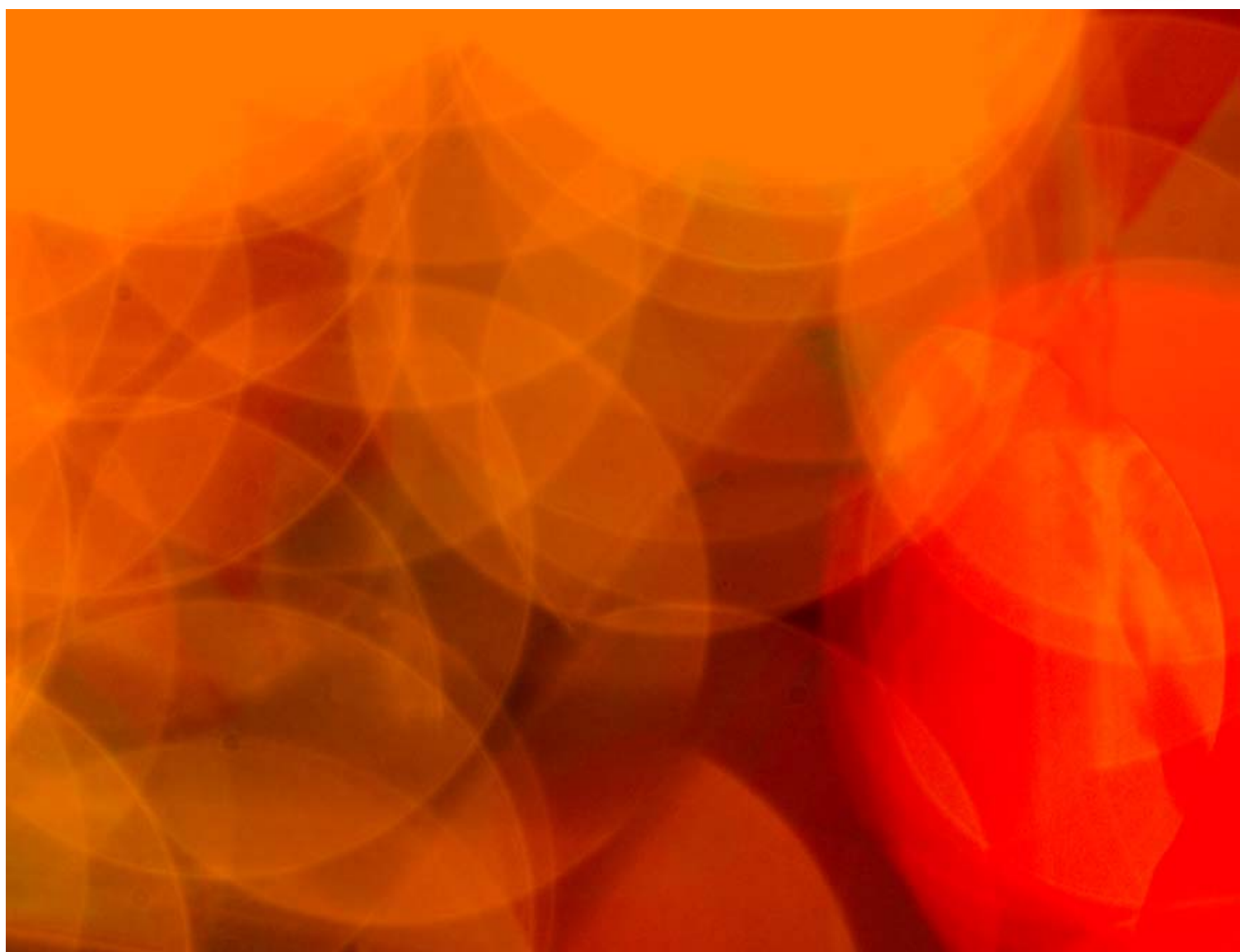


WCS

Developing Responsive Provision



Case Study – Northamptonshire Training and Development Partnership (NTDP)

Northants Training Group (NTG)
Train to Gain delivery partnership

What was your starting point?

Northants Training Group (NTG) is a 14 member partnership led by Northants Training and Development Partnership (NTDP) – a membership organisation representing training providers in Northamptonshire. The county is new to Train to Gain, having had no involvement in the Employer Training Pilots (ETPs).

Smart partnership in action: what did you do to improve?

a) A delivery partnership

NTG sees itself as a delivery partnership – with the emphasis on partnership – rather than as a consortium. “Our role is to manage and lead the partnership, but it’s very much about everybody being in it together” explains General Manager Sheila Sturgeon. We’re a partner as well and I think it’s important that we don’t set ourselves apart.”

b) Responding to brokerage referrals: simple and complex leads

NTDP has set up a referral response system, based on two types of lead:

i) A **simple lead**, where an employer requires a piece of training that only one of the partners can deliver. The appropriate partner is asked to contact the employer directly, to deliver the training using its own systems and processes and to manage the relationship. Where more than one partner is able to deliver a piece of training, leads are allocated on a rota basis.

ii) A **complex lead**, where an employer’s training will need to be delivered by more than one of the partners. NTDP manages the employer relationship. Where an employer has been introduced to NTDP by one of the partners, then the employer relationship – regardless of whether it becomes simple or complex – remains with the partner.

c) Direct employer approaches

NTDP manages direct employer leads in exactly the same way as it does brokerage referrals. It has already launched a small but engaging website for NTG (**northantstg.co.uk**) offering employers a contact/training needs request form that promises a response within 48 hours. The site is simple and the language refreshingly jargon-free. The same website also offers employers a freephone number, enabling them to contact the NTDP central office direct with any enquiries.

d) Risk management

Complex decisions are made at the Group's delivery partnership meeting, which is held every other month and is chaired by Sheila. Each partner sends one senior representative to this important meeting.

Although NTDP has 28 members, only 13 of them chose to be part of the Northants Training Group project. NTDP sees risk management as one of the partnership's toughest challenges and has negotiated a comprehensive risk sharing agreement with the partners. In simple terms, the contract states that if there is a loss over the first two years, it will be split between the partners.

e) Evaluation

The partnership will be evaluated principally through employer satisfaction reports. Length of "stay" will also be monitored. The partnership intends to review its own effectiveness by means of questionnaire peer-review and discussion of the outcomes at partnership meetings.

Where are you now and what are your next steps?

NTDP is currently focusing on hitting its Level 2 targets before July and on sustaining its contract for the current year. Sheila has also already identified a number of key areas on which she will focus in the next few months. At the heart of these is the notion that NTG is an entity with a life of its own, which in turn generates a whole set of issues around brand value definition. "We need to know how much full-cost recovery work the partners have pulled in as a result of Northants Training Group activity," says Sheila. "Gathering that information will give them a flag to wave... it's about changing the mindset. I've got to get the providers to stop thinking about the Train to Gain Level 2 contract and start setting targets for private income. It comes down to leveraging full cost recovery rather than delivery of Level 2s."

Another immediate challenge is branding. "Agreeing the NTG logo was interesting... how do you get 14 diverse organisations to act under one banner and one brand, and make sure the experience for the employer is the same, regardless of which of the 14 partners they come into contact with?"

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To help her tackle these critical issues, Sheila is receiving consultancy support as part of the Development Programme for Train to Gain and she and her team have been involved in a number of events. Sheila is also managing one of the Development Programme Improvement Projects, focusing upon branding and marketing issues.

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