

Case Study: Skills and Education in Communities Programme

The City of Wolverhampton Council Skills Team managed the coordination and delivery of a total of 8 projects with a range of providers, each providing structured 6-week skills and employability training to young people 16-25, women facing complex life challenges, and people living with long term physical and mental ill health conditions. Programme goals included empowering people with the skills, knowledge and experience required to overcome barriers to employment, as well as improving mental health and wellbeing.

Real Talk

The City of Wolverhampton College delivered a programme of *Real Talk* which supports young people in building confidence, resilience, and motivation to get into work. The project provided skills and employability training in conjunction with partners from across the city aimed at supporting 16–25-year-olds with positive decision making for their career pathway. The programme enabled 13 participants to improve digital skills, self-esteem, and motivation, providing opportunities to engage in a community project gaining real time work experience as well as hearing from local employers on how best to prepare for entering the employment market.

Choices4U

The *Choices4U* programme from City of Wolverhampton College targeted 16–25-year-olds now ready to identify career paths and work towards the requirements for their chosen career, develop confidence and motivation to look at next steps, reflect on their own learning goals and aspirations and identify and break down barriers, developing communication skills and working with others. A total of 15 participants achieved online certification for employability skills, mental health awareness and preparation for work going on to receive mentoring and coaching support through college advice and guidance team and signposting to other agencies, as required.

Empowering Women

Aspiring Futures delivered the *Empowering Women* programme which engaged a total of 15 women (18+) who were facing a range of life complexities including substance use and domestic violence which can place additional barriers in their ability to secure rewarding and meaningful employment. The programme delivered tailored 'person centred' employability support focusing on further education, training, and volunteering, CV writing and mentoring. Targeted mental wellbeing promotion interventions, counselling, and time to explore new coping strategies to deal with day-to-day issues improved self-confidence, and self-esteem, supporting opportunities to gain employment.

Health at Work

The *Health at Work* programme delivered by Access to Business provided a total of 18 adults living with long term physical and mental ill health conditions with an opportunity to gain further education, work experience and soft skills support to support confidence and wellbeing with a goal of helping people be 'job ready'. The programme also helped people understand how to have a healthy body and healthy mind, the importance of taking time for self-care, useful relaxation techniques, as a result of a series of workshops, guidance, and support writing job applications.

Outputs and Outcomes

A total of 61 people were engaged in the above employment skills and education in communities programme across 8 project cohorts, with many participants living the 30% most deprived local super output areas (LSOA'S) in the city. Programme output activity was captured using a range of methods including case studies, personal narratives, workshop engagement images, and end of project reports from providers. All projects utilised the Warwick and Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS) to further gauge impact of project activities on the wellbeing of participants.

The *Health at Work* project showed increases in wellbeing scores of participant groups across both project cohorts by end of programme, with similar outcomes shown in the first cohort of the *Real Talk* programme, though missing data for cohort 2 made it difficult to assess impact. The *Choices4u* project showed some positive initial results, though these were variable across programme cohorts. The *Empowering Women* project reported more 'post' than 'pre' course WEMWBS scores due to additional people joining the projects mid-programme and as scores were grouped this made assessing true impact purely from WEMWBS data a challenge.

In summary however, the totality of project outputs was overall positive with case examples of people securing employment because of attending skills and employment programmes. Showcasing of case studies and impact narratives from all employment skills and education in communities projects will feature on the <http://www.bettermentalhealthwolves.co.uk/> landing page.