

**REPORT TO WEST AREA PEOPLE BOARD  
10 November 2015**

**WIRES Phase 2**

**1. Background**

- 1.1 As part of its priorities for the year 2015/16, West Area Committee identified Job Prospects and working with 14-16 year olds to improve their aspirations and develop their skills, as a priority - reviewing further options for skills support - utilising the West Business Diagnostic.
- 1.2 Area Committee also wanted to look to the Education and Skills Strategy and further develop relationships with Schools with a particular focus upon work skills, vocational qualifications and opportunities to prepare young people to move into employment and raise their personal aspirations to succeed. Understanding the impact of poor mental health and wellbeing in relation to young people's aspirations to move into secure employment and enhance personal development
- 1.3 Area Committee agreed the funding of WIRES (West Intensive Recruitment Employment Support) in December 2014, to offer residents support to help them into sustainable employment. This project focused on age 19+ West residents and ran for 12 months from January to December 2015. The project has been delivered from Pallion Action Group and also more recently Parker House Memorial Home on Kayll Road, Sunderland.

**2. WIRES – Lessons Learnt**

- 2.1 During the last 12 months the WIRES project has delivered the following outputs:
  - a) 184 people have accessed the project (*this is including those who have not completed the actual bootcamp but a mini scaled down version due to the increase in demand*)
  - b) 138 people have received additional intense and pastoral support (*completed the whole WIRES project*)
  - c) 294 accreditation qualifications have been gained
  - d) 41% of those attending have secured employment from point a)
  - e) 70% of clients completing H&S Qualification gained employment
  - f) 100% of clients who through the project received a funded CSCS Card, gained employment
  - g) 100% of clients who received Asbestos Awareness Training have gained employment
  - h) 100% of clients who received Working at Height Training have gained employment
- 2.2 Although Job Centre+ did refer clients over to the project this only accounted for 10% of clients. The project mainly recruited via social media and the most popular method was word-of-mouth.
- 2.3 The following employers supported project:
  - Housing 21 Care and Support
  - Unipres

- Galliford Try
- Gallaghers Gas
- Bibby Financial Services
- Linda Catering
- Owen Pugh

## **2.4 There have been a number of frustrations during the project to-date:**

- 2.4.1 Clients having to get permission off JC+ advisors to attend the project
- 2.4.2 Clients not being able to access free training as they were not receiving the relevant benefit, for example someone claiming Employment Support Allowance (ESA) in the Support group not the Work Related Activity Group (WRAG) group, cannot access certain provision, or if someone is not claiming benefits as their partner works, there is no provision even if these clients are actively seeking work.
- 2.4.3 Clients who were on the work programme who accessed the Centre wanted to be part of the W.I.R.E.S project, but the project had to decline them – reason being that when W.I.R.E.S was originally established, it was agreed that the project would not work with anyone on the ‘Work Programme’ as Ingeus etc., were receiving funding via the JCP+ to work with this client group and for that reason would not need to access WIRES.
- 2.4.4 As the most popular method to communicate the project opportunities was word-of-mouth, at times WIRES had to run two groups alongside each other to cope with the demand of the project.

## **2.5 What worked really well with the project to-date:**

- 2.5.1 Developing relationships with businesses has opened discussions regarding what employers are truly looking for, in the majority its reliability, commitment and good work ethic. Unipres are quite open in the fact that they gain train and up skill individuals for working with their company but it's the soft skills that we need to work on. Most large companies have their own training programme and want younger people to apply for vacancies but as they do not possess the skills to pass the recruitment agency process the employer never gets to meet them.
- 2.5.2 Working directly with the employer and finding out the recruitment agency test methods has been instrumental to support those who would not have had a chance working for these companies, as a result of WIRES they now have secure permanent employment.
- 2.6 We need to offer work experience, instil a good work ethic, increase good communication skills, improve literacy and numeracy skills. We also need a motivational and inspiring environment, so people want to achieve. Linking in with quality training providers including those who delivered FACL enabled us to help people gain accreditation
- 2.7 An unexpected outcome was discovering that the majority of those most in need of support had been in and out of care homes from an early age. They had also not been interested in academia – but they also didn't realise that if they wanted to learn a trade they would still need a certain level of qualification to gain an apprenticeship or work experience. Younger people

give up if they feel they do not have any of the qualifications needed to progress in to apprenticeships / employment.

- 2.8 The project has found, by doing initial assessments - in the majority of cases, that the client is very bright and by using an alternative way of learning can achieve so much - particularly when they are learning something that they are interested in. Those who have been in and out of the care system have consequently moved schools quite often or have not attended for a variety of reasons. By letting them talk directly to employers it can eliminate myths and inspire them to learn and gain qualifications which will help them to aspire longer term, especially if these can be gained in-house. From July 2015 to Sept 2015, WIRES worked with 31, 16 to 18 year olds. Some quotes below:
- 2.9 Lindsey, married Mum of 2, who could not access any provision anywhere, as her husband worked and she had no active benefit but was ready to go back to work as her children were 6 and 8 years old, completed the WIRES course and the project paid for Health and Safety and First Aid Qualifications. Lindsey has now secured employment as a lunchtime assistant at a local primary school. She bought WIRES a thank you card which said *"Thank you so much for everything you have done to help me get this job, I forgot I could do something other than being a mummy, I really appreciate the extra mile you went for me"*
- 2.10 Mohammed Al-Hafid was a Pharmacist when he lived in Bangladesh but his qualifications were not recognised in England. He completed WIRES specialising in the Unipres aspect and is currently working full time at the factory. After securing employment he brought his wife and young son in with him so they could all thank us personally. He said *"myself and my family would like to thank you for all your help, we give you our sincere gratitude and wish you and your team well in the future"*

### **3. Moving forward – WIRES Phase 2**

- 3.1 During the course of the first WIRES project it became very apparent that many of the issues faced by the users of the intensive support could have been prevented, if they had received advice and guidance at a much earlier age. When they were 14-16 years old, they had little understanding of what they wanted to achieve and which options were available to them.
- 3.2 Many of the users were former care leavers who had not benefited from a secure home environment and therefore due to a number of circumstances may not have received additional parental or guardian advice, in relation to important decisions such as career choices, importance of qualifications, vocational opportunities, work experience etc.
- 3.3 Utilising the lessons learnt from WIRES Phase 1, an option to develop WIRES for a further 18 months has been developed, to support the delivery of the Area Committee priorities as highlighted within item 1 of this report, as well as demonstrating (through evidence gathered through WIRES Phase 1), the need for such targeted interventions within the West of Sunderland.

### **3.4 The detailed option is as follows:**

- 3.4.1 Offer a bespoke motivational package of learning and development for young people 14 – 18, who may be struggling with mainstream learning, to reduce the risk of them becoming NEET.
- 3.4.2 Create Employer Mentors for young people, who will keep in touch with young people, via the project.
- 3.4.3 Develop key ready for workskills including, Interview preparation, Information Advice and Guidance relating to training providers and services available, to create a wider choice for young people to make informed decisions for their futures. Give them an understanding of their rights and responsibilities in the workplace.
- 3.4.4 Use practical work projects such as up-cycling furniture as an example, to skill-up but also create the opportunity to engage young people in conversations as well as build trust.
- 3.4.5 Identify possible career pathways and work with the individual young person to achieve learning by visiting companies and organisations.
- 3.4.6 Concentrate on improving lifeskills including communication, teamwork, promote advocacy.
- 3.4.7 Offer work experience and promote volunteering opportunities to young people.
- 3.4.8 Look for alternative relevant training that would be beneficial to a young person.
- 3.4.9 Work with Youth Offending, Children Services including Missing Sexually Exploited and Trafficked Co-ordinator, Young Carers, Leaving Care and Looked After Teams to identify those most vulnerable and at risk of becoming NEET.
- 3.4.10 Work with health and wellbeing services and Live Life Well Service, NECA, Carers Centre, Barclays Bank etc., who can share information on what they provide for young people, in particular using Barclays for information regarding opening bank accounts, avoiding debt etc.
- 3.4.11 Work with the schools and other agencies involved with young people to help young people to remain in school and achieve their GCSE's where applicable.
- 3.4.12 Promote online security and social media awareness, i.e. how what they put out on social media could be viewed by potential employers etc.
- 3.5 Overall, WIRES Phase 2 would create alternative learning and additional support services accessible to people within the West.

### **3.6 The key measureable outcomes would be:**

- 3.6.1 Each learner will receive a Personalised WIRES Action Plan that would assess their current barriers to training/education and offer solutions to

overcoming these, so with the support of an Advisor the individual will be able to access services to help them reach their goals.

- 3.6.2 Up-skill and develop knowledge and passion in young people to reduce the risk of young people becoming NEET and improving the chances of leaving school with qualifications.
- 3.6.3 We will work to create positive relationships with young people, key community representatives and statutory workers. This will assist in helping young people visualise and achieve their aspirations.
- 3.6.4 Internal courses would be delivered by award winning qualified staff working in line with regulations from the governing body Pearson, all courses that link into FACL will be monitored by Ofsted.
- 3.6.5 For those wanting to move into work we will improve their employability skills to improve the success rates of young people going into employment and where the young person wants to continue their education we will provide them with structured study pathways.
- 3.6.6 Remove and reduce barriers to young people accessing alternative provision by creating a trusting, responsive environment where young people feel safe.
- 3.6.7 Develop and nurture relationships between the community, young people and employers to improve the chances and opportunities for local people to become employed in the City.
- 3.6.8 Give young people in care / leaving care or those with multiple barriers mentoring support from project workers and employers.
- 3.6.9 Offer a bespoke service that will help support and signpost young people to improve and protect their mental health and wellbeing.

### **3.7 How will we measure success of the project:**

3.7.1 WIRES Phase 2 will use a logical approach to performance manage the project, using an outcome chain to measure each outcome individually. The project will use written data, visual evidence, service knowledge and evaluations throughout the project to gather data, this will include identifying the impact of the project. We will carefully monitor and evaluate the following key areas:

Reaction – Young people's written feedback and verbal consultations with employers.

Learning - Young People's increased and improved skills and knowledge.

Behaviour- Changes that Young People have applied to their Personal Action Plan and is that reflected within their school behaviour. We will measure this by observation and feedback from schools / families/carers.

Results – Looking at achievements and participation, increase in goals attainment.

## **4. Finance**

- 4.1 WIRES 2 Co-ordinator – Full-time member of staff including on-costs for 18 months - £40,170.
- 4.2 Training materials: £2,000, however the co-ordinator would look to source training free of charge. The only costs would therefore be if certification from an Awarding body was sourced for a young person (e.g. £30 per student for accreditation - cost of registration / certificates).
- 4.3 Room Hire: In Kind, utilising dedicated delivery space within Parker House Memorial Home, Kayll Road, Sunderland.
- 4.4 Transport: £300, utilising the West Area Community Bus to reduce travel costs for employer visits therefore funding would be for the diesel costs only.
- 4.5 Administration Costs: £2,600, this would cover the costs of admin support to collect data, input client details and any of the administration duties connected with the project.
- 4.6 Health and Wellbeing and additional Support Work costs will be covered by match-funding secured. £7,680 - Virgin Money Foundation & £7,500 - Zvmrangoolawala Foundation.
- 4.7 A WIRES project staffing and reporting structure is attached at Annex 1.
- 4.8 Total cost: £45,070

## **5. Recommendations**

- 5.1 Note the content of the report.
- 5.2 Consider and agree a recommendation for Area Committee in relation to:
  - a) Extension of West Intensive Recruitment Employment Support (WIRES) into Phase 2, to incorporate support for 14-16 year olds and young people leaving care.