Name of LSP group reporting
Economic Development and Transportation Partnership Board

Start dates: End dates:
Planned start date May 2009 Original end date 31 March 2011
Actual start date July 2009 Actual end date 31 March 2011
Budget amount: £50,000 £ over/under budget: On budget

List achievements

Background - BCT Consortium were asked to become involved in the project in August 2009 after there had been limited activity from The College at Braintree (formerly Braintree College) prior to its merger with Colchester Institute.

Market Research –
- The BCT Employer Engagement Officer undertook market analysis of the Braintree district focusing on its 3 main towns; Braintree, Halsted and Witham including all parishes linked to these towns by formulating a database of over 170 companies and 30 Schools.
- Between August and October 2009 a letter was sent to each employer and school to re-introduce The College at Braintree, their offering and their involvement with the BCT Consortium and the wider provision of Apprenticeships available. Each letter was followed up with a telephone call to secure appointments and to offer an Organisational Needs Analysis (ONA).
- The objectives were to raise awareness of training opportunities to local employers and to consider The College at Braintree in the first instance as their local College. If employers requested training which was not offered by the College, the Employer Engagement Officer was able to offer alternative provision available through the 11 other training providers within the BCT Consortium.

Employer Engagement –
- Approximately 30 face to face appointments were made initially with Braintree district employers resulting from the market research with a multitude of employer requests for further information to be sent by email so they had time to consider the training opportunities.
- These employers were mainly SME’s based in the Braintree district including; Feering, Halstead, Hedingham and Witham. Responding to the market research companies were interested in how recruiting an apprentice could benefit their business and the types of training they could offer to young people living in the area.
- Employer who have successfully recruited Apprentices in the Braintree district
have included: Alec Hunter School, Crittall Windows, Express Motor Cycle Service, Greenfields Community Housing, George Yard Shopping Centre, H&S Risk Management Ltd, Juice Project, Lambert Chapman, Notley High School, Ramsey School, Riegens Lighting, Technicweb, and Yaxley Homes and many more.

NEET numbers –
- When the project started there were approx 302 young people who were NEET based on Feb 2009 figures. With sharp increases to 398 between Aug – Sept 2010 which mirrors previous years where NEET figures tended to spike at the beginning of each academic year.
- NEET figures as of Feb 2011 have not changed significantly compared to Feb 2010 remaining at 292.
- BCT data shows that 81 learners aged 16-18 enrolled onto Apprenticeship programmes during the 2009-10 contract year. As of Feb 2011, there have been a further 67 learners aged 16-18 who have enrolled onto an Apprenticeship with BCT providers from the Braintree district. With 5 months still left in this contract year this figure is expected to increase significantly due to continued BCT activity.

Careers and IAG Events -
- NEET Activity: - BCT organised a NEET Careers day with Colchester Institute - Witham Campus at Witham Shopping Centre to promote Apprenticeship training in November 2010.
- BCT staff attended 2 Open days at The College at Braintree to promote Apprenticeships to prospective learners.
- A Business Launch Day was organised in January 2011 to re-launch CI – Witham Campus with local employers and young people.
- George Yard Shopping Centre in Braintree gave BCT a free outlet to utilise to promote Apprenticeships to shoppers and the general public during Apprenticeship Week February 2011.

Schools –
- BCT’s regular attendance at the Braintree 14-19 Area Planning Groups has improved relationships and communication with Braintree Schools where Apprenticeships are prominent on the agenda.
- BCT’s Employer Engagement Officer has carried out many ONA’s with several Secondary Schools in the Braintree district including: Alec Hunter School, Hedingham School, Honywood School, Maltings Academy, Notley High School, Ramsey College, Rickstone’s Academy and Tabor Science College.
- In addition to employing apprentices into the Schools, requests have also been made from Alec Hunter School and Maltings Academy for their Year 10/11 learners to be visited by the BCT Employer Engagement Officer to discuss Apprenticeship opportunities and progression routes. Learners also had the opportunity to talk to BCT’s Business Apprentice, Laura Baker about her own experience as an apprentice.

New Apprenticeship programmes –
- Since the merger of The College at Braintree with Colchester Institute and in response to employer demand in Braintree, the College have developed new
Apprenticeship frameworks including: Beauty, Creative Media, Dental Nursing, Financial Services, Graphic Design, Management, Motor Cycle Maintenance & Repair, Painting & Decorating, Team Leading.

- In the last 12 months, BCT providers have also developed the following new frameworks to be delivered in the Braintree area and across Essex: Business Improvement Techniques, Estate Agency, Horticulture, Marketing Communications, Passenger Vehicle Carrying (Bus & Coach), Sales & Telesales, Warehousing and Waste Management.

## List benefits/outcomes delivered

### Outcomes –

- Increased employer engagement activity in Braintree district: – measured by contact with over 220 Braintree companies since August 2009.
- Year 1 - increased uptake of young people enrolling onto an Apprenticeship programme: – measured by 166 learner starts (16-24) in Braintree between 1\textsuperscript{st} Aug 2010– July 2009
- Minimum Levels of Performance in 2009/10 for Work Based Learning was 50% with BCT timely success rates of 68% and overall success rates of 74%.
- Year 2 – continued uptake of Braintree learners onto Apprenticeship programmes: - measured by 366 learner starts (16-24) in Braintree between 1\textsuperscript{st} Aug 2010– Feb 2011
- Since August 2009 in total 532 learners (aged 16-24) enrolled onto an Apprenticeship programme with greater increase in 19+ learners in Braintree

### Gaps in provision –

- With market research and local labour market intelligence, further gaps in provision were identified through learner and employer feedback and BCT identified new programmes which could be delivered by the providers including: Beauty, Business Improvement Techniques, Creative Media, Dental Nursing, Estate Agency Financial Services, Graphic Design, Horticulture, Marketing Communications, Management, Motor Cycle Maintenance & Repair, Painting & Decorating, Team Leading, Passenger Vehicle Carrying (Bus & Coach), Sales & Telesales, Warehousing and Waste Management.
- In some cases where training was not available through the BCT due to lack of provision or lack of funding, employers and learners in Braintree were signposted to other providers such as Becton College, Cambridge Regional College, Chelmsford College, JHP Training, Otley College, TBG Learning and Writtle College to ensure high quality Information, Advice & Guidance.

## List unexpected benefits

### Essex County Council Wage subsidy –

- During the project, ECC launched a new wage subsidy incentive in April 2011 with a budget of £2m to sponsor approx 650 opportunities for young people. The employers had to be located in 4 targeted NEET districts; Basildon, Braintree, Colchester and Tendring to enable employers to recruit an apprentice. BCT Consortium was approached by ECC to become involved in the project to be able to incentivise employers in the Braintree project and
complement the activity already being carried out through the PRG project.

- Initially the scheme was aimed at 16-18 year olds as their prime focus, but due to demand where specific sectors could only recruit 19+ or were already employing 19 year olds there were allowances for employers to recruit an older person, and in some instances allowed the learner to come off Jobseekers allowance. This strategic shift probably accounts for at least some of the apprentice intake from 16-18 to 19+.

- This initiative was a huge benefit to Braintree employers who would not ordinarily have considered recruiting an apprentice due to lack of knowledge or lack of funds as a barrier to the salary costs and BCT were able to promote this incentive to Braintree employers and at various Networking meetings.

- ECC originally allocated Braintree district 150 places to fund 50% of the apprenticeship wage subsidy but due to a combination of funding cuts and lack of take up, was reduced later to 80 places. Of these BCT have successfully secured 55 places for Braintree employers which has significantly raised the profile of Apprenticeships as 6 of them are with Braintree Secondary Schools who have employed 16-18 year olds from the local area.

14-19 Braintree Area Planning Groups -

- A new strategic plan for the ‘Braintree Learning Partnership’ of which BCT are an active member, recently developed through the 14-19 Braintree APG group specifically mentions areas for development in the Braintree area to “Increase availability of Apprenticeships”. Actions to support from Jan-July 2011 include; working with BCT and other local WBL providers to develop provision of Apprenticeships with schools as employers; increased publicity of apprenticeships and introduce NAS teaching pack; detail regarding young apprentice or equivalent to be delivered to schools.

- These actions will be fully supported by BCT through the Braintree IAG sub groups, Braintree APG meetings, Connexions service and Braintree District Council to work collaboratively together to continue to raise awareness of apprenticeship training.

List savings

- Efficiency savings identified through the project have been where staff shared car journeys to attend Careers Events thus avoiding two sets of mileage claims.

- Attendance at 14-19 Braintree APG meetings have been shared between the BCT Employer Engagement Officer and the Consortium Coordinator to ensure attendance at all meetings and other meetings have been arranged in Braintree on the same day to reduce mileage costs and ensure consistent representation.

- Marketing costs for promotional materials have been shared with The Professional Training Centre(PTC) at Colchester Institute to carry out joint advertising targeted at Braintree employers and NEET learners.

- A business event was held CI – Witham Campus to lower costs rather than hiring external venues in Witham to invite employers and NEET’s to network and learn about training opportunities.

- Through excellent relationships and goodwill with Brenda Baker, Manager of George Yard Shopping Centre, Braintree, the BCT Employer Engagement Officer was able to secure a Retail outlet free of charge to use for 2 days promoting Apprenticeships. George Yard also recruited a Business Admin
List unexpected problems

Pre-Merger, The College at Braintree & Colchester Institute –

- The project commenced in April 2009 as a direct contract with Braintree College but subsequently a proposed merger was announced with Colchester Institute to take place Jan 2010 with some uncertainties regarding the future of training opportunities. The project was adversely affected due to senior management changes and resultant disruption to staff hence limited activity on this project during this period.

- BCT Consortium was asked to take over the project in August 2009 in an attempt to resurrect the project and raise the profile of Apprenticeships with young people. BCT accepted the challenge and the Employer Engagement Officer arranged individual meetings with the then Heads of Department at The College at Braintree to glean as much information as possible regarding provision and what was available to the local learners and employers. Areas discussed included; Business Administration, Hair & Beauty, Hospitality, Motor Vehicle, Retail, Sport and the Key Skills department.

- Feedback from the staff focussed on the need for the College to build better relationships with Freeport, the local Retail Shopping Centre as a main employer in the area. However, after the merger took place January 2010, various staff changes slowed down employer engagement activity and the development of new courses.

Other providers

- Unforeseen problems within the Braintree area have also been met by competition from other training providers from outside of the local area including: JHP Training, a national training provider, Chelmsford College and Otley College based in Suffolk.

- During the project another national training provider, Life-skills Solutions became permanently based at Freeport Shopping Village delivering Retail Apprenticeships to the local employers which hindered engagement with John O’Shea, Manager of Freeport. This unfortunately closed the door to The College at Braintree and BCT providers even after several attempts by the Employer Engagement Officer to make further contact with them again and stopped further discussions of the possibility of accessing a retail outlet at Freeport Village.

What worked well, and why?

Schools

- A great success which has evolved from this project is the improved working relationship with the Braintree Schools and also Braintree District Council

- Schools are now contacting BCT directly to gather information on Apprenticeship and training opportunities which is in turn beginning to mend broken relationships with The College at Braintree.

- Regular attendance by BCT staff at Braintree APG meetings to communicate with Schools and Braintree Connexions has also opened new opportunities for other BCT providers.
Employers
- Through Careers events and Open days in Braintree and Witham, employers have become more aware of BCT Consortium and access to funding initiatives.
- The merger with Colchester Institute and The College at Braintree has proved successful through new branding and new strategic plans to offer more apprenticeships in the Braintree district and to be more flexible in meeting employer demand.

NEET
- Learners who are Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) have previously travelled from Braintree to Colchester and even Chelmsford to find a course of their choice but can now be offered local provision by The College at Braintree to reduce travelling expenses and to offer the best possible pathways for learning and employment.
- This project has highlighted the need for more progression routes and clearer pathways for young people with increased collaboration between all providers. BCT are able to offer a choice of providers to Braintree learners including The College at Braintree and other BCT providers to match their career path and career choice.

What did not work well, and why?
- Lack of attendance by young people at careers events due to inadequate marketing and lack of motivation and understanding.
- Some employers changed their minds about taking on an apprentice after committing to the idea due to economic reasons, or bad experience with a training provider.
- Specialist training was requested by some employers which was not fundable or not available as an Apprenticeship programme and therefore BCT were unable to meet their needs.
- Some employers did not meet the eligibility criteria set by Essex County Council to recruit an apprentice through the wage subsidy scheme and therefore could not financially commit to an apprentice without any subsidy.
- Employers who did meet the criteria to recruit an apprentice were then unable to recruit due to lack of suitable applicants applying for the vacancies.
- Some learners were ineligible for the Apprenticeship scheme where they are still at School and not of a legal age to start an Apprenticeship or where their level of capability was not at a level to go onto an Apprenticeship programme and needed Level 1/Pre-Apprenticeship training.
- Transport problems is an issue for learners who are unable to drive or could not afford to use public transport or where public transport was unavailable in rural areas.

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(Version 1)