

Autism Accreditation Assessment

Portland College

Reference No.	28004
Assessment dates	3-6 th May 2022
Lead Assessor	Stephanie de Vries
External Moderator	N/A
Status prior to the assessment	Advanced
Advanced status applied for	Yes

About this Assessment

This report states key findings on how well autistic individuals are supported according to our framework of good autism practice. Evidence has been primarily obtained from observation, supplemented by evidence from interviews, a sample of support plans and information provided by the provision. If opportunities to observe has been problematic or limited greater weighting has been given to other sources of evidence.

Where appropriate, feedback has been obtained from autistic people supported by the service and/or family members and this feedback has been taken into account in findings.

Findings from the Assessment

Differences in Social Communication

Key outcomes identified from personal support documents and staff discussions:

Support plans identify each autistic learner's skills and challenges in social communication and interaction and any challenges they may experience in expressing themselves. For example, one learner's communication plan states;

- X has difficulty understanding spoken language and what is happening around him. This is due to his level of language but also his severe anxiety and the impact this has on him processing language.

Support plans describe how staff should modify their communication or what communication aids they should employ in order to make themselves understood by each autistic learner. For example one learner's communication plan states;

- Breaking down information
- Simplistic language

- Use communication book to model language and concepts
- Use visual aids to support X to make choices

Support plans provide evidence that each autistic person is set realistic goals related to their communication and social engagement. For example one learner's goals include;

X will have speech, language and communication skills at a level where he can:

- Make his needs and wants known verbally or nonverbally
- Understand the language used around him
- Initiate interactions with others by sharing equipment
- Consistently use his visual timetable to indicate his next activity
- Take part in a range of new and unfamiliar tasks, supported by an adult
- Extend his attention and concentration on the task to 15-20 minutes, with support

Support plans provide evidence that autistic learners achieve positive outcomes in their social interaction and communication, for example from meeting set goals or successfully taking part in a social activity.

A case study shows evidence of the positive outcomes achieved by one learner who 'struggled with writing/ replying in sentences and would often give short answers. X had issues with pronunciation of words (this also led to frustrations in being understood)'. The college provided the learner with an iPad and used Dictation on Notes with spoken content activated. This has led to an improvement in X's communication skills, their speech is not as rushed and they have expanded their vocabulary repertoire.

During interviews staff spoke about the different communication approaches used across the college, this included encouraging staff to simplify their language when giving instructions, to use core language and modelling of activities. Other approaches include the use of symbols, objects of reference and communication boards. Staff explained that assistive technologies are used widely across the college as this is the preferred communication method for many learners.

Key outcomes identified from observation/review of key activities:

In all observations staff made themselves understood by simplifying their verbal language and allowing appropriate processing time. Where appropriate, for example with communicate pathway learners staff would give instructions such as 'Now it's time for...' and 'Alexa game has finished' supported by Makaton and/or a symbol.

In all observations autistic learners could make themselves understood by using their preferred communication method. For example some learners were observed to use

communications books, others Makaton while some learners communicated verbally. Where appropriate some learners were observed to use tablets with a communication programme.

In one session learners were observed to be supported to learn to use assistive technology to develop their expressive language. Staff used modelling, verbal and visual prompts to show learners how to use the technology. This involved learners tapping symbols in order to construct a sentence to make the lights change colour. Learners were visibly delighted when the sentence they had written was spoken out and the lights changed colour!

In another observation one learner was deaf and communicated through using BSL, the learners' support worker was fluent in BSL and supported the learner to communicate to other people.

In all observations autistic learners were provided with opportunity and purpose to communicate as part of a group, 1:1 with staff, with each other and where appropriate members of public. Three learners gave the adviser a tour of the college, they confidently asked and answered questions. Other learners were observed in a group session sharing experiences about how confident they felt in different situations. While many learners were observed to be speaking with their support staff using their preferred communication method. Learners were also observed in the college café meeting and serving staff, students and members of the public.

Problem Solving and Self-reliance

Key outcomes identified from personal support documents and staff discussions:

Support plans identify each autistic learner's skills and challenges in independent functioning.

- Likes cooking/baking, swimming open spaces and animals
- X has difficulties during transition time and finds it hard to process things so take slow and steady steps with instructions and symbols
- Likes to have boundaries and know what is expected of him with clear reminders from staff.

Support plans describe how best to support autistic people in their independent functioning e.g. carrying out an activity; coping with change; managing transitions; making choices and decisions etc.

- Now & Next and timetable to ensure he knows what is happening throughout the day.
- Use social stories where necessary to support X's understanding of changes.

Support plans provide evidence that each autistic learner is set realistic goals related to their independent functioning.

Support plans provide evidence autistic people achieve positive outcomes in carrying out activities and making choices with increasing self-reliance and autonomy

A case study provides evidence the positive outcomes achieved by one learner whose EHCP target was to '*access travel training*'. Through an integrated programme which included support with sensory differences and emotional regulation. The learner's parents have reported that '*since starting travel training, X has not only been more willing to use public transport, but is also more independent and confident to complete tasks for herself when out with her family*'.

In interviews, staff can give examples of how they have supported autistic people in following routines; copying with change; making decisions etc – and positive outcomes achieved as a result.

Key outcomes identified from observation/review of key activities:

Autistic learner were able to work out what they must do now and what they are expected to do next. Communicate pathway learners were observed to use symbol Now and Next timetables, other learners would use morning or afternoon symbol timetables and where appropriate some classrooms would display a whole day visual timetable. Other autistic learners had a printed written version of their personalised timetable.

Autistic learners were supported to do things by themselves rather than needing to be directed by a member of staff. Task lists were observed in both symbol and written format, often tasks were modelled by staff to encourage learners to complete activities. Some learners had personalised work booklets which they worked through independently. In one observation an autistic learner was observed using a visual task sheet to collect, wash, clean and sort fresh eggs that had been laid by the chickens from college farm.

The college provides autistic learners with a wealth of opportunities to consolidate and develop daily functional skills. For example learners were observed participating a number of internal work placements including the college farm, in the café, student shop and on the reception. Learners also spoke about their supported internships they had done with local companies. One learner who was on work experience in the café explained that they were going to college in September to complete level 1 in hospitality.

Sensory Experiences

Key outcomes identified from personal support documents and staff discussions:

Support plans identify sensory experiences which have a positive experience on each autistic learner. For example one learner's support plan states;

- Enjoys deep pressure/massage through joints (knees, shoulders, hands and upper arms). Staff need to be mindful that X doesn't like light touch and any touch should be initiated by X.
- Enjoys hands and feet massages and twiddling hair(calming)

Support plans identify what challenges each autistic learner may experience in regulating sensory experiences, examples include;

- X can become overstimulated and get over excited and bounce around the room, at this point he finds it hard to listen or calm down.
- X has issues with 'spatial awareness' in that he cannot find the potato masher in kitchen drawer if there are several other items in there.
- Dislikes loud noises. GN usually has his noise cancelling headphones on but can wear ear defenders too

Support plans identify what approaches or tools should be employed to help autistic people regulate sensory experiences or avoid sensory overload.

- Ensure the environment is calm and quiet, and where possible familiar
- Ensure X has movement and sensory breaks after each small task

A case study provides evidence of the positive outcome achieved by one learner who has daily access to a sensory programme stating '*daily TAZ sessions allow him the opportunity to regulate himself by using a sensory circuit made up of alerting, organising and relaxing activities. During X's relaxing stage of the sensory circuit, he often uses the time to relax and talk with staff about any concerns/worries he has*'. The results being that '*Since X has been at Portland college X has been extremely settled and has not displayed any of the previous behaviours reported from his previous placement. It is felt this has been impacted by providing X to have the opportunity to access the TAZ*'.

Movement breaks are incorporated into all learners timetables, the college has gone one step further and incorporated a number of activities into the movement breaks to support exercise, mindfulness and regulation. This initiative has been called 'STOPS' learners can find QR codes around the college grounds and using tablets they can access the different activities these have been designed to be fun but also to support learning.

In interviews, staff can give examples of how they have supported autistic learners in their sensory regulation for example one member of staff explained that one learner had been very deregulated, in order to support the learner the college devised a

bespoke sensory diet, the programme included a lot of calming techniques such as deep pressure massage, use of a weighted jacket, lots of movement breaks and access to the TAZ room. Staff stated that 'overall the programme has had a very positive effect on the learner, they are now a lot less dysregulated'.

Key outcomes identified from observation/review of key activities:

Autistic students were observed to be engaged in a range of sensory based learning activities which they seemed to find enjoyable or relaxing, this included participating in outdoor work experience on the farm, performing a dance piece and playing. One learner was observed participating in a sensory circuits session which incorporated alerting and calming activities. The session ended with the learner relaxing on a waterbed. The learner was visibly much calmer and regulated at the end of the session.

Autistic learners had access to a range of sensory-base resources to aid self-regulation and avoid sensory overload. Learners were observed wearing ear defenders, using weighted blankets, blowing bubbles, using sensory cushions. Movement breaks are an integral part of all learners timetables, the college has gone one step further and incorporated a number of activities into the movement breaks to support exercise, mindfulness and regulation. This initiative has been called 'STOPs' learners can find QR codes around the college grounds and using tablets they can access the different activities these have been designed to be fun but also to support learning. Other resources include large gym, trampoline, hydro-pool, physio suite and woodlands area.

Portland college is situated on a large rural site surrounded by woodland. The college has recently developed a fully accessible woodland adventure zone, where learners can access activities such as; zip line, abseiling, climbing wall, bush craft and bike trail. Learners were observed enjoying using the zipline, it was evident that learners participating in this activity clearly experienced a sense of achievement and enjoyed the experience. The woodland adventure zone offers learners the opportunity to explore new sensory and physically challenging experiences in a safe and secure environment.

Some of classrooms were rather cluttered and included large amounts of display material. This often lead to it being difficult to understand which information was important to the student and which information was intended for adults. The college should consider conducting a sensory audit across classrooms to establish a baseline and provide consistency as to what information should be displayed in classrooms.

Emotional Well-being

Key outcomes identified from personal support documents and staff discussions:

Support plans show an appreciation of activities which each autistic learner finds enjoyable, relaxing or provides them with a sense of achievement and purpose.

- X is described as having a mischievous sense of humour and good personality.
- X likes anything food orientated, music and dancing and watching Nigella Lawson on YouTube.
- Loves water and will shower for multiple hours if allowed

Support plans identify approaches or activities to help maintain the well-being of each autistic learner including where appropriate proactive and preventative strategies to avoid anxiety or distress and support emotional regulation. Examples include;

- When X begins to become unsettled it is best to remove all liquids from his eyesight
- Encourage to go outside - Muga pitch
- Distract by singing round the garden and doing the actions on his hand.
- UP to have access to a quiet space and items that aid his regulation and help keep him to remain calm. This includes weighted blanket and fidget toys
- Reduced verbal communication from staff when upset.
- Lots of space outdoors
- Calm but firm approach
- Calm and confident approach with familiar staff
- Verbal instruction in a calm voice

Plans identify positive achievements and progress impacting on the quality of life of each autistic learner including greater access to and inclusion within community activities.

Video evidence was reviewed of one learner talking about using Zones of Regulation. The learner explained that the different colour zones related to their different emotions, for example 'blue is when I'm feeling sad and want to be left alone and green is when I'm ready to learn and on task'. The learner went on to explain that they have they use different strategies to help them when experiencing different emotions for example 'when I'm in red, I'm angry and I put my music on to take the voices away'. The learner also explained that they had different coloured bands to show staff what zone they were in. The learner said that Zones of Regulation 'helped to cope with my emotions'.

During interviews staff explained that the core themes of the college curriculum was; health and well-being, independence and employability. 'We want to give learners a lifetime of opportunity and empower people with disabilities'. Throughout the observations it was evident that these core themes and aspirations were at the heart of the college.

The assessor spoke to 3 learners who all spoke very positively about their experience at Portland College. Comments included;

I like that I get treated like an adult.

I can talk to staff if I need to.

It's a calm environment and class sizes are small.

I like the diversity and acceptance.

In total 25 family members provided feedback to the assessment team by returning completed questionnaires. The full results are shown as an appendix to this report.

- 25 family members stated that the support their relative is given is always or mostly good.
- 24 family members stated that staff understanding is mostly or always good.
- 24 family members stated that advice given by the school was good or always good.
- 24 family members stated that the way they are kept informed was good or always good.

Comments included;

My son has adequate support and his needs are met he is happy at Portland his independence skills and confidence has progressed greatly which is what we anticipated

Staff are great, and the main quality required is getting to know the individual student, and although this takes time and effort I feel this is achieved at Portland. Thank you

Very happy with the way my relative is supported and understood and with the opportunities they have had there.

In total 72 autistic people provided feedback to the assessment team by returning completed questionnaires. The full results are shown as an appendix to this report.

- 70 stated the support they were given was good, 2 stated it was sometimes good.
- 67 stated that staff understand my needs, 5 stated staff sometimes understand my needs
- 68 stated that staff listen to me on how I want to be helped, 4 stated that staff sometimes listen to me on how I want to be helped.

Comments included;

The support I get is good.

I like Portland college

I likes sport at Portland

X excited to come to College. She said that she likes her staff.

Yes I have the right amount support at College.

The staff at Portland College are amazing

Key outcomes identified from observation/review of key activities:

Throughout all observations, students were treated with dignity, status and respect. Staff appear to have developed positive and trusting relationships with the students and staff across school provided meaningful and positive feedback which appeared to boost the confidence and self-esteem of students.

The classes are taught in small groups, which suits the emotional needs, for example anxiety levels, of the learners.

Autistic learners were supported to understand and regulate their emotions. Zones of Regulation displays were observed in most classrooms, photographs of learners were observed in different zones and suggestions on different activities to help calm or lift mood were seen. Each classroom has a toolbox with a range of regulation toys to support learners to self-regulate. At the beginning of each session staff were observed to check-in with each learner as to which zone they were in.

In one session learners were discussion how confident they felt in different situations such as, using public transport, at college, with friendships etc. The group openly discussed their feeling and acknowledged that it was okay that some people felt more confident about some situations than others. This helped learners to accept their own feelings and be more understanding of others.

Autistic learners were engaged in meaningful activities which they found fun and interesting and are encouraged to enjoy the challenge of trying out or learning a new activity or skill. This was evident in the range of activities, lessons and work experience opportunities.

During all observations learners appeared engaged in their learning. The curriculum is differentiated to meet the specific needs and long-term aspirational outcomes of each learner. Learners appeared to find the classroom based activities which supported their language and functional skills development fun and interesting. There is a clear focus on developing learners employment skills through internal work experience

opportunities which include elements of challenge and opportunities for learners to extend their learning or develop new skills.

Section 3: Summary of assessment

What the provision does particularly well

What stood out as particular strengths: in supporting autistic people:

Throughout the observations it was evident that the core themes of well-being, independence, employability and the aspiration to give learners a 'lifetime of opportunity and empower people with disabilities' is at the heart of the college.

In all observations staff made themselves understood by simplifying their verbal language and allowing appropriate processing time. Where appropriate, for example with communicate pathway learners staff would give instructions such as 'Now it's time for...' and 'Alexa game has finished' supported by Makaton and/or a symbol. This was consistent across the college.

In all observations autistic learners could make themselves understood by using their preferred communication method. For example some learners were observed to use communications books, Makaton while some learners communicated verbally. Where appropriate some learners were observed to use tablets with a communication programme.

It was clear through discussion with staff and throughout observations that the college is keen to promote the use of assistive technologies, not only to aid communication but also to assist learners to become more independent. Teaching learners to use assistive technologies will provide enormous benefits and improve learners well-being as they develop their expressive skills and understanding of how technology can aid them in furthering their independence.

Autistic learners were supported to understand and regulate their emotions. Zones of Regulation displays were observed in most classrooms, photographs of learners were observed in different zones and suggestions on different activities to help calm or lift mood were seen. At the beginning of each session staff were observed to check-in with each learner as to which zone they were in.

Ensuring movement breaks are an integral part of all learners timetables ensures that students have regular sensory breaks throughout the day which help support sensory regulation by further incorporating the 'STOPS' programme into the movement breaks the college has added an extra dimension to help further aid learning, well-being and self-regulation.

The curriculum is differentiated to meet the specific needs and long-term aspirational outcomes of each learner. Learners appeared to find the classroom based activities which supported their language and functional skills development fun and interesting. There is a clear focus on developing learners employment skills through internal work experience opportunities which include elements of challenge and opportunities for learners to extend their learning or develop new skills.

The woodland adventure zone is a fantastic resource that offers learners the opportunity to explore new sensory and physically challenging experiences in a safe and secure environment.

What the provision could develop further

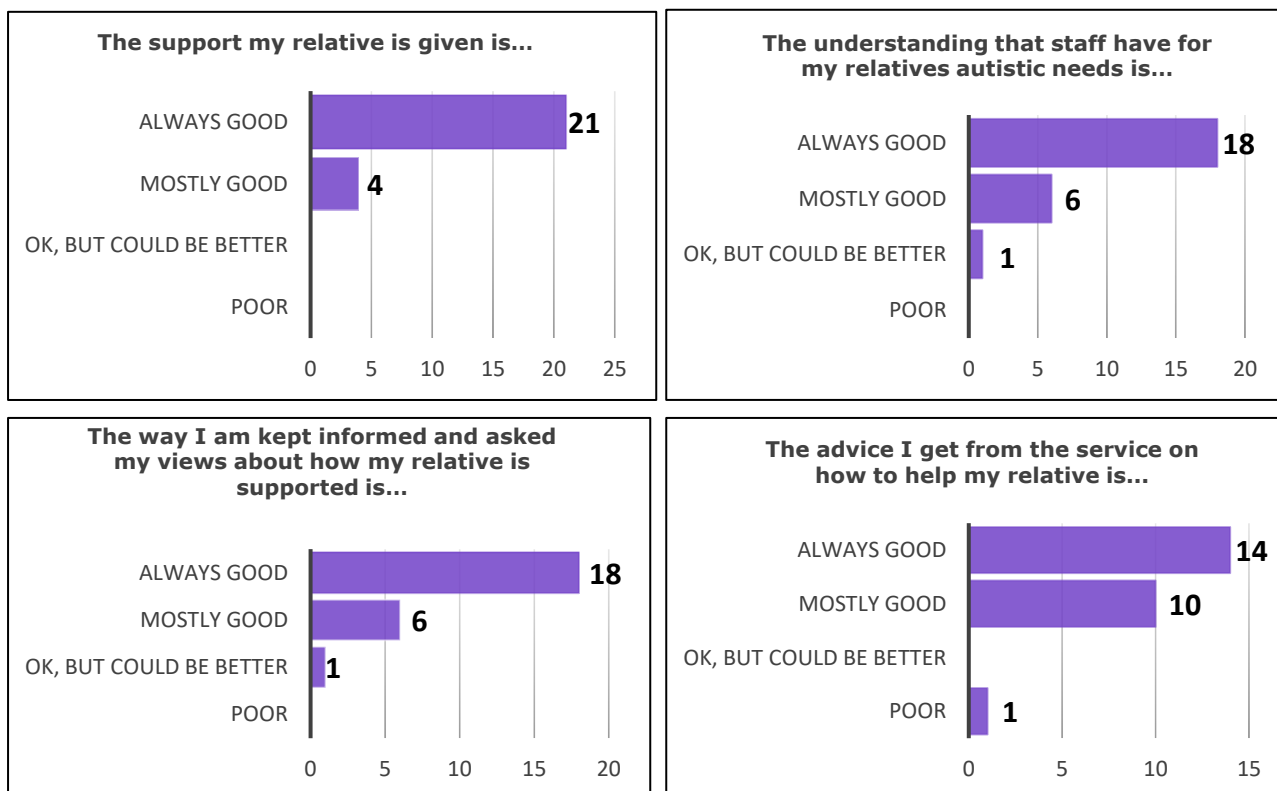
Priorities for the provision in ensuring consistency and quality in supporting autistic people:

Some of the classrooms were rather cluttered and included large amounts of display material. This often lead to it being difficult to understand which information was

important to the student and which information was intended for adults. The college should consider conducting a sensory audit across classrooms to establish a baseline and provide consistency as to what information should be displayed in classrooms.

APPENDIX: SURVEYS

Families of Autistic Persons - Questionnaire Responses: 25



Comments

My son has adequate support and his needs are met he is happy at Portland his independence skills and confidence has progressed greatly which is what we anticipated

Staff are great, and the main quality required is getting to know the individual student, and although this takes time and effort I feel this is achieved at Portland. Thank you

Staff are fantastic however following 2 sustained complaints against other staff members shows the level of care she receives from some is extremely poor

Anything asked is never an issue Portland are always happy to help anyway they can my sons recently told them he feels held back as things repetitive from last year and isn't learning on two of his days so he's not happy they assured him it be sorted so he learns and so I'm hoping this is the case they have recently took a day off each student to not be in college due to a covid outbreak but said it will be as normal after Easter and they currently help my son do travel training to help him come September when he transitions to another college to further his skills but Portland have been outstanding and helping to ensure things are as smoothly as possible

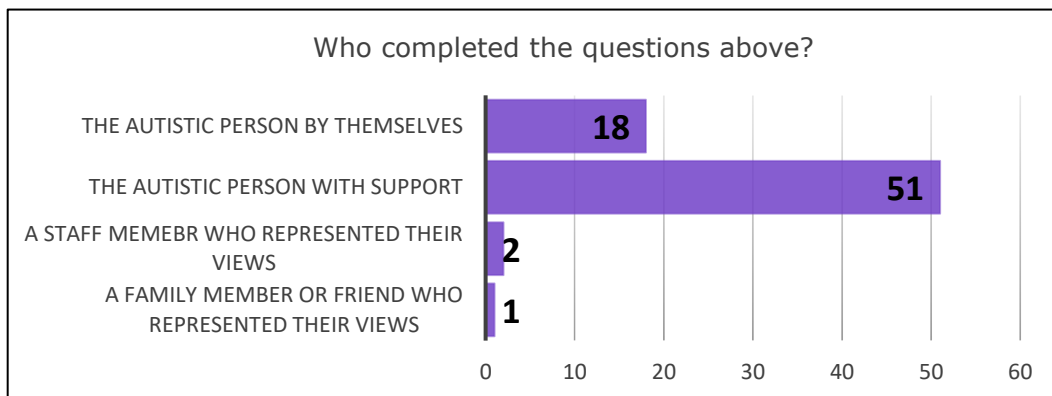
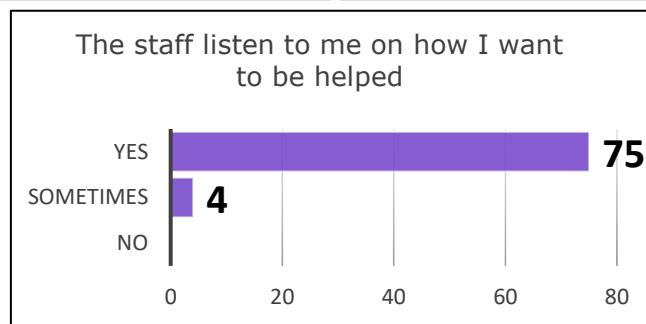
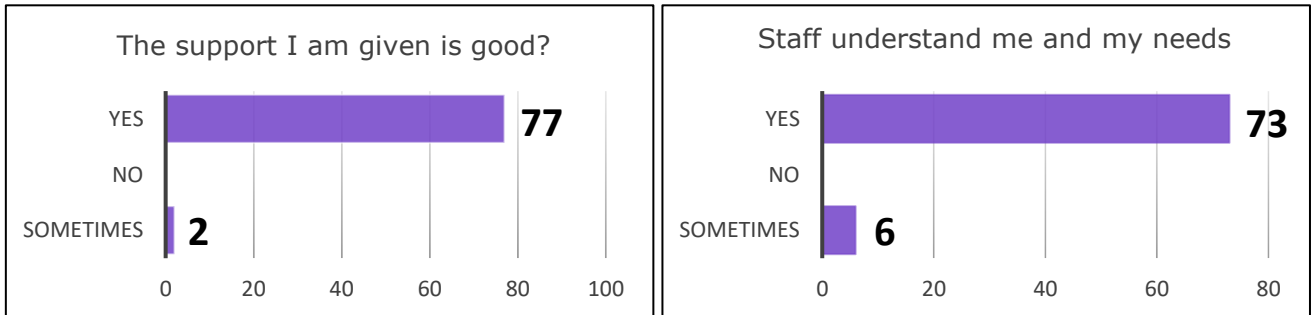
Very happy with the way my relative is supported and understood and with the opportunities they have had there.



I'm extremely impressed with how my Son's transition into college has been managed so far. I was anticipating numerous anxiety related issues due to the many changes and new situations which he is experiencing, but anxiety and problems have been minimal. It has exceeded my expectations. Very pleased.



Autistic Person - Questionnaire Responses: 79



Comments

The support I get is good.

I like Portland college

I likes sport at Portland

X excited to come to College. She said that she likes her staff.

Yes I have the right amount support at College.

The staff at Portland College are amazing

I say sometimes more my epilepsy people need support more.



Most staff but some struggle to understand why I struggle with my temper or my obsessive behaviours.

More visual sheets in maths.

I like to visit the animals

I like Portland College and do not want to leave

Nothing to report no problems or concerns

APPENDIX: INFORMATION FROM THE PROVISION

Type of provision e.g., special day school; residential care home etc

How many people are supported by the provision? 200

How many of this number are autistic? 150

What is the range of autistic people supported by the provision? e.g., age; learning disability; verbal or non-verbal etc.

Type of provision e.g., special day school; residential care home etc

Portland College is a National Special Education College that support learners aged 16 – 25 that have special educational needs and an EHCP.

Please see link below to get an understanding of the service in detail.

This is our virtual open day we completed for families that were unable to attend through covid to face to face open days.

<https://youtu.be/rqPeAyQ7pJ0>

How many people are supported by the provision?

201 learners attend College on 3-day programs with 9 of those learners staying residentially. The 9 residential learners attend for 5 days.

How many of this number are autistic?

124 (62%)

What is the range of autistic people supported by the provision? e.g., age; learning disability; verbal or non-verbal etc.

Age range - 16-25years
 Academic level – pre-entry to Level 3
 Intellectual Disability – mild to severe
 Associated conditions – Downs Syndrome, Prada Willi, ADHD, Mental health, severe communication difficulties, challenging behaviours, ABI and physical disabilities.
 Learners both verbal and non-verbal identified within their Communication Plans.
 Some use AAC technology.

Outcome of last statutory inspection if applicable.

Body	Date	Outcome
Ofsted	17 October 2017	Good

Please include a hyperlink to the report: <https://files.ofsted.gov.uk/v1/file/2737489>

What are the main specialist approaches used in supporting autistic people in their social communication and sensory regulation and promotes their independent and well-being?

- Positive Behaviour Support
- Zones of Regulation
- 5 Communication Standards
- Winnie Dunn sensory profile
- Person Centred ECLIPSE ME Framework
- Holistic approach with a multi-disciplinary wrap around support.
- Be Health Active and Courageous - BHAC

What training or support do staff receive in delivering these approaches?

- PBS annual training
- Zones of Regulation webinar
- Communication training with refreshers
- Sensory part 1 and 2 training as part of induction and refreshers
- Autism Awareness
- Autism package of:

Autism in girls
 Autism and transgender
 Stimming
 Autism and the environment

Autism theories

- BHAC training over full academic year

What processes are in place to ensure that each autistic person has a regularly reviewed personal support plan that identifies strategies and sets targets in their social communication and sensory regulation and promotes their independent and well-being?

MDT half termly meetings

Wrap around support

PBS plans updated as and when required or half termly

Communication and sensory plans reviewed as part of any assessment

How are autistic people consulted in the support they receive?

Learner led conversations in place for all learners from progression tutors

De briefs and learner reflections

1-1 support via Zones of regulation

1-1 workshops/sessions from IAGT

Consent to care documentations

Portland council

How are the family who represent the best interests of the autistic people consulted about the support their relative receives?

Parent carer forums

Parent/carers invited to training in College

Initial assessment process

Parent contact via Progression tutors

Parent/carers invited into the MDT's for learners

MCA and Best interest documentation with parent /carer feedback

What do you consider to be the main areas of development for the provision?

Consistency of approach

Embedding of the systems that are in place

Further develop the mental health and well-being activities including staff training and strategies.

What do you consider to be the main areas of strength for the provision?

- Commitment of leadership and management

- Therapy support
- Quality Assurance
- Positive Behaviour Support
- Zones of Regulation
- Be Healthy Active and Courageous Project
- Safeguarding
- Varied curriculum
- Investment in staff
- College environment and campus

APPENDIX 3: ADVANCED APPLICATION FORM

Part 1: Professional Development
Initiatives or innovations that impact on staff insight into the personal experience of being autistic e.g. regular involvement of autistic people in professional development activities or review of practice.
<p>Description</p> <p>We provide CPD for our staff around the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Autism specific induction training • Communication needs training • PBS training • Sensory training part 1 and 2 • Zones of Regulation • 5 Autism Workshops • Learner Autism package • Employer package • Quality Walk Schedule • Wrap around support meetings • MDT target setting meeting • Staff members with Autism • Be Healthy, Active and Courageous (BHAC)
<p>Impact</p> <p>We provide CPD for our staff around the following:</p> <p>Autism specific induction training – All staff regardless of role attend these sessions Our SLT team deliver Communication needs training</p> <p>PBS training is completed on induction with a full 2 day delivery that also captures all staff at College, Annual refreshers are then delivered to keep up to date with good practice.</p> <p>Sensory training part 1 and 2 – Our OT team have designed a training package to support the understanding of sensory needs and the implementation of strategies for all staff</p> <p>Zones of Regulation- Webinar/Session plans/Recorded sessions</p> <p>5 Autism Workshops – Autism and women and girls/Autism and transgender/Autism and the environment/Autism and Stimming/Autism theories have been created by the PBS team to give greater context around different areas of Autism.</p> <p>Be Healthy, Active and Courageous (BHAC) Portland College puts Health and Well-being at the forefront of the curriculum. Staff deliver the programme with a focus on three key themes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Know Myself – to support self-awareness and self-regulation • Win the Week – developing high-quality health habits.

•Be Courageous – support learners to see failure as an opportunity to learn instead of an opportunity to stop learning.

Initiatives or innovations that ensure that specialist approaches or techniques are fully understood, consistently implemented and regularly reviewed.

Description

- Learner Autism package
- Employer package
- Quality Walk Schedule
- Our learners are always at the heart of our delivery
- Wrap around support meetings
- MDT target setting meeting
- Staff members with Autism

Impact

Learner Autism package – We have also created a further Autism training package that is made entirely from our learners.

Employer package – We deliver training to potential employers

Quality Walk Schedule – Our quality walk schedule creates feedback from all areas of the therapy teams (SLT, OT, PBS, ZOR) Therapies and the PBS team complete termly walks across the department to look out for good practice the share and areas of development that can be inputted into training packages and briefings

Our learners are always at the heart of our delivery with learners being given the opportunity to attend and co deliver training sessions to staff. Feedback from participants is that there is a greater emphasis when our learners are delivering training.

Wrap around support meetings – Our new wrap around support meetings are on a weekly basis where all College professionals meet and discuss learners on a case by case basis. LSA's and delivery teams get invited and there are a set of actions created to support learners who have an identified behavioral need

MDT target setting meeting – These meetings take place on a half termly basis where all the learners targets are discussed and reviewed with delivery teams and therapies

Staff members with Autism – 10% of staff have Autism – Our recruitment program makes it inclusive for any person to have the opportunity to be employed. We currently have approx. 10% of our staff team with a diagnosis of Autism

Part 2: Outcomes for individuals

Initiatives or innovations that have had a considerable impact on the quality of life and inclusion of autistic people e.g. programmes; projects; therapeutic interventions social enterprises etc.

Description

Learners also access a mandatory **lunchtime/evening enrichment** sessions– activities are linked to the five areas of well-being – Connect with others, physical, give to others, keep learning and be mindful.

IAGT

- Point of assessment and beyond to transition
- Workshops/events PFA framework
- 1-1's under the core areas (H&WB, Employment, Independence)
- FRESH
- Person centred reviews
- Portland Council
- Transition out – careers chats, transition visits, placement, transition reviews, external referrals

Workshops throughout the year are delivered to learners on topics such as: Wellbeing workshops, Work experience and supported internships, Self-esteem and confidence, Careers chats, Rules and responsibilities, Developing emotional resilience, Being a good citizen, Mindfulness, Develop a positive self-image, Living options.

The above workshops are then embedded into the **Preparation for Adulthood** sessions that take place on a weekly basis under the ECLIPSEMEDE framework.

1:1 Support – By Drop In/By Appointment

FRESH – Friends, Relationships, Sexual Health (& C Card)

Feelings/worries/problems

Social Media Safety

Careers Advice/Job Searching/Application Support/CV Checking

Maples Bungalow

The bungalow provides creative and unique opportunities to support learners with different needs.

Skills that our learners are developing:

- Communication
- Following instructions
- Problem solving
- Independence skills
- Communication devices
- Cause and effect
- Environmental controls

Occupational Therapy

Occupational Therapy (OT) at Portland College focuses on learner independence and functional engagement within education. We value the importance of working collaboratively with the multidisciplinary team in education and care to empower and support learners to reach their goals and potential through interventions such as Zones of Regulation, Sensory processing etc.

SLT

Learners will be supported by a total communication approach – that is, their preferred method or methods of communication will be encouraged with no emphasis put on any particular one.

Physiotherapy

Our state-of-the-art gym equipment includes virtual reality technology and we have one of the largest hydrotherapy pools in the UK.

The Physiotherapy team also can support private clients in the gym and hydrotherapy pool.

Positive Behaviour Support

Our Positive Behaviour Support team is central to everything we do. Their focus is to ensure individuals live their best life possible by understanding behaviours, patterns and triggers and providing supportive environments and trained staff.

Zones of Regulation

In 2020, we introduced 'Zones of Regulation', an initiative which enables learners to foster self-regulation and express and review how they are feeling.

Learners are encouraged to update their 'Zone of Regulation' as often as their emotions change throughout the day and each session

Be Healthy, Active and Courageous (BHAC)

BHAC journey has been designed specifically to support the health and wellbeing of learners at Portland aiming to increase the long-term Health and Wellness of learners by supporting them in becoming Healthy, Active and Courageous.

Impact

Maples Bungalow

Since October 2020, 40 learners have accessed the SMARTHome provision on a weekly basis.

The Speech and Language therapy team are using the space for their group sessions. Learners have been working towards their outcomes developing independence for supported living, and/ or independent living.

Ultimately, the **BHAC** Journey has been designed to support a curriculum step change by moving Health and Wellbeing to the centre of the learner journey. The project will also be able to inform HR and other departments (not just learning and teaching) of what is working in the organisation from a health and wellness point of view.

Initiatives or innovations that empower autistic people as experts in their own lives e.g. examples of co-production; working in partnership; developing effective consultation tools and processes to ensure that autistic people have a voice etc

Description

The Portland Voice cycle forms an important part of the College's quality assurance. The information gathered from surveys/ feedback is crucial in determining the levels of satisfaction within the College and identifies issues and concerns that require action to ensure continuous quality improvement. Portland Voice aims to provide our Autistic learners, Parent/Carers and associated outside agencies a say in aspects of the service offered by the College. It aims to identify features of best practice, as well as investigating aspects that are weaker. Portland Voice activities follow a cyclic process as set out in the Portland Voice Framework. The reports includes learner and Parent/ Carer On Programme Survey results collected from day and residential learners in Further Education, as well as evidence from:

- Portland Council – where governors and senior managers are mandated to attend the meetings
- Person Centred Reviews (PCRs)
- Information, Advice, Guidance and Transition (IAGT) events/ workshops
- Learner Programme Review and Evaluations (PREs).
- Following the Portland Voice Framework, Further Education provides three surveys throughout the academic year

Impact

The results will enable Managers to drill down in areas found as requiring improvement and build on activities that are identified as strengths. This report is shared with a wider audience including Curriculum Managers, Progression Tutors and the Information, Advice, Guidance and Transition (IAGT) Team. The information allows Managers to evaluate practice at Department, Programme and Individual Journey Level.

Part 3: Sharing of Expertise and development of knowledge and understanding

Initiatives or innovations that have had a significant impact on how families, other professionals or members of the public understand and respond to autistic people e.g. outreach support; training for other professionals, families; sharing best practice at events etc.

Description

Portland College are able to show sound collaborative working relationships historically with employers. Portland College work with approximately 100 local employers from a range of vocational sectors.

Impact

The impact for our learners in terms of working with employers is not only the increase with positive employment outcomes, but also that 100% of learners stated that their employability skills have improved as a result of undertaking work-experience

Initiatives or innovations that have significantly increased knowledge and understanding of best practice in supporting autistic people e.g. involvement in action research; development of resources; partnership work; publications etc.

Description

Links with Nottinghamshire Football Association, Boccia England and Special Olympics to assist learner's experience. This is an area that we continue to do well with.

Impact

Notts Badminton has gone from strength to strength in terms of partnership work. Saturday morning in partnership with the Special Olympics Nottinghamshire network and the Nottingham Hoods basketball team, several of our learners and ex learners' access this session that has been taking place

Part 4: Validation

Validation from other bodies or professionals s e.g. awards; summative evaluation data; inspections etc.

2019 – Leading Business award winner at the Autism Hero Awards

2019 – Special commendation for the Lifetime Achievement Award (PBS Manager)for the positive impact he has on the lives of so many people with Autism.



2021 national winner for interdisciplinary working at the National Specialist College Awards



Outstanding Individual Contribution Award at the National Special Educational Needs and Disability Awards Ceremony



Finalist for The Employer Award at The Learning Disabilities & Autism Awards 2021



IAGT Matrix recognition



AOC Beacon award finalist and recognised as a commended College for its support for learners



Relevance

Autism Hero Awards 2019

“Portland introduced key roles and appointed qualified and experienced trainers to educate staff to understand Autism and to support the learners in different ways”

Outstanding Individual Contribution Award at the National Special Educational Needs and Disability Awards

“Portland College Curriculum Manager David Winter was announced as the winner of the Outstanding Individual Contribution Award at the National Special Educational Needs and Disability Awards Ceremony
The National Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Awards celebrates the most inclusive practice for young people in schools, colleges, educational settings and employment across the UK”

2021 national winner for interdisciplinary working at the National Specialist College Awards

“Initiatives have the learner at the centre with a focus on health and well-being. A programme of workshops was been created and is one of the biggest professional development timetables the college has ever delivered.
The judge from Natspec said; “Portland College interdisciplinary staff and students should be proud champions of their PBS/Zones of Regulation/Be Healthy, Active and Courageous initiative.

AOC Beacon award finalist and recognised as a commended College for its support for learners

“The College has highly effectively worked in collaboration with parents to provide an integrated approach in the best interest of learners. An innovative model is in place with elements that are transferable across the sector with a targeted, person-centred holistic approach. A well thought out, personalised approach that focuses on individual learners with complex needs at different levels is evident. Highly motivated staff enable and empower teaching and support staff to be focussed and responsive to learners that have complex and different needs. Staff are experienced and passionate about how the support programme enhances individual well-being and how this impacts on transition. A forward thinking

approach for learners and parents around reducing RPIs and the use of Positive Behaviour Support empowers independence and less dependency

IAGT Matrix

"The matrix Accreditation Review provided evidence of considerable impact from a highly competent organisation. Portland has the resilience, commitment and expertise to thrive and progress further. Most importantly Portland shows what can be achieved for and with students with learning disabilities, Autism and challenging behaviour, to help them lead fulfilling lives and be active members of their community. Young people's lives are being improved significantly through the support of Portland and the College and its staff provide inspiration for professionals, parents and carers and students to come. Portland College truly makes a difference.

Facilities and staff expertise are excellent and tailored individual learning programmes and consistently high standards.

Appendix 3: Case Studies

TEMPLATE 1: Case study for an individual

Name of school/service	<i>PORTLAND COLLEGE</i>
Name of individual	<i>GN</i>
Period of time covered	<i>6 months</i>
What support was introduced? What approaches, strategies, methods were used?	
<p>GN has participated in a weekly AAC session whereby he has used the iPad to make choices and give instructions when playing games such as Mr. Potato head and Jenga.</p> <p>Role modelling, carefully timed and planned sessions, close coordination with his progression tutor so, the session is flexible around GN mood incorporating fun and engaging activities, based on his interests.</p>	
Pen picture of individual before support was introduced including challenges, difficulties etc.	
<p>GN has a diagnosis of Autism. His main way to communicate is via gesture and facial expression but does have verbal speech. He tends to only use his speech when reciting TV programs or music.</p> <p>GN has difficulty transitioning due to different environments and his participation in activities is mood dependent, and therefore careful planning.</p>	
OUTCOMES	
Communication skills; social skills; relationships	
<p>Throughout his placement at College GN has been using paper-based communication resources within his sessions. Through external and internal assessment, it was suggested GN could develop these skills further through an initial trial of an iPad with Proloquo2Go.</p>	

GN's user area was transferred onto the College trial AAC device supporting consistency across both environments. Structured AAC/SLT sessions have been implemented for a prolonged period of time to support GN's use of the trial device.

GN is able to use the iPad to support his communication in all of his sessions at College, identifying how he is feeling and participating more within the activities set. Should he choose, he is able to socially communicate with his peers/staff and build upon the friendships that he has within his surrounding environment.

Confidence; self-reliance; independent problem-solving

Proloquo2Go will give GN more independence in making a wide range of choices as opposed to relying on other people to offer things that they know he might choose or he has chosen in the past. With the practice of giving directions it will give GN more confidence so he is able to give directions/instructions to people supporting him, for example informing them he needs some time out, which will give him more control over his own support and outcomes at these times.

Ability to cope with sensory input

Proloquo2Go will help GN to make choices about activities/items to support his own sensory regulation, and also direct other people to support him to get sensory input e.g. asking for ear defenders on or to listen to his music. Using Proloquo2Go can support GN to say how he is feeling enabling people around him to support his sensory needs. E.g. if GN says he feels upset they can offer sensory strategies to hopefully help him feel calmer.

Emotional self-regulation and well-being

Proloquo2Go will support GN to identify how he is feeling and make his choices, therefore reducing frustrations as much as possible. This could be from the type of activity that he wants to engage within, identifying when he needs time away, or what he would like to eat/drink.

Achievements, successes and quality of life outcomes

He has navigated well through the layout and is able to formulate short sentences using both core and fringe vocabulary. GN has also used the iPad within his wider vocational sessions to support him to get his messages across from greeting a peer to identifying how he is feeling throughout the day.

As a result of the successful trial period, GN has been purchased his own iPad and will have his Proloqu2Go user area added on to this. The iPad will be used both at college and home continuing to support his communication in a variety of environments.

GN has shown he is able to communicate his requests, wants and needs, such as; drink, toilet, snacks, feelings.

Through the use of the iPad GN will have more choices in his life. He will have more access to a range of meaningful activities which will give more opportunity for achievement and success. Overall the iPad will support GN to communicate his feelings, making meaningful choices, be in more control of his support, and become a more confident and independent communicator, which will contribute to improving his quality of life.

Next Steps; transition

GN will continue to use his iPad both within College and the home environment, supporting him to make choices and develop his independence. Through parental contact and training his user area will develop as and when required, and it will serve to reduce any frustrations that may arise through the communication of his preferences.

TEMPLATE 1: Case study for an individual

Name of school/service	<i>PORTLAND COLLEGE</i>
Name of individual	<i>Use first name, initials or number</i>
Period of time covered	<i>Dec 2021 - present</i>
What support was introduced? What approaches, strategies, methods were used?	

Sensory input/SLT input and PBS support
Grounding/regulation approaches.

Pen picture of individual before support was introduced including challenges, difficulties etc.

EN has a diagnosis of ASD, severe learning difficulties, Social and emotional difficulties.

EN was having difficulties in accessing college, potentially taking twenty minutes or more to exit his transport. EN would sometimes be heightened and would run, climb or sit on the spot.

He began exhibiting destructive behaviour in class, this was not usually aimed at students or staff. He would seek to grab, break and throw pieces of equipment, opening and emptying cupboards and climbing on items of furniture and tables. These behaviours could escalate to EN running down corridors and accessing other classes or work spaces. These behaviours could unsettle other students and cause a ripple of other behaviours within the class. They were a cause for concern with the high potential for injury. EN works closely with a 1:1 member of staff and potential triggers were hard to identify.

Using an MDT approach with Education staff, Positive Behaviour Support, Occupational Therapy, AAC and parents it was decided to create a calmer and safer environment for him. EN was provided with his own area containing a soft chair, sensory equipment and books, some of these were personal items sent from home. All unnecessary risks were removed.

After a period of adjustment, a routine was put in place that meant EN began accessing other areas of college at structured times, regular time in the Therapy Activity Zone, Sensory stories with his peers, walks around the campus woodland and most recently Community access.

OUTCOMES

Communication skills; social skills; relationships

As an OTA I began working with EN and his 1:1 staff initially providing support to keep him safe. Overtime a relationship has built, EN is able to communicate his needs and I am more able to gauge his level of regulation. This maybe through how he is vocalising, facial expressions and his body movements. EN will hold out his hand and pull you into him if he requires deep pressure. He will allow you to sit close and read while he turns the pages of a book. He will undo the shoelaces of my shoes and tap for me to redo them (this is a calming strategy that he has developed). When he requires his own space, he will gently push you away. EN will follow verbal prompts and use of a symbol to go to the toilet. He will seek snacks from his bag when he is hungry. EN has the use of a now and next board and symbols to express his wants and needs. He is currently working with AAC and

has access to a communication aid to try and promote his independence even further.

Confidence; self-reliance; independent problem-solving

EN is working better with less familiar staff

Ability to cope with sensory input

EN wears a weighted gilet while travelling on transport as he can become over stimulated while travelling. EN will remove his gilet with support on arrival to college, this means it can be used to greater effect while in college should EN need proprioceptive feedback, he also finds deep pressure calming.

EN will tap his surroundings and support staff. He may run, skip and twirl the OT support has meant this can be done in a safer way and allows EN to gain the sensory feedback he requires.

EN has not accessed ear defenders for a while and during behaviours he would break them, by creating a better environment for him they have not been required. During a recent community access activity EN was able to indicate to staff it was noisy and moved to a quieter place.

Emotional self-regulation and well-being

EN has been able to still attend college and is doing work through a more bespoke approach, he is accessing blended learning in his own room and is consistently making progress towards his goals and outcomes. He is calmer and will engage in tasks at his own pace. He now goes for walks around the college woodland, something he previously used to do. This requires 2:1 support and provides exercise, fresh air and sensory feedback. EN is also accessing the community this again allows him exercise and experiences in different environments and the chance to spend time with his peers.

Achievements, successes and quality of life outcomes

EN is active at home e.g. swimming, trampolining and family walks. Allowing him to incorporate these kinds of activities in his daily routine at college provides him with a better experience and EN is currently exhibiting less behaviours.

Next Steps; transition

Future transition for EN will see him access his classroom more often and see him interacting in a group environment. EN will be using his communication aid more to express his needs and wants.
When EN leaves Portland he will transition to a Day Service with skills to be more resilient to change and be able to work with new staff and a new routine.

TEMPLATE 2: Case study to show impact of initiative

Name of school/service:	PORTLAND COLLEGE
Date initiative started: June 2019	Date of report: 20.04.2022
Description (What was the initiative?)	
The initiative was to provide remote learning opportunities and increase the use of technology with in college and encourage learners to engage proactively with their accounts.	
Context (What was reason for developing initiative?)	
We felt that we required a virtual learning environment that enabled learners to find out information about what is happening at College, such as news stories, menus and events. Plus, for them to access content that was being delivered wherever on campus.	
Purpose of initiative (What were the aims and objectives of the initiative?)	
*To provide a learning virtual environment which could be accessed both onsite and remotely * Learners to use the digital skills in accessing devices and applications	
Method (What did you do, and how were you going to measure, observe and record outcomes?)	

Firstly, we designed a page that would be accessible to learners with the College's external consultant for SharePoint and Office365 functions.

Once a first version was created we then presented this to the Portland Council, for their views and opinions.

Next, we asked all staff to create suitable content that could be placed onto specific pages.

All work was audited and approved by the quality team.

Unfortunately, in 2019, there was some reluctance from staff to regarding the use of online resources and the project stalled.

However, in March 2020 and the announcement of COVID 19, the production of accessible sites, remote learning and accessible resources became of paramount importance.

*New sites were created and updated, weekly.

*Topic content resources were created and differentiated according to the learner's journey. (maths and English, prep for adulthood)

*Resources were provided to support learners to get onto their sites and use functions such as teams. Staff support provided to staff and parents about accessing sites and using TEAMS.

*Staff development and training provided for safeguarding, rules and consents for using video calling.

*Designated person for uploading approved content.

* Designated person for postal support.

What happened? (Describe how the initiative developed)

In 2021, process maps created for Blended learning:

- Change of programme Forms
- Marking
- Feedback
- Health and wellbeing checks
- Auditing

- Digital timetables
- Risk assessments for blended learning introduced considering a number of risk ratings.

In 2021 we implemented a template for creating booklets and resources, we knew that we would no longer be able to provide as many online sessions, so each topic booklet, had an instruction video and a FORM to answer questions.

100% audit took place bi weekly.

Learners sites were updated bi weekly.

Developments to learners' sites include: request for help app and self-referral to IAGT services.

All subject areas included on the site according to a learner's study programme.

In 2022, we have continued to provide blended learning resources via postal and SharePoint sites.

Blended Learning risk assessment were added to pre-enrolment information to help plan for possible blended learning programme for individual learners.

Resources have been audited as part of the RARPA 3 deep dives (audits).

What were the actual outcomes of the initiative? (What progress was made by individuals for example in communication and social skills; in self-reliance and independence; sensory processing; emotional regulation and well-being)

2020: Over the last 14 weeks we have made, checked and used:

74 booklets for the PfA framework

145 booklets for functional skills

Learners had access online content via:

Teams: 68

SharePoint Users: 20

Loaned devices: 15 iPads - 1 Chromebook

BKSB users: 67

2021:

From the registers we have 75 individual Learners who have accessed Blended Learning at some point through the 2020-21 Academic Year. 68 Learners who have since returned to College.

2022:

5 learners accessing blended learning off campus for part- or full-time course.

Continuation of blended learning content provided bi weekly through out the academic year, with the introduction of 1st and 2nd years differentiated work.

Blended learning planned and used on campus with Schemes of work.

Learner feedback:

" It was nice being in a safe environment and not worrying yet still getting our work done that we needed to do in order to keep up to date. We missed going into college though and would still prefer that because it gets us out of the house but when covid- is bad its brilliant to be able to study at home because we feel safe."

Staff feedback:

"HWB abled us to keep in check with how the learners was feeling and what they struggled with on their work, this was when we found that Matthew was struggling with his Maths and was able to set up a 1:1 with the maths tutor to help. We also set up a target around asking for help, which he achieved and now feels confident in asking familiar staff for help at College and at home.

IAGT and therapy support was good for Isobel, Isobel did group work around working through her emotions and mindfulness sessions with her peers which Isobel felt it helped knowing others was feeling low too.

Completing all targets at home mum took photos and sent them through, or LSA's that completed TEAMS session was able to gain video and photo evidence using QR codes"

Next steps and lessons learnt

*Variety and flexibility of content to be provided:

*Padlet pages and PowerPoints

*More support throughout the year to support access to SharePoint sites and development of digital skills.