

The voluntary, community and faith sector approach to reducing worklessness



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The voluntary, community and faith sector contribution to reducing worklessness

A Report to the Narrowing the Gap Board

1.	Introduction	page 2
2.	Background	page 2
3.	Why VCFS provision is effective	page 3
4.	Recommendations	page 5
5.	Organisations involved in workshop	page 7
	Appendix I – Overview of VCFS provision	page 9
	Appendix II – Case Studies	page 13

1. Introduction

This report is based on the outcomes of a workshop held on 20 May 2008 which sought to identify:

1. The contribution that the voluntary, community and faith sector is currently making to reducing worklessness in Leeds.
2. The successes of the voluntary, community and faith sector in reducing worklessness (supported by case studies).
3. What needs to be changed to increase the contribution of the voluntary, community and faith sector to reducing worklessness.

2. Background

Reducing worklessness is one of the key priorities of the Leeds Strategic Plan (LSP). A Worklessness Strategic Outcomes Group was recently set up – chaired by the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods – which is drawing up an action plan to achieve the improvement priorities and targets in the LSP to reduce worklessness with a focus on the most deprived neighbourhoods.

The issues have been detailed in the three reports which provided the background for this workshop report. These are:

1. *Addressing Worklessness, Sue Wynne, Leeds City Council, February 2008*
2. *Job Centre Plus West Yorkshire District Deprived Area Funding – Leeds, Shreeveport, August 2007*
3. *Towards Skills for Jobs: 'What Works' in Tackling Worklessness?, LSC, May 2007*

The priority groups identified are,

- People with disability and health problems
- Lone parents
- People over 50
- People with no or low qualifications
- Ethnic minority groups

In the majority of cases people in these groups will be in receipt of benefits and will be unlikely to be actively seeking work.

All the reports agree that the way forward requires,

- Partnership working – statutory/private/voluntary, community and faith sector
- Local knowledge and credibility
- Coordination of organisations and provision
- Person-centred approach
- Addressing underlying barriers
- Individual 'caseworker' throughout the process
- Suitability of employment opportunities (for employer and potential employee)
- Continuing support for employee and support for employer once in work.

3. Why voluntary, community and faith sector provision is effective

3.1 The voluntary, community and faith sector ethos and approach

Voluntary, community and faith sector organisations are intrinsically people-centred rather than issue driven. That is, they do not compartmentalise people as having an employment, or a drug, or a housing etc. issue but see people as individuals with complex, sometimes chaotic, lives in which issues of employment, drug abuse, housing... are interdependent and which must be addressed in a systematic way with the full agreement and involvement of the individual.

Additionally, voluntary, community and faith sector organisations do not see individuals in isolation but as part of a family and a wider community. This is important, particularly in areas of high deprivation, where unemployment and the reliance on benefits is the norm rather than the exception and, for many communities, has been for a number of years.

1. See http://www.leedsvoice.org.uk/Downloads/AddressingWorklessness_SueWynne.pdf

2. See http://www.leedsvoice.org.uk/Downloads/Shreeveport_2007.pdf

3. See http://www.leedsvoice.org.uk/Downloads/WhatWorksInTacklingWorklessness_May2007.pdf

Because voluntary, community and faith sector organisations view their work in an holistic way, they provide a wide range of support and services and are able to obtain funding from a number of sources not directly related to the worklessness agenda. For instance a number of voluntary, community and faith sector organisations are part funded by the Leeds PCT for work with physical and/or mental issues, or by private charitable foundations such as the Rowntree Trust for specific work with a specific client group, or by the Big Lottery for work associated with specific Big Lottery projects. Although these funds are not intended for the worklessness agenda they do contribute to the agenda by helping to overcome barriers to engaging with employment programmes.

3.2 Voluntary, community and faith sector organisations and staff and volunteers

The majority of voluntary, community and faith sector organisations are relatively small (75% employ 10 or fewer paid staff – see *'The Ripple Effect', Parkin and Morrill (2007)*) and consequently tend to operate in a relatively informal and non-bureaucratic manner. Individuals find voluntary, community and faith organisations far less intimidating to engage with than many statutory and private organisations which are, necessarily, much larger and consequently more impersonal and, to many, more intimidating to engage with.

The small size of voluntary, community and faith sector organisations also assists in effective team working, all staff know one another and are aware of the particular skills and/or knowledge of their colleagues. Many voluntary, community and faith organisations have staff or volunteers who have personal experience of one or more of the issues they are helping individuals to overcome which gives them particular knowledge and understanding.

Many voluntary, community and faith organisations use a “caseworker” approach, that is, every individual who engages with the organisations is assigned an individual member of staff (or in some cases an appropriately qualified and experienced volunteer) who will support them and work with them throughout their programme. This approach ensures that the individual always has someone who is known and trusted to contact, particularly in the event of a change of circumstances which has implications for their programme. In many cases this “caseworker” will continue to offer support even when the individual has gained employment and will thus help to ensure that the employment is sustained.

The overall effect is to provide individuals who engage with voluntary, community and faith organisations with a known contact member of staff who provides a caring and personal service and who they feel they can trust to act in their best interests.

3.3 Local knowledge, understanding and credibility

Because voluntary, community and faith sector organisations are embedded in the communities they serve, they have a knowledge and understanding of the community and of the support that the community requires. This knowledge and understanding is built up over time and is constantly changing as circumstances change, for example, a major employer closing down or relocating outside the area.

Alongside understanding the community in which they are embedded, voluntary, community and faith organisations have gained the confidence and trust of the community through providing high quality support and services over a number of years and in particular support and services in areas outside mainstream funding priorities.

3.4 Direct and indirect engagement and addressing barriers

Voluntary, community and faith organisations see individuals as a whole and as a result provide, or have access to through their networks, a wide range of support and services. Many, if not most, individuals initially engage with the voluntary, community and faith sector on issues other than employment.

Following engagement, voluntary, community and faith organisations work with individuals, identifying underlying issues and developing a plan to address these issues which in many cases will be barriers to addressing worklessness. This plan will provide a pathway through to employment and in many cases will involve progressing the individual to a main stream employment programme run by the statutory and/or private sector

3.5 The voluntary, community and faith sector as an employer and volunteering opportunities

The voluntary, community and faith sector is a substantial employer in Leeds with an estimated paid workforce city-wide of 22,000 and of the order of 100,000 volunteers working within the sector (see '*The Ripple Effect*', Parkin and Morrill (2007)). Many organisations provide work experience and volunteering opportunities as integral components of their employability programmes. There are a number of examples of individuals progressing through a programme and ultimately gaining employment with the voluntary, community and faith organisations who have supported them. This has the added advantage that many of these organisations have staff and volunteers who have personal experience of the issues which they are helping individuals to overcome.

4. Recommendations

4.1 Voluntary, community and faith sector Worklessness Focus Group

A voluntary, community and faith sector Worklessness Focus Group would have two key responsibilities.

The first key responsibility would be to coordinate the approach of voluntary, community and faith organisations involved with the worklessness agenda by;

- providing a link between voluntary, community and faith organisations and networks working in different areas of the worklessness agenda
- establishing and maintaining a database/directory of available voluntary, community and faith sector provision
- identifying gaps in provision and unnecessary duplication of provision

- acting as a forum for sharing best practice
- providing a communication hub for voluntary, community and faith organisations
- facilitating representation of the voluntary, community and faith sector on appropriate strategic and commissioning bodies
- facilitate training and organise workshops and other events
- advocate on behalf of the voluntary, community and faith sector

The second key responsibility would be to engage with the statutory and private sector organisations and agencies involved in the worklessness agenda by;

- providing a single initial contact point for statutory and private sectors to engage with the voluntary, community and faith sector
- providing a communications channel to the voluntary, community and faith for the statutory and private sectors
- facilitating the engagement between statutory and private organisations and the voluntary, community and faith sector by organising meetings, workshops and other events
- supporting the Narrowing the Gap Board in the work it is undertaking to reduce the levels of worklessness in Leeds.

4.2 Local Control and Coordination

Serious consideration should be given to establishing local control and coordination of the effort to reduce worklessness. The Worklessness Strategic Outcomes Group, for example, could take on the role of the local coordinating body. This local coordinating body, which needs to include representatives from all stakeholders, would be responsible for;

- monitoring the size and location of the workless population
- working with partners including Prime Contractors, Jobcentre Plus, LSC, colleges, private providers, voluntary, community and faith sector.. deciding on the most appropriate provision to meet the individual needs of the workless population
- ensuring that funding is used to maximum effect and that there is no unnecessary duplication of provision and no gaps in provision
- ensuring that partnership working is effective and that partnership agreements are fair and equitable and comply with the Compact for Leeds.

4.3 Caseworker Model

A caseworker model similar to Connexions PA model for young people should be adopted. A dedicated caseworker should be assigned to all clients and should remain as the key contact throughout the process of seeking employment. Caseworkers should be responsible to the local coordinating body.

4.4 Support to Sustain Employment

A support/mentoring service should be established to support clients and their employers once in employment. Ideally this would be the caseworker as described above. This service should be flexible both in the levels of support and the length of time the support is available.

4.5 Partnership Working

Everyone involved in the worklessness agenda is agreed that partnership working is the only approach which is likely to be effective with the disparate client group and the very local nature of worklessness.

For partnership working to be effective partnerships must be open and equal and based on mutual trust and the sharing of resources and expertise in order to achieve the common aim of reducing worklessness.

To increase mutual knowledge and understanding which are essential for true partnership working, regular meetings and/or events should be held to bring together statutory, private and voluntary, community and faith organisations.

4.6 Increased Volunteering

Volunteering has been increasingly recognised as an effective stepping stone to employment, particularly for those who have been out of work for a substantial period. The appropriate use of volunteering should be encouraged and volunteering schemes expanded. Pathways for volunteers to progress into employment or further training should be also be expanded.

4.7 Contracts and Funding

An essential part of greater involvement of the voluntary, community and faith sector and the development partnership working depends on the organisations and agencies who oversee the awarding of funding and contracts adapting their policies and procedures to enable and encourage bids from smaller organisations and from partnerships. To achieve this;

- A good practice guide –the Compact Commissioning Code of Practice could be the basis for this guide - should be developed and adopted by all funding bodies.
- Funding bodies should offer guidance and support to bidding organisations particularly those who are bidding for the first time
- There should be realistic deadlines for tendering which would allow partnerships the time to conduct the necessary internal discussions prior to bidding.
- Every effort should be made to reduce the time between the submission of bids and the awarding of contracts which has been in some cases inordinately long.
- There should be a minimum time between awarding of a contract and the start of the contract. This time should be sufficient to enable the contractor to adequately prepare for delivery of the outcomes.
- The achievement of “soft” outcomes should be included in contracts as appropriate to the client group.

- Payments regimes to contractors should take account of the financial resources of delivery organisations, for example, the cashflow implications for organisations of payments in arrears
- The length of contracts should be increased to a minimum of 3 years (subject to satisfactory performance) to allow meaningful staff and programme development.
- Local knowledge, and ideally creditability, should be mandatory for all contracts, that is a Prime Contractor must have this local knowledge or must have in place a formal partnership whose partner(s) have this local knowledge

5. Organisation involved in Workshop

5.1 Attendees at workshop

St Lukes Cares
 Leeds re'Build
 Vera Media & LeedselevenFM
 Archway
 Volition
 Stocks Hill Day Centre
 Groundwork Leeds
 Leeds Housing Concern
 Active 4 Life
 Healthy Living Network – Leeds
 Leeds University
 Leeds City Council Resources
 Leeds Ahead
 Leeds City Council Jobs & Skills
 PATH
 Cardigan Centre
 Mencap Pathway
 re'new
 St Anne's Open Learning

5.2 Unable to attend but contributed to workshop and/or case studies

Leeds CAB
 Jobcentre Plus
 Asha Neighbourhood Project
 Learning & Skills Council
 Physical & Sensory Impairment Network
 Learning Partnerships
 Mental Health Employment Consortium
 Gipsil

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Appendix I - Involvement

Introduction

This appendix is intended to give a brief overview of voluntary, community and faith involvement in the worklessness agenda over the last two to three years. It is not intended to be a comprehensive catalogue of all voluntary, community and faith provision in this area but rather to give an indication of the range of provision and of organisations.

It should be further noted that this is an overview of provision directly related to worklessness and does not include the huge amount of indirect voluntary, community and faith sector provision associated with overcoming the barriers to engaging with the worklessness agenda, offering on-going support, and signposting to further appropriate provision in the voluntary, community and faith, statutory or private sectors.

Nor does it include all the voluntary, community and faith organisations who work with year 10 and 11 school students who have been or are at risk of being excluded, nor those working on LSC funded NEET programmes such as Entry to Employment. In both these cases the aim is to re-engage the young people and prevent them from joining the worklessness statistics.

“Access to Employment” (A2E)

Four programmes were commissioned by A2E in April 2007,

Archway – Youth Employment Network

Builds on existing work undertaken with young people who are NEET extending the range of activity and providing additional specialist resources to develop skills and experience that will ultimately lead to employment. This is a city-wide partnership project which includes BARCA-Leeds, St. Luke’s Cares and Youthpoint (Cardigan Centre) as delivery partners, and builds on two earlier and more localised phases of the YEN funded through ERDF and A2E.

Learning Partnerships – Access the Job Zone

A partnership project which brings together key organisations from both the statutory and voluntary sectors to deliver a package of support to those most advantage through worklessness. Builds the capacity of local people and organisations while at the same time linking to employers needs in key growth sectors.

Leeds Mind – Working Minds

Activity to address the gaps in the availability of work placements and mentoring opportunities appropriate to the needs of unemployed people with mental health problems. Engaging with and supporting employers to reduce stigma and discrimination within the workplace and in turn open up new job opportunities for mental health service users.

Space@Little London – Removing Barriers to Employment & Training

Making better use of a valued community facility to develop a programme of employment related support for local people seeking to overcome the barriers to skills, training and employment.

In addition **Groundwork Leeds** were funded to undertake a feasibility study around establishing a community training and employment initiative for people living in the Wykebeck Valley.

Groundwork are also involved in a Round 2 programme to develop an environmental apprenticeship scheme in West and South Leeds in partnership with West North West Homes and Aire Valley Homes.

NRF Funded Projects

South Leeds Health for All – Learning in the Community

Project to engage local community groups within South Leeds with educational and employment opportunities in the area to increase skills and employment.

RETAS – Leeds Welcome Project

Project to support refugees to enable them to access employment opportunities at an appropriate level for their skills and qualification level, for example health professionals.

Leeds re'Build – Local People into Construction

Project to support local residents to access employment opportunities in the construction sector.

Leeds Mind – Support to Employment Project (STEP)

Project to provide specialised support to enable people with mental health problems to engage with mainstream employment-related vocational activities and employment opportunities.

Leeds Ahead

Project to secure private sector resources to support practical delivery on neighbourhood renewal projects with employment outcomes

Learning Partnerships – The Job Zone

The Job Zone targets people living in areas of greatest need, providing supported pathways into employment. Partnership project with the East, Inner North East and South Leeds District Partnership Worklessness groups.

Archway – Archway Resource Centre

Project to provide support to disaffected and underachieving young people to access education and employment opportunities.

Other...**DISC – Pathways to Work**

DWP funded initiative to help and support people claiming incapacity or disability benefit into employment.

Leeds Ahead – Out of Armley

Pilot project to improve employer engagement in the rehabilitation of ex-offenders.

Mencap Pathway – Getting and keeping a job

This project aims to give people with a learning disability equal opportunities to get and keep rewarding jobs that match their individual needs and preferences.

The voluntary, community and faith sector contribution to reducing worklessness

Appendix II - Case Studies

Case Study #1

Jim B (name has been changed) was a 37 year old man who had been in and out of treatment services for help with his drinking problem for 8 years. His chronic and long-term use of alcohol - drinking in excess of 75 units of alcohol per day - had caused a range of problems. His physical health was poor - experiencing severe alcohol withdrawal symptoms - and his mental health had deteriorated due to his use of alcohol, with him experiencing feelings of anxiousness anxiety and depressive symptoms. He had also had problems with the police because of his drinking, including 4 offences of drink driving. Although he had been in employment, he had not been able to hold a job down because of his drinking, and he had lost several jobs for being intoxicated.

Following a referral from his GP, St Anne's were able to assist Jim in first accessing appropriate community treatment programmes, which were able to assist him in stabilising his drinking and his mental health. Then, working in partnership with the community treatment team, Jim was admitted to the St Anne's residential treatment services, firstly into a detoxification programme, and then onto a rehabilitation programme. During the rehabilitation programme Jim learnt a range of skills and techniques that have helped him develop as a person. This includes coping skills for anxiety and low mood, dealing with anger, and learning assertiveness skills. As well as personal development, the structure of the programme taught Jim how to structure his lifestyle and to get into routines of work and leisure. In addition, the programme assisted Jim with specific skills for returning to employment or other meaningful activities. In partnership with a local education centre, Jim was able to attend computer sessions regularly which helped him boost his confidence, assist him to settle in a learning environment, and give him specific computer skills. During the programme Jim also got help with writing his C.V., learning how to complete job application forms and how to use the internet to search for jobs or other meaningful activities.

St Anne's policies allow service users to be at the centre of decisions that affect them. Jim was part of the interview panel that selected staff for work at the centre, again boosting his confidence, but also improving his future work opportunities.

Whilst on the rehabilitation programme, Jim was assisted in applying for voluntary work placements. This included Jim applying to be a volunteer mentor in a community drug project. He was successful with this application, and was able to start as a volunteer there at the end of his rehabilitation programme. Jim successfully completed his

rehabilitation programme, and St Anne's continued to provide support to him in the community to assist him with adjusting to his life back at home.

A few months after completing his rehabilitation programme, Jim applied to be a volunteer with St Anne's - wanting to 'put something back in', in return for all the help he had received. Following an assessment and interview, Jim completed a volunteer training programme to ensure that he had the appropriate skills and knowledge for his volunteer role. Jim was supported in his volunteering through supervision and ongoing training.

After a few months of volunteering, a job vacancy became available at St Anne's which Jim decided to apply for. He was successful in his job application, and recently started work at St Anne's Alcohol Services, providing care and support to people with long-term and chronic alcohol problems. Jim's story is one of personal success for him, demonstrating that given good quality services, partnership working and opportunities to develop, tremendous positive changes can be brought about - changes that benefit the person, but also the services they are using.

(courtesy: Jonathan Philpott, St Anne's Alcohol Services)

Case Study #2

AN came from Pakistan about fifteen years ago with her one year old son, to join her husband in the UK. Since then she has had another son. When she arrived in the UK she was looked after and supported by her husband's family, they did everything from shopping to taking her son to nursery. However, all the support came to an end when AN and her husband separated.

AN had basic primary schooling from Pakistan and was only able to read and write in Urdu. When she first came to Asha she needed help with almost everything in terms of everyday living, such as housing, benefits and immigration advice.

Asha's staff not only provided AN with advice and support, they encouraged her to access the ESOL classes at Asha. AN joined the classes to help her to learn and understand basic English she also felt at ease knowing that her youngest child was close and looked after in Asha's on sight crèche. After completing the ESOL class, AN was then encouraged to join the Clothing Technology course, which was also running at Asha.

AN commented that Asha is very popular amongst Asian women within the community, as it is the only organisation which has been specifically tailored to meet their needs. She also remarked that the Clothing Technology course has a more flexible approach to learning and the lessons are planned in such a way that they start after children have gone to school and finish before school ends. Asha is very welcoming; it feels safe and less daunting than a formal College setting.

Since completing the Clothing Technology course AN joined the Co-op group and became interested in driving. Asha provided help in finding a good driving instructor and also supported her through her test.

AN now owns her own car which she uses to commute to and from work. Over the

past few years AN has advanced and developed herself immensely. She has raised two children as a single mother and continued to find career opportunities, enabling her to experience and adapt an array of skills and knowledge.

AN has now embarked on a new venture and has opened her own business in the textile industry. AN continues to maximise Asha's services and drops in on a regular basis, she is provided with help and support with her new business along with general personal advice.

(courtesy: Helen King, Asha)

Case Study #3

Sarah joined Archway in 2003 to access the Housing Support service after living and unsettled life, facing homelessness and moving into a hostel. She overcame numerous difficulties and worked hard to eventually establish her own tenancy and live independently. Although she faced a range of barriers to employment, Sarah was still keen to become financially independent and took on the challenge of finding a full time job. She eventually started work full time as an assistant in Somerfield and was committed to becoming organized and making her situation work for her. Over time Sarah secured numerous part time and temporary jobs but the challenges she faced made it difficult for her to sustain them, and she eventually became disengaged. She ultimately wanted to start a career in youth work but had no idea of where to start, and so accessed support from the Careers Adviser at Archway.

Sarah has always had high aspirations and the desire to succeed, although lack of knowledge about available opportunities combined with low levels of confidence led to uncertainty about her future career. She was keen to explore her options and take on some of the challenges she faced, and began volunteering for two different youth based community projects. She developed a range of skills, took steps to increase her motivation and confidence, and became proactively involved in a Peer Development Programme. Always keen to be independent, Sarah moved on from accessing support at Archway and went on to pursue her goals.

In 2007 Sarah approached Archway's Youth Employment Team for Support as she had recently become disengaged and wanted to really overcome her barriers and pursue her career in Youth Work. She was keen to find a suitable path into her chosen career whilst also becoming financially independent. With one to one support, advice & guidance she started to explore her options & make some confident choices about her lifestyle to overcome the barriers she faced. Gradually her confidence grew and she began to explore her aspirations, she admitted that she had always wanted to study at University, but had been convinced that she would be unable to do so.

By accessing one to one support and group work opportunities she developed her overall employability skills and started to look for a job that would help her to fund a course at University. By exploring her options Sarah became able to make confident decisions and applied to the BSc(Hons) Youth and Community Work course at Leeds Metropolitan University, onto which she was accepted. With further support to make funding applications, a strict budget plan and further employment support, Sarah secured a part time job at Marks and Spencers and became financially independent. Sarah has now completed the first year of her university course, and is still working at Archway, she is confident and excited about helping other young people to overcome

barriers and face challenges in the way she had to be able to achieve her goals.

(courtesy: Ruth Davany, Archway)

Case Study #4

Duane is 34 years old and lives in Little London. After leaving school he studied business and finance at college before taking a job working as an assistant in a bingo hall. Within a few months, due to stress and depression. Duane became ill and began to find himself more and more isolated. At the time there were few activities locally that he felt confident enough to get involved in. His lack of work experience added to his anxiety and he eventually stopped looking for work as he felt no-one would employ him. When Space @ opened the Cyber-Café he started to come and access the internet several times a week, gradually building his confidence as he interacted with staff and others using the facility.

In the latter part of 2007 he enrolled on to the Digital Media Photography course funded by A2E and found he not only had a real talent for photography and IT, but that supporting others who were less skilled helped to build his confidence. In December, working alongside the tutor, he prepared an exhibition of class work and ran a stall promoting IT and photography. Since January he has continued to grow in confidence and is supporting the tutor in workshops, setting up and preparing the sessions and helping others develop their skills. He also attends the Job Club on a weekly basis and is actively seeking work.

Duane says "Coming to Space @ and taking part has changed my life. I feel that through volunteering I can build up my experience and skills to apply for work that I will enjoy. The Job Club have been helping me with searching for work and preparing a CV as well as giving advice about things like Working Tax Credits so that, when I do start work, I will have enough money to support myself".

(courtesy: Access to Employment Newsletter, Spring 2008)

Case Study #5

Touchstone were asked to assist Adult Social Care producing a report into the Mental Health needs of residents in Chapeltown and Harehills.

To assist with this project Touchstone recruited a research team of 5 who had;

- direct experience of using mental health services or
- caring for someone with MH problems
- lived in Chapeltown or Harehills.

We also wanted to recruit people who may have had difficulties in finding employment, or who were currently on benefits.

We ensured the roles;

- Did not to require a particular level of academic attainment

- Were flexible to allow carers, or people with fluctuating capacity to vary their hours
- Required no previous experience of research – a comprehensive package of training was provided by Touchstone
- Received regular support through 1-2-1, group and on an ad hoc basis
- Could be treated as “permitted work” – to ensure benefits disruption would be minimised.
- Additional support was provided for those on state benefits

Five people undertook training, with three of them having little or no work experience in the previous four years. They were employed by Touchstone for a total of ten weeks.

Two of these researchers have gone on to full-time employment, and one of them is still employed on a sessional basis by Touchstone as a consultant/facilitator.

(courtesy: Jon Beech, Touchstone)

Case Study #6

James (name has been changed) applied to the St Annes Substance Misuse Training Course after using heroin for about 13 years and was starting to make positive changes in his life. His life had until recently revolved around drugs and he was determined to put this behind him and to be equipped with skills that would enable him to be an effective drugs worker. I saw the potential in James and was sure that the training course could provide an opportunity for him to realise his potential.

James grew in confidence during the training course as he applied himself to the training sessions and responded to the challenges that were set him. The training course focused not only on the skills and competencies needed to work in drugs services but also the interpersonal and confidence-building that proved to be key for James and other people on the course. James grew in self belief as the course progressed and the change was apparent particularly when he had to deliver presentations that he had put together as part of the course assessment process. Aside from the course material, support was provided to ensure that James was adjusting to his change in lifestyle. Halfway through the 6 month course, James applied for and was successful in gaining employment as a drugs worker with St Annes and has established himself as a competent worker who has an excellent rapport with staff and service users alike. Since gaining employment, James has designed and delivered training sessions to other agencies by effectively applying the skills acquired on the training course.

(courtesy: Karen Newsome, St Anne’s community Services)

Case Study #7

Zoe has been with Gipsil for nearly a year and has settled into her new home well. Her 5 year old daughter is enjoying school and Zoe was eager to return to work. Zoe had previous experience as working as a dental assistant which she did before having her daughter. Zoe enjoyed this work and requested help and support towards finding

part time work in a local surgery which would also provide training to enable her to gain qualifications in this field.

Zoe and myself spent time putting together a CV, building up her confidence and building on the skills she has. We put together a covering letter along with her CV and sent it to all the dental surgeries local to Zoe. Zoe received good feedback through telephone calls and letters and was invited to three interviews. Zoe was successful in two of the interviews and chose a surgery in Meanwood, where she would be working 16 hours and who would provide training towards her qualifications, starting in September. The original vacancy was for cover of maternity leave however Zoe has been informed that they would like to keep her on and she has now become a valuable member of staff.

(courtesy: Julia Preston, Gipsil)

Case Study #8

After leaving school with minimum GCSE's and clueless of what I wanted to do, I needed to get my life going. Sitting at home every day, being rejected from every job application, my future was heading towards stacking shelves and my aspirations were diminishing fast. The first time Future Pathways called to tell me about Groundwork's Dig It project, I turned them down –I didn't want to make the journey and my self-esteem was too low. After the second call I decided to take the chance. At first it was difficult and I kept myself to myself, but the Education Maintenance Allowance I was receiving kept me going. I kept telling myself it was getting me somewhere, unlike wasting myself in front of the TV. As the course progressed I still had doubts, but at least I had options and qualifications. I achieved Key Skills English Level 2 and I'm now working on another NVQ. I received training in team building, personal and social development, healthy living and Admin. They helped me brush up my CV and gave me a 2 weeks work placement, which led to a job as an Administration Assistant at Groundwork.

Before, I felt as though my friends were miles ahead of me and I wasn't getting anywhere, but now I'm overtaking some of them. I visited my old school recently and my teachers were surprised and pleased at how well I'd done for myself, my friends commented on how I've matured. I'm hoping to eventually become an IT Technician. Dig It has given me a future to move towards, I'm not going to give up.

(courtesy: Glen Duckett, Groundwork)

