

## **THEME** Working With Employers

**Other themes referenced in this work:** Collaborative working

**Cheshire East Cluster**

**NORTH WEST REGION**

### **Cluster group**

Total People Ltd.  
South Cheshire College.  
Springfield School  
Cheshire East Borough Council Supported Employment Team.

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## **Cheshire East Employer Engagement Pack**

### **Project Summary**

The aim of this project is to raise employer's awareness of employment as a positive pathway for learners with disabilities or learning difficulties. It has been developed to:

- actively seek employer engagement
- introduce employers to our clients and show their potential in the workplace
- build a long term and positive relationship with employers across East Cheshire
- inform employers about the support available for disabled clients and employers
- create a greater shared understanding of how providers in the Cheshire East locality can work together collaboratively to develop personalised packages for learners with learning difficulties and /or disabilities
- raise local employers perceptions and understanding of how "job carving" can provide supported employment opportunities for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities whilst meeting the needs of their business.

### **What we wanted to achieve**

Our overall project aim was to develop a greater shared understanding between the cluster group to enhance collaborative working and look to eliminate competitiveness. Effective collaboration will ensure the sharing of good practice and improve expertise. This will enhance the spread of knowledge, support the development of personalised pathways and build capacity. Shared delivery arrangements will prepare learners for adulthood and increase the breadth of learning environments.

Employer engagement is critical to increasing that breadth. Key to this the development of appropriate social enterprise models. The cohort of learners and their parents have very low aspirations of ever achieving sustained employment. Cheshire East has the pathway into employment high on its agenda. By pooling the clusters expertise and innovative methods for engaging employers we hope to strengthen existing opportunities and by providing employers with specific information that will support potential employees we aim to raise the profile of learners and introduce job carving as a concept. The aim of this strand of our project was to raise employer's awareness of employment as a positive pathway for learners with disabilities or learning difficulties. As a cluster we identified that learners and parents in the area have very low aspirations of ever achieving sustained employment and we needed to engage local employers to raise that aspiration.

## What we did

To raise employer's awareness of employment as a positive pathway for learners with disabilities or learning difficulties we realised that we required a platform to meet with employers and a tool to share that would emphasise the support available for employers and potential disabled employees.

**The issue of a coordinated approach to employer engagement was debated at the LSIS project planning groups. We had hoped to showcase an employer event and promote employment through the strong parent partnership that exists in Cheshire East. We took advice however, from the local chambers who advised that in the current economic climate employers would not always be available for an event.**

We went back to the drawing board and, as a group, developed a power point and supporting employer pack presentation that can be used at chamber events, employer workshops, parent partnership events and on a 1:1 basis with a prospective employer. Each organisation contributed documents, case studies and ideas for the full employer pack.

The Employer Presentation Pack has been developed to:

- actively seek employer engagement;
- introduce employers to our clients and show their potential in the workplace;
- build a long term and positive relationship with employers across East Cheshire;
- inform employers about the support available for disabled clients and employers;.

The pack includes local information and national documents to support disabled learners into employment and offer advice for potential employers:

- **3A.** Power Point Presentation '*Working together to achieve success for disabled clients.*'
- **3B – 3K** Exemplars of documentation to support employees and employers

### **3B-3G** National Documents:

- **3B.** 'Handbook for Employers' produced by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation  
[www.jrf.org.uk/publications/employing-people-with-learning-disabilities-handbook-employers](http://www.jrf.org.uk/publications/employing-people-with-learning-disabilities-handbook-employers)
- **3C.** 'Top tips for small employers' produced by The Disability Rights Commission  
[www.equalityhumanrights.com/uploaded\\_files/Employers/top\\_tips\\_for\\_small\\_employers\\_emp\\_5.pdf](http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/uploaded_files/Employers/top_tips_for_small_employers_emp_5.pdf)
- **3D.** 'UK Customer profile' produced by the Employers Forum on Disability  
<http://businessdisabilityforum.org.uk/our-offer/advice/publications/factsheets>
- **3E.** Flyers and updated information from REMPLOY Web: [www.remploy.co.uk](http://www.remploy.co.uk)
- **3F.** Employers- ' Practical Guide to the law and best practice for employers'  
[www.equalityhumanrights.com/uploaded\\_files/Employers/a\\_practical\\_guide\\_to\\_the\\_law\\_and\\_best\\_practice\\_for\\_employers\\_emp14.pdf](http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/uploaded_files/Employers/a_practical_guide_to_the_law_and_best_practice_for_employers_emp14.pdf)
- **3G.** Employer Engagement - Natspec  
[www.natspec.org.uk/fileadmin/.../employer\\_engagement.ppt](http://www.natspec.org.uk/fileadmin/.../employer_engagement.ppt)

### **3H- 3K** Documents produced by East Cheshire

- **3H.** Placement Information documentation produced by Cheshire East Council
- **3I.** 'Myth Busting' case study prepared by East Cheshire Supported Employment
- **3J.** 'Bridging the Gap' Project case study produced by Springfield School
- **3K.** DVD 'Bridging the Gap' produced by Springfield School

The presentation for employers includes slides giving information about the role of support workers.....

## We will provide for you.....

- ✓ A support worker for every client who comes to work for you.
- ✓ Close and regular liaison with every employer to provide advice & support to ensure maximum benefit for everyone involved in the workplace.
- ✓ A smooth transition for our clients into the working world.



## The support worker will.....



- ✓ set up the work placement directly with you;
- ✓ carry out all health & safety and risk assessments;
- ✓ write a detailed job description;
- ✓ find a mentor in the workplace;
- ✓ organise visits on site;
- ✓ set objectives for success work e.g. timekeeping, travel plans, use of equipment;
- ✓ provide support for client and customer as long as required.

## The Support Placement Officer at Total People Ltd.

***'A Placement Officer needs to be an exceptional multi-tasker and always go that extra mile in supporting employers and trainees'***

*Julie Barnes, Placement Officer, Total People Ltd. April 2013.*

*It is particularly important to ensure that employers who take on learners with additional needs or disabilities have my full support and guidance and are safe in the knowledge that their Placement Officer is only a phone call away!*

*In setting up work placements I spend time with employers ensuring total compliance with Health and Safety (H&S) rules and regulations as the safety of the learner is my number 1 priority, full H & S vets are undertaken and I work with the employer on risk assessments which take into account any learning difficulties, disability or medical/health conditions the learner may have.*

*We discuss any prohibitions or restrictions that may apply to the learner and any control measures that need putting in place.*

*When the learner is in placement I telephone and visit more frequently to ensure that the learner is safe, supported and progressing well – and also that the employer is happy with the service and support provided to them. Anything that needs addressing or anything that I can do to help – I always make sure that I do!*

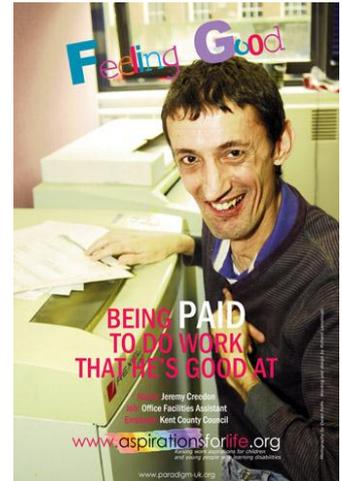
Our cluster group has also included case studies about your own young people who have successful employment placements that have resulted in full time employment.



## Meet Sam.....

Sam, aged 22, is a positive and personable young man who enjoys meeting new people and learning new things. He is partially sighted he has cataracts on both eyes leaving him with only peripheral vision. His physical disabilities mean that he struggles to stand for long periods and that he can only lift very light objects.

Sam has an opportunity as a kitchen assistant in a high quality elderly care home. He is fully supported by a Personal Assistant (PA) who helps with his personal needs as well as acting as an onsite job trainer. Sam has the responsibility to ensure that the tables are cleaned stocked with condiments. To enable Sam to develop catering skills and tackle more complex tasks the manager has provided scales with an audible readout, and a Dictaphone loaded with instructions, so that Sam can access information at a rate that suits him. Given the support from his PA and the cooperation offered by the kitchen staff Sam has been able to develop a greatly improved level of social interaction alongside a range of practical skills once thought beyond his capabilities.



## Introducing Ryan.....



Ryan Dooley is a delightful young man, extremely capable, very polite and on the autistic spectrum. Ryan gained City and Guilds Entry Level 2 in Hospitality and Catering group and a Diploma in Employability and Personal Development Entry Level 3. Ryan began a work placement at a local community cafe at St John's Church in Hartford. His role was general assistant, involving setting up for busy lunch service, recording the number of covers served, food service and cleaning down after the lunch service. Ryan excelled within the role and was a great asset to the small team of volunteers.

Ryan was also placed at Nunsmere Hall Hotel in Oakmere, a top class four star country house hotel, as a kitchen porter. Ryan drew on experience gained at college and excelled. He exhibited exemplary commitment to the role and in return his confidence, self esteem and personal development were undeniable. Ryan was thrilled to become part of a team and be invited to 'staff do's', He was awarded Employee of the Year by his fellow employees. Ryan progressed into a paid position in the kitchen porter role.



"Ryan is a real asset to our kitchen team. All the staff love having him around he is a credit to us and to Petty Pool College".

**Mark Huntley General Manager of Nunsmere Hall Hotel**

## What we achieved

### Working with Employers

We have produced a successful presentation to local employers that will be used to promote the possibility of young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities participating in work. We now have improved communication and cooperation with other providers in the local area.

**A draft presentation was tabled at Cheshire East Council's Welfare to Work partnership chaired by Colin Jacklin. It was very well received and comments noted. The Chair of the Congleton Chamber of Commerce was impressed and believes he can pull some 30 employers together to see the presentation.**

**We shall be finalising which events will be targeted for employer engagement at Welfare to Work meetings within East Cheshire. It is our aim to take the presentation right across the authority to Congleton, Macclesfield and South Cheshire. Feedback will then be given to the practitioners group to amend and up date.**

*'This project will ensure that in the future our students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are given wider progression options with employment (supported, paid or voluntary) being a possible alternative to education or social care.'*

**Chris Baggs South Cheshire College**

**Springfield School shared the findings of their work on a pilot of the Bridging The Gap project working with Manchester Metropolitan University. This involved three students in their school leaving year in working at the university four days a week and undertaking a range of vocational accreditation and training on the fifth day.**

*'The Bridging the Gap project was hugely successful in enabling the students to experience real work – and their parents to feel assured that this was something that their children were potentially capable of in the longer term future. The achievements of the students on the Bridging the Gap project surpassed all expectations and has led to further departments within the university offering placements and enabling the project to continue into next year. One student has also been offered an unsupported work placement on a voluntary basis for at least the next year. The students have grown in confidence and maturity. Employers within the university have appreciated the strengths of our students and excellent links have been forged with the university for the future.'*

**Di Brown Deputy Headteacher Springfield School East Cheshire**

### Working Collaboratively

*'I have found the whole project both useful and informative. I have received useful information from our specialist advisor throughout which will be used to inform future provision at the college.....The Regional Cluster event was a great opportunity to meet with colleagues working in the same field to share information and experiences.'*

**Chris Baggs South Cheshire College**

Through the partnership working and information shared between members of the cluster group we have a better understanding of some of the different curriculum pathways available, for example traineeships and supported internships.

We now have a shared understanding developed through the practice of Collaborative Action Research and Joint Practice Development.

We have invited colleagues working in the region on Supported Internship programmes to come along to our events such as the parent partnership and contribute with a short presentation.

<http://www.midchesh.ac.uk/news/2012/10/supported-internships-young-people>.

Mid Cheshire College gave a presentation at the transitional support steering group and Macclesfield College, who are partners in the project. The college has promised to provide will regular updates for employers.

We are currently looking at a working group of placement officers/employer engagement staff, who will meet on a regular basis to keep the employment pack current and up to date.

*'As a new comer to the process I have learnt such much from our partners and the support and knowledge of our LSIS Specialist Adviser has been fantastic. I hope other work based learning providers join in their local clusters as we have so much to offer.'*

**Gaynor Holland Total People LTD**

## **What we have learnt**

*'As a college we have realised that there is a need for us to develop our curriculum offer to include courses that help young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities into employment.'*

**Chris Baggs South Cheshire College**

The project has highlighted the lack of progression opportunities for young people with leaning difficulties and/or disabilities, and the need to promote employment as a realistic option.

There was wide variation amongst partners re views on how best to combine forces re engaging with employers.

*'Our students have demonstrated their ability to work – we need to continue to work towards a system and structure which will enable them to undertake meaningful work and potentially to earn from it. School needs to continue to research and be involved in ways to make this happen.'*

**Di Brown Deputy Headteacher Springfield School East Cheshire**

Working with LSIS has allowed our organisations to learn more about the SEND pathfinders and learn from their experiences and developments. This has helped our work.

<http://www.preparingforadulthood.org.uk/what-we-do/pathfinder-support>

## **What we are taking forward**

- Work on South Cheshire College Study Programme development with partnerships with employers, adult services and their internal apprenticeship team.
- Total People to look at developing programmes to attract Post 19 funding.
- South Cheshire College will be investigating how they can offer more courses that can lead into employment, e.g supported internships. Within the college The Entry Level Department will forge a closer working relationship with the College's Work Based Learning Team.
- Make more extensive use of the existing Welfare to Work partnership to encourage and coordinate employer engagement
- Practitioner group to look at employer engagement and update employer pack
- Roll out employer presentation across the chamber of commerce sites
- The employer pack with be shared at the Parental Partnership group which also sit on the Cheshire East Strategy group

- By measuring the uptake of learners to programmes we can measure the impact of the pack in employer engagement.

### **What advice we would give to others**

- Look at a variety of media to reach employers; we were naive to think in the current economic climate an employer event would reach all.
- Stress to employers they are not alone, support is always there
- Keep it simple, small steps for learner and employers works for all
- Share expertise and good practice
- Celebrate your success

Documents and resources linked to this work are available by contacting cluster members

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