



EVALUATION REPORT



PROJECT TITLE: Training in Community Support

PROJECT REF NO: ESF/0203/004

LEAD ORGANISATION: Integrate Employment Services

Overview of the Project Activity and Partners

This project offered a training course for the unemployed to train in community support for 3 days per week. The training course provided beneficiaries with extensive training including NVQ 2 Care and a substantial work experience element. They also achieved the LDAF induction qualification, a statutory requirement for working in the field of learning disability. The project ran for 17 months and offered work experience on the sites of our two community businesses. Beneficiaries worked alongside disabled people who were employed or training in the businesses. They offered hands on support to enable the disabled people to remain in or gain the skills to move into, employment.

There was no direct partnership involvement, however, the project had positive contacts with local jobcentres, community organisations and voluntary organisations. Through these organisations, the project was able to recruit beneficiaries, advertise the course and find employment for the beneficiaries. The project had a number of difficulties in achieving its targets. These included:-

staffing difficulties within our organisation which included the loss of the trainer to long term ill health
difficulty in recruiting at a time of high employment

Achievements of the Project

While the project did not achieve its overall targets, it did support 25 beneficiaries to access the course (target 42). Of these 21 worked towards a qualification (target 35), 17 completed the course (target 32) and 13 found work (target 20). This represents a 52% success rate in finding employment. Additionally, soft outcomes for the beneficiaries included increased levels of self-confidence. They showed a commitment to the course, developed enhanced levels of self-esteem and learned to re-engage with the world of work.

Areas of Innovation

The project was innovative in terms of the manner in which it was delivered, combining NVQ training with a work experience format. It offered a strong package of support to beneficiaries recognising that for many, barriers to work included a lack of self-esteem and self-confidence as well as the more practical needs such as childcare support.

Additionally, the beneficiaries role as support workers to people with a disability, allowed this disadvantaged group of people to stay in work and/or access training opportunities within our social enterprises.

Identification of Areas of Good Practice and Areas for Improvement

The project worked well due to its strong links with other organisations in the geographical area and within the field of social care, based on a good previous track record. It also achieved a 52% success rate in beneficiaries accessing the course finding employment. This reflects the strong links that have been developed with employers who recognised the value of the course and the high calibre of training delivered. The project did find difficulty in recruiting and in adapting to change due to long term staff sickness. These points indicate the need to be more creative and focused in our recruitment process and to build in more flexibility in our staffing of the training course.

The project found some difficulty in adjusting to the administrative and monitoring systems required by LSC which differed markedly from ESF systems. As a small organisation without some of the required level of computing systems, this proved difficult to deal with. However, it was eventually possible to work within these parameters. Additionally, the outcome based payment system caused major difficulties in delivery. As a course working with difficult to reach groups of people (long-term unemployed, ethnic minorities and disabled people), the running costs of the course were fixed regardless of the numbers of beneficiaries. As a result, the financial base on which the course ran was compromised.

Lessons Learnt

Co-financing was offered as a simple and easier way for small voluntary organisations to access ESF funding. Our experience, especially in terms of the level of bureaucracy and the systems adopted does call in to question whether this funding route is appropriate and as such the organisation is considering withdrawing from this type of delivery in the future.

Dissemination of Good Practice including Details of Dissemination Materials Produced

No materials were produced and the project did not directly disseminate good practice

Details of Publicity Undertaken (attach copies of any advertising/publicity materials produced)

The project was publicised through a series of adverts in LEP for the recruitment of beneficiaries to participate on the course. A poster was also produced for use in local community and voluntary organisations. (see attached)

Case study

PH, a beneficiary of the course, has gained a lot from participation on the course. His reasons for joining the course were complex. He has been caring for his elderly mother for some time and had also found this very stressful. He felt the course would both help him to get back into the employment field and utilise the skills he had learnt at home. PH was on the course for nearly 12 months. He enjoyed the contact with other beneficiaries, made new friends, registered for his NVQ and began his work experience at the horticultural site. Throughout the course he enjoyed working with adults with a learning disability, and showed a natural aptitude towards the work. This increased his self-confidence and self-esteem and he began applying for jobs. As the course was coming to an end, PH applied for and was successful in getting a job as a carer for the elderly in their own homes. He is currently waiting for a start date and is very pleased with the way things have turned out.

(all information written with PH permission)

Views of customers and/or partners

The beneficiaries came from a wide variety of backgrounds and with little or no experience of working with disability. For most the course has been a worthwhile experience. It was structured in such a way that all beneficiaries experienced the hands on work experience at an early stage to see whether it suited them. In this way it was possible for them to decide if this was the field they wanted to work in. As a result, it became clear who it suited and who it didn't. Once beneficiaries had overcome this barrier, they all stayed for a significant period of time with an average stay of 18 weeks before moving on. The overall feedback from the course is positive, however, the major issue was the slow pace of NVQ. This was primarily due to the loss of the course trainer for significant periods of time.

While the project did not have any direct partnership working, there continued to be positive interactions with local community and voluntary organisations. The job centre recognised the value of the course and were very sympathetic to beneficiaries with regards their benefits and other aspects of their individual back to work programmes.

Comparison of how the project dealt with Information Communication Technologies, Equal Opportunities and Sustainability

The project followed the equal opportunities policy of Integrate and encouraged as wide a range of participants as possible. This was done by engaging with community organisations working with various different groups in the local area. As a result of this engagement, the project recruited 4 women from ethnic minority groups (16%) and 15 disabled people onto the course (60%). Of these two disadvantaged groups, 2 women from the ethnic minority group found employment and 5 disabled people also found work.

Additionally, the project was committed to social inclusion as part of its sustainability strategy as denoted by the high numbers of beneficiaries from disadvantaged backgrounds. From an environmental perspective, the project was based at two social enterprises which recycled products as part of their business strategy- wood and garden waste- and overall the project was committed to using recycled paper products wherever possible.

ICT was not a major aspect of the course itself, however, all beneficiaries had access to PCs for CVs and letter writing to employers. They also had access to the internet as part of their job search.

Sustainability of the Project's Activities (Exit Strategy/Mainstreaming)

The project sustainability was dependent on exploring links with other agencies in this field with regard to developing a training agency for the delivery of this type of training. This is an ongoing process and no final decisions have been made. As such with the withdrawal of funding by LSC it is currently not running. For beneficiaries, the majority moved on to employment or further training and as such were able to leave the course with a positive outcome.

Details of tools used to evaluate the impact of the project

Project evaluation was based on beneficiary outcomes, verbal feedback from beneficiaries and monthly returns to LSC.

Additional Information

SIGNATURE:

DATE

