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Conference or Workshop Item

Title: Working together - Library and Learning Services and RNIB College Loughborough

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Example citation: Townend, J. (2014) Working together - Library and Learning Services and RNIB College Loughborough. Seminar Presentation presented to: *East Midlands Academic Libraries Information Network (EMALINK): Broadening Engagement, Loughborough University, 09 April 2014.*

Version: Presented version

<http://nectar.northampton.ac.uk/6589/>



Working together

Library and Learning Services
and
RNIB College Loughborough

Jenny Townend
Learning Support Specialist

Community Engagement

The University of Northampton engages with the local community by creating mutually beneficial alliances with public, private, voluntary and community sectors.

Local schools and colleges

- 2010–2013: 1,200 pupils from 22 local schools visited our libraries for a tour, introduction to resources and advice on Google smart searching. Pupils are entitled to free Associate Membership.
- Work experience offered to up to 2 pupils at a time for up to 2 weeks.
- Skills Hub involvement.

Reading groups for adults

- YWCA – young Mums, disadvantaged young females.
- CAN – drugs, alcohol and homelessness.
- NVCFR – refuge for women and children.



Reading groups for children



2 schools in Northampton, Yrs 4 and 5.

- To encourage an enthusiasm for reading
- To promote school and public libraries
- To broaden literary horizons
- To establish reading communities within schools
- To enhance skills including literacy, debating and group discussion
- To increase confidence and self esteem





A national organisation offering learning opportunities, outside of the school curriculum, to 7-14 year olds. The aims of this initiative include raising aspirations and encouraging a love of learning.

Children receive credits for each hour of activity they engage in and they record these in a **Passport to Learning** book. As they progress through the scheme earning credits they are awarded certificates based on 3 levels:

Undergraduate, Postgraduate or Doctorate (how adorable is that?).



College, Loughborough.

“...a specialist residential college recruiting people with sight loss and other disabilities aged 16 – 65 from all over the UK.

Learners have a wide range of disabilities including sight loss, learning disabilities, autism, Asperger's Syndrome, communication problems, physical disabilities, chronic illness and hearing loss.”

<http://www.rnibcollege.ac.uk/>



Work placement (Oct 2012)

Preparation

- Visit from Marie Muir, Employment Placement Officer, and mock interview with Filippo – discussion of CV, skills and areas of interest.

The nitty gritty!

- How much could he see and how did he feel about his impairment?
- How was he going to find his way around? Risk assessment?
- What equipment would he need?
- What could we find for him to do?

Day	10am	11am	12pm	1pm	2pm	3-4pm
Monday	Tour and introductions with Jenny Townend	Set up workstation and start on SM Survey	Lunch	Shadowing Reception Desk/Info Point	SM Survey	SM Survey
Tuesday	SM Survey	SM Survey	Lunch	Shadowing	SM Survey	SM Survey
Wednesday	SM Survey	SM Survey	Lunch	Shadowing	SM Survey	SM Survey
Thursday	15 min catch up with Evie McNally/SM Survey	SM Survey	Lunch	Shadowing	SM Survey	SM Survey
Friday	SM Survey	SM Survey	Lunch	Shadowing	SM Survey	SM Survey handover/summing up with Evie and Jenny



Outcomes of placement

For Filippo:

- Gaining confidence.
- Sampling the 'rhythm' of work.
- Experiencing a new work environment – chance to consider options.
- Opportunity to exercise and enhance skills (eg: pc use, analysing data).

For us:

- Good experience for our staff – awareness raising.
- Accessibility issues (eg: environment) raised by an 'expert'.
- An extra pair of hands.



Learner visit to LLS (Feb 2013)

Aim:

To give learners an insight into the variety of jobs within LLS.

Things to consider:

- The usual – parking, catering, room booking.
- Powerpoint presentations and handouts – making them accessible and interesting.
- Staff awareness and confidence with learners.
- How best to tour?
- Guide dogs needing comfort breaks.

- **10.30am** - Welcome and tour (Charlotte, Michelle and Jenny).
- **11.00am** - Tea and coffee.
- **11.10am** - Recruitment and employee characteristics (Chris).
- **11.30am** - Being a Learning Technologist (Al).
- **11.50am** - Being an Academic Librarian (Charlotte).
- **12.10pm** - Adventures in research (Nick).
- **12.30pm** - Working in Customer Care (Stewart).
- **12.50pm** - Working in the Centre for Achievement and Performance (Kate).
- **1.10pm** - Working with library collections (Alan).
- **1.30pm** - Lunch.



Feedback

“Today has been absolutely invaluable - it's not what I expected, it's better. I'm approaching 50, and have been out of work for 12 years, so what do I do now? I'm actually thinking I like the library outlook. I have experience with customer service, I also worked in a brewery for 20 years. I'm not going to be returning to manual work. I can talk to people, I like to communicate, I like to help and if there's a problem I like to solve it.

I've been brushing up on my computer skills, and the RNIB are also going to help me with other things like my maths and English, to bring them up to speed. I am thoroughly enjoying it, and this is amazing.”

Gary, RNIB College student

"Most of the group don't know what they're going to do when they leave college so days like this are really good because it gives them an insight into what careers are available.

Some of them come from quite a labour-intensive background, from warehouses or manual labour work, so seeing how an academic institution works will give them an idea of those sort of jobs."

Marie Muir, RNIB College Employment Placement Officer

“I really enjoyed the day. It was totally different to any outreach stuff I’ve been involved in before. The trainees and the RNIB staff were lovely to talk to and seemed really enthusiastic and it was great to hear so many questions at the end about the possibility of working in university settings. I wish the trainees good luck in their endeavours.”

Charlotte Heppell, Academic Librarian

“If I helped any of our guests feel more confident about a career in my line of work, or about working in Higher Education, then I think that’s my fifteen minutes well spent.”

Al Holloway, Learning Technologist





Mock interview panel (Mar 2013 and 2014)

- For adult learners seeking employment.
- Practice interview skills, CVs, application forms, etc.
- Panel comprised of people from various industries.



Employer information evening (Mar 2013)

- Learners demonstrated equipment and had a chance to meet potential employers.
- College trainees presented on their experiences and focused on dispelling some of the common fears faced by employers when taking on a blind or partially sighted person.





Award time!

**Debut award for an outstanding
contribution to the employment
of people with disabilities.**

**10th Annual Employer Partnership Awards
Thursday 20 June 2013.**

I was unable to attend but a couple of people were prepared to go and bask in my glory!



The future...

Continue to work closely with the RNIB and also to seek other outreach opportunities....the University of Northampton is relocating to the town centre in 2018 so there should be plenty of them...

RNIB contacts:

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**Thank you
for listening**

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