

# Minister visits Wester Hailes Education Centre

**The Minister for Further Education, Higher Education, Youth Employment and Training, Jamie Hepburn MSP, visited Wester Hailes Education Centre (WHEC) on Wednesday to find out how an ENABLE programme is helping pupils there.**

The ENABLE Works' Stepping Up Programme was devised by the charity for people with learning disabilities and helps any young people with a learning disability to progress into work or further education.

The minister heard from students who take part in Stepping Up about the variety of interactive workshops and training activities, and the way these have helped to increase their confidence and develop their employability skills.

Mr Hepburn got involved in an interview workshop, aimed at building employability skills, and had the chance to try ENABLE Works' Virtual Reality (VR) headset, as the programme utilises the latest technologies.

The programme has a 98% positive destination success rate which is higher than the current school leaver statistics in Scotland.

A student, Jay Shanks, said: "I have really enjoyed my time on Stepping Up so far, as I've learned a lot about college and

work and had the chance to try new things such as the VR headset, while working alongside people in a similar position to me.

“As a pupil in fifth year, I’ve started thinking about what I’d like to do after school. Before Stepping Up I really wasn’t sure what was next for me, I didn’t know much about the world of work, and I wouldn’t have known how to write a CV or how to act in an interview. Thanks to the programme, I now understand how to do these things and I feel much more prepared.

“I’ve been discussing college courses and I’m feeling really excited about what options are out there for me. I’d love to study drama or film and I’m looking forward to visiting different colleges to learn more about the full-time options.”

Director of ENABLE Works, Ashley Ryan said: “Stepping Up is the only programme of its kind in Europe and now operates in over 75 schools across Scotland, making a real difference to the lives of thousands of young people.

“We were very pleased to have welcomed Mr Hepburn to Wester Hailes High School to see first-hand the impact the programme is having on disabled young people, to overcome any barriers that can prevent a positive transition from school into adulthood.

“Helping equip young people with learning disabilities with the confidence and skills they need to positively progress into employment or further education is invaluable, and we hope this early intervention will help to close the disability employment gap that exists in Scotland.”

Jamie Hepburn said: “It has been inspiring to hear about the vital work that ENABLE does to connect disabled young people to fair work, education and productive activities designed to support a successful transition into adult life and work.

“The Scottish Government is committed to supporting organisations, such as ENABLE, to ensure that people with additional support needs are given a wealth of opportunities. I look forward to learning more about the progress of the Stepping Up programme.”



Jay Shanks and Jamie Hepburn the Minister for Further Education, Higher Education and Science of Scotland. ENABLE Works – Stepping Up Ministerial Visit to Wester Hailes Education Centre.



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