

BUILDING A POSITIVE FUTURE

Lewis¹ was 15 years old and had attended a Pupil Referral Unit² prior to starting at college in 2016. He enrolled on an entry-level construction course, knowing that he had a trial at Crown Court coming up and the real threat of a custodial sentence hanging over him. He was clearly keen to start a new phase of his life and to progress forward. That is not to say it has all gone perfectly since then; unfortunately, he has had disciplinary discussions with his personal tutor and the head of school.



However, he has been keen to learn construction skills and to improve his Maths and English. This has meant that he has needed to attend classes in his own time. Despite these challenges and obstacles, Lewis has been determined to build a better future for himself, through further education (FE).

Recently, Lewis has been getting positive feedback for his general attitude towards self-improvement from various members of staff across the college. This is great news for his self-esteem and confidence, which will provide a strong foundation for his next steps in education, training and work.

Lewis is a young person who was on the wrong path and has used his year at college to make the necessary change. As a result of the Crown Court case, Lewis was put on a tag; this was seen as a positive outcome, as the sentence was influenced by the positive statements from the college. The tag has now been removed and Lewis is continuing his personal improvement. There is still a little way to go until the end of the year and for him to be 'work-ready', but in the past six months he is showing all the signs of having found a turning point in his chosen path. Lewis has progressed onto a plastering apprenticeship and in addition to the plastering work, now attends college one day a week.

What has really made difference for Lewis is having people around him who can support him and go the extra mile for him – to look out for him and help him if he is faltering. This has helped give him a firmer foundation to strive to achieve from, even on the tougher days.

The college where Lewis studied benefits from having a team of volunteer mentors and enablers. Each year, these volunteers help young people like Lewis, and hundreds of others, to learn how to build resilience, confidence and self-esteem and to keep on the right track. A senior pastor with the New Testament Church of God, Lester Freckleton³, says that colleges are crying out for members in our communities to get involved as college mentors.

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Can you answer that cry?

How does your faith find a way of working with people?

What can you do?

Are you in touch with your local college?

Does your church have links with local education providers?

Do you or other members of your church have gifts you think could be used to be a volunteer mentor in a college?

Why not contact your local FE college to see how you can get involved to help a young person like Lewis who wants to build a better future?

For further information please contact your local college or get in touch with Sara Iles, Education Assistant with the Free Churches Group on: sara.iles@freechurches.org.uk



Members of the FE Working Group with Free Churches Group who are from a broad range of church backgrounds are all active as mentors, teachers, chaplains or governors in FE. From left to right – *Senior Pastor Lester Freckleton, Revd Alistair Smeaton, Professor Graham Handscomb, Revd Sara Iles, Dr John Wise, Anthony Alderman.*

¹Names have been changed to protect learner's confidentiality.

²An establishment maintained by a local authority which is specifically organised to provide education for children who are excluded, sick, or otherwise unable to attend a mainstream school.

³Lester Freckleton who kindly provided this case study for Education Sunday, is an executive coach and learning development facilitator with over 28 years' experience of working in a large FE college, where he designed and managed a mentoring programme. In 2013 Lester left the post of head of school to set up his own company, Targeted Performance Initiatives, and take up the pastorate of The New Testament Church of God, Cardiff. Lester is currently Chair of South West Prison Ministries and leads a team on an ex-offenders' project.

