

Press Release

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Support to get young people back on track

A new programme offering support and training has launched in Herefordshire and Worcestershire to assist young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) to find their feet and succeed in the future.

The programme, called '4U', is managed by Worcester College of Technology and funded by the Learning and Skills Council's and West Midlands Leaders Board's regional European Social Fund (ESF) programme.

Working with a consortium of training providers from across the two counties, the programme aims to reach out to hard-to-help young people, the majority being 16 – 18 years old, offering predominantly one-to-one support and flexible, hands-on training. The support provided includes help with the many complex issues facing young people such as social exclusion and anti-social behaviour and encourages them onto a vocational path to help secure their future prospects.

It is hoped that over a period of 18 months '4U' will support more than 150 young people in Herefordshire and Worcestershire.

Across the West Midlands, the ESF programme is providing £22 million to help over 7,000 vulnerable and disaffected young people.

Hereford Primary Care Trust (PCT) is one of the providers supporting the scheme in



Leading learning and skills



Herefordshire, as Helen Mapp, training centre manager, explains:

“‘4U’ is in its early stages, but it is already having a positive impact on young people in the region. Hereford PCT works with young people, providing support such as mentoring sessions to help individuals adapt to the work environment. We also work with other local organisations, such as youth and health services, that support individuals with more serious barriers to learning such as drug and mental health problems.”

Zelma Williams, deputy head of faculty at Worcester College of Technology, comments:

“There are a number of reasons why young people in our region find themselves without a placement or job. These range from low self-esteem and long-term health problems, to substance abuse and crime. As the number of at-risk young people in Herefordshire and Worcestershire increases and the job market becomes more competitive, it is more important than ever that the right provision is available.

“‘4U’ aims to do just that, providing flexible tailored support to young people and acting as a stepping stone to a better future.”

Olwen Dutton, chief executive of the West Midlands Leaders Board, added:

“The next generation of workers is vital to our region and investment in their future is incredibly important. Funding from the ESF co-financing programme allows training providers, such as those involved in the ‘4U’ project across Herefordshire and Worcestershire, to continue to deliver new and innovative training courses to help disengaged young people get back into education or employment.”

ENDS

For more information about the region’s ESF co-financing programme, please contact Hannah Pries, Laura Reid or Christine Smart on 0121 456 3199 or email hannah.pries@smarts.co.uk.

Notes to editors



European Social Fund 2007 - 13

The European Social Fund (ESF) was set up to improve employment opportunities in the European Union and so help raise standards of living. It aims to help people fulfil their potential by giving them better skills and better job prospects.

The ESF programme forms part of the wider European Structural Funds programme running from 2007 to 2013, through which the UK will receive an anticipated £8bn of European funding.

In the West Midlands, the Learning and Skills Council, West Midlands Leaders Board and Jobcentre Plus are working with partners to deliver a wide range of projects designed to promote regional employment and skills objectives.

The LSC and West Midlands Leaders Board have over £200m to invest in:

- Improving the employability of inactive and unemployed people
- Tackling the barriers faced by young people not in education, employment or training
- Assisting offenders into work, education or training
- Providing small grants to the third sector to support the aims of ESF
- Supporting people experiencing redundancy to retrain and find new jobs
- Raising the qualifications and skills of workers to improve their job prospects and productivity

Government Office West Midlands

go-wm.gov.uk/gowm/EuroFund/StructuralFunds2007-2013/?a=42496

Jobcentre Plus

<http://www.dwp.gov.uk/supplying-dwp/what-we-buy/welfare-to-work-services/european-social-fund/>

LSC

lsc.gov.uk/regions/WestMidlands/ESF/

West Midlands Leaders Board

<http://www.wmleadersboard.gov.uk/>



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