

PRD project – case study

Building effective practice in partnership working to support young adults (18- 24) to progress to employment, including apprenticeships



Project title - A partnership approach to Engaging NEET's effectively

Worth reading if you are interested in:

- Supporting different organisations to work together with stakeholders to support young adults into employment or training

Contact information

Main contact: John Wilkie

Name of Peer Review and Development (PRD) group: The South West Association of Training Providers

Participating organisation(s): The South West Association of Training Providers, Academy for Training and Development, Puffins Training, Wessex Training and Assessment, Paignton Sec and Infotec Training, DMT Business Services and GHQ Training.

What the PRD group set out to do and why

To improve the collaboration of the partners and develop closer links with the stakeholders involved in 19- 24-year-old NEETs and to train mentors within the partners to support the other members of the staff to engage with the client group. It became apparent through the peer SAR activity in Q1 of this academic year that the partners approach and resources (regarding engaging NEET's) were not aligned with the community or engaging all of the required stakeholders and therefore not always meeting the NEET cohort needs. Some partners were previously engaging with young people who were NEET, but data shows that there were a very small number of enrolments onto learning programmes and not all partners had the same approach

What has been achieved so far

There have been several meetings of the partners to discuss their own procedures and working practices and share good practice. The first meeting was on 26 March at which seven of the eleven partners attended. These were The South West Association of Training Providers as the lead, The Academy for Training and

Development, Puffins Training, Wessex Training, DMT Business Services, GHQ Training and Paignton Sec and Infotec Training. This resulted in these partners signing a commitment to the project.

They all identified their current position in terms of Stakeholder involvement and NEETs issues. A suitable mentor for each partner was also identified. (*minutes are attached appendix one*)

A subsequent meeting was held on 24 May as part of the overall partner operations meeting. Progress towards the implementation plan was discussed and the partners identified issues over stakeholder engagement

Contact was made with the relevant stakeholders including JCP, Local Authorities and the Prince's Trust as well as several Social Enterprises.

Progress has been difficult with some stakeholders.

Jobcentre Plus

At the initial meeting of partners on 26 March, it was identified that JCP were a major stakeholder with the NEETs 18-24 category of learners.

Information was sent to all Partnership Support Managers within the SW JCP. Only one response was received from Gloucester who had been passed my details and asked for more information. No further contact has been made by the individual JCPs..

I was later informed that despite gaining the information from the JCPs own website that the Partnership Support Managers I had tried to contact were in fact pension advisors. (*A copy of the list taken from the website is attached as appendix two.*)

One of the partners identified the JCP Divisional tool as a good method of getting information regarding the partnership to the individual advisors. This was followed up and, after an initial invite to a regional JCP meeting to discuss the project, this was withdrawn. It was felt JCP already worked well with the partners involved and no further information was required, however they did agree to supply contact details for use by the mentors if specific issues relating to a particular JCP office arose. This was after discussions with JCP relating to the Partnership Manager contact details as highlighted above.

It was felt by JCP that there were too many NEETS initiatives with lots of small projects and that, as this is a priority, they will have all the information they need. It was also disputed that there were issues with certain providers and JCP offices as they had to prioritise NEETS so this would not be the case.

Prince's Trust

Information was sent to the regional offices of Prince's Trust who offer a programme in the SW called "The Fairbridge Programme"

This programme begins with a five-day Access course, the learner will complete challenging and adventurous activities at The Prince's Trust Centre as well as

staying away from home for a couple of days somewhere completely different. The programme continues for as long as it's needed and, once ready, they will be supported in moving on to a positive step or outcome. It is the learner's choice to join the programme, and their choice to stay on it and they will not be made to do anything they don't want to.

This would have been ideal for partners to refer to and get referrals from, but it appears to only be available in Bristol. Clarification was sought from the head office but an answer was not received. After discussing this with GHQ training who work with the Prince's Trust, I was contacted by two members of the Prince's Trust team; these were the SW Programme Manager and the Head of Programmes Team. After discussing the NEETs project, further information was requested and passed to both regarding the partnership and the project, but there has been no response from them.

Local Authorities

The majority of Local Authorities do not work with the 19-24 age group, they informed me that this was dealt with by JCP unless the client had mental or physical disabilities. Where there is involvement with 19-24 NEETs this is normally handled by the local Authority, many of whom hold Foundation Learning or Apprenticeship contracts with the SFA.

In Devon it is handled by an organisation called PLUSS who are part of the Council and who informed me that Apprenticeship progression for NEETs would be through the Council as they had the SFA funding.

In Dorset this is handled by an organisation called Stepping Stones which are part of the Council.

Stepping Stones is a type of social enterprise for those with physical or mental disabilities in Dorset (*details attached*). They were approached and a discussion with the manager identified areas of possible collaboration in identifying employment opportunities, however the main category of their clients are over 25 and therefore not within scope of the project. Details have been passed to the partner who works in this geographical area who will pass on details of any suitable vacancies to Stepping Stones clients

Cornwall Community Action Network (CCAN), although not part of the Council, is another Social Enterprise company that employ's NEETS.

CCAN is targeted at helping young people who want to work and improve their skills but who are (or are at risk of being) not in education, employment or training, or who are otherwise at a disadvantage in the labour market. As well as getting employment and access to a full Intermediate (Level 2) Apprenticeship the young people are all registered with DMT's placement agency to be marketed to employers in the wider commercial business community. In this way CCAN and DMT Business Services are working together to help young people get started in employment and develop skills that employers want, and to support local employers to take on Apprentices and develop their skills further to meet business needs.

Individual partners arranged meetings with Stakeholders, mainly JCP, and these varied in success, their comments are beneath the individual organisation.

Puffins Training has had a good response from Exeter JCP :

“I had a really effective meeting, they were really hospitable. I think it has been easier for me to get in as I have offered work experience in our Nurseries so that gave me a foot in the door. We have arranged interviews in Exeter and Torquay and intend to offer four places in Exeter and one in Torquay. This will then hopefully lead onto Apprenticeships”.

Information from Puffins at the Partner meeting on 24 May identified a lack of engagement from NEET learners. They had six referrals of which one turned up in the morning and three in the afternoon, of these only one started and then did not turn up the following day.

GHQ Have also had some success:

“We have attended an apprenticeships day at JCP Plymouth this week and are attending another couple over the coming few weeks. Karen is at JCP Plymouth on Tuesday mornings and at Devonport JCP on Thursdays to talk to 19- to 24-year-olds about options for vocational courses and apprenticeships. I also met with the Prince's Trust this week to confirm a course we are running for them in July”

Paignton have had mixed success.

“I have met with JCP on several occasions and spent a whole day with Working Links in Torquay. JCP are only willing to send people for training if it is within walking distance from the person's home – they won't fork out for bus fares. The Preparation for Employment has only reaped six maybe a seventh to start this week. Frankly JCP are not pushing any of this. They don't want training – not one of their targets. I am trying for another Sector Based Work Academy but they are not prepared to do this until they have the promise of the job interviews. Working Links do their own training and again only want the job outcome I don't know if they offer their own apprenticeships but I do know in the past they worked with NVQ so may still have this in place. I have also held a joint employers event with the Torbay Development Agency for apprenticeships nothing really come from it yet. When it comes to the crunch they say all the right things and then forget it, we have to somehow get the opportunities that we can offer onto their computer system”.

DMT highlighted issues with a particular JCP office and when the contact identified as the JCP support for the initiative in their area was passed to them they identified the office that this individual was in charge of as the problem.

They have formed a partnership with Cornwall Community Action Network which is a new social enterprise company, which has been set up to help young people get into employment and improve their skills while providing affordable services for local communities.

DMT also supplied information on the Wheels to Work initiative that supports learners with transport issues in Cornwall. Unfortunately more research showed this support is no longer available.

Wessex Training

“Jayne has spoken with all connexions staff throughout Dorset to discuss marketing and to ask what their client base was like for Childcare. She visited Blandford office with more marketing materials and met Lee (advisor). I also spoke to the Connexions advisor in Poole and discussed ways we could help some of the NEETs clients she had, but they were below 17 at the time and one was only 15.

Connexions in Bournemouth are starting to change their set up, I met with the guy who will be running it at the 14-19 event in February and passed on our marketing materials

The Open Media resource that you advertised in with Sue gets sent out to all career advisers and places like connexions, we were in this edition April - September.

JCP - Jayne can't even begin to tell you how frustrating it is pinning someone down there. She even went to the Poole branch and still they couldn't find someone who knew what I was talking about. To be honest this has not been pursued any further, JCP apparently have preferred training providers within Dorset that they work with”

Training of Mentors

Mentors have been identified and training given on supporting NEETs with information on benefits and general information on the NEETs category.

The training for the mentors was divided into two distinct sections. This was due to the major stakeholder being identified as JCP and the majority of possible NEETs would be on benefits which several of the mentors had very little knowledge about.

Therefore outside training was identified through a specialist organisation called Turn 2 Us, who support front-line practitioners ('intermediaries') who currently support or would like to support people in financial need by finding benefits, grants and other financial information in an efficient and effective way. Turn 2 Us also support an on interactive web site for all to use in relation to advising on Benefits.

The training covered:

- how to use the interactive tools;
- understanding how to carry out checks to assess individuals' eligibility for welfare benefits and tax credits;
- develop knowledge of grant-giving charities, and how to search for and apply for funds on behalf of individuals in financial need;
- understand where to find further information about ways that individuals in financial need can use to manage their money and maximize their income.

All partners attended on the same day which they found very useful as they were with the mentors from the other partners. It was felt by some that the training, more specifically the trainer, was not used to the type of provision offered by the mentor's organisation. (*The individual mentor comments are attached at appendix three.*)

The second part of the training (*appendix four*) was delivered on an individual basis at the mentors organisation.

This covered

- the reasons for a young person becoming NEET;
- understanding the issues delivering solutions;
- the three most critical elements.

Several documents were issued electronically to provide a deeper understanding of NEETs, including an LSN publication on **Tackling the NEETs problem, Supporting Local Authorities in reducing young people not in employment, education and training** and also **Building Engagement, Building Futures: Our Strategy to Maximise the Participation of 16-24 Year Olds in Education, Training and Work**)

What still needs to be done

All partners need to build stronger relationships with the stakeholders. This cannot be completed by a central organisation as the local knowledge and contacts are paramount especially with JCP managers and also Social Enterprises. Measure the impact on NEETs numbers at a later date.

Resources to be shared with the sector

Valuable web sites

<http://www.turn2us.org.uk/default.aspx>

<http://www.britishservices.co.uk/charities.htm>

Key learning points

The development of the mentors to support NEETs in their respective organisations has been successful with many sharing ideas with other mentors. This has meant NEETs young people have more opportunities available and better IAG. Through the training they have been able to guide other members of staff to identify and develop the NEETs cohort however it is too early to measure the impact on the number of NEETs recruited and progressing on to Apprenticeships or employment.

The engagement with stakeholders has been the most challenging part of the project. This stems from initially identifying possible stakeholders like Local Authorities who in reality do not work with this age group unless they have mental or physical disabilities. It is also exacerbated by the fact most Local Authorities hold their own SFA contracts and protectionism of their targets.

The JCP are the biggest stakeholder for this group and the contacts with JCP have not brought about any improvement, except in one case, in closer engagement. The problem seems to be they have their own targets to meet relating to this age group and the overall feeling that there are too many initiatives and organisations involved and, as this is one of their priorities, they have all the information needed.

The social enterprise route is one that should be investigated more thoroughly as this seems the ideal way to encourage those who are NEET in to a programme of training and supported employment with close links to a training provider to progress into an Apprenticeship.

The partners have benefited from taking part in this project as it has identified new opportunities that they were not previously involved in. One partner has developed links with their local JCP offices and are receiving referrals another is discussing possibilities of collaboration with the Prince's Trust.

They have been able to share ideas and concerns through the meetings and have passed information to each other.