

Works Better and Better Engaged Project

These projects are part of the Opportunities For All partnership programme that also includes Transition keyworkers, Fife Voluntary Action and Apex and is funded through ESIF.

Works Better aims to engage with young people (16 -19 year olds) who experience mental health issues or have characteristics that may lead to mental health issues and who are disengaged from education, training or employment by providing intensive one to one and group activity including support to find and keep a job.

Initial engagement is achieved through a variety of contact methods including direct door step contact. Using a person centred approach this initial contact will then lead to the young person being supported to attend the Works Better Programme.

Better Engaged aims to engage with young people who have been referred by SDS due to their “unknown” status. We use a variety of contact methods to engage the young people, including direct door step contact. If a young person is in a positive destination then this information is fed-back to Skills Development Scotland. This initial engagement can also lead to the offer of one to one support and group work opportunities in convenient community facilities eg. community buildings, leisure facilities, youth cafes etc. If appropriate, individuals can also take part in the Works Better programme.

After the young person is engaged support is provided to re-engage them with Skills Development Scotland to facilitate a progression into college, training or employment.

Case Study

One afternoon in March 2016 as part of the door knocking exercise of the Better Engaged programme I called at the door of a young person in Cowdenbeath. His mother answered the door and after an initial explanation of why I had called she invited me and my work colleague in. She got her son out of bed and into the living-room to meet with me. I explained about the options that were available to him through the programmes I could offer him. He was very sceptical about accepting the support and help on offer, as he was almost 18 and would then get a job easily on his own, even though he had left high school in May of 2015 and had only left the house once in the previous 10 months. I agreed to call back to his house one week later to discuss his situation and how I could help him get into college, training or a job.

On the second visit I met with him and his mother and after a long discussion he agreed that he did need help to get out of the rut he was in and that he would be well suited to the Works Better programme as he did have some mental health issues relating to depression, anxiety, and low self-esteem and confidence. I completed the appropriate ESIF registration form and action plan with him.

Over the next few weeks he started attending a weekly Works Better group at Tower House Centre in Dunfermline, travelling independently by bus. As part of this programme we looked more closely at his mental health issues and how he could improve these and start focussing more on his career aspirations. He attended regularly and we then started work on the employability part of the works Better programme. This included identifying his skills,

personal qualities and areas for development, we also looked at employers expectations and career planning. We organised meetings to Skills Development Scotland in Dunfermline to get appropriate careers advice and to look at options available to him.

I also facilitated a meeting for him with Carol Burns from Fife Voluntary action, one of our Opportunities For All partners. This led to him taking up the offer of a volunteering opportunity with a local charity that specialized in refurbishing computers. This was ideal for him as he wanted to work with computers. He started volunteering one half day per week but he soon upped this to two half days per week. This placement helped him with the structure of his week, improved his confidence and motivation and allowed him to put into practice the theory work he was doing each week with The Works Better programme.

After a few weeks of him volunteering I arranged a meeting with Stewart Lyons of Fife Council to discuss the Employability Fund 2 training programme that was going to be available. This meeting went well and I arranged for Skills Development Scotland to complete a referral for this programme. He started this programme and has recently completed it, getting work placement experience with Fife Council's IT department in Glenrothes. He progressed to Fife Council's Employability Fund 3 on the 18th of July and is now on a full time placement in this council department.

He is continuing to work with me on the Works Better programme and this week he has applied for a full time computer technician job with Fife Council.

The positive impact the Better Engaged/Works Better programme and co-ordinated partnership working has made to him in a short space of time has made the world of difference to him. If we had not of made the face to face contact at his home then he agrees that he would still be spending all his time in his room playing computer games.

Graham Duncan

July 2016