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“The LAB Project is a very effective way of reconnecting people to the wider community and underlining the important message that everyone has the skills and talent to make a difference.”

Paul Goggins, MP for Wythenshawe

The LAB Project is a two-week intensive course that uses the arts to help unemployed individuals progress onto employment, education or volunteering. It uses drama as a means to build self-esteem, challenging participants to access their own creativity, to be taught, adapt and deliver a drama workshop in a local primary school.

Participants learn to take responsibility for themselves and understand how their contribution can be of value to their wider community.

The LAB Project has been running successfully in Kirklees and Manchester for the past eight years.

“I was on longterm sickness benefit and the LAB gave me the confidence, the practical skills and the contacts to get a job. I am now working fulltime as a care worker.”

Claire Barker – LAB Participant

Participants who complete the Lab project will:

- **Understand how to behavior appropriately in professional situations**
- **Take responsibility for themselves and their behavior**
- **Understand consequences of behavior**
- **Communicate successfully with a range of people**
- **Understand the importance of attendance and punctuality**
- **Completed a level one award in progression**
- **Be ready to step into employment, training or volunteering**

The LAB Project runs from 10am to 4.30pm every day for a 2 week period. We also offer half day, one day and two day courses which introduce participants to the same training. In addition, we offer a LAB 2 course which takes successful candidates from the LAB and progresses them onto apprenticeships in specific areas of work.

“The LAB fulfills a role that we can’t provide. What’s different is that the tutors are able to get absolutely ordinary people doing extraordinary things. You can build CVs and prepare people for interviews but there’s an ingredient missing: It’s the confidence that enables them to even start this process and that is what the LAB Project does.”

Eamonn Graal, Manchester Adult Education

The main aims of the course are to:

- Gain increased levels of motivation, confidence, recognition of prior skills.
- Increase feelings of responsibility, levels of self-esteem, personal aspirations.
- Improve levels of attendance and timekeeping, levels of self-awareness, greater levels of concentration and/or engagement, organisational skills
- Receive continuous one-to-one mentoring and individual advice and guidance on next steps in employment, education or volunteering.

The main progression routes from The LAB:

- Further education and training courses at level one and above relevant to an identified personal or career goal.
- Voluntary work in order to develop identified skills and competencies.
- Part and full time employment.
- Work placements
- Apprenticeships

As well as achieving 100% success rate at progressing participants, the LAB is a very popular progression route from other courses as part of a wider network of providers.

Level of qualification / Unit of Accreditation:

The LAB project is an accredited course. By completing the program participants can gain Level 1 National award in Progression.

All participants have had few or no qualifications when starting the course. In the last 12 months 100% have gained the above qualifications through completing the LAB.

Profile for a typical group following The LAB

The LAB Project works with people who are willing to make the transition from worklessness to meaningful occupation (employment, training, education or volunteering) but who need support in developing their self-confidence, motivation, and communication skills or in identifying suitable next steps.

Proper Job have been working with marginalised groups through the LAB Project for the past eight years in the most deprived wards in Kirklees and other areas in the North of England. The people coming on to the project are not in work or education; they may have addiction problems and may have either offended or be at risk of offending. They may have mental health problems. Proper Job has a long experience of working with all these groups and has the professional experience and expertise to work creatively with individuals from a range of disadvantaged background.

Overview of the syllabus

Initially a two week intensive programme uses interactive and reflective exercises to look at personal awareness and development. The first stage looks at team building and communication skills e.g. questioning and listening, building rapport and raising self-awareness. In the second stage, we show and teach participants a participative arts workshop. It is a 60-minute workshop which the participants take on, learn and then deliver to an audience of year 5 and 6 pupils (age 9 – 11) in a local primary school.

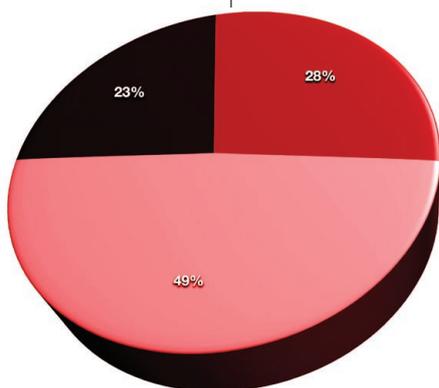
Feeling empowered, the next stage is used to harness those emotions and feelings gained from the experience so far and channel them into avenues participants want to follow. Individual advice and guidance is offered in private, one-to-one sessions with careers advice workers, educational guidance providers from local FE colleges and volunteer bureau workers.

We ensure that the Lab project, as far as possible, is accessible to all. If a learner has a specific physical need, we will ensure that inappropriate exercises are amended or a role is created for them to remain involved.

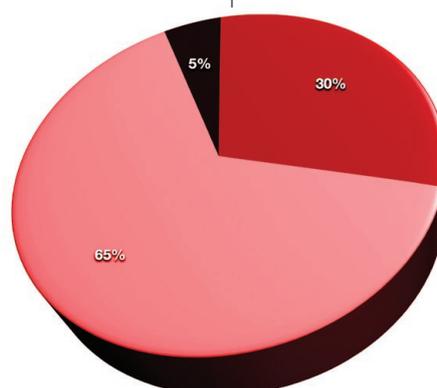
Appendix 1. Statistics & Evaluation

LAB PROJECT PROGRESSION RATES

LAB PROJECT MANCHESTER

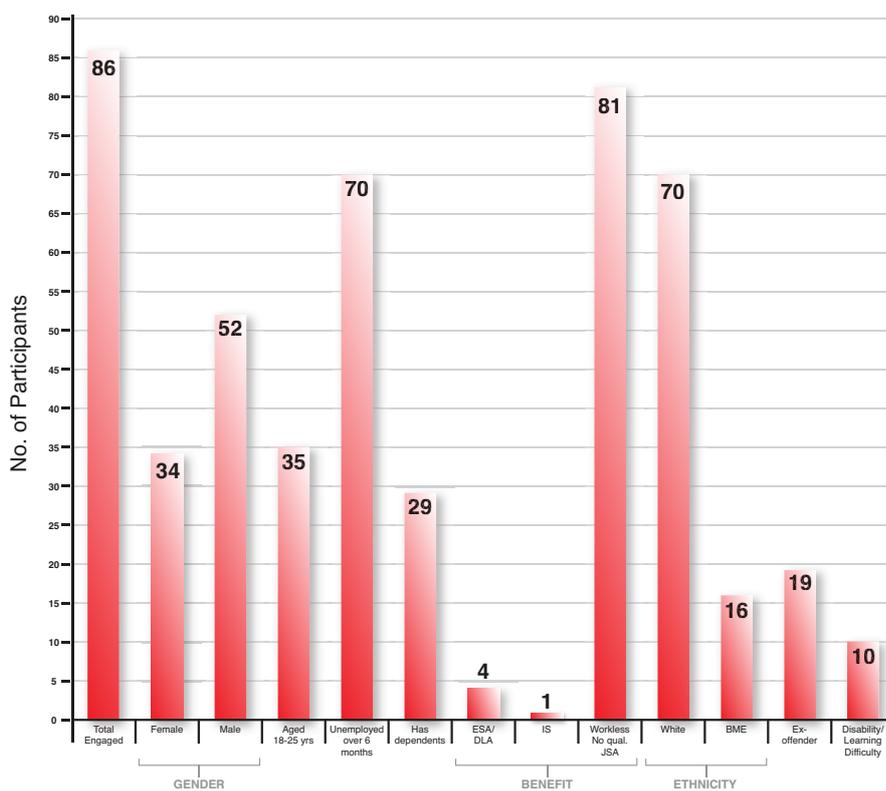


LAB PROJECT KIRKLEES



Progressed to volunteering
 Progressed to employment
 Progressed to education

LAB PROJECT 2011/12 - ENGAGEMENT CHART



PARTICIPANT EVALUATION



"Interacting with others was a challenge for me, I got over it by being motivated by others to join in."

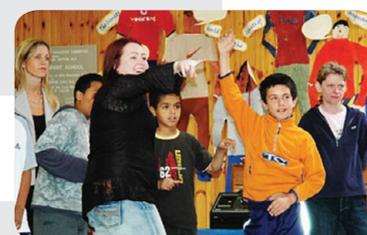


"Getting up and speaking in front of a group was a challenge, but I learned to become more relaxed throughout the course."

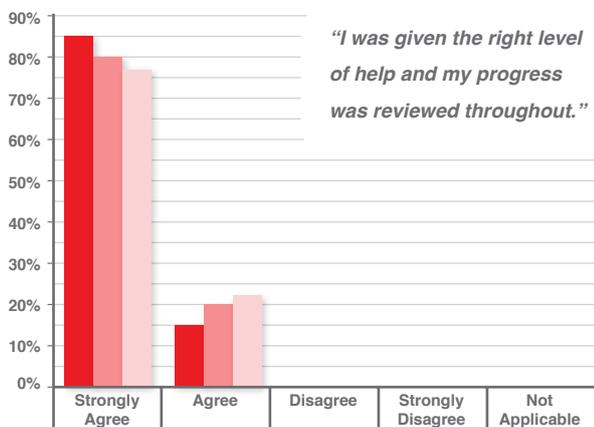


"I was scared of going to the school, but as soon as I got there - I realised I COULD do it."

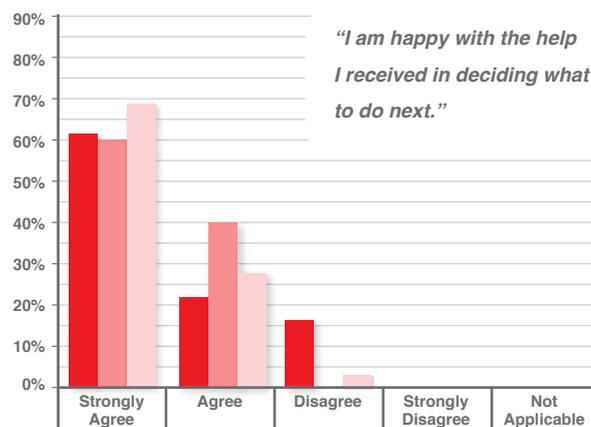
"I found it challenging to get out of bed in the morning at first, but I couldn't wait to get there after a few days."



"I struggled to speak in front of others but by the end of the course, I didn't even think about it, I just did it!"



"I was given the right level of help and my progress was reviewed throughout."



"I am happy with the help I received in deciding what to do next."

■ Nov 2011 ■ Oct 2011 ■ 2010-11 Average

Appendix 2. CASE STUDY - HOUSING ASSOCIATION

Wythenshaw Community Housing Group (WCHG) and The LAB Project.

The LAB Project has a long-standing relationship with this housing association, initially because people who attended The LAB Project would then progress to many of the courses that the WCHG ran, and so a mutually beneficial partnership was created.

The partnership developed when representatives from WCHG came to observe the way in which The LAB Project was delivered and they recognised some of the creative methods and techniques used were having real tangible success in engaging and motivating hard to reach individuals.

From this the WCHG began to incorporate The LAB into their own long term training schemes and placements, where people in the area would be trained in skills like driving, computers, first aid and anything that would help them to be more job ready. They would also have a work placement within the housing association and The LAB is placed at the beginning or the end of some programmes to help address specific areas including decision making, confidence, motivation, assertiveness and working effectively in teams.

Because The LAB is separate from the housing association, the participants can be more candid and direct about any of their needs that they feel are not being fully met, and this can be valuable information when it is fed back to the housing association in order to identify any improvements that could be made in the overall provision.

The fact that we are a theatre company always sets us outside the norm when it comes to training providers and many people have commented on the 'fresh, exciting and engaging' exercises that many other courses don't contain.

This partnership has now spanned the best part of 10 years, and there is a good deal of trust that has been developed, having grown naturally through observation and communication between the two organisations.



Appendix 3. CASE STUDY - PARTICIPANT

A learner from the Huddersfield LAB Project was signposted to our course through his progress2work Linkup advisor. He had previous issues with alcohol and depression. The LAB Project was the first step he had taken to re-engage with people as he had isolated himself from the world for a long period.

“I was really unsure at first and didn’t think that I would like to do anything concerning drama, but as I’d heard about the course on a few separate occasions, I thought I’d show up and see what it was all about. I felt that the relaxed environment made me feel comfortable at the induction and thought that I would carry on with it and see how it went.”

Although quiet and reticent at the beginning of the course, the learner had taken part in all activities, and during a 1-1 interview with a tutor mentioned that he had previously managed a care home and had worked with adults as a support worker. The tutor asked if he might be interested in responding to a local company ‘United Response’ who were recruiting for support workers at the time. The learner replied that he did not feel confident enough to go back to work just yet, but that he was enjoying the course and was feeling a change in his mindset.

As the course progressed the learner became more involved in the workshop, offering to take on a greater role than he had originally intended.

In the second week during ‘check-in’ the learner announced that he had applied for university and had been accepted for a place to start in September.

“I now feel that I am in the right frame of mind and have the confidence to go on to university in September. The course has helped me so much – my confidence is growing and I feel like I am able to interact with others again and that I actually enjoy it!”

The learner went on to complete the course and gain a level 1 NOCN accreditation. He also applied for a position with ‘United Response’ as a part time support worker (something he could continue to do along with his studies in September) and he informed us recently that he had been successful in his application and is now a support worker with the company.



For more information please call 01484 514 687

Or email: mail@properjob.org.uk

<http://www.properjob.org.uk/lab-index.html>