourselves in recruitment or selection situation to get caught up so much in the decision that 'we' underestimate how it must feel to receive a negative outcome from an application. There is absolutely no way that everyone should be accepted for everything but it would seem that many of our recruiters are concentrating solely on their own 'patch' and not the wider 'community' as a secondary concern. Therefore, the cumulative impact of so many rejections is not fully appreciated by many. Although some departments may only make a handful of rejections, other ones make as many as 50, and they then perhaps forget that there are over 30 departments in the College. This makes a significant amount within the region.

Looking forward to being at both of your presentations - good luck with the prep

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Munir Moosa Sadruddin
1:46am 25 January 2019 Permalink

Hello Patrick! It is good to learn about your personal interest and association with this project. Pakistani government these days are also planning to offer training to youth who lack skills and education.

Recruitment is a global challenge and I agree that directions to the rejected candidates must be provided! But I think it is not only the recruitment process to blame, one should blame individuals as well who, in many cases, despite education lack skills and competencies. Example, Having PhD does not entitle me to get a job or referral because the relation between skills knowledge and degree is not always positive.

We need to delve down into the realistic aspect that why the application was rejected?

Was the person not competent? We also need to make individuals learn to take ownership and to explore their personal and professional identities.

I second that inclusive service should be provided to individuals but colleges must also equip learners with skills in demand to reduce rejection rates.

I am curious to learn if you find any report or study on the impact and consequences of rejection on youth unemployment?

All the best!

Munir

[Bernadette Laffey](#)
3:59pm 29 January 2019 [Permalink](#)

Really interesting project. I worked with NEET young people some years ago and I believe like you that there should always be an education alternative within a college if students are rejected from their initial choice. And if there isn't an alternative, the college should create a course that can cater to these students' needs. It may be that they need a course which will build confidence and social skills alongside study skills. It is not comfortable to think that students who may already be experiencing barriers to participation should have to experience rejection and possibly a feeling of failure when it is the system which is letting them down.

[Sioban James](#)
6:46pm 30 January 2019 [Permalink](#)

Hi Patrick,

Is it not the case in Scotland that up to the age of 18 all young adults need to be either in full time education (school / college) or an equivalent – such as an apprenticeship? This is the case in England – my son in Y13 and about to sit A levels was the first year were this was made compulsory – his cousin left school but is doing an apprenticeship.

I suppose I am wondering how you get so many NEETs who must be falling through the cracks – I have no idea but wonder if it is the same in England.

[Potenza Atiogbe](#)
12:33pm 31 January 2019 [Permalink](#)

Hi Patrick this is such an interesting topic. I have an interest in NEET too personally from knowing a few young people who are classed as NEETs and

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Potenza Atiogbe
12:33pm 31 January 2019 (*Edited 12:38pm 31 January 2019*) Permalink

Hi Patrick this is such an interesting topic. I have an interest in NEET too personally from knowing a few young people who are classed as NEETs and how the English educational system treats them and what the alternatives are. It is shocking to read some of your evidence. Similar to Sioban's comments did you look at the NEET system in England? It will be interesting to hear more about how digital networking helped to inform your findings and the development of the project, during the conference. Communication as Annette pointed out seems to be a key issue.

Cathy McGovern
2:20pm 1 February 2019 (*Edited 2:48pm 1 February 2019*) Permalink

Hi Patrick,

I'm very glad you've recognised an issue and decided to address it. Am I correct that you are focusing on better pathways and reducing negative rejection outcomes for applying perspective students?

The campus where I work have a very high number of students equivalent to your NEET category. We offer a foundation skills course, HEAR pathways,http://accesscollege.ie/hear/ and alternative entry by interview.

Staff awareness of the impacts of disadvantage on educational achievement is key. They also know that we address those disadvantages and any lack of skills by providing a range of supports which could be relevant to the potential students. Experience has shown the lectures that these students can be successful and now they are much more open to a person's potential at the selection stage.

Of course, once the access to education is addressed, then comes participation, completion, and transitioning into the workplace. We have an retention rate of 87% for a group that is much less likely to succeed in other Higher education settings.

The demographics of our learners is likely to be constantly changing so our response to that can never be static. That's why I started by saying I'm very glad you've recognised an issue and decided to address it, as that's the only way we can keep serving our learners needs to the best of our ability.

I'm really looking forward to hearing how your project is going. Best of luck with it

Phill Grimes
8:08pm 2 February 2019 Permalink

What I find interesting is that you have this issue to such an extent. What number of colleges exist in your area?

If I make comparison to my own area, we rarely seem to reject students, having quite formidable procedures in place to prevent. But, then I believe this is largely down to the level of competition in our area. An FE review carried out a few years ago identified too many institutions in the area to remain sustainable.

If we rejected a student, they have 2, maybe 3 other colleges in the local area.

A clearing house sounds like a good idea

Samantha Bennett
2:33pm 3 February 2019 Permalink

Sounds like a much needed project Patrick. I'm interested to know how much support you have from other colleagues/instutions for the clearing house project. Have resources been allocated to the development and maintenance of it, or is it at the concept stage at the moment? Have you managed to get others on board?

Catherine Penny James
7:21pm 10 February 2019 Permalink

Hi Patrick

Your abstract has made me realise that I have never questioned what happens to candidates rejected from the degree programmes I work in. Although - as you point out - undergradutates applying via UCAS have access to clearing, that is not the case for postgraduates. I think HEIs would be interested in your project (although their concerns are likely to be related to making sure that desirable candidates have not slipped through the net!)

Dr Simon Ball
3:46pm 18 February 2019 Permalink

Hi Pat

Well done on a great presentation! Here is a summary of the comments and questions you received following your presentation (including those you may have addressed verbally). Please respond in whatever way you choose - I suspect you may wish to deal with the first few in one response!

Best wishes

Simon

- With NEET, how do you define employment? In some developing countries, a young person growing a garden is 'employed'.
- I think young people are not NEET even of they are only working a few hours a week, so NEET figures hide a lot of underemployment
- Underemployment and our failure to harness the talents of young people is much higher than reported
- Great to see age being recognised as a sociopolitical barrier, we often forget the privilige of being middle-aged!
- What is the buy in of course leaders to this?
- I like the idea of generic course. Or foundation level course to help students explore strengths and interests and make good course choices
- I agree that thr impact on young people who are rejected can be hugely negative

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