



ENERGY &
EFFICIENCY
INDUSTRIAL PARTNERSHIP



THE NORTH WEST PILOT TRANSFORMING YOUNG LIVES



CASE
STUDY

16%

OF YOUNG PEOPLE
IN NORTH WEST
CLASSIFIED AS NEET

12

YOUNG PEOPLE
PARTICIPATED IN
THE PILOT



9

YOUNG PEOPLE
COMPLETED PILOT
FROM COHORT ONE

The North West Pilot (the Pilot) was a multi-company pilot project to help create youth employment opportunities involving the identification, selection and support of young unemployed people through a 10 week support programme comprising two weeks of pre-employment activity and eight weeks of work experience.

The North West was chosen for this pilot as there is a disproportionate level of youth unemployment and deprivation in the region with over 16% of young people not in employment, education or training (NEET). The Energy & Efficiency Industrial Partnership (EEIP) has a significant ambition to address youth unemployment, to increase the talent pipelines into the industry, and to align with that commitment there was a need for practical action.

United Utilities offered its leadership to turn the concept into a project that would lead to real jobs for young people in the participating companies.

"It would be great if every organisation in the EEIP got involved and offered at least one placement, and hopefully many more, so that together we can reach into all of the communities in which we operate. I know through experience that it is hard work to get this collaboration going, and you have to be patient, but it is definitely worth it when you realise you can play a part in transforming lives."

Lynn Johnson
Talent Programme Manager
United Utilities

Lynn Johnson, Talent Programme Manager at United Utilities has led the Pilot. Lynn drew heavily on her previous experience as a Business in the Community (BITC) Business Connector as she used her skills to good effect in engaging with local, community organisations that were able, and used to, working with young unemployed people and who would be trusted by those individuals.

Lynn explains: "We carefully identified and worked with these organisations as they would ultimately be responsible for identifying the young people and referring them to us. Energy & Utility Skills (EU Skills) also played a huge part in engaging with stakeholders, such as the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and Jobcentre Plus, to ensure buy in to the Programme and to negotiate flexibilities that would enable the young people we most wanted to help to engage with the Pilot, without losing their benefits. DWP personnel came to one of our selection days and as a result of that and EU Skills' stakeholder skills we believe that really helped."

Lynn continues: "We aimed to have something up and running by September 2014, only six months after we started turning the concept of the Pilot into a reality. For that first cohort we had 75 young people referred to us; of which 36 came to selection days we organised. Of these, 13 young people were selected of which 12 went on to participate fully, and nine out of these 12 completed the experience." The participants were a mix of males and females aged 17-23 and who had very different needs, capabilities and qualifications. Lynn said this was a key point: "We learned that the programme is suitable for people who are ready to make a commitment, not those who cannot or don't wish to – they must be prepared to have a go. This means that initial identification and selection has to be focused."

The Pilot has allowed for the creation of a 10 week programme that has included elements of innovation too. For example, on day two of the pre-employment training, Lynn organised for the Ministry of Defence (MoD) to provide some teambuilding work purposely taking participants out of their comfort zone, but with the effect of individuals becoming more confident at addressing their fears and concerns.

There have been impacts at a number of levels, but most noticeably for the young people who took part; for the companies that took part who have learned that you really can impact people's lives through joint effort; and for the strategic stakeholders that learned how to make their partnerships and

resources work together for a common ambition. Young people have secured real jobs and their achievements were formally recognised at a graduation ceremony at the end of the programme. Zoe Green, who took part in the Pilot, now works as a Customer Advisor at United Utilities. Jobs have also been secured for participants at E.ON and Amey.

"At the age of 17, the prospect of securing a full time job with potential to develop myself seemed impossible. Then I was made aware of the Pilot by Warrington Youth Club and knew that this was for me and a way of developing my skills and getting into the wider workplace. I now have a permanent job at United Utilities as a Customer Advisor. I love my job, the environment, my work colleagues; who would have thought three months ago, that I'd be talking to customers and even better understanding a water bill. I'm very proud of myself and what I've achieved thanks to a great scheme that helps people like myself."

Zoe Green
Customer Advisor
United Utilities

With hindsight Lynn observes that there have been some really important ingredients for success, including but not limited to: "the engagement approach – between the companies that have the jobs and with community organisations that provide the referrals; using participating companies' infrastructure, such as our training centre in Leigh, where the young people were in a business environment with our other employees – this meant they had to up their behaviours and to concentrate properly; interactive, energetic selection days; flexibility of the DWP to enable no disruption to the young person's ability to commit to and complete their experience; and to dedicate time to drive the Pilot and make it happen rapidly".

The Pilot has been very visible to the EEIP Council and Operations Board members, and has captured their imagination as a model that can be scaled up and rolled out in other parts of the country, subject to all the right resources being secured in all the right places. The plan currently includes an ambition to deliver 24 cohorts of 12 participants each across four regions including the North West, North East, London and the Midlands, bringing opportunities for 288 young people in the next 12 months. This means that new employers and organisations are also stepping up to engage with the Partnership's goals and Lynn hopes that even more employers will become involved.

For more information about the work of the EEIP
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energyandefficiencypartnership.co.uk

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