

Pathway to Employability Project



Lessons learnt report November 2014 – May 2015

Pathway to employability introduction

This lesson learnt report details the work carried out by Inspiring Communities Together (ICT) on behalf of Seedley and Langworthy Trust (SALT) between November 2014 and May 2015.

Background

SALT secured an Award for All Lottery bid in November 2014 at the same time as their staff team was being restructured due to other funding cuts. ICT were approached by SALT to see if they would be prepared to deliver the project on behalf of SALT, providing the project management role and line management support to the advice and guidance worker who remained the employee of SALT. The second advice and guidance worker post was covered through the staff team of ICT.

Project idea

The project was a six month pilot delivered between November 2014 and May 2015 to provide an intensive support programme of activities to homeless/vulnerable people and develop a network of peer- group volunteers who will continue the project once the funding has finished

Individuals would join the programme in groups of 5 at 1 month intervals, with each group completing a 3 month pathway. Pathways were to be designed for each group to target specific issues preventing their ability to secure employment, training and or volunteering.

A project coordinator would liaise with referral agencies and ensure achievement of individuals and monitor the delivery of the project.

Each pathway was to be delivered by two qualified, sessional – Employment, Advice and Guidance advisors. These posts would also support the development and skills of volunteers to become peer-mentors.

Key components

Time frame	Who for	activity	comments
Weekly	Individual	1:1 assessment	A holistic approach used to explore all aspects of the individuals life to enable them to identify their skills and needs and develop clear goals and pathways
	Group	Supported job club	Guidance to carry out job search activities, comply with statutory DWP requirements, gain access to volunteering and training activities
	Group	Workshops	To develop personal and job related skills and direct support to overcome literacy, IT and self-esteem issues
Month one	Individual	Basic needs assessment	Training needs identified
	Individual	Goal setting	

	Group	Supported job club	Supported access to internet and job seeking activity, CV writing, skills identification, completing applications
Month two	Group	As per month one	Additional activity – workshops including prepare yourself, literacy, selling yourself, IT, volunteering (volunteers developed to provide support to new group starting month one)
Month three	Group	As per month two	Additional activity – continue volunteer development and mentor support pathway

Identification of need

Over the last few years, austerity measures across the country have been changing the shape and size of Britain's public services. National and local government have been forced to make difficult decisions about which services to prioritise and which to re-shape or remove. At the same time, families have been tightening their belts, with the rising costs of fuel and food, the bleak economic outlook and the changing eligibility for various state benefits.

This confluence of events has created an (im)perfect storm for the most vulnerable in society. The bad news is there is still more to come. The latest estimates suggest that 88 per cent of the planned cuts to welfare spending and public services are yet to be enacted. More than ever before, we need to know how Britain's families are coping with the cuts to better understand what can be done to further protect them from vulnerability.

(Young Foundation July 2012)

Salford context

In May 2014, 14.8% of Salford's working age population were claiming out of work benefits, this is significantly higher than the national average (10.2%), and slightly higher than the GM (13%) and North West average (12.6%).

The welfare benefit reforms continue to impact on Incapacity Benefit / Employment and Support Allowance claimants. The changes implemented mean that individuals in receipt of IB will have their benefit status assessed through the Work Capability Assessment, with the majority of claimants likely to be transferred on to Employment Support Allowance (Work Related Activity Group) or Jobseekers Allowance and be required to seek employment.

Between February and May 2014 feedback was collected from individuals who had been accessing the local job club. This identified that whilst the provision of a job club was helpful it did not go far enough to bring about individual positive change. Individuals required more support and focus on debit management, literacy, confidence building and a valued life experience opportunity to enable them to sell themselves to perspective employers.

The focus of this project is on those individuals who are furthest from the work place with multiple challenges including mental and physical health problems, drug and alcohol dependency and/or a history of offending. Individuals may be homeless or vulnerably-housed, have low aspirations and lack of basic life skills all of which are barriers to entering into the work place.

Project delivery

Recruitment

The initial phase of the project was to engage with agencies which were already supporting venerable individuals who might be interested in taking part in this pilot project. It was felt that this would provide additional support for those taking part in the project along-side offering valuable volunteering opportunities.

Whilst the first two agencies approached were keen to engage in the project they both struggled to recruit individuals to join or stay on the project. The first three individuals who were recruited were unable to stay with the project:

- Individual A left the unit
- Individual B relapsed and needed a different type of support
- Individual C felt unable to continue without the support of the other two

A further barrier to engagement was that individuals had to take part in recovery sessions to enable them to remain in their accommodation and these sessions clashed with the days of the project.

The third agency we approach – **The Thomas Project** operates a dry house which meant that the individuals had already completed their first stage of recovery and were able to fully engage with the project as well as receive support from the Thomas Project to ensure they attended sessions. Eleven individuals were eventually recruited to take part in this pilot project.

Key learning

- Building relationships with support agencies takes time and needs to build trust to enable them to feel comfortable sign posting to other services
- Agreeing role of support agency within project was key to the success for the Thomas Project individuals
- Individuals have complex lives and so cannot always commit in the way expected
- Support for individuals needs to go further than meeting once a week telephone contact and reminders ensured individuals attended sessions
- Identifying individuals who are ready to take the next steps

Programme

The pilot project concept was to build on the feedback received from those individuals who had attended a job club in the neighbourhood. The model was designed to engage individuals in a programme of learning alongside provided peer to peer support through volunteering.

Following the delivery of the first three weeks of the programme it was felt that a review of deliver was needed.

The approach finally delivered built on our learning from the first group of three people and engaged with one support agency and recruited a larger cohort of individuals at the start of the process rather than looking to recruit small numbers over the life time of the project. It was expectation that the individuals would remain on the project for at least three months.

Weekly group sessions

The group met together with the advice and guidance workers once a week for two hours and followed a planned programme of learning for ten weeks delivered by the employment advice and guidance advisors who were also adult education teachers.

The frame work of learning was delivered using the ASDAN Level one qualification in volunteering and each participant was supported to produce a portfolio of evidence alongside attending the learning sessions.

Learning sessions delivered:

- **Week one** – Developing and understand of different communities with which volunteers can engage and how the work of their volunteer organisation serves the community. Individuals complete work outcome star
- **Week two** – Developing and understanding of what volunteering is about
- **Week three** – Developing an understand of individual volunteer roles and responsibilities and standards required when volunteering
- **Week four** – Developing an understanding of rights and responsibilities with regard to health and safety in volunteer role, both individual and organisational
- **Week five** – Developing and understanding of time management and how using tools and techniques can help individual to manage their own time
- **Week six and seven** – Developing skills to be able to present yourself including planning and presenting (this included each group member presenting their work in front of the rest of the group)
- **Week eight/week ten** – Setting goals for improvement, agreeing a plan, carrying out the activity and reviewing progress
- **Week nine/ten** – Building on volunteering to develop a career including producing a CV. Revisit work outcome star

The learning element was delivered at a community venue away from the Thomas Project which enabled learners to feel they were involved in activity other than their individual recovery programme.

All eleven learners completed the learning element of the project – If someone was unable to attend due to other commitments arrangements were made for them to complete their work at an alternative time:

Of the eleven individuals who took part in the project:

- Six completed enough course work and evidence to have their work submitted for moderation and received a level one in volunteering qualification
- Five received certificates of volunteer achievement
- The group was recognised in the group learner category at the Salford Adult community Learners event.

The learning approach delivered was not the model out lined in the original project proposal but all the elements identified were covered during the ten week sessions;

Original proposal	Actual delivery
<p>1:1 assessment – A holistic approach used to explore all aspects of the individuals life to enable them to identify their skills and needs and develop clear goals and pathways</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individuals complete work outcome star in week one and revisit in week ten
<p>Supported job club – Guidance to carry out job search activities, comply with statutory DWP requirements, gain access to volunteering and training activities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building on volunteering to develop a career including producing a CV • Carrying out a volunteer role • Setting up e mail address and registering for job searches
<p>Workshops – workshops including prepare yourself, literacy, selling yourself, IT, volunteering (volunteers developed to provide support to new group starting month one)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ten week programme of workshops including completion of written work sheets, using technology and preparing and presenting in front of group members to build confidence • Securing a certificate including level one in volunteering qualification
<p>Goal setting</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Setting goals for improvement, agreeing a plan, carrying out the activity and reviewing progress

Volunteer role

The original proposal was to recruit three cohorts of five individuals (cohort one would provide volunteer peer to peer support for cohort two and cohort two would provide volunteer peer to peer support for cohort three)

The model delivered found that recruiting a larger group (eleven individuals) at the start of the project and providing a weekly joint session enabled the group to build relationships, improve individual confidence and provided a peer to peer support network both during the sessions and when they returned to their daily lives at the Thomas Project.

Individuals provided peer to peer support during the sessions building on their individual skills including:

- **Computer skills** - Some group members were more advanced than other so were able to work together on setting up e mail accounts and carrying out job searches
- **Literacy skills** – Working in pairs and groups enabled those with low literacy skills to be supported by those with improved skills. Making this element of the learning informal such as word searches and group work enabled a strength based model to be used and help develop individual confidence
- **Presentation skills** – Group members were very supportive of each other during their presentation skills unit providing encouragement and asking informed questions. Although all individuals were not confident at the start of the project to have to present in front of their peers by week seven all group members had prepared a presentation, some group members also prepared props to help them all completed

the task set.

- **CV writing** – This workshop encouraged group members to share their strengths and aspirations with each other. When individuals felt they did not have strengths other group members provided positive feed-back enabling the individual to review their own views about themselves

Along-side the peer to peer volunteer support some group members also look at ways to put into practise what they had been learning during the workshop sessions and enhance their own CV by carrying out volunteer roles within the Thomas project including:

- Painting and decorating
- Gardening
- Supporting the Tomas Project Job Club using the skills they had learnt during their own learning sessions
- Youth mentoring – sharing their own stories and supporting a fishing project for young people at risk of offending.

Key learning

- Recruitment at stage one of the project enabled time for group members to develop relationships and build on individual strengths to help others
- As individuals built confidence they started to identify their own strengths and look at ways to enhance their own skills through wider volunteer roles
- Building a framework of delivery but allowing for flexibility and less formal level of learning encourage individuals to take an active part in the workshop sessions
- Building a portfolio of evidence was not easy for all but recognition of achievement was a positive outcome for all those taking part

Our social impact

Eleven individuals with low self-esteem have engaged in a project which has enabled them to understand their own skills and strengths and how to use them to build a positive live style

Eleven individuals have supported each other to complete a programme of learning including producing a portfolio of evidence



Six individuals have gained a level one qualification in volunteering

Five individuals had identified volunteering as a route back to employment and taken up volunteer roles outside of the project

One individual has secured their own home

Eleven individuals have updated CV's and are using the internet to complete job searches

One individual has carried on with his learning and completed a confidence building course

Case study

Individual A has found the past couple of years hard and because of his drinking and drug taking he had ended up in prison. While he was in prison he managed to get dry, and on release he moved into the Thomas project to complete his rehabilitation. He is in his late thirties and has children, although he lives in the recovery house he still manages to see his children as much as possible and wants to start making a positive impact on their lives. Now at second stage he has managed to remain dry and free of any substances.

Taking part in this project was a massive achievement for him. He had very limited computer skills but through building his confidence he became a lot better and by the end of the project he was able to:

- Searching for jobs and volunteering roles on line independently
- Registered on line with job search sites and uploaded his CV.
- Started to volunteer mentoring young people at a fishing project

Individual A said that “he really enjoyed the course and found out lots of information about volunteering and job searching and he felt more upbeat and confident”

Case study

Individual B is in his 40s he had lost a number of jobs and been in and out of prison due to his alcohol addiction but he knew he had to change his life. He was in second stage recovery a big achievement as he had never been dry for this amount of time before. He joined the pathway to employability course and really benefited from leaving the Thomas Project and coming to community venue and he seemed to grow in confidence, he would help to rally the other individuals to attend on time.

Before going to prison he had been a bin man and enjoyed the job. He had also never had a CV and had very limited computer skills. During the project he:

- Created his own CV
- Registered with agencies to enable him to get back into work
- Applied for and received his driving license
- Registered with Salford Home search and secured a flat
- Started volunteering twice a week
- Successfully completed a level one qualification in volunteering

Nigel said “he gain lots of really good information around job searching and all the rights and responsibilities when volunteering and understanding that by volunteering this could help him to find employment in the future”.

For further information about the type of work ICT do please check out our website www.inspiringcommunitiestogether.co.uk or contact:

Bernadette Elder
Coordinator
Inspiring Communities Together
E mail: Bernadette@inspiringcommunitiestogether.co.uk
Telephone 0161 743 3625.