

Case Study: *Bolton Fibromyalgia support group (Fluidity) “The Inclusive Entrepreneur “*

Project Aim

The project had 2 elements to it firstly to work with one of the internationally recognised most marginalised group of people who have hidden and fluctuating conditions , of whom women within this particular marginalised group are doubly disadvantaged .

We believe this is a positive way forward in the reduction of intergenerational chronic poverty within disabled people.

We wanted to introduce them to the concept and possibilities of entrepreneurship as a real alternative to a life on benefits.

We did this by piloting the Inclusive Entrepreneur programme developed by our Chair Jacqueline Winstanley which took participants on a journey from the concept of entrepreneurship to starting their own business covering they key elements they would need to consider alongside opportunities to hear from existing inspirational disabled and non disabled entrepreneurs who shared their own stories and gave our participants advice and an opportunity to keep in touch going forward.

We also wanted to address the important aspect of managing a health condition within the entrepreneurship and central to the programme was a health and wellbeing strand which enabled participants to work through how their condition may affect them in their chosen career going forward and provided strategies and pathways to support to enable them to achieve their aspirations.

The project was led by our Chair Jacqueline Winstanley and was supported by Hair Body & Mind, Jigsaw Medical, Ice Box Designs, Here 4 You magazine,

Joy Sullivan (award winning photographer) Julie Fernandez (actress) ,

MarylIn Hart (Editor Here 4 You magazine)EMDB, Tom Walker (freelance Journalist) Shelly Qwarmby (Singer songwriter) Federation of Small Business and Virgin start Up, Carrs pasties, Universal Inclusion



Fluidity is a Support Group for people with Hidden and Fluctuating conditions we work in partnership with the local NHS Trust and are affiliated with FMAUK .

Our Committee is made up of members who also have hidden and fluctuating conditions

We provide authoritative guidance and advice, networking, peer support, advocacy & are seen internationally as a respected and authoritative voice on all matters concerning living with such conditions in particular within the workplace regularly providing recommendations and or consultation to policy makers.

Our aim is to nurture people from the point of diagnosis and all of the difficulties that can bring to a renewed understanding and optimism about life going forward.

Impact and benefits specific to a participant or group of participants

Use this section to give an overview of the impact and ben.

Our project dictated that we had a small number of participants and of the 10 that started with us 7 completed all of whom have grown in confidence, self esteem and their knowledge and understanding of managing a health condition within entrepreneurship going forward.

One of our participants in particular Wendy has come such a long way as a result of taking part.

Wendy has complex health conditions in particular Fibromyalgia, Ehlers Danlos Syndrome (hypermobility type ,POTS, and Chiari malformation .

Wendy's health deteriorated whilst she was in work and she found herself like many of our members out of work on disability related benefits.

Wendy has had a tremendous struggle in terms of acquiring a diagnosis; coming to terms with the diagnosis and how her life will be going forward and of course work is a large part of that.

When Wendy started the programme she was completely disillusioned with the prospect of ever getting into work again having had difficulties with DWP in terms of supporting her self employed aspirations and having recently had a bad experience with a head hunting recruiting agency.

One of the things that Wendy struggled with was not the ideas or aspiration but the practicalities of understanding the importance of managing her health condition within the work environment which then resulted in a deterioration in her health and a vicious circle started for her as she really struggled to admit to herself and others that she needed to do things differently in order to achieve her goals.

Wendy displayed a tremendous amount of courage as she worked through the sessions and internal processing of how her life needed to be going forward and embraced all aspects of the shared information, tasks and peer support the programme provided.

Having completed the course Wendy stated, “ the course has helped me to consider my options for self employment and helped me to see how I can make it a reality and this means ensuring I can manage my health whilst doing the self employment “

Wendy is now looking seriously at entrepreneurship going forward.



WEA's support:

The grant co-ordinating body has been very supportive, the very nature of our group means the back room management of our project can be subject to the presenting symptoms of our committee members which sometimes results alternative ways of working and extended timescales.

Ian McHugh was particularly supportive when half way through the project we encountered some internal difficulties that meant we needed to restructure our award at the same time as our Chair and project lead lost her Support Worker.

The support we received meant the project completed and was very successful and although we were going through difficulties and significant changes as a group the participants were not adversely affected.

To me this is an example of the WEA commitment not only to supporting participants but everyone within the project.



For further information contact Jacqueline Winstanley Chair

26th June 2015

Funded by

**Skills
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