

# REGIONAL RESPONSE FUND FINAL PROJECT REPORT

## 1. Project Title

PRC Employment Service

## 2. Lead organisation

Peterborough Regional College (PRC)

## 3. List the partners involved in the project

Reed  
Job Centre Plus  
Randstad  
Next Step  
Opportunity Peterborough

## 4. Overview of the project

In response to the planned introduction of Job Outcome Incentive Payments in the 2012-13 academic year, this project was designed to establish a recruitment agency-style service to support unemployed people and students finding work. PRC recognised that existing business relationships could be utilised to achieve job outcomes for learners. The aim was to use Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) as a lever to encourage businesses to support their local community and help reduce levels of unemployment. PRC had an existing relationship with Job Centre Plus for the provision of training to support unemployed people and had trialled a model working with a local employer to deliver job outcomes.

## 5. What were the planned and actual outcomes and associated impacts?

Planned Outcomes	Actual Outcomes	Impact*
Create a college based employment agency that will act as a "one-stop shop" for the unemployed. Work in partnership with local agencies to manage and deliver a comprehensive learning experience.	PRC Employment Service established, offering training, coaching and job search support, as well as vacancy matching for employers. Working in partnership with local recruitment agencies including Reed and Randstad, as well as Job Centre Plus has allowed us to knit together job search support, training from the perspective of a recruiter and real life recruitment activities to provide a "one-stop shop" approach.	Learners benefit from having a single point of contact to access all support available from the college as well as regular updates on available job vacancies. To date, 137 students and unemployed people have registered with the service and receive regular contact and support, with 65 of those having moved into employment. Employers benefit from tapping into the unemployed market, in combination with relevant training for their sector. 24 employers benefited from the

		recruitment fair and 17 employers have advertised vacancies through the Employment Service. We are currently working with 2 employers to develop Sector Based Work Academies. Our partners have benefited by creating strong links with the student body and other learners, as well as free advertising of vacancies.
Develop a new approach to delivering the “Job Outcome Incentive Payment” target.	PRC Employment Service proactively helps to achieve Job Outcomes by engaging directly with employers. The service has also improved communication with learners to support tracking of outcomes.	PRC is able to more accurately track successful job outcomes. By strengthening links with local employers, there is a knock-on impact on the college’s reputation locally and opportunities to cross-sell the full range of services available.
Database to match job seekers and employment opportunities created	As planned	Improved communication between PRC and learners to update them on available job opportunities and encourage reporting of outcomes. 113 active job seekers currently registered with the service, benefiting from regular job vacancy updates and personalised support.
Strategy developed to promote employer Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). Engage directly with employers and partners to promote the benefits of CSR.	PRC have worked extensively with Job Centre Plus, the local regeneration company Opportunity Peterborough and local employers like Cross Keys Homes to investigate the benefits of working with unemployed people. Job Centre Plus and PRC have attended meetings with major local employers like Enterprise Peterborough who deliver services on behalf of the City Council. Through meetings like this, we have identified a strong desire within the business community to support unemployed people.	Some employers a large local employer won a contract with the City Council which required them to provide a detailed plan of ways they would support the local community. We met with the employer to discuss ways they could work with the college that would help them achieve their obligations under the terms of their contract. Our relationship with Job Centre Plus and ability to provide training has increased employer confidence about working with this group.
Secure employment for 110 people	Through the project, we have identified 115 people who have	Latest regional figures show a fall in the number of

	<p>moved into employment following their involvement with PRC. These people were not placed directly into vacancies by PRC Employment Service, however, their involvement with the service helped them identify suitable vacancies, improved their ability to apply for suitable jobs by writing better CVs and performing better in interviews and improved their skills by attending training courses. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 54 PRC students</li> <li>• 11 job seekers who attended training with the college</li> <li>• 18 job seekers who took part in Work Clubs</li> <li>• 32 job seekers who attended the Recruitment Fair.</li> </ul>	<p>unemployed people in Peterborough, where figures have risen elsewhere in the UK (approximately 100 fewer people claiming benefits in September compared to August).</p>
<p>Management and delivery of comprehensive learning experience covering job preparation training, CV writing and interview technique, assessment centre selection awareness, work attitudes and employer values.</p>	<p>As planned</p>	<p>Learners have been able to improve their CV writing, interview technique and job search techniques through training and coaching provided by PRC. Further support provided by the delivery of a work club, with a second work club to be established in the near future. Prospectus produced to effectively communicate available training to job seekers and Job Centre Plus staff. PRC Employment Service has a fortnightly stand at the local Job Centre which is used to increase awareness of the training and support available to job seekers. Series of tutorials delivered to students by our partner Reed. These tutorials have been aimed at preparing students for interviews and job search activity.</p>
<p>Job seekers interviewed and details entered onto database. Use of a web page with an e-application process as well as jobs board.</p>	<p>As planned. E-application process to be added to VLE. Jobs board established in main entrance.</p>	<p>Improved morale of job seekers and learners. Improved communication to ensure learners are fully aware of available support. Provision of detailed advice</p>

		to students. An unexpected outcome was that we were able to provide support to students who wanted to find part-time employment to help fund their study.
Advertising and promotion in local press and radio and promotional events organised. Raise the awareness and benefits of apprentices to employers.	Promotional activity has been focussed around a Recruitment Fair which took place on 14 <sup>th</sup> October.	Promotional activity served to raise awareness throughout the local community of the employment service. 24 employers attended the event, introducing new leads to the college's business focussed teams, including apprenticeships. Feedback from employers was very positive, demonstrating that they have benefited significantly from working with PRC. Follow-up activity is being planned, but initial comments suggest several employers have a desire to work with us further as a result of attending this event. 22 visitors to the event registered on the day, with follow-up information provided by a further 219. One employer commented that it was the "most productive recruitment event we have attended for a long time".

### Quotes from employers and service users

*"Jon's advice helped me create a much more professional looking CV, as well as learning to understand what skills and qualities employers look for in the retail sector. He made me realise that my outgoing personality and passion for customer service were my key selling points for getting a job. After working with PRC Employment Service, I started being offered interviews much more regularly and my confidence grew after each one. Finally, I was thrilled to be offered a job at a local sports outlet where I am now working and building my experience."* **(Robert Rutherford)**

*"Working for Serve Legal gave me something different to add to my CV, showing that I had the initiative to look for unusual types of work. With this added experience, I was able to successfully apply for a job in a retail outlet, which I really enjoy doing. Unlike school work experience placements (which can feel like being a slave at times!), working for Serve Legal was an interesting challenge that helped me develop my skills."* **(Jess Taylor)**

*“Sourcing candidates in difficult financial times is not a problem, the challenge lies in finding high quality candidates with the skill set to match our customer’s needs. REED were very pleased to be invited to the PRC Employment Service Recruitment Fair in October 2011. We were impressed by the number of job seekers who attended the day, but also noticed that many of them had made a real effort to impress the recruiters who were there.*

*Following the fair, REED have referred 8 candidates to Angard for seasonal vacancies, 6 people are now in temporary roles and 5 have registered with us for permanent work. From a business perspective, the fair gave us an excellent opportunity to raise awareness of the vacancies we were working to fill and to attract good quality candidates who we believe will stand a good chance of progressing into these roles.*

*We commend Peterborough Regional College for organising such a well attended event and look forward to continuing our relationship with the college in the future.”*  
**(Sharon Franklin, REED)**

## **6. How was the initial issue for development identified?**

PRC recognised that existing processes for supporting learners into employment tended to focus on reactive activities. It was identified that existing links with employers could be exploited to improve rates of progression into employment, linking in with local strategies developed by the City Council. By developing a proactive model, we hoped to demonstrate how colleges can achieve job outcomes to secure their funding allocations in future years. By strengthening our relationships with local employers, the college also increases opportunities for cross-selling apprenticeships and full cost training models.

The process of establishing a service like this has allowed PRC to gain an understanding of the level of resource and types of activity needed to achieve job outcomes for learners. This information can be used to inform future planning once the new funding model is in place.

Learners have benefited by having an easily accessible system to support them into employment as well as access to training and dedicated help with the job application process and job preparation.

Employers have benefited by having access to our free of charge recruitment service that supports the aims and objectives of the Local Authority. Working with unemployed people often supports employer’s tender applications with the local council as well as giving them positive PR opportunities.

Following the completion of this project, PRC has decided to continue funding the Employment Service until the end of March 2012 in order to fully capture the benefits of the recruitment event and the new relationships we have established with local employers.

## **7. What were the key activities?**

- Establish structure and create links with relevant colleagues internally. Internal communication strategy developed and implemented. Project Board established to ensure sufficient internal management of project resources.
- Develop branding and promotional materials to raise awareness with customers and employers, including a jobs board, email distribution list and posters.
- Develop appropriate systems to record customer information.
- Develop relationship with Job Centre Plus and other external organisations with similar goals including involvement in local strategic planning.
- Develop relationships with employers to understand their recruitment needs, support them in promoting vacancy opportunities and encourage them to consider providing opportunities for unemployed job seekers and students.
- Organise a Recruitment Fair to develop links with local employers and promote the availability of the service to job seekers.
- Established 2 work clubs in the city, one aimed at supporting professionals into employment, the other focussing on entry level employment.
- Creating systems for tracking learner progression into employment, using staff knowledge, exit interview data, regular contact and incentive schemes to encourage reporting of outcomes.

## **8. How were the findings and developments disseminated within the region and more widely?**

Dissemination of the project findings and developments will take place after the project end date (31<sup>st</sup> October 2011). PRC delivered a presentation to the ACER Business Development Manager's Network on 1<sup>st</sup> November as well as providing reports and discussions with our Peer Review Group consisting of 3 other colleges from the local region. Follow-up meetings have taken place with Harlow College and Bedford College to share the lessons learnt from this project. A report and case study will be made available on the Excellence Gateway to allow a wide range of other colleges to find out about the project.

## **9. What further issues has the project identified and how might these be addressed?**

Successfully tracking people moving into employment has been a significant issue throughout the project. Improving communication with Job Centre Plus will help to identify people most likely to have found work and regular contact with job seekers should help to improve reporting of successes.

This project did not focus on the nature of job outcomes so no data was recorded on the longevity of employment. We are still waiting for clarification of the criteria job outcomes will be required to meet. If sustainability is included in the criteria, it is likely that additional resources would be needed to accurately track this information.