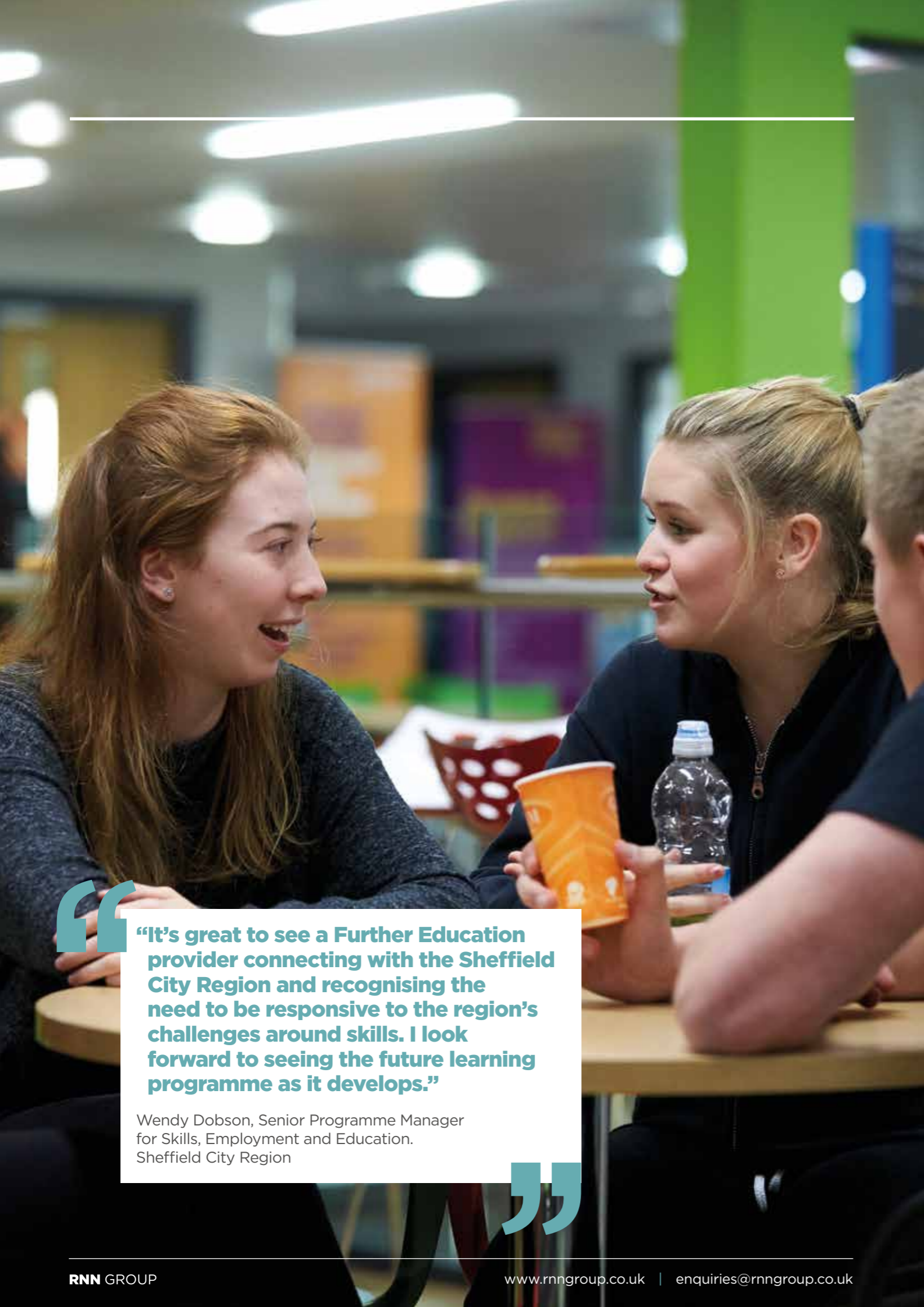




Teach Too

Our Story: Curriculum Innovation Hubs





“It’s great to see a Further Education provider connecting with the Sheffield City Region and recognising the need to be responsive to the region’s challenges around skills. I look forward to seeing the future learning programme as it develops.”

Wendy Dobson, Senior Programme Manager
for Skills, Employment and Education.
Sheffield City Region



Project Overview

The Curriculum Innovation Hub project has been funded by the Association of Colleges (AoC) and Education and Training Foundation (ETF) as part of the national Teach Too programme.

The RNN Group Teach Too bid focused on the organisational development of practice related to curriculum design and planning, specifically, how this could be better informed through long term, meaningful relationships with local employers and partners.

The ambition was to establish Curriculum Innovation Hubs in two pilot curriculum areas, (Digital and Hospitality and Catering) which would be centred on the Teach Too principles of collaboration and co-design. This would include activities such as; staff, employer and learner working groups to co-design curriculum, staff and employer partnerships which would facilitate professional development opportunities and learner voice feedback, influencing leadership at all levels of our organisation.

Through long-term partnerships with the stakeholders in each Curriculum Innovation Hub, it is our goal that we enable all delivery staff to consistently access dual professionalism activities which will better inform the design and delivery of curriculum and ultimately, benefit all learners to fulfil their individual potential.

Project Aims

The Curriculum Innovation Hub model aimed to explore the methods by which the following activities could take place:

- Curriculum innovation and design (including delivery, assessment and Higher Education opportunities)
- Improvement of dual professionalism (including training opportunities for employer staff e.g. skills swap)
- Active engagement of learners (with a focus on raising aspirations) through industry placements, masterclasses, workshops etc.
- Informing quality and standards (through liaison with awarding organisations)
- Sharing practice and raising awareness (through showcase events for curriculum areas and businesses, including local authority and LEP representatives)

Each Hub was formed on the principles of co-design and innovation in order to increase opportunities for employers, learners, awarding bodies, universities and voluntary agencies to co-create industry-standard and localised provision which:

- Raises learner and community aspirations
- Develops a broad set of employability skills relevant to industry
- Supports business growth (including training and development of staff/apprentices)
- Provides routes to higher level employment opportunities

What the project involved:



- Curriculum review workshops - where employers, learners and staff worked together to evaluate curriculum content and skills gaps in industry
- Employer-led masterclasses and workshops - which equipped staff and learners with specialist industry skills and knowledge
- Guest speakers - to raise the profile of career routes and opportunities in each sector
- Staff industry placements and shadowing activities - from which staff are translating the challenges faced in industry, into rich learning experiences for students



Employer and Student Experience



The Curriculum Innovation Hub pilot project engaged over 40 local employers across the Digital and Catering sectors, who were all involved at varying levels. Students from Rotherham College studying within these curriculum areas regularly worked with staff, employers and awarding bodies to provide feedback about their learning experience so far, reflections on how learning can better connect to industry and to find out more about the skills gaps which local employers had.

John Savage, Director of Business Development and Quality Management at NFPC said:

“The meal that students prepared and served was outstanding. The service was fantastic and every aspect of this special occasion was delivered and managed with high precision and professionalism.”

“The students are a credit to the College and clearly met our customers’ expectations. Everyone present congratulated the team for their outstanding service.”

Mark Baines, Chef Sales Manager of Braehead said:

“I think in the industry at the moment, it’s important for a Chef to have a high level of skill and experience. It was great that the students attacked the challenge with confidence and a great attitude. They should be taking this attitude with them into the workplace.”

Jamie Sefton, Managing Director of Games Republic said:

“The aim of our company is to make sure that designers and coders, both established and junior, that are working within the Yorkshire region have the opportunity to collaborate and work together on some fantastic projects.”

“This is why we regularly hold business-focused networking events in the region with major international companies such as Sony Interactive Entertainment Europe, Microsoft and Amazon to name a few. Being able to share and talk about these opportunities, the work we do, and how the industry is developing to students is really important in enabling them to be the sought after employees of the future.”

“Early engagement with students in the South Yorkshire area is crucial for the future success of DiSC, RNN Group and the wider community. We got involved in the project as we wanted to ensure young talent is not lost to outside the industry.”

Bob Dyson, Managing Director of DiSC

“I now know more about preparing game. When you work as a chef you may be given a full bird and told to make a meal out of it; I think this has helped us prepare for these demands in the workplace. I think these are skills that I could use in a professional restaurant. This is another thing I can say that I’ve now done.”

Shauna Hatton, Professional Cookery Student

“It was good to hear what employers want from us in their organisations. It’s important to understand how hard it is to get a job and learn the type of skills employers are looking for.”

Sam Brooks, Computing Student

“I’ve been involved in the project from an employer engagement perspective, and I think having employers coming into the College for masterclasses and receiving their feedback, enables our learners to gain that first-hand experience of industry standards.”

Ashley Vaines, Skills and Employability Tutor, RNN Group

“I’ve been working with learners to get their initial feedback about what they felt would be valuable to them in terms of work experience and industry intelligence. It’s important to understand how the students think the course they’re studying is preparing them for employment.”

“Overall, the learners in Digital have found the whole project to be an experience whereby they have been better able to determine what they want out of their career and what aspects of jobs in the sector do they have the necessary skills and experience for. As a result of all of the employer input from this project, learners are able to set themselves challenging targets and tailor their career goals.”

Sabia Iqbal, Progress Tutor, RNN Group



Staff Experience



The pilot Curriculum Innovation Hubs have been led by Will Sibley, Curriculum Manager for Catering and Hospitality, and Leanne Brunt, Curriculum Manager for Computing and Digital. A number of events and workshops have taken place to also involve a variety of staff members working in these departments, senior leaders, other Curriculum Managers and staff that specialise in student engagement, employability and industry placements.

The purpose of these workshops was to provide opportunities for staff, learners and employers to review, discuss and plan a range of future actions which would result in; opportunities for staff to undertake dual professionalism activities in the work place, masterclasses and workshops to develop subject specialist skills with learners and curriculum planning feedback, to inform the future offer of the college to the local community.

“Engaging with employers has better informed us as to the latest challenges being experienced in industry which can be included in our curriculum. In doing so, we’re meeting the needs of local employers and developing higher level skills and understanding of our learners. On this basis, we’re better able to secure future employment for our learners and maintain the currency of our curriculum.”

“The main benefit of this Teach Too pilot for students has been that they’re now more aware of the variety of routes into the Digital sector in Rotherham and how the skills and knowledge that they are developing is best placed to meet these job requirements. For staff, we have been able to refresh our knowledge and skills in industry settings which has resulted in opportunities for us to bring these challenges and circumstances back into curriculum and translate them into learning briefs for learners.”

Terry Wilding, Programme Leader, Computing

“I feel the project has gone really well. It’s been brilliant to have the opportunity to involve employers more heavily in our curriculum design, as well as to see how enthusiastic employers have been to come and work with staff and students. The students have really enjoyed the process, having their voices heard by employers and working with past students who now work in the industry to learn about their roles and relevant experience.”

Darren Foden, Curriculum Team Leader, Catering and Hospitality



Outcomes and Future Plans

Given the short time frame of the project, it is too early to measure impact on learner outcomes at this stage, however based upon a significant amount of activity, qualitative impact upon staff and the future plans of the organisation have been achieved. The following changes demonstrate positive progress as a direct result of the Teach Too programme:

- Strategic senior leadership commitment to dual professionalism activities which will be formally recorded via the internal HR platform on each employees individual record.
- Shifts in the pastoral support model will include greater reflection and planning time for students to develop the skills required by employers (as identified in the curriculum area skills matrix).
- Implementation of the Curriculum Innovation Hub model across all curriculum areas on all sites of RNN Group colleges, beginning in September 2019. This will result in increased and improved employer engagement practice which incorporates curriculum planning, design and delivery and greater focus on the local, economic plans and skills shortages. These practices will have direct impact upon the learning experiences of over 2,000 learners.
- A shift in organisational culture and development, with a focus on locally informed curriculum, long term and sustainable partnerships with employers and investment in staff and learner skills development.



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