



Vox Centres support those at risk of exclusion from the education system

The Challenge

Almost 200,000 teenagers aged 16-18 are estimated to be NEET – not in education, employment or training. If the range is widened to 16-24 year olds the total number becomes closer to one million.

Those excluded from school, or in school but failing to engage fully with their education, are at higher risk of becoming NEET. Around 9,000 pupils a year are excluded permanently from state schools, with the vast majority being boys and a high proportion from ethnic minority groups.

The Vox Centre Solution

Vox Centres are an innovative way to help those excluded by the education system, offering young people the chance to train across a variety of vocational occupations – and work toward recognised qualifications, including City & Guilds, OCR and the Construction Award Alliance.

Our approach is personalised and flexible, working alongside trainees to create a challenging and rewarding experience. All our centres are also working venues, making use of real facilities – from cafés to hair salons and construction sites – to train young people in a work-based environment. To increase cooperation across courses, we look for linkages where possible, so that while the catering students provide food for the centre, the retail students make sure the construction site and kitchen are well stocked with equipment.

Providing training in this work-based, supportive environment helps young people develop a much wider and transferable set of skills, increasing personal confidence and raising preparedness for a working life. Our individual mentoring and use of positive role models means everyone attending receives a personally tailored experience, taking into account individual circumstance and situation.

Our dedication to improving both the lives of those attending the centre and the wider community mean we place huge emphasis on developing partnerships with local and national businesses. Better understanding and linkages means we can match the needs of both young people and employers – giving a more stable journey from training into employment.

How it works

Organisations buy places at a Vox Centre for those identified with being at risk of exclusion or already excluded (at present we work on referral of 65% at risk and 35% excluded).

- These places can be for between one and four days a week.
- We interview all students referred.
- We fully induct our students, including a contract based on behaviour and attitude.



The record of success

There are now eight Vox Centres across England, with more planned. Vox Centres are already proving a popular – and highly effective – way to train young people, with figures for April 2009 - March 2010 showing:

- 92% student retention rate from referral to successful progression;
- 72% achieving at least one qualification at Level 1;
- 58% achieving at least two qualifications;
- 75% progression into education, employment or training.

The cost of failure

Failing to deal with this problem has a significant – and long-term – impact on both the UK economy and wellbeing of society:

- the cost of youth unemployment is £3.65 billion every year¹;
- NEETs overall are three times more likely to go to prison;
- female NEETs are 22 times more likely to become teenage mothers, 50% more likely to suffer poor health and 60% more likely to become involved with drugs².

There are other - less easily measured – human costs to this problem. Young people unable to find work, further education or training have a lifetime earnings scar, meaning they earn somewhere between a 12-15% less than average, and continue to be more at risk of ill health and crime.

Moving forward

We are always looking at further ways to evolve and improve innovative solutions that deliver better results. Currently, we are looking at ways to:

- expand to offer 'all age' support – with our new Brixton Vox Centre piloting an all age scheme from June 2010;
- increase primary intervention programmes – 'Vox 4 Tots' – to target at pre-teenage age groups;
- widen the range of courses and training facilities available to keep in line with the local employment market – to include green technologies, health and social care and digital media;
- develop varying delivery models – from a completely A4e funded Brixton Centre, to a part ownership arrangement with Sheffield Wednesday Football Club – that best fit local areas;
- establish a presence in new cities, with sites identified in Manchester, Leicester, Derby, Nottingham.

¹ Toward a NEET solution, CBI, 2008

² 'The Cost of Exclusion', Prince's Trust, 2007.