

## Working collaboratively to extend work experience options



Linkage College, Wolds Federation, Boston College, Sir Joseph Banks Ltd

### Summary

This case study describes how a group of providers and a social enterprise business in a rural location worked together to extend work experience opportunities to learners.

### Introduction

#### Rationale

Linkage College, Wolds Federation ( St Bernard's school / St Lawrence school, SEN specialist provision for student's with additional needs aged 2 - 19) and Boston College identified that there was a gap in opportunities for learners to access placements outside of their own provision. The key barriers identified are transport, due to the rural nature of the cluster and the lack of placements available from employers for all learners of all abilities due to the economic climate of the area.

#### What we wanted to achieve

The group decided to share our experience, knowledge and resources with a view to exploring how they could be used to extend work experience opportunities for our learners. The partners identified staff skills and knowledge, across the cluster, alongside commercial opportunities that could provide meaningful work experience within the provider environments.

The cluster also identified that linking with an organisation that had a wealth of experience in Enterprise would be beneficial and identified Sir Joseph Banks Ltd, a local not for profit social enterprise, to partner with.

The group also wanted to:

- develop positive relationships and the sharing of good practice across the partners to provide a wider range of quality opportunities and experiences for learners
- Use the outcome of the project to support learners in transitional planning and to enable them to make informed choices.
- Meet the needs of local employers in relation to skills and attitudes that they require in an employee

### Implementation

#### Outline of project

The partners would offer placement opportunities to learners in 10 week blocks on a carousel across a range of commercial businesses including catering, horticulture, retail, wood crafts and media production.

## What we did

Local employers were surveyed to identify skills and attitudes they require in an employee

Project managers met to agree process and timelines

Work experience coordinators identified cohort of learners from each partner

Placements identified to match learners needs, aspirations, and abilities



Transport and support needs agreed



Risk assessments undertaken



Start dates agreed with relevant placement supervisors



Induction of individual into placement



Review of progress with learner, supervisor and support staff



Learners CV updated to reflect achievements

## Outcomes and impacts

- ❖ Learners experienced a variety of work experience opportunities focussed on real working environments (RWEs).
- ❖ Accreditation outcomes were met including functional skills
- ❖ Comfort zones were challenged through accessing placements away from their own site
- ❖ Learners developed a wide range of skills including confidence, interaction with others, team working, decision making, timekeeping, problem solving, self esteem
- ❖ Learners developed a range of transferable work skills and attitudes that employers had identified and are better equipped to gain and sustain employment
- ❖ Staff shared good practice and resources.

- ❖ Staff gained an awareness of transition opportunities within the cluster, enhanced their Continuing Professional Development (CPD) opportunities, increased their knowledge of RWEs and developed skills in assessment evidence for accreditation.
- ❖ Providers gained opportunities to meet the collective mission statements around independence and employment opportunities.

## Learners comments

*"I was very anxious on my first day and was pleased my support was with me. I had a great time and at the end of the day I asked my support if I could go next week on my own. She checked with the Job Coach and they said I could. I have been on my own since then. Working at the retail shop has helped me develop my confidence and I have met new people and made new friends"*

*"I have been working at the Image factory and helped to make a film with the other guys. I have taken videos, learnt how to get it on the computer and edited it with help from Tom. I have watched the film and think it's good"*

## Staff comments

*"It has been a pleasure to have the young people from different providers working with us. They have been very keen to take part in the day to day activities within our busy café and one learner in particular has identified that this is the career pathway she would like to follow. She has already spoken to her job coach about coming back next year on a weekly placement."*

*"It has been great to go with the learners and see them flourish as they have gained in confidence and self-esteem through attending the placements. One young man in particular who was so quiet on his first few times and wouldn't have his photograph taken is now one of the first to want to be in front of the camera"*

## What worked well

- ❖ Linking of coordinators across partners to share knowledge and information
- ❖ Extending collaborative working.
- ❖ Knowledge gained of the provision on offer within the catchment area
- ❖ Widening opportunities for people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to develop skills and opportunities in work experience.
- ❖ Broadened opportunities to work on individual targets within other settings and extended peer and staff groups
- ❖ Learning Support staff have increased access to CPD opportunities to work in new environments.
- ❖ Profile raised across the partners of our young people through feeding into other enterprises.

- ❖ Transition into post school opportunities for those within final year

## Lessons Learnt

- ❖ In future we will undertake the identification of placements earlier to enable Education Business Partnership (EBP) risk assessments be completed sooner
- ❖ Information guides to be produced detailing aims and processes of project for learners, staff and parents
- ❖ Dedicated transport and drivers are essential to ensure learners can always access their placement
- ❖ Support staff need to be inducted into the placement before learners start to allow smooth transition

The outcomes of the project have been shared via:

- ❖ College Management Meetings
- ❖ Staff Newsletters and websites
- ❖ Special Heads Meetings
- ❖ County Wide Strategic Planning Meetings for Learners with Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities
- ❖ Open events and parent forums

## Next Steps

- ❖ Identify students prior to the next academic year, enabling an earlier start in the autumn term
- ❖ Produce enterprise placement information leaflet accessible to learners in easy read by August 2013
- ❖ Parent and staff information guide to be produced by August 2103
- ❖ Review training needs of staff and enable access to training opportunities across the providers
- ❖ Increase the range of placements to offer a wider variety of job roles
- ❖ Produce yearly schedule of placements available - location, when

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Provider name: Linkage College, Wolds Federation, Boston College, Sir Joseph Banks Ltd

Sector covered: LLDD provision including special schools, FE independent specialist providers and GFE's

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