Evaluation Report

Employment Through Education Vocational Programme 2013-14

Rachel Edgar

Table of Contents

Executive Summary and Key Recommendations

This year's Employment Through Education Vocational Programme is a broader programme than the previous years' programmes, and has an additional course on thermal insulation as well as the existing PowerSkills course.

The thermal insulation course has had significant start up problems with the partner body taking less of a role than was originally anticipated resulting in an absence of site visits and work placements. There were also difficulties with recruitment to the course.

Although there were some difficulties with the overall recruitment process this year, the new mechanism for recruitment with its strong links through YouthLink Scotland to the Opportunities for All coordinators and other partners has great potential to identify those who will benefit most from the programme.

There is evidence of engagement and increased employability skills among the young people.

The partnership between Glasgow Clyde College and Scottish Power is strong as is the developing partnership with YouthLink Scotland. The programme benefits from a strong staff team and a strong ethos of continuous improvement.

The key challenges facing the programme continues to be developing the recruitment process, developing the core skills of participants, and developing the evaluation systems as the programme expands to ensure that quantitative and qualitative data, including longer term data, is available for all participants.

The key recommendations are:

1. The partners should review the recruitment process for the PowerSkills course to identify any potential areas where young people in the More Choices, More Chances group could be offered further support to help them achieve a place on the course while still having a realistic prospect of successfully completing it.
2. A communication plan should be agreed between the partners setting out responsibilities and timescales for communication with each other and with potential students during the referral process and setting out the timescales for continued communication during the course.
3. The key worker role should be clarified and any opportunity to provide greater continuity and allow the development of organisational knowledge and networks should be explored.
4. Qualitative and quantitative data on students needs to be collected in a more systematic way as the programme expands.
5. The programme should continue to explore ways in which it can develop the core skills of students.
6. The programme should explore ways to improve attendance and timekeeping, including early communication with referring organisations where problems are identified.

Introduction

This report sets out the results of an independent evaluation of the Employment Through Education Vocational Programme run by Glasgow Clyde College. The programme now has two components: the Power Skills programme run in conjunction with Scottish Power and the Thermal Insulation programme run in conjunction with the Thermal Insulation Contractors Association (TICA). YouthLink Scotland is now a partner and has played a key role in recruitment to both courses using the network of Opportunities for All coordinators and other partners. This evaluation focuses on the 2013-2014 programme. All course activity took place in 2014.

The programme is funded by the Cashback for Communities programme. Cashback for Communities uses the proceeds of crime, recovered through court proceedings, to fund a range of programmes primarily focused on activities for young people at risk of turning to crime and anti-social behaviour.

The programme also contributes to Scottish Government policy objectives on youth employment and contributes to national indicators including increasing the proportion of young people in learning, training or work.

Methodology

This evaluation has involved an end of course review of materials gathered by the college, including attendance data together with semi-structured interviews with eight course participants and four key staff at the college. The lead contacts at Scottish Power and YouthLink Scotland were also interviewed along with two of the Opportunities for All coordinators. Attempts were made to secure telephone interviews with students who had left the course but these were unsuccessful. A list of materials reviewed and of interviewees is enclosed at Annex A.

The Courses

PowerSkills

The Power Skills course involves a 19-week programme for up to 12 young people where participants attend three days per week. Participants receive £30 per week allowance to attend plus travelling expenses.

Most of the programme is delivered at Glasgow Clyde College's Cardonald Campus where the college delivers the Engineering Skills group award at SQA level 2, as well as classes in employability and sport and fitness. The group award covers four units: mechanical and fabrication; maintenance; design and manufacture; and electrical and electronics.

A key worker support the course by working individually with students as well as delivering sport and fitness sessions and employability skills, including developing CVs, interview skills and presentation skills.

Students attend four site visits designed to raise awareness of the industry and increase understanding of what it would be like to work in different settings. The first of these, Delaine House involved a full day of shadowing apprentices. There were then site visits to Longannet Power Station, Whitelee Wind Farm and to Subsea 7's pipeline welding centre. Staff use the site visits to help make students more work ready, for example learning that a 730am start for the Subsea 7 visit meant being ready with boots and overalls at 720am.

On one of the early weeks of the course, students attended a five-day residential Outward Bound course. A Scottish Power apprentice also attended this course, allowing the students the opportunity to get to know someone of a similar age to themselves already working for the company.

The programme begins with taster days where young people referred to the programme have the opportunity to take part in practical tests as well as informal interviews. The initial assessment of young people at the taster days was conducted jointly by Scottish Power and Glasgow Clyde College. This was an informal process that involved assessors watching applicants as they took part in a practical exercise and group discussion and gauging their level of interest and demeanour as well as their performance in the activities. Because of the level of the entrance qualifications for this course, there are few qualified applicants who are on activity agreements, although two were successful in obtaining places on the course this year.

The course has been designed to give young people foundation skills to help them get into the workforce, for example, time management, budgeting and establishing a routine, as well as teaching practical and transferable hands-on skills.

The course has been run since 2012, and changes have been made each year based on previous experience. In 2014, the target qualification changed and the outward-bound element took place earlier in the course. These changes followed feedback from the previous year's students.

Thermal Insulation

This course was new this year and was run in conjunction with TICA. It ran three days a week over 17 weeks. It leads to SQA certification in four units: bench skills; machine processes; fabrication and thermal jointing techniques; and introduction to thermal insulation. Students also study for a health and safety CSCS certification allowing them on construction sites across the UK.

The course is supported by a key worker offering the same support as on the PowerSkills course. Students attend weekly physical activity sessions and also attended an outdoor education session involving gorge walking.

It had been intended that students attend site visits and work placements, but these did not take place. In relation to site visits, the lack of CSCS certification until the end of the course appears to have been an impediment. The partnership with an employers' body rather than with specific employers also made it more challenging to set up work placements.

The Participants

PowerSkills

12 young people aged between 15 and 18 began the PowerSkills course (compared with 10 in the previous year). This group was drawn from a wider group of 69 referrals. More than 40 young people attended the taster days, which was an increase in the number attending taster days from the previous year. Two further attendees at the taster days were offered places but turned them down. Of the 12 students starting the course, 11 were male and one was female. Two students were from ethnic minority groups. None had visible disabilities. One was identified as dyslexic in initial core skills testing and offered additional support. Three students came from Glasgow, two from South Lanarkshire, one from West Dunbartonshire, four from Renfrewshire and two from East Renfrewshire.

Previous educational information is available for eleven of the participants. The highest education qualification for three of these is at SCQF level 6 (Higher). Six have achieved SCQF 5 (Intermediate 2) and three have achieved SCQF 4 (Intermediate 1). Two of the students had been on activity agreements prior to attending the course, one was referred by the community safety team, two by Skills Development Scotland, two from other employability programmes and the rest from schools.

Thermal Insulation

13 young people aged between 16 and 18 began the course. All were male and one was from an ethnic minority group. None had visible disabilities. One was identified as dyslexic in initial core skills testing and offered support. This group was drawn from a wider group of 43 referrals. However, attendance at taster days was significantly poorer than for the PowerSkills course, which may be attributable to lack of knowledge about the industry and it being the first year on which the course ran.

The students came from three local authority areas: Glasgow (seven); Renfrewshire (five) and South Lanarkshire (one). Two were referred by criminal justice teams, two by activity agreement advisers, four by schools and five by Skills Development Scotland.

Previous educational information is available for eleven of the participants. The highest education qualification for one of these is SCQF 5 (Intermediate 2). The highest qualification for the other ten is at SCQF 4 (intermediate 1).

The course was deliberately targeted at those with lower levels of educational attainment that the PowerSkills course.

The Role of the Partners

Scottish Power continued to play a key role in the PowerSkills course providing three of the site visits (Delaine House, Whitelees wind farm and Longannet Power Station). It also has a key role in the Outward Bound element of the course setting the outcomes for the course and ensuring a strong STEM (science, technology, engineering and maths) element to the course. A Scottish Power apprentice attended the Outward Bound course and many other Scottish Power staff members have been involved in site visits and in making presentations to the students.

TICA committed to support the thermal insulation programme but personnel changes and the fact that is an employers' organisation rather than a direct employer has meant it has not been able to offer work placements and site visits that were originally discussed.

YouthLink Scotland took on the coordinating role for referrals this year led by their National Development Manager for 16+ Activity Agreements. She promoted the courses through the activity agreement advisers in Glasgow and the surrounding local authorities as well as in the broader More Choices More Chances (MCMC) network including Skills Development Scotland and in schools, who could identify Christmas leavers without a positive destination. She also attended the taster days and provided support to young people attending.

The Referral Process

This year's referral process led by National Development Manager for 16+ Activity Agreements has helped to identify a wider pool of potential candidates for the programme. Using a network of Opportunities for All coordinators, Skills Development Scotland, careers advisors in schools and other employability projects allowed the programme to target those on activity agreements and others without positive destinations. The policy focus in this area is to identify young people before they become unemployed as the evidence suggests they are

more likely to sustain placements if there are not significant gaps between school, college and work.

The current arrangement has great potential to identify the young people who will benefit most from the programme. However, there were some issues identified by the key staff this year and there have been some discussions and proposals put forward to address them. The main issues are set out below

Information about the courses

Although the referring organisations attended a meeting at the College in October where they were informed about the courses and entry requirements, they felt they did not have enough information about the courses in advance to share with young people, particularly for the thermal insulation course. Referring organisations would find it useful to have course dates as early as possible so that they can work with young people on activity agreements to prepare them to start the course.

Taster Days

There was an expectation from one of the referring organisations that the taster day would be more than just a recruitment exercise and that young people would find out more about the industries, through talks or videos. One of the interviewee questioned whether taster day was an accurate description if it was only a recruitment day for a specific course.

On one of the taster days for the thermal insulation course, one of the referrers noticed an increased enthusiasm for the course among attendees after one of the attendees whose uncle was in the industry told other attendees some of what he knew about the industry and his uncle's experience.

On at least one of the taster days, potential students had difficulty finding the right part of the college to go to because of building works taking place.

There was some concern expressed about the recruitment to the PowerSkills course with at least one good but quiet student not offered a place and a sense that it was the more vocal candidates who were successful.

There is a tension for the PowerSkills course between the desire of Scottish Power to recruit onto the course candidates whom they consider likely to be able to reach the level required for entry to the Pre-Apprenticeship course and the desire of the funder to ensure that this course is aimed at those who are part of the target More Choices, More Chances group. Young people on activity agreements in particular are often at a stage where they do not have the required level of literacy and numeracy.

Communication

There was a breakdown in communication during the recruitment process with the College assuming that the referral partners would notify candidates whether they were successful and the referral partners assuming that the college would do so. As a result students did not know whether they had secured a place. One student turned up on the first day of the course thinking that he had a place when he did not. Referral partners were also disappointed at the lack of feedback for unsuccessful candidates.

Referral partners have not always received information when young people they referred have been struggling or have dropped out of the course. They would also like to be kept informed about student destinations.

Impact

Of the twelve young people who began the PowerSkills course, nine have obtained the full group award with the other three passing individual units. As the qualification is at SCQF 5, for two of the participants this increased the level of their highest educational qualification. All have learnt new skills.

Three young people obtained a place on the Scottish Power pre-apprenticeship course (2013: four) with only those three (2013: seven) passing the initial test. This reduced number compared with the previous year appears to have been the result of the benchmark level for the online test having risen.

Two of the others have been offered places on further education courses beginning in August at other colleges. One has applied to join the army. One has secured fulltime employment in the retail trade. One has obtained an apprenticeship as an electrician. Three others have applied for MOD apprenticeships. One has returned home to England where his employment status is not known.

All took part in and completed the Outward Bound course with most undertaking activities they had not previously tried, including an overnight camp.

Of the thirteen young people who began the thermal insulation course, eight completed it, with two of those being offered unconditional places in the NQ Engineering Skills with Thermal Insulation at Glasgow Clyde College. The other six have been offered conditional places on the course. One student left four weeks before the end of the course when he was offered fulltime employment in the motor industry. Six of the students also obtained the health and safety CSCS certification allowing them access to construction sites.

Unfortunately none of the previous year's participants in the PowerSkills course has yet secured a Scottish Power apprenticeship. One of the group from 2013 came sixth or seventh on his pre-apprenticeship course with the top five automatically being recruited to the apprenticeship programme. There may be a

further recruitment of apprentices in January for a March intake in which case he may still succeed in securing an apprenticeship.

Views of the participants

In the interviews with the participants, all eight who were interviewed were positive about the programme. All were positive about the staff team, all describing the staff in positive terms, such as great, knowledgeable, helpful and good teachers. One described the staff as calm and treating you as you treat them unlike staff in school. Another commented that he could talk to staff a lot better than he could in school.

The participants were asked what difference the course had made for them. Most highlighted the technical skills that they had learned and their increased knowledge. One commented that he understood better the importance of maths and accurate measuring. One commented that he was fitter; another that he had better teamworking skills. Several identified other significant changes as a result of the course. Two talked of becoming more mature with one commenting that he had moved away from the gangfighting and drinking trouble that he had previously been involved in.

In addition, all PowerSkills interviewees expressed views on the type of work they would like to do. They related these views to experiences on the course, including site visits. Four of the interviewees had applied for fulltime jobs or were about to, two were looking for part-time jobs, and one was already working part-time. Seven of the eight had also applied for further college courses.

All made broadly positive comments about the outdoor activities, despite some admitting that they found them challenging. Two of the PowerSkills students commented that the Outward Bound course was a good way to get to know the other students.

In terms of areas that could be improved, three from the PowerSkills course commented that it could be more structured. One of these wanted more clarity about what they were doing next, and one commented on feeling very pressured to get through all the units. One of the PowerSkills students did not like the split in the week with attendance required on Monday, Tuesday and Friday.

None of the Thermal Insulation course students had suggestions about how the course could be improved.

Achievement of Outcomes

The programme has identified four key outcomes:

- Increased participation by difficult to engage and equalities groups.
- Greater confidence and self esteem among participants
- Participants demonstrate new skills and positive changes in behaviour
- Participants develop confidence in their skills and develop aspirations for further learning and development

Achievements against these outcomes are set out below.

Increased participation by difficult to engage and equalities groups.

This year's programme had an increase in participation by equalities groups with one woman, three people from ethnic minority groups, and two people with disabilities (dyslexia) joining the programme. Three of the students were referred from criminal justice or community safety teams.

The new referral routes ensured that participants were those who may otherwise not have secured a positive destination.

Greater confidence and self esteem among participants

In the semi-structured interviews this year, students did not make unprompted reference to greater confidence, but talked about improved skills and about overcoming challenges. Several commented on pushing themselves in the outdoor activities to do activities that they would not previously have done. Interviews by the key worker identified evidence of a significant reported increase in confidence.

With the increase in course numbers, it would useful to find a structured way to collate information about these changes, perhaps using established tools such as wellbeing webs.

Participants demonstrate new skills and positive changes in behaviour

Participants who were interviewed highlighted their increased technical skills. This was confirmed by staff. Two students commented in interview about being more mature with one giving a specific example of how he has moved away from previous negative behaviours, such as gang fighting and problem drinking.

Another commented about being fitter, and being motivated to maintain this to ensure that he can do the type of work he wants to do.

Participants develop confidence in their skills and develop aspirations for further learning and development

All the students who were interviewed were considering or had applied for further educational courses. By the end of the course, all the students completing the course had applied for further courses or apprenticeships to develop further their learning.

Strengths

The key strengths of the programme are set out below.

Level of ambition

The PowerSkills programme provides a potential route into a job with good pay and benefits and attractive career options. The apprentice salary rises begins at £10107 rising to £15932 during the three year apprenticeship with a starting salary of £23340 as a craftsperson on completion of the apprenticeship.

Pay in the thermal insulation industry is subject to a national agreement based on a 38 hour week with a salary of about £25000 (plus the possibility of overtime and allowances).

Most interviewees saw these as good jobs with some commenting on opportunities to travel or work abroad.

Students are actively encouraged to develop CVs and to apply for jobs as well as college courses. Many now have experience of interviews and other recruitment tools.

Range of options

The programme is strengthened by extending the course choice. The thermal insulation course, although it has not worked as originally planned, has offered an opportunity for young people who do not have the necessary qualifications for the PowerSkills course.

The proposal for an engineering course in partnership with Doosan Babcock and a horticulture course in partnership with Glasgow City Council will also help more young people to find a course that is suitable for them, and are likely to be more suited to young people on activity agreements than the PowerSkills course, which requires a higher level of core skills.

Level of engagement

The PowerSkills course has continued to have a high level of engagement by course participants. Nine out of twelve have completed the course with the other three obtaining some qualification. The average attendance rate is 90% with a significant proportion of the absences in the last five weeks. One of the participants had a full attendance record and another four missed only one or two days.

The Thermal Insulation group has been more challenging with four of the group dropping out and a fifth leaving four weeks before the end of the course to take up a fulltime job. Eight have obtained the qualification. Of these eight, the attendance level was just over 90% with two absent only for one day and one absent for two days. The overall attendance figure on the course was 75%, but this included those who dropped out.

Staff team

It was clear from interviews with staff and with the participants that there is a strong commitment by the staff team to the young people. The students who were interviewed were all positive about the staff.

The staff continue to create a positive culture and culture of respect. Two participants commented in interview about the way they were treated by staff being very different from school.

Commitment to continuous improvement

The college and its partners remain committed to improving the course. This year a number of changes were made based on last year's experiences, including changes to the PowerSkills qualification, earlier follow-up assessment of core skills testing, running the Outward Board course earlier and having an apprentice at an earlier stage of their apprenticeship attend that course. The site visits have also changed and students on the PowerSkills course had an opportunity to shadow an apprentice for a full day in their first site visit.

The college was successful in attracting a female student this year to the PowerSkills course and attracting three ethnic minority students to the courses. The proposed addition of a horticulture course next year should help to attract further female students.

Focus on employability

The students who were interviewed demonstrated an understanding of workplaces and expressed views on the type of work they would like to do. Most

had already made applications for both jobs and college places and understood the need to have backup options.

The students valued the site visits, which contributed to there being able to visualise the types of work they were keen to do. The course also helped some to understand where their strengths lay.

All students developed their practical hands on skills, many of which are transferable. Six of the thermal insulation group also obtained CSCS certification opening opportunities on construction sites. Four of the PowerSkills students improved their core skills levels in Maths and two in English In addition, students learned and developed general employability skills, such as compiling CVs, giving presentations and interview skills. They also developed team building skills through the outdoor education elements as well as in the workshops.

Areas for Development

Clyde College, Scottish Power and YouthLink Scotland have already considered how the course might be developed further next year. The key areas being considered are:

- Replacing the thermal insulation course with an engineering course in partnership with Doosan Babcock to ensure a strong employer link.
- Adding a horticulture course in partnership with Glasgow City Council, who have agreed to provide work placements.
- Improving communication in the referral process and clarifying responsibilities at each part of the process.
- Scottish Power is considering greater involvement by apprentices in the course and trying to increase the role of Scottish Power's supply chain in identifying potential recruits from the course.
- To improve collection of long term data about destinations, the College is considering offering incentives for keeping the College advised about destinations.

All of these proposals are likely to improve the programme. Areas for further development are set out below.

Core skills

Both courses assessed core skills in English and Mathematics at the beginning of the course and then later in the course. The initial core skills assessment helped identify one student in each of the courses with dyslexia and support was offered to these students, although this not does appear to have been taken up.

On the PowerSkills course this year, nine of the students completed both assessments. Four of these improved in Maths and two in English, with none regressing. This was a significant improvement on the previous year when some students regressed. It is also notable that all three students who were successful in obtaining places on the pre-apprenticeship course had succeeded in improving their core skills in either Maths or English. These three were the only ones who had managed to pass the Scottish Power online test this year, which is based on numeracy and literacy testing.

On the thermal insulation course this year, only five of the students completed both assessments. None improved in the second test, while three regressed, one of whom regressed in both Maths and English.

It appears difficult to motivate students to take advantage of opportunities to develop their core skills, and this is an area that the programme needs to continue to develop. The key contact at Scottish Power is exploring whether they can make sample tests available to students to help prepare them better for the online tests. The staff have begun to integrate more core skills into the general coursework and this appears to have had some success on the PowerSkills course, but may require further development on the other proposed courses where students may, as on the TICA course, have lower levels of educational attainment from school and not readily engage with support around literacy and numeracy.

It is also important that all students participate in both core skills assessments and this may an area in which further encouragement or incentives are required.

Attendance

Attendance has been an issue for some students. Even on the PowerSkills course, there was a drop-off in attendance towards the end of the course and some issues with lateness and leaving early. Students receive a £10 allowance for each day that they attend college along with travelling expenses. They are not penalised for late arrivals or leaving early.

One of the Opportunities for All Coordinators commented that this amount may not seem very generous to some students who have been on activity agreements where they may have received £30 per week for only two hours of activity, although generally young people at the point of being ready for college courses will have been on activity agreements requiring more activity than this. £30 per week is a standard Education Maintenance Allowance rate, although there are some courses that pay a higher allowance. However, one of the students interviewed who had been on an activity agreement commented positively on money he received and clearly considered it a valuable incentive.

Without increasing the allowance, it may be worth considering offer additional incentives for full attendance (without lateness) over a certain period to try to improve attendance levels.

Referral process

Identifying the participants who will benefit most from the course continues to be a challenge. On the PowerSkills course, there is a tension between the needs of the potential employer (Scottish Power) and the target group for the course, many of whom do not have the expected level of core skills and employability skills. Given that one of the strong areas of the PowerSkills course has been to develop confidence and presentation and interview skills of participants, this may be an area where it is worth reconsidering recruitment scoring.

The involvement of YouthLink Scotland as a partner with the network of trusted professionals across a range of local authority areas has had a clear benefit in extending awareness of the programme to relevant professionals and helping to identify those who are most likely to benefit.

In relation to the referral process, while it may not be practical to have broader taster days or offer other options at the taster days, it would worth exploring what other information, such as industry videos could be made available to referral partners before the taster days. Better signposting and staff helping potential students at the taster day to find out where to go should help all candidates arrive as relaxed as possible.

A communication plan identifying timing of communication to students, levels of feedback and responsibilities is crucial. Student feedback including positive feedback is important both for the potential students themselves and to give confidence to referral agencies that they can refer candidates without negative consequences.

The Key Worker role

The success of the courses is heavily dependent on the key worker role. This role carries a lot of responsibility for building relationships with partners and communication as well as providing one to one support to students and delivering elements of the course, such as employability training and physical activities.

As this is a temporary role, there has been staff turnover with this year's worker leaving at the end of the course and last year's worker also moving on to other roles. Unfortunately this limits the ability of the postholder to build up knowledge and networks and to benefit from experience.

If this remains a temporary role, ways to strengthen it may include:

- A clear written job plan.
- Sharing some of the networking and communication responsibilities with key lecturers to ensure that institutional knowledge is carried forward.
- Working closely with the referral network to ensure smooth transition and sustainability for students.

- Strengthening communication with the referral network, who may also be able to assist with identifying opportunities for students on completion of the course, and identifying employer incentives that may be available when hiring some students.
- Exploring the possibility of seconding an existing employee from partners or the network with existing useful contacts and knowledge.

Collection and collation of data

One of the potential strengths of this programme is sustainability. It is therefore important to track participants over time to see whether their participation leads to further qualifications and employment. The College has had difficulty obtaining data on destinations from some students and is exploring offering incentives to assist with this.

As the programme expands it is also important to gather consistent qualitative and quantitative data from all participants as they progress through the programme and keep it in a form that it can be used for evaluation purposes. In particular, it would be useful to collate information on changes in confidence levels and the development of employability skills such as teambuilding skills. The College may wish to explore the use of a database and consider the use of a structured way to collect views of all participants, for example, using surveys or wellbeing webs.

It could also be helpful to arrange exit interviews with those who leave the course, perhaps using referring organisations where the student is no longer responding to contact from the college.

Rachel Edgar
Edgar Consultancy & Training
26 August 2014.

Annex A

List of interviewees

Eight students from the 2014 courses (four from each course).
Phil Duffield, Community Liaison Manager, Scottish Power.
Sandra McIntyre, National Development Manager, YouthLink Scotland.
Linda Clinton, Opportunities for All Coordinator, East Renfrewshire Council.
Abigail Kinsella, Opportunities for All Coordinator, Glasgow Council
David Innes, Head of Faculty, Technology and Business, Clyde College.
George Campbell, Lecturer, Power Skills course, Clyde College.
Alan Bradshaw, Lecturer, Thermal Insulation course, Clyde College
Sean Gallagher, Key worker, Power Skills course, Clyde College.

List of materials reviewed

Spreadsheets on referrals
Attendance records for students.
Education qualification records for students
Core skills test scores
Course descriptions
Progress reports for Cashback for Communities and Inspiring Scotland