



Northern Ireland  
Assembly

## Research and Information Service Briefing Note

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# Foxes Academy

## Introduction

As part of the Committee for Employment and Learnings (CEL) inquiry into post-16 support for people with learning disabilities, this Briefing Note considers the operation of Foxes Academy. In particular, it explains how the Academy trains people with learning disabilities, and how it is funded.

## 1 Foxes Academy and Hotel

Foxes Academy is an Independent Specialist College. Based in Minehead, Somerset, Foxes Academy offers:<sup>1</sup>

*...training in independent life skills in residential learner houses, plus the opportunity to learn catering skills in a real operating hotel, with paying guests, where a vast selection of functions take place all year round.*

Foxes Academy provides accommodation for its learners, with eight residential houses situated around Minehead. Each learner has their own room. Houses have different levels of staffing as appropriate to the needs of the learners. As they progress through

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<sup>1</sup> Foxes Academy, About Us, <http://www.foxesacademy.ac.uk/about-us>

the Academy, there are opportunities for learners to move into semi-supported accommodation in order to encourage their further independence.<sup>2</sup>

Learners may access a number of courses, including on-the-job training at “Foxes Hotel”, a fully operational training hotel for young people with learning disabilities.

The hotel provides a facility in which young people with learning disabilities can develop their essential vocational skills.

As stated by Foxes Academy:<sup>3</sup>

*They interact with residential guests, customers using the restaurant and delegates attending conferences and seminars. By providing conference facilities, Foxes hotel brings a wider range of customers into contact with learners.*

The hotel provides a range of work settings including reception, food preparation, waiting and housekeeping.

In December 2015 it was announced that Foxes Academy had entered into a partnership with Hilton Worldwide, to create learning and employment opportunities for young adults with learning difficulties.

As stated in a press article:<sup>4</sup>

*Hilton Worldwide is involved in this pilot programme to offer several of Foxes Academy's 15 graduates tailored learning and employment opportunities at one of their owned, managed and leased UK hotels, providing each individual with the skills and experience they need to flourish in the hospitality industry.*

## 1.1 Admissions

Foxes Academy holds presentation days at which prospective students can meet with learners and staff. After such a visit, a detailed initial assessment is arranged. As stated by Foxes Academy:<sup>5</sup>

*This gives us the chance to accurately assess needs, wishes and academic levels. It also gives the learner the opportunity to make sure that Foxes Academy is the right place for them.*

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<sup>2</sup> Foxes Academy, Accommodation, <http://www.foxesacademy.ac.uk/accommodation>

<sup>3</sup> OFSTED, Commission on Adult Vocational Teaching and Learning, Outstanding collaboration with employers: Foxes Academy, [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/392071/Foxes\\_20Academy\\_20-20Good\\_20Practice\\_20Example.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/392071/Foxes_20Academy_20-20Good_20Practice_20Example.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> Somerset Country Gazette, 4 December 2015, Minehead's Foxes Academy announces ground breaking partnership with Hilton hotels

<sup>5</sup> Foxes Academy, Admissions, <http://www.foxesacademy.ac.uk/admissions>

In 2013 Foxes Academy had 79 full-time and 1 part-time learners, of which 71 were aged 19+ and were undertaking Level 1 or below skills courses.<sup>6</sup>

## 1.2 Courses

Foxes Academy offers a range of courses for learners, including:<sup>7</sup>

- **National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) Level 1 in Hospitality:** This course includes training in accommodation services, food and beverage services and hospitality services;
- **The Pathway to Life Vocational Course:** Specifically written to provide Foxes learners with a robust learning programme which supports them in gaining a Hospitality and Catering NVQ. Learners, working with qualified tutors, work through different departments in the Hotel to gain experience in areas such as housekeeping, communication in the workplace and food service;
- **Pathway to Life Independent Living Skills:** This course is designed to help Foxes learners develop their independence within the home and community. It is delivered within structured sessions and is embedded throughout the learners curriculum and supported by residential staff;
- **Skills for Life:** Skills for Life incorporates basic reading, writing, mathematics and ICT skills. The course provides four qualifications: City and Guilds Functional English; Functional Maths; ICT; and English Speaking Board (The English Speaking Board exams focus on the learner's ability to communicate); and,
- **Work Experience:** In addition to the work experience received within the Foxes curriculum, learners can also have an external work placement within the local community. Foxes supports employers who take on a learner for work experience, providing training for employees on specific and general learning disabilities issues and designated contacts from within the Foxes work experience team.

Foxes Academy also offers in-house therapies designed to meet learner's individual needs. These include:

- Cognitive Behaviour Therapy;
- Occupational Therapy; and,
- Speech and Language Therapy.

An Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (OFSTED) inspection report in 2013 gave Foxes Academy an "Outstanding" inspection grade.<sup>8</sup>

It found that:<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> OFSTED, 19 June 2013, Learning and Skills inspection report: Foxes Academy

<sup>7</sup> Foxes Academy, Courses, <http://www.foxesacademy.ac.uk/courses>

<sup>8</sup> OFSTED, About our inspection reports, <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/about-our-inspection-reports>

<sup>9</sup> OFSTED, 19 June 2013, Learning and Skills inspection report: Foxes Academy, <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/inspection-reports/find-inspection-report/provider/ELS/131892>

- Learners achieve outstanding results in all aspects of their learning programmes;
- Very successful work placements prepare learners for gaining employment on leaving the academy;
- The outstanding systems for recording learners' progress ensure targets to further extend learners' skills and understanding are shared across all parts of the academy and revised frequently;
- 95% of learners progressed to living semi-independently after living with parents or in 'looked after' accommodation when starting at the academy;
- At the end of the 2012/13 academic year, 18 of the 21 leavers found either paid or voluntary employment within three months of leaving the academy. Twelve of these leavers also took on additional education and training at their local college of further education; and,
- The realistic work environment, excellent use of the wider community and the diverse curriculum provide a wide range of learning opportunities to develop employability and independence.

In addition, a press article from August 2015 stated that 79% of graduates from 2014 had found employment, with 55% in paid work and 45% working on a voluntary basis.

Moreover, 68% of graduates had moved to independent or supported living.<sup>10</sup>

### 1.3 Funding

Discussions between RalSe and Foxes Academy found that attendance fees are set in accordance with a learner's individual needs. There is an initial assessment to determine these sums. Fees typically range from approximately £45,000 to £65,000 per annum.<sup>11</sup>

Funding for learners is provided through three main sources:

- **The Education Funding Agency (EFA):**<sup>12</sup> The EFA is an executive agency sponsored by the Department for Education and manages £54 billion of funding a year. This is to support all state-provided education for 8 million children aged 3 to 16 and 1.6 million young people aged 16 to 19.<sup>13</sup> The EFA provides Element 1<sup>14</sup> and Element 2<sup>15</sup> funding, which is received by every young person in England;<sup>16</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Somerset Country Gazette, 24 August 2015, Hyde, S, Reason to celebrate at Foxes Academy as 79% of leavers find work

<sup>11</sup> Conversation with Foxes Academy

<sup>12</sup> OFSTED, 19 June 2013, Learning and Skills inspection report: Foxes Academy

<sup>13</sup> Education Funding Agency, About Us, <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/education-funding-agency/about>

<sup>14</sup> Element 1 represents the funding that students at the institution attract for their basic programmes and does not take into account the additional support costs of high needs students

<sup>15</sup> Element 2 is the second component of "place funding" and provides the first £6,000 of funding to meet the additional support costs for high needs students.

<sup>16</sup> RalSe discussion with Foxes Academy, 8 January 2016

- **Local Authorities:** For people with learning disabilities who have additional educational needs, funding is provided by local authorities as Element 3 funding<sup>17</sup>. It is accessible *via* Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP); and,
- **Privately funded:** Some learners are funded privately.

Please note, following a review of the available information it was not possible to identify the level of funding received by Foxes Academy.

The CEL may wish to note that under the changes instituted by the Children and Families Act 2014<sup>18</sup> every local authority in England must publish a list of education, health and care services available to children, young people and their families. This is required as part of their 'Local Offer'<sup>19</sup>, as prescribed by the Children and Families Act 2014.<sup>20</sup>

Foxes Academy is included within this local offer; and as such young people and their parents/guardians can name Foxes under their EHCP.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Element 3 is the funding required over and above that provided by the place funding (Element 1 and Element 2), to enable a student with high needs to participate in education and learning.

<sup>18</sup> This Act is not applicable in NI as a result of devolution.

<sup>19</sup> Foxes Academy, Local Offer, <http://www.foxesacademy.ac.uk/admissions/local-offer>

<sup>20</sup> Legislation.gov.uk, Children and Families Act 2014, <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2014/6/contents/enacted>

<sup>21</sup> For further information on Education, Health and Care Plans please see NIAR 247 – 2015 “Costs of Special Educational Needs Provision for ages 16 – 25 in England and Wales” <http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/globalassets/documents/raise/publications/2015/del/11615.pdf> and NIAR 68-2015, Paper on a Possible Amendment to the Special Education Needs and Disability Bill, <http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/globalassets/documents/raise/publications/2015/del/5215.pdf>