

Breaking Barriers

Overview 2023

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What Is Breaking Barriers?

Breaking Barriers is a ground-breaking partnership, enabling young people who have learning disabilities the opportunity to attend one of the leading business schools in the UK, achieve an accredited qualification, and gain real work experience with some of the country's largest employers.

The flagship programme is a joint venture between Enable, the University of Strathclyde Business School, ScottishPower and STV. It gives young people the opportunity to access the life-shaping experience of university and aims to create equality of access to the opportunities that educational institutions and partner organisations can provide.

There is no programme which ScottishPower runs that delivers greater impact or that has given me more pleasure to support. Thank you to Enable and the University of Strathclyde Business School. Breaking Barriers – it does what it says!



Keith Anderson,
Chief Executive,
ScottishPower



The Scale of the Challenge



There are an estimated
175,000 people
who have a learning disability in Scotland - that's just
3% of the population



The disability employment gap is growing
Only **45% of disabled people**
are in employment, compared with
81% of non-disabled people
in Scotland



Only **7% of people**
who have a learning disability are in paid employment
compared with 70%
who confirm they would like to work



Around
14,000 school pupils
in Scotland have a learning disability



This means that there are more than
100,000 people
who have a learning disability in Scotland who need support
to get into work - and stay in work



Only
8.6% of school leavers
who have a learning disability go into university education,
compared with
45.1% of all school leavers

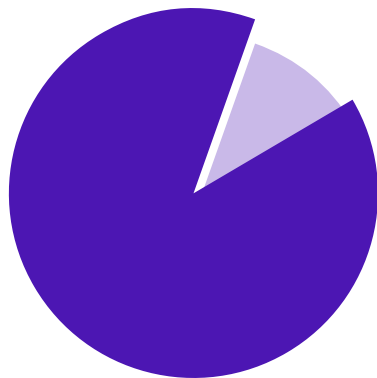
Impact Of Our Delivery

Since Breaking Barriers first began in 2018 the programme has supported over 100 young people* with learning disabilities and barriers to employment. Students have graduated from the University of Strathclyde Business School with a Certificate in Applied Business Skills, Science Faculty with a Certificate in Applied Science Skills and in 2022 the programme expanded into Edinburgh Napier University's Business school where 14 students graduated with a Certificate in Applied Business Skills.

Prior to joining the course, these young people were nervous about what the future would hold. We know from speaking to students that many of them now feel more confident and empowered, with clearer goals for their futures, and equipped with the tools they need to reach them.

Following graduation, students receive continued support from their Enable Employment Coordinator to plan their next steps with many considering options in Higher Education, Further Education, Apprenticeships and employment opportunities.

Breaking Barriers has supported a number of graduates into further employment in organisations such as Barclays, as a Graduate Apprentice Accountant and the Scottish Government, as a Policy Officer. Many former graduates have gone on to shape their chosen career path and secure employment and additional training opportunities in fields such as filmmaking, para-medicine, cyber security, financial services, digital music and fashion.



90%

***of all students have gone on to secure further employment, education and training opportunities since graduating from the programme**



The Student Experience

CASE STUDY: Anna Taylor

Enable Works Breaking Barriers in partnership with Edinburgh Napier University and EY:

Anna Taylor has a number of barriers. With autism, severe anxiety and mobility issues, Anna has previously struggled with being in a school/learning environment. Anna becomes startled quite easily (for example, a fire alarm ringing or a raised voice) this then sends Anna into a spiral of panic and unease. Anna's mobility issues also acted as a barrier to her development as she felt quite uncomfortable using her walker when in school. Anna was very keen to make more friends and connect with people that understood her barriers, as she often felt isolated and that her friends were all leaving her behind, going to university or college. Anna's Autism, which was a fairly new diagnosis, offered some clarity on some of Anna's feelings and behaviours. Anna was initially very anxious about taking part on the course and was unsure of how she would feel once in the FE environment.

Anna was referred to the Breaking Barriers Programme through her father in late January 2022.

Anna has responded very positively to both the Napier course and the work placement with EY, of all the young people enrolled in the cohort, I believe Anna has gained the most. Anna was extremely anxious in the first two weeks of lectures at Napier, in the first week she was unable to come in for the full session and instead mum sat in and took notes for her. However, week by week Anna completely thrived, she developed the confidence to be attending each lecture on her own, she actively reached out to and connected with the other YP on the cohort, and she consistently offered answers and feedback to lecturers in lessons. Anna became comfortable in the university environment and began to see a future for herself. Anna had previously decided that she wouldn't be able to go to college or university and that she wouldn't be able to achieve the same things as her school friends. Through this process, Anna's confidence and belief in her own abilities has developed to the point that this has now changed, and she sees the possibilities in her future.



At the time of her course finishing, Anna was applying for Christmas work with an All in Edinburgh Support Worker, while waiting for her college course to commence in January. Anna will be attending the FE course at Newbattle Abbey which covers all areas of social science. We recently toured the campus with Anna's mother, and it was clear to see a hugely positive change in Anna's thinking. She was motivated and excited about her future and was clearly very enthusiastic about her enrolment in the college. Overall we are so pleased with the confidence and skills that Anna has developed through the Breaking Barriers programme and are very excited to see what the future holds for her.

I definitely feel more confident. I no longer feel on my own. Meeting so many new people who have similar experiences has helped a lot. Following negative school experiences, I had previously been put off pursuing any further education such as college. I have now decided this could be a possibility for me going forward. I will be attending Newbattle Abbey College in January and can't wait to see what it's like to be a full time student. I am particularly excited to learn all about social science and think about what career I would like. I am also considering moving into the student accommodation on campus to get the proper student experience.

Anna Taylor



Positive Progressions

In 2017, only 56 young people who have a learning disability, across the whole of Scotland, went on to university education. Already, we have exceeded this number across the cohort of young people who have participated in Breaking Barriers.

Following graduation from Breaking Barriers, **90%** of young people have gone on to achieve positive progressions into further employment, education and industry training opportunities.

The Fraser of Allander Institute undertook a year long research programme into the socio-economic outcomes for people who have a learning disability in Scotland. It confirmed a very poor picture nationally of their employment status. However, in a positive sense, the report highlights Breaking Barriers as 'evidence of what works'.

Breaking Barriers is changing the employment prospects of young people with a learning disability, and enabling employers to engage with potential recruits and meet their corporate social responsibility objectives.¹



¹ <https://fraserofallander.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Learning-disabilities-employment-final.pdf>

The Fraser of Allander Institute found that:

// Very few school leavers with a learning disability go on to attend higher education institutions. There is little evidence that this will improve without more direct intervention and Breaking Barriers helps to achieve this by providing a pathway to the experience of higher education and, ultimately, employment for people with learning disabilities. We interviewed Breaking Barriers graduates and it is clear that they had never considered higher education until this programme became an option. This feeling, and a more general lack of ambition for young people with a learning disability, has been cited as a reason for poor employment outcomes.²

I was very isolated before Breaking Barriers, with very little experience in any professional environment. I didn't feel like I could ever get into a professional environment before this.

Fraser Glen

// The report concluded that: **Meaningful progress cannot be made by government alone. It requires all stakeholders, including employers, to take active steps towards more inclusive working environments.**

This presents an opportunity for government and employers to invest in the support that will unlock the potential of people with a learning disability... To change the employability landscape in the long term, more programmes like this [are] needed.²

The independent report goes on to say that 'the key challenge is replicating success at scale'.



As the 'place of useful learning', Strathclyde is committed to being socially progressive. This also means being inclusive and opening higher education to all, so we are delighted to be pioneering the Breaking Barriers initiative.



Professor Sir Jim McDonald,
Principal & Vice-Chancellor,
University of Strathclyde



Breaking Barriers has made it possible for students in Scotland who have a learning disability to attend one of the leading business schools in the world, to experience university life, achieve an accredited qualification and gain real work experience with major corporate employers.

Four years of delivery have proven that the model works, and it has been independently evaluated as a blueprint for success.

Breaking Barriers demonstrates how the public, private and third sectors can work collaboratively to advance diversity, equity and inclusion in education and the workplace. We are excited to work with more partners to scale up Breaking Barriers and create even more opportunities for young people who have a learning disability across Scotland to realise their potential.



Theresa Shearer, FRSE
Enable CEO



Plans For The Future

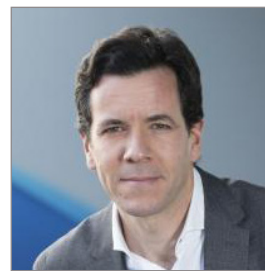
Now entering its sixth year, Breaking Barriers is expanding across Scotland to continue to increase equality of access to education and employment.

In January 2022, 20 new students were welcomed to Strathclyde Business School to commence their journey towards a qualification in Applied Business Skills. Furthermore, we extended the delivery model by increasing our offer from the University of Strathclyde to include the Faculty of Science, which will broaden opportunities for students, no matter their interests.

Expanding the reach further was a new partnership from 2022 with Edinburgh Napier University. Our award-winning widening access and participation programme welcomed a new cohort of young people who have a learning disability in the East of Scotland, as they work towards graduating with an Accreditation in Applied Business Skills from Edinburgh Napier University's Business School. The students enjoyed the opportunity of work placements with our latest global corporate partner, EY; a core pillar of the student experience as we continue to break down barriers.

We are looking forward to expanding the programme further still with new partners in 2023.

I am proud that we will be welcoming students from the Breaking Barriers programme. It really has never been more important for organisations to take steps to become more accessible to provide opportunities to young people to unleash the talent we have from right across Scotland.



Simon Pitts,
Chief Executive, STV







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