



**Nelson & Colne College**

# ***RECRUITMENT & TRAINING***

***ESF Co - Financed***

***OBJECTIVE 3***

***Dossier: 021242NW3***

***Project Ref No: ESF/0203/122***

***1<sup>ST</sup> August 2002 – 31<sup>st</sup> Dec 2003***

## **EVALUATION REPORT**

*Prepared by members of the Project Management Group*

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## **Introduction**

The Recruitment and Training project which is the focus of this evaluation was a part funded by the European Union through the European Social Fund Objective 3 programme, co-financed by the Lancashire Learning and Skills Council Lancashire. The project lead organisation was Nelson & Colne College.

This is an internal evaluation which seeks to highlight what worked well and what did not work so well, in order that it will assist future projects by building on the successes and avoid repeating mistakes. Every effort has been made to make the evaluation report as objective as possible.

The prime aim of this project was to provide a recruitment and training package to assist young people and adults who are long-term unemployed, economically inactive or recently redundant to move into employment. Therefore this project was submitted under Policy Field 1, Active labour market policies, of the Objective 3 programme 2000-2006: *“to reduce long term unemployment through the use of active labour market measures and assist the unemployed and economically inactive back into employment”* and *“to reduce the flows into long-term unemployment through the use of active labour market measures targeted at those recently unemployed”*.

At the core of the project was the aim to provide an integrated programme combining employability training, basic and key skills development plus vocational training customised to the needs of the beneficiaries. Thus it was deemed most appropriate to submit the project under Measure 2 of the above policy field, namely to *“improve the employability of the unemployed, returners and young people of working age through*

*targeted intervention to enhance vocational and other key skills and removing external barriers to labour market entry”.*

Based on the above aim of supporting people into jobs the targets we set reflected this:

- 1) To assist a total of 105 unemployed beneficiaries (60 to be female)
- 2) To assist all beneficiaries in working towards a qualification
- 3) For at least 85% of beneficiaries to achieve an award up to NVQ level 2 or equivalent
- 4) To have 90 of the above beneficiaries into employment by 31<sup>st</sup> Dec 2003.

**Key components of the project design were to be delivered in 6 phases:**

- 1) To establish a Project Management Group comprising of representatives of partners indicated in the project bid and to prepare a detailed implementation plan.
- 2) To appoint a project team to work with participating companies to identify the skills that would be required in new recruits and to establish a training model.
- 3) Recruitment of beneficiaries through referrals from partners and local community regeneration partnership and learning centres, backed up by adverts in the local press.

- 4) Individual guidance and needs assessment, leading to the preparation of an individual action plan and programme with agreed milestones and objectives. The learning programmes were to be tailored to the needs of the individual beneficiaries and companies and would include a combination of basic/key skills development and vocationally specific skills, covering underpinning knowledge and practical competencies leading to accreditation. Regular review of beneficiary progress towards milestones agreed between trainees and guidance tutor was to be an integral part of this phase. In addition the programmes would address any special needs, including childcare, ESOL, literacy and communications, plus any specialist support required for reasons of disability.
  
- 5) Delivery of training using a variety of options identified under phase 2. An integral support measure of the project was to include a wage subsidy to encourage local employers to take on and allow training of a new person, with the long-term view of securing permanent employment.
  
- 6) Evaluation of the project outcomes, achievements and options for sustainability.

### **Partnership arrangements**

As indicated above the project was designed to run in partnership with other public and private partners with Nelson & Colne College being the lead organisation:

- **Lancashire Connexions and Job Centre Plus** was to play a key role in the recruitment of beneficiaries by assisting in the identification and referral of suitable individuals. **Empower** was also a partner with which Nelson & Colne College were to liaise with specifically to help engage 'hard-to-reach' individuals from ethnic minority backgrounds. This organisation plays a key role in this area and works closely with parents to ensure that they are fully aware of opportunities available to their children.
- **Employer** partnerships was seen as playing a critical role in identifying skills needs / options for the programmes offered to beneficiaries. They would also secure a high level of positive outcomes for beneficiaries in terms of movement into employment and provide regular 'feedback' on the effectiveness of provision.
- **Pendle Partnership, East Lancashire Partnership and East Lancashire Lifelong Learning Partnership** were all seen as supporting the strategic integration of the project with other initiatives. For example, Pendle Partnership through the Single Regeneration Budget had already supported initiatives to engage the disadvantaged and disengaged people at a very local level. To avoid duplication and to make the most of any facilities such as local community based learning centres that had already been set up, including Learn Direct/UFI accredited centres, would ensure the very best packages were made available to the final beneficiaries.

### **The Project Context**

Nelson & Colne College is a Further Education College based in the Borough of Pendle in East Lancashire and was the applicant organisation for the Recruitment & Training programme. While most information supplied by publications such as the North West Regional Development Plan 2000-2006 refers to regional data, there are more specific and recent data sources which allow us to analyse the local terrain and evaluate the effectiveness of the project as a whole.

#### **Regional Need and linkages to Local Need**

“Low skills are barriers to competitiveness and to social inclusion, removing the barriers and realising the potential of individuals and the capacity of communities will assist long-term economic competitiveness and social exclusion.” **NWDA Regional Economic Strategy**

The NWDA states as a primary objective that people in the North West must have access to opportunities which empower them to participate in the social, economic and cultural life of the region. A series of major deficiencies in the skills available have been identified at all levels in the region alongside a weakness in the learning culture and relevant skills training which undermine the competitiveness of businesses. The expectation of high level skills is increasing across all sectors, but especially in the service industries. It is increasingly important for individuals to be confident and competent in using ICT as a means of learning. There is a need to ensure that exclusion is not made even worse through ICT exclusion.

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Evidence of changes in the labour market is shown in the RDP and the NWDA Skills Strategy. It describes over-dependence on traditional industries and that changes in manufacturing, coupled with growth in the contribution of service sector industries to the regional economy, will have implications for the type and levels of skills demanded on the labour force.

The table below shows the breakdown of employees by industrial sectors and compares it to the North West and Great Britain as a whole.

<b>Employee Structure 2001-Employee Jobs %</b>			
<b>Industrial Sector</b>	<b>East Lancs</b>	<b>North West</b>	<b>GB</b>
Manufacturing	29.4%	16.4%	14.2%
Distribution, hotels and restaurants	28.4%	30.9%	30.3%
Finance and other business services	9.6%	16.1%	19.6%
Public Administration, education and Health	22.7%	23.2%	24.4%
Other	10.1%	11.5%	11.5%
Source: ONS – Annual Business Inquiry 2001			

The above evidence ties in with local evidence i.e. a survey was commissioned by Pendle Borough Council in 1999 and was carried out by the University of Cambridge to look at Pendle's economy and future outlook. Key findings of the report in relation to this project include:

- Manufacturing will continue to decline over the next 10-15 years
- One of Pendle's weaknesses is its lack of an appropriately skilled workforce
- Inadequate marketing, sales and customer-service skills
- Retention of population – this issue is closely associated to the issue of a skilled, educated and young workforce

Pendle is highly dependent on the manufacturing sector, which has and continues to be in decline. Service sector industries are becoming increasingly more important, for example call centre employment now accounts for some 2.3% of the UK workforce with the North West being a major location for call centres – in 2001 over 4,000 of the 19,793 new jobs created in the UK were in the North West (source Deloitte & Touche), more than any region. In addition the expected growth areas for Labour demand in East Lancashire are: Business services, Hotels and catering, Professional services, Leisure, Arts and personal, Retailing and insurance.

Many residents in Pendle do not have the skills, knowledge or confidence to engage in a wider labour market. In November 2001 the LSC Performance and Innovation Unit circulated a report called “In Demand: Adult Skills in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century”. This report identified reasons for low skill levels of the UK workforce and proposed changes that need to take place to rectify the situation namely:

- to improve the training supply
- matching qualifications to employment needs
- increasing access to employment opportunities and to help people move towards levels 2,3 and 4 qualifications

A particular target area for the Recruitment & Training project were the pockets of deprivation that is a feature of the Borough of Pendle. These areas are characterised by high levels of unemployment and many residents have low skill levels. Pendle Partnership Objective 2 Action Plan 2000-2006 states that if these residents are to benefit from Pendle’s wider regeneration they need to be able to:

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- access employment and learning opportunities
- develop their ICT skills and awareness
- access information through ICT

All wards in England are ranked out of a total of 8414 where the most deprived is 1 and least deprived 8414. As expected the concentration of deprivation is within urban areas with East Lancashire seen as a particular problem. Using the IMD 2000 method Pendle has 7 wards that rank in the worst 10% in England.

The new Index of Deprivation 2000 (ID2000) is made up of:

- 6 'domain' indicators at ward level (income; employment; health deprivation and disability; education, skills and training; housing; and geographical access)
- An overall ward level Index of Multiple Deprivation 2000 (IMD 2000) that aggregates the 6 domain indicators
- A supplementary Child Poverty ward level index
- 6 summaries at the local authority district level of the overall IMD 2000.

Ward	Rank in England out of 8414 wards	Ranking top 30 most deprived wards Lancashire
Whitefield	39	1
Bradley	128	10
Waterside	365	25
Walverden	457	
Southfield	474	
Brierfield	522	
Marsden	626	

Source : DETR Indices of Deprivation 2000

61.2% of the people unemployed in Pendle live in the 7 wards with 62.6% of the total number of unemployed men also living there. There is also a high percentage of the Pendle Pakistani population living within these wards.

At district level local concentration is used to identify district 'hot spots' of deprivation on this basis Pendle is ranked 19 out of 354 in England. Of particular concern is the fact that in Pendle and East Lancashire there is a significant higher proportion of 16-24 year olds who are unemployed compared to regional and national figures.

Pendle's unemployment rate was 3% in October 2002 which compared to a Lancashire average of 2.6%. However, of the total unemployed in Pendle 36.8% are aged 16-24 years which is significantly higher than 30.2% average for the North West and 26.6% in Great Britain.

*Source: National Online Manpower Information System (NOMIS) October 2002*

### **Linkages to Strategic Objectives**

*“The mission of Nelson & Colne College is to be the Centre of Excellence in education and training for the communities we serve, working in partnership to achieve success for all.”*

Every year Nelson & Colne College’s Marketing Department produce a Needs Analysis which has a primary purpose to inform and underpin the College’s Strategic Plan.

The Key Messages of the College’s Needs Analysis that reflect the Recruitment & Training project are:

- To encourage higher aspirations to education/training for people living in Pendle, marketing the link between education/training and higher income jobs.
- To work collaboratively to maximise opportunity and resources to benefit the learners.
- To encourage and support return to learning.
- To identify current and future skills shortages in order to provide appropriate education/training for young people and adults and be responsive to employer need.
- To support the Skills for Life Strategy by addressing the Basic Skills needs of the Community.
- To provide advice and guidance sessions in the community and other locations in order to breakdown barriers to learning.
- To cater for a large an increasing young ethnic minority population.

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- To seek to maximise the contribution that education and training makes to community cohesion.
- To re-engage the disaffected in learning
- To ensure that education and training contributes to local regeneration

In addition the Recruitment & Training project assists Pendle's Regeneration Strategy to increase the participation and access to education, training and lifelong learning and thereby improve the quality of life of residents by enhancing their employment prospects, developing their skills, confidence and interests

**Methodology, Innovation, Lessons Learnt & Good Practice**

**Stage 1** was to establish a Project Management Group comprising of representatives of partners indicated in the project bid and to prepare a detailed implementation plan. Nelson & Colne College also felt that it was also necessary to set up an Operational Group, comprising of key members of staff that were working on actual project delivery. Therefore, two groups were set up and terms of reference were agreed so that each group were clear on their areas of responsibility. In addition, dates were set for both groups to meet throughout the project lifetime. This should be a point of good practice, as it ensures everybody is aware of the dates and times well in advance and before individual diaries become an obstacle in getting everybody together at the same time. It also allows ample time for group members to prepare.

One lesson we learnt (through a GONW ESF audit) was that each group should have its membership clearly stated and that procedures and a Code of Conduct be in place to cover points of order such as what constitutes a quorum. This was put into place during the project lifetime, however for the future draft terms of reference, procedures and membership will be in place for discussion at the start.

Overall, the project group meetings were extremely important; however we did find it difficult to get members of partners to attend. Therefore, where partners could not attend we ensured that minutes of meetings were distributed accordingly. Individuals meeting with partners would report on progress and this was reported back to the Management Group.

An implementation plan was devised, outlining the aims and objectives of the project and a timetable of the milestones and phases was compiled. It was agreed that this should be the yardstick against which the project performance could be measured. The implementation plan should be used as a working document and was amended on various occasions to take account of variances. Also the project implementation plan should be prepared which will enable project workers to see at a glance what their particular responsibilities are and the timeframe by which tasks need to be completed. Project performance reports should be distributed to all project staff so that they can be kept fully up-to-date.

**Stage 2** was to appoint a project team to work with participating companies to identify the skills that would be required in new recruits and to establish a training model.

In addition to the management, co-ordinator, work-based trainers and assessors, guidance and support workers based at College Training Services the project also helped the College continue the employment of an additional NVQ trainer/assessor, who was able to deliver NVQ's in Call Handling, Customer Services, Business Administration and Warehouse and Distribution. The External Funding Projects Officer was also part-funded through the project as it was envisioned that this was a key role in liaising with relevant organisations to identify opportunities for the unemployed beneficiaries.

Through the work of the project workers individual learning programmes were designed for the trainees which were to be a combination of the following:

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- work based training and assessment of competencies
- part-time release to the College, on a day/evening or block release basis
- open distance learning
- pre-placement College based training where appropriate, especially in basic and employability skills
- support in the transition into employment
- aftercare to ensure that beneficiaries employment is sustainable

The project has been administrated and managed through the College's External Funding Unit, which has managed other North West Development initiatives as well as a wide range of European and other externally funded projects. This allowed the College to be fully aware of the administration and management required to successfully fulfil its role.

Administration packs were distributed to all staff members signing up beneficiaries to the project, along with instructions on beneficiary eligibility criteria. The project was monitored monthly so that the project managers, as well as the LSC Contract Manager, could be kept fully informed of its progress.

From past experience the delay in submitting the project bid and receiving the go-ahead can cause problems in delaying the start of the project. Endeavours were made to ensure the project paperwork and staff briefings were carried out prior to receiving the approval letter. One difficulty that did arise was that we couldn't actively set about

promoting the wage subsidy until we received the approval letter, as this was a long term commitment to companies that does not receive funding from any other source.

The co-financing arrangements were substantially different from the GONW ESF arrangements and initially it was difficult to adapt to the new funding/evidence requirements. Fortunately, through working closely with the MIS department, the people experienced in the monitoring of work based learning (which closely resembles the new ESF requirements) and the LSC Contract Manager the monitoring team were able to submit accurate claims on a monthly basis. One other problem was that requirements from the LSC did change over the project lifetime, however through dialogue with our Contract Manager these problems were overcome and we are in a better position for the future.

There remains duplication between the European Social Fund paperwork and some of the work-based learning ILR's and some difficulties were noted through the LSC PFA audit on the ESF project. The work based learning software (YETI) does not allow the new ESF fields to be inputted, and some WBL fields can cause conflicting information. For example, both the ESF and the WBL requirements ask for the recording of employment status on the day before being taken on. For the ESF project the criterion was that the status was to be unemployed and this was recorded on the ESF learner record. Substantial work via the ESF project was undertaken with the beneficiary before they were considered for WBL and in many cases work trials were set up with employers prior to signing a beneficiary onto the scheme. Therefore, in some cases the employment status when signing somebody up to WBL was employed the day before (which is correct). Following the audit, the External Funding team and

the College Training Services team undertook a full audit to ensure all beneficiaries were eligible.

**Stage 3** was the recruitment of beneficiaries through referrals from partners and local community regeneration partnership and learning centres, backed up by adverts in the local press.

The recruitment to the ESF project was very local and included the following methods:

- 1) College Open Events
- 2) Career Events
- 3) Presentations in Schools
- 4) Directly with Employers
- 5) Referrals from Connexions

This work was backed up by specific adverts in the College prospectus, by adverts in the local press and other marketing literature such as flyers. The European Social Fund was promoted in the following manner:

- a) ESF support is shown on all recruitment & training materials
- b) ESF support is outlined in an “induction” pack given to all beneficiaries
- c) ESF support is notified in a letter to all employers providing work placements
- d) Press releases, leaflets and flyers all highlight ESF support

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- e) The Employer Support department has a promotional banner used to raise awareness of services the College can offer. ESF support is acknowledged on this banner.
- f) The College has obtained ESF plaques which are displayed in public areas.

Nelson & Colne College also actively promote the importance of the European Social Fund and raise awareness with the beneficiaries through the following mechanisms:

- a) Word of mouth – all operational members working on the project actively promote the European Social Fund.
- b) ESF support is shown on all recruitment & training materials.
- c) ESF support is outlined in an “induction” pack given to all beneficiaries
- d) The College has obtained ESF plaques which are displayed in public areas.

Examples of promotional materials are shown in **Appendix 1**.

Partnership work was also extremely important to the relative success of recruitment to the project. Working closely with other organisations i.e. EMPOWER and Connexions has enabled Nelson & Colne College not only to promote the project but also enabled us to get involved with events in the local area and find new avenues to reach ethnic minority groups.

The most successful aspects of the recruitment campaign was via the local Connexions office who were proactive in referring unemployed people through to the College and also the work undertaken with existing company contacts and also new

companies via Anne McIvor, the College Training Services Recruitment Officer and Barbara Livesey, Project Officer working through the External Funding department.

As mentioned above, the Recruitment and Training project has been promoted by Nelson and Colne College in several ways. Some have been successful and others less so. As with all projects the College works closely with its own marketing department in developing narrative to go into the College's news column. The column is run in the local Burnley and Pendle Leader Times series of newspapers. This is a useful method to kick start the profile of the project and its partnerships. This is not really used as a recruitment tool but enables familiarisation within the college of new European Social Fund initiatives. All narrative and literature clearly shows the ESF logo.

The draw back to using the College column is that, because it is free to the College, it is run at the discretion of the paper and so not always coincides with the project launch. The College advertises in other newspapers, particularly the Evening Telegraph and its supplements as well as in the Chamber of Commerce directory. We are unsure as to how much interest these advertisements generate.

Projects are also well publicised in the College part-time adult prospectus, the prospectus is taken in bundles out into the surrounding area, in public places as well as local businesses, as well as posted out to those on the Colleges general mailing list.

The traditional method of cold calling has also been implemented, but found to have a low success rate, as it is difficult to make contact with a person responsible for

training issues. A method of recruiting to the project was adopted which involved searching through the local newspapers for companies advertising that they were newly trading or those that were looking for staff. This rather than delivering a “scatter” approach enabled a more direct telephone call, as it gave a better understanding of the company’s immediate needs.

When issuing mail shots it is far more successful to distribute these in small batches specific to business sectors, i.e. call centres/or companies with strong direct customer communication needs. The information they receive is then specific to the sectors needs, such as customer care or call handling programmes. This has proven to be a particularly successful method.

At the time of compiling this evaluation report the Recruitment Officer had left Nelson & Colne College, however interviews undertaken with both Barbara Livesey and Anne Ainscough (College Training Services Manager) highlighted the substantial amount of work needed to get companies to take on a new trainee.

*“The history of the Pendle area and the fact that the majority of companies are SME’s, with the majority of these being one or two man bands make it extremely difficult. Not only do they have to incur a cost in paying additional wages but the company also experiences costs in terms of allowing experienced staff time to train the new employee”*

Barbara Livesey – Project Officer

*“Matching a beneficiary to an employer is very time-consuming. It involves sending out marketing literature, telephoning companies that are advertising vacancies in the local press, cold calling and follow-up calls. The success rates are low, however being able to offer a wage subsidy is a big help.”*

Anne Ainscough – CTS Manager

As a result of the lessons learnt, both in engaging learners and companies, Nelson & Colne College have compiled good practice guidelines which highlight the findings. These findings have been disseminated through to all other Lancashire Colleges who comprise the Lancashire Colleges Consortium.

**Stages 4 & 5** was to provide individual guidance and needs assessment and to deliver training through a variety of options. Through the project we were able to spend time developing the Individual Action Plan, where we drew on best practice from an INTEGRA project which was led by Lancashire Colleges Consortium, in which Nelson & Colne College were a partner. The focus became barriers to learning and a new action plan was devised with guidance notes for project staff (see **Appendix 2**).

People who were referred through to the College Training Services department of College all received the following:

- An initial interview
- Initial Assessment which included assessment of key skills
- A gensys test for basic skill needs

This initial work carried out with the beneficiary combined with any information provided from partner organisations such as Connexions enabled the staff involved to place the person on the right program and more importantly at the right level. The most difficult aspect was the placement of the beneficiaries in appropriate employment opportunities. To assist in the process flexible options were provided to potential companies.

Firstly companies had the option to take the person on into their employment and pay them a salary accordingly – this is called “employed status”. Secondly, the person could have a “trainee status”, whereby a work placement would be offered and a training allowance paid through the College which would allow not only the company but also the beneficiary to find out whether they were suitable to that chosen occupation without the full commitment.

Flexible and blended learning methods are both offered to both the employer and the beneficiary. This could include:

- Full work-based training with key skills training to be undertaken at College.
- Day – release
- Foundation Modern Apprenticeships & Advanced Modern Apprenticeships (these are level 2 and 3 qualifications respectively, with the added benefit of providing a package to the beneficiary and the employer ranging from additional qualifications and additional key skills not necessarily related to the vocation).

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- Distance Learning via CD-ROM with e-mail and telephone support combined with the trainer assessor visiting the beneficiary to check on progress.

Also available is the access to relevant websites and supporting CD ROMS and videos. The Learn Direct website has also proven useful as added support to learners.

The disadvantages to these delivery methods, particularly solely work based, is that beneficiaries do not benefit from mixing with other learners which can aid the swapping of good practice and the added value of learning in a group. Overall, the flexibility of learning offered and the ability of learners to contact tutors outside of delivery of the programme has assisted in the retention of learners as it enables them to have a degree of control should their own work or personal life change.

Through the project the beneficiaries were able to undertake a range of vocational qualifications:

QUALIFICATION	LEVELS
Business Administration	Levels 1-2
Catering	Levels 1-2
Hairdressing	Levels 1-2
Manufacturing	Levels 1-2
Call Handling	Levels 2
Engineering	Levels 2
Customer Service	Levels 2

Trainer/assessors are employed to visit the beneficiary in the work place at least once every two to three weeks. The purpose of the visit i.e. to check on progress or to undertake an assessment is documented on the action plan as well as the outcome of that particular visit. The points raised on the action plan are agreed between the trainer and the beneficiary with the aim that the beneficiary takes some ownership of the plan and their learning.

One problem we did have to overcome was the wage subsidy element. Some of the staff encountered problems in receiving evidence of the beneficiary wage being paid out by the company, which was a prerequisite for triggering off the wage subsidy. As a result some companies did complain about the delay in receiving the subsidy. This issue was never really resolved; however we did manage to pay out all the subsidies due.

A particular area of innovation which would not have happened had it not been for the project was the setting up of virtual call centre at one of the Colleges outreach centres. The aim was to increase the number of unemployed people training for entry to the service sector, addressing key skills, and preparing people for a pathway to develop the higher level, more diverse skills the sector requires. This facility which is a legacy of the project will enable residents of the CED wards and other Pendle residents to gain the necessary skills and qualifications for not only Call Centre specialist roles but also for a wide range of other occupational opportunities in Pendle and surrounding areas.

**Stage 6** was to evaluate the project to ensure the sustainability of the project. This process has been ongoing throughout the project with the culmination being this evaluation report. The next section looks at the added value and impact of the project detailing the tools used to measure this.

### **Added Value & Impact**

The aim of the Recruitment & Training bid was to add value that would result in additional beneficiaries than would normally be achieved and also an increase in beneficiary outcomes, especially with respect to disadvantaged people moving into jobs.

The following part of this evaluation report looks at the work undertaken by the project in terms of what added value was provided by the Recruitment & Training programme, and more importantly what the impact of this added value were.

One of the primary aims when we were putting the project bid together was to ensure that we added value to the work based learning provision that already occurred at the College.

Support from the European Social Fund Objective 3 programme has been crucial in enabling Nelson & Colne College to assist unemployed people into work. The Recruitment & Training project has enabled the College to:

- 1) Provide more one-to-one work and development activities including needs analysis work with employers and the development of individual learning programmes tailored to the needs of employers and individual beneficiaries.
- 2) Provide a wage subsidy to assist companies in taking on new employees and support workplace learning

- 3) Supporting additional activity to recruit and engage hard to reach learners and to assist them in overcoming any identified barriers to learning
- 4) To enable a range of flexible delivery options to be offered geared to the needs of the beneficiaries

The total project budget submitted in the bid was £95,417. The largest element of the added value was the wage subsidy to offer to companies. This had been identified by people on the ground as a major factor in persuading companies, especially very small companies in taking on and training a new employee. In addition to the wage subsidy an element of budget to cover any childcare costs which may have prevented a beneficiary taking up an employment opportunity was built into the project. Beneficiaries were also to benefit from additional resources such as training materials, the virtual call centre and the additional costs of stationery items etc.

So what impact did this grant money which covered the above resources make?

Firstly, in terms of beneficiary numbers the additional trainer/assessor mentioned previously accounted for the support and training of 9 people (8.5% of the total number of beneficiaries). It is safe to say that the support given to these people would not have taken place without the ESF support.

Finding evidence to support additional beneficiaries and outcomes through the College work-based learning route is more difficult. Looking at the statistics on participation on work-based learning and those people entering full time employment, however does give some indication of the impact.

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For the period August 2002 – January 2003 166 people had participated on work-based learning and 87.4% had entered full-time employment. During the 12 month period January 2003 – December 2003 participation levels were up to an average over the 12 months of 175 participants and approximately 95% had entered into full-time employment.

This seems to indicate a positive impact and is a good indication of the added value of running the ESF project. However, there are other features which have been of value. Ethnic minority participation on Work Based Learning was 9.6% in July 2002. For the period 1<sup>st</sup> August 2002 – 31<sup>st</sup> December 2003, through the project the ethnic participation increased to 20%; more comments on this are made later on.

To evaluate the impact on the beneficiaries, a survey was undertaken, the results of which can be viewed in **Appendix 3**; however salient points should be highlighted:

- 83.3% of respondents felt that the programme had improved their employment prospects.
- 94.4% of respondents felt they were on the right programme.
- 94.4% of respondents felt that their confidence had increased
- 100% thought that the programme had increased their knowledge & skills

There are areas that need addressing for the future:

- Only 33% knew that the programme was supported by the European Social Fund.

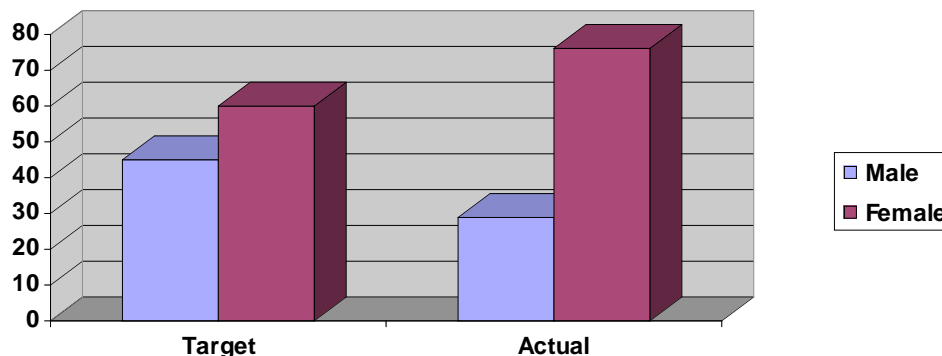
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- Not all beneficiaries were adequately informed about the College support services
- 44.4% of respondents have not been advised of further suitable programmes.

The following section looks at the achievements of the project both in terms of hard and soft outcomes. This is also a measure of the success of the added value elements described and the impact of the project.

**Project Outputs**

The Recruitment & Training project had a 100% success rate of attracting beneficiaries onto the project (actual 105 against a target of 105).



**Figure 1**

As can be seen in Figure 1 the mix of beneficiaries was slightly different than the target – female participation on the project was up by whilst the males were down. We originally anticipated that 57% of the beneficiaries would be female and 43% male. The actual figures were 72.3% and 27.7% respectively. Despite this we feel that the planning stage was a success as it was anticipated that we would attract 15 more females than males onto the project as many of the NVQ’s on offer are in traditionally female occupations such as hairdressing and call centre operations.

As the project was mainly designed to add value to the work based learning elements that the College provides it was not anticipated that we would hit many older unemployed people. This proved to be the case with 70.4% of beneficiaries through the project being aged less than 18 years old. However, we did manage to help adults with 20.95% of beneficiaries being aged between 18 – 24 years of age and 8.57%

being aged over 24 years old with the oldest being aged 49 years. In previous projects of this nature i.e.2001-02 despite the efforts of all staff recruiting to the project we were unable to attract any beneficiaries over 24 years old, therefore this demonstrates greater success in reaching older persons, many of whom are in danger of slipping into long – term unemployment.

The above observation is bolstered when we contrast the targets we laid down in the original bid to the actual number of long-term unemployed people we were we were able to help a greater number of longer term unemployed people as can be seen in figure 2.

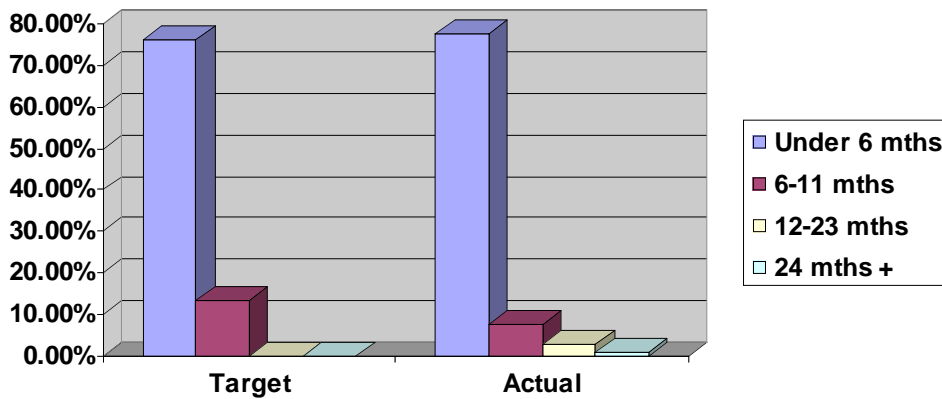


Figure 2

Between August 2002 and December 2003 12.38% of the beneficiaries assisted through the ESF project were unemployed longer than 6 months. Of those unemployed over 6 months, over 30% were unemployed over 12 months.

Therefore this demonstrated that the project was successful in assisting and placing into work people who had been at a particular disadvantage in the labour market;

indeed this is evidence that some of the beneficiaries we assisted were slipping into longer-term unemployment which is difficult to get out of. This also suggests that the approaches taken in recruiting to the programme and breaking down barriers with companies to place people into work, combined with the wage subsidy incentives were proper.

Ethnic minority participation on the project was 20% and this compares to the 2001 Census data states that 15.1% of the population of the Borough of Pendle are non-white. This also is a 7.5% increase compared to the 2001-02 project which had a quota of 12.5% of beneficiaries of ethnic minority background. Therefore at a glance it could be concluded that the project did over achieve on its quota of ethnic minorities. However, the Pendle region has pockets of deprivation namely in the wards of Waterside and Vivary Bridge, in Colne; Whitefield and Bradley, in Nelson; and Brierfield which have been designated as Community Economic Development Wards. Youth unemployment in these areas is a concern, especially in Whitefield, Brierfield and Bradley and over 20% of the population in the CED wards are from ethnic minority backgrounds.

Therefore, although we feel that the number of ethnic minority participants on the project is reasonable and has increased since 2001-02, this is still an area that requires substantial resource and continued partnership work with organisations such as EMPOWER. There are many documented reasons why in many cases the above target group are especially difficult to reach, however it is evident that the good work carried out via the Recruitment & Training project needs to be built on for the future.

As already documented the primary aim of the project was to get unemployed people into work. Figure 3 shows what happened to the beneficiaries when they finished on the project.

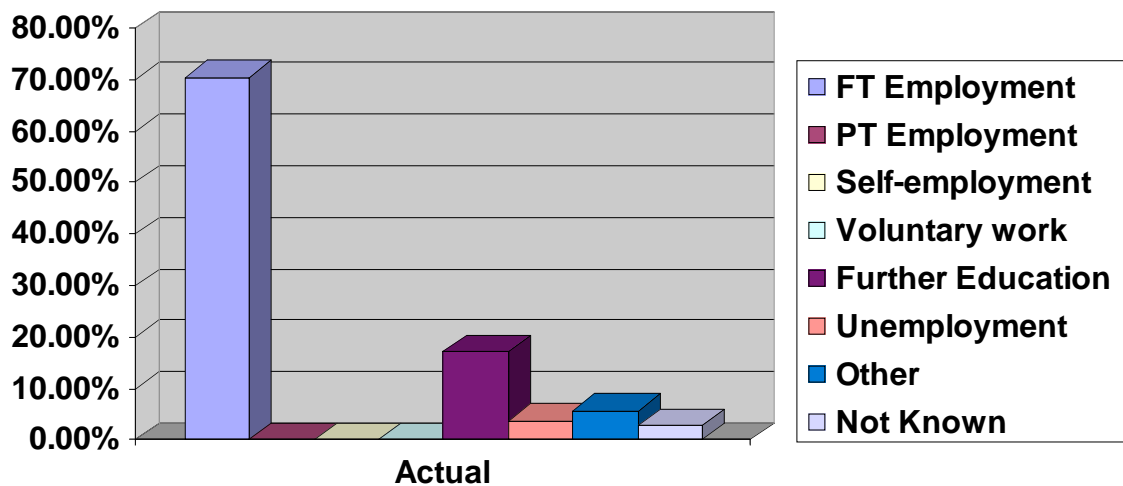


Figure 3

The project assisted 74 beneficiaries into full-time employment (only claimed 63 on the final claim due to difficulty in getting letters from employers) against a target of 90 in the original bid. On the face of it this would seem to be a significant reduction in outputs; however this has been offset by a greater number of people than anticipated continuing in further education and training. The total number of positive outputs (i.e. FT and PT employment; self-employment; voluntary work and further education or training) is 87.6% against a target of 90%. It is hoped that in the near future that the beneficiaries in further education and training will find full-time employment opportunities.

A particular strength of the project in comparison to previous years is that there was a big reduction in the number of people dropping out of the project early, hence the low percentage of people where destinations are unemployed or not known. The project ensured that all the beneficiaries had full access to the College support services and this obviously paid dividends, however from the beneficiary survey it is evident that the support needs to be communicated more effectively

Achievement of qualifications has been seen as a measure of the project success. The qualifications in question being delivered were NVQ's at various levels. Due to the nature of the qualifications in question it was always going to be difficult to get beneficiaries through the full qualification during the project lifespan. Figure 4 shows the percentage of beneficiaries completing full qualifications and those who only achieved units towards their qualification.

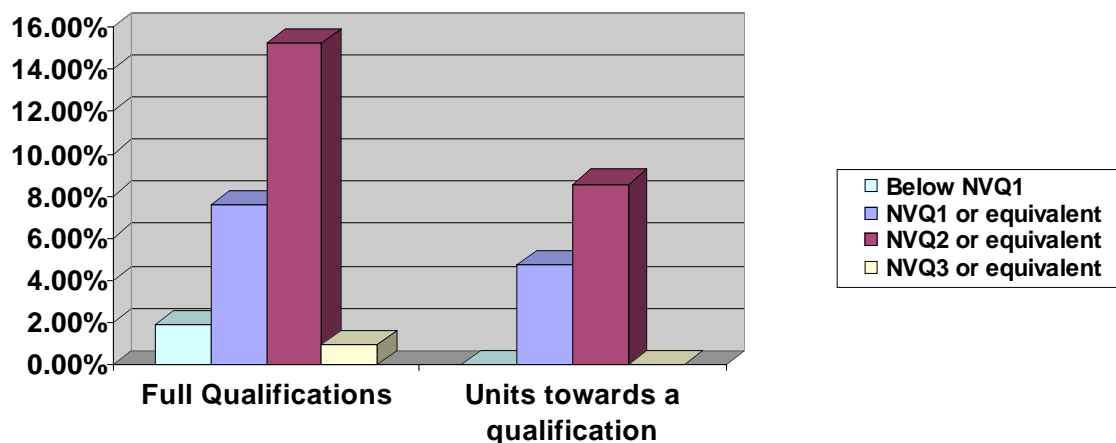


Figure 4

Out of the 105 beneficiaries benefiting from the project 41 achieved either a full qualification or units towards a qualification during the duration of the project. As can be seen above the majority of these qualifications were at level 2 for units towards and also for full qualifications. This is not an unexpected result as level 2 qualifications can take considerably longer to complete than those at a lower level. Taking into account the relatively low level of drop-outs it would be anticipated that the units towards qualifications would be transferred into full qualifications post December 2003. This result is extremely significant and will place the beneficiaries in a strong position to either sustain their employment or achieve employment status following their studies. All the beneficiaries will also have progression routes to higher qualifications, and as there is market evidence that employers' will expect higher level recruits in the future this is an extremely important aspect to mention.

As mentioned in the project context, the majority of the unemployed people in Pendle reside in the 7 wards that lie in the top 10% of deprived wards in the UK. Therefore it is of interest to see where the beneficiaries on the project actually resided.

As can be seen in figure 5 the wards of Southfield, Bradley and Vivary Bridge accounted for the highest percentage of the beneficiaries from Pendle on the project. A total of 36 beneficiaries resided in the 7 most deprived wards in Pendle which accounts for 34.2% of the overall total. Discounting the beneficiaries residing outside of the Pendle Borough the percentage rises to 52.1%.

Based on the above figures we would have expected a greater percentage of the beneficiaries to come from the 7 most deprived wards. The range of the project has

been more than anticipated in terms of coverage and indeed 34% of the beneficiaries reside outside Pendle, however the majority of these reside in the deprived wards of the Burnley borough and this should be seen as a positive outcome. There is a positive correlation between the population of deprived wards and the population levels of ethnic minority people in the Borough. As stated earlier this is evidence to suggest that further work needs to be carried out to reach these people.

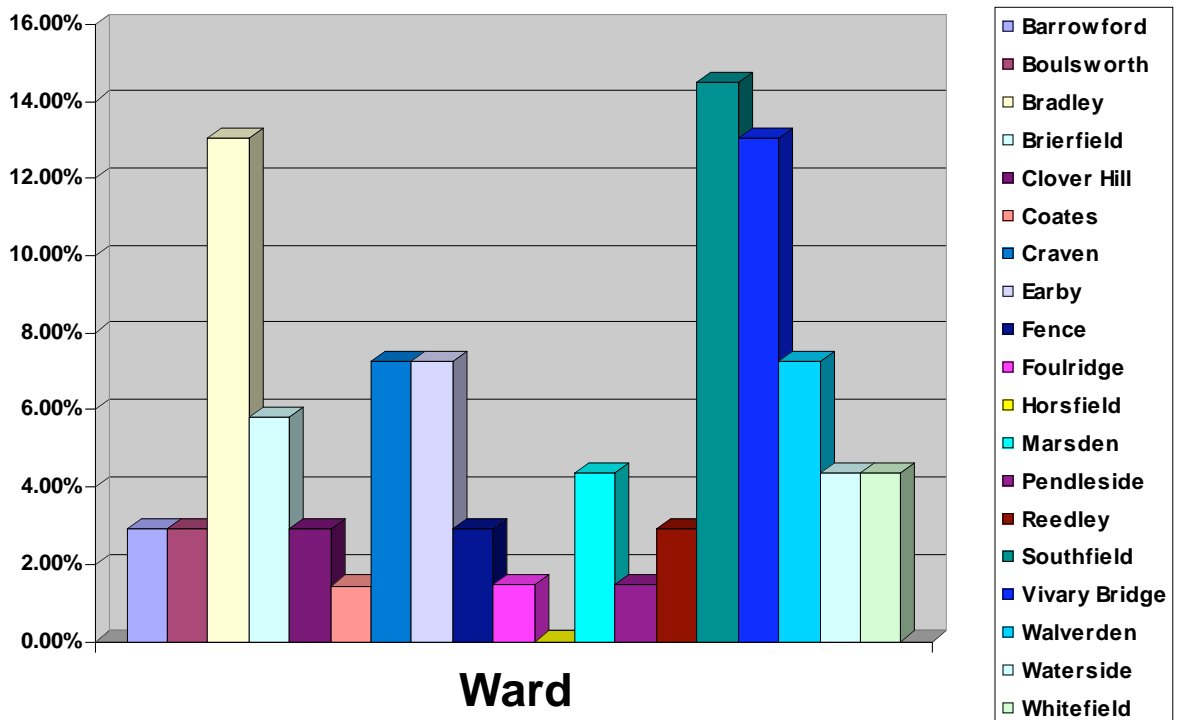


Figure 5

The wards of Boulsworth, Coates, Craven, Earby, Foulridge and Pendleside are classed as rural areas. These areas suffer from negative aspects of constrained or no access to many of the basic components of modern living, including employment and education and training. *“Sustainability of rural communities can only be achieved when more people can live and work in the immediate area. This not only generates*

*dynamism and vitality in the local communities it ensures that there is sufficient and sustainable demand for local services and amenities”.* **East Lancashire Partnership – Enterprising Rural Communities Report, 1999.**

A total of 15 beneficiaries (21.7% of the Pendle beneficiaries) reside in the rural areas, therefore it could be argued that the project benefited a greater area than anticipated and therefore helped alleviate a larger range of disadvantage.

To conclude, the project performed against outputs, outcomes and key milestones as follows:

<u>Output/Outcome/Milestone</u>	<u>Target</u>	<u>Actual</u>	<u>Variance</u>
OP1 – No. of beneficiaries assisted	105	105	0%
OP2 – No. of female beneficiaries assisted	62	76	+23%
OP3 – Total no. of beneficiaries receiving training	105	105	0%
OP4 – No. of female beneficiaries receiving training	62	76	+23%
OP5 – No. of beneficiaries working towards a qualification	105	105	0%
OP6 – No. of young people assisted who are less than 6 months unemployed	80	86	+8%
OP7 – No. of adults assisted who are less than 12 months unemployed	14	28	+100%
OC3 – No. in work on leaving	90	63	-30%
OC5 – No. of unemployed in work after ESF support	90	63	-30%
MS1 – Establish Project Management group and prepare detailed project Implementation Plan	1	1	0%
MS2 – Appoint project team	1	1	0%
MS3 – Recruitment of companies and individual learners	1	1	0%
MS4 – Development of Individual Learning Plans	1	1	0%
MS5 – Delivery of programme	1	1	0%
MS6 – Evaluation	1	1	0%

As well as the hard outcomes mentioned above, the project has also looked at trying to monitor the “*soft outcomes*” to provide a truer, more rounded picture of its success or otherwise. Soft outcomes are outcomes from training, support or guidance interventions which cannot be measured directly or tangibly. In the context of this particular project it is important aspect as the soft outcomes “*can be used as a tool for measuring distance travelled towards labour market participation*” **Guide to Measuring Soft Outcomes and Distance Travelled – The Institute for Employment Studies.**

The soft outcomes we attempted to measure were as follows:

- Increase in knowledge, skills and attitudes
- Confidence levels and self esteem
- Dealing with the technology surrounding lives
- Improved communication skills
- Influencing and becoming decision makers

The main means for collecting this data was through the beneficiary review process where this information was actively sought by a variety of forms. The baseline position for measuring distance travelled was by looking at results of the beneficiary initial review and results of the Gensys and basic key skills tests and the initial interview.

The following case studies give an indication of the progress made by beneficiaries on the project. Many beneficiaries continued to keep training after the project ended and it has been useful to use some up-to-date comments to compare with those when they

first started training. The names of the individuals have not been revealed to protect confidentiality:

- 1) Beneficiary A had left school and progressed but subsequently dropped out of FE and had gained some work experience as a waiter until July 2002 before becoming unemployed. The ESF Recruitment & Training project helped him pursue a career aim of becoming a Chartered Accountant as the wage subsidy offered through the project enabled a local accountancy company to take him on. Despite a slow start the support of the College and the employer paid dividends:

Beneficiary A – *“I’ve caught up on two of the units, and completed a further two” – 14<sup>th</sup> May 2003*

Beneficiary A – *“Everything seems to be going well, I continue to enjoy my work and feel as though I am a developed member of the team” – 11<sup>th</sup> Sept 2003*

Beneficiary A – *“I continue to enjoy my job, I’m always learning new things” – 17<sup>th</sup> Dec 2003*

Employer comments on Beneficiary A – *“He is hard working and has a great attitude to his job. He is a pleasure to work with and train” – 14<sup>th</sup> May 2003; “A is confident, friendly and very hardworking...his progress is excellent. Well done!” – 11<sup>th</sup> Sept 2003; “A is progressing very well and is an excellent*

*team member” – 24<sup>th</sup> Oct 2003; “A continues to progress quickly and should continue with further exams following AAT” – 17<sup>th</sup> Dec 2003*

The conclusion to this case is that the beneficiary gained a full-time permanent position with the accountancy firm and passed a foundation accounting qualification. He has now progressed onto an intermediate accountancy qualification and an Advanced Modern Apprenticeship.

- 2) Beneficiary B prior to the project start date had gained a job at Pendle Borough Council. However, due to a combination of poor attendance and attitude this person was sacked and became unemployed. Through the project the beneficiary was offered job search assistance and the wage subsidy enabled a local company to offer her a placement. Unfortunately, the early days revealed a continued trend of poor attendance both at work and College.

This is a good example of the advantage of having strong partnership arrangements and by combining initiatives to maximise the benefit to the individual. Pendle Partnership has funded the College through SRB monies to employ motivational support workers. A member of this team was deployed to work with beneficiary B at a crucial period as the employer was in the process of considering whether or not to take her on permanently. Fortunately, this extra support proved decisive with the beneficiary’s attitude becoming more positive and this resulted in the company taking her on permanently from February 2003.

However, it wasn't all plain sailing with the beneficiary suffering from continued personal problems. The motivational support worker was able to continually work with her and when signs of depression were showing the College was able to refer her to specialist support workers.

Beneficiary B – *“I have improved a lot in my attendance” – 17<sup>th</sup> April 2003.*

Beneficiary B – *“I have finished all my assignments...I am also doing a lot more jobs in my workplace” - 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2003.*

Employer comments on Beneficiary B – *“At this stage making adequate progress” – 29<sup>th</sup> Oct 2002; “we have set targets for B to improve in certain areas” – 20<sup>th</sup> Dec 2002; “B is progressing well in all areas” – 11<sup>th</sup> Feb 2003; “B’s confidence is building all the time. B is getting more involved in daily activities” – 17<sup>th</sup> April 2003; “B continues to make progress and we are now introducing her to different areas of the business. As B meets and works with new key personnel we expect her confidence to grow” – 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2003.*

The conclusion to the case is that the beneficiary has overcome many of the problems she has faced and has achieved units towards an NVQ. The last employers evaluation gave her good to excellent marks for attendance and attitude and this is also evidenced through the final remarks made – *“B continues to make progress...and is contributing to the daily running of the Production Department.”*

- 3) Beneficiary C is a single parent who resides in one of the most deprived wards in Pendle. She had already obtained a level 2 qualification but has failed to hold down a full-time job, however she was still trying her best to support herself rather than relying on state benefits.

Although the Recruitment & Training project was written around the delivery of basic qualifications up to a maximum of level 2 standards the beneficiary faced multiple disadvantages and we felt that the ESF support that we could offer a company to enable her to enter and continue in full-time employment would be of enormous benefit to this person. Fortunately, after asking for a ruling from the Lancashire Learning & Skills Council it was agreed that the individual was eligible for support.

As a result, we were able to offer support to assist with the cost of childcare and the offer of the wage subsidy enabled a small company to take her on as an Office/Accounts administrator. The ESF project has assisted her in undertaking an NVQ level 3 - AAT Intermediate qualification.

Employer comments on Beneficiary C – *“C shows a lot of enthusiasm for her job...her telephone manner is excellent” – 26<sup>th</sup> June 2003; “Over the past few weeks C has devised and implemented new systems to improve the filing and accounting monitoring...well done!”*

- 4) Beneficiary D was an older beneficiary who had been unemployed for over 2 months and had career ambitions to become a teacher / trainer assessor in

hairdressing. The wage subsidy offered through the ESF project was a critical factor in her being taken on at a local salon as the company had been reluctant due to the increased minimum wage level they would have to pay for an older person.

Employer comments on Beneficiary D – *“D is an excellent worker, does the work of two camels and a donkey and is a pleasure to have”* – 27<sup>th</sup> Nov 2002; *“D is working really hard and has a lot of confidence in what she does”* – 4<sup>th</sup> Feb 2003.

Throughout the review process the employer evaluated beneficiary D as having excellent attendance and timekeeping; confidence and motivation and attitude. The beneficiary has passed her NVQ level 1 & 2 in hairdressing as well as key skills application of number. Unfortunately, the beneficiary has been signed off on long-term sick leave but we are hopeful that the experience and qualifications should stand her in good stead for the future.

The above comments have not only been made by the beneficiary; these have been backed up by statements from employers and tutors and therefore should reflect an unbiased view on progress. Although the above is only a sample of the total number of beneficiaries on the project it does highlight some interesting points.

Firstly, a large number of the comments refer to confidence levels and the general trend is that as the beneficiary becomes more integrated within the company and learns more skills the more confident they become.

From more of an employer's point of view the comments reflect the fact that the majority of the companies are small and require the new employee to be motivated, listen and act on instruction, have the correct attitude and be quickly able to take on extra responsibilities. Many companies such as highlighted above do not have the time or money to waste on somebody they feel after a certain period do not come up to scratch.

Fortunately, the majority of comments from the employers are positive. This is extremely important to the sustainability aspect of the work carried out by the project. It is hoped that the more companies that benefit from taking on new staff and investing in training; the more likely it is that they will consider further expansion or longer term efficiency projects to improve their competitiveness and the overall prosperity of East Lancashire.

A further study has been undertaken by Nelson & Colne College into the impact of the project on local employers. The results and questionnaires are shown in **Appendix 4**, however salient points are:

- 100% of companies felt that the project was useful
- 57% of respondents stated that they would not have engaged the trainee without the ESF support
- 71% stated that they would continue to employ the beneficiaries
- 93% are interested in taking part in a similar project.

## ESF Objective 3 Co-financed Recruitment & Training 02-03 Evaluation Report

This survey highlights one critical point in the success of the project, namely the wage subsidy, which was offered through the project at 30% of the beneficiary weekly salary up to a maximum of £45 per week for 24 weeks. Project workers as well as companies have expressed how important this feature has been in taking on a beneficiary and offering them employment opportunities. The project co-ordinator recognises this as being a determining factor in the increase of participants on work based learning entering employment increasing from 87.4% to 95%.

## Summary

There is no doubt that Nelson & Colne College have introduced new learners into the training environment who would not necessarily have received this opportunity had it not been for the ESF support.

Nelson and Colne College has a reputation for quality. The excellence of the services has been recognised with national awards, including Investors in People, Charter Mark and a Beacon Award. The staff are caring and dedicated to ensuring that everyone gets the best possible educational experience. Nelson and Colne College offers all its learners:

- Equality of Opportunity - we do our best to promote this vigorously in all our work. This has been carried forward through the project by:
  - targeted recruitment at unemployed people (105 in total)
  - recruiting older people facing particular disadvantage
  - supporting childcare provision
  - recruiting 20% from ethnic minorities
  - designing learning flexible to the individual needs of beneficiaries and companies
- Learning Support: offering extra support for learning: help with study/key skills; language support. The project has made extensive use of additional learning support and where possible maximising benefits by drawing on support from partners i.e. motivational support workers as highlighted in one of the case studies.
- Support for learners with disabilities or learning difficulties

## ESF Objective 3 Co-financed Recruitment & Training 02-03 Evaluation Report

- Learning Resource Centres - all learners of Nelson & Colne College can use the Learning Resource Centres at Reedyford and Barrowford Road for access to information technology, reprographics, binding etc, as well as all the facilities associated with a traditional library
- Complaints Procedure: learners are able to raise a concern about any aspect of College, or if necessary make a complaint at which point they will be advised of the set procedure
- Advice and Guidance: should learners wish to discuss careers or have problems which may benefit from support we have Learner Services based at the Reedyford Site.

Nelson & Colne College are now in a stronger position with regards to links with employers in the area. Through opening lines of communication and showing organisations that the College is responsive to their needs has paid dividends and is seen as crucial in sustaining its efforts to place unemployed people into work. Client management is going to be crucial to ensuring that companies that have benefited continue to see the importance of training and where possible taking on new recruits. A good example of how we have progressed is that two employers who took on unemployed people and allowed them to be trained through the project, were in fact, in the past, in the position of the beneficiaries on the project i.e. unemployed and looking for an opportunity to prove themselves. Maybe the beneficiaries of today will go on to set up their own companies and take on trainees in the future?

The area that requires additional funding is the outreach work that was undertaken. The recruitment officer and business liaison officer were crucial in engaging beneficiaries and the companies with which they could be given work placements. As highlighted the work required to engage and place individuals is time-consuming and requires dedicated staff members. Client management is essential if the work of this project is to be sustained and for companies in particular to have one contact person is of paramount importance if future needs are to be satisfied.

Targeting disadvantaged groups and recognising the needs of everyone has shown the importance of preventing social and economic exclusion and will help towards building sustainable communities. By developing new skills/skills for growth areas such as call handling and customer services the project will help maintain high and steady levels of economic growth and employment in communities otherwise facing the loss of traditional jobs. As mentioned previously, the project has helped the College set up a virtual call centre environment so that unemployed people and people requiring retraining can gain the skills necessary to work in a variety of occupations. This is a legacy of the project and can now be sustained through core funding and is one example of how ICT can be used to engage learners.

Many of the beneficiaries as part of their NVQ qualification have undertaken the option of IT key skills. Distance Learning via CD-ROM was also used, for example beneficiaries undertaking the NVQ Customer Care qualification were provided with specialist software to enhance their learning experience. Where required we were also able to loan out laptop computers. E-mail as well as telephone support was offered and combined with the trainer assessor visiting the beneficiary to ensure ongoing



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# **APPENDICES**

