



EUROPEAN UNION  
European Social Fund

# EVALUATION REPORT



Leading learning and skills

## Evaluation Report

### Lancashire Learning and Skills Council

### ESF Objective 3 Co-Financed Project

**Project Title:** Engaging Disaffected Young People

**Project Reference Number:** ESF/0203/258

**Lead Organisation:** Lancashire College Consortium  
Skelmersdale College  
Northway Campus  
Skelmersdale  
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## 1. Executive Summary

### 1.1. Report Context

This report forms an end of project evaluation of the ESF funded Engaging Disaffected Young People project. It aims to evaluate the performance of the project over its lifetime and present key findings. The report is structured against the following headings:-

- Executive Summary
- Project Context and Objectives
- Methodology
- Project Results (qualitative and quantitative data)
- Prospects

The evaluation framework adheres to LSC evaluation guidance notes published last year and includes the minimum requirements. Separate appendices are also attached which include: project evaluation indicators, structured questionnaires (interim and final) and case studies. Good practice guides published by ICOM and the ESF national website have been referenced to develop the report.

### 1.2 Economic Context

Evidence to quantify need for intervention was contained within a number of research documents including the DfES Employer Needs Survey, which demonstrated that employers in the North West report recruitment difficulties, and that even in lower level jobs applicants often do not have the skills the jobs need.

In addition, Skillbase (DFES) forecast a sharp decline in the number of jobs not requiring any qualifications for the North West. Nationally the 2001 report by the CBI/TUC to the Productivity initiative drew attention in the shift from jobs needing no qualifications to those needing Level 1/2.

'The 2001 Lancashire Household Survey also demonstrated that people who live in areas that suffer severe disadvantage are disproportionately likely to have few or no qualifications and poor literacy and numeracy skills'.

Concentration in youth disaffection reflects the collapse in traditional school leaver entry-level jobs in these areas. The Community Development Foundation (CDF) in Background to Youth Disaffection highlighted in its report

*"20 years ago nearly half of all school leavers went straight into employment and that today, the figure stands at less than 1 in 10. The collapse of the youth labour market can be seen to have impacted particularly hard on the identity of working class young men who, in the words of one education expert, are left feeling 'unwanted and useless' in the new economy".*

Evidence from IPPR and Rowntree suggests that most non-participating young people do have job ambitions. It is the lack of mapping routes, and recognition of the 'new' labour market that leads to disaffection.

Some evidence, e.g. IPPR, shows that repeated periods of short term, including informal, work is more characteristic of this group than continued non employment.

The need for ESF intervention was highlighted in the LSC's Co-Financing Plan stating:-

- the need for higher-level skills as a passport into sustainable employment
- the need take special action to bring into learning those people who have low skills, and who are disaffected from learning and distant from the labour market.

### 1.3 Evaluation Approach

The approach taken in order to develop the end of project evaluation utilises both qualitative and quantitative data. It was formulated by building on the project's output data and softer information derived from interviews with Colleges and the Consortium, building in case studies from the project's participants. The process of project delivery is examined as well as its achievement of targets. Section 3 describes the project's methodology and evaluation processes.

### 1.4 Conclusions

The following conclusions can be drawn from the evaluation processes:-

- Robust partnership arrangements are crucial to the success of this project. Being able to work in collaboration with key support agencies and voluntary/community bodies that have regular contact with the client group has enabled Colleges to actively engage disaffected and disengaged clients.
- The project would gain from a longer lead in time to enable Colleges to develop the project curriculum and stimulate demand. A one-year project does not reap the rewards with this client group and adapting curriculum to client group needs has been a challenge.
- Retention rates and progression routes have not always been easy to manage. A "what next" scenario materialised. Participants were not necessarily ready to enter full time education/training and needed small incremental steps back into learning coupled with mentoring support to enable them to make the transition into full time education/training. Project staff recognised that they needed to enhance the project by extending what is currently being offered – in effect providing a modular approach to learning in small "bitesize" chunks.
- Retention rates can be improved through delivery in small bitesized chunks using innovative teaching and learning materials rather than the methods that beneficiaries have already rejected.

- Non-mainstream funding is required to continue to support this type of activity. Given the need to work in small groups (e.g. 6-8) offering intensive one to one support the project would not be deemed economically viable for mainstream support

## 2. **Project Context and Objectives**

The purpose of the project was to deliver new and innovative programmes to engage in learning disaffected young people, work with them to address basic skills, underpinning attitudinal, personal and other factors that contribute to disaffection, and support their moving back into structured learning. Project objectives included:-

- To organise a briefing workshop to make available the results of UK, US and EU good practice.
- To bring together the players required to deliver local pilots. (These included College basic skills tutors, outreach workers, community workers and 'influencers'.
- To support outreach work, and informal learning coupled with advice and guidance.

Project activities included:

### Stage 1

Carrying out developmental work to support project aim, outputs and outcomes. (An initial priority list was agreed following preparatory workshops including creating a sports based and music based model).

### Stage 2

Setting up and carrying out local pilots. Each pilot produced an operational plan (building on prior developmental/explanatory work). Delivery of project activities commenced in 2003 and each pilot included the following stages:

- Beneficiary and community engagement primary on an outreach basis
- Identification of individual barriers/factors leading to disaffection
- Construction of a programme based around individually tailored support recognising the need for what CDF described as a holistic, person centred approach'
- Support in addressing basic skills needs, and building self-esteem through recognising achievement, including those demonstrated in Sport and Music
- Movement towards employability and participation in structured learning as a next step.

## 3. **Methodology**

The purpose of this evaluation report is twofold, firstly to satisfy LSC requirements and secondly to assist FE Colleges and partner organisations to align current and future projects more closely with the changing needs of its target audiences. The following evaluation objectives were established and informed our evaluation methods and processes:-

- Document project's experiences and achievements for internal and external audiences

- Create a platform for future development
- Support dissemination activities

The following evaluation methods were adopted to analyse and present findings: -

- **Formative evaluation:** - producing interim evaluation findings as the basis for adjusting and improving activities as the project progressed.
- **Summative evaluation:** – producing final reports to draw lessons learnt from the project after results were captured and recorded.

Types of evaluation approaches adopted included:

- **process evaluation** – evaluating the design of the project to review if the provision was appropriate to the client group and to establish if college plans were appropriate to meeting project objectives
- **outcome evaluation** – reviewed results, progression routes and positive outcomes

#### Structured Interviews

Interviews were arranged with FE Colleges and partner organisations to gather qualitative data. A structured questionnaire was used to form the basis of these interviews to ensure a consistent approach was adopted and that information was gathered and documented which had clear linkages with the project's evaluation indicators and evaluation objectives (e.g. process and outcome questions).

A copy of the questionnaire is attached to this report for information purposes.

#### Evaluation Indicators

The project was set a range of evaluation indicators to assess the success or failure of any particular aspects of the project. Quantitative and qualitative indicators were developed and formed part of a simple matrix of indicators.

#### Project Management process

The process of implementation and delivery had a number of elements that allowed for development and facilitated and supported project delivery. These elements consisted of the following steps: -

- Contract clarification between the Consortium and the Lancashire Learning and Skills Council. This process was somewhat protracted because the system was new to both sides
- A "Project definition workshop" with all the partners to develop an agreed understanding of the project, to discuss issues and to develop an overall implementation plan. This activity should have come after contracting with the LSC but because of the protracted nature of that process this took place early within the project life.
- The establishment of local "delivery" or "implementation" groups. The form of these groups varied from College to College but typically involved a project manager or leader, curriculum staff from vocational areas and in some cases representatives of local agencies and / or local employers.

- The formation of a local delivery plan giving volumes, proposed achievement dates and outcomes. When these were agreed with the Consortium they provided the basis of the formal contract entered into by the Consortium with each project partner.
- Regular project meetings between the Consortium and staff delivering projects within the Colleges. These meetings had a common format :
  - Overall review of progress against targets identifying any shortfalls in local delivery
  - Reports from each project member of activity and progress on delivery of targets – including inputs from specialist administrative staff and teaching staff
  - Discussion of issues and contingency management
  - Progress report (including on occasion the distribution of draft reports) on milestone activity.

These meetings provided an essential forum for the sharing of good practice amongst Consortium members, formulation of contingency plans, sharing of targets across the Consortium and reporting on difficulties encountered and how they were overcome.

- Local evaluation activities – including obtaining feedback from beneficiaries and employers
- Final project dissemination activity –the event facilitated the sharing of good practice, promotion of the impact of ESF and the role of the LSC in the projects.

#### Project Monitoring Procedures

During the operational life of this project the Consortium established a comprehensive process of reporting to ensure effective and timely delivery of project activities and to address any delivery difficulties. Management information was captured and recorded on a monthly basis centrally and quantitative data has been compiled from our management information returns to the LSC and included in this evaluation report (see Project Results Section 4.2).

In addition regular evaluation review meetings were scheduled to review progress against the evaluation indicators and objectives. Project Implementation Group (PIG) meetings and Consortium Steering Group meetings were also used as a vehicle to review evaluation activities, discuss key findings and raise any concerns or issues regarding the evaluation processes. Colleges found the PIG meetings to be an extremely useful and valuable forum enabling them to discuss operational issues and difficulties during both the development and delivery stages of the project.

Feedback from participants has also been included in this evaluation report by analysing and interpreting comments contained on FE Exit Questionnaires.

## 4. **Project Results**

#### 4.1. Delivery Mechanisms

##### Recruitment and selection processes

Colleges worked in collaboration with key partners and agencies to attract and recruit participants onto the project. Colleges developed extensive links with a wide range of organisations that had regular contact with the client group including: Connexions, Youth Service, the Probation Service, Youth Information Shops, Youth Offender's Team, Streetlife, More Music, Lancaster Farms, Family Planning Clinics and Housing Associations. In addition a wide range of community bodies were key in identifying potential participants, which proved to be invaluable given the hurdles and barriers encountered by the client group, which were both real and perceived.

Self-referral onto this project was minimal, however participants needed to demonstrate a desire to learn and a commitment to gaining a positive outcome prior to enrolment. College tutors were responsible for assessing needs and developing individual action plans to monitor and assess progression towards achieving their goals and aspirations. Participants were also provided with advice and guidance as part of the selection process.

##### Matching Need to Provision

Part of the initial assessment process involved tutors identifying strengths and weaknesses to ensure that provision was tailored to participants' needs. The participants' Action Plan also allowed tutors to offer customised support, which included IT development and discrete basic skills provision. (Where appropriate action plans were developed with support from basic skills tutors).

##### Project Adaptability

The course was "pitched" at the right level to ensure that all participants were able to benefit from participating on the project. Tutors set the pace when participants had enrolled.

The project was structured to support small groups and when appropriate tutors were able to provide intensive one to one support. The dynamics of working with small groups brought benefits in terms of being able to dissipate and resolve behavioural problems, and "anarchy", but more importantly to be able to plug into the cultural dynamics created by the client group.

Provision was modular based, being delivered in short burst (e.g. 3-5 hours per session) comprising of theory, practical work/activities and discrete basic skills over a period of 6-8 weeks. Delivering short bursts of training proved to be beneficial in relation to retaining participants on the project, and ensured that benefits were not affected (e.g. the 16 hour rule).

Project activities focused on the delivery of Music and Sport disciplines, offering flexible provision in terms of delivery (e.g. late starts, short bursts of training). Local community venues were used to deliver the project, utilising where appropriate partners facilities (e.g. IT suites).

Local settings were familiar environments to the client group, non-threatening and enabled participants to feel socially acceptable.

### Publicity and Promotion

The project was vigorously promoted through local partnership networks, which proved to be successful in identifying and referring participants onto the project. Promotional materials were produced (e.g. flyers) and displayed by local partners and in public places (e.g. libraries, health centres and GP surgeries). Leaflet drops were also organised on local housing estates and community centres. Promotional materials declared that ESF and LSC funding supported the project.

Example of these tools in action in the community:

In Skelmersdale recruiters visited local snooker clubs, explained the project in detail to the staff there. Two or three weeks later two young men arrived having been persuaded to come by the staff.

### Innovation

The innovative nature of the project has been the robust partnership arrangements drawn from key agencies and voluntary/community bodies. Building relationships with local partners has resulted in positive outcomes and has enabled the college to build effective working relationships at grass roots level.

For example a local football team (Sunday League) were drafted in to play a "friendly match". Involving local agencies and local communities has been an innovative approach adopted by the college yielding high success rates for participants.

Through Involvement with local agencies many participants were, for the first time, actively involved in their own community. Through their work with Junior Football Clubs they were recognised for what they could do rather than what they didn't do.

### Cross Cutting Theme Issues

The Lancashire College Consortium managed the project with all activities falling within the purview of their equal opportunities policy. Commitment to equal opportunities was apparent during delivery of the project with a commitment to equality of opportunity in staff and participants. For example, participation was not limited by disability, family responsibilities or ESOL with effective mechanisms being built into the project to overcome these discriminatory hurdles.

The project also made significant use of ICT to engage participants in learning offering them access to initial tasters in IT training as part of the project's basic skills activities. In addition, part of the project's aftercare support was to offer participants access to on-line learning packages which required them to have ICT skills to source information on the Web (e.g. Learndirect and NOW Network products) and download these learning and IAG materials. Participants were also able to use College ICT facilities (e.g. Local Access Points and Learning Centres).

### Examples of IT/ICT based materials and sites

The FA website ([www.thefa.com](http://www.thefa.com)) contains a wealth of useful information about all aspects of the sport and is easily adopted to help develop literacy. Wwww.1<sup>st</sup>4sport.com was used to develop numeracy skills – identifying quantities, calculating costs etc. other useful websites used on the project included [www.intothenet.org](http://www.intothenet.org) and [www.horseracinghistory.co.uk](http://www.horseracinghistory.co.uk)

The skills for life agenda was fully integrated into the programme, beneficiaries used ICT to help develop literacy. 'Sport - No Sweat' a BSA book provided a range of photocopiable teaching materials relevant to this groups interests.

Colleges and the Consortium also utilised ICT facilities to effectively manage the project and monitor progression. ICT facilities were also be utilised as part of planned dissemination activities to exchange and share best practice with colleges.

All Colleges have a written environmental policy and a significant number of them are working towards achieving ISO1400. Adherence to sustainability can be demonstrated by the project's ability to attract and support people who would otherwise be unlikely to access learning opportunities, thus ultimately increased their employability skills.

#### 4.2. **Project Outputs, Outcomes and Milestones**

	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Target</b>	<b>Actual</b>
<b>Outputs</b>	No of beneficiaries	197	173
	No of which are female	52	39
	No working towards a qualification	169	147
<b>Outcomes</b>	No of positive outcomes	237	124
	No in work on leaving	24	4
<b>Milestones</b>	End of project conference	1	1
	Good practice guide	1	1
	Evaluation	1	1

The project achieved 87.8% of volume target with 84.9% working towards a qualification and with 71.6% gaining a positive outcome. Softer outcomes were also delivered as part of ESF intervention with some examples described in the Added Value section of this report (e.g. See Section 5 which describes participants' experiences).

#### 5. **Prospects**

##### Areas of Good Practice

The DJ short courses proved to be a success with participants. The Seasiders venue (BFC) was fully equipped with DJ facilities and a Music Suite with all the latest technologies to attract and retain the client group's interest.

ESF intervention has enabled Colleges to develop effective behavioural strategies that enabled tutors to engage participants to develop their skills and abilities thus increasing their employability skills.

In addition working in collaboration with local partners and voluntary organisations has proven to be a useful exercise and resulted in a more cohesive project, drawing on partners strengths, knowledge and skills sets, providing the client group with the unique opportunity of participating on a project that delivered subjects which held their interest (e.g. Music and Sport disciplines).

The use of mentors from the local community or voluntary organisations worked well for both beneficiaries and mentors.

### Lessons Learnt

The sports delivery aspects could be improved for example resources available at Blackpool Football Club's Seaside venue was limited however tutors were able to adapt to the facilities that were available. Facilities at the main campus site (Bispham) would have provided a wider breadth of curriculum, however the location was useful in terms of attracting clients from the inner wards of Blackpool town centre.

Issues were also raised with regards to the length of the provision (e.g. 3 hour sessions). It was felt that attention span, coupled with behavioural difficulties and literacy/numeracy problems proved difficult to capture their attention for the full training sessions. It was suggested that future provision should break-up the sessions into 2 hours slots.

The project could be improved by appointing a "Link-worker" that would network with potential partners and providers that have regular contact with the client group to map client provision across the target area and raise the profile of the project. The Link-worker could also be responsible for building effective working relationships with partners to be able to offer participants an effective referral onto future existing or planned provision.

### Added Value

The project has resulted in high success rates for participants with the subject areas (e.g. Music and Sport) holding their interest and enticing them back into learning, offering them an alternative and unique route to learning outside of the academic route.

The overall value of the project can be measured by not the volume of clients participating, but the softer outcomes it has produced e.g. improving interpersonal skills, ICT skills, raising self-esteem and motivational levels whilst at the same time breaking down some of the barriers and negative perceptions encountered by young people who were originally reluctant to participate in learning, but have been able to see and reap the benefits and rewards the project provided.

Engaging disaffected young people in Music and Sport disciplines has also enabled participants to build their social skills and teambuilding skills, which

will prove to be useful later in working life. In addition the project has changed attitudes with some participants who are now willing to continue in learning feeding into other College provision.

Positive feedback from participants as part of the exit questionnaire process demonstrates the project has resulted in positive interventions these include:-

*"I have learnt new skills and would be interested in further training"*

*"I understand how to use software products and I am interested in participating on a Modern Apprenticeship course"*

*"I have learnt about fitness and interested in participating on other provision in relation to nursery courses"*

### Mainstreaming

Non-mainstream funding is required to continue to support project activities in terms of resources (e.g. tutors and support costs to participants e.g. travel and refreshments).

In addition, ESF has allowed Colleges to work with smaller groups that would not normally be deemed economically viable. Colleges were also able to provide participants with discrete basic skills support and access to vocational tutors and IAG support.

### Dissemination

All dissemination materials produced for this project were shared with members of the Consortium and the wider partnership. A dissemination event was arranged in January post completion to raise the profile of the project, share best practice, lessons learnt and discuss the project's heritage.

Key partner organisations were invited to attend including representatives from Business Links, Ufi Hub and the Learning and Skills Council. Copies of the materials produced for the event are attached as separate Appendices.

## **Case studies**

**Karl had left school with no qualifications and a poor attendance record. He had started a training course but dropped out after a few days. He started the course because of his interest in playing football. His mentor introduced him to the training sessions at the Under 10's team. He has now completed the course, is regularly attending a Sports therapy course at Skelmersdale College and still helps the junior team in his spare time on a voluntary basis.**

**Ashleigh was a very keen Ladies Football player. She was recruited through a visit to the 'Youth Information Coffee Shop.' She enjoyed the course and is now enrolled on the E2E course and is working with the local girls football team.**