

Assenti Research

Evaluation of Pioneers Pilot Year 2
Final Report
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I. Background and Objectives

I.1 Background

In Scotland WorkingRite deliver work based learning and mentoring projects to 16-18 year olds. Their work is based on a number of key principles:

- The importance of breaking away from their peers and learning how to mix in the world of adults
- Practical learning on the job
- The need for many young people to understand and learn skills that matter in the workplace e.g. understanding authority and why it's necessary, importance of time keeping, the cost of mistakes to an employer etc

This research is a follow up to last year's evaluation of Year 1 of the Pioneers Pilot and includes evaluation of the project in Edinburgh and Glasgow.

The project has developed since last year's evaluation and trainees now progress through a two-stage programme beginning with a 5 week induction to build confidence and self-esteem, encourage positive thinking and instill some basic understanding of what is necessary to succeed in the workplace. They then move onto a work placement 1-2 days a week increasing to 3 days and potentially then transferring to another WorkingRite programme to continue their work placement.

I.2 Research Objectives

The over-riding aim of the research was to assess the impact of participation on the young people.

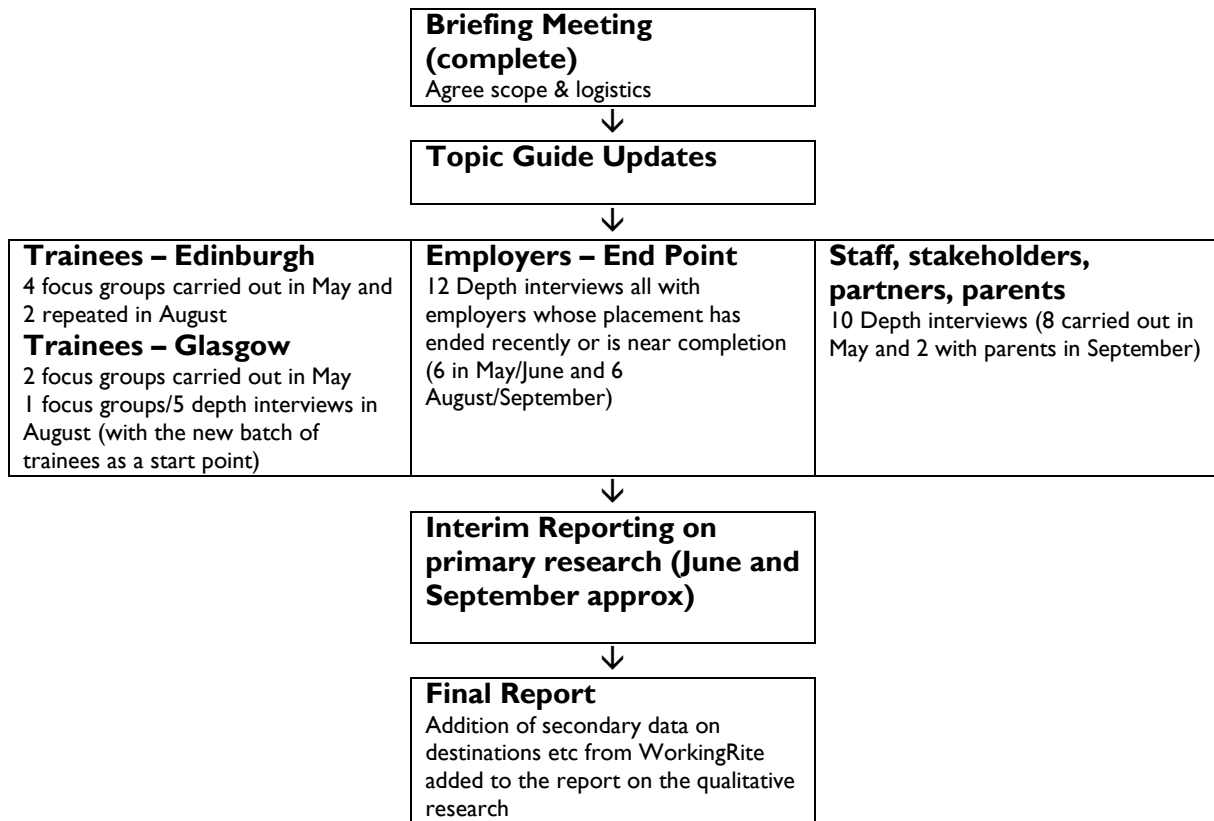
The specific objectives were:

- to develop an understanding of the programme process that will allow identification of areas for improvement
- to consider the project from an employers perspective in terms of what makes it appealing or off putting
- to consider how other partners and participants felt about the project before they were involved – what were their expectations at that time?
- to understand whether employers feel that the pilot is worthwhile for them – how have they/their business/staff benefited from taking part? – would they take part again in the future/recommend to other employers?
- to make an assessment of the extent to which (and how) participation results in the enhancement of self-esteem and confidence, changes in aspirations and motivation, and improvement in social and team working skills
- to consider what the young people think they would have done without this project
- to ascertain the value that is placed on participating by the trainees and employers
- to identify the benefits and any drawbacks of the pilot as it now exists
- to identify the challenges the pilot has faced in delivery and consider ways of overcoming these if replicated elsewhere
- to consider how repeatable the project is

2. Research Approach

2.1 Outline of Research Approach

The research approach is summarised below. This report is an interim report and further reports will be provided on completion of the second and third stages of research in summer 2015.



2.2 Trainees

The trainees were given a full understanding of why the research was being carried out, their role in the research and that it is anonymous and confidential.

Focus groups were carried out to exploit the group dynamic to maximum benefit. As they all knew each other, trusted their Project Leaders and were comfortable in each other's company the groups worked very well. A small number of in depth telephone interviews were carried out in Glasgow with trainees who had left the programme – these were incentivised with store vouchers to encourage participation.

2.3 Employers

Understanding the employer experience is particularly key to establishing how easy or difficult it would be to run this project again and in other areas. An in-depth telephone interviewing approach was adopted.

Telephone depth interviews were carried out with 6 employers (3 Edinburgh and 3 Glasgow) in May/June and again in August/September. These interviews used a pre-agreed semi-structured topic guide and lasted about 20 minutes each.

The 12 employers worked in a range of different sectors including:

- Soft play centre
- Painter and decorator
- Café
- Joiners (2)
- Furniture maker
- Engineering Company
- Ceramic painting centre
- Landscaping
- Cabinet making and upholstery
- Letting agency
- DIY store

The respondents interviewed were mostly business owners / directors, some of the business had a handful employees and others were sole traders. Consequently most of the respondents were responsible for all hiring and decision making within their businesses. Very often these employers had a sense of social responsibility and could personally relate to the young people's experiences and situations – this was a significant part of their motivation to take part.

2.4 Staff & Partners

Depth interviews were carried out with:

- Project Leaders in Glasgow and Edinburgh (Face to face with supplementary phone calls and emails)
- WorkingRite Chief Operations Officer (Telephone consultation)
- LGBT Youth Scotland (Telephone)
- Fast Forward (Telephone)
- Robin Jeffrey, Outdoor Instructor (Telephone)
- St Mirren Community Activity Team (Telephone)
- Cyrenians (2 telephone interviews)

3. Research Findings

3.1 First Impressions

All of those involved had a clear understanding of the purpose of the Pioneers project.

“It’s trying to help young people who have maybe got a wee bit off track to get some skills and experience so they can get a job.” (Employer)

“Developing young people so they have the maturity and experience to be able to get a paid job.” (Employer)

“To get them work ready, give them an experience of work and engaging with that in a safe and supportive manner so they get used to the routine of it.” (Partner)

“Work with young people for whom school hasn’t clicked so that they can move to a positive destination.” (Partner)

“It’s for people like me who weren’t built for school to give us a chance of getting a job.” (Trainee)

“I wanted a job but I had no clue how to get one and just got loads of knock backs. So you get taught all the stuff you need to know to get a job, cos they don’t teach you that in school and if you don’t have any qualifications like me and my pals don’t even have Nat 3’s, then you need all the help you can get.” (Trainee)

First reactions to the project were very enthusiastic. Several partners noted that there was a need for this type of project working with young people who were disengaged and required more support. Employers were also largely positive in the first instance, indeed some employers remained positive and open to the project even after some very “challenging” experiences with their trainees. Some of the trainees were initially apprehensive – usually about who else would be taking part (especially boys) and what type of work they would be doing (concerned it might be like school).

“When I first went in I was like who’s this boy, totally giving me daggers, I just thought don’t look at him or we’re going to end up having a fight here. Turned out he was just the same as me and everyone else eh? – we just never liked school.” (Trainee)

There were a number of factors that allayed the trainees concerns and encouraged them to first come along and then continue to participate in Pioneers when often teachers from their schools had predicted that they would not engage with anything:

- Being paid and having money deducted for being late or not attending (biggest motivating factor)
- The Project Leader meeting the young person at their location of choice e.g. home, supermarket, Cyrenians etc
- Small groups
- Discovering that other people in their group had similar experiences
- Not like school (being respected and having some control over the choice of placements)
- Not consecutive days or early starts to begin with (out of routine)

“I did want to get a job so I might have come anyway but the fact you were getting paid just meant that I came every day and I tried harder to be here on time.” (Trainee)

“I probably wouldn’t have done it if it wasn’t for the money to be honest. I would never have expected that it would be as good so I wouldn’t have tried it.” (Trainee)

3.2 The Trainees' Experience

Before Pioneers

Before the Pioneers project most of the trainees had been school non-attenders to varying degrees. Some had work experience gained from working with small family businesses or that they had organised themselves – none of these situations was sustainable long term. Mis-use of alcohol and other substances was commonplace. There were some who were young carers and a notable proportion who had unstable home lives and poor relationships with parents. As in last year's research it was clear that many of them were bored and unhappy but lacked confidence in their own abilities and had no understanding of how they might turn around their current situation.

"I was on Street League which was good but then I had nothing to go to and I was just bumming about the house." (Trainee)

"I was depressed, I knew I wanted to get away from the crowd I was with but I didn't know how and didn't see any point." (Trainee)

"I wasn't going to school, teachers didn't help me when I had a problem they just made it worse. They would put me in detention where the other kids were hostile and I'd get angry and fight again. At the time I left school I honestly thought I was just going to hell." (Trainee)

"I didn't fit in at school, people thought it was a laugh to provoke me so I just stopped going. To be honest I was just arguing with my Mum every day." (Trainee)

Although most of the young people had aspirations they had no idea how to go about achieving those aspirations. All had strongly disliked school and commonly experienced issues with anger, low self-esteem and limited expectations.

"I tried not to think about what would happen in the future. I wanted to get a job and a car and have my own house and that but I couldn't see it happening." (Trainee)

"I wasn't good at school, I wasn't clever and that. I started skipping school because it was a laugh and it was any excuse not to go but then the more school I missed the harder it was to go back." (Trainee)

"I had a lot of anger issues, I couldn't talk to anybody because I was just so angry all the time." (Trainee)

Cyrenians was the main mechanism for referral in Edinburgh. The trust that trainees had developed with Cyrenians was part of why they were open to considering Pioneers. In Glasgow the trainees had mostly come from Careers Service.

"I think there was something else I could have done but Mark (Cyrenians) told me Pioneers was going to be better." (Trainee)

Engaging with Pioneers

The Pioneers Project Leaders were critical in establishing a good fit for the project. The key motivations for the trainees to take part in order of importance were:

- Money (more than college)
- Enthusiasm of the Project Leader (not like a teacher, welcoming, encouraging, kind, understanding)
- Appealing activities on offer
- Potential for a job at the end
- Not like school but not quite like work either

“I liked Maureen straight away, I was expecting her to be more stricter, more like what I was used to but she never tried to tell me what to do.” (Trainee)

“Vikki is just so nice and I felt comfortable straight away when I met her.” (Trainee)

The key concerns that had to be addressed were:

- Don't want to be back in a classroom environment with a teacher pupil relationship
- Not knowing anyone or being worried about who else might be doing it
- Anxiety about trying something new

“I was a bit worried about who else would be doing it because there are some people round this area I don't get on with and if we were in the same group let's just say it wouldn't go down too well.” (Trainee)

Being a Pioneer

Despite some changes to the Pioneer experience it was very clear that being a trainee on the Pioneer pilot was a positive experience for the trainees. There were a number of critical factors that led the trainees to value their experience:

- Strong, positive, fair, caring relationship with Project Leader
- Small group
- Ability to contact Project Leader whenever they need help, advice or reassurance
- Learning in a fun, dynamic, active way
- Very little classroom style learning
- Opportunity to participate in lots of different activities
- Not starting straight away with work placements – given time to work on fundamentals like time-keeping, swearing etc
- Meeting new people and being part of the group
- Being paid
- Getting work experience which was relevant to them – something they wanted to do
- Getting second chances

“I thought it was great the whole thing, there was nothing I didn't like.” (Trainee)

“It was good the way we were all the same and none of us liked school and also it was three days but different every week so it never got boring and I knew if I'd had a long day I'd be getting a break the next day so I could be back fresh after that.” (Trainee)

“Every week we would go on a trip like rock climbing or painting or something. We just got told where we were going and never thought about it but it was all little things to enhance working in a group and supporting each other and it all related to how it would be when we were working.” (Trainee)

All of the activities they had participated in were valued to some degree although not all participants had a clear idea why they had done each activity. It appeared that the Edinburgh trainees had worked more with external organisations. They also demonstrated a slightly higher level of engagement and enthusiasm when discussing their experience as a Pioneer. It is not clear whether this higher level of enthusiasm was a result of the variety offered by working with their Project Leader and a wide group of partners and/or the individual Project Leader. This type of variation is almost certain to occur as this approach is rolled out as so much of the trainee experience is based on their individual relationship with their Project Leader and it is important to note that the Edinburgh Project Leader had developed the format and had already run Year 1 pilot. Also importantly, all of the Glasgow respondents were still very much engaged and enthusiastic. Despite this there are differences in the outcomes for the Edinburgh participants when compared with Glasgow (see Section 4). It should be noted that the sample size is small/not robust and although participants in Glasgow and Edinburgh were chosen against the same criteria all participants were individuals with their own challenges.

*“I learned I could actually get along with someone cos I wasn’t getting on with my teachers or my parents.”
(Trainee)*

“I learned how to adapt to new environments, I had quite bad anxiety and I realised that if I pushed myself out of my comfort zone I could actually achieve a lot.” (Trainee)

“I’ve got more understanding of what a job is like and what you need to do or definitely can’t do.” (Trainee)

Those who were settled in their work placements generally were the most positive, especially if they had experience of more than one placement. However, even those who had left the project felt that Pioneers had a significant impact on them and had helped them realise that they maybe weren’t quite ready for work yet.

“I love my placement the guys are heavy sound and I like the work. The first one was totally boring and then in the second one the guy was just shouting at me all the time as if I’d made a mistake – it’s good I got a second chance.” (Trainee)

“My placement was ok but it was like really long hours and early mornings and one day I just thought I don’t want to be working, I think I’m going to college after the summer.” (Trainee)

“Definitely helped me get the jist of what it is like to be working, bit more confident, new skills for my CV. I got on alright with people but I was really trying ‘cos I left school ‘cos of behavior problems.” (Trainee)

Many of the respondents had experienced challenges whilst on placement. Close mentor support was very important at this stage. Coping with the mundane aspects of work, working hours, relationships with other staff members and long bus journeys were the most difficult aspects of being on placement for most of the respondents. It was not uncommon for trainees to have had particular difficulties with placements sometimes due to a poor fit or sometimes due to circumstances beyond their control e.g. discovering a latent fear of heights in a builders post. This highlights the need for flexibility and constant contact during work placements with the employer and the trainee.

“It must be me ‘cos all my friends have got jobs now and I haven’t – it’s my own fault I speak back to people the way they speak to me – I think the army would be good for discipline and then I can try again to get a job when I’ve bucked my ideas up. But I would still have done it (WorkingRite) because I definitely understand myself better I’m just still no able to hold back though.” (Trainee)

The Project Leaders employed slightly different approaches to communication with trainees and again this may be a factor in the slight difference between Edinburgh and Glasgow trainees in terms of their level of positivity about how much Pioneers had helped them and indeed the difference in drop out between Edinburgh and Glasgow. In Edinburgh the Project Leader kept in contact by phone call, text and Facebook messaging whereas the Glasgow mentor didn't use Facebook. The trainees did not particularly value or feel a lack of Facebook contact. Indeed it could be argued that contact via Facebook is unrealistic and possibly offering too much support. However, the Edinburgh Project Leader hugely valued the opportunity to use Facebook messaging and credited it as being an excellent way of keeping in contact very informally and casually, it also enabled her to observe other issues going on in the young persons lives.

The trainees had all benefited in different ways. It was very easy to observe the differences between those who had completed their 5 week programme with their Project Leader and those who had not. Those who had completed the programme were more open and trusting of the researcher, more confident, willing and able to express their opinions and better able to reflect on their own experiences. Furthermore those who had been on placement for a longer period were often more mature in their perspective and outlook.

"I've grown up a hell of a lot – looking back I was acting like a wee boy expecting it all to come to me – my boss is sound man and he has taught me a lot." (Trainee)

Those who had already started their work placements were clearer and quicker to describe how they had benefited and those who had completed their work placements even more so – regardless of whether they were now in what would be considered a positive outcome or not. However, they all tended to agree that they had benefited by:

- Being more confident
- Having more ideas about what they want to do or don't want to do
- Being better at turning up on time (mostly – still a work in progress for some)
- Getting work experience
- Being better at being a team player
- Sticking at something, having the stamina to keep going even when it is hard work
- Learning about working hours associated with different jobs

"I didn't like my first placement it was boring. I'm doing joinery now and it's good. I'm getting my tools now and they've cleared me a wee space in the van so maybe they will keep me on." (Trainee)

"I did landscaping and the first few days I was in pure agony but it is solid man." (Trainee)

"I was chieving but after a couple of weeks I wasn't progressed cos I couldn't get up early to get there and when I was there I wasn't enthusiastic – they let me go it's understandable. I realised that I didn't want to be working just yet." (Trainee)

"It's crazy hours man – early mornings, late nights and weekends but I get paid overtime, proper wage because I'm an apprentice now – I like learning new stuff. I've just got my head down and trying my best now 'cos this is what I wanted." (Trainee)

"I got a few second chances, it wasn't all my fault, my first boss was a rocket. She must have seen something in me that I couldn't see and I'm glad about that because I don't mind my placement now – the boys are good and the work is easy but they are teaching me stuff now."

There were a number of key factors that influenced the trainees and encouraged regular attendance and encouraged most of them to stick with the project. Sanctions being applied, losing or fear of losing their money was fundamentally important – many of the trainees had not regularly attended school or other projects for some years. In some respects it was related to being able to always contact the Project Leader even late at night or at weekends. It was also strongly related to the relationships with the Project Leader.

Without the Pioneer project most respondents thought they would have still been at the same stage they were before they began. Indeed some respondents thought their situation would have been worse and by now they might have been forced to leave home by their parents, increased drug and alcohol abuse and increased feelings of isolation and depression.

“I honestly don’t know if I’d even be here anymore – things were that bad I couldn’t have continued that way.” (Trainee)

“WorkingRite gave me the confidence to move out and away from that place that was bringing bad people into my life. No-one knew who I was when I moved away. I’d eventually have got myself together but I’m extremely happy now and I don’t think I’d have got this far or achieved this much if it wasn’t for this project.” (Trainee)

*“I’d be sleeping and being a lazy ****. I’d have been kicked out of school and my Mum told me if that happened she would kick me out of the house cos she was struggling with money.” (Trainee)*

All of the respondents would recommend the project to friends in the future – indeed many already had. Taking part in Pioneers was definitely seen as worthwhile even amongst those who had not completed.

“It’s totally different from school. From the minute you start you’re treated like a grown up. You realise everybody else here had the same problems at school but it’s ok because you can still get a job.” (Trainee)

“My pals all want on this because we get paid and we get good trips. But it’s not just that it’s hopefully going to get you a job at the end of it.” (Trainee)

“I left right? But I still learned loads. I thought I was ready for working but I just realised I was only 15, so I’m going back to college.” (Trainee)

Parents interviewed were also extremely positive about the impact on the young person, one commented *“There was a lot going on and school wasn’t right for him. I can’t explain how much WorkingRite have helped him and given him a focus in life – it’s a stepping stone but without that nobody knows where he would be.”*

At the time of the research some of the trainees had already been kept on in employment. All of the trainees said they wanted to be in a job in a year’s time. Some of them had very specific ideas about the job they would like to do often based on experience or knowledge they had picked up at Pioneers. Mostly their aspirations were simple – a stable job, earning money to do things they enjoyed or buys things they wanted. Longer term aspirations were often either less realistic or the same as 1 year ambitions. The longer they were in placement or employment the more long term aspirations became apparent. For example some of those now in apprenticeships hoped to have their own small joinery or construction firms in the future.

3.3 The Employers' Experience

Engaging with Pioneers

The employers had all found out about the project from the Project Leaders who had used personal, work and other informal approaches to bring on board employers who might be a match for the trainees. As with the young people the Project Leaders were critical in engaging employers and in ensuring they understood and supported the core values of the pilot. Some of the employers had been engaged with Pioneers since last year and had taken on a number of trainees – persevering even when their trainee experience was challenging.

Initially most employers had met with the Project Leader face to face and this was important in quickly establishing a rapport and in ensuring there was a good fit from both sides.

The main reasons that they agreed to support a trainee were:

- Having experienced something similar as a young person whether that was another scheme or just being given an opportunity when they had no experience
- Having left school without a lot of qualifications and struggled to find their place in the world of work
- Feeling lucky to be in a position to help young people
- Getting an additional “pair of hands” without any cost
- Potential to take someone on at the end of the placement – “like an extended job interview”
- Previous experience with Pioneers

“I was just the same as these boys, I can relate to them and we all need a step up.” (Employer)

“We were hesitant at first because we had someone before and it really does depend on the person you get but the new one has come in and we’ve been really pleased so it really is an extra pair of hands.” (Employer)

“I’m not getting any younger, I don’t have kids and I’d like to be able to pass my business on.” (Employer)

Taking on a Trainee

Most of the respondents said they felt well prepared in advance of their trainee starting with them. Certainly they knew what to expect from their trainee and understood that they were not work ready and would need additional support. Some smaller businesses, not used to having staff had found it difficult in the early days to keep them usefully occupied. The bigger businesses with more established training patterns and those who had taken on other trainees from similar schemes were the best prepared.

“It can be tricky you’ve always got to have an eye on what they are doing. It takes a while for them to start taking initiative and seeing jobs that need done before you ask them.” (Employer)

“It is a shock for them when they start most of them are very unfit and they have no idea how physical this job is. You make allowances for that.” (Employer)

The interviews were a good opportunity for employers to be reassured about their trainee. There were some respondents who were still a little concerned that the trainee was a bit quiet and shy but generally once the placement started the trainees became more open and talkative. It was apparent that the employers trusted the Project Leader to put forward someone who would be a good fit and so even when they had some doubts about the candidate they went with the recommendation.

Importantly for employers, most of the trainees were perceived to be motivated and enthusiastic.

Trainees needed different levels of support from their employers. Some started very well and then had problems maintaining. Others seemed to have difficulties at first but overcame them, others had very few problems at all (minority). A few had found the challenges of the workplace too much and had dropped out of Pioneers completely. Usually these respondents had other “issues” going on at home and still had contact with their Project Leader.

All of the issues that were raised by employers were issues addressed by the programme of work the trainees undertake before their placements – some of the trainees needing more ongoing support than others. The main challenges were:

- Time keeping
- Sick days
- Accepting that mistakes are part of learning and everybody has to start somewhere
- Communication when there was a problem – the Project Leader was essential in smoothing out such problems, without their intervention it is likely that more of the placements would not have been sustained
- General attitude to life shifting from expecting things to fit in with them to accepting that they have to fit in with the job

The employers who had their trainee for a longer period of time were asked about how they had changed. The main changes identified were:

- More confident, outgoing and relaxed among adults
- Developed new skills
- Better time keeping
- Becoming better at planning and organising tasks
- Better at anticipating what needs to be done – more proactive

“She can portray herself very well now. She has picked up the booking system and the tills – overall it’s just her confidence and being able to communicate with staff and customers.” (Employer)

“We treat him like one of us – he’s not the tea boy he is working with us and one of the team – he has really come out of his shell.” (Employer)

“He was very quiet and not overly confident but he now speaks to all staff and not just mumbling, you can see his confidence has grown.” (Employer)

“The biggest thing is common sense, understanding why a job has to be done a certain way.” (Employer)

“He was a scared wee boy with no confidence or ability but it’s amazing the difference from then to now.” (Employer)

Employers also identified benefits for themselves, especially if they had experienced a sustained placement which had now finished or was close to finishing

- Learning about how to support new staff
- Extra pair of hands
- Fulfills desire to be socially responsible
- Creative input, ideas
- Gaining a new member of staff

Several of the smaller employers highlighted that taking on a young person required a significant investment of their time in training and developing the trainee. It was essential therefore that the trainee came willing to work and where trainees did not have this attitude the placement was short

lived. One respondent noted that initially it took a while to sort out payments for protective clothing and equipment – this was especially challenging as the employer had several trainees in succession.

The employers had generally had a positive experience and even where the placement had not worked out it was not seen to be the fault of Pioneers or WorkingRite. All of the employers were open to taking on another trainee in the future from Pioneers or WorkingRite. The only exception was those businesses where they were hoping to keep on their current trainee. Certainly all would recommend Pioneers and WorkingRite to other businesses. It is notable that some of the employers had experienced one or more challenging experiences with young people and the fact that they were willing to continue to take another person on was partly down to positive relationships with the Project Leaders and partly because their motivations were strongly altruistic – an attribute not all employers will have.

3.4 Pioneer Partners

One partner from Glasgow and five from Edinburgh were interviewed due to lack of other suitable respondents from Glasgow.

Most of the partners other than Cyrenians had fairly limited involvement with the Pioneers. There was one other who had also been an employer as well. The Pioneers project was seen as filling a gap by working with young people disengaged from school but too young for other employability projects. The following list highlights the benefits of Pioneers over other projects:

- Tailored to individual needs – going the extra mile to make sure individual trainees get what they need
- Smaller groups, same group of people all the way through not a rolling programme
- High volume of contact with Project Leader
- Part time to begin with and no early starts
- Good attendance and low drop out rate

“We do have other options but a lot are full time and expect them there Mon-Fri 9-4.30 which is a big barrier for young folk not used to it and a lot have rolling programmes where people come and go but here they have a support group of 6 they get to know really well. It’s something about developing a relationship with one person as well – you are noticed and you can’t skive or avoid stuff.” (Partner)

Other benefits offered by Pioneers and potentially available from other projects included:

- Good rapport with Project Leader - mentoring
- Meeting people outside their community with different outlooks and experiences
- Good connections to local businesses

“It’s definitely really difficult for young people to get into and sustain employment but this breaks down all the barriers for them and helps them get beyond those stages where they might have given up.” (Partner)

“The structure of the timetable is good for young people because it’s a good mix of personal development and practical.” (Partner)

“They are young people who ‘don’t get it yet’, the world of work is a long way from their experience. They will get it wrong and need someone not to give up on them, someone who is honest with them but also supportive.” (Partner)

The respondents from Cyrenians who referred Edinburgh respondents had often kept in contact with the young people they referred. They identified similar benefits to employers and Project Leaders.

“The ones I’ve met are definitely a bit more confident and have a belief they can do things. A lot of them have failed a lot at school and to do something positive is a great boost.” (Partner)

“I really value Pioneers very highly, it’s a great programme. A lot have not been in anything for a long time and attendance at the group stage is remarkable compared with other programmes and referrals.” (Partner)

3.5 Staff Experiences

Engaging Young People

It was apparent that the referral arrangement in Edinburgh with Cyrenians was working very effectively. The previous research identified sustainable referrals from an appropriate partner as important. Where trainees have not stayed the course with Pioneers in Edinburgh there has been another support mechanism and another trusted relationship for them to fall back on which is obviously desirable.

In Glasgow referrals were made by the Career Service, SDS and by recommendations from the first group of Pioneers. Pioneers was based in Glenoaks Housing Association and this location was a barrier/hindrance. For some people living relatively nearby they would still have to travel into town first and then back out to Glenoaks. There were also some issues with territories which made it hard for some of the young men to come into Glenoaks. The location was not ideal and had worked mainly because of the extra efforts of the Project Leader.

The trainees had a lot of challenges and barriers such as learning difficulties, caring responsibilities, unstable home life, poor relationships, substance misuse, issues with anger management and behavioural problems, school non-attendance, looked after in care etc. Commonly they all lacked confidence and motivation in some respect but had a desire to improve their current situation.

“Some were full of bravado but when you started talking about their strengths and skills found it quite hard to highlight where they thought they could go or what they thought they could do. When you unpicked it they didn’t think they had anything to offer.” (Project Leader)

“It’s a gateway to employment and a lot of them don’t have parents who could help them do that.” (Project Leader)

Engaging Employers

The report has already evidenced the importance of engaging employers who are not only motivated by having a free extra pair of hands. WorkingRite has a history of engaging with employers and this experience is invaluable. Engaging the right employer in terms of their attitude to the project isn’t the only issue. It was also raised how important it was to make sure that the trainees were choosing placements they were interested in and that they could access by public transport. There were multiple challenges involved in portraying to the young people what was involved in a job they may be interested in. Finding the right employers for each batch of young people started with talking to them about their interests and challenging them.

The key issue with engaging the right type of employer for the project was in ensuring that they understood the aims of the project and also what to expect (or not expect) from a new trainee.

Persuading an employer to try again after a negative experience was also important and the project now has evidence to demonstrate that an employer can achieve success even after several challenging placements.

“The best employers aren’t doing it for a free member of staff, they genuinely want to help.” (Project Leader)

Addressing the Challenges

In the previous research the Pioneers model was shown to address many of the challenges generally associated with working with disengaged young people like the trainees. This table overleaf is very similar to the previous research, it differs only in that there is slightly less scope for young people to develop at their own pace by taking part in Game On or Dance Base or a similar project rather than going straight to employment after 5 weeks. At this stage this does not seem to have had a significant impact on any of the trainees.

“Previously we could never do anything as intense as the Pioneers model. The end result will be better after the Pioneers project they are more likely to get a positive outcome and sustain it.” (Project Leader)

| Expected Challenge | Pioneer Approach |
|---|--|
| Dealing with the youngsters lack of trust and building a relationship | Developing a positive relationship with the Project Leader and Partner staff through perseverance and helping them when they need personal support Single mentor/point of contact |
| Poor timekeeping / absences | Treating young people like adults by using sanctions and incentives so that they are in control |
| Immature expectations | Learning about how to treat and respect employers and colleagues Learning about what an employer can expect of them |
| Going off radar | Keeping in touch by text (and FB in Edinburgh), being open to receiving text and calls evenings and weekends Checking with partners and employers that trainees are attending |
| Various factors impacting on their ability to sustain work | Encouraging a balanced approach to life by running sessions on healthy eating, smoking cessation, relaxation, substance mis-use |
| Finding it hard to relate what they learn in the classroom to real life | Making sessions very practical and hands on |

“It’s hard to get them to stick at anything, as soon as there is a barrier they want to walk away so you have to keep close contact so you know what is going on all the time.” (Project Leader)

“We aren’t as harsh as other employability projects. If they get on placement and don’t stick it out or are late, even if that’s because they don’t like it – I don’t give up on them. The second placements are generally more successful.” (Project Leader)

“It’s about taking a holistic approach. It’s all very well knowing how to behave when you are at work but if you don’t turn up because you’ve been out the night before that’s no use.” (Project Leader)

The benefits for the individual trainees of this person centred approach were seen as extensive.

“Some maybe were unrealistic and not knowing what skills or qualifications were needed for certain jobs. We do a big planning exercise where I say if everything was perfect how would your life look and how is it now and how do we get there? They take ownership of that and take responsibility for driving a lot of it.” (Project Leader)

“In the first instance it is often just something to do, it’s not attending school but it allows them to work towards something they want to achieve. We’re bringing them into the real world of work and they often realise it is completely different to what they thought. So we’re managing their expectations and being realistic about what it is to be an adult” (Project Leader)

Suggested Improvements

There were some minor suggestions for improvement from Project Leaders if the project was re-run.

- Bring in more partners in Glasgow
- Invite a partner specifically dealing with substance misuse in Glasgow
- Introduce a certified educational outcome to encourage parents (Edinburgh)

3.6 Repeating the Project

To date despite positive feedback from participants the repetition of the project in Glasgow has not achieved as positive results as observed in Edinburgh and there are a number of potential reasons for this:

- Participants in Glasgow being further away from being work ready
- Differences in approach e.g. fewer external organisations were invited in during the initial training period
- Glasgow being less tailored to individual needs and a more generic programme
- Edinburgh using different approaches for communication such as social media

It is important that if the project was repeated in the future the Project Leaders are well supported by WorkingRite's core team. The new Area Managers should provide some much needed support for holidays etc.

To date the changes made to the project in Year 2 Edinburgh appear not to be detrimental and are certainly cost saving.

The key criteria required for a successful Project Leader are:

- Educational background such as Community Education - incorporating informal education
- Experience of working with young people and specifically in relation to employability
- Well organised, able to juggle lots of activities
- Comfortable with social media
- Has experience of developing a positive rapport with challenging young people
- Tolerant of being contacted evenings and weekends
- Self starter
- Pro active
- Enthusiastic
- Excellent personal and communication skills
- Committed and patient
- Can cope with the unexpected

4. Key Issues Arising from the Research

The research has identified notable improvements in the trainees work readiness.

The key issues arising from the research to date are:

- Although some changes have been made to the programme to make it more cost effective to date these do not appear to have had a significant impact on the trainees outcomes. The current model of 5-6 weeks working with their mentor and partners followed by part-time and eventually full time work placement seems to have worked for most participants.
- Even where the outcome would not be considered positive – all of the respondents still felt it was worthwhile taking part and felt they had gained useful self-understanding and life skills.
- Employers experiences are largely positive, even where they experienced challenging behavior from their trainee they still held WorkingRite in high regard and were on the whole still open to another trainee. Their motivations to take part included a number of factors specifically the desire to help a young person and also have another pair of hands.
- Partners all valued the project and thought that it was fulfilling an unmet need – especially Cyrenians.
- The key motivating factor for trainees was the financial incentive but in fact taking part had been much more rewarding than they had expected. All of those interviewed reported a wide range of benefits. Trainees all placed significant value on the project and would recommend whole heartedly.

In Edinburgh there were 24 young people who started Pioneers.

- 8 had continued to a positive destination including 1 employed, 5 at college and 2 in employability programmes.
- There were 3 who did not complete dropping out at placement stage mostly due to non-attendance/lateness. All 3 were still in touch with WorkingRite and getting support informally e.g. a reference for another job.
- There are 13 currently still on placement of which 6 have discussed promise of an apprenticeship and 2 employment. The remaining 4 are expected to have a positive destination.

In Glasgow 20 young people started Pioneers.

- 4 had continued to a positive destination including 2 employed and 2 apprenticeships. Another 1 had progressed to the next stage of WorkingRite and was still in training
- There were 3 early leavers dropping out due to health or inappropriate behavior. A further 7 completed the training and placement but did not go on to a positive destination immediately.
- There are 4 still on placement and another working on a personal development award.

Appendix – Topic Guides

WorkingRite Evaluation

Trainee Topic Guide

Background

I'm an independent researcher and WorkingRite have asked me to carry out an evaluation of the project that you are taking part in. I'm going to be talking to all the trainees today and then in the next few weeks I will be speaking to the companies you are working with as well as people from **Cyrenians, Impact Arts, Dance Base and Game On – include West partners too**. I'm trying to find out how taking part in this project is affecting you so I'll be coming back to talk to you again individually when you finish the project. At the end I will write all my findings up into a report and WorkingRite can use that to help them improve the project and maybe run more of this kind of scheme in the future.

Any questions so far? What we're doing here today is a focus group. I'm going to be asking lots of questions and its important to remember there are no right or wrong answers. Everything you say is anonymous and confidential in that I'm not going to tell Vikki/Maureen or anyone else your individual comments, so hopefully you can be open and honest about your experience here. After today I would like to send you all some texts with some extra questions and I really hope that you will reply to them with your thoughts and opinions. Is that ok with everyone?

Ice Breakers

- Desert Island – if you were stranded on a desert island and you could take with you one piece of music, one book or something to read and one luxury item – what would you take?
- I've got 20 questions written down and I want you to pick a number to decide which question I ask you

1. If you could go anywhere in the world, where would you go?
2. If I gave you £10,000, what would you spend it on?
3. If you could watch your favourite movie now, what would it be?
4. If you could talk to anyone in the world, who would it be?
5. If you could wish one thing to come true this year, what would it be?
6. If you could live in any period of history, when would it be?
7. If you could change anything about yourself, what would you change?
8. If you could be someone else, who would you be?
9. If you could have any question answered, what would it be?
10. If you could watch your favourite TV show now, what would it be?
11. If you could have any kind of pet, what would you have?
12. If you could do your dream job 10 years from now, what would it be?
13. If you had to be allergic to something, what would it be?
14. If you sat down next to David Cameron on a bus, what would you talk about?
15. If money and time was no object, what would you be doing right now?
16. If you had one day to live over again, what day would you pick?
17. If you could eat your favourite food now, what would it be?
18. If you could learn any skill, what would it be?
19. If you could be any animal what would you be?
20. If you could buy a car right now, what would you buy?

Before WorkingRite

- Tell me about what you were doing before WorkingRite? – describe a typical day?
- I want you to think back to that time and tell me how you felt about how your life?
- What did you think the future held for you?

Route to WorkingRite

- How did you first find out about this project?
- What was your first impression? – What did you think it would involve?
- Who did you meet first? – What your impressions of Vikki/Maureen? – What did she tell you about the project?
- Why did you want to take part?
- Why did you think you were selected to take part in this project?
- What did you expect to get from taking part?
- Had you ever done anything else like this? – why/why not?

Experience of WorkingRite Project

- When did you start with the project?
- What has the project involved? – what sort of things have you been doing?
- Taking part in this project has involved lots of different things – working with Vikki/Maureen, information sessions with partner agencies, GOALS training (West only) and of course your work placements. I want to look at all these different aspects one by one and ask you some questions about each one:
 - What has been involved/what did you do?
 - Did/do you enjoy taking part? – why? Why not? – what did you like or dislike about it?
 - What do you think you are getting from this aspect of the project?
 - In what ways is it helping you? – what have you learned about yourself?
 - What aspects of it have been hard or has there been anything you didn't like doing or didn't want to do?
 - If not mentioned probe on:
 - Increased/decreased confidence
 - New skills
 - Meeting new people
 - Having fun
 - Structured day – somewhere to go
 - Focus away from other problems
 - Getting workplace experience
 - Learning something about yourself
 - Getting on with others / communicating with others

Needs and Wants

- If you were in charge of this project would you do anything differently? – what? – why?
- If you were talking to a friend who was thinking about doing this what would you tell them? – should they do it? – why? Why not?
- What do you think you will do when this project finishes?
- Where do you want to be in a years time? – in five years time?
- If this project didn't exist, what would you be doing now?
- From your point of view is it worth taking part? – how worthwhile, important or helpful are the skills you have learnt so far?

Sum Up and Close

WorkingRite Evaluation Partners Topic Guide

Introduction

My name is Sinead Assenti and I'm an independent researcher. I've been commissioned by WorkingRite to carry out evaluation research with their staff and partners as well as trainees and employers involved in the pilot project.

Background

- Please tell me a little about your organisation and its remit?
- What is your role in your organisation?
- Can you tell me about the relationship between your organisation and WorkingRite? – How do you work together? – To achieve what aim?
- Is there a good fit with your organisation and WorkingRite? – why / why not?

Perceptions of WorkingRite

- What do you understand to be the aims and objectives of WorkingRite?
- How would you rate the work that they do? (probe on why positive or negative) Do you value the contribution they provide?
- What would you say they are particularly good at?
- Are there any areas where they could they improve the way they offer their services?

Evaluation of the Pilot

- How did you first find out about the pilot project?
- What were your first impressions of the idea of the project? – did you have any concerns at this stage?
- Tell me a bit about how you are involved in the pilot project? – what is your input?
- Thinking back to when the first group started can you tell me what your perceptions were of the trainees (from both groups) – I'd like you to give me examples wherever you can. What sort of challenges / difficulties were they facing?
 - What was their self esteem/confidence like?
 - What was their motivation to participate like?
 - Did they have positive future aspirations?
 - What were their social and team working skills like?
- Tell me about how you have been involved with them since the pilot started? – what has your role been?
 - Have you experienced any challenges or difficulties in fulfilling your role within the project?
 - Have you been able to overcome these? – is there anything else that could be done to make it easier for you to deliver your contribution?
- Have the trainees changed since the pilot began?
 - In what ways have they changed? (probe for effect on self confidence, motivation, aspirations, social and team working skills)
 - Will these changes help them when they leave the project? – in what respect?
- Thinking about the way the project is structured and the activities and opportunities that the young people have....
 - What do you think are key aspects of the project that have the potential to make a difference to the trainees?
 - How valuable and worthwhile do you think the pilot is?
 - In what way can this pilot help where another project might not?

- What sort of outcomes would you expect for the young people involved if this project hadn't been available?
- How could the project approach be improved to further benefit those taking part?
- Do you think this project could be replicated? – elsewhere?
- Would you make any suggestions if this project was to be funded elsewhere? – What advice would you give to those involved?

THANK AND CLOSE

WorkingRite Evaluation Employers Topic Guide

Introduction

My name is Sinead Assenti and I'm an independent researcher. I've been commissioned by WorkingRite to carry out evaluation research with employers on this pilot as well as trainees and staff/partners involved in the pilot project.

Background

- Please tell me a little about your company? – what do you do? – how many staff do you have?

Perceptions of WorkingRite

- What do you understand to be the aims and objectives of WorkingRite?
- Since you have been involved with them, what would you say they are particularly good at?
- Are there any areas where they could they improve the way they offer their services?

Evaluation of the Pilot

- How did you first find out about the pilot project?
- What did Vikki/Maureen tell you?
- Do you remember receiving leaflets about the project? – email if needed
 - Do these give you the information you were looking for? – an accurate view of the pilot scheme?
- What were your first impressions of the idea of the project? – did you have any concerns at this stage?
 - If so – how did Vikki/Maureen overcome your concerns?
 - What appealed to you about the project? – what was less appealing?
 - What were your expectations? – what did you envisage it would be like to take part?
 - Why did you agree to take part?
 - In your opinion what is more persuasive – the input from Vikki/Maureen or the leaflets and information you were given? – how useful are the leaflets?
- How well prepared were you before your trainee started? – did you feel you had been told everything you needed to know?
- Thinking back to when you first met your trainee – what were your impressions?
 - Did you have any concerns about their ability to fit into your company?
 - Any concerns about your own ability to support them at work?
 - What was their self esteem/confidence like?
 - What was their motivation to participate like?
 - Did they seem to have positive future aspirations?
 - What were their social and team working skills like?
- Tell me about what it has been like having a trainee from WorkingRite?
 - Have you experienced any challenges or difficulties?
 - Have you been able to overcome these? – is there anything else that could be done to make it easier for you?
 - Do you feel you have had the right amount of support from Vikki/Maureen?
- Have the trainees changed since they started working with you?
 - In what ways have they changed? (probe for effect on self confidence, motivation, aspirations, social and team working skills)
 - How do you think your trainee will have benefited from working with your company?
- What have the benefits been for your company?
- Would you take on another trainee in the future? – why / why not?

- If not, would you consider taking on another WorkingRite trainee who was closer to being work ready?
- Would you have been prepared to pay something towards the trainee's allowance?
 - If you were asked to pay at the beginning would it have made a difference to your decision to take a trainee?
- Would you make any suggestions if this project was to be funded elsewhere? – What advice would you give to other companies thinking about taking part?

THANK AND CLOSE

WorkingRite Evaluation Trainee Topic Guide Stage 2

Background

I'm an independent researcher and WorkingRite have asked me to carry out an evaluation of the project that you are taking part in. I'm going to be talking to the trainees again and then I will be speaking to the companies you have been working with as well as people from [Cyrenians](#), [Impact Arts](#), etc – make this localised as different organisations involved. At the end I will write all my findings up into a report and WorkingRite can use that to help them improve the project and maybe run more of this kind of scheme in the future.

Any questions so far? I'm going to be asking lots of questions and its important to remember there are no right or wrong answers. Everything you say is anonymous and confidential in that I'm not going to tell Vikki/Maureen or anyone else your individual comments, so hopefully you can be open and honest about your experience here.

Ice Breakers

- I've got 20 questions written down and I want you to pick a number to decide which question I ask you
1. If you could go anywhere in the world, where would you go?
 2. If I gave you £10,000, what would you spend it on?
 3. If you could watch your favourite movie now, what would it be?
 4. If you could talk to anyone in the world, who would it be?
 5. If you could wish one thing to come true this year, what would it be?
 6. If you could live in any period of history, when would it be?
 7. If you could change anything about yourself, what would you change?
 8. If you could be someone else, who would you be?
 9. If you could have any question answered, what would it be?
 10. If you could watch your favourite TV show now, what would it be?
 11. If you could have any kind of pet, what would you have?
 12. If you could do your dream job 10 years from now, what would it be?
 13. If you had to be allergic to something, what would it be?
 14. If you sat down next to David Cameron on a bus, what would you talk about?
 15. If money and time was no object, what would you be doing right now?
 16. If you had one day to live over again, what day would you pick?
 17. If you could eat your favourite food now, what would it be?
 18. If you could learn any skill, what would it be?
 19. If you could be any animal what would you be?
 20. If you could buy a car right now, what would you buy?

Before WorkingRite

- Tell me about what you were doing before WorkingRite? – describe a typical day?
- I want you to think back to that time and tell me how you felt about how your life?
- What did you think the future held for you?

Experience of WorkingRite Project

- Tell me about what you have been doing since I last saw you?
- Who was your placement with? (Ask the following for each different employer where there has been more than 1)
- What did it involve?
- How did you find the people you worked with? – the nature of the work? – the hours?
- What was difficult or challenging about the placement?
- Was there anything you didn't like?
- What aspects of the placement did you like the best?
- Did you enjoy your placement?
- How do you think your placement helped you? – what have you learned about yourself or the type of work you want to do?
- If not mentioned probe on:
 - Increased/decreased confidence
 - New skills
 - Meeting new people
 - Having fun
 - Structured day – somewhere to go
 - Focus away from other problems
 - Getting workplace experience
 - Learning something about yourself
 - Getting on with others / communicating with others
- What are you doing now that WorkingRite is coming to an end?
- What would you like to be doing?
- Do you feel ready for a job now or do you think you need more time? – how do you feel you still need to develop before being ready for a job?

Needs and Wants

- If you were in charge of this project would you do anything differently? – what? – why?
- If you were talking to a friend who was thinking about doing this what would you tell them? – should they do it? – why? Why not?
- Where do you want to be in a years time? – in five years time?
- If this project hadn't happened, what would you be doing now?
- From your point of view is it worth taking part? – how worthwhile, important or helpful are the skills you have learnt so far?

Sum Up and Close

Project Leader Topic Guide Stage

- Go through each trainee:
 - Talk me through what has happened since I was last here?
 - What have been the challenges, how have you overcome them?
 - Did you have the resource you needed to support them?
 - If you think back to how they were when they started, how would you compare:
 - their self esteem/confidence?
 - their motivation to participate?
 - their future aspirations?
 - social and team working skills?
 - ability to move on to a position destination?
 - Is there anything else, any other support they would have benefited from?
 - What are they doing now?
- Thinking about their work placement stage - have you experienced any challenges or difficulties in fulfilling your role within the project?
 - Have you been able to overcome these? – is there anything else that could be done to make it easier for you to deliver your contribution?
- Thinking about the way the project is structured and the activities and opportunities that the young people have undertaken...
 - What do you think are key aspects of the project that have the potential to make a difference to the trainees?
 - Is the balance right between the early development stages and then placement?
 - How valuable and worthwhile do you think the pilot is?
 - In what way can this pilot help where another project might not?
 - What sort of outcomes would you expect for the young people involved if this project hadn't been available?
 - How could the project approach be improved to further benefit those taking part?
- Do you still think this project could be replicated? – elsewhere?
- Would you make any suggestions if this project was to be funded elsewhere? – What advice would you give to those involved?