

PROJECT TITLE: Childcare Entrepreneur Development

PROJECT REF NO: ESF/0203/237

LEAD ORGANISATION: New Era Enterprises Ltd

Overview of the Project Activity and Partners

The project helped people entering self-employment by breaking down barriers through the provision of advice, guidance, mentors, business and practical support. It supported 17 new self-employed registered childminders, providing 79 new childcare places.

The project increased the sustainability and growth potential of SME's in the childcare sector (self-employed registered childminders, out of school clubs, Pre-schools and playgroups) by supporting entrepreneurial learning, providing business development skills, providing advice, support and guidance, mentoring, and networking opportunities.

The project provided information and support to employers to increase competitiveness particularly by addressing workforce flexibility/ employee childcare issues.

The following partners are all involved with childcare development within Lancashire.

Project Partner: National Childminding Association.

As in the original bid NCMA identified and referred to the project people who would like to become self-employed childminders. They also sign posted to the project childminders in East Lancashire who would like to develop their business opportunities by becoming better qualified.

Project Partner: Lancashire Children First (Early Years Development Childcare Partnership)

As in the original bid Children First identified childminders in need of additional support that was provided through this project; they provided a briefing seminar and the pre-registration training which comprises of 6 compulsory sessions required as part of the registration process.

Project Partner: Out of School Childcare Association in Lancashire (OSCA)

OCSA's role as in the original bid differed slightly. In practice there was a greater emphasis on training up individuals working within out of school club settings, rather than the provider taking advantage of the business development training that was offered through this project.

Achievements of the Project

1. Objectives - Within the original bid the project achievements were to:-

- ◆ recruit 10 new self-employed registered childminders:
- ◆ assist 8 adults and 2 young people to obtain a relevant qualification:
- ◆ offer support to 4 SME's to enable them to develop strategies to overcome employee childcare difficulties:
- ◆ improve the competitiveness of 6 small to medium childcare enterprises by providing tailored training/ support:
- ◆ hold two networking/information/training events promoting the aims of the project.

The Project actually:-

- ◆ recruited 17 new self-employed registered childminders; these people meet one or more of the target groups, these being recently redundant or threatened with redundancy, recently unemployed, and low skilled people:
- ◆ assisted 13 adults to enrol onto the NVQ Level 3 Early Years Care and Education; this was achieved by working closely with local colleges, Sure Starts and the partners:
- ◆ assisted 12 adults to obtain a recognised qualification in paediatric first aid; this was facilitated

through Children First and co-ordinated by this project:

- ◆ supported 11 SME's by providing current legislation outlining the minimum requirements of employers and further information on how to introduce family friendly policies; this will help them develop strategies to overcome employee childcare difficulties:
- ◆ supported 29 small childcare enterprises by running three 12 hour courses specifically designed to enhance the knowledge and understanding of the business side of childminding.
- ◆ Held two networking/information/training events promoting the aims of the project. The project invited a wide range of professionals related to childcare who were also able to benefit from the networking opportunity of these events. A third event was also held in December, which was for childminders to network together – see publicity section.

2. The project delivered the following objectives (as stated in the bid) by, :-

A Recruiting and supporting self-employed childminders by providing advice, training, mentoring and networking, tailored business development training.

B Supporting other childcare SME's to increase their sustainability, competitiveness and growth potential through the provision of advice, support, tailored business development training, mentoring and networking.

C Helping businesses to develop and implement strategies to overcome employee childcare difficulties, by informing businesses of Family Friendly policies and practices, and current relevant legislation

These activities were formerly delivered in a discreet area of Burnley, using the systems and experience already gained, an implementation plan was developed to cover the other areas, and was used by the partners to implement and deliver the project, as detailed in the performance of the milestones below.

MILESTONE	TARGET	ACTUAL
Advertising of posts	December 2002	Jan 2003
Recruitment of Staff	Jan/Feb 2003	Jan & April 2003
First Event to encourage people to take up business support and become Self -Employed	March 2003	27 th March 2003
20 people getting self employment help	March 2003	March 2003
2 companies receiving help	March 2003	March 2003
30 women receiving support	March 2003	March 2003
Training as identified by beneficiaries	April 2003	February 2003
Second Event to build on previous event and to be held in a different location	June 2003	17 th June 2003
Training as identified by beneficiaries	June 2003	1 st May 2003
A further 40 women receiving support	June 2003	June/July 2003
A further 30 people getting self employment help	June 2003	July /August 2003
2 companies receiving help	July 2003	May 2003
Training as identified by beneficiaries	October 2003	November 2003
A further 30 people getting self employment help	September 2003	September 2003
A further 40 women receiving support	September 2003	September 2003
A further 20 women receiving support	December 2003	December 2003
4 companies receiving help	December 2003	December 2003
A further 20 people getting self employment help	December 2003	December 2003

Areas of Innovation

This project was innovative in the following ways:-

- ◆ The design of a multicultural resource pack, which was introduced to childminders at different stages of the registration process. This was to enable the childminder to have better understanding of what was required of them with regard to Standard 9 of the Ofsted National Standards. This was originally highlighted by one of the partners as an area that childminders had lack of knowledge in and were unable to source suitable materials. The materials and information supplied by the project increased the childminders' confidence when being inspected by Ofsted.
- ◆ The project invited Ofsted to attend the training and information days. Ofsted rarely have the opportunity to attend such events where people interested and working in the childcare sector can share information and concerns. On both occasions Ofsted representatives said, "This has been a valuable use of our time". A good working relationship was formed and the opportunity was taken to show Ofsted the multicultural pack offered to childminders. They confirmed that the resources pack given to childminders was a good starting point for the dissemination of good practice.
- ◆ During the course of the project various training needs of childcare providers were identified. Due to the way training is delivered training providers need a minimum of 10 people to attend and in some Qualifications as many as 30. In order to help facilitate this we co-ordinated our efforts with Sure Start projects, colleges and one of the partners that had also identified similar training needs.
- ◆ The Business Skills training devised by New Era is tailor made to the self-employed business of a childminder. This has been very successful, as no other comprehensive business training is available. The short time scale of the project meant that we were unable to meet the demand across the whole area.
- ◆ The project developed a reference guide for employers to help them consider strategies to overcome employee childcare difficulties. The guide informed businesses of Family Friendly policies and practices, and current relevant legislation. One Sure Start recipient was so enthused by the guide that she decided to make this subject the basis for her business masters dissertation, as she recognises this issue is not given much consideration at present by employers.

Identification of Areas of Good Practice and Areas for Improvement

- ◆ Sharing information with organisations not originally identified in the bid.
- ◆ Informing partners of problems identified by users of their services e.g. bringing to the attention of one of the partners a specific problem. An equality of opportunity issue had arisen whereby the information provided about childminders was not detailed enough. This was considered to be an unfair playing field compared to other childcare providers.
- ◆ Informing the National Childminding Association of issues that childminders locally identify as being of a concern to them. This supports the NCMA to act nationally on behalf of childminders.
- ◆ Developing channels of communication with Ofsted at all levels in order to ensure problems encountered by beneficiaries with regard to the bureaucratic systems could be resolved through intervention by the project.

- ◆ Ensuring, through consistent and mutually beneficial working partnerships that the information passed to childminders in the newsletters, and in all other communications, was accurate, up-to-date, and relevant.
- ◆ Challenging childminders and those going through registration if their attitudes or practice are inconsistent with Ofsted's national standards. The welfare of children being child-minded is paramount.
- ◆ Publicising and supporting the Childminder Support Groups running throughout Pendle, Burnley and Rossendale. Also the Childminders' Toy Library and Equipment Loan provision, both run voluntarily by childminders.

Lessons Learnt

Training can be facilitated if an organisation takes the lead by co-ordinating and identifying people that require training. Working closely with training providers and having a good understanding of their funding and working practices ensures that individual needs are met.

Evaluations from events/training provide invaluable insight as to how to improve the delivery of future events/training.

Training was undertaken by the project manager in Implementation planning, and was used to good effect in the planning of the project – with the activity of the project following the plan.

Administrative lessons learnt

Good client records on a database have always been kept by the Childminder Support Project on an Access database. This project introduced an "evidence" folder with all original documentation of activity – courses, events, signing-in sheets, photographic records, publicity, press-cuttings etc – this has given a very good visual record of the project in one large folder. (The 2004 LLSC programme seems to be following this example).

The project administration has learnt a lot about the inputting of the outputs onto the LLSC database, though this aspect of the project had not been made clear at the outset. The project team and administrative support staff have coped with the difficulties this inputting has posed, with the volume of the traffic on the on-line database making inputting difficult. This aspect of the project has proved very frustrating for staff, using a lot of valuable staff time, and the solution not being in our hands.

Dissemination of Good Practice including Details of Dissemination Materials Produced

For copies of original leaflets, newsletters etc see Appendix 1 and 2

The whole ethos of the project is to support the development of childcare provision, and to improve the quality of that provision, so that everything the project has done in the broad sense has been around the "dissemination of Good Practice". This has ranged from actually running courses specifically designed to pass on particular knowledge, to being at the end of the phone on a daily basis to respond to queries of beneficiaries, giving them the benefit of the projects' skilled and experienced staff support.

The particular ways in which the project has disseminated good practice:-

Newsletters - these were produced regularly and passed on a wide variety of information to childcare providers – eg training opportunities, networking events, Ofsted updates, relevant local, regional, and national Association news – eg NCMA, Lancashire Children's Information Service, alongside contact information for the project to give support when needed by the childcare providers. In the evaluation questionnaire the childcare providers responded that the newsletters were excellent in terms of "interesting to read" and "informative and useful"

Networking events

There were 2 major networking events during the year 2003 organised by the project for childcare providers, or potential childcare providers. These events provided information about the work of the project and also brought in relevant agencies to give expert advice – Ofsted, the Inland Revenue, NCMA, Children First Resource Centre, and encouraged childcare providers to take up further training offered. As well as these 2 events the project workers have attended events organised by other relevant organisations to pass on information and good practice. These events have included – partner-organised events - Surestart information days, the Childcare seminar at Daneshouse Community Centre, New Era Enterprise's-organised "Family Support Services" conference, amongst others. Appropriate material is used to suit the community event and audience to which the event is targeted.

The project was part of a "Childcare Seminar" at Daneshouse Community Centre, which brought together agencies involved in childcare support in the area.

Training and Courses

NVQ 3 - The project encourages the take-up of training by childcare providers, taking advantage of relevant local college training where it exists, and working with the colleges to provide courses where the project has identified a need by childcare providers. In Rossendale two NVQ 3 in Early Years Care and Education courses have begun in the community rather than in college because of the direct work of the project in encouraging Rossendale Childminders to start the NVQ 3. Support funding from Children First for beneficiaries was obtained. In Burnley Childminders also enrolled on to the NVQ Level 3 Early Years Care and Education at Burnley College, 50% of beneficiary costs being funded by the project.

First Aid - A First Aid Course was organised and 50% of beneficiary costs were funded by the project. There were 12 beneficiaries on the course.

Business Skills - Project staff have also developed Business skills training specifically for Childcare providers. This course has developed into a 5 week course of 2.5 hour sessions, and includes:-

- ◆ SWOT analysis for childcare providers
- ◆ Identifying publicity opportunities, and formulating a marketing and advertising strategy
- ◆ Dealing with a new enquiry for a placement
- ◆ Identifying skills and qualities required for childminders
- ◆ Child record-keeping
- ◆ The benefits of a good Contract
- ◆ Health and Safety, H&S record-keeping, report book, accident book, medicine, treatment book
- ◆ Finances, book-keeping, income and expenditure accounting, record-keeping
- ◆ Dealing with Inland Revenue, and Tax Returns
- ◆ Planning and Time Management

Three 5-week session courses were run in 2003 benefiting 29 childminders

Evaluation forms received from the course scored the course as "very good" in terms of the course content, relevance to need, course notes, level of pace, and competence of the tutor – "I felt I learnt a lot"....."I found it very useful"....."was very knowledgeable on all aspects of the course"...."the course was exceptional"were some of the comments made on the evaluation forms. It is felt that this course does very definitely disseminate good practice in the profession.

Advice and Resource Evening – For newly – registering childminders – to offer advice and support, free first aid kit, information on training, Ofsted registration process, and networking. These evenings have been held on a regular basis.

Visual display Material

The project has a resource of display-board material, which it uses to promote and advertise the work of the project, and best practice for the childcaring profession. These have been used at a variety of events during the course of the project – as mentioned above.

Multicultural resources

In response to a need from childcare providers that their duty under Ofsted Registration to provide multicultural resources was being difficult for them to fulfil because of a lack of easily available resources the project resourced materials and circulated information about obtaining these materials. A multi-cultural resources starter pack was made up and given to beneficiaries going through the registration process. Resources can be purchased from New Era or directly from suppliers, by childcare providers. These resources disseminate good practice in multi-cultural issues – “Including multi-cultural toys and resources, which reflect diversity into your child’s environment will enable them to develop awareness of people from a variety of cultural backgrounds. Children learn from adults as guides and role models and so develop anti-discriminatory attitudes. With positive adult interaction and information children will develop knowledge and understanding of their own cultures, similarities and differences in those of others”.

Family Friendly Policies

A guide to family friendly policies for small companies was produced and circulated to 11 companies. This contained information on what family-friendly policies mean, new government rights, case studies, up-to-date dti information booklets on maternity and paternity rights, adoption leave, flexible working, time off for family emergency. The guide was intended as a “starting point” for companies looking at these issues and pointed them to where they could obtain further information for good practice.

Resources and materials

Information Pack – The project has produced an information pack for all beneficiaries. The pack includes a general information leaflet about the support available from the project, an information leaflet about the Toy Library, an information leaflet about the “CHIMPS” (Childminder Placement Scheme), an information leaflet about the “Burnley and District Childminding Network”, and the latest edition of the project newsletter “Do You Mind?”
See the example enclosed

Toy Library – Originally set up by New Era’s Childminder Support Project in previous years this resource is now run by the local childminders and has been supported and advertised by the project.

Equipment Loan Scheme – This scheme, similar to the Toy Library, was established by a previous project and is run by local childminders with the support of the project.

Book Library – An extensive book library is available for childminders to borrow from, and is particularly useful for those childminders undergoing professional training.

First Aid Kits – These are available for newly – registered childminders.

Safety Gates and fire guards- These are provided on a basis of need for childminders going through the registration process.

Details of Publicity Undertaken - copies of any advertising/publicity materials produced are in Appendix 2

When local press releases were sent out they were sent out to the following:-

Lancashire Evening Telegraph group of papers

Burnley Citizen

Burnley Express Group

2BR – Local Radio Station

Radio Lancashire

Children First “Partnership News”

Initial Publicity about the Project

Press release “New Funding for childminders” sent to local media

Press release published in Children First “Partnership News” Spring 2003

Newsletters

Three editions of the Newsletter “Do You Mind?” were produced and distributed to all the childminders on the database in May 2003, Sept 2003, and Dec 2003. Feedback from the questionnaire show that these are well-received and are found “interesting and useful”

Events

A database of childcare providers is kept by the project, which is used as a basis for the mail out of information, and invitations. Up-to-date information on registered childcare providers is obtained from Children First, a partner organisation.

27/03/03 Networking event in Pendle–

Invitations and posters sent to child-carers.

Press Release sent to local media.

Press release and photo published in local papers.

28/04/03 Childcare seminar at Daneshouse Community Centre

Invitation sent to local childminders.

17/06/03 Networking event in Rossendale

Invitations and posters sent to child-carers.

Press Release sent to local media –

Press release and photo published in Children First “Partnership News” Summer 2003.

05/12/03 Networking event in Burnley

Invitations and posters sent to child-carers.

Press Contacted

Press coverage and photo published in the Burnley Express and the Lancashire Evening Telegraph.

Display-Board Material

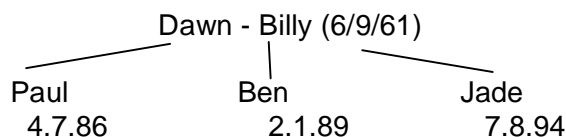
The project has a resource of display-board material, which it uses to promote and advertise the work of the project. These have been used at a variety of events during the course of the project – eg the networking events mentioned above, partner-organised events eg Surestart information days, the Childcare seminar at Daneshouse Community Centre, New Era Enterprise’s-organised “Family Support Services” conference. Appropriate material is used to suit the community event and audience to which the event is targeted.

Details about the project **Information Pack** is in the previous section on Dissemination of good practice and in Appendix 2

Case study

DAWN – D.O.B. 25 JULY 1966

Dawn is 37, married for 19 years, with 3 children.



She was born in Burnley and says all she ever wanted to do was look after children, even as a young person. At 16 she left school and wanted to go to college to undertake a nursery nurse's course, but due to family circumstances was unable to do so. She took an office job in which she worked for two years until she married at 18 and became pregnant with her first child, Paul. Paul has a learning disability diagnosed as Dyspraxia. This is a complex problem, involving short-term memory loss, general delays in development and maturity, clumsiness and comprehension difficulties. When Paul was 2½ years old Ben was born, but Paul was functioning at a much younger age. These were difficult times for Dawn and the family and it was several years before Dawn felt back on an even-keel. She deliberately waited five years before having Jade, who is now 9. Jade has a physical disability, with one leg shorter than the other and is about to undergo an operation to extend the leg, which will mean months of physiotherapy and special care.

Dawn's children have needed a lot of support and Dawn has happily committed herself to their well being. However, over the years she has often thought about childminding as she so enjoys being with children, but never got around to doing anything more about the idea. That is until her brother asked her to care for his son Cameron, which she did for 18 months, finishing in March 2003 when he went to nursery. This gave her the push she needed and in February 2003 she applied to become a registered childminder.

Dawn immediately became involved with the Childcare Entrepreneur Development Services and attended the Project's 5 week Business Skills Training course in March 2003. This course prepared her for running her self-employed childminding business and she says it gave her the skills she needed to be organised and professional. One area of particular concern was working with parents. Her lack of formal work experience had left her feeling unconfident and the course helped her to feel she could 'do it'. Importantly she met others on the course that was already registered and she said their tips and advice were very helpful. After the course she was knowledgeable enough to show another lady going through registration with her how to complete her financial records.

As part of our support, the Project provided Dawn with some multicultural resources, an area of Ofsted's National Standards she was having difficulty with. These helped her to understand what was meant by the term multicultural and gave her extra confidence for her Ofsted inspection.

Dawn became a registered childminder on 24 June 2003 and was immediately placed on our Vacancy scheme so that we could help her fill her vacancies. Dawn was worried about her financial situation as she had not had any income since March 2003 and this early stage is the most difficult time for newly registered childminders. The Project helped Dawn to understand that it could take a few months for her business to get off the ground and that it was nothing to do with her personally. The Project gave her advice about marketing and suggested where to put posters up and how to go about contacting nurseries and schools.

In July Dawn discussed with the Project the possibility of undertaking the NVQ III in Childcare. The Project was able to give her details of how the course works and encouragement that she would be able to do it because of her childcare experience. She decided it was something she needed to do, as she would then be qualified to work in a nursery as her children get older and

more independent. She appreciated it is quite a challenge, as it is a 2 night college commitment for two years, but she felt she really needed such a positive goal and it would make the most of her becoming a childminder and having the childcare 'placement' required. The Project helped again by paying for her NVQ III core textbook. Dawn had a tough time in October because she still had no children and was concerned about meeting the needs of the NVQ. We were able to reassure her that the real assessments don't really begin until January, so she had time to find some work.

In November a local Sure Start contacted the Project to help them find childcare for two mothers attending courses. Dawn was able to take on the work and although only part-time, it was the start Dawn needed. She received thank-you cards from both parents, a sure indication of a job well done. Dawn also took on a 3-week temporary job working in a restaurant kitchen immediately before Christmas to increase her income, but was able to fit it around her childminding commitments.

2004 has started well; the Project was able to match her to a parent with two children requiring part-time care, which fits exactly around her current commitments, particularly her daughter's medical timetable. Dawn is going to earn approximately £70 per week, with the potential for increased earnings in the future and is really pleased with how childminding is improving her quality of life. She feels the NVQ III is becoming more interesting, as she is learning how to undertake child observations.

Although this is going to be a hard year, Dawn is feeling positive. Dawn has really used the help the Project has offered and has come a long way, considering that only a year ago she was still deciding whether to become registered. Dawn says the Project has really helped because 'it has been there all the way through and there is nothing else around'. Dawn's increased confidence and skill level is a testament to her determination to succeed.

Views of customers and/or partners

In December 2003 a questionnaire for evaluation of the services of the project was sent out to 153 beneficiaries. The questionnaire is attached as Appendix 4.

There were 30 responses, which gives an approximate return rate of 20% - which is rated as a very good return rate.

In response to the first question – "Has the project helped you develop?" – 26 out of the 30 replies had received help in between 1 and 6 stated areas, with the highest numbers of help being received in areas of "ideas for further personal development, including other work or training possibilities", "self confidence", and "organisational/business skills". This confirms the stated aim of the project to "support entrepreneurial learning, ...business development skills....."

For the support of newly registered childminders – 13 responded that they had been helped in setting up in business and filling vacancies. The numbers of newly registered childminders supported exceeds the target of "10" stated in the bid. The comments received from the childminders indicate the value they place on the support they received from the project – "Staff are always very helpful" "Although now registered for 8 years you were an invaluable support especially in the early years".

Asked if any letters sent had been clear and helpful 25 out of 30 responded with a tick in the "yes" box, with no ticks in the "no" box.

21 out of 30 replied that they had found the resources and materials "relevant and helpful", one childminder commenting "I started my NVQ3 course which I wouldn't have been able to do without your help. I love it". Responses like this make all the hard work worthwhile!

13 out of the 30 replies had attended one of the two networking events in Pendle and Rossendale. The questionnaire had asked the childminders to rate the event on a scale 0 – 5 where 0 were poor and 5 excellent, for a number of variables. Out of the 13 responses - 11 of the responses scored 4 and 5 for the event being “informative and helpful”; 12 of the responses scored 4 and 5 for the event being “well-run and user friendly”; 10 of the responses scored 4 and 5 for the “timing of the event being suitable”; 9 of the responses scored 4 and 5 for the “venue being suitable”; 7 of the responses scored 4 and 5 for “the activity for the children being suitable. “As always, we look forward to your events...” was one response.

These results are very encouraging that networking events are being valued highly by the participants, and that they are being organised to a high standard.

25 out of the 30 responded saying they had received the newsletter. We know that all the childminders on the database are sent the newsletters. That 25 out of 30 remembered receiving them is a very good response. Asked if the newsletter was “interesting to read”, and that “the articles were informative and helpful” 22 of the responses scored 4 and 5. (again scoring on a scale of 0 – 5 where 0 is poor and 5 excellent). These are excellent evaluations for the newsletters and show this method of communicating information to childminders as a very effective one, and that the project’s newsletters have been of a high standard.

Asked if they received “advice, guidance and support” from the project, 16 out of the 30 indicated that they had. 15 of the 16 scoring 4 and 5 for the advice being “helpful and accurate”, 15 of the 16 scoring 4 and 5 for “team members responding to queries promptly”, and 13 of the 16 scoring 4 and 5 for “problems and concerns being taken seriously”. This supports the project’s own assessment that advice, guidance and support is being given to childminders, and confirms that this support is of a high quality. General comments about the project from the questionnaire responses support this view:- “Hope it continues - any support for childminders is helpful”: “I found the people very friendly and knowledgeable. I found the course to be very useful.” :“See you all soon at the children’s Christmas party. If it’s anything like our day at Haslingden Community Link it will be an event to be remembered”.: “Excellent”: “I think that New Era are brilliant because they are always there to help when you need it most”.

The childcare providers on the Business Skills course were given evaluation sheets – an example is attached in Appendix 4. They were asked to evaluate on a scale of 1 –5, where 1 is poor and 5 is very good in terms of “the course content”, “the relevance of the course to my needs”, “the competence of the tutor”, “the course notes”, and “the level of pace of the course”. The feedback from the course was excellent with **all** attending scoring “5” – very good under all categories. This scoring was re-inforced by the comments made where “what did you most like about the course” – “all of it, I found it very useful for the startup of my childminding career”....”the tutor, nice and friendly”.....”I felt I learnt a lot I never would have dreamed would be involved; all handy tips”.....”the relaxed atmosphere and friendliness of all attending course, tutor was very helpful to all, and put over all info to us,,,was very knowledgeable on all aspects of course”.....”the course was exceptional it covered all the points I needed to address as a new childminder”.....

The response to the question “have you any further comments to make about the course, or any suggestions for improvement” also gave very positive feedback.....”It was very relaxed and enjoyable”....”need more courses...should be available before registration..”I’d go on it again”..”course should be done alongside of workshops for all childminders”.....”A bit more time needed to cover some things in more depth. The course should be available before registering as a childminder”

The few comments in the “what did you least like about the course?” section also reinforced the excellent way in which the course was received...”that it should have been available at the beginning of becoming a childminder”...”tax etc as I’m not registered yet”.....”nothing”.....etc

The project manager has taken on board these comments.

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

A comparison of how the project actually dealt with ICT compared to the project proposal.

The project used ICT as specified in the bid as follows:-

The project used Pentium computers, (with Ethernet cards and cat5 cables), networking using NT, exchange and proxy server software and server hardware, internal & external email facilities, web access and data backup, local printers and networked printers. The software utilised (in addition to that mentioned above) was Microsoft:- Windows, Excel spreadsheets, Word (incl. Urdu & Bengali), Access, Publisher, Outlook, and Quickbooks and PAYE-Master. The project used fax and telephone technology.

Project workers encouraged people to use ICT, especially those who had little experience of ICT whether because of lack of confidence, money, time, induction or training.

Use of ICT facilitated accurate, effective and efficient management and financial control of the project through the capture, collation, analysis and distribution of data and financial information for the project, through the use of management and control systems. The project developed Microsoft Excel spreadsheets to assist comparison and monitoring of actual spend to budgets, forecast and predict spending, monitor the throughput of clients, and facilitate the production of what-if and other tools to assist management and control.

A comparison of how the project actually dealt with Equal Opportunities compared to the project proposal.

The project developed and maintained best practice in Equal Opportunities for all. It ensured that no person received less favourable treatment on the grounds of age, disability, race, gender, religion, marital status, sexuality or ethnicity.

Signing, translation and interpretation, the use of large fonts and graphics in publications, the use of premises with wheel chair access, the employment of male and female staff including speakers of minority ethnic languages are some of the ways in which the project promoted equality of opportunity. Every attempt was made to engage all sections of the community in ways appropriate to their own personal circumstances. Staff have undertaken ethnicity, gender and disability awareness training. Beneficiaries' records keep account of gender, ethnicity and special needs and the project reported on a quarterly basis against these headings. Under representation was highlighted and action taken.

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

The exit strategy was dealt with as per the original proposal :-

Further funding has been secured to continue the activity after the lifetime of this project because the applicants believe that there will be further need for more new provision and ongoing support until the statutory sector has resolved the problems currently being identified. This is the reason why this provision has not been mainstreamed and all the project activities will continue under the new funding stream.

The project worked with a partner to establish local support groups for childminders. The groups are self-sustaining providing a local network and supportive environment to encourage and sustain childminders.

The project influenced OFSTED to be more aware of its need to make the process of registration less daunting and time consuming, and more aware of the needs of ethnic minority childminders.

The project increased the sustainability of new childminders by providing opportunities for them

to build relationships with more experienced childminders.
SME's have benefited from business skills training specific to their organisation thus ensuring their long-term sustainability.

Details of tools used to evaluate the impact of the project

Evaluation forms designed to collate the relevant information from courses held
Questionnaire evaluation
Feedback – written
Feedback - verbal
From beneficiaries and partners

- Did the project keep within its budget?

The project spend was (very close to, and) within the budget.

- Did the project provide value for money?

The project provided good value for money as extra outputs were secured in addition to the contracted outputs.

Additional Information

There was insufficient understanding by all parties of the man-hours and ICT capacity needed to meet data input requirements. This led to the project activity in the original bid not taking into account the additional workload generated by this process.

Unfortunately the LLSC registration form is not user friendly. This meant the project has to design an additional form to obtain the relevant information from the beneficiary and transfer this information with the correct codes onto LCS form.

With regard to the LSC website this is a very large site and the information applicable to the projects is very hard to find. The LLSC feel that their responsibility on informing projects of any significant changes can be sufficed by putting this information on the website. As the site is so big the relevant information is hard to find and the project feel that correspondence via e-mail or post notifying the user of relevant information changes and where to find them would be of great assistance.

SIGNATURE:

DATE