

national transition support team

working together to improve transition
for disabled young people

Case Study: LB Tower Hamlets – employment opportunities for young people with sensory impairments

Introduction

Developing employment opportunities for young people with sensory impairments.

Overview

Young people with sensory impairments often miss out on transition planning. This case study looks at how employment opportunities were developed specifically to support disabled young people with sensory impairments by developing a range of support that could lead to meaningful employment. Although in its early stages the project is considering a range of options that include work experience, and apprenticeships. The project has also considered the use of adaptations and employment brokers to support young people into the workforce, as well as ensuring the school curriculum considers the skills young people need to successfully gain employment.

Main transferable learning points

- A transition strategy should consider the needs of specific groups of young people including those with sensory impairments
- A school curriculum needs to address the skills young people need to successfully gain employment
- Relevant work experience opportunities need to be available to young people with additional needs

Background

This project was developed following a consultation at a transition event in 2009, with a group of 30 disabled young people with sensory impairments.

The young people had considerable ambitions and wanted more intellectual challenges and opportunities to feel a sense of academic achievement. Their ambitions were also reflected in the responses they gave regarding career choices with many wanting to enter employment within recognised fields. They wanted genuine job opportunities and support for employment in the longer-term.

Within the borough there was support for young people with learning difficulties and those with mental health support needs but there was no provision for this group of young people who had sensory impairments.

Tower Hamlets aims to put young people at the heart of everything they do and the local authority is especially keen to respond to needs identified by young people themselves. Coming as it did just as the Innovations and Outcomes Fund was announced, the challenge laid down by this group of young people seemed an ideal focus for a bid for funding.

The project

The project being delivered through The Hub in partnership with a local specialist employment

agency, Tower Hamlets College and the local Education Business Partnership. The Hub partnership is a department within the Tower Hamlets Council. The Hub was established in September 2006 to widen access, participation and choice, raise aspirations and achievement, improve progression and secure future prospects for the borough's 14-19 learners (14-25 for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities). The Hub partnership consists of the borough's secondary schools, college, training providers, universities and support services who all work together in general work together to meet the diverse needs of young people in Tower Hamlets. The Director of the Hub and the 14-19 Development Manager are both represented on the Strategic Transition Forum.

Aims and Objectives

The overall aim of the project is to broker employment opportunities within the borough, including the local authority and PCT and to work with employers on job redesign and the identifying specialist adaptations required for young people with sensory impairment.

In addition the project aims to support placements through job coaches in order to make the individual young person's ambitions become a reality and to ensure the young people are able to sustain their placements.

The initial project is designed to run for 12 months commencing in April 2010. Through it Tower Hamlets aims to:

- provide sustained employment for 1 year.
- deliver 15 job outcomes out of which 8 will be pre-apprenticeships.
- transform the curriculum and develop a new set of employment related opportunities tailored to this
- group of young people.
- ensure young people become more independent.
- assist young people to meet their ambitions

This is being achieved through the use of a range of activities which develop employability

skills and support young people to both find work and sustain it, including:

- initial 1:1 sessions with learners, teachers and parents are included in these meetings.
- group work sessions to develop soft employability skills and build confidence
- development sessions around interview skills and practice.
- sessions around CV and job application writing
- visits to employers
- team building exercises
- work experience placements
- job brokerage into vacancies with local employers.
- job coaching and ongoing in work support once a learner has entered employment.

The advisor/job coach also draws together all other existing services for the young people, ensuring that they have access to the best possible support and opportunities available.

Some of the employment partners with whom the local authority hopes to work in the Borough as the scheme progresses include, BT, Asda, Tesco, Marks & Spencer, G4S, Royal Mail, Pitney Bowes, Xerox & Greenwich Leisure Limited.

The local authority are also working on projects with Olympic Delivery Authority & LOCOG specifically aimed at improving the opportunities for disabled people to find employment with the London 2012 arena.

Initial phase of the project

In response to a number of factors (including reduction in the amount of funding available and shortened timescales) it was decided to focus the initial phase of the project on developing and supporting employment opportunities within the Council so that the first phase of the project could be completed by March 2011.

The local authority matched the funding received through the Innovations and Outcomes fund to develop the pilot for 30 learners at post-16 level. Arrangements were made for 2 of the young people to be supported into employer-led apprenticeship programmes and further 8 to be placed on level 1 apprenticeship programmes. A further 10 will be assisted into full or part time employment through Remploy placement services.

All the young people will attend Remploy Development Modules and will be provided with a personal development plan geared towards their journey to employment. They will also attend events and placements led by some of the employment partners with whom we work including, BT, Asda, Tesco, Marks & Spencer, G4S, Royal Mail, Pitney Bowes, Xerox & Greenwich Leisure Limited.

Implementation

The apprenticeships and placement support were negotiated and arranged between June and August 2010. The Hub has brokered employment opportunities within the local authority that will identify the specialist adaptations required for young people with sensory impairments and has arranged for the local authority to be the apprentice employer. Two schools (George Green and Phoenix) and the Cambridge Heath 6th Form Centre (Morpeth, Oaklands and Swanlea) are taking part in the pilot phase of the project and the project got underway with the young people in September 2010 starting with employability sessions in schools. Following this action plans were completed for each young person.

Apprenticeship recruitment and interviews were held in the autumn of 2010. Employment outcomes will be recorded on an ongoing basis and will be reviewed in August 2011 followed by a final review in December 2011 of more sustained outcomes for this initial cohort.

Successes

It is too early to evaluate the project overall as it is still a work in progress but there are some early indicators of impact. Eight young people will be starting their pre-apprenticeships in February 2011. A further 30 young people are accessing

employability training and 12 Job Action groups are being facilitated. All the young people have been very actively engaged in the project and are positively benefiting from the programme.

Benefits of the project

This pilot scheme will provide a lasting legacy for young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities in that it will:

- lead to a transformation of the curriculum so that more opportunities available post 16.
- enable young people with disabilities to access our Passport to Employability Programme which will continue beyond the life of the project.
- ensure support for disabled young people in relation to employment becomes integral to our 14-19 reform programme.
- SEN schools work closer with SENCOs in mainstream schools to map a programme of qualifications accessible to all students and to identify progression routes
- develop an implementation group to develop learning plans and programmes of work that identify achievable progression routes

If the scheme is successful the local authority plans to continue employing an advisor/job coach and would seek to fund this through mainstream mechanisms such as the Job Centre Plus Workstep programme.

There will also be a lasting legacy for the employers, who will be better able to continue supporting employees with sensory disabilities in particular and wide range disabilities in general. The local authority will use them as champions within our local Education Business Partnership and the East London Business Alliance, promoting the success of the pilot to other employers.

Lessons learned

The lessons learned from the pilot will be disseminated throughout the Tower Hamlets

14-19 Partnership, ensuring that all 15 secondary schools, 7 sixth forms and local FE college are able to transform their approach to encourage young people with disabilities to see employment as a viable progression option.

We are a key member of the London 14-19 Regional Planning Group and Apprenticeship Sub-Group and will also be able to share our learning with other local boroughs.

Conclusion

Tower Hamlets is pleased with the progress on the scheme so far and expects to realise the benefits anticipated by the project. The authority is grateful for the Innovations and Outcomes Fund funding which has helped to make the project possible.

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National Transition Support Team (NTST)

NTST is working alongside the National Strategies and the Child Health and Maternity Partnership to coordinate the delivery of the Transition Support Programme.

NTST is based at the Council for Disabled Children (CDC), the umbrella body for the disabled children's sector in England. CDC is hosted by NCB. www.ncb.org.uk/cdc

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