

Transition Project Saffron Walden

www.transitionproject.co.uk

Annual Review 2010/11

Background

In response to the sharp rise in claimants for Job Seekers Allowance in Uttlesford between 2008-2009, and the worsening economic situation, a group of volunteers from St. Mary's Parish Church in Saffron Walden decided to find out how the church could offer practical support to those who were either unemployed or facing the prospect of redundancy.

From the outset we have been aware of the importance of not duplicating existing provision from bodies such as CAB, or JobCentre Plus – our objective has been to provide a complementary service of support.

Project Research

In order to identify the needs of our client group we held a series of drop-in sessions in the Saffron Walden Town Hall during February and March 2010. These took place on Tuesday mornings from 11.00 am – 1.00 pm and were publicised in the local press, on local radio and through the distribution of flyers and posters to local churches and other interested bodies.

“The Transition Project provides a free, open-door, welcoming, encouraging and supportive service to those who are out of work and looking to get back into employment, and who live in Saffron Walden and surrounding villages”

We were very grateful to the Saffron Walden Town Council for providing us with the Town Hall as a venue as we wanted somewhere that was central and easily accessible.

We learned from those who visited us that they needed help in the following areas:

- ❖ accessing the internet in order to do an online job search and apply for jobs online.
- ❖ writing and presenting an effective CV.
- ❖ preparing for a job interview.
- ❖ basic support and encouragement in looking for work.

Project Volunteers

We have been very fortunate in attracting a number of extremely able volunteers – many of whom have recent experience of being made redundant, and all of whom understand the human issues surrounding redundancy and unemployment. They also have considerable experience in recruitment and job selection.

Some of their recent careers have included:

- ❖ Senior role in Global Pharmaceutical Company.
- ❖ Senior Management role in Manufacturing Industry in UK, France & Czech Republic.
- ❖ Executive Editor in BBC Learning.
- ❖ Senior Lecturer in Electronics.
- ❖ Commercial Director and Interim CEO for a business and technology consulting PLC.
- ❖ Head of Career and Employment Services for a major university.

Project Venue

During our research period we were based in the Scrivener Room of the Saffron Walden Town Hall which was ideal as a central location. However once we realised our clients' need for computer access to the internet we decided to look for premises that had existing computer facilities.

The Parish Rooms at St Mary's have a basement complex of rooms which includes a computer room that is used for other parish activities.

With the donation of three laptops and a wireless router we were able to create a wireless network which means that we can have at least four computers available for internet access.

There are also facilities for making tea and coffee – and one of the rooms can provide a confidential space in which individual clients can be given practise in interview technique.

The Parish Rooms provide a welcoming and professional venue for the Project with all the facilities that we currently require.



Client Profile

We have had nearly 70 clients since May last year. Since July we have been averaging 7 clients per session, of whom two to three will be new to the Project. It is encouraging to hear that several of them have been successful in finding paid work since meeting with us and others have taken up voluntary work.

Although a few clients see us regularly, finding themselves in the long-term unemployed category, the majority find that a couple of interviews with us are sufficient to help them on their way.

Most of our work is carried out in the Parish Rooms of St Mary's Church Saffron Walden where we are available to meet clients every Tuesday between 10.00 am and 12.00 midday. There's also regular email correspondence with clients who are asking for help with CV's, plus the occasional home visit to assist a client with computer / IT / email set-up, or an informal careers advice meeting in a local coffee-house.

The Transition Project team finds it very rewarding when a client they've worked with is successful. This may have been as a result of re-writing their CV to include a personal profile, supporting them with a job-search on the internet, preparing for an interview, researching prospective companies, setting-up a mock-interview, and generally enabling them to do of their best. A significant part of what we do is to encourage and increase the self-esteem and confidence of our clients.

Other clients may simply need advice about claiming Job Seekers Allowance and other local sources of assistance, like CAB and the Salvation Army. When they have either no access to a PC and low computer skills, we help them create their own CV, set up an email account, search for jobs on the internet, send off job applications by email or post, and generally guide and coach them as needed.

Finance & Resources

We have been very fortunate in having our venues provided free of charge, initially by the Saffron Walden Town Council and now by St Mary's Parish Church.

Our main costs have been publicity – in particular for running the weekly advertisement in the *Walden Local*. To date these costs have been met by private donations.

St. Mary's District Church Council agreed to underwrite any costs that the Project might incur during 2010/11 up to a level of £750.

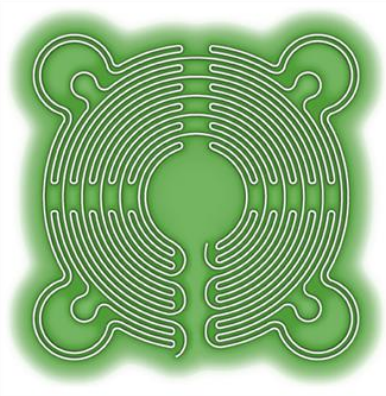
All those working on the project have given their time for free.

Looking Ahead

There is a continuing need for our services, and if anything the need is likely to grow. We will therefore continue to try and meet the requirements of our clients. We want to remain flexible in our response and to be able try out new services. For instance at the moment we are offering a new personal coaching service for those who might benefit. This provides a means of motivating and facilitating people to achieve their true potential through setting and achieving self-defined goals.

We need to address our long-term sustainability which will involve attracting more volunteer helpers, and securing a more regular flow of funding.

While retaining our independence from other organisations, we continue to be resourced principally by St. Mary's Parish Church, Saffron Walden.



Every Tuesday – 10.00 am – 12 midday

Parish Rooms, Church Path (beside St. Mary's Parish Church, Saffron Walden)