

Tackling Redundancy: A Different Opportunity

The Tackling Redundancy conference was held on 27 January 2011 for agencies, community groups and interested individuals around the issues and process of redundancy. Nearly 50 delegates were energized by Lord Andrew Mawson, the author of *The Social Entrepreneur* and heard from other speakers, Susan van Beveren, Lesley Reilly from New Directions, Ann-Marie Paterson from Christian Community Action and Phil Rees from JobCentre Plus.

Conference Outcomes

The key points that have come out of the conference are 3 areas for ongoing pieces of work.

- Best practice for employers for those about to be or are made redundant to include employers, managers and lawyers to offer support to employees of small and medium businesses and share guidelines. Delegates signed up to work together and take this forward.
- Delegates signed up to a network of support to share practical input such as a free listening course available, to increase skills.
- Work and support to those at JobCentre Plus with volunteering and signposting where they are, with practical problems and possible volunteer outreach is much needed and delegates signed up to continue this work.

Lesley Reilly from New Directions offered free training to small groups up to 12 in faith communities held in their building.

Workshop Outcomes

David Screen in mapping opportunities fed back that JobCentre Plus was universally hated and very unfriendly. There's a need to network with them. The group suggested meeting on the proviso that those 12 members had been in touch with 12 contacts and had come up with an idea, otherwise they don't attend.

Ann-Marie from the Job Placements group described attendees keen to know how we at CCA worked with work placement volunteers and how the process worked. We discussed the advantages of volunteering which had already been covered in my earlier presentation, highlighting the opportunity volunteering gives to an individual to broaden their horizons and gain experience in a new area. Having a range of options / different jobs that can be tried by volunteers is beneficial but not always possible. Giving volunteers a trial period is a good idea as it helps them to get a feel for whether they will enjoy the role and if they will fit into an organisation.

We discussed how to treat volunteers (Slide from presentation covered this) and ways to spread best practice. RVA can refer organisations to courses that teach this.

Peter Knight who led the Creative employment ideas summed up that his attendees were eager to get together 12 people to be creative and have constructive communication. Discussion was around how to survive the JobCentre Plus experience and bring JCP in as part of the community. Social and business networks are vital to share resources.

From the best practice group Susan van Beveren outlined the need for support required from faith based communities like a one stop shop, to provide a locally known network and

support group.

The group wanted to raise the needs of the individual, what the actual steps one goes through and the support for emotional and practical which links in to the one stop shop.

Speakers

Revd Nigel Hardcastle, chair of the conference, raised concerns around redundancy, the care offered and the spiritual issues of value, meaning and relationships. The conference will enable network groups to share information, ideas and action with a resource document from delegates experience, knowledge and ideas.

Lord Andrew Mawson, the keynote speaker, encouraged delegates with stories of people from his community that brought about the Centre at Bromley by Bow. he inspired all to get together and build relationships across sectors preferably over a meal for up to 12. A meal would give the opportunity to listen and together work through the difficulties, barriers and opportunities.

Susan van Beveren spoke from the local perspective, explaining the context and the dilemma that the town offers due to unskilled youngsters and high tech firms offering bright futures. She continued with the affect on both business and the individual, the purpose and meaning each has and developing a new paradigm, a type of recycling people. Best practice for the individual and business is needed by a 'joined up' service provision with dialogue and commitment.

Lesley Reilly from New Directions explained the training and courses available and the centers in various areas of Reading to up-skill those on benefits.

Ann-Marie Paterson spoke about her organization Christian Community Action with their shops, support centre and furniture delivering & collection service. She described the benefits of volunteering, practical tips when working with volunteers and some challenges that occur.

Phil Rees illustrated JobCentre Plus as an agency working together with other agencies in the town, supporting those not in employment and the issues around volunteering & work experience while looking for work.