

South Tyneside Cluster

Capturing the 'Learner Voice' Inter-work experience case study



Background

The South Tyneside cluster included Groundwork South Tyneside and Newcastle, Epina Business and Enterprise School, South Tyneside Local Authority, Bede's World Museum and Orbital Community Radio

The project ran from October 2012 to July 2013 and was aimed at giving young people with disabilities in South Tyneside the opportunity to gain work experience linked to their academic and vocational programmes of study. The project involved two groups of learners. One group was part of **Groundwork South Tyneside and Newcastle's Inter-work** programme and involves a one year work experience placement that runs alongside the learners' academic programme of study, where learners complete weekly hours with employers. The other group were former pupils of **Epina Business and Enterprise school** who completed **in-house work experience** working in the school cafe and in the cafe of Bede's World museum.

The groups were set up to engage young people with a range of special educational needs including learners with autism and those identified as NEET. Programmes were designed in direct response to learners' interests and abilities with a view to looking at progression opportunities for learners once engaged in their work placement and course programmes.

Outcomes and impacts

This project profiled the **learner's journey** as learners shared their experiences and talked about their own 'journey' through radio, using local community based radio stations of Orbital Radio and Bede's World's community radio HiVE. Learners used the medium of podcasts and a number of broadcasts as a way to express their thoughts and review their own progress, ensuring their '**learner voice**' was heard. This proved to be a useful tool for not only for them but for other young people like them living in South Tyneside who are deciding what they should do when they leave secondary school.

The learners reviewed their learning experiences through podcasts and interview broadcasts, sharing their 'journey' with the listener and outlining the skills they had developed on their course and work placement. They were also able to share what plans they had for their future. This type of project is unique to the Borough and the results have been very informative, giving providers involved in the project a real sense of how learners feel about their learning and work experiences and how they, the learners, make sense of their career and work options.

The final results of the project gives providers involved in the cluster work valuable information for future curriculum planning. The results highlight the type of initial advice and guidance Yr 11 learners and their parents need in order to make the right choices in post 16 education. They

also bring to light the support learners need 'on programme' and illustrate how this support should focus on enabling learners to become more independent and confident in looking for work and functioning in the work environment. These examples of learning options post secondary school are being made available to learners in South Tyneside to promote a sense of ownership about how information is given to pupils and parents considering post 16 education.

The project aimed to help learners gain an understanding of what employment is and to develop skills that enabled them to contribute in the world of work linked to qualifications. The ultimate aim for this group was for learners to be offered employment by their workplace employers and this one year project has helped employers to get to know their work placement learners well. This working relationship, between employers and their work placement trainees has been a key strength of this project and one that will be developed further in the next academic year.

Learner journeys

A range of placements were available to learners including classroom volunteering, catering, radio broadcasting, working in a care home, working in the college shop, interior design/painting company and customer services within the museum. **Bede's World** and **Orbital Radio's** community radio stations and broadcasts have captured the learners' experiences through an additional in-house programme of study that has enabled these young people to have confidence in expressing their views and share their workplace experiences with others as they develop new skills.

Jack

Epinay School recruited Jack, a former pupil of the school, onto their catering programme. Jack was not engaged in any education, employment or training programme before joining the initiative but, in a short space of time, has gained skills in catering and food preparation as well as customer service and money handling. As a result of this programme Jack has gained confidence and will gain units towards a Level 1 NVQ in Food Preparation and a full Food Hygiene qualification.

Beth

The Inter-work programme has worked with Epina School in arranging and supporting Beth who is working in the school's library and has helped with re-organisation of the library and learning resources. Plans to extend Beth's role in the school are being finalised for September which will involve Beth in holding weekly library sessions with each class within the school to issue and collect books and develop a library recording system.

Alex

'In my work experience I found the pencil drawing a bit hard but the work is somewhat enjoyable. I got better as time went on. It has helped me realise what it is like to work in real job. I have been very good and improved on my drawing skills and more organised. In my work placement I have painted 4 rooms and the themes I chosen are space and Disney characters. I have done very well with the progress. I am more independent and my social skills have improved. In my work placement I have developed concentration and painting skills. It made me think I could I look for alternative job rules like working with animals. I would recommend this to other young people.'

Scott

'The skills I developed is socialising with the elderly people and talking to them about what they did during the past, helping them play bingo and making drinks for them. We listen to old fashioned music and sing songs together, talk about old films and the books that they are reading. I also make Tea and coffee and serve biscuits for them. I am also allowed to make

myself a cup of tea or coffee and I help wash the dishes with the people who work there and they are really nice. We do exercises while listening to music with the physiotherapist. I enjoy the walk there and back and I know how to get there now. The course has really helped me to get experience to work in the future.'

Colin

"It's been very educational and I also learnt how it feels like to work, make things out of wood and also learn how to refurnish and carry stuff around. Thanks to the teachers and the people who have been helping me"

Opportunities and Challenges

A range of engagement methods have been used including identifying target groups through the Youth Service, Epinay School leaver's register and other school referrals across the borough. There have been some difficulties in recruitment due to maintaining contact with school leavers. However, this programme will continue in the next academic year with Epinay School and Groundwork using these podcasts and broadcasts to widen engagement across the borough to inform current Y11 pupils, parents and pupils about this project's successful learners and potential progression opportunities. The radio station broadcasts and podcasts have given and insight to how learners make progress and their learner voice will relate to other Yr11 learners in the borough considering their options following secondary school.

Actions for 2013-2014

- The cluster group will continue to meet on a regular basis and will include some of the former members of the group as well as some new members i.e. schools/college and the local authority Youth Services Team.
- Individual group members will carry on with their own projects and develop these in line with shared good practices which have emerged from the local and north east cluster meetings.
- As a group, we will continue to implement good practice in our own programmes and work as a group to develop new and innovative education opportunities for young people with learning difficulties and disabilities in the South Tyneside area.
- **Groundwork South Tyneside and Newcastle's Inter-work** programme will be extended to include other sector skills areas.
- The radio programme will be offered to pupils at of **Epinay Business and Enterprise school** as part of their curriculum offer.

What advice we would give to others

- The LSIS programme provided work experience for learners in a variety of settings. It is important to involve the learners in reviewing their placements as part of their course at regular intervals.
- Feedback from learners has shown that they have enjoyed their work experience and the school and Groundwork have been able to make improvements with regards to placement supervision, communication and scheduling for next year's cohort.

- Additional support has been provided by Epinay School and Groundwork to identify progression opportunities for the learners. The learners doing catering will gain units towards an NVQ food preparation and cooking qualification and food hygiene next year. It is important to look at unit achievement as a way to engage learners and move towards a full qualification if appropriate.
- Unfortunately, despite a big recruitment drive and information shared with youth service and schools, we did not manage to engage any learners for the Hive radio provision at Bede's World. We found it difficult to identify learners once they had left school and have subsequently recommended that learners be targeted whilst in year 11. Taking this into account Orbital Community Radio offered to run an introduction to web-based radio programme with Epinay School year 10 pupils which has given them an insight into this field of work and has provided a programme that has been enjoyed by the pupils and has enhanced school provision. We will offer this web-based radio provision to other pupils during the next academic year.

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References

- Orbital Radio – 5 week broadcasting programme
- Shaun's podcast text

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