

City Bridge Trust – Monitoring Visit Report

Organisation: Toucan Employment	Grant ref: 9742	Programme area: Positive Transitions to Independent Living\b) Young disabled people in transition into adulthood
Amount, date and purpose of grant: 18/02/2010: £75,000 over three years (£25,000; £24,700; £25,300) to meet the salary and on-costs of a full-time direct project worker supporting young people with learning disabilities.		
Visiting Grants Officer: Jemma Grieve Combes	Date of meeting: 12/02/2013	
Met with: Alex Margolies, Service Manager		
<p>1. Introduction to the organisation: Toucan Employment (Toucan) supports people with learning difficulties in the boroughs of Southwark, Lambeth, Brent and Barking and Dagenham to gain employment. The organisation works closely with each individual to provide support with job searching, interviewing skills, and in preparing them for the “world of work”. Staff then approach potential employers and support clients through job interviews and, if successful, in their new position for as long as is needed. Toucan has built up a portfolio of socially responsible private, public and voluntary sector employers over the years. Employers it has successfully supported people to gain employment for include Sainsburys, Houses of Parliament, HM Treasury and Dulwich Picture Gallery.</p>		
<p>2. The project funded: City Bridge Trust awarded £75,000 over three years in February 2010 to support Toucan’s direct mailout service. This project trains young people in the skills required to work in an admin/post room setting. This involves filling envelopes with leaflets, sorting internal and external post and addressing mail. Many of the young people taking part will also work on their literacy, numeracy and other employability related skills (such as working in a group and to a deadline) in a non-academic setting where they are also being paid. A dedicated project worker supports each young person to ensure that the work is carried out to a high standard, identify additional work placements and locate job opportunities. Toucan aims to work with at least 20 people a year and expects six clients to be placed into employment; eight to gain additional work experience and to retain six to undertake regular mailouts.</p>		
<p>3. Work delivered to date: Years 1 and 2 of the work were delivered to target with 20 people taking part in mailout work each year, of which each year six gained employment; eight gained additional work experience and six stayed on for further regular mailouts. Referrals come from a range of sources including social services, Disability Employment Advisors, schools and a large number of self-referrals. The latter are usually a result of personal recommendation.</p> <p>In Year 3 of the grant 20 clients have taken part in the mailout work so far. However the volume of mailout work has been more difficult to maintain a in the current</p>		

economic environment many employers doing mailouts in-house or simply mailing fewer documents. Instead Toucan have been finding other work to ensure that clients can gain work experience placements and paid employment.

4. Difference made:

Through the project, Toucan has seen young people gain skills and confidence and many have gone on to further employment or training. For example one young person worked with Camberwell Arts College to deliver promotional material to neighbouring communities. They proved an excellent worker and was able to take less abled colleagues under his wing and help them to finish their duties. Subsequently they have secured a role as a kitchen porter with the Cambridge and Oxford Club and used his earnings to enrol on a photography course.

Greater independence is a key goal of this project. Young people with learning disabilities are given the opportunity to undertake paid work and to seek longer term employment. It focuses on the individual and whilst in some cases their families will be involved, the case worker will often meet with the client on a one-to-one basis to help build their independence.

An unexpected benefit and challenge of the work was the relationships developed within the group of young people undertaking the mailout work. At times friendships could blossom but at other times different clients did not get on with each other. Learning to manage this and to adopt a professional working relationship was another useful skill to prepare clients for further employment.

Although focused on employment, the close relationship that Toucan has with clients means that inevitably other issues are raised for example around benefits entitlements. Some of these, Toucan feels it can helpfully respond to directly and for others it signposts to other agencies.

5. Grants Administration:

Satisfactory monitoring reports were received on time for the first two years of the grant and the City Bridge Trust is acknowledged in the organisation's accounts and annual report. It was suggested by your Officers that the organisation attend monitoring and evaluation training to make sure it is best able to 'sell' its work. Staff will be attending training in the forthcoming month. A P11 was seen at the visit and your Officer met with the postholder, Emma Griffiths.

6. Concluding comments:

City Bridge Trust's grant will come to an end in May 2013. After this time, Toucan hope that the mailout project can be incorporated into its core work to provide employment. To keep employers on board in the current economic climate Toucan may provide some mailout work for free. Toucan has exciting future plans to set up a new social enterprise café in early 2013 and a Green Fingers gardening project in Southwark and Brent which will supply fruit and vegetables to the café.