

Community and Skills Hub Proposal – MidKent College

Purpose – Youth unemployment (18-24) in Kent is slightly higher than the national average: 7.5% in Kent, 7.2% UK and claimants represent 7.2% of all unemployed people in the town (840 people). The aim of the Community and Skills Hub would be to engage with NEETS (not in employment, education, or training), or people at risk of becoming NEET, unemployed adults, and school leavers to secure positive progression for these groups into either full-time education, apprenticeships, or employment. Currently there is not a 'one stop shop' where vulnerable people can easily access information and advice regarding finances, housing, benefits, education, or health so we seek to address this by working collaboratively with partners in the area to bring a range of support together under one roof for these groups of people.

MidKent College are ideally placed to support young people in the community as we can offer career advisor appointments, further education options and apprenticeships, along with the ability to offer short training courses to support the move into employment. We do have gaps in our provision, hence our desire to engage with other referral partners in the community to offer a variety of provision under one roof. Currently one of the barriers to MidKent College engaging effectively in the community is our location, being out of the town centre. A central hub would address this. We would look to pilot this scheme for six months, enabled by the grant. If successful we would hope to extend this for as long as a need was demonstrated by the community.

Partners –

Maidstone's Community Protection Team is working with DWP and Infozone (KCC) on taking a unit in the Mall to offer services to young people from October. We will liaise with them to ensure that each hub offers a different service to support and engage with the local community.

We have spoken to the following partners:

- CXK (National Careers Service Advisors offering careers advice and guidance)
- Open Road (Drug and alcohol recovery service)
- Porchlight (Housing Support)
- Bemix (Support for people with autism or learning difficulties)
- DWP
- Golding Homes (Housing Association)
- Oasis DA Service (Supporting victims of domestic abuse)

These partners would be able to advertise their regular slot in the hub and offer pre-booked or drop-in sessions for people who are not currently able to access the service, and people for whom the location is easier to get to.

We would look to involve our own students to integrate into the community, particularly Early Years and Catering students to engage with young parents. This could potentially lead to adults being able to attend training for short periods with their children, removing a barrier to training and increasing integration into the community and helping potential loneliness that can be faced by young parents, particularly if lone parenting.

We would also hope to engage local employees with vacancies to offer Sector Based Work Academy Programmes and recruitment days to improve employment in the local areas. These programmes are designed to offer targeted pre-employment training which is tailored to a specific vacancy, with the offer of work experience and an interview or the position tied in.

Delivery – We have a broad range of courses we would be able to offer, and the selection below is not exhaustive. We would develop our offering according to need and demand. Examples of potential training options are below.

Bookkeeping and computerised accounting (in conjunction with SAGE) – From Level 1 to Level 3 these are ideal for adults wishing to go self-employed and work particularly well for parents who want to find flexible work. Locally the DWP have indicated a demand for this provision.

Skills Development Online Courses – A variety of Level 2 qualifications targeted towards various sectors including Customer Service, Health Care, Childcare and Digital Skills, can be offered with PC's available for people for whom digital poverty is a barrier to learning. These would be aimed at adults who are wishing to upskill to enter employment or to retrain.

Essential Digital Skills – Beginners, and Intermediate level courses to support essential digital skill development for employability and day to day living. Covers computer basics, keeping safe, making purchases, researching information, word and excel.

Certificated Work Skills Programmes

Aimed at young people who are not in employment to develop skills for seeking employment and keeping safe. Qualifications cover Alcohol and Drug Misuse Awareness, Citizenship, Developing Skills for Gaining Employment, Managing Money, Understanding Self and Others and Confidence and Self-Esteem amongst other things. These courses are designed to be flexible in content according to the needs of the delegates.

Food Hygiene –

A one-day course at L2 which will support people entering the Hospitality industry as part of sector-based work academies which will seek to address the lack of hospitality applications for the current vacancies.

Employability –

We would work with the NCS to offer regular career workshops with CV, job searching and interview support.

Funding –

Where possible we will draw down funding from our AEB (Adult Education Budget) budget allocation. Additional funding will be required for staffing the hub and for non-eligible participants as below. In order to make best use of the budget, where possible we will endeavour to source equipment that can be lent to the project, shown as In Kind costs.

Activity	Requested Funding	In Kind - Covered by college	In Kind - Covered by council
Project Officer - 6 months FTC @ 25k FTE plus on costs	16000		
Laptops x 10	3000	7000	
Furnishing - 14 x desks			2000
Projector and screen plus whiteboard	2500		

Advertising (including external signage)	7000		
Costs for training courses for those who are not eligible @ £300 per person	6000		
Stationery		2000	
Total	34500	9000	2000

Key Assumptions –

The shop is available for a period of 6 continuous months.

The venue is suitable for a training course for 10 x delegates with a reception area / separate area for appointments with partners

The space is fully serviced with business rates, heating, electricity included

The area can be secured

We can access the free Wi-Fi offered by The Mall.