



EVALUATION REPORT



PROJECT TITLE: ACCESS POINT BURNLEY

PROJECT REF NO: ESF/0203/050

LEAD ORGANISATION: BURNLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Overview of the Project Activity and Partners

The project 's job was to "raise the profile of Access Point among the target groups" and "provide [them] with an appropriate programme of activities". The Project Plan identified the following themes in achieving these ambitions: to create a customer-focussed building; to establish a promoted service; to meet matrix standards; and, to run a programme of events. The events were divided into: employer-friendly courses; recruitment events with employers; and, occasional taster sessions to attract new users. Partnership working for the specific project focussed on employers with significant recruitment ambitions, and taking the joint lead with Connexions Burnley in delivering a Burnley Information Providers' careers event.

The agreed outcomes for the project reflected the main business of Access Point: information, advice and guidance. These outcomes are achieved in partner ship with training providers (Burnley College, Lancashire County Council, Burnley Telematics) and mutual advice referrals (Connexions, Job Centre, Burnley Volunteer Bureau, Burnley Enterprise, Asian Business Federation).

Achievements of the Project

Beneficiaries

The project exceeded its target total number (+11%) and profile (9%) of beneficiaries. Numbers receiving ESF training was 1% below target. Positive outcomes were below target levels. The contract was revised as a result, and a significant shift in emphasis towards addressing employability and basic skills resulted.

Building

The project created an attractive environment for service users, with practical, clear, appropriately delineated and regularly managed displays. The inherited position in the first report was of "public areas dark and hemmed in; no welcome space, and no confidentiality. Information lacked relevance, timeliness and discipline of place."

Promotion

Starting from scratch, the project has: produced publicity material, from stationery and leaflets with a minimum shelf life of two years and in four languages, to flyers; created display, banner and presentation materials and capacity; generated media interest and copy; and, effected four web presences for the project, principally www.accesspointburnley.org.uk. Paper and electronic publicity routines are established and a new mailing list in place.

Matrix

Access Point achieved the Matrix Standard in May 2003. The assessor identified the project's Mosaic Workshops as an example of good practice. Continues..

Events

25 employer-friendly courses were run; 8 events – or series of events – around employer recruitment; and, 7 events or courses of a more social or lifelong learning aspect, intended to attract new users. Recent work has focussed on expanding ESOL provision (6 courses in place in the last quarter; 1 in the first quarter), and developing a capacity to meet basic competence needs (reading, writing, and PC skills), available from January 2004.

In Building, Promotion, Matrix and Events above, the project met or exceeded its targets.

Areas of Innovation

All of the work undertaken, with the exception of the employer-friendly courses (which had operated at a lower level), was new to Access Point. No other IAG provider in Burnley has developed links with employers around race diversity issues, and we know our work with Burnley & Padiham Community Housing (BPCH), the Pensions Centre (specifically commended by the Job Centre), Burnley Council and Tesco to be unique locally. BPCH and Access Point have run two introductory events linked with work shadowing opportunities and possible future employment. Subject to the outcome of the recent second launch, we plan to promote this as a model to other employers.

Identification of Areas of Good Practice and Areas for Improvement

Good practice, as perceived externally: see work with Pensions Centre around recruitment, immediately above; and under Matrix, above.

Good practice, in our experience: work with employers around recruitment, especially BPCH and Pensions Centre; maximising opportunities to learn employability skills; one stop shop service delivery for IAG.

Possible improvements: further development of employer links, especially around unadvertised vacancies; promotion of service mix for different client sub-groups (e.g subcontinental graduates, young women 16-18); greater emphasis on learning about work from people in different sectors.

Lessons Learnt

Employer recruitment events have highlighted the weaknesses of our clients in fundamentals like basic written English, sufficient to fill in an application form, or confidence to participate in a basic assessment centre. Basic skills provision, and treating ESOL as a matter of urgency, emerged from this understanding. CV work has changed our understanding of younger users; we now acknowledge that a significant minority are barely IT literate.

Reflecting on what we offer client sub-groups allows us to be better focussed in devising our services.

Dissemination of Good Practice including Details of Dissemination Materials Produced

We share our experience through the now! Local Area Network, Burnley Information Providers, and the Social Inclusion and Employment Network as appropriate. Subject to developments, we are considering a dissemination event to share our experience of co-working with BPCH. No specific materials have been produced.

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

Leaflets in four languages – attached. Monthly “What’s On” guides and event flyers – samples already submitted. See also “Promotion” above.

Case study

Female Early 20s Asian family background

Ambition, determined through IAG consultation: seeking part or full-time work, focussing on relationships with people. Action plan: job search introduction and techniques; interview preparation; courses in Customer Care, Counselling, and Health & Safety. Outcome: work within caring profession.

Views of customers and/or partners

Direct feedback from clients regarding overall service: 57% very good; 23% good; 0% poor; 0% very poor; 20% no reply. 60% of those expressing an opinion about the "Choice is Yours" careers event said it was excellent, the rest OK. Commendation from Job Centre for employer event. Increase in partner involvement through expanded range of basic skill/ESOL courses.

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

The project supported the development of an ICT community service through UK On-line, and the development of a part-time facilitator on site from 2004. Access Point's ICT infrastructure was a significant drain on employee effectiveness; this has been addressed, with support from this project, through the renewal of equipment and creation of an in-house server. Compatible electronic management systems are in place for the LSC.

Our client group remains overwhelmingly of Asian family background, supported by multi-lingual IAG, publicity and training. Our premises were assessed for DDA, and because of their intrinsic unsuitability we are committed to move when suitable premises equally within the heart of our community of benefit become available. The project continues to provide a discrete service for women as desired.

The project is a local provider for local need. This allows for minimum transportation needs and maximum local economic outputs (local people for local jobs, and local jobs for local spending power.). We follow the Council's recycling practice.

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

The building's user spaces and Matrix accreditation need only be maintained for the foreseeable future. Keeping displays up to date, and generating publicity has now been largely absorbed into administrative staff time, which has grown during the year. Access Point is keen to maintain its relationship with recruitment through employer events, and our capacity to undertake this is currently being reviewed. We hope to have an employee, funded through the Community Learning Representative programme, who will be able to take responsibility for employment-related training, by the summer.

Details of tools used to evaluate the impact of the project

The building's user spaces and Matrix accreditation need only be maintained for the foreseeable future. Keeping displays up to date, and generating publicity has now been largely absorbed into administrative staff time, which has grown during the year. Access Point is keen to maintain its relationship with recruitment through employer events, and our capacity to undertake this is currently being reviewed. We hope to have an employee, funded through the Community Learning Representative programme, who will be able to take responsibility for employment-related training, by the summer.

Additional Information

The project delivered good value for money in respect of beneficiaries served overall. Outcomes were poorer in value for money terms, reflecting both the difficult client group with which we work, and the experience from which we were able to draw our more focussed plans for client support.

Fit with local initiatives

The project co-operated with Burnley College, Burnley Telematics, Lancashire County Council adult Education service, FastTrain, Mid-Pennine Arts and Nightfreight in the development and delivery of courses. The project co-operated with Burnley Information Providers (College, Connexions, Bangladesh Welfare Association, Youth & Community Service, Police, Fire Service, Army, UCL, Lifeline, Building Bridges, Asian Business Federation &c) in the development and delivery of a careers event, also with Sure Start for a similar smaller event with a different target group.

The Project is managed by a Partnership Board, with Connexions, College, Employment Service and local community group representation. This Board received reports and plans. Members of the Social Inclusion and Employment Network were advised of and invited to participate in Employer events. Access Point was regularly represented at the Local Managers' Meeting and the Local Area Network.

The project's flexibility in responding to local need is evidenced by:

- the significant growth and re-orientation of support towards basic skill/ESOL needs
- development of local surgeries to support large recruitment events
- identification of resources to support employment-related learning and personal ICT skills for 2004.

Delivery of capacity building activities

The project increased the capacity of Access Point clients and of the agency as a whole. All activities from initial consultation onwards seek to develop capacity for the individual. The project supported 31 courses (between 7 and 69 hours in length), 8 employer events and 7 social/lifelong learning events. These attracted respectively 381,42 and 74 participants. Impacts include known referrals, recruitment for additional learning, and people securing jobs, both those for whom we could claim, and those where we have been unable to produce evidence, due to employer reluctance.

Measurement of soft outcomes

We do not have the capacity currently to measure these.

SIGNATURE:

GEORGE GARLICK

DATE

31/1/04