

Youth Skills Update (September 17/October 17)

September and October have been a busy months supporting young people who have left it late to plan their future pathway or those that have changed their mind on what pathway they want to take.

I have been involved with our local colleges, schools and employers trying to support transitions between them and our young people. It is essential that our young people are following a suitable pathway and if they find themselves on a pathway that isn't suitable they get the assistance to change it, to ensure they don't become a NEET statistic.

It's good to see numerous part time vacancies available at this current time some being seasonal vacancies and some being created by new business moving in to our town. Time has been spent helping our young people apply for these vacancies and helping them develop good interview techniques.

We have on offer two short full time educational courses in Haverhill. We have spent time ensuring those on our caseload that are suitable, are currently studying on these part time courses. We are offering pastoral support during this time.

We continue to support an increasing number of young people who are suffering from low mood and anxiety. Our referral numbers again are growing we will endeavour to work with as many as possible in the coming months without watering the service down too much.

Apprenticeships

We continue to try to match young people to vacancies. If a young person approaches us and there is no vacancy in their chosen area we will speak to local businesses and try to encourage them to meet the young person with a view to offering a position. If there is no position we try to organise some work experience to help increase the young person's skills in an area they want to work in and thus enhancing their CV.

As stated our project has now been running for 4 years starting September 2013. We have during this time advertised over 240 apprenticeship vacancies.

Schools

I attended the Suffolk Skills Show along with Samuel Ward School it was good to meet some students and talk to them about their future plans and aspirations whilst walking around and being informed on training opportunities available in Suffolk and meeting possible future employers in the Suffolk area.

I attended a Job fair at Sam Ward and got to share the latest news on apprenticeships to all year groups and held an assembly with year 11's.

I went along to a post year 11 pathway evening at Castle Manor and spoke to parents and students about the apprenticeship route as one pathway available when they finish their education at CMA.

I met with some students who were attending 6th form who were not enjoying it and wanted to change pathways quickly to allow them to get on a September course at FE colleges these young people had identified that they needed to act quickly to ensure they didn't spend a year doing something that was not for them and then wasting a year of studies. I come across students that didn't have any plans in place for this academic year and we managed to identify a suitable way forward for them.

I recently spent the day at the Churchill School to share information on apprenticeships with both parents and students. I look forward to supporting some of these students in the future.

Young people

I am currently working with a cross section of young people with varying needs.

I have supported young people with job searching, work experience placements, job applications and developing CV's for those looking for employment. We have had some very pleasing results. We have also had regular Job Hub sessions in the media hub on a weekly pop in basis.



Training Courses

The short courses available in Haverhill at the moment are being run by West Suffolk College and Inspire Suffolk. Both courses are full and we hope to see our young people developing new skills to ensure they are successful with their next pursuit.

Traineeships (WSC)

A traineeship is a course for 16-24 year olds with work experience that gets you ready for work or an apprenticeship. It can last up to 3 months. It includes studying to improve your Maths and English as well as improving your employability skills.

Fast Forward (Inspire)

The programme is centred on personal progression helping young adults 19+ to get work ready and find employment. The programme consists of teamwork skills, community spirit, mock-interview workshops, career planning and skills assessment, job search skills and submitting applications for active job roles within the area. The main focus is to help identify and/or find employment, education or training to progress onto on completion of the course.

Signpost Projects

Adult 16-24 years

Funding for the Suffolk Mind Jubilee Allotment has now finished as they want to concentrate on their allotment near the cemetery in Haverhill. As the young people have really bought into this project it has been agreed that with the direction of the Royal Horticultural Society once a month we will continue to up keep this area. As the young people will need to be supervised I have agreed to oversee this on a weekly basis. We look forward to enhancing the area even further and maybe even holding a community event on the Allotment in the future.

Case Study Adult Signpost

SS is a capable 22 year old, yet unconfident young man, who has found it difficult to find long-term employment. Adding to his struggles, he is reluctant to apply for benefits and lives solely from the support of his mother. He is the living proof of not judging a book by its cover, friendly and intuitive, SS has a keen dedication to whatever he is engaged in.

Initially, he was encouraged to participate in a youth allotment project, to help him with his confidence and to keep him busy and engaged. Instantly, and with the support of his peers, SS took to the project and was a keen advocate for continuing the project past its end date. Following this, he was signposted to a youth employability course – Inspire Suffolk's Fast Forward programme. Seizing on his potential and growth in confidence, he has now taken his future into his hands by applying for a job at a local supermarket.

Junior Signpost 13-16 years

Is aimed at improving the well-being of young people 13-16 who are suffering from anxiety or are struggling to form relationships.

We have just started our Autumn Junior Signpost. We are currently working with 12 young people some are new referrals and others are existing members. We have a variety of sessions planned some are repeated popular sessions and it is hoped that skills and confidence can be developed at a higher level.

Case Study Junior Signpost

RD is a very intelligent young man who has Asperger's Syndrome and Autism. His mother had to encourage him to attend as he was nervous and unsure how he would cope. When we first started working with him, he found it incredibly difficult to interact with other young people he had little or no social skills. Often solitary, he would shy away from engaging in activities – withdrawing behind his ear defenders and under his hoody.

Encouraging his engagement in activities, but not forcing him into it, and praising him for his engagement was paramount in helping him to open up to both his peers and the adults that supported him. By the end of his time in our first course, Signpost 4Boys, he had become an integral member of the group and whilst still quiet, there was a definite improvement in his self-confidence. He took off his ear defenders off and his hoody down for the last 2 sessions which was essential if he was going to engage with his peers on the course. His mother told us of how much he had enjoyed his time with us and he is now engaging in his second round of youth wellbeing groups.

We have been busy applying for more funding for our Signpost Project. We have applied to the Haverhill South Peoples Forum and also to the St Edmundsbury Community Chest. We need to await the outcome to see if we have secured future funding for 2018.

Looking ahead

We will run the Rob Maidment Enterprise Project again in the New Year. Our teams will be given £50 and tasked with making the highest profit. We are thinking of changing things around slightly this time to give it a slightly different look and to try and engage local businesses.

We will continue to hold our pop-in job hub regularly over the coming weeks to ensure young people can pop in for guidance and support, we will run these with Suffolk County Council Intensive Support Workers out of the Media Hub in the Art Centre.

I look forward to meeting with the Social Prescribing Project Coordinators and establishing how we will work more closely together in the future to help enhance the already good results we are achieving independently.

I will meet with Dave Gooderham and look forward to assisting and supporting to organise an Apprenticeship Event that will take place in January.

We will continue to run our Signpost projects if our funding applications are successful. If not we will need to investigate other sources of money. We will need to pencil in a plan of how we will deliver Signpost in the New Year and who we will be targeting next time around.

I would by the New Year like to have a programme of short courses available for our young people. Those that have finished attending the short courses they are currently attending will either be successful in finding employment or will need to attend further training to enable them to move on positively. So it essential we encourage suitable progression courses to be delivered and available in Haverhill. Princes Trust 12 week Challenge Programme will be targeted as will other programs that have a proven track record.