



Preparing for Adulthood

“Our Preparing for Adulthood provision offers a personalised pathway developed around the needs of young people aged 16 – 25 with special education needs and disabilities...”





“Before I started the PFA course, I lacked confidence and did not like to talk to people. I would not comment or have an opinion on anything. I have gained so much from this course and I have been given so much support and encouragement along the way. Things that are so easy for me today such as talk to people and work with other people seemed impossible to me at the start of my programme. I have surprised myself and did not realise what I could achieve in such a short space of time and I know have my job which I love.”

Luke Brooks – Former learner who progressed into full time employment

About Fir Tree CIC

Fir Tree CIC is an independent government funded specialist training provider for young people aged 16 – 25 with learning disabilities, social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs that require a personalised approach to their education, health and wellbeing. Our programmes have been designed to be inclusive and engaging by offering an alternative provision which combines classroom learning with practical and vocational delivery. The alternative approach education and small cohort delivery means that staff at Fir Tree CIC are able to work closely with learners, parents, guardians, carers and external support teams to minimise barriers to learning, independence and achievement. At Fir Tree CIC we encourage everyone to participate in a friendly, safe and supportive learning environment which maintains individual goals, aspirations and values at heart to support a positive transition into adulthood. This translates into a personalised and bespoke programme for every learner in which they receive support, guidance and encouragement to achieve.

Curriculum overview

Our provision offers a series of bespoke pathways to suit individual learner needs across a range of vocational learning sectors. Personalised programmes centre around individual aspirations and long-term aims, with the vision to support learners to progress positively into adulthood and employment. We pride ourselves on effectively merging vocational learning opportunities with high quality classroom sessions and tailored additional support suited to each individual learner.

Our pathways combine vocational learning with functional skills maths and English and allow learners to explore accredited programmes in horticulture, angling, customer services, sport and active leisure, independent living and work preparation.

Additional topics covered include understanding British Values, Safeguarding, digital skills, developing personal and social relationships, culture, equality and diversity, crime awareness, budgeting and home management. In addition, a number of work preparation credits focused around employability such as applying for work, interview skills, health & safety at work and investigating career choices are interlinked throughout.

Fir Tree CIC also offers a full programme of enrichment and personal development activities focussed around a range of external visits and IAG session with learners engaging in gym visits, industry sessions, guest interviews, leisure activities and external placement visits.



“I have been working directly with Fir Tree CIC for over 6 years and in this time have seen the organisation grow into one of the leading specialist education providers in Wigan. As a recognised post 16 ESFA provider for young people with SEND, they have developed robust systems and have experienced and competent staff that are able to provide the best possible education experience and outcomes for young people who require additional support requirements.”

Clare Todd - Strategic Manager for SEND at Wigan Council

The referral process

Our local offer is made available to families and services that support young people with SEND and they are able to contact Fir Tree CIC and the local authority to find out more about our Preparing for Adulthood programmes at any time.

Individual Assessment for High Level Support Funding working with the Local Authority determines the appropriate provision and pathway for the individual. All programmes are designed to be inclusive of work skills and Functional Skills accredited provision and Personal and Social Development aimed at supporting young people from Entry Level 1 to Level 2.

In addition, a number of open events and community days will also give a learner and their families a first taste of the Fir Tree CIC provision experience, its environment and feel. These events give young people the opportunity to familiarise themselves with the facility and meet smaller groups of other learners and staff before they start their full time programme.

Safeguarding of learners & arrangements for ensuring all learning takes place in safe, healthy & supportive environment

Fir Tree CIC has a designated Safeguarding Lead who is also a fully qualified and experienced Occupational Therapist. This allows us to develop a safe and supportive learning environment, whilst being able to facilitate arrangements to meet individual learners' needs and offer help and support to learners with disabilities to participate fully in their education at Fir Tree CIC. All of our Teachers, Tutors and Specialist Educators are sector specific/occupational competent and have experience in working with learners of all abilities within their specialist area.

Furthermore, Fir Tree CIC has a student council allowing learners to feedback on their experiences, opinions and feelings about safeguarding and wellbeing. This is vital as it helps shape and develop the provision, whilst keeping the learners thoughts and feelings at the centre of all operations.

Communication with families

Learners at Fir Tree CIC have the benefit of a dedicated Learning Co-ordinator as the first port of call for parents to contact. Information is provided to share with parents, guardians and carers through a variety of methods such as learner reviews/annual reviews, regular meetings and general ongoing communication. On a day-to-day basis, parents are encouraged to contact appropriate staff by telephone or e-mail to discuss progress and share concerns, with the education team equally encouraged to communicate any specific changes and developments. Appointments can be made with the Centre Manager and Occupational Therapist at a mutually convenient time, if parents/guardians prefer to meet face to face.



"The young people from Fir Tree CIC who have participated in work experience at Wigan Council have been a breath of fresh air. They are willing, engaged and have genuinely helped our existing Council staff to improve the community greenspaces. Working with Wigan Council enhances presentation of sites and gives the young people the opportunity to learn new skills. This project is not just benefitting our own staff, but everyone in the Wigan borough as our parks and gardens are looking better than ever. The project gives Wigan Council the ability to assess the skills of these young people with a view to developing them to apply for seasonal and full time employment opportunities..."

Mark Burchall – Wigan Council Greenspaces

Work Experience and Supported Internships

At Fir Tree CIC our Work Experience and Supported Internship programmes are aimed at those who have had very little experience of work or employment or those who have progressed from the initial 'Preparing for Adulthood' programme with an intention to move onto a supported internship.

It builds upon the key elements of the PFA model with a more weighted programme toward the development of Work skills through active off site work experience. This programme provides a variety of rich, meaningful learning opportunities. Learners will learn new skills and build on their existing knowledge, become more independent, increase their confidence and apply these new skills in their lives.

Work Experiences and Offsite Industry Placements

Learners explore a range of work options, including vocational tasters and offsite work experience. Following these taster sessions, learners make informed choices about their preferred vocational areas including customer services, outdoor work, horticulture and fishery management. Our Staff will work to ensure that learners develop the necessary skills and experience and provide relevant offsite work placements, where appropriate.

Some learners will achieve an accredited Edexcel Qualification in Work skills from the Pearson skilled for life framework. Our staff will work with learner to develop job search skills and prepare CVs to aid their progression into supported employment.

Exploring wider Work related skills

Learners studying on our Work Experience programmes and Supported Internships will develop their understanding of mental and physical wellbeing, making healthy decisions, appropriate social interaction, expectations and responsibilities as adults, equality and diversity, having high expectations of themselves and of others, and an understanding of their rights.

Programme Aims

- Promote and develop preparation for work skills
- Develop and utilise independence living skills and self-management skills that are required for Future employment
- Develop skills in making the right choices in life
- Promote the importance of learner voice within industry
- Enable learners to have a presence in and engage within their local community
- Explore a range of work experience options
- Develop self-awareness, self-esteem and confidence
- Develop work skills and prepare for progression to employment opportunities.



“Oakfield High School & College have been working directly with Fir Tree CIC since 2015. Staff at Fir Tree CIC are very welcoming and supportive of our learners who each have their own individual needs. As well as building up their skills to complete the qualifications, learners have developed a range of wider key skills such as patience, perseverance; team work and communication. These will support them as they progress into adulthood and beyond.

Learners thoroughly enjoy the practical hands-on approach to their learning in an environment which is second to none. The tutors at Fir Tree CIC provide regular reports on the progress in terms of their academic achievement and their attitudes to learning. This ensures that at Oakfield we are kept fully informed about the progress of learners. The service that we have received from the team at Fir Tree CIC has been outstanding and we hope to continue working with them for years to come.”

Jo Nulty - Assistant Head Teacher at Oakfield High School & College

Facilities & additional support arrangements...

Fir Tree CIC has excellent specialist facilities including a number of log cabin style learning centres containing Apple I-Mac technology. Our newly developed independent living centre also allows young people to develop self-management skills such as preparing meals and home management safety.

A total of 9 acres of outdoor learning environment has also been created including a fully disabled access angling centre, allotment garden areas, a practical learning classroom, an 80ft polytunnel, woodlands, meadows and animal habitat areas.

Where further adaptation or equipment is needed to enable learning and to reduce barriers to learning, individual meetings are held with learners, parents/guardians and external specialists to agree reasonable adjustments.

The facility has excellent access for those with disabilities to access both the outdoor and indoor education centre including fully accessible toilet facilities. The Centre also has a drop zone area for mini-buses and small coaches that might require private or community transport.

Transport arrangements for our learners...

Fir Tree CIC operates a mini-bus pick up and drop off service for young people requiring this support requirement. There are no cost implications and this service operates for learners based in and around the Wigan area.

Some learners may also meet the criteria for subsidised transport from the local authority and have special transport arranged for them. Parents or carers should contact either Fir Tree CIC or the local authority to find out details of how this is assessed and the cost of any contribution they may be required to make.

For those learners not in receipt of subsidised local authority transport, or for learners who want to develop independent travel skills, public transport may be a suitable alternative with travel training available as part of our provision offer.

Fir Tree CIC is also well served by both buses and a local train station less than half a mile from the Fir Tree CIC Centre. Information about the routes and cost of transport is available on request. Prior to enrolment, details will be provided with an explanation about the cost and details on bus routes.



“I have worked with Fir Tree CIC for over three years and they have provided Solis Landscapes Ltd with excellent young people with the skills to support my business grow. The course gives young people a really thorough understanding of working safely in my industry which is really important to me. Furthermore, the young people develop confidence, communication skills and a work ethic throughout this course and for this reason I am happy to keep giving their young people opportunities within my organisation.”

Chris Bentham - Managing Director at Solis Landscapes Ltd

Transition

Fir Tree CIC works closely with the local services, families and schools to share information on learners' attainment and support needs in order to ensure a smooth transition to post 16 education. This can begin as early as twelve months before a learner starts their placement with Fir Tree CIC.

Our team of specialist staff including our Occupational Therapist, Centre Manager and Learning Co-ordinator can attend transition and review meetings for learners requiring additional support requirements to develop a suitable personalised provision. Personal and career aspirations are explored, matching the level of attainment of the learner, in order that the best choices are made to achieve success. Discussion also takes into consideration the educational, personal, social, health and care needs of each individual learner, so that barriers to learning can be minimised by putting reasonable adjustments in place.

Fir Tree CIC already has strong links with local schools including Oakfield High School and College, West Lancashire Community High School and The Dean Trust Academy through alternative education opportunities for their learners many of whom enjoy their time so much at Fir Tree CIC and feel valued and supported by our specialist staff. This enables them to become familiar with the setting and help build up a confident relationship with staff prior to their transition. In partnership with local schools, services and the local authority teams, we can deliver school information sessions and a range of taster day experiences aimed at improving the knowledge and skills of learners in preparation for transition. These events also give learners the opportunity to familiarise themselves with the facility and meet smaller groups of other new learners, before they start their full time programme.

Furthermore, Fir Tree CIC also organise a number of taster day experiences, open days and evenings and celebration events of learner achievements which we actively encourage families and learners who are considering our provision offer to be actively part of.

Beyond...

Progression rates are very high to further and higher education programmes such as Traineeship, Supported Internships and employment. This is because we have developed excellent links and partnerships with organisations including The Wigan Council Greenspaces who have supported our learners throughout their course by providing real life work based learning opportunities. This has allowed our learners to form relationships, develop an understanding of work and long-term allowed them to develop the skills necessary for progression into employment.





If you would like to find out more information about our Preparing for Adulthood provision at Fir Tree CIC, please contact us at...

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