

## **LSIS Supported Provider Collaborative Development projects**

### **LSIS funded Getting People into Work project**

**Case study for Knowsley Community College:** Developing our curriculum offer to help learners on their Apprenticeship journey

#### **Project background**

LSIS supported a number of provider-led development projects, which were to run from November 2011 through to July 2012, with the aim of building the sector's capacity to design commission and deliver improvement and strategic change.

Our project, involved four providers; Knowsley Community College (KCC) as the lead provider, Lancaster and Morecambe College, Hopwood Hall College (HCC) and Training Tomorrow's Engineers (TTE). Each provider worked on initiatives within their own organisation and we came together to exchange good practice and resources.

This case study focuses specifically on KCC's initiative, which looked at the development of the curriculum offer to move learners towards Apprenticeship programmes.

#### **Introduction**

KCC is a Merseyside college with two main centres in Roby and Kirkby. Roby Sixth Form College offers a large number of A-levels and BTEC Nationals or Diplomas aimed mainly at school leavers. Alongside this, courses for adult students such as Access to Higher Education and for foundation level learners who require additional support are available. We also offer Apprenticeships in Hairdressing, Barbering, Beauty Therapy, Hospitality and Leisure and Tourism.

The Kirkby Centre specialises in vocational education for both full and part-time students, including programmes for apprentices in a wide variety of trades. Courses in Kirkby also include Accountancy, Business Administration, Construction, Computing, Engineering (Automotive and Electrical), Health and Social Care and Teacher Education and Foundation Degrees in Business, Management and Computing. The Kirkby Centre also provides the base for the Employer Response Unit, which maintains important links with local and national employers, many of whom provide Apprenticeship places and work placement opportunities

The College has recently acquired a third site in the Huyton area where a growing range of provision for unemployed people is offered under the brand of 'WorkWorld'.

## **Project Aims**

The aims and intended outcomes of our project focused on developing a pathway to enable young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) young adults (18+) to:

- progress into the Access to Apprenticeship programme;
- sustain a place with an employer; and
- prepare for progression onto an employer-led Apprenticeship.

### **Short term aims December - March 2012**

- Investigate routes into Engineering, Customer Service and Administration Apprenticeships for NEET learners.
- Investigate suitable Qualifications and Credit framework (QCF) units - where possible that form part of the Apprenticeship frameworks.
- Develop suitable curriculum using QCF units.
- Develop links with employers to give learners work experience or Apprenticeship opportunities.

### **Longer term aims April - July 2012**

- Consider an Access to Apprenticeship curriculum offer by building on the needs of local employers including small and medium enterprises (SMEs).
- Improve the WorkWorld provision for Jobcentre Plus (JCP) clients to support their progression into Apprenticeships.
- Develop a clearer understanding of how best to pitch the value of this element of Apprenticeship delivery to employers.
- Where relevant, develop ongoing partnerships between the other providers engaged in the project, in particular Hopwood Hall and Lancaster and Morecambe College.

## **Starting point**

Our project emerged because KCC had undertaken a pilot with nine learners on an Access to Apprenticeship way with a local provider partner. The pilot was not entirely successful. Therefore, the starting point of the project was to consider the learning from the pilot and look at appropriate provision to move learners nearer to an Apprenticeship, or into an Apprenticeship depending on their starting point.

## **Activity**

Our focus was on engaging the NEET group in pre-employment provision rather than just using the Access to Apprenticeship pathway. This allowed wider scope to use a range of products to meet the project's objectives than we had originally planned.

We settled on developing different 'learner journeys' to engage JCP clients with a view to progressing them on to Apprenticeships. The project centred on Engineering, Customer Service and Administration provision, which is delivered through the WorkWorld provision. We identified relevant QCF units that would prepare the learners for an Apprenticeship and where possible used units that form part of a technical certificate to develop a sustainable offer in each of these key curriculum areas.

As a result of finding it difficult to engage learners on the provision we started to investigate the barriers to accessing Apprenticeships and the issues surrounding effective and robust Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG). We began to look more rigorously at assessment of mental toughness and developing activities to support the results.

In support of this activity, we set up the following.

- A KCC Development Group was established comprising College Curriculum Managers with responsibility for Engineering, Customer Service/Administration and the Manager with the cross-college responsibility for Apprenticeships.
- Managers and staff participated in training in using the QCF unit funding spreadsheet, the Ofqual register and the Learning Aim Reference Application (LARA) database to research appropriate units for pre-Apprenticeship provision.
- New resources were developed to deliver unitised provision to unemployed learners with a view to progressing them into Apprenticeships. Considerable support in resource development was received from the other providers involved in the project)
- We started to define an ideal 'learner journey' into Apprenticeships through the WorkWorld provision based on the experiences of KCC and the other providers in the project.

## **Challenges**

Initially, navigating the many units on the QCF unit spreadsheet was a major challenge for our staff. We overcame this by starting to look at the units within the main vocational areas we wanted to deliver, therefore placing parameters on our search of the spreadsheet. An ongoing concern for us is the administrative challenge of delivering short unitised provision in terms of enrolment, maintaining registers, registration with award bodies, assessment and verification. We have yet to fully address this but remain focused on doing so.

## **Impact**

The staff development activity in using the LARA database, Ofqual register and the QCF unit spreadsheet has improved our ability to develop cost effective, fit for purpose provision for the unemployed.

Several different curriculum models are in place to engage JCP clients with a view to progressing them into Apprenticeships.

Two JCP clients have progressed to Apprenticeships – one in Customer Service and one in Administration who were unlikely to have done so if we had not looked at developing more effective routes from unemployment to Apprenticeship programmes.

Three learners were engaged in the engineering pathway, 'Go for Engineering' but finished without completing. This has contributed to the recognition of the need to enhance the IAG for not only the JCP clients, but also the wider College community. Significant work is underway now in this area as a direct result of this project and our learning from partners.

Staff perceptions of working with JCP clients have improved. This is evident in their approach to developing and delivering programmes that support moving unemployed people into work.

Mental toughness: we have identified which activities are more effective at building resilience and building confidence student "types" (as determined by the mental toughness assessments).

## **Top Tips**

If you are looking to develop your approach in moving NEET learners towards Apprenticeships, we would suggest the following.

- Ensuring robust IAG is in place, which focuses on personal and social skills, not just academic or vocational skills.
- Understand the precise requirements of employers to ensure the matching process is swift, and engages both students and employers quickly.

- If you are working with partners, share experience and resources. There is no need to reinvent the wheel. This means taking the time at the outset to explore whether or not your values are aligned and there is the potential to build a trusting relationship.

## **Our next steps**

- Continue to develop and expand our curriculum to support the progression of unemployed learner into Apprenticeships.
- Work with our Internal Systems team to streamline our processes and procedures to support the delivery of short, unitised provision whilst maintaining quality standards.
- Implementing software to address the personal and social development needs of students to ensure they are more thoroughly prepared for an Apprenticeship programme and all that it entails.

## **A learner case study**

Peter had been trying to find employment for some time and had applied for numerous jobs without success, despite his qualifications in Information Technology. He started attending the WorkWorld job club through which he achieved a QCF employability related unit. He also joined the, 'Go for Customer Service' course achieving a Customer Service related QCF unit. Whilst on the course his mentor helped him to link up with the 'Knowsley 100' Apprenticeship scheme. Peter's application was successful and he is now a Customer Service apprentice with a local pharmacy.

*Peter said, "Although I was looking for IT jobs, the courses I did at WorkWorld helped me to think about other options available to me. They helped me to search for jobs and how to be prepared for the interview. I'm really enjoying my Customer Service Apprenticeship and I am getting to use my IT skills and enjoy working with the public."*

## **The value of LSIS support**

*"Working closely with the other managers and staff, not only from within my College but also with the partner providers, has been a great experience. Three members of our provider group have regular contact and have plans to work together in the future and exchange ideas. We have a common goal of developing fit for purpose curriculum for the unemployed and this has been invaluable in developing routes into employment and Apprenticeships. The unintended outcome of introducing the software to the College wider community has been of significant benefit. "*

Barbara Smith, Development Manager (Access to Apprenticeships Project Manager), Knowsley Community College

*"This LSIS Project has helped the College to analyse in a more systematic way the IAG needs of NEET young people, and to build their skills appropriately*

*using their starting points. Mental toughness has proved to be very effective in improving our understanding of what works and what does not work. We are now embedding these lessons into our wider College curriculum and expect to improve outcomes and destinations for learners. The project has enabled us to work collaboratively with other Colleges and training providers which has provided valuable insights and sharing of good practice.”*

Steve Gardner, Assistant Principal, Knowsley Community College

**Contact details**

Barbara Smith, Development Manager

[bsmith@knowsleycollege.ac.uk](mailto:bsmith@knowsleycollege.ac.uk)

0151 329 2196

This resource was produced by Knowsley Community College with funding from LSIS. LSIS accepts no responsibility for the accuracy or quality of the contents of this case study.