

Calderdale and Kirklees Partnership – The following extracts from the assessment of the strengths and areas to address in preparation for a partnership self-assessment report, illustrate the areas of work covered by the Calderdale and Kirklees Partnership

Introduction

Huddersfield Technical College is the lead partner for the Calderdale and Kirklees Entry to Employment (E2E) Partnership formed in July 2003. In 2005/6 the Partnership consisted of up to 16 delivery partners offering 27,341 E2E planned learner weeks under contract to West Yorkshire Learning and Skills Council. The Partnership secured funding for a Round 5 European Science Foundation (ESF) co-financed project running from September 2005 to March 2007, branded Rise to the Challenge (formerly entry to vocational training) - the initiative aims to offer an E2E gateway programme for a minimum of 188 learners from the 'not in education, employment or training' (NEET) group during its lifetime. From January 2006, the Partnership became the 'funding college' for the Prince's Trust Team Programme in Yorkshire and Humberside, offering 100 places at various locations across the region up to July 2006, and up to 250 places in the 2006/7 academic year. The Partnership has recently been successful in bidding to deliver a Learning Agreement pilot in Kirklees.

The Partnership Unit (the lead partner) works to the vice-principal (Information, Finance and Funding). The Unit employs a partnership manager and five staff - a subject learning coach, a Rise to the Challenge project officer, a finance/MIS officer, a plus support officer and an office administrator. The Unit has three full-time seconded personal advisers from Connexions, West Yorkshire. External consultancy support for data capture/analysis, quality improvement and project management complements the in-house team.

The Partnership continues to offer a broad range of learning opportunities to the E2E client group; partners are able to offer specific vocational specialisms and programmes giving priority to personal and social skills development. The Partnership is responding proactively to the increased emphasis on the vocational element of the E2E programme and aims to implement an action plan encouraging apprenticeship progression in 2007. The Partnership is also participating in the national Foundation Learning Tier pilot developing appropriate teaching and learning curriculum materials.

3 Leadership and management (general)

Strengths

- Effective operational systems including data exchange and financial/budget management.
- Good arrangements for enriching learner curriculums by means of sub-contracted specialist provision.
- Robust business planning arrangements in place.

Areas to address

- Under-developed assurance role of personal advisers.

3.1 We have clearly defined and articulated our strategic vision and plans for the Partnership and we undertake consultations with the partner/provider network to design and service a mutually acceptable working model - Partnership Group minutes refer to College senior management who fully supported and actively contributed to the development of the E2E partnership and have encouraged the diversification of our activities and our subsequent re-branding as the Training Partnership with a distinct operational identity within the College. This re-branding ensures that our role is understood across College and within the wider learning community.

3.2 An annual business plan, approved by senior College management, identifies our strategic priorities, our environment, the demand for our services and our operational tactics. The plan is fully costed and covers all our products.

The partnership manager directly reports to the vice-principal (Information, Finance and Funding). She also reports on request to the Quality Review and Standards and the Finance Committees of the College, both of which involve college governor representation. As a cost centre, the Partnership Unit maintains monthly management accounts fully analysing income, expenditure and performance against profile and budgets. These reporting and review systems ensure that there is an early identification of problems and trends and that corrective action is implemented promptly.

3.3 The E2E Partnership has a mature framework of representative partner groups who advise and adjudicate on all aspects of delivery. A Steering Group considers the strategic direction and plans of the Partnership. A Management Group involves partner managerial representatives and representatives from Calderdale and Kirklees Careers Limited and addresses key operational matters including retention, achievement and progression, equality and health and safety matters.

The Curriculum Entitlement Group (incorporating the former Basic Skills Forum) is pivotal in developing curriculum materials and teaching approaches and is prominent in identifying and responding to the training needs of teaching staff. This Group has also been a forum for the discussion of curriculum support materials developed as part of Skills for Life, the Standards Unit and so on.

A Health and Safety Forum allows partner representatives to share good practice (for example on placement vetting, induction) and to understand the detailed application of the Learning and Skills Council's (LSC's) safe learner concept.

These groups report to the Management Group. We recognise that there is an ongoing need to keep this consultative structure under review to ensure it remains relevant and effective, and in particular to ensure that group membership and responsibilities are clear and distinct.

Rise to the Challenge has a Steering Group with clear terms of reference and includes Learning Partnership, Connexions, LSC and Partnership representatives. Six-weekly hub provider meetings are held to formalise operational arrangements, for example eligibility requirements, subcontracting arrangements and so on. Rise to the Challenge providers have also been invited to participate in all E2E Partnership working groups.

The Team programme is served by a planned series of delivery provider and team leader meetings co-hosted with Prince's Trust staff.

3.4 We have been proactive in adding value to the Partnership by encouraging and facilitating the

sharing of partner resources and expertise and by making available additional curriculum opportunities. We have identified partner provision that might be offered more widely within the Partnership to enhance the curriculum offer for our learners. Our partners and providers can now take advantage of centrally coordinated training inputs and events to enrich their own in-house curriculum offer on a needs basis. For example, learners have been able to access coordinated fitness programmes and film-making offered as a Partnership resource, access to Institution of Occupational Safety and Health (IOSH) Working Safely and so on. Again, we have contracted with a provider specialising in information technology and the radio medium and offered access to their supplementary programme to all learners across the Partnership. In these ways we have enhanced the variety and depth of the curriculum offered to our E2E learners.

A similar approach has been adopted within Rise to the Challenge whereby a range of providers of specialist provision, for example outward-bound activities, anger management, film-making, theatre, dance and so on have been contracted to enhance and enrich the core curriculum. These additional curriculum elements motivate learners to stay in learning.

3.5 During the year we introduced a set of Partnership key E2E performance indicator targets covering contractual and quality improvement measures. Specific 'feeder' targets were then negotiated with each partner that aimed to stimulate their own improvement.

We undertake a formal, minuted quarterly performance review with the senior management representatives of each partner. The review considers performance statistics in the context of agreed partner/Partnership performance targets. This mechanism is of fundamental importance in maintaining a close understanding of how the programme is progressing, allowing the partnership manager to consider, for example, the reallocation of funding between partners to maximise delivery. This quarterly review process has been extended to include Rise to the Challenge and Team programme providers.

3.6 A highly effective data capture and analysis model is in place as an integral part of the College's management information system (MIS) using in-house consultancy support. A full learner database is maintained, which generates a learner list agreed by the partner and is reconciled and used as a basis for generating subsequent agreed learner lists and payments. The system permits the analysis of performance at partner and Partnership levels including retention, progression and achievement. We prepare regular management information reports that are considered by Partnership groups and are sent to each partner quarterly. We use this intelligence proactively to monitor a partner's given performance targets.

Subsidiary learning aims are captured by our database and a range of learner distance-travelled measures has been negotiated with providers. Supplementary information on placement participation and learner attendance has been routinely collected as a means of understanding the value-added elements of the E2E programme. Our approach has been rolled out to include the Rise to the Challenge and Team programme providers.

Performance benchmarking is routinely undertaken against other West Yorkshire E2E Partnerships. Close relationships have been maintained with other West Yorkshire Partnerships allowing for the exchange of good practice and the comparison of performance.

3.7 A directory of provision outlining partner learning offers is available and is regularly reviewed to ensure its accuracy. A Partnership website holds information on all E2E partners and Rise to the Challenge (R2C) providers and their offers and is a source of good practice and case studies. The website includes a partner/provider area and raises the profile of the Partnership's learning offers amongst referral agencies and the potential clients. The website also includes a specific Rise to the Challenge presence.

3.8 We communicate regularly with all partners and issue them regular updates with latest programme requirements, operational clarification, staff development opportunities, good practice and so on.

3.9 Partner staff development has been given a high priority. A full annual training needs analysis was conducted in 2004 identifying partner staff development needs, which allows us to prioritise and plan Partnership training effectively. An update of the qualifications of partner staff is undertaken annually. We are actively promoting the Standards Unit's recently issued E2E Competence Framework and awareness events have been held for partners. We have responded to the identified training needs by offering access to Further Education National Training Organisation (FENTO) qualifications in literacy and numeracy at Levels 2, 3, and 4, as well as a range of other training in the Passport, the Rickter Scale, MAPS, learner review and aftercare, health and safety, child protection, teaching observations and so on. Our subject learning coach has been working closely with partner staff to improve the offer of wider key skills and basic skills as well as to improve staff capability to manage learner behaviour, plan lessons and so on - this service will shortly be extended to include Rise to the Challenge providers. Our basic skills specialist offers active support and mentoring in embedding Plus initial assessment and curriculum materials as part of both the E2E and Rise to the Challenge learning offer.

This comprehensive training offer has been designed to build the capability of partner staff, to raise standards of delivery and to promote the ethos and principles of E2E. Staff delivering Rise to the Challenge have access to these training offers. We are in the process of establishing a similar support structure for our Team providers - already we have offered ILR and behaviour management training.

3.10 We have a sophisticated system for selecting and recruiting our own staff. All our staff undergo a full induction and are issued with comprehensive job descriptions. There is an established approach to human resource development (Striving for Excellence) and a structured staff appraisal system that includes the identification of their training needs and linkages to performance management. We have a positive commitment to the in-service training and development of all our staff.

3.11 Our three seconded personal advisers (PAs) undertake a cycle of on-site E2E partner and Rise to the Challenge provider visits, offering regular individual learner support and advice particularly to those at risk of drop-out and with personal problems. The PAs are closely involved in the completion and sign-off of Passport documentation, having a key role in quality assuring its content. The PAs interview and counsel learners regarding their learning options, their personal circumstances and progression issues. In effect the PAs offer a crucial bridge and brokerage service for the Partnership and are instrumental in ensuring that intelligence is fed back to the partnership manager. They provide important feedback on the operation of the programmes from the perspective of both learners and partners and, crucially, work to improve the appropriateness and the promptness of learner referrals.

The personal advisers maintain ongoing liaison with a given caseload of partners/providers, allowing them to develop their understanding and to build productive relationships with their allocated partners. The PAs report to the partnership manager on a formal basis at a monthly staff meeting covering current issues and problems. This allows the early identification and remedy of identified operational problems. In addition, intelligence is gathered and analysed in a more formal and structured manner by means of a quarterly PA report on partner progress to the partnership manager, linked to the formal provider review cycle.

We are currently considering how our PAs can be empowered to undertake a more active quality

assurance role whilst undertaking their visits. Given the frequency of those visits and their familiarity with provider staff and learners, there is a real opportunity here for them to influence the standard of Passport (and other related documentation) completion.

3.12 Huddersfield Technical College has explicit aims and values in its policy statement and a comprehensive policy communicated and reinforced to all partners in their sub-contract. There is a clearly stated commitment to the active implementation of the policy from a senior level within the organisation.

3.13 The planning, design and delivery of our programmes is informed by our strong commitment to encourage the participation of all minority groups. We have planned our provision so that it is available to prospective learners across our wide geographical area and we have ensured that a range of programmes is offered to meet the needs of all learners. We have, for example, continued to fund a specialist provision aimed specifically at pregnant girls and, latterly, programmes for learners re-entering the programme post-pregnancy.

3.14 Following the Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) Thematic Review we have implemented a full programme of partner staff dyslexia awareness training to ensure learner needs are identified promptly. Utilising the expertise of College staff, initial learner screenings are reviewed and, if appropriate, specific specialist learner support and training is offered.

3.15 The Partnership's Management Group takes lead responsibility for promoting equality and diversity and in sharing good practice within the Partnership. The Group has established wider links with organisations and training providers across the region in order to identify effective methods for improving minority participation and achievement.

3.16 Quarterly review meetings with each partner include a full analysis and discussion of each partner's equality performance in terms of the participation of male and female, ethnic minority and disabled learners. The meetings are minuted and they highlight action points. The Partnership's key performance indicators include specific targets for improving ethnic minority and learners with disabilities.

3.17 Partner equality and diversity policies are checked pre-contract. Partner policies and their effective implementation are checked on an ongoing basis during our annual cycle of assurance visits. These visits are also an opportunity to check that the marketing and publicity materials produced by our partners are free of any racial or cultural bias.

Our learners are encouraged to raise any grievances and to report any instances of harassment or bullying. We and all our partners have documented procedures that clearly state how learners can initiate complaints and how they will be investigated. The procedures offer a prompt, objective and thorough investigation of all learner complaints. Learner complaints against a partner have the opportunity to be escalated to the lead partner for independent resolution.

Our six-monthly feedback questionnaires for learners and leavers provide a further opportunity for learners to raise any grievances and to highlight any instances of discrimination, harassment or bullying.

3.18 College premises are fully accessible to learners with limited mobility. Some partner premises are not accessible to those with limited mobility but arrangements, including outreach training and transport to an alternative training centre, are in place to ensure that such learners are not disadvantaged.

3.19 All partners offer full and comprehensive induction programmes that highlight equality and

diversity issues. A number of participative, project-based learning activities are used that motivate and engage learners. Inductions also give prominence to partner disciplinary, grievance and complaints processes.

3.20 We, as lead partner, ensure that our own staff are fully aware of their responsibilities in complying with stated policy and in promoting equality. Job descriptions fully clarify responsibilities and codes of conduct are communicated during induction. Appropriate staff training is offered to ensure that staff are aware of the latest legislative requirements.

3.21 The lead partner is subject to the College's health and safety policies and arrangements. A comprehensive policy statement clearly identifies responsibilities for health and safety at a senior level within the organisation and the membership and terms of reference of the Health and Safety Committee. The policy is supported by a detailed set of arrangements and risk assessments.

3.22 All prospective partners and delivery providers are required to provide full information on their proposed learning offer and the management systems supporting its delivery. The LSC's preferred pre-contract questionnaire, the HSQ1, is issued. The information is fully reviewed and assessed by the partnership manager in consultation as necessary with the College's health and safety manager.

3.23 Eyes and ears monitoring conducted by the seconded personal advisers and Partnership staff during regular partner visits provides ongoing intelligence on partner compliance to health and safety legislation and good practice.

In order to meet the standards in the Health and Safety Executive's guidance, HSG65 Successful Health and Safety Management, we have introduced a cycle of assurance visits conducted by an external consultancy. This competent person audits each partner and all their sites, preparing a report and development plan with recommendations for improvement. A similar schedule of visits to our Team delivery providers has been agreed covering both Team locations and residential sites.

3.24 All partners and delivery providers have effective systems for accident/incident reporting and investigation. Our Contractor's Manual/handbooks clearly state that each partner is required to report accident/incidents to the lead partner. We maintain a central coordinating role in ensuring that accidents are promptly and effectively reported to the LSC.

3.25 We are able to access the health and safety manager, the College's nominated competent person, for advice and guidance on systems and compliance issues. The College health and safety manager leads the Partnership's Health and Safety Forum, which has disseminated advice and good practice in such areas as placement vetting, helping to standardise processes and procedures, and which has advised on the training/development needs of partner staff in line with LSC standards. Rise to the Challenge providers also participate in the Forum.

3.26 We have undertaken checks of all partners to ensure that they comply with child protection legislation and in particular that their staff have been cleared by the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB). Those not complying have been issued with a corrective action request specifying compliance within a stated timescale. We have also offered smaller partners/providers the facility of utilising the College's arrangements for obtaining CRB clearances.

3.27 In terms of the Team programme, we have worked closely with the Prince's Trust Regional Office to harmonise our health and safety arrangements and to ensure that intelligence is shared between our respective organisations. Delivery provider meetings routinely include a discussion of emergent health and safety issues.

4.2 Leadership and management (E2E programme)

Strengths

- Strong partner commitment to staff development.

Areas to address

- Inconsistent partner learner feedback arrangements.
- Lack of documented quality systems covering the teaching and learning process.

4.2.1 All partners have strategic and business planning systems that consider the financial, staffing, resource and organisational implications of programme delivery. Responsibilities are clearly assigned.

Partners monitor performance against budgets and profiles on a periodic basis, preparing internal management accounts. Sound internal control environments are maintained.

A range of internal representative management/staff groups and forums regularly review performance against their plans including learner recruitment, retention and achievement.

4.2.2 Partners have quality systems of varying levels of formality and sophistication. Some partners have fully documented systems with International Organisation for Standardisation (ISO) accreditation, others have developed their own operating manuals and handbooks containing key information relevant to job roles. In all cases existing procedures and work instructions address the significant stages of training delivery, ensure that standards are defined and consistently implemented. A minority of partners has yet to develop a suite of work instructions covering E2E-specific features such as extended initial assessment, review and aftercare.

4.2.3 Most partners undertake formal annual self-assessments of their provision in accordance with issued good practice that includes the E2E programme. Staff training offered through the Partnership has widened understanding of self-assessment and the inspection regime.

4.2.4 A number of partners collect and analyse learner feedback, usually after training sessions, key inputs - for example induction - and at the end of the programme. A number of partners issue an annual feedback questionnaire to all current learners. However we have identified that there is scope for agreeing minimum requirements in this area and have actively recommended the Partnership model as a means of facilitating comparison and analysis at Partnership level.

A number of partners include placement employers within their feedback capture arrangements as a means of assessing their satisfaction levels and their requirements for future information and support from the partner.

4.2.5 All partners have effective staff policies and arrangements. All partner staff have comprehensive job descriptions. Annual staff appraisal systems review performance and identify future development needs appropriate to their roles. All partners have a strong commitment to the continuing professional development of their teaching staff; there are clear organisational and individual staff development plans in place. The response by partners to staff development and training events organised by the lead partner has been very positive, demonstrating a willingness to release staff for both personal development opportunities and for the development of staff skills and expertise to improve the quality of the learning experience for the learner.

We have found that the motivation and commitment of staff to support learners and to deliver

individual training programmes, consistent with the ethos of E2E, are strong.

4.2.6 Partners have documented equality and diversity policies supported by robust disciplinary, grievance and complaints procedures. Equality and diversity are fully explored during learner induction using a variety of stimulating participative, activity-based techniques. Copies of policies and procedures are issued to learners. Detailed policies regarding learner grievance, harassment, bullying and discipline are also covered during induction ensuring that learners fully understand their rights and responsibilities.

Placement employers are thoroughly pre-vetted and partners check their commitment to equality and the availability of proper policies and procedures. All employer placement agreements explicitly include equality terms and conditions.

4.2.7 Partner learning resources are sufficient, current and fit for purpose, ensuring that they support and facilitate learner progress.

4.2.8 Partners have staff meetings involving teaching and support staff at which the curriculum is thoroughly planned and its effectiveness is reviewed using information from learning and assessment observations, learner feedback, external verifier reports, internal audits and third party audits.

4.2.9 Most partners undertake learning observations/assessment sampling in compliance with formal schedules. Partners have sufficient appropriately qualified internal verifiers and assessors in post. Feedback from the observations and sample checks of assessments is given to relevant staff and further staff training or support is subsequently identified. Results are also fed into partner programme review systems to identify any trends and necessary design changes.