

Supported Employment: Cadwynau Ceredigion Making a difference

Bethan Davies describes the success and impact of an ESF funded supported employment project in Ceredigion

Cadwynau Ceredigion, a Supported Employment project for adults with learning disabilities, has achieved significant success since it was set up in January 2003. The project was made available through the Objective 1 European Social Fund, and has been delivered through a partnership between Ceredigion County Council, Mencap Cymru and Coleg Ceredigion.

The background

Before external funding was made available for setting up Cadwynau Ceredigion there was clear recognition of the need for a dedicated supported employment provision in Ceredigion. A great deal of support was being provided by Coleg Ceredigion and Day Services for adults with learning disabilities to access work placements and work opportunities, but despite many successes, where some service users held paid employment, it was evident that neither organisation had the capacity to go the extra mile required in terms of support.

In recognition of the need for a

service dedicated to supported employment discussions commenced between Coleg Ceredigion, Social Services and Mencap Cymru. After a number of meetings it was agreed to form a partnership, with Social Services as the lead agency, and apply for Objective 1 funding under the European Social Fund (ESF). An application was completed by the end of December 2001 and it was anticipated that, if successful, the project could start mid 2002.



The first application was, however, a mere 10 points short and the partnership was advised to amend some aspects of the application. A resubmission was successful but the time delay meant a new start date of January 2003.

Setting up the project

There were many tasks confronting the partnership on receipt of the confirmation of funding. The complexities and details of the ESF rules needed to be digested and understood, there were staff to be recruited, there were details of the partners' match funding contributions to be documented and apportionment methods to be adopted, there was paperwork (with logos on everything!) to be produced, there was premises to be found and there was, it seemed, a million and one other things to do to achieve these things. But achieved they were and once leaflets were produced to advertise the project an official launch was arranged. The aims of the project were:

Llais

- To support individuals with a learning disability to gain meaningful and valued work opportunities;
- To raise awareness about the employment needs of people with learning disabilities with employers;
- To provide appropriate support to enable people to have a valued role and integration within the workplace.

The team

A Coordinator with extensive experience of working with adults with learning disabilities in Ceredigion was appointed and became immediately involved in the recruitment of Job Trainers. Five Job Trainers with a variety of experiences and skills were appointed and a member of staff from Day Services was seconded as part of the match funding commitment from the Social Services Department. The team, and the delivery of the project, was overseen by a Senior Management Group made up of representatives from the three partners and a Steering Group was formed with representatives from agencies and organisations that had offered their approval of the application and the project.

With an established team the project was set to receive referrals.

Off to a good start

By the end of 2003, since the launch of the project in May, there were 33 registered beneficiaries on the project (out of a target figure of 46 beneficiaries for the two years). Of those beneficiaries 30 were in work placements. The majority of those were voluntary



placements but Job Trainers were striving towards increasing beneficiary hours with view to paid employment in the future. Job Trainers reported that they had found this to be the most successful way of increasing beneficiary confidence and self-esteem and it gave opportunities to raise employers' awareness of people's needs and skills. The following practices were implemented throughout the project to provide beneficiaries with the appropriate support and to fulfil the requirements of being in receipt of ESF funding:

- Job tasters for beneficiaries that had never experienced being a part of a workforce to raise awareness and aid decision making;
- An agreed action plan for each beneficiary that was reviewed regularly;
- Risk assessments completed with employers' input which were reviewed regularly;
- A four-weekly monitoring service when a beneficiary was working unsupported;
- Six-monthly surveys to ascertain beneficiary and employer satisfaction;
- Training opportunities for beneficiaries including Workright

and Information Technology giving a range of employability skills;

- Training opportunities for staff including Training in Systematic Instruction, Benefits training and Marketing Skills training;
- Weekly staff meetings; monthly Senior Management Group meetings and quarterly Steering Group meetings to monitor and evaluate the implementation and progress of the project.

Continued success

By June 2004 the project had reached its target figure of 46 beneficiaries with 8 people in paid employment. Job Trainers were finding that the most difficult aspect of their work was achieving paid employment, but they reported that by this stage they were able to approach employers with success stories and that training and experience had enabled them to feel more confident in their approach to prospective employers. Many parents and carers were against the suggestion of the person in their care giving up any benefits and some beneficiaries had also expressed a wish to remain on benefits (even when offered open and paid employment).

Llais

By September 2004, however, the amount of beneficiaries in open employment had risen to 12 and the number of beneficiaries on the project was 53 (representing the permitted 15% increase by the Welsh European Funding Office). One of these beneficiaries had been successfully referred to the WORKSTEP programme managed by the Social Services Department and had gained paid employment within Day Services. Other beneficiaries had gained paid employment in a variety of places such as Aberystwyth University, Rachel's Dairies, Cyswllt Ceredigion Contact, Ceredigion County Council, Castle Café, Anthony Motors and Penrallt Hotel.

Apart from achieving paid or voluntary employment many of the beneficiaries had also been successful in completing courses such as ASDAN and Information Technology. The skills gained through undertaking these courses had proven to be invaluable for entering a work environment and they had also proven to have a positive impact on building confidence and assertiveness. In recognition of this an Award Ceremony evening was held in



November 2004 to present the certificates and to generally celebrate the achievements made by everybody who had participated in or benefited from the project. During this evening three beneficiaries spoke publicly about their experience of Cadwynau Ceredigion and how their work had impacted positively on their lives. The project also received very positive press coverage in these last few months.

The way forward

During 2004 the Senior Management Group and the Project Coordinator worked on the submission of another bid for ESF funding. It was to be a highly competitive final round for the appropriate Priority and Measure but one that had to be pursued as no alternative source of funding had been made available for the continuation of the project post December 2004. However, it was not possible to submit an application for just a continuation of the project - additionality had to be proven.

It had been apparent during the first two years of the project that people with higher support needs were disadvantaged by the project in that it was unable to provide sufficient support hours or longer-term support in the workplace. It was possible to quantify this as a clear unmet need for the second bid for funding. Fortunately the second application was successful and Cadwynau Ceredigion Phase 2 commenced in January 2005.

To build on current successes the current link with the WORKSTEP provision within

Social Services will be maintained and it is hoped that the Workprep programme delivered by Mencap will be developed in Ceredigion and will become an additional link for the project. The existing good relations with the representatives on the Steering Group - such as the Disability Employment Adviser - will also continue to be a valued and beneficial part of the project.

Ceredigion County Council will remain the lead agency and will maintain the higher proportion of match funding for the project. Following the success of secondment in the first two years more staff from Day Services have been given the opportunity for secondments to the project. This will provide the additional hands-on Job Trainer support required for the project and enable people with higher support needs to make the same achievements as previous beneficiaries. This would also provide some continuity for beneficiaries at the end of the project in December 2006 if further funding has not been secured. However, the partnership is committed to ensuring the continuation and development of the project and every effort will be made to secure funding for the future.

For further information about the project contact:

*Lis Pugh, Cadwynau Ceredigion
Coordinator*

Phone: (01545) 571636

E-mail: lis.pugh@mencap.org.uk

Bethan Davies

*Day Services Development
Manager, Social Services
Ceredigion County Council*