

BLACKPOOL CELEBRATES SUCCESS OF YOUNG PEOPLE'S PROJECT

Pleasure Beach celebration marks reduction in the number of Blackpool young people not in education, employment or training (NEET).

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Over 100 people including young learners, stakeholders and Blackpool Council's Director for Children's and Young People's Services, were at Blackpool Pleasure Beach recently to mark the success of an initiative that has seen the number of young people in the town who are not engaged in education, employment or training fall by over 10%. In August 2007 580 young people in Blackpool were classed as NEET; in August of this year that figure was 498.

The Learning and Skills Council (LSC) identified Blackpool as a NEET 'hotspot' in early 2007. In response a range of stakeholders including the LSC, Connexions, local colleges and training providers and Blackpool Council have worked together to create an innovative programme of support for young people who are, or are at risk of becoming, not in education, employment or training.

The project comprises four key strands; a scheme at Bispham High School offering personalised learning programmes to young people who would not normally continue on to further education or training, and a second at Beneast Training to equip NEET young people with essential skills to find and secure a job. In addition Blackpool and The Fylde College has employed two Specialist Learning Mentors to work with young people who may be facing difficulties in their lives and could be at risk of leaving education.

Perhaps the most innovative part of the initiative is the Energiser strand of courses, giving young people a week of activities designed to boost confidence and employability skills. The courses are organised by The Prince's Trust in partnership with Connexions, and use

specialist mentors to help young people identify the career or training route that is right for them. The Prince's Trust has also played an integral role in the project by acting as co-ordinator for the numerous stakeholders working closely together for the first time.

Ian Haworth, LSC Director of Area for Lancashire, said: "The LSC is committed to reducing the number of young people not in education, employment or training. We recognise the benefits that this can bring to the community as a whole as well as to the young people themselves.

"The excellent work that has been done in Blackpool illustrates just what working together can achieve, and how an innovative approach to training can change people's lives. Many young people in the town can now look forward to a brighter future."

Councillor Don Clapham, Blackpool Council Cabinet Member for Children's Services added: "The aim of the event was to celebrate the achievements of young people from across Blackpool who were unemployed or at risk of becoming unemployed but seized the opportunities presented to them despite the many challenges they faced. We are immensely proud of their achievements and delighted that our dedicated team of staff were able to assist via the schemes funded by the Learning and Skills Council."

ENDS

Learning and Skills Council:

The LSC exists to make England better skilled and more competitive. We are responsible for ensuring the availability of high-quality education and training for everyone. We have a single goal: to improve the skills of England's young people and adults to world class standards. Our vision is that young people and adults in England have knowledge and skills matching the best in the world and are part of a truly competitive workforce. We work nationally, regionally and locally to deliver this ambition on behalf of learners and employers.

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