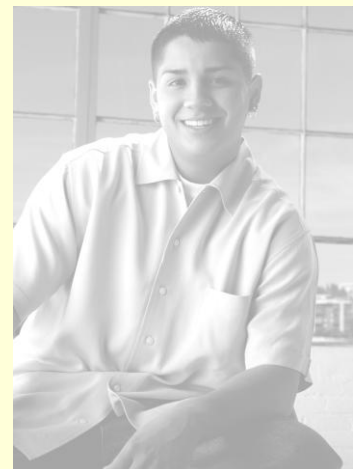




# Preparing young people for the future:

## Progression to apprenticeships and vocational learning





# Contents

<b>Contents</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>Introduction</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>The Wolf Report and others</b> .....	<b>5</b>
The Importance of Teaching: Schools White Paper .....	5
The Wolf Report .....	5
Ready to grow: business priorities for education and skills.....	5
The Forgotten Half – a Demos Report.....	6
<b>Pre-Apprenticeships</b> .....	<b>8</b>
Pre-Apprenticeship Courses .....	8
<b>An introduction to NOCN Qualifications</b> .....	<b>9</b>
NOCN Qualifications Structure .....	9
Assessment.....	9
Certification .....	9
<b>Practical applications of NOCN Qualifications</b> .....	<b>10</b>
<b>NOCN Skills Towards Enabling Progression (Step-UP) E3/L1</b> .....	<b>10</b>
NOCN IT User Skills (ITQ) L1/2/3 .....	10
NOCN Developing Skills for Employment L1/2.....	10
NOCN Economic Wellbeing and Financial Capability L1/2.....	11
NOCN Personal Wellbeing L1/2.....	11
NOCN Qualifications in Progression E3, L1/2/3 .....	11
NOCN Career Education and Preparation for Working Life L1/2.....	11
NOCN Independent Living Qualifications E1/2/3.....	11
<b>Case studies</b> .....	<b>12</b>
<b>About Us</b> .....	<b>15</b>

# Introduction

*“The many ways in which the term vocational is used reflect the many different purposes which 14-19 education serves and its large and diverse study body. Some qualifications are highly specific, orientated to a particular occupation. Others are more general, and are referred to sometimes as vocationally-related or pre-vocational. Some are very difficult and demanding, others not. A particular qualification can serve different groups, some with a clear career goal and others without, just a for a particular individual, a combination of the highly specific and the highly general may be more appropriate than just one or just the other.”*

*(Review of Vocational Education – The Wolf Report, Alison Wolf, March 2011)*

This paper, written in response to the Wolf Report and other reports published recently around the state of the current qualifications and skills landscape, explores how flexible pre-apprenticeship qualifications can be constructed to meet the needs of young people struggling to access the apprenticeship opportunities available to them.

In these times of economic uncertainty young people need every opportunity to gain the skills required both for successful employment and for accessing further learning. However, the reports referred to in this paper highlight the perceived lack of soft skills required for successful employment.

Qualifications and courses that build the confidence of young people, prepare them for the workplace and are part of a cohesive, broad and appropriate programme of learning are key in easing that transition or progression - be that progression to an apprenticeship, paid employment or further learning.

This paper provides real life examples of qualifications developed in collaboration with, and in response to demand from, schools and other providers in order to develop learners' employability skills and understanding of the world of work.

These qualifications also improve the learners' understanding of progression opportunities through FE / HE enrichment activities, greater understanding of the world of work through Work-based Learning (WBL) and pre-apprenticeship taster sessions.

It has been demonstrated many times that such qualifications and courses are a positive intervention for those at risk of becoming NEET offering the opportunity of learning by doing – writing for meaning embedded within a science project; speaking and listening skills within interview skills. In many cases the learner does not know they are “learning” until the qualification has been achieved. The Coalition Government plans to provide 200,000 apprenticeship starts every year by 2015; young people must be in a position to take advantage of these places.

This paper demonstrates how.

## The Wolf Report and others

Much has been said about the **Wolf Report**<sup>1</sup> and following the publication of the Government response in May 2011 the way forward is becoming clearer.

Reviewing the relevant reports and white papers published in the last year several themes are emerging:

### The Importance of Teaching: Schools White Paper<sup>2</sup>

This paper included support for Apprenticeships with clear routes into Apprenticeships to widen access. It was also supportive of PSHE, announcing an internal review to determine how best to support schools to improve the quality of PSHE delivery.

It also flagged that, following the Wolf Review, it will make necessary reforms to vocational qualifications and support more young people to continue in education or training to age 18.

### The Wolf Report

This report was published three months after the Schools white paper and discussed the fact that employers value work experience:

*"...because a genuine workplace teaches both general and specific work-skills more effectively than any education-based simulation can, however hard it tries..."*

Professor Alison Wolf, The Wolf Report, March 2011

But countered this by saying that it is difficult for under 19s to gain access to apprenticeships and that this was also the case for LLDD and disaffected learners. The ideal learning experience is a core curriculum with complementary, and relevant, work experience. Helping young people to obtain genuine work experience – and therefore, what the CBI calls 'employability skills' should be one of the highest priorities.

### Ready to grow: business priorities for education and skills<sup>3</sup>

The CBI published a survey of education and skills in May 2010 which defined employability skills. These definitions were arrived at following extensive collaboration with the business community. There are a set of attributes, skills and knowledge that all labour market participants should possess to ensure they have the capability of being effective in the workplace – to the benefit of themselves, their employer and the wider economy. They include:

**Self-management** – readiness to accept responsibility, flexibility, resilience, self-starting, appropriate assertiveness, time management, readiness to improve own performance based on feedback/reflective learning.

**Teamworking** – respecting others, co-operating, negotiating/persuading, contributing to discussions, and awareness of interdependence with others.

**Business and customer awareness** – basic understanding of the key drivers for business success – including the importance of innovation and taking calculated risks – and the need to provide customer satisfaction and build customer loyalty.

<sup>1</sup> Review of Vocational Education - The Wolf Report, Alison Wolf, March 2011

<sup>2</sup> The Importance of Teaching: The Schools White Paper 2010. Department for Education, November 2010

<sup>3</sup> Ready to grow: business priorities for education and skills Education and skills survey 2010, CBI, May 2010

**Problem solving** – analysing facts and situations and applying creative thinking to develop appropriate solutions.

**Communication and literacy** – application of literacy, ability to produce clear, structured written work and oral literacy - including listening and questioning.

**Application of numeracy** – manipulation of numbers, general mathematical awareness and its application in practical contexts (e.g. measuring, weighing, estimating and applying formulae).

**Application of information technology** – basic IT skills, including familiarity with word processing, spreadsheets, file management and use of internet search engines.

Underpinning all these attributes, the key foundation, must be a positive attitude: a 'can-do' approach, a readiness to take part and contribute, openness to new ideas and a drive to make these happen. Employers also value entrepreneurial graduates who demonstrate an innovative approach, creative thinking, bring fresh knowledge and challenge assumptions.

### **The Forgotten Half – a Demos Report<sup>4</sup>**

*Graduate unemployment has repeatedly hit the headlines since the start of the recession. Yet it is the 50 per cent of young people who do not go to university that are the least protected in the labour market.*

(The Forgotten Half a demos and private equity foundation report, Jonathan Birdwell, Matt Grist, Julia Margo, March 2011)

This report was published at about the same time as the Wolf Report. It defines five employment premiums – attributes that contribute to a successful career and/or fulfilling employment.

**The character premium** — capabilities and 'soft skills' such as the ability to communicate effectively, apply oneself to a task, commit to long-term goals, and work effectively in a team are now as important as academic ability in predicting earnings at age 30.

**The literacy and numeracy premium** — literacy and numeracy skills boost earnings and employment rates, all other things being equal.

**The work premium** — work is the best way to build employability skills, and early experiences of work lead to more employment over the life course.

**The technical premium** — training and education to level 3 (A-levels or equivalent) yields a substantial wage return — for example, completing a level 3 apprenticeship. Depending on the qualifications, training schemes and degrees, level 3 vocational qualifications can yield wage returns similar to university degrees.

**The graduate premium** — graduates (on average) gain a wage premium of £100,000 over the course of their lives

The Demos report also identifies the following as essential labour market preparation that should be delivered by schools:

---

<sup>4</sup> The forgotten half a demos and private equity foundation report, Jonathan Birdwell et al, March 2011

Teaching core literacy and numeracy skills, including recovery and/or consolidation through intensive learning across primary and secondary schooling — ‘vocationalised’ academic learning (academic skills learned in vocational contexts).

Engaging and creative activities that build ‘soft skills’ and ‘character capabilities’ through practical learning, enterprise and entrepreneurship, and community-based learning.

High quality work experience and employability skills training, including:

- opportunities for high-quality practical and vocational learning
- the teaching of specific ‘employability skills’ like CV writing and interview techniques
- meaningful work experience
- business engagement in education
- high quality information, advice and guidance on work and careers.

It is by forming relationships with employers and the local community that schools can improve the life chances of the ‘other 50 per cent’ – those currently disengaged or potentially NEET. To further address high levels of youth unemployment, and to provide further progression routes on to Apprenticeships, on 12 May 2011 the Prime Minister announced a new Access to Apprenticeship programme for 10,000 16-24 year olds. Learners on this programme ‘are embarking on a progressive route to a gold-plated apprenticeship.’ and will be guaranteed an Apprenticeship on successful completion of the programme. ([ALP Press release 12 May](#)).

The following section of this paper looks in more detail at how a pre-Apprenticeship course might be constructed.

## Pre-Apprenticeships

Apprenticeships are valuable for young people because:

First, they provide access to real-world practical learning with up-to-date methods and technologies, and highly skilled workers. For some careers, such as medical surgery, construction, catering and hairdressing, real-world practical learning to exacting standards is really the only way to learn the necessary skills. The responsibility for such time-consuming training cannot fall solely on employers in today's labour market.

Second, apprenticeships are valuable because they combine real-world practical learning with formal and theoretical learning in further education colleges. This dual nature of apprenticeships means young people are able to gain a more expert grasp of their field. In addition, general education can be incorporated into apprenticeships so that gaps in literacy and numeracy skills can be filled, as well as the further development of these skills through more traditional academic subjects.

Third, apprenticeships build character and employability skills. As well as providing valuable practical learning opportunities, the induction into the practices and expectations of a profession that apprenticeships provide is apt to build these latter skills. Learning to get on with others, work in a team, motivate oneself, use initiative, and develop self-understanding are all capabilities built by good apprenticeships. This fact is borne out by evidence that there is a wage premium for young people who undertake apprenticeships even if they leave the profession for which they trained. In other words, apprenticeships build character and employability skills that constitute the modern 'transferable skills' that employers repeatedly state are lacking in young people.

### Pre-Apprenticeship Courses

A pre-apprenticeship course is a stepping stone to help a young person get into the industry or occupation of their choice. Completion of a pre-apprenticeship course will help to:

- prepare them for the working environment in the selected industry;
- provide basic skills, or improve existing skills;
- and pave the way for the learning they will get as part of their apprenticeship.

Pre-apprenticeship provision is very important to prepare learners and "get them on the ladder" for an apprenticeship.

So how do you construct a pre-apprenticeship course? The following sections introduce the approach to qualifications taken by NOCN and offer some real-life case studies to demonstrate them.

## An introduction to NOCN Qualifications

The unitised and credit-based structure of NOCN qualifications provides small packages of learning that can be delivered in limited time frames. This approach enables a school, college or other learning provider to tailor courses to meet the needs of diverse cohorts of learners.

### NOCN Qualifications Structure

NOCN qualifications consist of a combination of units of assessment, each with an assigned level and credit value, which allow learners to achieve at their own pace and build upon towards a full qualification over time. Each 10 hours of learning has one credit attached. Rules of Combination determine how these units can be combined to achieve different qualifications at different levels.

Level	Level Indicators	Comparative Level of study
Entry	Recognise basic knowledge and skills and the ability to apply learning in everyday situations under direct guidance or supervision.	Entry 1/2/3
Level 1	Recognise basic knowledge and skills and the ability to apply learning with guidance or supervision.	NVQ 1 GCSE Grades D–G
Level 2	Recognise the ability to gain a good knowledge and understanding of a subject area of work or study, and to perform varied tasks with some guidance or supervision.	NVQ 2 GCSE Grades A*– C
Level 3	Recognise the ability to gain, and where relevant apply a range of knowledge, skills and understanding. Learning at this level involves obtaining detailed knowledge and skills.	NVQ 3 A levels

There are frequently parallel units at different levels so teaching can also be differentiated in a class to suit learners of different abilities.

### Assessment

Teachers, Tutors or Instructors devise assessment tasks to meet the specification for assessment detailed for each unit. The activity must meet the standards detailed in the assessment grid provided on each unit.

Methods of assessment include:

- Practical Demonstration
- Practice File
- Role Play/Simulation
- Group Discussion
- Written Description
- Oral Question and Answer
- Essay
- Report
- Production of an Artefact
- Case Study
- Reflective Log/Diary
- Performance or Exhibition
- Written Question and Answer
- Exam or Test

The flexibility of these methods of assessment means that learning through doing and the recognition of time spent in work experience can all count towards the achievement of a qualification. They also encourage learning and promote confidence amongst those for whom English is a new language:

*We recently had a case of a student new to the country with EAL issues who arrived at the beginning of year 11. However it was clear that he had a thrust for learning and so valued what he was being taught by the Leicestershire Personal Development Programme (LPDP) course [accredited through the NOCN Certificate in Careers Education and Preparation for Working Life]. By the end of year 11 he was achieving level 2. He had applied for a post-16 college who wanted to place him on only level 1 courses. I sent them his LPDP work (NOCN) which secured him on a level 2 course and saved him a year of his life which he was so grateful for. This flexibility is such a strength of the qualification.*

## **Certification**

At the end of a course learners will be awarded a credit transcript specifying the local course title, e.g. Developing Construction Skills if that is the setting chosen and a subsequent qualification certificate will be issued when the learner has achieved the required number of credits to satisfy the rules of combination of the chosen qualification, for example an NOCN Award in Developing Skills for Employment.

## Practical applications of NOCN Qualifications

Several suites of NOCN qualifications can be tailored to provide pre-apprenticeship courses. Please find below outlines of relevant qualifications and details of where further information can be found, followed by case studies demonstrating how the qualifications are being used.

### NOCN Skills Towards Enabling Progression (Step-UP) E3/L1

The NOCN Step-UP qualifications have been developed specifically to meet the needs of both pre and post 16 learners. The qualifications are a flexible and responsive range of general and pre-vocational qualifications, designed with the aim to progress learners into further learning and/or employment.

The units available can be used to create personalised learning programmes tailored to learners' needs and can be combined to create varying sizes (Award/Certificate/Diploma) and levels (E3/L1) of qualification. Subject areas include personal and social development, work-related learning, enterprise, many vocational tasters as well as being able to support skills development in English, maths and ICT.

The qualifications attract performance points and can enable the "more challenging", hard to reach learners to achieve success.

With generic work skills and specific vocationally based preparatory units these qualifications are ideal as a pre-apprenticeship qualification. They give learners the confidence to move forward and progress into further learning and/or work and provide evidence to employers of the skills developed, commitment to learn and work-readiness.

<http://www.nocn.org.uk/qualifications/step-up>

### NOCN IT User Skills (ITQ) L1/2/3

The NOCN IT USER Skills qualifications are available in a range of sizes (Award, Certificate, Diploma) and levels (1, 2, and 3).

They have been developed with e-skills UK, the Sector Skills Council (SSC) for Business and Information Technology and aim to equip individuals with the IT user skills needed for full participation in employment and society.

The qualifications recognise the needs of employers for ICT qualifications that reflect real-world skills and the challenges of work-place learning, and as part of a pre-Apprenticeship programme, enable recognition of the IT skills that employers want.

<http://www.nocn.org.uk/qualifications/it-user-skills-%28itq%29>

### NOCN Developing Skills for Employment L1/2

The NOCN Developing Skills for Employment qualifications at Level 1 and 2 develop a wide range of skills relevant to vocational employment which allow young people to make informed career and progression choices and build their self-esteem and confidence.

The qualifications also allow learners to gain skills in preparing for the world of work through vocational units that allow them to 'taste' different work-related activities, using practical activities, work simulations and/or actual work experience.

This means that they can find out more about areas of work they think they might be interested in before applying for apprenticeships, , perhaps, making more considered choices when they do.

<http://www.nocn.org.uk/qualifications/developing-skills-for-employment>

## **NOCN Economic Wellbeing and Financial Capability L1/2**

### **NOCN Personal Wellbeing L1/2**

These L1 and L2 qualifications provide opportunities for young people to gain recognition for cross-curricular dimensions of their learning: identity and cultural diversity: healthy lifestyles, community participation; enterprise; financial capability; career education and employability skills.

Each Award and Certificate contains parallel Level 1 and Level 2 units to accredit learners with a 'spiky profile'.

As part of a pre-Apprenticeship offer, these qualifications recognise the 'soft skills' such as communication, team-working, equality and diversity, that employers have identified as an important characteristic in any future employee, as well as allowing the would-be apprentice to research various vocational areas prior to making a decision. One key unit in the Economic Wellbeing Qualifications explores 'Opportunities in Work-based learning and Apprenticeships'. Preparation for the process of applying for an apprenticeship (resume and interview skills) can also be accredited through these qualifications.

<http://www.nocn.org.uk/qualifications/economic-wellbeing-and-financial-capability>  
<http://www.nocn.org.uk/qualifications/personal-wellbeing>

## **NOCN Qualifications in Progression E3, L1/2/3**

The Progression Qualifications are a flexible and responsive range of general and pre-vocational qualifications available in different sizes and at Levels E3, 1, 2 and 3. They contain units in literacy and numeracy, ICT, employability, personal development and taster units in a variety of industry sectors.

These qualifications are for learners aged 16+. They are designed to provide progression opportunities into further education, apprenticeships in specific sectors or other employment, and are widely used in FE settings nationally.

<http://www.nocn.org.uk/qualifications/progression>

## **NOCN Career Education and Preparation for Working Life L1/2**

These Awards at Level 1 and Level 2 enable learners to understand themselves and their capabilities in order to identify career and employment opportunities. They aim to stimulate an interest in and an understanding of the world of work, business and industry, as well as assisting learners to create a short and longer term plan to achieve their goals. In conjunction with relevant IAG which can be embedded into the qualification, these awards can provide an excellent introduction to Apprenticeships as a way in to the world of work.

<http://www.nocn.org.uk/qualifications/careers-education-and-preparation-for-working-life>

## **NOCN Independent Living Qualifications E1/2/3**

These Awards, Certificates and Diploma at E1, E2 and E3 develop not only the personal skills that are a pre-cursor to employability, but also skills and knowledge about living in the community and the individual's rights and responsibilities. Units accrediting learners' interests and leisure pursuits may also provide an introduction to employment possibilities via further learning as appropriate to individual learner needs and aspirations.

<http://www.nocn.org.uk/qualifications/independent-living>

## Case studies

### **Nightingale Academy proves that creative approaches can keep low achievers engaged**

The Vocational Academy at Nightingale School in Wandsworth provides high quality vocational provision for boys with learning difficulties and excluded students with multiple difficulties from schools throughout the Borough.

In addition they started an ESF funded, post 16 provision to enable students from the Pupil Referral Unit and Nightingale School to access the Academy's courses and in 2009 they were judged outstanding as part of the school's OFSTED inspection.



The Academy offers 14 different vocational pathways for learners from 14 to 25 and includes OCN London Region accredited vocational courses in Construction, Motor Vehicle, Music and Sports skills into which they embed literacy and numeracy skills. Steve Cairns, Head of the Academy, has found that “the NOCN Step-UP qualifications are pitched at just the right level for our students and are very easy to follow. The spiky profile also enables mixed ability learners who cannot always achieve at one level to gain partial achievement at a lower level and still build up credits towards a full national qualification”.

A typical student at the Academy may have been excluded from his mainstream school where he had not achieved any recognised qualifications.

The achievement of vocational qualifications at level 1 enables him to be accepted on to a level 2 vocational course in one of several local FE colleges with which the Academy has progression agreements. The avoidance of classroom based activities wherever possible and close personal support and encouragement from staff develops motivation and successful progression success.

Professional footballers and boxers give their time to support the sports training programmes and the Academy also runs after school clubs in both sports. The recent addition of a small animal farm enables special needs students to develop skills in caring for the animals and encourages visits from local primary school children.

## VESA 13-19 Education Support Agency

VESA 13-19 Education Support Agency has, for many years, been co-ordinating a Consortium of schools in Leicester/shire which has focussed on ways of giving value to learners' experiences in what is increasingly becoming known as the Personal Development Curriculum [PDC]. The Consortium includes 7 Leicester City 11 to 16 schools, 4 Leicestershire Upper Schools [14 to 19] and 2 schools from Northamptonshire which have recently joined the group.

In recent years, the Consortium schools have all been successfully delivering the NOCN qualification "Careers Education and Preparation for Working Life". The main focus has been on the Level 2 qualification and in some of the schools it is being delivered across the whole Key Stage 4 cohort. This is a significant commitment on behalf of those schools who generally allocate a minimum of 2 hours a week teaching time and use specialist teams for delivery [as opposed to delivery by all tutors]. The return for this is a qualification that is equivalent to 2 GCSEs [B grade at Level 2] and this has made a real contribution to overall student achievement, not to mention the impact on school performance and league table points. Other benefits have included:

The status of careers education and work related learning has been enhanced for both students and staff – particularly important given recent Government proposals to remove the statutory status of these curriculum themes.

The quality of teaching and learning in these subjects has been improved. Because of the accreditation, careers education and work related learning can justify its place in the curriculum and has "earned" the time allocated to it.

Learners have an experience which enables them to have a better understanding of themselves, what future options are open to them and how to plan for the future.

## Tower Project

Knowing that he wanted to work with cars, Lewis secured a college place on an electrical engineering course, but found his confidence dwindled after struggling with the exams. He said: 'When I failed my third year, I felt confused about what to do next so I sent my CV to lots of companies but finding a job was really difficult.'

Supported by mum Fay, Lewis visited Connexions, the advice service for 13-19 year olds, where he was told about an event for young people in his situation. Fay said: 'It was hard watching my son because I felt like he was stagnating. He kept trying but he was just hitting a brick wall'.

Lewis went along to the event with Fay, and there they met Rejaur Rahman, an advisor at Tower Project, a charity that supports children, young people and adults with disabilities. Enthused by Tower Project's emphasis on individual support and group work, Lewis signed up with the charity to complete a National Open College Network Level 1 Personal Development programme (accredited through the NOCN Step-UP qualification) and hasn't looked back since. In just two months, he has completed the National Open College Network Level 1 in Literacy and is currently working towards the Level 2 as well as an equivalent numeracy qualification.

Tower Project has also been able to set up work experience for Lewis at a garage near his home, which Rejaur hopes could lead to an apprenticeship. Able to see the huge change in Lewis' confidence, his mum is grateful for everyone's efforts. She said: 'Thanks to Rejaur and his amazing team, my son is now able to look to the future and says that one day he would like to own a garage and give back to the community, helping children who are in the same position as he was.'

Over the next few months Lewis will continue his journey with Tower Project, gaining qualifications and hands on experience while he takes steps towards realising his dream.

Lewis said: 'Working with Tower Project has changed my life. Without meeting Rejaur at the event, I wouldn't be where I am today.'

## West Nottinghamshire College 14-16 Foundation Pathway

West Nottinghamshire College, which has sites across the Mansfield and Ashfield districts of Nottinghamshire, is Ofsted-rated 'Outstanding' and an LSIS Beacon College. It provides a range of academic and vocational qualifications at all levels to more than 20,000 full and part-time students including learners aged 14-16 who attend the college's 'Schools Academy' programmes.

The NOCN Step-UP qualifications are part of the college's post-14 vocational offer for learners who are not fully engaged in their statutory education for a variety of reasons. Learners have their first experience of college life on a 'day-release' basis from their 'home' school and enjoy a wide choice of vocational options that supports their transition into college post-16.

There are currently 56 learners registered for the NOCN Step-Up Certificate, with a further 10 learners completing units – which count towards a Step-Up award, certificate or diploma – both at college and at their home school.

The college's Schools Academy Manager, Cate Hunt, believes the NOCN Step-UP qualifications allow learners to taste vocational options in an industry-standard environment prior to making choices about their future learning and career post-16.

"The Step-UP qualifications are structured in short, achievable step-by-step units made up of short projects that build up and allow learners to plot their own progress, which helps to re-motivate them back into learning," explained Cate.

"These qualifications can act as a springboard to further vocational studies in a chosen subject, or in some cases, bring about the realisation that a subject is just not for them.

"For some of these learners it's the first time they've ever achieved anything, which boosts their self-confidence and raises their aspirations."

### Learner progression

Michael, who started with the college as a year 11 learner, attended one day a week to study NOCN ICT units at Entry Level 3. The following year he enrolled full-time at the college to study ICT Entry Level Certificate plus maths and English, and went on to achieve an ICT Practitioners Software Development BTEC 1<sup>st</sup>.

Michael is currently studying a BTEC qualification in the same sector. He said: "I was always interested in computers. These courses and qualifications gave me a broader insight into different areas of ICT – and it all started with the NOCN ICT units."

Next step for Michael learner is higher education – either a foundation degree at West Nottinghamshire College or at university.

Another learner, George, who has progressed from achieving Entry 3 and Level 1 Step-UP units in painting and decorating, joinery and IT across years 10 and 11, is now studying a BTEC Extended Diploma in Construction and the Built Environment at the college. Although George had an idea of what he wanted to do, he admits to having lost focus and the NOCN units helped him get back on track.

In years 10 and 11 Joanne chose to study NOCN Step-UP units in beauty including personal presentation, basic beauty and manicure. After achieving these, Joanne realised this was not her preferred vocation so in the following year she changed direction and enrolled on the painting and decorating units. Upon leaving school she enrolled full-time at the college to study the Construction Skills Level 1 Diploma. On completion of the foundation year, she will decide which area of the construction industry she wishes to specialise in.

Another example of a learner using the NOCN Step-UP units as a vocational 'taster' is Leanne, who in year 10 studied childcare followed by painting and decorating in year 11. Upon leaving school she felt ready to choose between the two vocations and is now studying towards a Childcare Certificate at the college.

Leanne said: "It was good fun last year on the schools programme. I got qualifications at the end of it, which helped me choose what I wanted to do this year."

## About Us

The regional OCNs, all not for profit registered charity, are part of the Open College Network operating in England and Northern Ireland.

With over 25 years' experience in the education sector, we lead the market in the recognition of achievement through the award of credit for units and qualifications. Dedicated to widening participation, social inclusion, employer engagement and lifelong learning for all, OCNs support flexible, responsive and quality assured learning opportunities whether in the classroom, at work, in the community or through distance learning.

NOCN and the OCNs are licensed as awarding bodies by Ofqual.

If you would like to find out more about NOCN qualifications please contact your OCN North East Region Development Manager or;

### **OCN North East Region**

1 Palmer Road  
South West Industrial Estate  
Peterlee  
Co Durham SR8 2HU

T 0191 518 6550

F 0191 5186551

[www.ocnner.org.uk](http://www.ocnner.org.uk)