

## **Case study**

# **Personal and Social Development in Foundation Learning**

## **Camden Jobtrain**

### **Introduction**

Camden Jobtrain was founded as a work-based learning provider in 1972. All E2E learners are drawn from the disengaged group in the Borough. There are 165 learners at any one time and over 400 in a year. They have been involved in Foundation Learning since 2008 when an Olympics capacity-building pilot, funded by the local LSC, was launched. Camden Jobtrain is the highest performing E2E training provider in Central London with progression rates as high as 70% over the last three years. The organisation is also part of the E2E/youth community action initiative. This study does not focus upon Jobtrain's other area of work – delivering an alternative key stage 4 programme – although that too will in due course operate under the aegis of Foundation Learning.

### **Foundation Learning**

The aims of Foundation Learning fit with the organisation's ambition to counter exclusion and involve young people in society, both as active citizens and participants in the workforce. The target profile of learners is exclusively disengaged learners, i.e. socially and educationally disadvantaged young people. There is a balance of 60% young men to 40% young women, and great ethnic diversity, reflecting that of the area.

Learners are referred by the Connexions service and there are on-site Connexions advisers for three days per week. The initial assessment interview is carried out by the recruitment and progression (RAP) manager. His job is to ascertain precisely learners' needs and interests, using a RAP 'survey' and initial assessment checklist. Functional skills assessments are also carried out in the first week and other areas of need such as essential skills, ESOL, dyslexia assessment and PSD are identified. These support areas are added to the learning 'passport' and activity plans drawn up, which are reviewed every four weeks.



Richard Jackson, Chief Executive,  
Camden Jobtrain

All learners are assigned a key worker at the start of the programme. They build a relationship with the learner, taking an interest in their performance and making sure they are progressing properly. The RAP Team checks that learners are enjoying their programme and whether or not it needs to be changed. There are also student support officers who are there to intervene if there are any signs that a learner may drop out.

Learners progress to further learning at an FE college, to employment, to an apprenticeship and to volunteering (recently introduced as a new fourth option). Many construction learners progress to the Camden Council-run *King's Cross Construction Skills Centre Project* and then on to apprenticeship run by Carillion.

## Curriculum

All learners are on the E2E programme which models and is soon to be subsumed into Foundation Learning. The E2E programme runs for an average of 22 weeks but this will rise to an average of 40 weeks once E2E is absorbed into Foundation Learning.

Camden Jobtrain offers five vocational options: construction; retail; childcare; business and administration; and engineering (car mechanics). The three components of Foundation Learning are delivered discretely but cluster groups of staff work together to ensure that individual programmes are coherent across vocational learning, PSD and functional skills. This is partly a reflection of the problems of attracting and retaining staff that have both vocational expertise and the capacity to deliver literacy, numeracy and PSD. One specialist PSD tutor also helps to manage the volunteering programme with Camden Jobtrain.

Personalisation is achieved through the excellent range of support offered to learners to ensure that the programme is meeting their needs, as identified by the RAP manager. All learners participate in a sheltered work experience as it is critically important that they can have places where 'they can get it right, get it wrong and get it sorted'. Camden Jobtrain has a retail shop, *Aspire@Jobtrain* which takes on slight seconds from *French Connection* and other sources. In all areas (apart from child care for obvious reasons) there are three stepping stones into work: step 1 – employability preparation in the classroom; step 2 – work experience in a workshop/sheltered setting (e.g. garage, *Aspire*), and step 3 – work experience with an employer. In workshop sessions, learners carry out work tasks to professional standards, e.g. the mechanics service cars, in carpentry and joinery they carry out work for the local council. Learners, who demonstrate in workshops and the shop that they can manage a working environment, will then go on to a work placement with an employer.

## PSD

Camden Jobtrain is using the City and Guilds (7546) *Certificate in Employability and Personal Development*,<sup>1</sup> which has two mandatory units. One is 'Working effectively', including teamwork skills, time management, interpersonal skills, flexibility and motivation and the other is 'planning for progression'. Richard Jackson, the CEO of Camden Jobtrain, states that:

*PSD, in a sense, is the core aspect of what we are doing as it is about behaviour, self-perception and attitudes, preparation for work and your role in society. So it is what drives it. However, from a young person's perspective it cannot be seen to be the driver. They do not stand under lamp posts and say 'I want to be personally developed,' they say 'I want to be a mechanic'.*

Volunteering is a mandatory part of the programme and it is discussed with learners at induction. Every learner is informed that they will spend a day a week for four weeks to make up their 16 hours of volunteering, required by the LSC contract. To meet the contractual targets, volunteering activities are undertaken in groups.

## PSD key activities

A lot of visits are organised to expose learners to 'inspiring work environments' to raise their aspirations and make them feel that 'I could work here'. For example, the business and administration students went to Bloomberg's and had a tour of their beautiful building. The purpose of these visits is to widen their horizons beyond the borough; they are not directly linked to the PSD qualifications.

<sup>1</sup> See [www.cityandguilds.com](http://www.cityandguilds.com)

Construction students visit the major development site at King's Cross and they are undertaking a range of practical volunteering activities at the Camley Street environmental area behind the station. Work has involved: raking and digging; creating a pathway; building a tool shed and a sheltered area; and making bird-boxes and badger boxes. Jobtrain has a partnership with BAM Construction which is supporting the learners through interview-skills sessions run by their education manager, as well as by providing donations of wooden off-cuts and other materials.

Another group are being trained by Westminster City Council as city guides in the run up to the 2012 Olympics. Before that they will volunteer as guides supporting St Patrick's Day and the London marathon. This will help learners to develop customer-facing skills as part of PSD and employability.

Another group are involved in an intergenerational project with the charity Young At Heart. The idea is to bring older people from the community together with younger people working on practical activities such as arts and crafts, e.g. making Christmas cards, putting together photo albums.

*I have definitely built up on teambuilding, management skills. I have learnt how to behave professionally....I recommend volunteering. I get a lot out of it, including useful skills for other placements and my future career. It is the kind of job (sic) where you can learn so many things.*

Amira, Childcare learner  
volunteering at a youth club

There is a student council with two councillors per project elected by their peers. They put together agendas for meetings with the CEO and he adds his own items to the agenda. The student council has brought about real differences, for example the timetable has been changed and the lunch hour has been reduced to 45 minutes, the day starts at 9.30am not 10.00am and finishes at 3.30pm rather than 4.00pm. Experience in the student councillor role is captured through the exit questionnaires and progress reviews.

Citizenship has had a place in the agenda of Camden Jobtrain since it joined the Post-16 Citizenship Development Programme in 2001. Debates are held on topical issues, and local and national politicians visit the Jobtrain premises to talk to learners. Local candidates in the forthcoming general election are taking part in an election debate with the learners.

The programme actively develops learners' employability skills. Learners take part in role plays about employer expectations, and discuss employer stereotypes and how to overcome these barriers.

## Summary

The key strength of the programme has been its success in developing the learners' sense of self awareness and appreciation of the importance of good attendance, the right attitude and investing in your own career.

One area for improvement is to ensure that PSD is more embedded in the rest of the learner's programme. Camden Jobtrain also aims, through learner voice, to enable learners to contribute more to the evolution of the Foundation Learning programme and come up with their own ideas for the curriculum.

## Contact

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