

Helston & the Lizard Works Project wins runner-up in national competition

Helston Town Council's unique Helston & the Lizard Works project was awarded runner-up in the National Association of Local Councils' 2016 Star Awards at a ceremony held in Birmingham. In awarding the accolade the judging panel said *"Helston Town Council's activities were a shining example of the direction taken by many local councils in looking to move beyond their traditional service delivery boundaries. Helston is the first local council in the country that has worked closely with Jobcentre Plus to support unemployed people in their community."*



Helston & the Lizard Works is a back-to-work community based programme that gives jobseekers the connections and support to take control of their own futures. It recognises that being jobless is not just an individual's problem but is a community issue and can be assisted by a community solution – by local businesses giving their time to inspire and support jobseekers and by community projects allowing jobseekers the chance to get involved and to feel valued by making what may seem small-scale interventions to the life and fabric of their community.

The project has been led by Helston Town Council working closely with Jobcentre Plus, Inclusion Cornwall and other local partners to support jobseekers into work and to upgrade their training and skills base. The main source of funding came from the Department for Works and Pensions (DWP). Carolyn Webster, District Business Manager for Jobcentre Plus said: *"This is the first time we have invested Flexible Support Fund in a project led by a Town Council and we are keen to see the added value that brings in terms of delivering against local needs and circumstances. With the number of people claiming Jobseekers Allowance falling to pre-recession levels, Helston and the Lizard Works will be helping people on a range of other benefits to gain up-to-date skills and work experience."*

This stream of funding did not come without risks as it was results dependant. The total DWP grant was drip-fed following the return of statistical and progress reports and stringent conference calls...! That said, the Year 1 targets were well exceeded: Total engaged was targeted at 200 and reached 256, Individuals into work – targeted at 40 with an actual 104, and into work placements had a target of 15 and ended the year at 80.



How did the project come about.....? It all started when the DWP announced that it would be closing the Helston Jobcentre Plus on Fridays. Was this the beginning of the end for Helston's JCP...? Intervention by our local MP could not sway the DWP to change its mind so the Town Council invited JCP officials to a meeting with the idea of possibly creating a Friday Job Club. Further meetings followed and the suggestion of applying to the DWP Flexible Support Fund was followed-up and a successful bid submitted for the Helston & the Lizard Works project. At the same time, one of the project partners, Active Plus successfully applied to the same fund specifically to run a Work Club thus allowing the HLW project to concentrate on convincing local businesses to take on volunteers to help them gain the much needed work experience and self-worth to aid their job search.

Resulting from many visits to proprietors, 30+ businesses signed up to taking volunteers under their wing – each business being awarded with a window sticker to highlight their community spirit. The Town Council, like every local council, had numerous small community projects such as litter-picks, overgrowth clearing and the like that attracted volunteers. A call was put out to our surrounding parishes and numerous small projects came our way – all providing the jobseekers that much needed work experience.

Andrea Gilbert, Helston & the Lizard Works Co-ordinator said, *“The whole project is tailored to what individuals need. We are working with businesses and public and voluntary sector organisations to use everyone’s strengths within the community.”*

The project has been so successful it is now being copied in other areas of Cornwall and has been referred to in Parliament. A three minute video including some of the success stories can be seen at <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCsYCwrlvl-ZAKxjnjdcgjTA> Please have a look.



Department for
Work and Pensions