

## **Working with employers and local partners**

Motivation to improve employability skills is linked to the individual's interest or need to gain employment and also to the opportunities in the local job market. Each area/region/ward will often have specific shortages of job types. These might be care for the elderly, maths teachers, IT trainers, male primary school teachers, farm workers or others. Individuals accessing the local job market will want or need to develop new skills to make them more employable. As an employability teacher, you can build a network of relationships with a range of local or even national employers and other organisations in your local area with the aim of developing work placements and work experiences for learners. This may include volunteering opportunities in a range of different sectors. An employer, such as a large international supermarket or even a small local business, might offer a day's work taster session for people who are looking for work or for students at a local college. Strong partnerships are essential and can also support the teacher in bringing 'employability learning' into the classroom through a programme of speakers, practical demonstrations or shared enterprise activities.

Employability teachers and managers can build up their local contacts and develop networks through identifying potential local employers and partners. Sector Skills Councils (SSCs) are a valuable contact and can help facilitate links between employers and providers that can lead to co-operation in raising the skills standards and employment potential of a local community and workforce. Businesses and other organisations / agencies such as libraries, probation service and housing can also support the development of employability skills. Additionally, there will be other local organisations that will support employability such as Jobcentreplus or the local Chamber of Commerce. Local council websites will often indicate a range of volunteer work options, especially for young people, that can be a useful introduction to a potential employment setting. Local volunteer bureaux are a further source of information and possible partnership working to develop employability skills.

Contact can be made through face to face network meetings, breakfast clubs, Chamber of Commerce events, local exhibitions and Open Days, etc. In making contacts, it is important to build a strong business case for supported work placement opportunities or volunteer work options. You can do this by giving clear information about the learners and the skills they already have. When work placements are offered, there should also be guidelines for the learners in what to expect, how to conduct themselves and how to make the most of the opportunity.

The concept of employability encompasses the essential language, literacy and numeracy (LLN) skills which are needed for most types of work, e.g. speaking and listening, and also the individual's knowledge, skills and aptitudes required for a specific job role, e.g. bookkeeping, warehousing or marketing. Wherever possible, employability teachers and trainers should maximise the opportunities for the development of LLN skills for both general as well as job-role specific employability skills.