

MARCH - JUNE 2022

Careers, Creativity and the Commonwealth - Careers

In partnership with Avanti West Coast and the New Leaf Initiative CIC

CRP Officer: Julia Singleton-Tasker



Key Pillars:

- A. Providing a voice for the community
- B. Promoting sustainable and healthy travel
- D. Support social and economic development

CRP Aims:

1, 2, 3, 5, 6., 9



Concept and Aims

The New Leaf Initiative C.I.C. provides mentoring and support to people with convictions, with the aim of reducing re-offending, and increasing employment prospects for disadvantaged and marginalised groups. Their links to Avanti West Coast were first formed in 2015, through their relationship with Virgin Trains. Through the collaboration between both organisations, 40% of people engaging with the New Leaf Initiative have secured permanent employment and successful careers with Virgin Trains, and 78% into training and education.

In 2020 the impact of COVID-19 has seen rising unemployment levels and increased mental health issues. In the younger and disadvantaged groups in society there is even less opportunity for them as a result. Working in collaboration with the New Leaf Initiative C.I.C and supported by the Avanti West Coast's Customer and Communities Investment Scheme, the Heart of England CRP aimed to provide a mix of classroom-based



learning and practical careers experience for 3 cohorts of New Leaf trainees with a strong focus on careers in the rail industry. 3 cohorts of trainees would do 2 weeks of pre-employment training with New Leaf, learning skills such as CV writing, improving maths, English and IT skills and visiting to Suited for Success, a Birmingham-based charity that provides a free outfit for those who are unemployed, to give them confidence and suitable clothes for job interviews.



After the 2-week pre-employment training, the trainees would attend a series of Careers Experience Days organised by the CRP. Initially the aim had been to provide these experience days in the rail industry, however due to issues gaining permissions for these placements due to Covid-19 and staff shortages across the industry, the remit for the Careers Experience Days was expanded to include organisations that are accessible by train.



What Happened

Between January – June 2022, the project ran three cohorts with a total of 13 learners and a mix of those who have been through the criminal justice system and those who have barriers to finding employment such as complex learning difficulties, EHCPs and mental health issues. The 2 weeks pre-employment training took place at New Leaf's offices in Birmingham before each cohort being offered Careers Experience Days. These days offered a variety of different organisations for the trainees to explore. Trainees visited Kenilworth Castle and learnt about roles within English Heritage as well as discovering how many places of work were easily accessible by rail.



Birmingham Business Park partnered with the CRP to provide two days at their premises near Birmingham International and organised talks with Sulzer and Balfour Beatty Vinci amongst others, as well as the opportunity to join their weekly netwalking event. The netwalking was new to all the trainees and the overall feedback was on how useful it was for the trainees to be able to talk to people on a 'real' level and in a more informal setting. The value in being able to talk to and to feel welcomed by people from a wide variety of organisations was incredible and all the trainees felt that this was of real benefit to them. Some

of the trainees had commented on how they had thought that the employers might talk down to them or that there would be a very clear sense of hierarchy on the experience days, however the reality was that they all felt on an equal playing field, there were no power plays, power struggles or politics. It was just real people giving real, and invaluable, advice.

Learners experienced an amazing tour of the NEC, hearing about the wide range of careers available across their many venues. They also met some of the amazing Avanti West Coast staff at Birmingham International Station and Coventry Station, including previous clients of New Leaf, who still love their careers there. The BTP took time to come to speak to one cohort to explain their role in more detail and to discuss how their role is about ensuring that people are safe using the railways. On another occasion, Switch Hospitality Management organised an experience day at the Park Regus in Birmingham. This included time spent in the Maintenance, Food and Beverage, and Hospitality parts of the business.



Results

Numbers were unfortunately affected by the ongoing issues of Covid-19 with some learners who had booked on to the course having to pull out at the last minute. 11 of the learners completed the Work Preparatory training, 9 attended the Careers Experience Days and 9 undertook functional skills training to improve Maths, English or IT skills. Nine learners are continuing to work with New Leaf and will be secured placements with employers to support them into paid employment.

Following a session with the Avanti West Coast staff at Birmingham International, one of the trainees is now actively looking for opportunities within the rail industry and the CRP is looking to set him up with a direct contact at Birmingham International, who will be able to mentor and offer advice to him about the rail industry.

As a result of the day at Park Regus, one trainee was offered a trial with them.

Unfortunately, it didn't work out, but it has demonstrated how these experience days have a direct positive effect on the trainees and increases the opportunities available to them.

Another trainee impressed the landscaping team from the Nurture Landscaping Group at Birmingham Business Park so much that they have offered him an apprenticeship if he wants it. The CRP is also discussing with the New Leaf Initiative CIC about how, now this project has finished, they can continue to work together on promoting the rail industry to young people who have barriers to finding employment. The CRP is also facilitating an ongoing arrangement with Birmingham Business Park and New Leaf to hold regular careers experience days there.





Feedback and Media

Trainees were asked to comment on two things that they had learnt throughout this project. Answers ranged from how to be professional to how to adapt to different situations and to adapt CVs to make them role-specific.

There was also an increased awareness of the importance of time-keeping, being accountable for their own actions and work and not being afraid to ask for help.

"Yes, it was good to meet employers and do things that are outside of my comfort zone. I have not had the chance to meet employers before like this. I found it very interesting and gave me a chance to talk to others and create a positive impressions."

"On a real level I enjoyed speaking to the employers. It was nice to go on a trip and see real employers in their environment. It was good to ask questions about what jobs are available and how to get there."

"It was good to see some real employers and have that time to ask those important questions which will help me in the real world. I feel that there are chances out there for me."

"It was good to go and see employers to showcase what I can offer. Was good to meet new employers and ask questions."

OUR COMMUNITY

PARK HOSTS TALKS AND TOURS TO SHINE A LIGHT ON LOCAL EMPLOYMENT OPTIONS

BBP businesses host careers day for charity



Birmingham Business Park is hosting a series of Careers Experience Days in partnership with Heart of England Community Rail Partnership (CRP) and New Leaf Initiative for marginalised young people to explore careers in the railway industry.

The careers days provide pathways into secure employment through motivational sessions, vocational education, employment academies, focus groups and work experience & volunteering opportunities.

Those attending also get to join the monthly Network on the Business Park, which is a great chance to talk to others based on the Business Park whilst visiting the park's woodland and allotment areas.

The Heart of England CRP has been established to bring together rail industry partners, local authorities, businesses, and communities to help maximise the economic, social, and environmental benefits of the rail network to residents, businesses, and visitors. With Birmingham Business Park a five-minute bus ride from the station, it is ideally located to encourage employees to use the railways to get to work.

The New Leaf Initiative C.I.C. is an award-winning prison to employment specialist operating in the West Midlands. New Leaf was born out of consultation and their aim is to hear, value and amplify the voices of the communities they serve.

Lori Henebury, Marketing, Community and Business Development Manager for Birmingham Business Park, organised inspirational talks from Chris Powles, Head of Business Development and Improvement at Sulzer, Kam Hundal, Business Partner - Skills & Employment & Nick Cuning, Stakeholder Manager from Balfour Beatty VINCI, highlighting career opportunities available in infrastructure and engineering.

The New Leaf Initiative CIC have developed a trainee pre-employment training course that focuses on a coaching, mentoring and employability linking to the railways with the New Leaf Initiative CIC. Trainees spend two weeks with New Leaf where they learn functional skills such as how to write a CV and get ongoing support to help them gain meaningful employment.

Julia Singleton-Tucker, Community Rail Partnership Officer at Heart of England CRP, said: "Our day at Birmingham Business Park was brilliant. Lori organised a great day for our participants on the project and it was eye opening to see the huge amount of employment opportunities that are at the park and only a short train ride away from Birmingham and Coventry. We're looking forward to working more with Birmingham Business Park and the organisations who took the time to give us such a warm welcome there."

Marie-Claire O'Brien, CEO and Founder of New Leaf Initiative, said: "Bringing our trainees to Birmingham Business Park to meet with a variety of different people and businesses such as Sulzer and Balfour Beatty VINCI has been invaluable.

"Some of the trainees have had little idea about what they wanted to do as a career, so this really clarified things for a few of them who are now going to sign up to the construction course and one of our trainees is even considering the rail industry. We are always grateful to businesses that open their doors to us, for taster days and as employers looking to diversify their work stream with young people who could probably be classed as furthest from the labour market when they start with us due to their pasts, learning difficulties and living environments."

Chris Powles, Head of Business Development and Improvement - Services UK, Sulzer, added: "It was great to spend some time with the New Leaf team to discuss career opportunities with people in our local community who are looking to make a positive difference with their lives."

Lori Henebury, Marketing, Community and Business Development Manager at Birmingham Business Park, added: "It was a privilege to host a careers day for the New Leaf Initiative, a fantastic organisation on a mission to help people with convictions get into work. A huge thank you to all the business leaders and our local stakeholders who took the time out to welcome participants to our community here at the Park. We can't wait to take part in the next one."

If you think your organisation could support the Careers, Creativity and the Commonwealth Project or could work with New Leaf to help those they work with gain meaningful employment, then please contact either juliasingleton@heartofenglandrail.co.uk (CRP Officer) or paul@newleafcic.org (Partnership Manager at New Leaf).

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Our Careers Experience Days with the New Leaf Initiative CIC have featured in an article for [Solihull Chamber of Commerce monthly magazine. Pg 50](#)

Partnership helps job seekers

Birmingham Business Park has forged a partnership with an organisation hoping to get former prisoners back into work.

The organisation is New Leaf Initiative CIC who, together with the Heart of England Community Rail Partnership (CRP), delivered a careers day at the business park.

The CRP was established to bring together the rail industry with local authorities, businesses, and communities to help maximise the economic, social, and environmental benefits of the rail network to residents, businesses, and visitors.

Its work includes breaking down barriers to rail travel, improving station environments, promoting rail travel.

In this instance, it supported West Midlands-based New Leaf participants in a 'careers experience day' at the business park, to help the ex-cons explore careers in the railway industry.

New Leaf founder Marie-Claire O'Brien said: "Bringing our trainees to Birmingham Business Park to meet with a variety of different people and businesses such as Sulzer and Balfour Beatty VINCI has been invaluable.

"We are always grateful to businesses that open their doors to us, for taster days and as employers looking to diversify their work stream with young people who could probably be classed as furthest from the labour market when they start with us due to their pasts, learning difficulties and living environments. Due to our traineeship programme however, we see them become employable and highly motivated."

Lori Henebury, marketing, community and business development manager for Birmingham Business Park, said: "It was a privilege to host a careers day for the New Leaf Initiative, a fantastic organisation on a mission to help people with convictions get into work."

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Costs

ITEM	COST
Advertising & Marketing	£80.00
IT Software and Consumables	£1,209.37
Partnerships Manager - NI Er's	£1,227.82
Partnerships Manager - Salary	£11,666.68
Sundry Expenses	£203.05
Telephone & Internet	£114.13
Travel & Subsistence	£574.52
TOTAL COST	£15,075.57





With thanks to...

Our project partners:



These wonderful organisations who contributed to our Careers Experience Days for the trainees:

