

Ready Work

Ready 2 Work is a service to help with a young person's employability, although this is not always about getting a job straight away - it may be about finding work before going to college/university, or finding an apprenticeship. There is no career advice in the formal sense, the service responds to their goals and assists accordingly. Advice and guidance sit at the core.

Service Offer

- Starting or polishing a CV to distribute, talking about making a job specific CV also.
- Assisting the structure of a search, generally advising a particular role or area of interest.
- Sending direct and group based messages with opportunities in different areas, mostly retail and office based work presently.
- Mock interviews.

Each aspect has its own matching challenge

- Skills and literacy of young people attending vary wildly across the board from very capable to less than average; support given as appropriate - given that building is about getting details in place, and polishing is more about creating a document that is readable as a 'pitch document' towards an interview.
- Structuring job searches is a task only the more capable (and quite often older) seekers will understand the importance of.
- Too much digital discussion does not really equate to moving situations along (see digital distractions) and fulfilling job searches, although it has helped when problems arise and extra support or intervention is required.
- Problematic trying to get young people to attend, it transpired that the offer of a 'practice run' would be taken up with an imminent interview and not in general.

Attending and returning

Engaged and those 'not quite as engaged' individuals present themselves and make use of my skills in assisting them - their own focus (or lack of) alongside their own personal situations create the dynamism to attend regularly, or at least turning up with a sense of process; this is not often the case, as young people have their own lives, filled with

immediacy and family issues. People can disappear for weeks to appear just as suddenly wanting help with an application form or to build/polish a CV.

This prompted a digital format of engagement - with its attendant difficulties and yet I could attempt a form of connection with young people, diplomatically nudging to visit and forwarding links to vacancies. It has enabled me to keep an ongoing dialogue of what could be termed 'pastoral support' as there are a number of young folk returning for whatever reason: one young man visits for job seeking assistance while he is out of university, a young lady revisits to keep pushing towards her goals; first it was working in fashion retail later developing into early years learning.

Digital distraction and 'Magical thinking'

The 'attendant difficulties' of working digitally with a number of young people has brought a range of challenges in itself. Trying to engage via email is ironically almost impossible as What's App or SMS offer immediate direct dialogue, an ongoing battle to impress upon them the importance of using email if looking for a role in a company or any organisation. So, a What's App live jobs group was formed, project participants opting in at the point of registration. This is not totally great as new members don't see the history, but a suitable notice board for me to reach out en masse.

Now the mechanisms for communicating were in place, it did enable young people to just ask me for more assistance online rather than in person which promoted a sense of ownership. It also enabled an unfortunate lack of structure, and that things just happen without much effort. With that in mind, every effort has been to keep the service offer open for revisiting/repeating, reminders keep on visiting to deal with the process of building/polishing a CV, then targeting and researching who would be a good company or organisation to work for. Then there's the matter of logging what happened to keep things in perspective. Those with focus and drive show themselves again, but very few have visited three weeks consecutively.

Working with other organisations

Reach out and marketing through libraries and advertising in local venues of all kinds, superhero CVs as a marketing tool which were useful for getting the structure across for individuals and generating interest. Marketing the service is an ongoing challenge, attempting to create slow and steady referrals through local networks, and more direct attempts at talking to people in Deptford Lounge and clearing days have created better visibility with other local organisations (with useful mailing lists) and occasional referrals. Youth services in the borough have been contacted on an ongoing basis, and are aware of the service, yet the other youth clubs (services run by youth First) in the borough have been hard to start a dialogue with, apparently as their community liaison has been on long term illness.

Careers service

Met at a Job fair at Lewisham college, helpful and feel the service is a grass roots complement to their provision - young people need to be supported after their careers advice

interview fades from memory. A good dialogue and support, R2W now has a deck of cards to facilitate a young person's self reflection on their skills and interests.

Mencap

Also met at the job fair, an ongoing dialogue has proved to be useful, garnering a small number of local individuals requiring support. There are plans to deliver a mock interview session for a new cohort of young people going through their service.

Local schools / Lewisham virtual school

The most challenging organisations to get referrals from, which was a distinct surprise. Some schools have had a tentative approach and then decided to refer elsewhere. The Lewisham virtual school (a support network for pre-NEETs and low attenders) gave an opportunity to pitch at their AGM in 2019, generating conversation but very little follow up.

London Youth

As project funding offered scope to pay for a youth worker, this organisation delivers the Future Talent project, providing follow on monies enabling the R2W service to continue and expand; 'Inspiration activities' to create new horizons, 'Experience activities' are employment placements for participants. Unfortunately we are a victim of Lewisham's high level of building development with not much opportunity for business enterprise premises. The position of the centre offers potential for Southwark based opportunities to be explored.

Lewisham Construction hub

Purveyor of training and apprenticeships in the construction industry, good dialogue offered an opportunity to attend a Lewisham job fair in the college, which led to meeting support workers for Mencap. Good point of referral for those looking to work in the industry.

Young Lewisham Project

Introduced by Bradley Manning, this veteran service offers young people a chance to repair motorbikes and mopeds and then to race them. Meeting with their founder was most useful as it led to being invited to the AGM for the Lewisham Virtual school.

Lewisham Youth Theatre

This organisation offers a range of youth orientated theatre based work experiences (in sound engineering, lighting and acting opportunities) mentoring to build self confidence. This is a new contact and the hope is to polish CVs created by participants, and refer young people needing a very person centred approach.



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