



ROWA! ESF Skills for Life Awareness Raising Project DLSC 991 September 2007 Final Evaluation Report

Background

The tender specification for this project was to provide “activities that raise the basic skills awareness of front line staff in order to diagnose basic skills difficulties and signpost beneficiaries effectively to appropriate basic skills provision”.

Target groups are front line staff that support people disadvantaged in the labour market and those who are socially excluded. This includes

- refugees and asylum seekers
- people 45+
- lone parents
- those living in isolated rural areas
- ex offenders
- those claiming benefits
- people from ethnic minorities

Target locations are in the most deprived wards of Derbyshire

- Amber Valley
- Tibshelf
- areas of Derby
- Erewash
- High Peak
- areas of South Derbyshire

Activities

The current project began in June 2005 following successful tender to DLSC. A workshop session was developed to be delivered over 1-6 hours with scope for a longer course leading to accreditation for those who wish. This has now been mapped to relevant OCN units and delivered over 10 hours (+ assignments) in partnership with the Derbyshire Learning & Development Consortium. It has also been customised for use by specific groups e.g. library staff as part of the criteria for Quality in Libraries Award developed by ROWA! and Derbyshire Libraries and now available for other areas.

At the start of the project a steering group was formed from interested partners who had supported the tender and with whom ROWA! had worked on Awareness Raising previously. This was made up of members representing Skills for Care, Chesterfield NHS PCT, Amicus the Union, Derbyshire Libraries, Derbyshire Learning & Development Consortium and ROWA!

Steering groups were held in June, September and December 2005 and February 2006 to get the project underway thereafter planned less frequently. The next meeting was planned for October 2006 but in fact no more steering groups took place as it proved impossible to get enough partners together at the same time. The project met its targets so the Co-ordinator continued to work with partners individually and made links between them where appropriate.

Final project outputs:

- 64 eligible beneficiaries recruited which exceeded the target of 50
- No ethnic minority employees recruited -3 planned. This was a disappointment as this group were under represented on the project
- 3 young women recruited -2 planned
- 12 people with disabilities recruited - 3 planned. This was largely due to the involvement of Derbyshire Coalition for Inclusive Living
- 21 beneficiaries 50+ recruited - 8 planned. Signposters were recruited largely from organisations employing a large number of mature workforce e.g. Derbyshire library staff, PCTs.

Outcomes:

12 beneficiaries achieved a qualification - target reached

Milestones:

- 79 learners signposted which exceeded the target of 50
- 4 steering group meetings held-target reached
- 10 presentations held which exceeded the target of 6
- 17 organisations advised -target 16
- interim, draft and final reports completed to target

Successes

Evaluations have given positive feedback and participants have particularly found the practical activities and discussions useful. Some participants were not particularly well informed about the training beforehand, this was due to the host organisations being responsible for recruitment and publicity but the partners had agreed they wanted to work that way.

Quotes:

"a very enjoyable session, comfortable and non-confrontational. Relaxing but inspirational and eye-opening."

"liked the quizzes best"

"astounded by the facts and figures and the scale of need"

"would have liked more group activities"

"more on how to sell to employers"

Accreditation for the courses has been developed with members of Derbyshire Learning & Development Consortium and South Derbyshire CVS through OCN. One course has also been held in partnership with DACE - Unit 1 of City & Guilds Level 2 Certificate in Adult Learner Support 9297. Links were also made with a customised Level 2 for local government employees as part of the GO award. ROWA! is currently working with DACE and Learning and Development to help Derbyshire County Council promote this award which was achieved in December 2006. It aims to encourage local authorities to take a more proactive, sustained and strategic role in helping their employees improve their Skills for Life.

Links between the partners of the project have also been explored e.g. Books on Prescription scheme between libraries and PCTs. Health and Care partners have become more aware of the work of the trade unions through steering group membership and opportunities to attend each other's conferences and events. All partners have learnt about the developing role of the voluntary sector represented by the Derbyshire Learning & Development Consortium who have been able to gain useful information from statutory organisations represented.

Case Study 1: Derbyshire Coalition for Inclusive Living

2 Awareness Raising sessions were held for Derbyshire Coalition for Inclusive Living members-staff and volunteers- in January 2007, following information displayed about the project at an opening event for South East Derbyshire Skills for Life CPD centre.

As a result 6 learners were signposted by beneficiaries who had attended the sessions and a discrete Skills for Life course was held at the Ripley HQ organised by Derbyshire Adult Community Education and ROWA! These learners have now been directed into mainstream provision and some have gained accreditation in literacy and/or numeracy.



Case Study 2: Amicus and Derbyshire libraries

2 of the project's partners joined forces to raise awareness of the benefits of libraries for Union Learning reps and their members as this is an important part of the ULR network. The Regional Learning Organiser wanted ULRs to look at other dimensions such as S4L bookclubs, any library mentoring services available etc., and a fun packed activity around using libraries and introducing them to others using computers. From libraries' point of view this would enable ULRs to visit a library and become more familiar with what's on offer. They will subsequently be additional voices of encouragement to potential users with whom they come into contact.

Events were planned in Ilkeston and Derby for April 2007 to include ULRs from Nottinghamshire but unfortunately there were not enough applicants. However the partnership arrangements are now in place for future events, subject to funding.

Target locations have been considered as follows:

- Amber Valley - Awareness Raising session Alfretton Library, DCIL Ripley
- Tibshelf - Awareness Raising session Tibshelf surgery
- Derby - workshop presentation at The Spot in Derby for Amicus and presentations for Skills for Care in Derby for care homes in the Derby/South Derbyshire areas.
- Erewash - Awareness Raising session Ilkeston library
- High Peak - display at High Peak and Derbyshire Dales PCT training day, awareness raising session at High Peak CVS (for DCIL High Peak members)
- South Derbyshire - presentation at Woodville Surestart

4 contract reviews have been held with LSC contract managers and a successful LSC audit was achieved in May 2006.

Difficulties

- After the first well attended steering groups at the start of the project it was difficult to get everyone together to attend regularly due to heavy work commitments. However the project Co-ordinator continued to make links with all partners.
- The other difficulty initially was tracking the beneficiaries to provide evidence of signposting 50 potential learners. However by the end of the project the target for evidence was exceeded as beneficiaries had time to use their experience and knowledge gained from the course.

Examples of signposting included libraries referring visitors to Adult Community Education and college provision, a workplace skills for life course set up to support NVQ at a care home following a presentation at a Skills for Care conference, and an employer signposting one of his employees to a local class and allowing him release time.

Project Co-ordinator's experience

It has been good to be able to further develop Awareness Raising from the original of 6 years ago with appropriate funding. I have enjoyed customising it for accreditation purposes and the different sectors as well as delivering it in a variety of ways ranging from 1 hour in a doctor's surgery to 2 full days with assignments included. Evaluations have generally been useful and positive.

Presentations have been interesting and I have adapted them from the usual stand up powerpoint to more interactive sessions encouraging participants to try Move On quizzes and think about their own Skills for Life gaps. This provides a bridge between a full course, which organisations are often reluctant to commit to and a short talk, so that they are experiencing some of the aspects of the whole session. Some presentations have turned into mini awareness raising sessions and organisations have gained sufficient knowledge to become signposters e.g. East Midlands Train to Gain brokers who volunteered to take the mini tests to see first hand the level of skills for life needed for work.

It was found that advice given to individual organisations usually followed on from presentations not the other way round as was anticipated. Sometimes this did not lead directly to any work within the project but has been followed up since e.g. a visit to advise Groundwork Derbyshire on Skills for Life issues led to their involvement in a mentoring project for voluntary organisations hosted by ROWA! in partnership with the Derbyshire Learning and Development Consortium, one of the original project partners.

Experiences of some of the partners

- **Derbyshire Learning & Development Consortium** supports voluntary organisations across the county to provide good quality learning opportunities. It was really useful to be involved in the project as often the Voluntary & Community Sector are excluded and those members of staff, volunteers and service users miss out on opportunities to learn. As a countywide organisation, the delivery of the OCN unit meant we developed a useful tool to raise awareness of the issues facing those in the community with Skills for Life needs.

One thing we did realise is that standardisation of materials is needed to ensure fairness/parity across delivery organisations so as not to disadvantage any one group of learners. This is easily remedied and does not detract from the benefit of the delivery to date.

- **PCT perspective on the ESF project**

From the PCT perspective I found involvement in the group useful to link into my work on health inequalities. As health and educational status are clearly linked it is helpful to have a wider understanding of work particularly focussing on basic skills and to be able to make front line staff aware of the issues. In this way we can contribute to addressing the broader underlying determinants of health.

- **Amicus**

Amicus is pleased to be part of this project and delighted that ROWA! and other organisations were again at the Regional Lifelong Learning Conference held in November 2006. RLOs in region have maintained awareness raising of ROWA! and project, for example in update briefings to Union Learning Reps, Officers and others. Also at events for example this years Adult Learners Week - Amicus (Unite) did a Test the Company, in the Derby Regional Office and information on a range of organisations and projects with regards to skills for life were made available to those taking part (Officers, Staff, Reps and visitors to the Union).

In terms of numbers: Around 50 attended the Regional Lifelong Learning Conference at The Spot. Around 150 ULRs receive updates about organisations/events etc., every 2-3 months from RLOs. ROWA! is referred to in 2 of these update. In addition in terms of events/ information packs etc., around 25 leaflets distributed.

As part of an Advice and Guidance Session (Regional Learning Organiser doing NVQ3 in Advice and Guidance) 1 person (H & S Rep) was given information on ROWA! as part of this session.

Skills for Care

Over the past couple of years the Derbyshire Brokerage project (part to the sector skills council for social care) has supported the Basic Skills awareness project by; being part of the steering group, invited you to give presentations at the conferences in Derbyshire and at employer engagement group meetings. We have also posted information about the basic skills awareness course in newsletters, publications and put information into information packs given to employers during visits.

Conclusions

Since 2001 when the Skills for Life strategy was launched there has been a good deal of activity to raise awareness of skills for life in Derbyshire. This project and its predecessors have contributed towards that. Funding has enabled good quality training to be delivered and workshop materials leading to accreditation to be developed.

Beneficiaries attending events funded by the project have become equipped with the necessary skills to signpost members of the public or work colleagues with whom they are engaged. Evidence of this has been obtained during the life of the project but only towards the end. More time and money to work with the signposters and support them in this endeavour would have been useful if funds had been available. Often the organisations who employ the signposters do not have sufficient knowledge or interest to provide this support themselves.

Exceptions are libraries who through QLA with the support of ROWA! as assessors can maintain the impetus for skills for life and unions through UnionLearn where there is a strong emphasis on this area of work. The Derbyshire Learning and Development Consortium can support its members in the voluntary sector as an umbrella organisation and through NLDC and other short term projects. The Care sector is aware of the low skills for life levels in its workforce and is trying to address this but statutory demands of NVQ training often conflict with these needs. Links between poor health and skills for life needs are made by multi agency working and measures to improve both are in place in Derbyshire e.g. Working Well events in October 2007.

Recommendations

- Future ESF funding for ROWA! and other organisations to maintain their strategic role in promoting skills for life
- Recognition of the continuing need for awareness raising and signposting to start off this process and support and encourage hard to reach learners
- Continuing Professional Development for tutors, volunteers and support staff (including ULRs) to embed skills for life awareness raising, this includes accreditation at all levels.

Pat McLoughlin Project Co-ordinator September 2007.