

HELPING YOUNG PEOPLE TAKE THE NEXT STEP

FUNDED BY: Greets Green Partnership, working with St Albans Community Association in Smethwick.

PROJECT BACKGROUND: One of Greets Green Partnership's education targets is to increase the proportion of young people leaving school with positive destinations to 95%. In 2002, this figure was 85%, which means a 10% increase was needed. Those who leave school with nothing to move on to are classed as 'NEETs' – not in education, employment or training – in effect they have slipped through the net. Several other Partnership-funded projects have been helping to reduce the number of pupils likely to end up as NEETs, notably the Pastoral Managers project at George Salter Collegiate Academy.

By providing ongoing support to pupils and their families, and picking up problems before they escalate, the Pastoral Managers have helped to reduce the number of permanent exclusions to zero.

Excluded pupils have a greater chance of becoming NEETs. The school also invests much time and effort into improving young people's abilities and aspirations to continue into further education or training.

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Tonia Flannigan from St Albans Community Association with Katherine Hewitt, Jobs & Skills Theme Leader, Greets Green Partnership.

However, prior to the Employability Award, Greets Green Partnership had not designed a project specifically for NEETs and no considerable impact had yet been made on this group of young people.

PROJECT DETAILS: In Spring 2008, St Albans Community Association in Smethwick approached Greets Green Partnership to see whether they would be interested in finding a group of young people who would benefit from an Employability Award course. “St Albans church was converted into a community centre in 1984 to provide services for local people to maintain a strong community,” says Tonia Flannagan, Centre Manager.

“A couple of years ago we set up a computer suite and started to run alternative learning programmes to support young people not in mainstream education. We developed the Employability Award programme but needed to find young people who would benefit. Greets Green Partnership was fantastic.”

Katherine Hewitt, Jobs & Skills Theme Leader at Greets Green Partnership, explains: “We thought the course could make a huge difference to local NEETs. The problem is, it’s notoriously difficult to find NEETs as the very nature of them means they can’t be found. They’re no longer in education and haven’t progressed to training or work.

“We decided to ask the local community and see whether they knew of any suitable young people. Our Community Reps found five young NEETs through contact with their families and they were all keen to start the course in June 2008.” Through the Partnership’s Pakistani Rep, 17 year old Atiya and her brother Ozair aged 16, signed up and became the first two young people from Greets Green to complete the course in September 2008.

The 12 week programme saw Atiya and Ozair attending St Albans Community Association one day a week. Holding the course in Smethwick was a potential issue for the young people, so Greets Green Partnership funded taxis. However, the youngsters soon said they would prefer to make their own way to the course and so the Partnership provided a bus pass which they could use at other times too.

Atiya explains: “I came from Pakistan to England so I’d not been at school in Greets Green and wasn’t doing anything. Last year I went to Greets Green Partnership and spoke to Katherine Hewitt about finding a job. She told me about this 12 week course in Smethwick.” Atiya mentioned it to her brother who wasn’t sure what he wanted to do in life. “I didn’t know if I wanted to go to college or what next step to make,” he says. “The course looked good and there was free travel which was helpful.”

PROJECT IN ACTION: The Employability Award course is designed for young people who need some support to find a positive way forward.



Mandy Anderson, Programme Co-ordinator at St Albans, explains: “Although we have to follow the same course for each group, no two courses are the same. We adapt each one to meet the needs of the individuals in that particular group so that it’s as fulfilling and interesting as possible.”

“We start with personal targets, looking at what they need to improve. We focus on things which can be achieved very quickly to give them a boost, such as improving spelling and writing.

“We then look at long term goals, which may be starting a college course. We identify the steps needed to achieve this, for example researching different colleges, visiting the college, choosing a course and applying for it.”

The young people are given support and encouragement to take each step to reach their goal. The course covers a range of different modules to give the young people the skills, knowledge and confidence needed to take the next step in life.

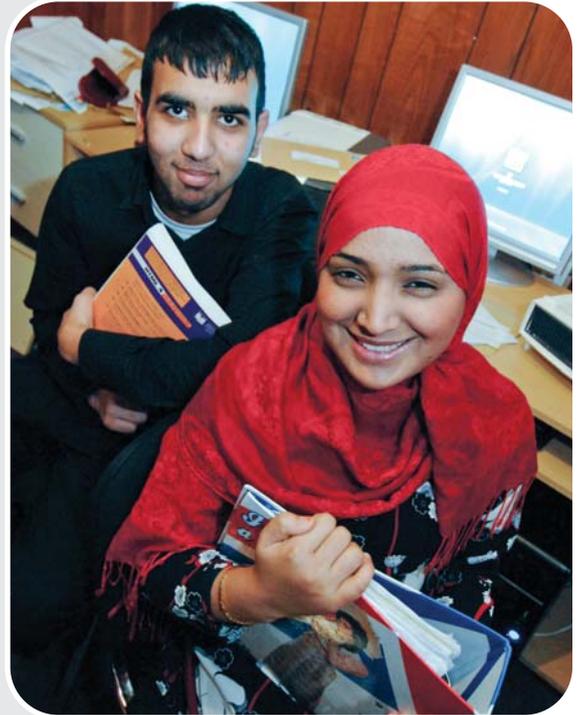
Modules include ‘Applying for a Job’ which looks at how to do job searches, write application letters and interview techniques. ‘Rights and Responsibilities in the Workplace’ is also studied, along with ‘Working with Others’ and ‘Personal Presentation in the Workplace’.

“We’re finding more and more that employers are saying school leavers have no idea how to present themselves,” says Mandy. “We’re not only giving young people the skills needed to get a job, but also showing them how they should act once they start work.”

As well as studying one day a week, the young people also have to undertake eight days of work experience. They’re encouraged to talk about their interests, what they’ve done in the past and what they would like to do when they finish the course, to find a work placement which will be beneficial to their future.

Atiya completed her work experience at the pre-school at St Albans Community Association and its summer play scheme. Ozair has always been interested in graphics but through his placement at the flagship Public building in West Bromwich, he got interested in IT and is now set on a career in that industry.

At the end of the course, the young people gain an ASDAN Employability Award - Atiya and Ozair completed Entry 3. To receive this they had to produce a portfolio of evidence which is internally assessed and moderated, as well as externally moderated by ASDAN. The qualification means that learners are in a better position to ‘sell themselves’ to potential employers by demonstrating and owning a range of



Ozair and Atiya have both completed the Employability Award run by St Albans Community Association.



skills and qualities that employers look for. In addition the students also receive something extremely valuable - a reference from their work placement employer.

“Many young people find it hard to get a current reference because they’ve not worked before,” says Katherine Hewitt. “The whole point of the course is to move them on a step – to remove them from the NEETs category. Gaining a nationally recognised qualification and a work reference gives them two tangible benefits when deciding what their next step will be. They also have a wealth of new skills and more self-confidence to achieve something in life.”

This is certainly true for Atiya and Ozair. Atiya has gone into full-time education. “I’m now going to Sandwell College in Smethwick full-time. I study English, maths, computers and art and am really liking it,” she says. “I’m also looking for a part-time job as I’m married now.” Ozair explains: “I’m in the sixth form at George Salter Collegiate Academy doing A levels in English, maths and science. After that I want to do some courses in IT so I can start a career.”

FUTURE COURSES: While it’s NEETs youngsters from Greets Green who’ve so far benefited from the Employability Award course, Greets Green Partnership is now funding a second course for local people in their early 20s to gain these valuable skills. St Albans Community Association has also run the course to help other groups, including Year 11 pupils who are about to leave school and decide their futures.

Contact: To find out about the Employability Award courses being run through Greets Green Partnership, call Katherine Hewitt on freephone 0800 953 0215. For more information about the courses available at St Albans Community Association, call Tonia Flannigan on 0121 558 0018.

Greets Green Partnership was awarded £56 million in 2000 to deliver a 10 year regeneration programme under the Government’s New Deal for Communities (NDC) initiative. It has funded over 340 projects throughout the area, covering community services, crime & community safety, health, housing & urban form and jobs & skills. The Partnership area, which is adjacent to West Bromwich Town Centre, is home to just over 12,400 residents living in 4,900 households.

For permission to publish this case study and to request photographs, please call Brian McKinstrie, Greets Green Partnership’s Communications & PR Manager on freephone 0800 953 0215 or email brian_mckinstrie@sandwell.gov.uk

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