

LSIS Supported Provider Collaborative Development projects

LSIS funded Getting People into Work projects

Provider end of project report: July 2012

Project Title: Developing pre-employment provision for young people not in employment, education or training (NEET)

Section 1: Introduction

Knowsley Community College (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, as well as courses and 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. The Kirkby Centre 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

We worked in partnership with the following providers and project representatives on this project.

- Hopwood Hall (HHC), a Rochdale based Further Education College: Karen Humphreys.
- Lancaster and Morecambe College (LMC), a Further Education College: Susan Keenan.
- Training Tomorrow's Engineers (TTE), a training provider: Alan Turner.

The aims and intended outcomes of our project focused on developing a pathway to enable 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.

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

The College was keen to share experiences and ideas with other providers in the region who were also facing similar challenges with rising numbers of NEET learners.

Each of the partners had experience of delivering pre-employment provision in various guises. We identified at our first meeting that the project would be more effective if we broadened our scope to look at all potential routes to move learners towards Apprenticeships and not just the Access to Apprenticeship option. The rationale for this was that three of the partners had concerns as to the value of this option for the majority of their learner base, many of whom are not ready to move onto an Apprenticeship programme. Finding new ways to engage learners and move them nearer to the job market was crucial for us.

Progress and project impact would be measured by:

- the creation of new provision;
- learners joining the programmes; and
- if possible, evidence that they were moving along the path towards an Apprenticeship or other employment.

The starting point for each provider can be summarised as:

- **Knowsley Community College:** an unsuccessful attempt to use Access to Apprenticeships to drive Apprenticeship opportunities alongside a range of employability programmes;
- **Lancaster and Morecambe College:** had developed a suite of pathway into employment courses but nothing that explicitly focused on Apprenticeships;
- **Hopwood Hall College:** had a range of employability provision in place but an interest in looking at alternative ways to engage disengaged young people; and
- **Training Tomorrow's Engineers:** had Access to Apprenticeships but they had not been used to drive Apprenticeship activity.

Section 2: Activities

Who has been involved?

Knowsley Community College's senior leadership team fully supported the project and as a result a steering group was established with the membership and function summarised below:

Steve Gardner (Chair)	Assistant Principal - Curriculum and Quality	KCC
Barbara Smith (Project Manager)	Development Manager -Foundation Learning	KCC
Louise Doyle	Consultant Associate	LSIS
Jo Kenney	Business Development Manager - Partnerships	Jobcentre Plus
Richard Seddon	Operational Manager	Connexions
Phil Jones	Learner Transition Manager - Engineering	KCC
Julie Byrne	Development Manager (Apprenticeships)	KCC

Function and Purpose

- To provide strategic management of the LSIS development project, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.
- To oversee and direct the activities of the project development groups in achieving the aims and intended outcomes of the project.
- Oversee budget spend.

We engaged the Greater Merseyside Learning Provider Forum with a view to utilising their network to disseminate any learning from the project at a suitable point after the initial project lifetime. Each of the partners agreed on a focus for their activity and the three project Development Groups were used to share experiences and review project progress.

The activities of each provider is summarised below:

Hopwood Hall College (HHC)

In partnership with Clear Aims Ltd, HCC were successful in obtaining Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) Flexible Support funding to support the "Get the Gist" programme aimed at unemployed customers to assist in removing barriers to education, employment and to reduce economic inactivity. This funding enabled partner, Clear Aims to deliver valuable up front motivational one-week workshops to two cohorts using their Self Smart programme. Self Smart is an initial assessment tool which allows people to look at themselves and identify barriers to work, improve their motivation to return and break the cycles of self-destruction and disempowerment.

Lancaster and Morecambe College (LMC)

LMC has developed and piloted a pre-employment Pathway to Apprenticeships for 18-24 year olds referred from the JCP or NEET cohort. It uses the aspect of the SSFU contract grant to employers to take on an 18-24 year old job seeker, who has been employed for six months, onto an Apprenticeship

Knowsley Community College (KCC)

The project focus changed over time and settled on identifying relevant Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) units that form part of a technical certificate to develop a sustainable offer in each of its key areas; Engineering, Customer Service and Administration. In the latter stages of the project, KCC began to focus its efforts on developing a robust approach to information, advice and guidance (IAG) with the assessment of mental toughness and developing activities to support the results.

Training Tomorrow's Engineers (TTE)

The project focused on engaging employers, with the organisation of an event. The aim was to gain employer commitment to take on Apprenticeship or Access to Apprenticeship learners. The target number was fifteen Access to Apprenticeship learners to start in September 2012.

We made changes throughout the project to scope and membership. In terms of membership, Southport College were initially involved but were unable to participate beyond the first provider Development Group due to unforeseen circumstances. TTE's involvement was limited as they had a very specific focus and requirement.

The key change to the scope was to focus on engaging the NEET group in pre-employment provision rather than just the Access to Apprenticeship pathway. This was welcomed by KCC, LMC and HHC as it gave more scope to use a range of products to meet the project's objectives.

Section 3: Working in partnership

Establishing the partnerships was relatively straightforward in the first instance because the focus of the project was very relevant. Additionally previous good working relationships helped us to contact the most appropriate people.

It was more challenging to maintain the relationships because, as is sometimes the case, the day job gets in the way of project work with each of us having to balance resource with wider priorities. Juggling workshop times and project requirements has been our biggest challenge.

The ongoing partnership between KCC, LMC and HCC has worked very effectively, with good practice from the projects captured and initiated within the other organisations (see successes in section five of this report).

Our advice to providers working together in future is as follows.

- Consider establishing alternative ways of communicating instead of face-to-face meetings such as video conferencing. Technology let us down in achieving this during the project but we would still try this again going forward.
- Use the project to develop something that needs to be developed *within* your organisation. The project worked well because partners had the scope to determine what would work for their own organisation, as long as they agreed with the aims and objectives of the wider project and shared their own learning with other partners.
- Be prepared to change the focus of the project within the scope of what LSIS expects it to achieve. We gained much more by allowing providers to look at their wider NEET provision.

Section 4: Impact

The impact, specific to each provider is summarised below. Further detail can be found in the supporting case studies.

- TTE engaged eight employers to support 15 learners onto their Level 2 Access to Apprenticeship programme from September 2012.
- HCC and Clear Aims have delivered two programmes to date with 24 learners successfully progressing to and achieving the Edexcel Entry Level 3 BTEC Award and Certificate in WorkSkills. Learner feedback has been extremely positive.
- LMC has piloted its Pathway to Apprenticeship employability programme with six learners. This will be built into the offer from September 2012 with an increased focus on marketing this amongst the potential client group.
- KCC has developed different models to engage JCP clients with a view to progressing them onto Apprenticeships. The project has focused on Engineering, Customer Service and Administration. Whilst initial learner numbers have been low, an important result of this initiative is staff members have had training in using Learning Aim Reference Application (LARA) database, the Ofqual Register and the unit funding spreadsheet, which has improved our ability to develop cost effective, fit for purpose provision for the unemployed.

There have been a number of unintended impacts of the project to.

- Staff member's perceptions of working with JCP clients have improved. This is evident in their approach to developing and delivering programmes that support people move into work.
- The development of a qualification is well underway with Edexcel as an output from the work with Hopwood Hall College and Clear Aims.

- The recognition within KCC of the need to enhance the IAG for the wider College community has resulted in the piloted use of the Clear Aims self-assessment tool with 2,000 learners from September 2012.

Section 5: Success and challenges

Our key achievements are summarised below.

- Partners actively using different funding routes and models to meet the needs of the NEET learner group and the resulting learning for each of us. This has included the development of an 'ideal' learner journey, capturing the good working practices of each project.
- Ongoing development work with Edexcel to look at fundable routes for the motivational workshops and discussions on higher level QCF qualifications.
- Clear Aims and Hopwood Hall College were invited to Westminster to discuss the project with Simon Danzucuk, Rochdale MP.
- The development of a new offer within the portfolio of provision for unemployed young people for LMC.
- For KCC, an increased understanding of using the QCF units effectively and the move to a potentially more robust approach to IAG which looks at the whole person, not just their skills or knowledge.

In terms of achieving the project aim - to develop new provision that meets the needs of learners - we feel we have moved a long way towards this and look forward to measuring the impact of the project again with LSIS in twelve months time.

Critical to our success has been the enthusiasm, committed partners and the flexibility to change the direction (within scope) of the development plans when the need arose.

Our key challenge has been one of resourcing, particular around project management when there is so much demand on our time for other priorities. As each partner has taken up the project in his or her own way, the risk of limited central co-ordination has been mitigated largely. The strength of relationship has allowed for informal updates where formal meetings have not been possible.

Section 6: Resources produced by the project

For circulation beyond the wider project team, we have developed the following resources.

- **Knowsley Community College case study:** Developing our curriculum offer to help learners on their Apprenticeship journey.
- **Hopwood Hall College case study:** 'Get the Gist' – building confidence and self-esteem of Jobcentre Plus customers.
- **Lancaster and Morecambe case study:** Pathway to Apprenticeships.

Should anyone be interested in our curriculum models or IAG tool we would encourage you to get in touch with any of the partners

Our resources will be of interest to any provider looking to develop their capacity to support the NEET learner group. The case studies can be used as a reference point for enhancing their own provision.

Section 7: Future planning

As an outcome of the project our plans are as follows:

- KCC will be piloting the use of the Clear Aims Self Smart IAG tool across their learner base; and
- HCC and Clear Aims will be looking for funding support to develop a training module for staff involved in employability provision to enhance their skills at engaging with the NEET learner group.

We will also continue to work in partnership to develop our NEET provision with arrangements already in place for some of the partners to meet early in the next term, and further share resources and ideas.

Section 8: Contact details

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