

Re-Engage Programme- Wigan and Leigh College

HIGHLY COMMENDED - COMMUNITY INITIATIVE OF THE YEAR



Wigan and Leigh College's Re-Engage Programme is an inspiring community initiative that is transforming the educational futures of Electively Home Educated (EHE) young people. In response to a significant rise in EHE numbers, often involving learners that are disengaged from mainstream education, the College developed a nurturing programme that rebuilds academic ability.



Since its launch in October 2023, the initiative has supported 77 young people, providing small, adapted classes in accessible settings, with a focus on personal development.

The results are remarkable with a 100% GCSE pass rates, transformed attendance levels, and 100% positive destinations. **The Re-Engage Programme has restored hope and belonging for learners who once felt left behind.** By placing students and families at the heart of its design, and working closely with local authority partners, this initiative has created a scalable model of support that is already changing lives- and setting a national example of how to reimagine inclusive, post-16 education.

What inspired the creation of the Re-Engage programme aimed at supporting electively home educated young people?

The programme was created to promote better progression opportunities, post 16 for young people who have been home educated. Not having a GCSE in maths and English can present a real barrier to accessing Level 3 qualifications and equally having a graded baseline in these subjects, which employers highly value, offers life changing opportunities.

How does the programme work to re-engage vulnerable and disaffected learners back into mainstream education?

Referrals to the programme come from the local authority ensuring learners and their families are choosing to engage with the college. The groups are small and the location of the classrooms away from the busiest areas of the campus creates a safe, warm and welcoming learning environment. Assessment methods are designed to be fun, engaging and non-threatening and sessions are highly adapted to meet individual learner need. Particular attention is paid to managing anxiety, ensuring that teaching and learning is accessible, needs are met, and every learner is supported.

Since its launch in October 2023, the programme has supported 77 young people to attend mainstream education and sit GCSE exams. What have been the key factors in achieving these results?

Numbers on the programme have grown as news of Re-engage spreads in the EHE community. Over the summer period, parents' of EHE children have contacted each other via a WhatsApp group and made plans to meet ahead of starting in September. Our teaching and learning Academy works with English and maths teachers to develop their professional practice resulting in innovative teaching, varied assessment and intervention techniques. This builds very strong and positive relationships between staff and students.

The EHE team at the council keep in regular contact and review learner progress and capture learner voice ensuring our partnership work remains high priority. The young people themselves say they feel supported, understood and heard and this is critical to their success.

How does the Re-Engage programme help open doors to post-16 education and improve life chances for these young people?

Post 16-study programmes use grade 4 in English and maths as a baseline pass grade for progression. Employers also recognise grade 4 as the minimum expectation for most business needs. Without having taken any formal qualifications, it is much more challenging for EHE learners to demonstrate their true potential and progress at the right level for them. Re-engage afford these learners the opportunity to continue being home educated but also gain a formal GCSE qualification.

What challenges have you faced in engaging this particular group of learners, and how has the programme overcome them?

The challenge for us has been in managing the demand. EHE numbers are rising nationally and we are aware that we could offer more places if we had the capacity. We are limiting class size and we offer the classes on both college sites, in Wigan and Leigh; so this is a high cost venture and not one we can grow exponentially – however, this is mitigated by 2 factors.

- The referral system from the council meaning learners are introduced to us via the EHE team
- The rolling programme model that sees us enrol year 11 EHE learners in September at both sites and then we do a further enrolment of year 10 learners in January. These learners can get used to the college and progress onto their GCSE year in September.

How do you envision the future development and impact of the Re-Engage programme in supporting vulnerable young learners?

We are fully committed to this agenda. It widens participation, restores confidence and fills a real need. We will continue to enrol our EHE learners and invest in their future.

“We are immensely proud that our Re-Engage programme has been recognised in this way. The learners are a very important part of our college community and the programme is changing lives. When our 2023/24 cohort joined the programme, their average prior school attendance was 23.7%, with some below 10%. On Re-Engage, the average rose to 89%, with over half of Year 11s achieving attendance of 94% or higher and a third with perfect attendance.

The programme requires investment, but the return is evident in lives redirected, opportunities unlocked, and futures reclaimed. As one parent put it, “This gave our child a second chance we didn’t think was possible.”

ANNE-MARIE FRANCIS

Vice Principal- Curriculum
of Wigan & Leigh College

