



DRIVE FORWARD

MOMENTUM MADE BY YOU

Drive Forward Foundation

About the organisation

Based in London, [Drive Forward Foundation](#) was launched in 2012 to support care leavers, aged 16 to 26, to develop skills, confidence and motivation for work, education or training. They work with a range of young people for example, some with no qualifications or work experience and others who are graduates, and so tailor support to the needs of each young person.

Drive Forward recognise that many young people, unsure of what is expected of them in an interview, or what employers want to hear, are afraid to go to interviews and can limit what they achieve as a result. The idea of What Employers Want (WEW), which puts the young person in the position of the interviewer and helps them to look at the process from a different perspective, appealed to the charity.

Delivering the project

The project was led by the Outreach Co-ordinator in the charity's Youth Engagement Team.

The Team worked with nine young people, aged between 16 and 24, on their WEW project. The Outreach Coordinator targeted both young people with limited or no interview experience and those with substantial experience of interviews, to bring different perspectives to the project. Most of the young people were already in contact with Drive Forward services but the team were keen to also include care leavers, identified through their outreach work, who had not used their services before. All but two young people remained engaged until the end of the project.

The project lead encouraged participants to take charge of the project for themselves, providing support if needed. Following the initial planning meeting the team worked with each young person on the project to identify their interests and who they might like to interview. Young people were provided with a list of corporate partners, employers that Drive Forward work with regularly, but were also supported to approach other employers relevant to their area of interest. Participants then used

the template interview questions, from the Project in a Box materials, as the foundation from which to develop specific questions for each employer.

Project staff held practice interviews so young people would be familiar with what would happen and their role in the interview. Although some young people had planned to do the interviews in pairs, in practice all interviews were carried out individually, with the Outreach Coordinator or a colleague sitting in.

The young people interviewed nine employers, most of them at the offices of the companies. Following the interviews each young person produced a summary of what they had learned individually. On completion of the interviews, a group session was held to discuss and compare what they had found out from the different industries they had visited which included for example, construction, retail, finance and youth work. The group recorded some of this discussion to capture their conclusions and produced a poster with key findings from the project.

Following its success, Drive Forward plan to repeat the project as part of their ongoing programme of work.

Challenges

Recruiting participants was a challenge at first, as some young people were put off by the apparent length of the project which takes place over several months. Once the project lead explained in more detail about the different stages of the project and what they would be doing at each stage, young people were less reticent to get involved. Getting participants together at one time also proved a challenge.

Approaching employers and securing their involvement was a lengthy process which prolonged the set-up stage of the project. However, the response to the project from employers was overwhelmingly positive.

Benefits – for young people, organisations and employers

Care leavers can often have low aspirations linked to low-self-esteem. Involvement in the What Employers Want project has helped to build confidence in the young people and change the way they think about getting work and achieving in industries or jobs that they may not previously have believed possible. Learning first-hand from employers that they are interested in experience and attributes beyond qualifications has been particularly motivating for participants.

“...when they actually do meet them, at first it’s intimidating, but then after a while, they start to see, ‘Hold on a minute...these are just people, and they’re giving you information about how it could work in that kind of industry.’”

Project lead

Being in a position of control in an interview situation also helped the young people to grow in confidence.

Involvement in the project has had tangible employment related outcomes for some participants. One young person, who had never been in an interview before, was invited for an apprenticeship interview with the construction company he had interviewed. The young person who interviewed the youth organisation has been offered work experience on one of their projects.

Participants have also learned about and begun to develop the skills to prepare for job interviews, for example understanding the importance of doing research about a company when applying for a job.

“.. it's helped me gain more knowledge about the working environment and I think that a lot of the answers will help myself and others when it comes to finding a job.” Participant

Many of the employers involved in the What Employers Want project are already actively involved in and supportive of the aims of Drive Forward. Employers were happy to engage in the project as it was ‘something different’, they understood how it could have positive impacts for young people and it was an opportunity to talk to young people about their company.

“It allows for an honest and open conversation which you wouldn't necessarily be able to have in an interview for a role.” Employer

Having seen young people benefit from the experience of leading on the What Employers Want project, Drive Forward plan to build this approach into other areas of their work.

Success factors

Making sure that each young person understood in depth what the project was about, what would happen at each stage in the process and how they would be involved helped to secure the engagement of participants and move the project on after a slow start.

Project resources

The project lead emphasised that delivery of the project would have been much more challenging without the Project in a Box materials. The toolkit provided a handy reference throughout the project from which to develop ideas or validate approaches to delivery.