

RESIDENTS 'BECOME' EMPLOYABLE & EMPLOYED

FUNDED BY: Greets Green Partnership began funding the BECOME project in February 2005 as part of its Jobs & Enterprise Theme. It has made a total investment of £640,000 and just under £200,000 has been secured from a variety of other funding sources. In 2007, Greets Green Partnership extended its funding for the project until March 2009.

PROJECT BACKGROUND: The BECOME project was originally designed to help Greets Green residents meet their aspirations in terms of improving their prospects, skills and income. It was recognised that many residents have their own goals and desires, but do not know where to start in terms of trying to reach them.

BECOME was a wide-reaching project which brought local organisations together to offer a vast range of practical help and support to enable local people to succeed. The project helped individuals across all areas of their life, with a view to removing the barriers stopping them achieving their aspirations.

December 2008



The Become team... Chantel Ebanks (left) with Lindsey Osborne (right) and Katherine Hewitt, Jobs & Skills Theme Leader at Greets Green Partnership.

In September 2007, when Greets Green Partnership transformed its Jobs & Enterprise Theme into Jobs & Skills, it was decided that the project was too wide-reaching and not focussed on outcomes. Intensive packages of support had been provided to a small number of individuals rather than tackling the issue of worklessness amongst the broader community. As a result BECOME was re-shaped and re-launched with a more specific aim – to help Greets Green residents into jobs.

The work of the re-focussed Jobs & Skills Theme has been recognised as a model of best practice by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) in their December 2008 report 'Tackling Worklessness in NDC Areas – a Policy and Practice Update'.

PROJECT DETAILS: BECOME provides all the help and support residents need to develop their confidence and skills, and gain employment. The project consists of two key parts. The first is client support, which is managed by A4E (Action for Employment) and which focuses on people who are long-term unemployed. A case worker provides one-to-one support and points clients to the second part of the project which offers more intensive job search support.

Residents who need extra help to overcome barriers to employment, such as housing issues, low self-esteem, financial problems or a disability, are signposted to other services and agencies. The case workers also support clients once they've started work and offer help with any teething problems which can occur in the early days in a job.

The second part of the project is managed by Steps to Work, part of the West Bromwich African Caribbean Resource Centre. This concentrates on ensuring clients can effectively apply for work by offering individual tuition in areas such as completing applications, writing CVs and interview techniques.

Help is also offered in researching vacancies. Each client has an initial induction where the amount of support they need can be assessed and agreed. Both areas are working closely together, cross-referring clients so that everyone gets the complete package of support they need to help them into work. The project is also working closely with mainstream providers, referring people to services such as Jobcentre Plus, the Citizens Advice Bureau, Business Link or Connexions.

Hundreds of local people aged from 16 – 60 have already received a range of support through the project. Chantel Ebanks from the BECOME project, explains: "We work with the long term unemployed to help them rebuild their confidence and find the right training course or job for them.

"As well as working with individuals on a one-to-one basis, we are able to put them in touch with other services who can help so that they receive all the support they need."



ACHIEVEMENTS: During the first 12 months after it was launched in February 2005, the BECOME project helped more than 40 Greets Green residents from a wide variety of backgrounds to achieve their ambitions. The project actively worked with 25 of these on an ongoing basis.

In 2006, BECOME's success was recognised in the Regen WM Awards. It was Commended in the Roses from the Ashes category which celebrates projects which have learned from initial mistakes to develop into models of excellence.

In 2008, outreach sessions were launched at a range of local community venues including the Central Library, the Yemeni Community Association, the Confederation of Bangladeshi Organisations, OSCAR Sandwell and the Guru Nanak Community Centre.

Project worker, Asia Khatun explains: "We go out to different community venues to meet local people who may want to be referred to the BECOME project. If people need help with CVs, job searching or accessing courses, we're there on site to help them."



Become Project Worker, Asia Khatun.

PROJECT IN ACTION: Many local people have benefited from the BECOME project and are now more confident and enjoying better prospects.

On the right road

Former driver, Simon Broadbent was able to set up his own mobile catering business after being helped on the road towards realising his dreams by BECOME.

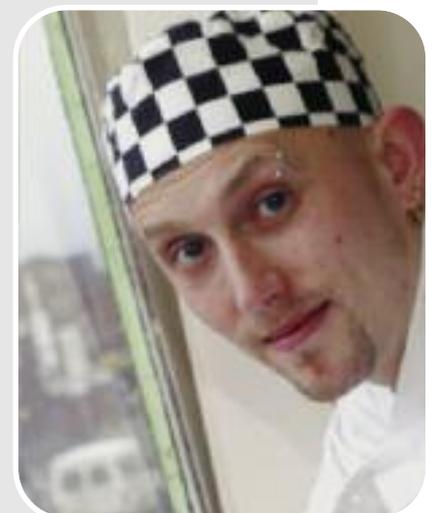
Simon originally trained as a chef and worked in catering after leaving school, before becoming a driver. When he was made redundant at Christmas 2004, he found it difficult to get back into work. He came up with the idea of setting up a mobile healthy eating catering van and was helped to turn it into a reality after gaining support from the BECOME project.

BECOME helped Simon with practicalities such as gaining his Food Hygiene Certificate and applying for grants. It also put him in touch with other organisations which could help including Business Link.

"BECOME put me in touch with different people I wouldn't have known about and they help me out with any problems I come across," says Simon. "I now know who to call if I'm stuck with anything. If I'd done it all myself, I'd have been struggling."

New Hope for the Future

Michael Kelly first heard about BECOME when living at Chapter House, which provides accommodation and support for young single homeless people. He completed a football coaching course and hopes to undertake further training



Simon Broadbent.





Michael Kelly.

and eventually work in sport. But his main aim when he approached the BECOME project was to find a job. Thanks to the support he received, he was able to get temporary work with the Royal Mail during last Christmas.

Nabil Siddique from the BECOME project, said: "Michael was motivated in terms of looking for work but didn't know where to go. I asked him to come down to the centre and we got some information online. He applied for the Royal Mail job and within a few days he'd got the interview and was successful."

Michael added: "BECOME has given me support about work and tried to point me in the right direction for training. Now I'm hoping to find some permanent work.

Now I've had a taste of work - I don't want to be unemployed again."

FACTS & FIGURES:

Since the BECOME project was re-launched in September 2007 with a new focus, 75 people have been helped into employment. In addition:

- 51 residents have been trained to help gain employment
- 91 residents have been given in depth careers advice
- 55 residents have been supported about in depth issues and with mentoring
- 47 residents have been referred to other organisations who can help further

Contact: For further information about the BECOME project, call Chantel Ebanks on 07841 271608, Lindsey Osborne on 0121 580 4162 or Katherine Hewitt, Jobs & Skills Theme Leader at Greets Green Partnership on 0121 533 3185. The project is based at the Steps to Work Office, Central House, 312 -314 High Street, West Bromwich (above Allied Carpets).

Greets Green Partnership was awarded £56 million in 2000 to deliver a 10 year regeneration programme under the Government's New Deal for Communities (NDC) initiative. It has funded over 340 projects throughout the area, covering community services, crime & community safety, health, housing & urban form and jobs & skills. The Partnership area, which is adjacent to West Bromwich Town Centre, is home to just over 12,400 residents living in 4,900 households.

For permission to publish this case study and to request photographs, please call Brian McKinstrie, Greets Green Partnership's Communications & PR Manager on freephone 0800 953 0215 or email brian_mckinstrie@sandwell.gov.uk



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