



## EVALUATION REPORT



**PROJECT TITLE: Learning at Work**

**PROJECT REF NO: ESF/0203/217**

**LEAD ORGANISATION: Burnley College**

### Overview of the Project Activity and Partners

The aim of this project was to promote skills acquisitions by the local workforce as a prime factor in addressing the government's competitiveness agenda and local economic/social regeneration. The project enabled employers to provide accessible learning opportunities for their people to upgrade their existing skills and acquire new ones in the fields of ICT and supervisory skills/management.

The project targeted employees with low skill levels and those from disadvantaged groups and communities and aimed to widen participation in lifelong learning and ensure that emergent skill needs of employers especially in the fields of ICT and management are met. The project facilitated access to flexible learning opportunities, many of them work-based, delivered and supported by ICT.

Partners were: Northern Technologies and Training Solutions (Burnley) Ltd.

### Achievements of the Project

Programmes run:

- BCS European Computer Driving Licence
- CIEH Professional Trainer Certificate
- CLAIT
- OCR New CLAIT
- Single CLAIT Modules
- Team Leader Training

In total 150 people benefited from the programme with 134 working towards qualifications (70 women). All as proposed within the original bid.

### Areas of Innovation

The project supported the establishment of two workplace learning centres incorporating ICTs servicing companies on two new business parks in Burnley.

Learning opportunities were made available in the workplace and ICT was used to enable both the delivery and support of learning. Such workplace learning minimised opportunity costs for SME employees and employers and allowed learning to be matched to business needs.

The project built on successful pilot work undertaken in two major ADAPT ESF initiatives which finished in 2000 responsible for delivering new client led training opportunities using e-learning.

### Identification of Areas of Good Practice and Areas for Improvement

#### Good Practice

The College BDU works very closely with Trade Union Unit and the Union Learning Rep network. Via this project links have been strengthened as the focus has been on the sharing of training and learning solutions to meet client and company need. Links with most of the major companies in Burnley have been advanced

through the marketing of the project where the BDU has attended a Burnley Business Support Network comprising of various business support agencies.

The project has enabled BDU staff to increase in their understanding of the customer base and produce delivery mechanisms flexibly and proactively in response to client demand and immediacy of need e.g. CLAIT courses delivered in a single week to meet employer demand and beneficiary need.

### **Areas for Improvement**

Additional learning centres, if established, would bring new learners into the College and FE system. Existing centres will need to be maintained. Mainstreaming these centres will require additional funding and employer contributions are to be sought.

With Colleges measured primarily against 16-19 yr old targets, commercial/employer engagement is seen as a low priority in funding terms. To sustain these activities continued ESF interventions or other government initiatives will be needed. It is planned to invite the LSC in to see how Burnley College, our employers, and SME beneficiaries benefited from this project and to attempt to clarify what we understand to be 'Employer Engagement' as it is one of the main targets for the LSC nationally and regionally.

Some employers still see colleges still as academic institutions and while this project helped reduce that perception there is still a need to challenge and change these perceptions through more dissemination work, newspaper case studies, press promotions and targeted marketing.

### **Lessons Learnt**

The SME employers, and the constraints on time in SME businesses continues to make it difficult for staff to be released for training.

There is a collective need to think innovatively about marketing and the types of courses and training provision, as well as the times for tutoring and facilitation e.g. tutors could use spare time at the end of a programme to demonstrate what comes on future courses.

Unsupported e-learning is not the answer. There is still a need for many learners, especially those with current lower levels of qualification to have facilitated and even instructional support in their learning. Programmes need to contain a mix of supported and flexible self-study using and promoting the broadest range of media options including workbooks, the web and e-learning programmes with on-line tutor access and 'live' facilitation and lecturing.

Learning makes a difference, although we new that already. Staff in the Learning Centres all agreed this had been a fantastic opportunity for them to get new skills. It is now up to the College and partners to communicate this to other SMEs in the local area.

### **Dissemination of Good Practice including Details of Dissemination Materials Produced**

The College participated in the submission of a bid for a Beacon Award on the back of much of the work developed for and through this project. Active links with the TU and other agencies supported its submission and it became a national runner up in November 2003. A copy is attached.

The College participates in many forums locally and regionally including the Social Inclusion and Employment Network, East Lancashire Learning Partnership, the Workforce Development Sub-group and the Lancashire College Consortium. Anecdotal and experiential evidence of best practice is communicated informally via these groups and with other learning providers, most notably for this project Northern Technologies.

During the life of the project the College networked with local businesses, worked with the local employer networks and the Council and canvassed other SMEs to consider establishing similar ventures.

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

Press communications and marketing materials, together with communications to clients have been produced.

## Case study

One of the main employers with this programme were Weston's of Colne who had a number of supervisory staff on programmes. Two cohorts were run (to coincide with shift patterns) and the delegates gained a great deal from the programme.

Further details of this case study can be given upon request from focus group study undertaken in November 2003.

## Views of customers and/or partners

- "Fantastic", "All at different levels – everyone helped", "Work at own pace", "Look forward to coming", "Not frightened of course" – CLAIT
- "Tutor has the patience of a Saint", "She must have ten pairs of ears" – CLAIT
- "Don't feel stupid even when it is an obvious mistake" - CLAIT
- "Couldn't afford to do course otherwise was going to Learndirect" – CLAIT
- "Husband wants to come on course rather than learndirect" – CLAIT
- "The day kept being changed -Frustrating being messed about – especially when having to plan time of work-as I work full-time" - CLAIT
- "In comparison to the Foundation degree, the ESF programme was much better run. Especially in terms of meals, breaks etc." – CIEH Professional Trainer Certificate
- "Learning where wasting time", "sharing of experiences not usually done"- Team Leader
- "Tutor – lots of effort in", "All information in notes", "You can tell it is accredited – it is structured and is a recognised qualification" – Team Leader
- "What next after introductory certificate", "has to be more than just an introduction and then stops" – Team Leader
- "Company making Team Leader's do it in own time", "No say in whether attending or not" – Team Leader
- "Sessions slightly longer than need to be", "lots of sit and discuss – dragged out too long" – Team Leader
- "Pitched at right level" – Team Leader

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

The use of College and partner facilities ensured that ICT expectations as outlined in the proposal were met.

The project was open to all members of the community and steps were taken to ensure that no one was unfairly excluded. The College operates and monitors an Equal Opportunity policy.

Sustainability, in environmental terms was addressed through the use of ICTs on site to facilitate learning resulting in such benefits as less travel, so less pollution from transport vehicles. ICTs used low energy monitors and the infrastructure was set up within existing premises.

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

Sustainability economically, in the short term is possible through continued mainstreaming of SME clients that have participated on the project. However, to maintain the centres long term and to set up other similar learning centres in other businesses requires additional investment that may only be impossible through SME donation and investment or additional grant funding.

## Details of tools used to evaluate the impact of the project

The tools used have included:

- Beneficiary questionnaire survey
- College student perception surveys
- Regular monitoring of enrolment and completions
- Project review meetings
- Focus groups with students and staff (lowly attended)
- Staff interviews
- Partner reviews
- Gap analysis framework
- The Excellence model for process and performance management

--

Additional Information

N/A
-----

SIGNATURE:

DATE