

TEACHING NOTE

Erasmus Plus
GUIDE + Good Guidance Stories Project¹
Rinova

“Improving IAG² practice
through effective
partnership working and
operating within networks”

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² Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG)s

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Key Words

Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG³), IAG practitioners, youth-led, career guidance, career guidance practitioners, innovative employability programmes, continuing professional development in the non-formal learning sector, inter-active and peer learning, relationship building, networking, and partnership working.

³ Information, Advice & Guidance: plays a pivotal role in the Skills Development Strategy, and helps individuals to address and overcome barriers to learning, and support them in making realistic and well informed career and employment choices.

The Competence

“Improving IAG practice through effective partnership working and operating within networks.”

As young people's needs rise and austerity cuts bite, there is a growing importance on joining up services, and fostering collaborations between like-minded partners to share their experiences, build resilience, and co-deliver employability projects. Within this context, the IAG practitioner needs to be adept in both partnership working and operating within networks. Therefore, the contemporary and resilient IAG practitioner will need to be competent at both building networks and networking, and building effective relationships through partnerships.

Networking, (the art of building alliances), is a critical skill at all levels and in all job roles. It is often said, “It’s not what you know, but WHO you know.” This maxim is not completely true – skills and knowledge are also critical for job success, but there is a ring of truth to it. At the heart of networking is relationship building, and its importance in the sphere of IAG provision is often under-acknowledged, especially in contrast to more specialized skills needed to deliver IAG based employability services to young people.

Definition of Partnership: within this context a partnership is two or more organisations that come together to form a delivery model that offers funders the breadth and depth of experience to tackle multiple and complex issues. Such partnerships are normally formed for the basis of contract delivery and disbanded once the contract has completed or grant fund completed.

Definition of Networks: within this context a network is a local area or thematic group of organisations and/or key stakeholders that share an aim to improve the interconnection between key areas of work. It is common for Networks to exist and be maintained outside of contracting or funding, however will add-value to contract and service delivery.

Teaching Objectives & Synopsis of the Case Study

This case study gives participants the opportunity to acknowledge that developing and enhancing the competency of effective partnership working and operating within networks can improve IAG practice. Essentially, the case study provides an opportunity to explore the know-how and what skills are needed.

Teaching Objectives

- a. To define the difference between partnerships and networks.
- b. To generate an interest in and improve the network building competencies of those providing IAG to increase their own performance and improve the outcome for those being supported.
- c. To develop the competencies needed to nurture and build trust based relationships within inter-agency networks that align to the needs of the IAG organisation and the persons being supported.
- d. To generate a greater appreciation of the processes and protocols needed to effectively inter-refer within delivery partnerships and with other complementary delivery partnerships, which can maximize the outcome for the persons being supported, and the contract being delivered.
- e. To develop a greater appreciation of how to develop and maintain key contacts within partnerships that are time-bound and contract based, and those that are longer-term and established through the IAG practitioners' or employers' own networks.
- f. To improve the outcomes for young people by enabling and empowering them in the art of building networks and networking.

Case Study Synopsis

Leo is an IAG practitioner with a career background in Youth Work⁴, which influences how he delivers Information Advice and Guidance (IAG) in his current role, which focuses on working with young people who are NEET (not in employment, education or training). For most of his working life, Leo has worked in the Third Sector⁵ and has provided IAG in a non-formal setting, through his work as a Youth Worker, and now through his work on a London-wide youth-led employability programme, namely Talent Match London⁶. Being youth-led, Leo has drawn upon the principles of his youth-work approach to design a unique employability programme along with a group of young people who are engaged on the project. Additionally, Leo has included the project's 'Youth Board' in the design of the programme, as the Board has been established to steer and guide the project's delivery; ensuring that it remains youth-led.

Unlike almost all other employability programmes for young people, young people, in partnership with employers and the Third Sector, have designed Talent Match London. Further, the programme is not delivered through a 'payment by results' model, and encourages inter-referral between partners to ensure that the young people being supported gain access to a wide range of support, wrap-around support, and progressions that the project partnership offers. It has a genuine focus on enabling and empowering young people who face the biggest barriers to have more and better opportunities to get into sustainable jobs and careers. Essentially, this youth-led programme has been designed to provide not only the skills, but the confidence, resilience, networks, and the sustained backing that young people might need as they set out to navigate fulfilling career pathways.

Case Study Context

'Talent Match London' is now in year two of five, and Leo is faced with two challenging situations. Firstly, he has agreed, with his team, to improve partnership working and inter-referral between the project partners, none of which he has worked with before. He has also agreed to further develop and 'tap into' his wider networks to help young people move seamlessly through their 'Journey of Change' and achieve their goals and aspirations. He's also aware of

external challenges in terms of encouraging inter-agency collaboration that might be seen as competitive, especially among those who are more familiar with delivering 'payment by results' contracts.

The second situation that Leo faces is the need to help improve the networks of the young people he works with. He is particularly keen to help these young people expand their networks to include employers, to help progress their career aspirations, and get better connected with the sectors they aspire to work in. Leo recognises that he needs to ensure that the activity is youth-led, and is now challenged to come up with a model that will be both appropriate and appealing.

Leo's Clients

Leo works with young people who are aged between 18-24 years of age who have been out of work for a year or more and live in 'youth unemployment hot spots' in London. The majority of the young people are those that do not access government programmes or mainstream support, have no formal qualifications, are not accessing training, are responsible for caring for children or other family members, or have a disability or mental health problem.

Many of the young people are considered to be 'hardest to reach and engage' as they tend to be 'off the radar' of mainstream provision and don't engage with 'the system'. So far, the youth-work approach combined with the Talent Match London offer has been appealing to this group of young people, simply as they feel they can influence the design and delivery of the programme; essentially, they feel that their 'voice' is being heard. By working closely with the group of young people on a daily basis, Leo has found that despite negative media representation, many young people are keen to secure work, earn a living and contribute to society as a whole. However, many don't have the networks that they need to navigate the complex and sometimes challenging routes into sustainable, meaningful employment.

⁴ Definition of Youth Work: defined as activities that intentionally seek to impact on young people through youth participation and empowerment.

⁵ Third Sector: the Voluntary and Community Sector including Charities, Social Enterprises and Community Interest Companies

⁶ Talent Match London is a Big Lottery Funded project led by London Youth

How will the competence be trained and / or developed?

Target Group

The learners intended for this case study are Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) practitioners at all levels of experience. As the nature of IAG provision evolves to meet the needs of emerging client groups and funding regimes, the case study provides an opportunity for the highly skilled practitioner to reflect upon their own competence, and to identify and exchange effective practice. It also provides an inter-active peer-learning approach for the new IAG practitioner to build their competence based upon 'tried and tested' practice.

Teaching Approach / Training Situation

The training methodology best suited to the case study is formalised peer learning, through both formal and informal activities. This approach can be mutually beneficial and involve the sharing of knowledge, ideas and experience between the participants. Hence, it is suited to mixed ability groups of IAG practitioners, as it encourages peer-learning exchanges. Therefore, the case study can be used as the basis for stimulating group discussion. Smaller groups can then be formed to address the discussion questions. Each group will be required to present their answers to the whole group. To conclude, the Trainer/Facilitator can facilitate a discussion on the importance of the competence, and will encourage the compilation of the learning outcomes gained by the participants.

The case study could be used as part of an in-house continuing professional development programme to encourage competency development through peer-learning exchanges that include problem-solving, creative thinking, and team working. Additionally, it also provides an opportunity for partners co-delivering employability programmes to come together to exchange ideas and form delivery models. This would ensure a consistency of approach and could lead to fostering further collaboration. The case study could be used to discuss only 'Situation 1' or 'Situation 2' – giving the flexibility to focus on key skills and competence to be developed.

Discussion Questions

Situation 1

- › How do you develop, maintain and improve effective partnership working for the benefit of the young people that you support?
- › Discuss how you would approach new partners and secure their involvement in inter-referral.
- › How can you involve young people in the inter-referral process, so that they take ownership of it?
- › Discuss how you would ensure relationship management with the young person to maintain trust, and follow-up.

Situation 2

- › How do you engage with and nurture employer networks?
- › Discuss how you approach employers and maintain employer networks.
- › How do you encourage young people to develop their own networks?
- › Discuss how you would involve young people in designing a networking programme with employers, and explore what you think might be the key issues and solutions.

Duration

The competence will be developed through a half-day training activity / workshop. The underpinning knowledge will be presented via a trainer/facilitator-led presentation, which will encourage discussion through a question and answer session. Each individual will receive a handout pack including the syllabus and presentation, so that they can refer to information provided during individual, group activities, and discussions with peers and the facilitator/trainer. Throughout the session participants will be given role-play exercises with different scenarios where they would have the opportunity to examine both ineffective and effective practices in 'partnership working and operating within networks'.

The participants will be given sufficient time to reflect on their existing practice and to exchange this information with their peers. Therefore, all participants will be required to self-assess their competences on the subject matter before and after the activity, so that they have opportunity to fully reflect.

Background Information

Rinova is a delivery partner on the London youth-led⁷ 'Talent Match London'⁸ programme. This innovative and highly responsive employability programme is underpinned by the core principles and ethics of Youth Work. IAG is a main feature of the programme, which includes supporting young people through a 'Journey of Change', which has been informed by the Young Foundation's 'Framework of Outcomes for Young People', which highlights the fundamental importance of social and emotional capabilities to the achievement of all other outcomes for young people. The Talent Match London programme is delivered through a cross-sector collaboration, including youth-led, community-based organisations, charities, social enterprises, and employers. Those providing IAG to young people engaged in Talent Match London, will include those professionally qualified in IAG and Youth Workers, for example.

'Information, Advice and Guidance' (IAG) is an umbrella term and covers a range of activities and interventions that help young people to become more self-reliant and better able to manage their personal and career development, including learning. It includes:

- › The provision of accurate, up-to-date and unbiased information about personal and lifestyle issues, learning and career opportunities, progression routes, choices, where to find help and advice, and how to access it.
- › The provision of advice through activities that help young people to gather, understand and interpret information and apply it to their own situation.
- › The provision of impartial guidance and specialist support to help young people understand themselves and their needs, confront barriers, resolve conflicts, and develop new perspectives.

The key principles of a coherent IAG service should be:

- › **Accessibility and Visibility:** should be recognized and trusted by clients.
- › **Professionalism and Knowledgeability:** frontline staff should have the skills and knowledge to identify quickly and effectively the client's needs.
- › **Effective Connections:** links between IAG services should be clear from the client's perspective, and clients should be supported in their transition between services.
- › **Availability, Quality and Delivery:** services should be targeted to the needs of clients, and be informed by social and economic priorities at local, regional and national levels.
- › **Diversity:** the range of services should reflect the diversity of clients' needs.
- › **Impartiality:** should support clients to make informed decisions based on the clients' needs and circumstances.
- › **Responsivity:** services should reflect clients' present and future needs.
- › **Friendliness and Welcoming:** services should encourage clients to engage successfully with the service.
- › **Enabling:** services should encourage and support clients to become lifelong learners by enabling them to access and use information to plan their careers.

⁷ A 'youth-led' development is broadly recognized as an initiative that is largely devised and implemented by young people, meaning that the service or the organization is informed through the inclusion of young people in designing, planning and implementing services or involved in management.

⁸ Talent Match London is led by London Youth: <http://www.talentmatchlondon.org/>

APPENDIX, RESOURCES

The importance of Networking & Relationship Building in IAG Provision

a. Understanding the wider context of youth unemployment

In the UK, 740,000 young people aged 16-24 were unemployed in October to December 2014, up slightly on the previous quarter and down 188,000 on the previous year. More information and source: <http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/research/briefing-papers/SN05871/youth-unemployment-statistics>

A young person leaving school today, is in some respects, very lucky. The sheer diversity of the opportunities on offer alongside the growing economy and increasing employment prospects, illustrate this. But in other fundamental respects, the current generation of young people are systemically disadvantaged—and this should concern us all. More information and source: <https://ukces.blog.gov.uk/2015/02/10/are-unemployed-young-people-caught-in-a-catch-22-situation-of-their-own/>

<http://www.theguardian.com/society/youth-unemployment>

b. Developing business-like competences

Networking as an Intimidating Concept: Networking, the art of building alliances, is a critical skill at all levels and in all job roles. It is often said, "It's not what you know, but WHO you know." This maxim is not completely true—skills and knowledge are also critical for job success, but there is a ring of truth to it. (However), many people are intimidated by the word "networking" because they feel they don't have the personality type and/or skills to pass out business cards to a roomful of strangers or function like a social butterfly. Some people feel more comfortable networking one-on-one rather than in large groups. Rather than worrying what to say when networking, focus on asking people about themselves and their work. View networking as getting to know others and letting others know about you. More information and source: <http://hrweb.berkeley.edu/learning/career-development/career-management/relationship-building/networking>

Relationship Building: The importance of relationship building in business has been discussed extensively in academic literature. Its importance in the business world is often under-acknowledged, especially in contrast to more specialized skills and expertise involved in running a business (or delivering a service). However, effective relationship building is a crucial ingredient in business success, perhaps even the critical success factor. More information and source: <http://iveybusinessjournal.com/publication/the-art-of-business-relationships-through-social-media/>

The Art of Strategic Influence: Your individual talents and abilities are a given. To perform at the highest level, you should also strengthen your ties to peers, co-workers, and external stakeholders. Nurture key relationships to the point where you have true strategic influence. More information and source: <http://smallbusiness.chron.com/strategic-influence-34636.html>

Customer relationship management vs. business relationship management: At some point in our lives we may all be both customers and service providers. The ability to see both sides of the coin will help to understand that business relationship management and customer relationship management are different but must work hand in hand. More information and source: <https://www.td.org/Publications/Magazines/TD/TD-Archive/2010/02/The-Connected-Employee-the-8-Networking-Competencies-for-Organizational-Success>

c. Improving Social Value

The **Framework of outcomes for young people: (the Young Foundation)** is at the heart of the thinking, planning and delivery of Talent Match London, in particular, focusing on what is needed to help young people become more resilient. More information and source: <http://youngfoundation.org/publications/framework-of-outcomes-for-young-people/>

Young people are living, learning and negotiating transitions to adulthood and independence in an increasingly complex and challenging world, in which they face greater levels of choice and opportunity, but also unprecedented uncertainty and risk. This calls for empowered, resilient young people, who play an active role in navigating these paths.

Individuals and organisations involved in commissioning, organizing and delivering services need to know the outcomes they are looking to achieve and the difference services are making to the lives of young people ('Framework of outcomes for young people', Young Foundation)

Voluntary Sector 'Picking up the pieces' from failing statutory services, (November 2013, Press Release). More information and source: <http://www.youthaccess.org.uk/news/voluntary-sector-picking-up-the-pieces-from-failing-statutory-services/>

As young people's needs rise and cuts bite, a new report reveals the increasing reliance on voluntary sector (youth) support services to fill gaps created by crumbling statutory services. Faiza Khan, co-ordinator of the Young People's Health Partnership, said: "This important report shines a light on the importance of joined up services. The Young People's Health Partnership is working hard to enable more youth organisations and young people to share their experiences.

Cohesive Communities – the benefits of partnership working between local government and the voluntary and community sector. More information and source: <http://resources.cohesioninstitute.org.uk/Publications/Documents/Document/DownloadDocumentsFile.aspx?recordId=175&file=PDFversion>

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