

CFRS-Job Centre Plus Initiative

Topic	Employment opportunities and reduction in unemployment.		
Title	CFRS-Job Centre Plus Initiative		
Function	Prevention		
Date	28 September 2011		
Service Priority		Services to our community	
FRESEF Reference	3.11, 3.15, 3.18		

Issue

Due to current economic, political and social factors, there are a number of people in Cornwall that are currently unemployed. Not only can it be demoralising to be out of work, not to mention a real struggle financially, it can also be an uphill battle to find new employment. This can be even more of a challenge for those that are older.

Unemployment in Cornwall has grown in recent years and, according to the Office for National Statistics, is currently over 10,000 people. Cornwall's unemployment rate is around 3.1%, which although lower than the national average (3.8), is still too high.

Actions Taken

Between December 2010 and April 2011 CFRS launched a pilot scheme as part of a partnership initiative with Cornwall Works and Job Centre Plus.

The pilot aimed to use the well-established brand of the Phoenix Project (CFRS youth and community engagement project) to tailor further courses to work with people referred from local Job Centres, with the overall aim of reducing unemployment and moving participants towards additional training, voluntary and/or new employment opportunities.

Four courses were established for those referred from different Job Centres; Redruth, St Austell, Bodmin and Falmouth/Penryn. The courses were delivered out of different fire station venues and were programmed for one day per week over a six-week period.

The aim of the course was to adopt a structured and disciplined environment using fire service drills and equipment to engage with people and help them develop and learn new skills. This ranged from teamwork and communication skills, raising self-confidence and self-esteem and developing trust in others, to raising aspirations.

The courses, which are accredited through the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN), were run over a six-week period and encompassed a multitude of activities; including marching, hose-running, breathing apparatus, fire safety and road safety, to name just a few.



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These concluded with a practical demonstration and PowerPoint presentation by the group to local dignitaries, employment agencies, partner organisations, senior fire officers, the press and families.

Following this session we held additional information days involving prospective employers and support agencies, voluntary organisations and further training opportunities. Participants had a series of 'round robin' interviews gaining invaluable interview techniques and feedback from local agencies.

This partnership is the first of its kind nationally and is a further testament to the ongoing diversity and visions that Cornwall Fire and Rescue Service places in its prevention and community engagement initiatives and activities.

Summary of Benefits and Evaluation Method

Over the period of delivering the four 6-week programmes, some fantastic outcomes were achieved, some of which are highlighted below:

From 35 Referrals:

54% gained employment.
20% were referred to additional training.

So nearly **75%** of referrals progressed onto something positive following the course; most of which is attributed to increased confidence, raised aspirations and the realisation that everyone referred to us had potential - it was just a case of unlocking it!

The Phoenix team (consisting of whole-time, on-call and non-uniformed staff) exceeded expectations throughout this pilot and were shortlisted for the Cornwall Works Wise Awards 2011.

The Cornwall Works WISE (**W**elfare to work, **I**nnovation, **S**kills and **E**mployment) Awards, which recognise and celebrate excellence in employment and skills activity in Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly, were held on the morning of 9 May 2011 at the Headland Hotel, Newquay.

The awards highlight the important role that the European Social Fund Convergence Programme plays in employment, skills, training and innovation across Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly, and the outstanding individuals and organisations that have shown excellence and made such a difference to people's lives.

We were award winners in the Organisation/Project category, winning the 'Welfare to Work Award'; which was a fantastic achievement following a relatively short pilot scheme.

Additionally, we have now secured additional funding through flexible support funding from Job Centre Plus and will be involved in a more comprehensive delivery model; engaging and developing partnership links with all of the Job Centres throughout Cornwall.

It is our vision to progress this positive initiative and develop a long term partnership with Cornwall Works and Job Centre Plus, using the fire service brand to develop and engage with more people in this unique programme.



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Contact

If you require any further details about the points raised in this case study, please contact:

Name: Scott Brown
Job Title: Watch Manager - Phoenix
Email: scbrown@fire.cornwall.gov.uk
Telephone: 01326 318177



Community Safety and Protection case studies

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