

Capturing the 'Learner Voice' Inter-work experience



Background

This project began in October 2012 and ends in July 2013 and is aimed at giving disabled young people in South Tyneside the opportunity to gain work experience linked to their academic and vocational programmes of study. The project involves two groups of learners. One group is 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 are former pupils of **Epinay Business and Enterprise school** who complete **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.

The learner voice

This project profiles the **learner's journey** as learners share their experiences and talk about their own 'journey' through radio by using local community based radio stations of Orbital Radio and Bede's World's community radio HiVE. Through a number of broadcasts and podcasts, their '**learner voice**' can be communicated as they express their thoughts and review their own progress. This is a useful tool for themselves and for other young people like them living in South Tyneside who are deciding what they should do when they leave secondary school.

Through podcasts and interview broadcasts, the learners review their learning experiences and share their 'journey' with the listener outlining the skills they have developed on their course and work placement and what their plans are for the future. This type of project is unique to the Borough and the results to date have been informative, giving providers involved in the project a real sense of how they feel about their learning and work experiences and how they make sense of their career and work options.

The interim results give providers involved in the cluster work valuable information for future curriculum planning. They highlight the type of initial advice and guidance Yr 11 learners and their parents need to make the right choices available in post 16 education. They also show what 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 and promote a sense of ownership about how information is given to pupils and parents considering post 16 education.

The project aims to help learners gain an understanding of what employment is and to develop skills that enable them to contribute in the world of work linked to qualifications. The ultimate aim for this group is that they will be offered employment by their workplace employers. As this is a one year project,

employers do have the time to get to know their work placement learner and form a working relationship between them their work placement trainees.

Learner journeys

A range of placements have been available 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.

Chris

"The experience has been good because I have enjoyed my work placements. I got on well with the employer and the other staff, I am more confident and I have more experience in work. I have progressed well as I wasn't confident enough to go to my work placement on my own, but now I am confident of going by myself. The skills I have learnt, I have become more independent, social skills and customer service. The course has helped me choose what I want to do because I want to do something in catering or in retail. I would recommend the internship course because it's a mixture of both work and fun"

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 elderlies of 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 talk about 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 that 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.