

Employability Learning Network Case Study



Fit for Your Future

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Background

Fit for Your Future is an innovative health and employability programme delivered through North Lanarkshire's Working by the Action Plan Plus arm of Routes to Work Ltd, working in conjunction with Dynamic Attitudes

North Lanarkshire's Working is the "brand name" for the employability services delivered by the North Lanarkshire's Community Planning Partnership which comprises of the local authority, and key partners such as the local college consortium, NHS Lanarkshire, Routes to Work Ltd, Voluntary Action North Lanarkshire (formerly the Council for Voluntary Service and the Volunteer Centre), as well as other organisations. Delivering services since April 2008, the model has helped over 3200 people into employment.

Since 2002, Routes to Work has delivered a key worker service to unemployed people in North Lanarkshire. This has developed into being the lynch pin of the current North Lanarkshire's Working model, providing dedicated, face-to-face, personalised employability support that is free and confidential.

One of its many services includes Action Plan Plus which is an award-winning, flexible, innovative, early engagement programme which allows participants to take part in short interest based courses which build confidence and improve social skills in a friendly and informal atmosphere. Often, those participating will be people with little or no social or routine connections and participation provides them with a purpose, contact with others and regularity in their lives that then becomes a stepping stone into more mainstream employability support.

Founded by Johnny Walker in 2000, Dynamic Attitudes Ltd is a company with a history of developing and delivering personal development programmes to people with multiple barriers that prevent their engagement with the labour market.

Their delivery model centres around the themes of "resiliency" – working with the person to take cognisance of the skills they have used to address possible chaotic behaviour and circumstances in the past; and "life skills" – acquiring a shared vision with other participants of the life skills and values required to assist them in removing barriers to employment.

Since its inception the company has worked extensively with ex-offenders, addiction sufferers, Women's Aid groups, and has delivered personal development programmes such as Positive Options for Women, and Positive Options for People in community and college settings.



Fit for Your Future

The initial aim of programme was to engage with hardest to reach men - those long term unemployed on Incapacity Benefit or on income based JSA with the desirable age range being between late 20's to early 50's. The programme was conceived on the basis that we needed to do something radically different to engage with men who were socially excluded, not engaging with any learning or employability support and whose lifestyles were impacting on their health.

Although the programme was managed by North Lanarkshire's Working (NLW) through the Action Plan Plus project, there were a range of partners involved in its delivery, such as NLC Log into Learn, Community Learning and Development, the Routes to Work Key Worker Teams, Greater Easterhouse Money Advice Project (GEMAP), NLC Welfare Rights, Motherwell FC, Dynamic Attitudes and the North Lanarkshire half of the Lanarkshire Equally Well test site (which has a theme of employability).

A rough outline of the desired structure was designed and through discussion with the partners a finished model was then agreed. Each partner had an important role to play at various stages of the programme. This may have been in the organisation, facility provision, recruitment, or delivery of elements of the programme.



The pilot course was based in Wishaw Library's Log into Learn facility and in Motherwell FC. The pilot delivered training and learning three days per week over five weeks as follows:

- Group programme delivered by Dynamic Attitudes to build confidence, boost self esteem, motivate, identify and remove barriers to employment, (Institutional, Environmental and Attitudinal).
- Information about the world of work, what employers look for, links to North Lanarkshire's Working support and access to employment and job opportunities provided by Routes to Work.
- Men's Health Issues delivered through Equally Well.
- Fitness, diet and nutrition provided by Motherwell FC.
- Financial education and awareness of debt and credit issues delivered by GEMAP.
- Literacy and numeracy support delivered by CL&D Adult Literacy Support.
- Introduction to computers and IT delivered by NLC Log into Learn.
- Benefits advice and better off in work advice delivered by NLC Welfare Rights.

Each trainee participant was registered on NLW support database and provided with continuing and ongoing employability support through Action Plan Plus and RTW Key Workers.

The success of this venture lay in the strength of the partnership and the feeling of ownership that it engendered. This enabled:

- Effective engagement with excluded men which encouraged their participation in the programme.
- Partners and Council services using and sharing resources to deliver the programme.
- The involvement of Motherwell FC which evidences its commitment to the community.
- The combination of motivation, self esteem and confidence building, men's health issues, fitness, diet and nutrition training and advice linked to a clear progression path to employability through NLW support.
- Ongoing access to additional employability support.

No hard targets were set as it was expected that participants would have multiple barriers to overcome and that the process of support would be longer term. The programme included the provision of intensive and challenging group work which provided motivation, confidence and self esteem building. This encouraged participants to examine their circumstances helped to remove initial barriers. Additional support was included in this group phase through a range of providers. As this was provided in situ it removed the need for participants to be referred and therefore to wait for this support. An added bonus was that participants bonded through the group and supported each other.

As Fit For Your Future was delivered through North Lanarkshire's Working it naturally provided linked access to services but the benefits of the group setting over an extended period enabled partner organisations to discuss with each other how best to input their support.

North Lanarkshire residents have access, in their communities to the complete range of employability support provided through NLW, however, this does not always guarantee engagement with these services. Therefore new and different methods of engagement, particularly for those people, (invariably men) who are furthest removed from employment need to be devised and implemented.



The important factor here was and is the attraction of Motherwell FC as participants were offered the chance to train in the stadium with the club coaches, not only to be able to meet the players but to be part of their day, and get professional advice about lifestyle, diet and nutrition.

In addition The NHS provided advice and information about men's health issues, e.g. diabetes, prostate cancer, heart and lung disease alcohol and smoking cessation and the problems that can come through poor lifestyle choices.

An evaluation of the pilot programme was carried out which highlighted the value of the support given by GEMAP, and Log in to Learn, which led to two participants signing up for IT classes at Motherwell College.

The involvement of Motherwell Football Club was regarded as an important hook to engage with participants whose general fitness improved through taking part in training sessions, and the men's Health sessions delivered by NHS Health Promotion were well received, highlighting some of the "bad habits" some of the participants had picked up. In particular, the sessions led by Dynamic Attitudes Ltd were regarded as "fantastic" and allowed the group to bond as a unit and tackle sensitive issues with diplomacy and care.

Following the successful delivery of the first "pilot" programme, the programme was then supported by Equally Well to deliver two further programmes, the first aimed at clients of Phoenix Futures and the North Lanarkshire Integrated Addiction Service which used the fitness facilities available through Wishaw Sports Centre. This was then followed by a programme delivered in Cumbernauld from the Wallbrae Learning Centre which is run by the locally-owned, Carbrain Learning Trust, with fitness session delivered at the Tryst Sports Centre.

This latter programme included participants with a wide range of health "issues", many of which were lone parents and included those with self-esteem and confidence issues to others who had suffered breakdowns and attempted suicide to those with eating disorders. Six of the participants have gone into full or part-time employment while two others have gone into training with another taking up voluntary work.



Future Developments

Traditionally, North Lanarkshire Council has a long history of being involved in the delivery of personal development programmes such as Positive Options for Women (POW) and Positive Options for Parents (POP) which were aimed at people who needed help with their self-esteem and confidence; and following these courses the participants would then progress to take part in the Women's Placement Programme which was a longer, more intensive programme which gave the participants the chance to experience a work placement in a variety of settings, and the chance to "try out" that type of employment.

Since April 2008, the personal development programmes have been delivered through the local colleges and latterly the Council's own Community Learning and Development department, however the experience of Fit For Your Future allied with its ability to target key groups has led to the development of "Personal Development Programmes for People with Complex Needs" or POP (Positive Options for People) as it is known. As the full title of this new programme suggests it is aimed at those with complex needs and has several target groups including ex-offenders, people with addiction problems, young people leaving care, and those with mental health problems.



One programme aimed at ex-offenders who are clients of APEX Scotland and ROOP (Routes Out Of Prison) has already been delivered with two more programmes aimed at this client group organised for November 2010 and January 2011.

Two courses have been delivered to addiction clients, and one for young people who are homeless or at risk of being made homeless.

The innovative delivery of this new programme by Dynamic Attitudes includes delivery of evening courses when clients are at their most vulnerable, and text and telephone counselling is also available. Consideration is also being given to delivering a course at Christmas which can be a depressing time for clients.



Other recent developments have seen the programme going full circle by working once again in partnership with Motherwell Football Club through the delivery of "Fit For Your Families Future" which delivered a learning programme for the whole family with the main aim of the course being to engage with parents who were unemployed and give them the opportunity to learn new skills, develop self-confidence and employability skills and improve their own health and fitness and lifestyles, and also that of their families.

To remove the barrier of child care, the children of the participating adults took part in a football coaching programme based at the club which taught them football skills, leadership skills and how to work as part of a team.

Based on the Fit For Your Future model, the course included "traditional" elements such as IT skills, adult literacy and numeracy support, financial inclusion, Better-off-in-work calculations, money advice, and employability advice and support.

Added to these inputs were a tour of the football club, health fitness and gym sessions and diet and lifestyle sessions from club coaches and the NHS.

11 adults and 18 children took part in the programme with all sessions taking place at Motherwell Football Club with travel costs covered for those participating.

While the programme has only recently finished, there has been a marked improvement in the confidence and self esteem of participants and some of them have moved on to other initiatives such as the North Lanarkshire's Working placement programme, or started college, while the rest are being actively supported by an employability key worker with two clients already securing employment.

The club have also been oversubscribed for their "Football Fans in Training" programme which is an initiative that all the Scottish Premier League clubs are involved in delivering which aims to improve the health of older male fans. Such was the demand for this programme when it was advertised on the club website that places were filled within a day and now the club and the Council through Equally Well hope to deliver an adapted programme for younger male fans and women starting in early 2011 which will include health and fitness and an employability element.



Client Case Studies

Andy

Andy took part in Fit For Your Future 2 and was referred in by Addictions Workers following a long period of alcohol addiction. Andy had originally lost his job because of his drinking. By taking part in the course he gained the support and motivation to beat his addiction.

After the course he continued to engage with his worker in a support group model. He then moved on to basic IT courses with Community Learning and Development. A course in Painting, Decorating and Tiling became available at Maintenance and Property Care and Andy took part and got a lot out of this course.

Andy already had some skills and began to help family and friends with this type of work and gained more skills through practice. He has achieved modules in a range of financial fitness topics and he is currently still engaged with the project, and although not ready to return to work he is making good progress.

John

John took part in the first Fit for the Future programme as he had been suffering from back pain and had experienced alcohol addictions issues. John had been unable to return to the same kind of work as before and needed retraining and a considerable boost in confidence

The course encouraged John to try new things and he started a college course in IT, which he completed. He received assistance with money advice from Gemap, and support with pain management from Salus.

John has retrained with financial assistance from Remploy in Security Industry Accreditation, and recently was appointed as a Security Officer in The Kwik Fit Insurance centre in Viewpark, Uddingston.



The views expressed in case studies are those of participants and are not necessarily shared by their employers or the Scottish Government.

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