

**Independent evaluation of the intervention study in  
Sunderland LA with young people who are not in  
employment, education or training (NEET)**

**Go Create – a social, creative and practical intervention**

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## **Background**

BECTA's NEETs Intervention Study was a small scale 'proof of concept' initiative which, consistent with both government social policy and e-strategy, explored the potential of technology to support young people who are not in education, employment or training.

Produced by TwoFour Knowledge, and based on a previous research study (Passey, Williams and Rogers, 2008), 'Go Create' took place in NEET 'hot spot' – Sunderland – over a period of ten months between November 2008 and September 2009. Championed by a Connexions area manager and implemented with the assistance of a range of key staff from projects across Sunderland LA (already working with young people who were NEET), 'Go Create' was designed to 'kick-start' the re-engagement of participants' interest through social, creative and practical endeavour.

## **Nature of the intervention**

With the objective of enabling some of the 'hardest to reach' young people to develop techniques and skills of self-presentation (building on their existing knowledge of online social networking), 'Go Create' focused on encouraging participants to undertake two main tasks. The first was to plan and film a short 'passion piece' about themselves (featuring their skills, interests and ambitions) and the second was to incorporate this work into online or visual CVs on the 'Go Create' site. Parallel support activities were to run concurrently to promote sharing and collaboration, as well as to celebrate the achievements of the young people involved.

Two separate approaches were adopted to gain the involvement of young people on the 'Go Create' initiative. The more successful method was to train participants 'directly' through attendance at a specially devised four day 'summer school'. The second, less efficient, strategy involved the training of key support workers from youth groups and Connexions Sunderland over a two week period, who would then take them forward with the young people with whom they were already working.

Levels of motivation, competence and confidence regarding ICT differed widely amongst the key support workers and this was reflected in their ability to engage and involve young people on the 'Go Create' initiative. It was also found that without a 'captive audience' attendance, attention and application were inconsistent. The 'single source', 'direct' approach was significantly more effective.

Although intended to accommodate up to 100 young people, the total number of participants taking part in the initiative who were NEET and had placed material on the 'Go Create' site by October 2009, totalled 27. Of this number, eight produced a CV in a form that was significantly more sophisticated and informative than anything they had completed previously.

Both attendance and attention were sustained throughout the duration of the initiative amongst the directly trained young people. This was a tangible success factor given the 'hard to reach' nature of the participants, and evidence also showed that most of the young people who took part felt that they had benefited and grown in self-confidence as a result.

## **Responses of young people and their key workers**

The adoption and application of a more creative approach to the CV building prompted some very positive responses:

- “It is a good way of showing employers that I am willing to think more outside the box by creating this visually and not just written down”
- “It is a way of demonstrating to employers that you are different”
- “It allowed me to access my creative side while producing something that would help me”

This view was not shared by all the support workers involved however, many of whom remained unconvinced of the value of the initiative, questioned its relevance to employers and/or suffered from a degree of 'technophobia'.

Getting young people 'on-board' and encouraging them to do something with the training was much more challenging than anticipated. The 'real life' feedback events planned in June/July 2009 (an integral part of the intervention) for showcasing the work achieved did not take place as insufficient material had been produced.

Although training for support workers had been 'fit for purpose', it did not equip them with the scope and time to fully understand and appreciate the initiative and its application. Going forward, those involved need to have a shared 'vision' of what is to be achieved and why, and to perceive the initiative as playing a key role in their developing professionalism.

Some youth workers found recruitment a major challenge and had to 'knock on doors' to generate interest. Others felt that:

- “It was hard to build a CV for someone who did very little apart from getting involved in anti-social behaviour”
- “It was hard to persuade people about the value of having a CV”
- “The main issue was getting young people in front of a camera and agreeing to be filmed”
- “The clients we are working with find it difficult to put together a written CV, never mind about an electronic one!”
- “The use of creative technology raises issues about confidence building, self esteem and self-efficacy.”

Others were more positive:

- “There was a noticeable growth in confidence with the group.”
- “They were improving in terms of talking about themselves and talking to camera.”

The technologies required in editing and uploading video film to the ‘Go Create’ site did present difficulties to many youth workers unfamiliar with the software involved. On-going technical support in the field would overcome this barrier and promote a degree of consistency of support throughout.

For the young people participating in ‘Go Create’, whilst the ‘creative process’ may have been a route to self-reflection for some, the majority were focussed on the product (the multi-media CV) and its usefulness as a route for gaining employment. With no meaningful feedback, particularly from employers, young people would not value the exercise.

As far as the employer community is concerned, a cultural change from the top down may well be necessary before multi-media CVs are accepted and valued adequately.

## **Conclusion**

It was generally considered that the study provided positive ‘proof of concept’. It indicated that, as a short-term, small scale intervention, there were valuable benefits to be derived for young people who are NEET.

Future approaches will need to acknowledge that young people’s technological skills are often superior to their social competences, whereas the opposite is frequently true of their support workers. Key workers will require more in-depth training to be effective in both engaging and supporting the young people involved.

Young people need a higher degree of feedback to maintain their motivation to create and present material online. In the same vein, events, both ‘face-to-face’ and online, are crucial to consolidate the participants’ progress and continuing involvement.

For LAs seeking to adopt this type of intervention, there is a need to ensure that it is ‘fit for purpose’. This requires a greater degree of clarity around the framing and positioning of the initiative, particularly in terms of its steering and direction. In the same way, there is a clear requirement to develop and embed the appropriate skills associated with education, training and employment application amongst those involved, to ensure consistency, effectiveness and sustainability.

This means that all stakeholders in the ‘Go Create’ chain, from the young people to their support/careers workers and the educational providers and employers who review the ‘end product’, must ‘buy in’ to the initiative. As such, an integrated and ‘systemic’ approach to the intervention pre-supposes that all parties are working together collaboratively and supportively.