

Daniel Wright

Programme Manager Higher Skills and Adults

BARNSELY COLLEGE - SOUTH YORKSHIRE



Your teaching experience

What problem or opportunity led you to participate in MAP?

The primary opportunity that led us to participate in MAP was the need to create more flexible, part time higher education options for adult learners. We identified a growing demand from individuals who wanted to upskill, retrain, or progress academically but were unable to commit to traditional full time study due to work, family, or other personal commitments.

By participating in MAP, we were able to explore a modular approach to delivery that made higher level learning more accessible and achievable. This model supported learners who wanted to develop professionally, gain recognised higher education credits, and progress either within their current roles or towards further study, while balancing learning alongside existing responsibilities.

What modules were selected for delivery, and why were these chosen?

The modules selected for delivery were Unit 2: Networking and Unit 10: Cyber Security. These units were chosen deliberately as they provided a clear progression from our existing parttime Level 3 pathways, enabling learners to build on prior knowledge as they moved into higher level study.

In addition, both modules aligned strongly with local and regional skills needs within the digital

and computing sector. The Cyber Security unit, in particular, allowed us to work collaboratively with a cyber security firm to help shape the course content, ensuring that learning was industry relevant and reflected current practice. This strengthened the vocational focus of the provision while maintaining clear academic progression routes.

How was the modular offer structured in terms of credits, delivery mode, and learner support?

The modular offer was structured to allow learners to achieve up to 30 credits, delivered through two 15 credit units. This provided flexibility for learners to engage with higher education at a manageable pace, while still gaining meaningful, recognised credit.

Delivery was designed as a parttime model, with teaching taking place one full day per week over a 15week period. This was supported by a blended approach, incorporating guided self-study alongside face-to-face delivery to reinforce learning and allow learners to work independently between sessions.

Learner support was embedded throughout the course. Tutors provided structured group teaching as well as one-to-one support, ensuring individual needs were addressed. Outside of timetabled sessions, learners had access to tutors through Microsoft Teams, which was used as the college's virtual learning environment to maintain regular communication, share resources, and provide ongoing academic support. ►

How was the delivery model designed to support accessibility for the learners you were targeting?

The delivery model was intentionally designed to maximise accessibility for adult and part time learners. Teaching was delivered on a part time basis, with one dedicated day per week, allowing learners to balance study alongside work, family, and other commitments.

To further support accessibility, the course structure included overlapping content across weeks, ensuring that learners who were unable to attend a session due to external commitments could re engage without being disadvantaged. This approach helped maintain continuity, reduce barriers to participation, and support retention across the programme.

What aspects of delivery worked particularly well, and why?

Face-to-face delivery worked particularly well for this cohort of adult learners. In-person sessions supported stronger engagement, clearer communication, and more immediate feedback, which was especially valuable when delivering technical content.

The classroom environment also encouraged discussion, peer support, and confidence building, allowing learners to ask questions and apply concepts in real time. For the adult learners on this course, this approach proved to be the most effective way to support understanding, motivation, and progression.

What worked well in the admissions process?

The admissions process worked particularly well through a targeted and personalised approach. We focused initially on existing Level 3 parttime adult learners, who already had a relationship with the college and a clear progression interest into higher level study. This helped ensure the course reached learners who were well prepared and motivated to progress.

In parallel, we worked with employers by promoting the course as a training and CPD opportunity for staff working within relevant industries. This strengthened recruitment by aligning the offer directly with workforce development needs.

Additionally, providing in person enrolment slots proved valuable, allowing prospective learners to receive guidance, ask questions, and complete enrolment with confidence. This supported conversion and reduced barriers often associated with more remote admissions processes.

How were the courses marketed?

The courses were marketed through a combination of online promotion and targeted employer engagement. Online marketing was used across various platforms to raise awareness of the offer and reach prospective adult learners interested in upskilling or progression into higher education.

In addition, the college's Employer Engagement team played a key role by working directly with specific businesses and existing employer links. This targeted approach helped ensure the course was promoted to organisations and individuals for whom the provision was most relevant, supporting both recruitment and alignment with industry needs. ►

“

By delivering higher education modules on a flexible, part time basis, we were able to support both individual learner progression and employer upskilling, while maintaining clear routes into full HNC and HND pathways.”

What were the headline recruitment and conversion figures, and how did these compare to expectations?

The initial recruitment target for each cohort was eight learners. In practice, the first term exceeded expectations, with ten learners enrolling, while the second term met the target with eight learners enrolled. This demonstrated strong interest and confirmed the viability of the modular, part time offer.

Conversion rates were particularly strong among learners who were directly targeted and engaged through conversations or enquiries. Where prospective learners had the opportunity to discuss the course in detail and understand how it aligned with their progression or employment goals, this translated effectively into enrolments. Overall, recruitment outcomes met our expectations and validated the targeted approach taken.

Who were the learners that engaged with the programme?

The learners who engaged with the programme came from a range of adult backgrounds and life circumstances. Participants included individuals who were both in employment and not currently employed, reflecting the flexibility and accessibility of the modular offer.

The cohort was male, with learners aged between 22 and 49, bringing a mix of prior experience, career stages, and progression goals. This diversity supported peer learning and demonstrated the programme's ability to engage adult learners seeking either employment, upskilling, or progression into further higher education.

How well did the modules meet the needs of learners?

The modules met the needs of learners effectively. They were designed to build directly on knowledge and skills developed through our Level 3 parttime pathways, providing a clear and logical progression into higher level study.

The content also aligned well with employer expectations. Learners who were supported by their employers were able to apply their learning directly to the workplace, while employers recognised the value of the modules in supporting upskilling and professional development. This ensured the provision met both individual learner aspirations and workforce development needs.

What positive outcomes were reported for learners?

Learners reported a stronger understanding of the subject area, particularly in relation to higher level technical concepts introduced through the modules. Successfully completing the units enabled learners to gain recognised higher education credits, which supported both confidence and career progression.

For some learners, this contributed directly to job progression or securing employment, while others used the achievement as a stepping stone into full time higher education pathways in computing. Overall, the programme supported a range of positive outcomes aligned to learners' individual goals, whether progression within employment or continuation into further study.

Were employer relationships leveraged to support recruitment and relevance? What worked well in engaging employers?

Yes, employer relationships were leveraged to support both recruitment and the relevance of the provision. This was primarily facilitated through the college's Employer Engagement team, who worked as a dedicated link between the programme and local businesses.

The team supported engagement by promoting the course directly to employers, identifying organisations with relevant skills needs, and positioning the modules as a training and CPD opportunity for staff. This approach helped ensure the course content remained industry relevant while also supporting targeted recruitment through established employer networks. ►

What are your future plans for modular provision under the LLE?

Our future plans are to continue developing and refining modular provision using this delivery model under the Lifelong Learning Entitlement (LLE). Building on the success of the initial delivery, we aim to expand the modular offer to cover a broader range of units and pathways within computing.

In particular, we intend to grow the provision to support progression across the full HNC and HND pathways, giving parttime adult learners greater flexibility in how they accumulate credits and work towards higher level qualifications. This approach will play a key role in supporting our progression roadmap for adult learners, enabling them to upskill, retrain, or transition into higher education in a way that fits around their existing commitments. ■

Read an existing Barnsley College student case study from course completion