

DORSET YOUTH LEAP INTO ACTION



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Career prospects for Dorset teenagers are improving thanks to a successful programme that is geared towards helping youngsters recognise their own abilities and empowering them to use them.

The LEAP Project – Leading, Empowering and Achieving with Purpose - is a two week intensive programme for 16 to 19 year olds who are not in education, employment or training. It is funded by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) through the European Social Fund (ESF).

During the programme, students compile a personal portfolio to help them understand their own skills and achievements and identify where local jobs are and how to apply for them. They also compose a CV and application letters and practice interview techniques.

The end result for each individual is a Level 1 in Career Planning, the ability to identify a career path, the confidence to proceed and the personal skills to succeed.

Louise Hall, Leap Project Leader for Dorchester-based Ansbury, which delivers the project for Connexions, said: “Students leave with a strong sense of self-belief and a valued personal portfolio as evidence of their learning and journey of discovery.

“Having established a new routine and structure from taking part they leave with clear career goals. Through the group work activities they both extend and develop a variety of skills to take with them - for example public speaking and leadership skills. They also develop new friendships which they can take with them after the programme has finished.”

Martin Vowles, Business Development Director for Ansbury, said: “Since the project began just over a year ago 61 people have taken advantage of the LEAP opportunity – many of them with particular personal challenges. Of these, 60% have achieved the Level 1 qualification and 40% have gone straight into further education or training.”

The LEAP strategy relies heavily on instilling self-belief and developing self-confidence in a variety of different ways. It is run in partnership with other groups and companies including Poole Job Shop, the Avon Tyrrell Outdoor Activity Centre and Hamworth Fire Service.

Mark Williams, ESF Director for the LSC South West said: “LEAP’s structured formal ‘lesson planned’ programme which provides intensive group work support is proving extremely successful.

“By taking part students are able to see the value of further education in improving their skills and equipping them for future employment. I am confident the project will go from strength to strength.”

CASE STUDY

One of the many successful LEAP students is Marvin Mutanga from Swanage. He was 19 when he joined the project, had been unemployed for some time and lacked self-confidence and direction.

Marvin said: “LEAP has changed everything for me. Instead of waiting for things to come to me, I get out there and get it myself. I’m now working full time in a restaurant and I’m waiting to hear back from my Business Administration Apprenticeship, which should begin soon.”

He attributes his new, positive, outlook to the encouragement, support, techniques for personal and social development and team-building activities he experienced on the project.

Marvin said: "It's little things like making real telephone calls to people, going on the college visits to find out more information, starting off the programme by choosing what you always wanted to do and investigating if you'd really enjoy it before jumping onto a course and not liking it.

"The personal development activities helped to ensure you get things right, like 'begin with the end in mind' and using positive language like 'I will try', 'I will do it' not 'I may do it' and 'I may not'!

"Now I'm doing my best and I want an education so I can provide for my daughter. This project has changed my attitude."

Ends

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Photo: Marvin Mutanga, 19, from Swanage

Notes to Editors:

In 2007-2013, the European Social Fund (ESF) will invest £2 billion in England and Gibraltar, which will be matched to £2 billion of national funding. The new European Social Fund programme will support two key priorities:

1. Extending employment opportunities to people who are unemployed or at a disadvantaged in the labour market, including disabled people, lone parents, older workers, ethnic minorities, low skilled people, and young people not in education, employment or training.
2. Developing a skilled and adaptable workforce, with a particular focus on employees who lack basic skills and good qualifications.

The new projects are the first to start under the 2007-2013 England and Gibraltar ESF programme, following the launch of tendering rounds in autumn 2007. The tendering rounds were organised by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), the Learning and Skills Council and other ESF Co-financing Organisations.

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. For more information visit: www.lsc.gov.uk/southwest

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