

Stirling Council Learning and Employability Team

Stirling Council is a Scottish local authority providing services to 87,000 residents in central Scotland. The local outcome improvement plan has a strong focus on improving the equity of partnerships including with communities and there is a growing understanding of the value of CLD (community learning and development) approaches in engaging communities.

The Learning and Employability Team takes a joined up, partnership approach to support people into employment through a range of programmes which offer personalised programmes of learning and support. Working in partnership with Scottish Government, public, Third and private sectors, the team designs bespoke programmes to help clients improve their labour situation which could include courses in reading, writing or numeracy, with optional Scottish Qualification Authority accreditation of creative, computing, life skills, language or ESOL courses. Through partnerships with local businesses, the team also provide work tasters, placements and internships, giving opportunities to job coach and train individuals for a role prior to recruitment.

One such programme is:

LEAP - Learning Employability and Progression (LEAP) Stirling project funded by the Scottish Government European Social Fund programme and Stirling Council.

The programme targets people who are long term unemployed or who experience barriers to work, as well as individuals who are currently working part time hours or working below their skills and education levels. Participants are supported to find work, gain qualifications or progress to further education regardless of age and length of unemployment. LEAP works with individual clients and partnerships offering: One to one tailored key worker support; career exploration and CV building; work clubs and CV writing; volunteering and work placement; support with job applications and employer contact.

Case study A: James

James was referred to the Learning and Employability Team's LEAP Stirling Project through Advice Services. James was previously a Heavy Goods Vehicle (HGV) driver for many years however in the summer of 2015 he was involved in a life changing accident.

At the time of the referral to LEAP Stirling James was unable to undertake HGV driving and was struggling with PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder) from the accident. He regularly attended Healthy Hearts classes at the Peak for cardiac rehabilitation, physiotherapy and has a personal trainer to improve his fitness levels.

During the referral meeting, James advised that he volunteers with the Food Train and that he enjoyed this role. He was however unclear what strengths and skills he possessed and how to move forward jobs wise, felt he was lacking in confidence and low self-esteem.

After discussing potential courses and training with the LEAP Stirling Key Worker, James indicated he wanted to improve his IT skills whilst volunteering weekly. Meanwhile the LEAP Stirling team undertook work on building confidence, exploring job goals and transferrable skills. James attended interview skills training and flourished in the IT class. The team supported him to create his CV and after applying for various jobs James gained an interview for a National Health Service (NHS) driving job.

When reviewing feedback from the NHS driving role, James questioned the positions he could undertake, including lifting heavy weights and he considered other roles incorporating the principle and values from the tanker driving.

James continued to work with the LEAP Stirling team, exploring the roles of compliance and enforcement team which appealed to James.

James was offered the position and started with the regulatory team in August 2018 as an enforcement officer.

To date James is still enjoying his job with Stirling Council gaining impressive feedback on his role and fitting in with the team effortlessly. In James spare time he continues to be a much valued volunteer at The Food Train.

Case study B: “Mental Health: A Journey to Employment” A partnership approach with a local business

This case study describes some of the approaches taken by Stirling Council's Learning & Employability Team and a local business (Youmanage) in supporting a client with severe and enduring mental health diagnosis progress towards employment.

The Learning & Employability Team's Supported Employment Service provides assistance consistent with the Scottish Government's 5 Stage Model for Supported Employment. The service utilises a Case Management approach and additional resources such as a Health Advisor, Money Advice and Adult Learning. Youmanage is a unique online human resource management software business based at Stirling University Innovation Park. Developed with both HR and people managers in mind, their interface guides human resource professionals, people managers and employees through every step of the employee lifecycle.

Dennis was referred to the Learning & Employability team by Anne, a Community Psychiatric Charge Nurse from the Community Mental Health Team. Dennis had been diagnosed with a severe and enduring mental health condition, attended maintenance clinic and also attended for regular medication.

Anne was in the process of discharging and stated that Dennis was ready to start with the process of looking for work.

Dennis had achieved BSc (Hons) Computing Science 2:1 at University of Stirling and aspired to find employment within a software development role. There were very clear limitations to Dennis's weekly routine and a dependency on support structures which would take time to change. Dennis was keen to find a work placement that could offer meaningful learning and help him achieve a level of productivity that either offered him the possibility of employment or experience he could then utilise in applying to work.

Having reached out to a number of local businesses, Youmanage indicated they would be keen to support Dennis in his recovery and could think of a number of business scenarios that might be both beneficial to Dennis and the business. Initially, the work placement at Youmanage was created to increase Dennis's confidence and experience within the workplace, focusing on digital skills and tasks that Dennis had learned but had been unable to flex or test within a business environment.

Progression and Review

Over the following weeks and then months, Dennis's confidence grew and all parties recognised a significant improvement in Dennis's health, contribution and abilities. His hours were increased to 3 days per week in recognition of a further transition and enhancement of his abilities both cognitively and socially. He was now an active part of the team at Youmanage and wanted to contribute further to ensure his references could comprehensively include the skills he was using and ideally aiming for a full-time working capacity.

Over the next 13 months, Dennis continued to be an active part of the team, and after subsequent reviews with the Learning & Employability Team, his days increased to 4 and then 5 working days per week. At this time, Dennis was confident to establish timescales around his project and the code he had been writing for a specific Youmanage software tool.

Success and Benefits

After 5 months of dedicated job searching, Dennis was successful in gaining employment in a position with a large skill software writing company based in the UK and across Europe. For the first year of Dennis's employment, he was based in Belgium and training in the company's software projects and particular coding methods.

Denis has kept in touch with his mentors and friends at Youmanage and continues to thrive in his new role after 3 months. Without the opportunity afforded to Dennis by Youmanage and the view of a longer term programme supporting him towards recovery and gain, he would not have been able to achieve this outcome.

The benefits to the company were massive too. The project Dennis worked on has been integrated into Youmanage's software packages and will be a key part of service delivery for them moving forward.

How the 'LEAP' programme demonstrates Citizens' Curriculum Entry Pathways principles

Principles	Capabilities	Links	Examples
Taking account of the setting and local context		√	Long-term unemployed; barriers to work; partnership with local businesses and employers
Learner involvement in co-design of learning		√	1:1 tailored key worker support; personalised programmes of learning and support; work tasters; 5 stage model for supported employment
Citizens' Curriculum Capabilities			
	Literacy/English	√	Explicit courses / taught sessions with optional accreditation
	Numeracy/Maths	√	Explicit courses / taught sessions with optional accreditation
	Language (ESOL)		Mentioned but not referenced in the case study
	Digital Capability	√	Explicit courses / taught sessions with optional accreditation
	Health Capability	√	Personal trainer to improve fitness levels; included within supported employment model
	Financial Capability	√	Included within supported employment model
	Civic Capability	√	Offers volunteering and work placement
Links to vocational		√	Partnership with local businesses; work placements; work tasters; internships; job coaching and training.

Critical Success Factors:

- Learner involvement in determining the curriculum to meet their needs and interests
- Bespoke programmes to help clients improve their employment situation
- One to one tailored key worker support to find work, gain qualifications or progress to further learning
- Multi agency working and partnership with local businesses and Scottish Government

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