



EVALUATION REPORT



PROJECT TITLE: Working it Out

PROJECT REF NO: ESF/0203/067

LEAD ORGANISATION: Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council

Overview of the Project Activity and Partners

The aim of the project was to assist excluded and disengaged employees in the upgrade and enhancement of their vocational skills, including basic and key skills, through a programme of culturally sensitive work-related training and mentoring schemes, delivered through the workplace and at a time conducive to work practices. A high proportion of these businesses and employees were of Asian heritage backgrounds.

Learning programmes were developed based on the needs of the learners taking into account barriers to learning such as language and culture. Taster events, such as fares, exchanges and road shows, helped to provide bite-sized learning morsels for employees and provide an insight into the demand for different aspects of the learning programme. Events such as Business Seminar Networks and a launch dinner with a high profile guest raised the profile of the programme and engaged with potential learners.

'Internal' trainers were identified and trained to provide vital IAG support, identifying needs and promoting learning as well as assisting in the recruitment of learners. Vocational and work-related courses and mentoring schemes were introduced to enhance the adaptability and flexibility of workers to change. In each area and in all courses, mapping took place to basic skills standards, and opportunities to develop basic skills and ESOL, where appropriate, in each area were identified.

Blackburn with Darwen Lifelong Learning Forum

This is a forum of 70 organisations from the voluntary, statutory and community sectors. The role of the forum will be to monitor the project and act in a supportive, scrutinising and overseeing capacity.

East Lancs Asian Business Federation (ABF)

The ABF will provide the principle gateway to learners through their network of 300 businesses, which form their federation. They will also offer developmental support for individual firms involved in the programme and seek to identify good practice for work with Asian managed companies.

Blackburn with Darwen Lifelong Learning Team (LEA community education service, specialising in work with excluded groups)

The team will employ an outreach officer and project co-ordinator to run the project, provide tutors in specialist areas and have a general responsibility of delivering the project.

Bar u Forums for Blackburn and for Darwen.

Local pressure groups of licensees, that work with the local authority and Police to tackle town centre issues and promote good practise within their sector.

Blackburn College (accredited college with BSA kitemark)

The college will provide ESOL and basic skills input and training for champions and employers.

Access Point Network

The Access Point Network will provide IAG support at the workplace and will support the mentoring scheme with employees.

Achievements of the Project

Number of companies helped	51 (25)
Total number of beneficiaries helped	519 (450)
Total number of female employees helped	115 (80)
Number of beneficiaries working towards a qualification	432 (154) no trainees currently working towards.
Number of trainers trained	25 (25)
Number of beneficiaries gaining a qualification	106 (100)
Net number of jobs safeguarded by ESF support	20 (14)

In all cases the planned targets are met or exceeded. The spread of courses undertaken can be seen below.

Introduction to Health & Safety	83
Working Together	67
Market Traders Website	10
Customer Charter	6
Team Building	77
Working in Teams	7
Business Network Seminar	127
Food Hygiene Certificates	47
Customer Care	6
Customer Care Team Working	7
Blackburn Market Seminar	7
Darwen consultation Workshop	11
First Aid at Work	26
Imran Khan Dinner	450
Market Traders' Dinner.....	

The establishment of Blackburn's and Darwen's Market Charters

Areas of Innovation

- Learning was tailored to meet the needs of traditionally excluded groups of employers and employees of pubs, clubs, social venues and market traders..
- Additionally programmes were adapted to meet the requirements of Asian businesses, a disadvantaged and excluded group of predominantly low-skilled Asian heritage men
- The employees were in control of the learning process and supported appropriately
- The project developed programmes made up of bite-sized units, so participants can drop in and out as required by their work commitments. Materials were adapted to suit the context of the learners.
- Provision of a localised and accessible learning to suit the learners. Further care was taken to create a welcoming atmosphere that encouraged the learners to meet other learners and pursue their own learning agendas..
- All learning programmes had clear aims, objectives and outcome profiles. There was a business case for all the programmes, and benefits resulting from the learning process were visible and easily identifiable.
- All programmes and event were delivered within the time scales of the employers needs, which included running late evening and weekend courses.

Identification of Areas of Good Practice and Areas for Improvement

- As the learning activities in these areas were designed for the individual events and not usually nationally certificated, all learners have been registered with Blackburn with Darwen's Life Long Learning Credit Framework database. Any subsequent training that they undertake will be logged towards their gaining of certification for 21 hours of training within this framework.
- The three large events were targeted at local businesses and a representative mix of the community was achieved by carefully targeting and following-up the invitations.
- Major companies (e.g. Thwaites) are keen supporters of workforce development activities and have sent representation to several of our events.
- A long-term relationship with the learners is being cultivated in order to support significant change to the way the businesses operate in Blackburn with Darwen.
- Provided short learning programmes that have a clear structure and aims.
- Provided learning that is valued by the learners and instils confidence in them. This was primarily achieved by making the programmes relevant to the learners needs

Lessons Learnt

- Always make learning programmes learner led. It is imperative that there are visible and tangible benefits arising from the learning process
- Careful planning of events needs to be undertaken if the opportunities from the event are to be maximised.
- By definition, these target groups require a lot of convincing of the needs and benefits of learning. Time must be allowed to build a relationship before the learning needs can be identified and suitable learning opportunities organised. This often meant visiting businesses several times, learning when employers had time to talk and avoiding busy periods. Many of these visits took place outside traditional office hours. This was especially true with the Pubs, Clubs and Social Venues.
- Use existing forums when available. Both Blackburn and Darwen have Bar U forums and using these meetings helped the Development Officer build links to develop courses that the Licensees needed for their businesses.
- Avoid pre-conceived ideas about employer/employee needs. Darwen Market Traders had significantly different priorities from those in Blackburn.
- Employer needs and awarding body courses did not always have the same purposes and objectives. Some flexibility was needed, as well as re-formatting the courses to meet the needs of the employers and employees personal needs.
- Employers and Employees in Blackburn and in Darwen have significant differences in the way they assimilate training and learning activities.

Dissemination of Good Practice including Details of Dissemination Materials Produced

- Training activities were target to workplace activities that not only met the employer needs but also the employees felt that they had achieved a skill that they would value in their current and future employment needs.
- Established case studies and profiled success stories in order for good practice to be extended amongst, both, Blackburn and Darwen markets. (IE The Market Charter)

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

- The main publicity was generated for and by the Workforce Development Dinner For Innovative success. This included the production of a video with input from LCS and Blackburn College together with interviews with employers who had been helped with Workforce Development by BwDBC. The project gained a high degree of coverage in local and regional newspapers, radio and TV.
- Learning programmes are promoted by on-going communication with the potential learners, employers, local government officers and, through posters and leaflets delivered to targeted businesses by Development Officers.
- In addition, The Bar U Forum newsletters and market traders' quarterly bulletin were used to promote learning programmes.
- The local press was invited to the market traders learning dinner and a press release was published in the Lancashire Evening Telegraph.

Case study

A number of case studies have been recorded as part of a video. These contain interviews with both beneficiaries and partners and demonstrate how the programme has benefited them and their organisations. A copy of the video can be produced upon request.

Views of customers and/or partners

The feedback from all partners is positive and all want to continue with providing learning programmes that result in a positive change to the way the learners undertake their business activities. (feed back/evaluation forms are available should they be required)

Employers and several partners have reported increased motivation and enthusiasm in learners who have undertaken the process. Several learners passed on their enthusiasm to others, who then asked if such courses could be put on for them.

The video contains interviews with a cross section of the beneficiaries and audience.

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

Comparing the proposal with the activities undertaken the following comments can be made regarding Equal Opportunities, ICT and Sustainability.

Part of the project was designed to engage with excluded and disengaged Asian employees in the upgrade and enhancement of their vocational skills. To allow equal opportunity within the target groups interpreters and bilingual tutors were provided.

With the take-up of learning places by female market traders and those who work in the pubs, clubs & social venues, which had The Pubs, Clubs & Social Venues a high proportion of female learners the overall target set by LSC was achieved.

The ICT skill base has been improved and many of the streams have utilised technology as part of their development. In particular the web-site programme helped learners develop their IT skills and learn about promoting their business on the internet and has resulted in over 50 of Blackburn's market traders being on the blackburnmarket.com site. Utilising mobile technology allowed the project to travel to the workplace increasing the availability of the project to the learners.

The aim of the project was to engage learners and subsequently, once they had got the 'learning habit', to work with mainstream learning providers such as Blackburn College in order to provide learners with a sustained and effective learning environment. This has occurred and is on-going. In addition, further learning programmes will be developed, in consultation with the traders and markets management, which further develop the market traders business skills.

The lesson learnt from this programme will be taken to a wider base in the hope of broadening the participation of those in the learning process that have the greatest need

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

The purpose of the programme was to engage or re-engage learners to the habit of training and learning. In registering with the credit framework through open college of north west, learners can now be tracked and supported.

Exit strategy - We are building a mechanism in support of employees/learner self development to secure a more sustainable self development process.

Details of tools used to evaluate the impact of the project

Certificated programmes had external monitoring procedures through assessment to meet awarding body standards.

Employees and employers were encouraged to provide open and frank comments on courses and tutor through our organisations evaluation and feed back sessions and events creating an open positive approach to this programme.

These questionnaires were analysed to identify strengths and areas for improvement.

Learner evaluation questionnaires were used at the end of each event.

Narrative and qualitative evaluation is used during each learning programme.

Evidencing the improved employability of their employees and safeguarding of their employment as a result, came from a letter of support from Utopia night club.

Additional Information

In the short time that the project has been running, it has become recognised as a major player in workforce development, assisting and shaping the future policy of not only the council, but organisations that operate within the authority.

SIGNATURE:

DATE