

Final Report

The Transitions Programme

2007-2008



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Executive Summary

The Transitions Programme was set up as a partnership between Hartlepool Borough Council Children's Services Department and Tees Valley Education Business Partnership-A4e funded by ONE North East through the Future Entrepreneurs Funding.

The visions and objectives of the project were to provide 16-18 year olds who are NEET throughout the five boroughs of the Tees Valley with the opportunity to increase their enterprise and employability skills, raising their aspirations and motivation and awareness of the opportunities available for them through practical enterprise skills.

A theme of the project was the shifting landscape of the labour market, focusing on how the needs of the economy have altered in the last 30 years, the type of vocational opportunities available in the Tees Valley today and the qualities required to run your own business.

The project targeted 50 16-18 year olds not in education, employment or training across the Tees Valley for a 6-day programme which ran between September 2007 and February 2008. 72 young people actually signed for the programme and took part in the 6-hour introductory session which included Rickter assessments for all participants. 26 completed all modules of the course.

Rickter assessments were conducted at the beginning and end of the programme showing positive changes.

As a hook to participation by this difficult cohort group, fun activities, such as 10-pin bowling and a visit to Laser Quest were included in the programme.

Within the programme framework, a shorter, more intensive, 4-day programme was conducted in March 2008 with a target of 10 young people. The actual number who joined the programme was 13, 12 of whom completed all modules of the course.

Based on expenditure of £ 50,000.00, the per capita cost for the 72 actual signatories over both programmes is approximately £ 695.00.

The project demonstrated good practice by:

- Requiring each young person to fill in an enterprise record sheet at the end of each day.
- The programme had the flexibility to change to meet the needs of the learner.
- Recruiting and integrating local business people into the programme with its benefit to the project and also beyond the project in terms of full time employment for the young people.
- It allowed the sharing of knowledge and enterprise education between teachers, youth workers and community placement workers who work with young people who are NEET.

Some lessons learnt for future projects include:

- The more intensive 4-day course had greater engagement than the 6-day course and led to higher retention and achievement for participants. Presentations from young people who participated in the 4-day course were of a higher calibre and more focused on enterprise and employment opportunities.
- The content and delivery methods of the programme benefited from staff expertise from both partner organisations. However, more formal planning sessions to determine line-management responsibilities would have alleviated planning issues in the early part of the programme.
- Participants will require further follow-up work to ensure their business and enterprise skills, which the project developed, are further refined. Hartlepool Borough Council is endeavouring to find additional funds to support young people to develop their ideas into start up businesses under the NDC Enterprise Programme based at Hartlepool College of Further Education.

Overall the programme has worked well achieving many of its objectives of giving young people the opportunity to develop their enterprise skills and raising their aspirations and motivation. They have seen and understood that there are opportunities for them in the world of education, employment and training. Already 27 have found placements in a variety of employment and training locations.

Although the programme ended in March, assistance will continue to be made available to beneficiaries to check whether they have moved into a positive destination. This will be reported to ONE North East in a separate update document in September 2008.

With the adoption of the recommendations herein, future Transitions Programmes will further improve the knowledge, motivation and aspirations of young people from the most vulnerable sectors of society leading to more positive outcomes in terms of NEET reduction.

1. Introduction

1.1 Context.

The Tees Valley has been particularly affected by the decline in heavy industry and manufacturing and with this decline the once prized apprenticeships in these sectors have disappeared as the economy has changed in favour of light and service industries. During this period many people have become displaced from the labour market, many long-term, with a proportionate rise in the number of post-16 young people not in education employment or training. Many of these young people come from family backgrounds where unemployment has spanned more than one generation.

The Transitions Programme is an innovative partnership project to reinforce the NEET Reduction Strategy throughout the five Tees Valley boroughs. Hartlepool Children's Services, in consultation with Tees Valley Education Business Partnership/A4e Ltd, 14-19 Coordinators and Connexions Locality Managers, has worked together to identify and recruit a range of NEET young people, aged 16 to 18, and has delivered a range of activities aimed at increasing not only their entrepreneurial and employability skills but also their self-confidence and social skills to further reduce the numbers of young people who are NEET within the Tees Valley.

1.2 Evaluation Approach and Methodology.

The purpose of this evaluation was to assess the way the programme has brought the required levels of skills to the target group in preparing them to return to full time study or enter training or employment. The programme deliverers were interviewed and use was made of the daily evaluation forms filled in by the young people to obtain their views and opinions.

2. Evaluation

2.1 Project background.

The key theme of the Transitions Programme was to look at how some individuals have successfully changed their careers. Having previously been employed in the Tees Valley's traditional –heavy – industry, these people have become self-employed or have retrained and are using their skills and qualities in different ways and were used as an example to the NEET cohort as to what is achievable with enterprise skills.

Vision & Objectives

To provide a 6-day enterprise challenge for 16-18 year old NEET's throughout the Tees Valley. See appendix A.

To make them aware of the changing job roles in local industry, introduce them to practical enterprise skills based on examples of members of the community.

To help and encourage them to recognise their entrepreneurial and employability skills and to raise their confidence, motivation, self esteem and aspirations.

By linking to real-life business owners, the project gave participants a first-hand view of self-employment and provided them with a realistic assessment of the skills, qualities and attitudes needed to set up their own business.

Design & development

Initially by TVEBP/A4e in consultation with Hartlepool Borough Council Children's Services.

Hartlepool Borough Council Children's Services had strategic responsibility for the project and was responsible for the budget return to the Regional Development Agency, One North East.

Hartlepool Borough Council Children's Services worked in conjunction with the boroughs of Darlington, Middlesbrough, Redcar & Cleveland and Stockton to recruit and induct a minimum of 50 young people onto the programme. Each young person was aged between 16-19 and was currently NEET. Each young person participated in an assessment to ensure they met the eligibility criteria.

A4e were responsible for design and delivery of the project and were responsible for the overall day to day organisation. See appendix B.

There were five stages of development: Engagement, Investigation, Inspiration, Interpretation and Progression. See appendix C.

Funding

Hartlepool Borough Council and A4e secured £ 50,000.00 of funding from ONE North East (Future Entrepreneurs Funding) to fund the project between August 2007 and March 2008. The funding was for the delivery and management of the project and was to include all staff costs, any bursary funds to young people, refreshments, hire of facilities and the completion of the final report.

Target group

50 young people aged 16-18 who are NEET, 10 each from each borough throughout the Tees Valley.

The aim of the project was to engage some of the most difficult and hard to reach groups including those young people currently involved in the Teenage Pregnancy programme, Young Parents, Young Carers, BME residents, young people leaving care or the Youth Justice System, those identified as having SLDD and young people from other groups identified as forming a higher percentage of the NEET cohort than the percentage of the population.

Many of the young people targeted by the Transitions Project had erratic or poor attendance throughout their schooling and were, therefore, not ready for full-time provision. The Transitions Project provided small steps through creative learning; it worked with small groups with high staff ratios to ensure engagement with activities.

The project team built up positive relationships and developed from deliverers of the project into mentoring and counselling roles as the project neared completion.

Management

Hartlepool Children's Services as budget holders were the accountable body for all returns to The Regional Development Agency, One North East.

The key delivery partners are Tees Valley Education Business Partnership/A4e who were supported by local employers, training deliverers and staff from Hartlepool Children's Services.

The delivery of training to the NEET cohort was managed by Nicky Cross, Enterprise Task Manager, A4e.

Delivery

Hartlepool Borough Council Children's Services staff worked in liaison with Connexions, Leaving Care teams, Youth Offending Services and A4e to broker the Transitions Project for young people.

Referrals were made via Connexions PA's, Youth Services, Youth Offending Services, Young Carers and the Leaving Care Team ensuring the programme did not duplicate existing provision and was complimentary to each of the Local Authority's NEET reduction strategies.

Each young person on the project had the opportunity to meet up to 5 local business people who have been through the transition from being employed in a traditional industry to being self-employed or retrained in a different field of employment were part of the delivery programme.

As a peripatetic programme, the suitability of some venues varied. However most were community based which gave the young people the opportunity to participate in their local community.

All young people participated in the Rickter assessment which mapped the attitudes, values and challenges in the young people's lives.

Where appropriate, links were established with the Economic Development departments in the Local Authorities to ascertain if additional funding and resources would be available to support the emerging business ideas generated by the project.

Hartlepool Borough Council will conduct a final assessment 3 months after the end of the programme to see if it has been successful and made any life changes to the young people on the project.

Roll Out

Marketing materials were produced by Springboard, a work-based learning provider in Hartlepool. The marketing materials were produced by students

which not only allowed them to develop evidence for their NVQ portfolio but also provided appropriate age specific marketing materials.

Hartlepool Borough Council's engagement team produced a briefing sheet with a specimen letter for possible candidates for the programme and an Individual Learning Plan (ILP) for all participants. This information was shared with members of Connexions who had agreed to support the engagement of the young people who are currently NEET.

After these briefings, dates were set up by Connexions staff to meet the young people to outline the project and encourage their participation in their own boroughs.

The project aimed to work closely with each participant to understand what they would like to get from their involvement with Transitions. As well as completing their Rickter assessments and ILP's, their hopes and expectations for the programme were taken in to account and fed into A4e's design stage ensuring that the activities, techniques and approaches are in line with the clients' requirements.

Middlesbrough held 2 introductory sessions and signed 15 young people to the project. Several sessions were held at the Middlesbrough office to give as many people as possible the opportunity to access the project.

The first 2 days of training, on 12th and 13th November, were held at the Meath Street Community Centre. A total of 13 young people attended.

Hartlepool has held several meetings and two introductory sessions. The first 2 days of training, on 19th and 20th November, were conducted at The Avondale Centre, Hartlepool City Learning Centre. 10 young people attended Day 1 and 12 day 2.

Stockton held several meetings and 13 young people signed for the course. The first two days of their training were held on November 14th and 15th at the Newton Resource Centre. A total of 11 young people attended day 1 and 10 young people day 2.

Redcar & Cleveland. After initial problems in setting up a date for the briefing meeting due to prior commitments of senior staff, there was a very positive response from staff in setting up the meetings with young people and 12 young people signed up. The first two days of training took place on November 29th and 30th at the Eston City Learning Centre with 10 young people in attendance on day 1 with 9 young people attending day 2.

Darlington. A date and venue for the initial briefing was arranged, but no young people attended. Mrs Hopper from Hartlepool Children's Services was informed by Connexions Personal Advisers that there were no young people interested in the project. Mrs Hopper was reluctant for the young people of Darlington to miss out and contacted the Leaving Care team who identified 11 young people, 4 of whom attended the introductory session and signed up to the project. The first two days of training were arranged for 26th and 28th

November at the Clifton and Newtown Centres but despite being contacted by telephone, none of the young people turned up.

Programme roll-out,

Sessions 1 & 2 were designed to give young people an awareness of how people's skills need to adapt to the new economy, to allow them to practice and understand enterprise skills, to gain an awareness of the local economy and to understand how the economy has changed over the past 100 years and its impact on people's skill sets.

Sessions 3 & 4 offered hands-on creative activities with participants working in groups, learning to work collaboratively and building an understanding of the needs for flexibility and adaptability in the modern working world.

Sessions 5 & 6 saw the young people utilise their enterprise and entrepreneurial skills in researching a business start up. They carried out marketing exercises, drew up budgets, planned advertising, designed and manufactured their products and finally made a presentation – Dragon's Den style – of their business to a panel of 'experts'. See appendix D.

During the final phase, the clients also completed their personal profiles and undertook their final Rickter assessment and ILP review to gauge the distance travelled so far and to identify what further support they require.

2.2 What has worked well?

Young people

It was felt that difficulties may arise in contacting the young people after the programme had finished for their views on content, delivery, satisfaction etc.

Therefore each participant was asked to fill in an evaluation form at the end of each day. An example of one of these forms and a summary of the evaluation forms are attached – see appendices E & F.

The vast majority of the participants were very enthusiastic about the project and recognised the benefits and new skills they could take with them to help in their transition to education, employment or training.

The evaluation forms indicate the young people have benefited as follows.

The quotations used are taken from these forms

- The development of their self-confidence – by the end of the programme the young people were able to deliver a presentation of their new business ideas and plans to a panel of adjudicators they hadn't previously met.

“I have learnt how to deliver our presentation.”

- Very importantly in young people who have been NEET there was an obvious increase in enthusiasm for what they were doing which hopefully will transfer to their everyday lives. With this enthusiasm comes increased motivation.

“Everything was excellent.”

“It was fantastic.”

- The young people now have an understanding of the changing nature of industry and business in the area and its impact on the local economy and, therefore, the lives of the local population. They have been given first-hand knowledge of local industry and the requirements of self-employment through their meetings with the business managers attached to the programme.

“All learners thought the session had raised their knowledge of the economy.”

- Their business and enterprise knowledge and awareness has increased: The young people have learnt to carry out market research, budget projections, marketing, advertising, product design and manufacture and the presentation of their product to the market-place.

“I have learnt more about how to budget money to make a profit.”

“I have learnt how to make a successful sales pitch.”

“I learnt how to market my own business.”

- The young people built a very good relationship with the co-ordinators and mentors and also with each other.

“I have learnt how to mingle with strangers”

- Raising Aspirations. The breadth of the course has shown the young people that there are, in fact, opportunities for them in life.

“I enjoyed making our own business; it made me think what I could do in the future.”

“Thanks for everything over the last few days it has made me realise I can do something with my life. Thanks for everything.”

(Texted after the course by one of the participants to Nicky Cross of A4e).

- All the benefits gained by the young people, described above, have increased their levels of employability.

Local employers

- The young people on the programme have gained a greater awareness of employment opportunities, increased knowledge of enterprise and employability skills and increased motivation to the benefit of local employers.

This also demonstrates the value of an innovative public/private partnership.

Connexions

- Reduced NEET figures and a breaking of the prevalent culture of despair found with these young people.
- Staff benefited from professional development given the expansion of their knowledge of working with young people with specific problems. Some members of Connexions' staff were able to work in a different environment acting in a mentor role.
- The opportunity to meet Connexions staff from other offices and exchange good practice.

A4e

- The programme motivated the group of young people, who generally turned up on time to participate.
- Closer working relationships were forged between the staff of A4e, Hartlepool Children's Services and Connexions and staff had the opportunity to further increase their knowledge and professional development.

Miscellaneous

- The vouchers at the end of the programme were an incentive for attendance.
- Enthusiasm and input from the delivery team.
- The venues chosen were local and accommodating.
- After the first two days the programme was adapted to offer a broad and varied indoor and outdoor innovative programme.
- There was an immediate 'gel' between staff, whose sole aim was to benefit the young people on the programme.
- Free transport was made available to all young people.
- The Hartlepool, Middlesbrough, Redcar & Cleveland and Stockton Connexions staff were fully engaged in the project.

2.3 What has not worked well?

Young People

The majority of participants on the course expressed satisfaction. However some areas of concern were highlighted in the evaluation forms.

- The diverse range of young people – from throughout the Tees Valley – meant that a few felt threatened on their arrival. Of these, four decided to leave, two of whom later changed their minds and returned to the programme participating fully.

One young person suggested that groups could have been better organised with people who get on better, which reflects the national NEET strategic assessment that this is not a homogenous group but requires particular skills to work with a very segmented cohort.

- Some young people initially did not realise the breadth of the programme encompassing enterprise and employability skills, others found the area's industrial history and economy challenging and not as relevant as other sections.

Delivery team

- The original 6-day programme was not as effective as originally envisaged due to the long gaps between the delivery days (Christmas, other commitments etc.). Some drop-outs were experienced as a result and staff found they had to re-build the rapport established with the young people. However a 4-day course run on consecutive days was piloted by young people from Hartlepool in March 2008 and this proved

- The lack of communication and awareness to likely candidates in Darlington which led to no young people going to the introductory day, only 4 signing up and none participating on the programme.
- The introductory and Rickter assessment meetings were sometimes poorly attended by young people which meant additional meetings had to be scheduled – both costly and time consuming.
- Some staff participating in the project required more detailed briefings from line managers in their roles and responsibilities in organising the project. Following detailed planning meetings some of these problems were alleviated after the first session.

2.4 Barriers to implementation

- Members of the A4e delivery team were not involved in the project design at the proposal stage. This resulted in longer planning meetings being required to clarify roles and responsibilities.
- The allocation of staff to the delivery team was delayed as staff were fully involved in completing a project prior to the commencement of the Transitions Programme. Whilst this was no hindrance to delivery of the project, it resulted in some short-term planning in respect of facilities taking place.
- It was difficult to enlist the interest and support of parents, many of whom have little concept of what is being offered.

- Some young people had low levels of aspiration sometimes compounded by family backgrounds where unemployment was second or third generation.
- Whilst many employers were prepared to support the programme, the number/quality who can mentor and impart knowledge while raising aspirations for young people are fewer. Some employers require intensive support programmes.

2.5 Outputs and outcomes

See appendix G.

6 day course.

Local Authority	Target number	No. signed up	Day 1	2	3	4	5	6	Celeb day
Stockton	10	13	11	10	8	8	5	4	2
Redcar & Cleveland	10	12	10	9		6	7	7	4
Hartlepool	10	15	10	12	11	12	8	8	6
Darlington	10	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Middlesbrough	10	15	7	6	5	5	5	5	2
Total	50	59	38	37	24	31	25	2	14

Outcomes.

Participants who have attended the introductory/Rickter assessment day, the 6 project days and the celebration day have benefit from 46 hours of learning.

Positive outcomes for the 59 young people are as follows:

- 11 young people are now in full time employment
- 4 young people are in employment with training including modern apprenticeships
- 8 young people are in training

- In addition 2 young people who took part in the programme have left the area.
- The results of the Rickter assessments indicate that a number of positive outcomes have been achieved.

4 day course (Hartlepool only)

Local Authority	Target number	Number signed	Day 1	2	3	4	Celeb
Hartlepool	10	13	12	12	12	12	12

Outcomes.

Positive outcomes for the 13 young people are as follows:

- 2 young people are in full-time employment
- 2 young people are in training with employment including modern apprenticeships
- 1 young person is in training
- In addition 1 young person has an interview with JHP Training in May

Awaiting final data.

2.6 Examples of Good Practice.

- The programme produced and developed an enterprise record sheet and self assessment/questionnaire. These were used extensively with young people to gain feedback which allowed the programme to be refined and developed to meet the learning styles and skill sets of the individuals concerned.
- The programme challenged young people who were removed from their comfort zone. Whilst some people found it difficult to initially mix,

- Sharing of experience between teachers, NEET workers etc led to a broadening and sharing of knowledge throughout the staff and forged a strong ethos of teamwork between all those involved making a positive contribution of the CPD of the team.
- The recruitment of the employers to the programme and their integration into the programme provide benefits to young people beyond the completion of this programme.
- The programme was flexible in its nature and was adapted to meet the needs of the young people. This ensured that most young people participated fully. The programme had a highly successful presentation at both the 6-day and 4-day courses at which some of the young people were presented with their first ever certificates.

2.7 Case Studies

Case Study 1.

The young man left school with no qualifications at all. He had learning difficulties and a lack of confidence and self-esteem. He has no history of previous sustained employment.

He signed onto the 6-day course and as his awareness of opportunities grew, so did his confidence and motivation. He carefully researched his business, a youth programme based around basketball coaching, looking into set up and

running costs against projected income, carried out his market research, earmarked venues and carried out promotions and advertising. On the final day of the course, he presented his business ideas to the panel displaying hitherto unseen levels of confidence.

Since the end of the Transitions Programme, this young man has successfully gained employment with Hartlepool Borough Council as a gardener, is thoroughly enjoying his work and is proving to be a valued member of the team.

Case Study 2.

This teenage mum, who left education when she fell pregnant aged 16, was unmotivated and lacked aspiration. However, she played a full part in the Transitions programme researching and developing her 'Every Penny Helps' business which involved making various items from waste and donated products for sale with a donation from each sale going to charity.

She gave an excellent presentation of the business to the panel, including examples of her advertising, market research and cash-flow projections.

The inspiration she found on the Transitions Programme encouraged her to enrol at Springboard Training where she is doing a Care course.

2.8 Cost of proposal.

Delivery of project	
Workshop delivery – 30 days @ £ 600.00 covering all delivery costs, travel, session materials, prizes etc.	£ 18,000.00
Venue hire and refreshments – 30 days @ £ 200.00	£ 6,000.00
Final event – venue hire, marketing, refreshments etc.	£ 4,000.00
Progression support for young people	£ 10,000.00
Management of project	
<p>Identification and engagement of 50 young people including setting up initial meetings with each of the other four local authorities and appropriate support team representatives.</p> <p>Production of project summary information for participants and all joining instructions.</p> <p>Initial assessment and action planning induction of young people.</p> <p>Financial control and reporting.</p> <p>Regular meetings/reporting with delivery partners and steering group members.</p> <p>Production of final report for ONE North East.</p> <p>30 management/administration @ £ 400.00 per day</p>	£ 12,000.00
Total	£ 50,000.00

3. Recommendations

The lessons learnt for future activity include:

- A longer planning process involving regular meetings between all partners would be beneficial with content and method of delivery made available to staff earlier.
- The quality of the initial selection process is very important in preventing the need for several meetings with prospective participants prior to the course. Equally important is the information on course content given to the young people so they know exactly what to expect.
- Due to the number of participants and nature of the programme it is felt the appointment of a deliver support assistant with the necessary skills in dealing with NEET's would be of benefit to future programmes.
- For reasons of logistics, timing and more effective delivery it is felt that in future the programme should be delivered borough by borough rather than involve all five Tees Valley boroughs in the same programme.
- The original 6-day programme with gaps between sessions meant delivery was disjointed and deliverers had to re-build the rapport with the young people when they re-grouped. A pilot programme was later run in Hartlepool over 4 days in the same week with great success and it is felt this should be the blueprint for future projects.
- A benefit of the programme was the daily evaluation form filled in by each young person. It is felt that equal benefits would be gained if staff also filled in a daily evaluation.

- Bonus payments acted as an incentive for young people to participate in the programme, however there is no direct evidence that bonus payments are a major incentive to participate in aspiration raising programmes.

The way forward

The Transitions Programme has worked well in terms of its stated aims and objectives of increasing the enterprise skills, knowledge, motivation and aspirations of a group of the hardest to reach young people and leading to many positive outcomes for those young people involved.

It should be cascaded to other agencies who are working with young people, currently NEET, who wish to develop their enterprise skills.