

NJC 2014-2019 Report Executive Summary

Each year thousands of young people leave Scottish schools with poor qualifications that do not equip them for the labour market. Some get insecure low-paid jobs. Most spend much of their lives unemployed. Each case is a personal tragedy. There is also a huge cost to society in terms of wasted human potential and increased costs of welfare, health and criminal justice.

The Scottish Government (SG) identified two areas of concern: the suitability of school leavers for employment and the disengagement of a large minority of school leavers and, following his contribution to Welfare to Work, as part of the City of Glasgow's Strategic Business Plan, Jim McColl was asked to investigate these. In 2011 McColl spoke with all of Glasgow's secondary head teachers and established that the difficulty did not occur at the time of leaving school, young people were beginning to fail much earlier than this. For this group school had ceased to be meaningful and by the end of their second year at high school they had disengaged and many had stopped attending. These young people were destined for failure.

In Glasgow every year over 700 young people leave school at the statutory leaving age. Of those around 50% go on to employment or college, 30% with skills development or activity agreements and 20% disappear off the radar, and do not engage with any systems of support. From the information available, the same percentages apply to Dundee and Edinburgh and likely to reflect the position across the rest of Scotland. These percentages have been consistent over a number of years. It is this lost 20% of statutory leavers that the junior college concept, was set up to help, a subset of all S4 leavers.

As the Scottish Government did not act on McColl's recommendations he felt morally bound to do so himself and set up Newlands Junior College (NJC), on the Southside of Glasgow, created as a demonstrator, a model, *"a junior college for young teenagers that would give them support and opportunity to move onto a successful and rewarding future."*

Newlands Junior College was hugely successful in getting this particular group of young people into a truly positive and sustained destinations, that being an apprenticeship, job or a full time place at a further education college. It is worth noting that the government consider short term unsustainable destinations as positive: a short training placement, an Activity Agreement and volunteering.

It was always intended that after 5 years of successful operation that the junior college model would become part of the Scottish education system. Discussions took place with Glasgow City Council (GCC) in 2018 with a view to mainstreaming the approach. However, at the beginning of 2019 the decision was taken by GCC not to mainstream the junior college concept and to re-integrate the year one NJC students back into the schools where they were previously failing.

National statistics reveal that only 75% of **all** 16 year old school leavers in Scotland in 2018 gained a positive destination. The Newlands intake was from a sub-set of likely S4 leavers considered to have much poorer than average chances of success. Indeed the majority of its students were those who would not move on to a positive destination. At the time of their admission to the college, students' previous schools estimated that only about 25% might gain positive destinations. Over its five years of operation 134 students attended NJC. At the time of its closure 26 students returned to local authority schools to complete their statutory education as they were not yet 16. Of the remaining 108 students, 89 completed their education at Newlands. 92.1% of those went on to a positive destination; further education, an apprenticeship or a job. This outstanding achievement demonstrates the effectiveness of the Newlands approach and the courses provided.

19 students returned to local authority schools for a variety of reasons. It is not known whether these students entered positive destinations or not. However, making the worst assumption, the percentage of young people who had any contact with NJC reaching positive destinations was 75.9%. This figure is three times the rate of success predicted at the outset.

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The success of Newlands Junior College was largely down to a number of crucial factors:

- Strong positive relationships between students and a small staff
- Intimate scale
- High expectations and positive ethos
- Creative leadership
- Attitudinal change
- A curriculum seen as relevant by students
- Effective, creative partnerships with further education college and employers
- Flexible, adaptable, real work experience which motivates and excites students
- A focus on personal development
- Nurture (including meals, uniform, transport)
- High quality separate premises
- Support into positive destinations
- Follow-up to keep students in positive destinations

NJC opened in 2014 and operated for five years. Young people were mainly recruited at the end of second year (S2) from Southside secondary schools. Those nominated were seen to be the furthest from the job market, likely to leave at age 16 with little chance of moving onto a job, apprenticeship or college, but were thought to have potential. Indeed schools suggested that only around 25% of those nominated might achieve a positive destination. Following nomination, informal interview and an assessment centre, successful candidates were offered a fully funded two-year scholarship.

The college was set up as an independent school and a registered charity. It operated in partnership with Glasgow City Council (GCC) and the Scottish Government (SG). GCC contributed £100,000 a year towards running costs and nominated students to the college and SG contributed £500,000 towards a variety of start up costs, spread across 5 years and later contributed a further £700,000. The vocational providers were: City of Glasgow College; GTG (Arnold Clark); and Riverside Studios (for a limited period). The college was supported by a number of businesses, in the form of financial contributions, provision of work experience, mentoring, apprenticeships and jobs. It should be noted that private finance made up the majority of NJC funding.

The cost to educate a young person in mainstream secondary school is around £7,300 per annum. However, this cost varies depending on the level of courses undertaken and the possible additional costs of supporting those with greater need. It should also be noted that additional services and support comes from charities such as Action for Children, MCR Pathways and others. This funding is not within the school's budget but is paid for through Scottish Government grants to those charities, in additions to donations, to support young people in mainstream education. The cost per annum at NJC was around £15,000, though not directly comparable with the £7,300 for the reason outlined above. The annual cost per student would decrease significantly if the junior college sat within the local authority and able to make use of its support services.

A key argument for the equitable education of our young people would be allowing funding to follow the young person: an equitable allocation for the students secondary education. A student attending S1 to S4 in mainstream schooling costs around £29,200 and attending S1 to S6 around £43,800. If students then attend university the total cost is around £79,800. Although the cost to educate a young person at a junior college is higher, the difference is that the investment of two years at a junior college leads to much higher levels of success. Based on the figure above, the cost of four years of education with two years in mainstream and two years in a junior college would be around £44,600.

When considering the costs, in addition to the moral issue of saving young lives, financial savings must also be considered. Savings in the areas of health, welfare and criminal justice cannot be underestimated. Using the data on NJC's success in getting students into positive destinations

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lifetime savings of between £0.5m and £1.5m per cohort of 25 can be generated. A junior college therefore has to be considered a good investment even though it will not prevent all school failure.

Newlands Junior College was created to fit the needs of students in contrast to the way that mainstream students were expected to fit into school. The four key elements of the junior college approach were:

1. The development, growth and sustainability of positive relationships with young people within a positive and support culture
2. Vocational courses provided by a further education college (and other recognised providers)
3. Meaningful work experience, igniting desire in a field of work, borne out of strong relationships with employers
4. An academic curriculum suited to the particular needs of the young people

The college was small, with 60 students: 30 in each year group. Building positive, trusting, meaningful relationships with students, and between students, was key. Therefore the right adults had to be in place and there had to be time to grow relationships. The staff team comprised a principal, and 5 teachers: IT (also the deputy principal), English, mathematics and science teachers and a teacher responsible for business links, careers and guidance. A Skillforce instructor was an additional member of the team, as were the business manager, catering staff and drivers. As students attended vocational courses three half-days a week at provider locations, with alternate years attending at different times for a significant part of the week, there were only 30 students in the college for a significant amount of the week, enabling higher staff to student ratios.

The junior college was not a school. It did not look like a school, feel like a school or operate like a school. This was crucial to those disengaged young people who had switched off from school and from learning. Health and wellbeing were also important. In order to mitigate the effects of poverty (70% of the cohort who came from the most disadvantaged areas) young people were collected by minibuses in the morning and brought into the college for breakfast. A healthy lunch and snacks were also provided. Students were transported to vocational courses and work experience placements and back home at the end of the day.

Statistics from session 2018/19 demonstrate that in Scotland there remains a significant number (almost 1400) of statutory school leavers, those who leave at age 16, and do not move on to a job, apprenticeship or further education. The full Newlands Junior College 2014-2019 Report demonstrates that this educational resource served this client group with much more success than mainstream schooling. It proves the junior college concept and demonstrates how to address the problem for 1400 young people every year: by creating a network of junior colleges across Scotland.