

Get Some Credit

03 The Conservation Volunteers

Get Some Credit is a Scotland-wide programme run by The Conservation Volunteers (TCV), aimed at getting unemployed 16-24 year olds into employment by teaching practical skills in environmental and habitat management. TCV's experience demonstrates that the process of working towards a practical outcome can inspire those who have never gained a single qualification to progress and also develop self confidence, making trainees more employable.

Introduction

TCV is committed to the training, support and development of individuals working and volunteering on community and environmental projects. It provides practical learning outside the classroom, providing a diverse range of work experience activities. Within the Central Scotland Green Network area, work has taken place in Glasgow City, West Lothian, Stirling, Falkirk and South Ayrshire.



Bringing change to life



Central Scotland Green Network

Inputs

The scheme cost £158,000 to run.
21 trainees were recruited, 13 within the CSGN area.
Placement cost per trainee was £7,900.

Background

The aim of Get Some Credit was to provide the opportunity for young people to gain the experience and qualifications needed to successfully compete for employment within the environmental conservation sector. It evolved from previous training programmes in recognition that more could be done to offer young people useful work experience.

Prior to the introduction of Get Some Credit, TCV held discussions with volunteers - particularly their young volunteers and staff; feedback showed a desire for accredited training and employability awards that would be recognised by potential employers. In response, TCV applied to the Climate Challenge Fund for funding for Get Some Credit, a long term employability model offering a more innovative approach to employability training than had previously been offered.

The Project

The Scotland-wide scheme ran for a period of 24 weeks for 4 days a week. Early stages of the scheme focused on confidence building and the development of soft skills (such as team building and leadership skills) before moving onto practical work to develop a wide range of outdoor skills.

Those participating in this scheme were all unemployed; defined as being at high risk of becoming long term unemployed. Additionally, some had been through the criminal justice system and some were classed as homeless. All expressed an interest in working outdoors.

During this programme, a variety of practical environmental improvement tasks were undertaken. Trainees consolidated their learning by joining TCV Scotland's regular conservation teams.

Practical work included mandatory courses, with some optional activities that allowed trainees to pursue training of specific interest to them. Selection and composition of training offered was informed by a TCV training audit and took into account the skills-set requirements of likely employers.

Vocational skills included footpath improvements, path creation, woodland management, landscaping works, horticulture, habitat enhancement, habitat creation, bridge construction, community action projects, practical tool use and maintenance, biodiversity and identification skills, CV building and interview techniques.



Site management core skills covered were risk assessment, leadership training, team work, travel to training, time keeping, communication, health and safety, community mentor training and leadership skills.

Additional activities were designed to create more positive attitudes towards work, a greater interest in the environment, higher levels of confidence and improved physical health and mental well-being.

Inputs

The scheme cost £158,000 to run, with the placement cost per trainee at a level of £7,900. A total of 21 volunteers were recruited during 2012, 13 were residents within the CSGN area.

Outputs

Positive outcomes were recorded for all who undertook the Get Some Credit training. Of those located within the CSGN area, four trainees gained employment, one enrolled in further education and five went into volunteering and applied for seasonal jobs.

As well as developing their skills on-the-job, the trainees had an opportunity to take part in training courses, several of which were certificated. They were also given the opportunity to earn TCV Scotland's Employability Award. Some of the trainees benefited from work placements with external organisations such as South Ayrshire Council and other local operators working on woodland management.

Qualifications that have been achieved include Lantra Brushcutter & Strimmers (17 sat the qualification and 16 passed), Lantra Woodchipper (12 sat the qualification and all passed), NPTC Chainsaw (18 sat the qualification and 14 passed), Employability Award SCQF Level 4 (all participants attended, SQA results pending), First Aid at work (all 18 participants passed the qualification).

The Get Some Credit scheme also enabled trainees to gain vocational and core skills which were then consolidated throughout their placement. This resulted in significant improvement in self-esteem and confidence to compete for jobs or enter into further education.

Outcomes

Get Some Credit was an innovative approach for TCV with the key outcome being to demonstrate a clear progression, for each trainee, from unemployment and low job prospects, through to increased hope, better education and employability prospects and ultimately, employment.

The programme provided the opportunity for young people to gain the experience and qualifications that they needed to compete in the labour market within the environmental/conservation sector. This sector includes employment activities such as managing our landscapes, habitats, species and access to the countryside. Activity within this sector also helps address some of our biggest challenges such as climate change and contributes to biodiversity, health and social inclusion.

Working in teams also provided good opportunities to build on core communication, problem solving, work planning and team building skills. Along with the confidence building that comes from achieving accredited vocational skills qualifications, this has resulted in increased levels of confidence. Mentoring records and environmental art evaluation is used to record how participants noted an increase in their confidence, physical well-being and self esteem.

This combination of evidence of transferable skills and greater confidence greatly enhances the employability of trainees.

Keys to Success

TCV has had regular contact with local employers. This has helped to ensure that training was designed to meet the needs of local employers and optimised the likelihood of trainees gaining employment.

Each trainee had a nominated mentor who kept in close contact throughout the duration of the course and the flow of communication between the two was high. This helped the young people gain the goals they set for themselves, whether it was to progress to further education, training or employment. Even after completing the scheme, mentors maintained their contact for a year in a supportive role. For example, they continued to offer help in CV development

“ I really really enjoyed it. It helped me loads with my confidence and helped me move on from sitting around the house all day to coming out with you and doing different things all the time. It was a really good experience and a real test of my skill...”

Peter Campbell, Get Some Credit Trainee

and assistance in sourcing possible jobs. This element of the training is not funded by the Challenge Fund but is considered to be important in ensuring that trainees have ongoing support into employment.

While not in the CSGN area, TCV also ran an Employer Recruitment Day in partnership with Barnardo Works in Inverness. This event allowed trainees to meet up with local employers in the hope of securing employment. A high employment rate was noted for participants in the Aberdeen and Inverness area as a result of this event (70%).

By supporting young people to become a skilled labour force TCV were meeting not only their action plan targets but also employer needs within the forestry, amenity horticulture and environmental conservation sectors.

Future

TCV will continue to offer employability training, obtaining funding from various sources. Although the Challenge Fund has now closed, TCV intends to use this model for future funding bids.

Due to its success, TCV is now planning to hold Employer Recruitment Days in other parts of Scotland, including the CSGN area.



Outputs

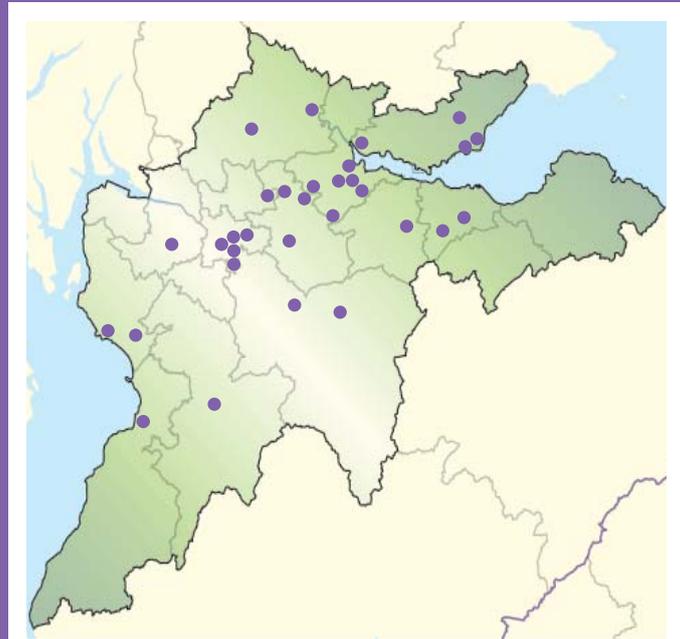
In the 2012 calendar year, positive outcomes were recorded for all who undertook the Get Some Credit training. Within the CSGN area, 4 trainees gained employment, 1 enrolled in further education and 5 went into volunteering and applied for seasonal jobs with the support of TCV Scotland.

Outdoor training in the CSGN area

Key Facts

- In 2012, there were a total of 677 trainees, on 57 separate courses - 12 trainees per course.
- Courses were delivered through from 31 programmes which were administered by 24 separate organisations.
- Programmes lasted an average of 24 weeks and most schemes ran at least twice during the year.
- Of the 297 individual trainees for which we have additional data, 135 (or 46%) went directly into employment, 27% returned to unemployment, 20% went into volunteering, 5% went into education and 1% undertook a further course.
- The mean average cost per trainee was circa £6,225 (though this varies widely)

Location of outdoor training schemes in the CSGN area in 2012



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The CSGN will change the face of Central Scotland by restoring and improving the rural and urban landscape of the area.

What is the CSGN?

The CSGN is one of the 14 national developments in the National Planning Framework 2. It is the biggest greenspace project in Europe and will help to make Central Scotland a more attractive and distinctive place to live, to visit and to do business. The CSGN has wide political and partner support and an all encompassing remit, far beyond just a 'green' initiative, with economic development central on the agenda.

Why are we interested in training?

The prosperity of Central Scotland is fundamentally linked to the skills of its workforce and we believe that the environmental sector can play a positive role in enhancing the employment prospects for everyone – especially young people. This will help to deliver not only career orientated skills but also those transferable 'soft' skills which a wide

variety of employers require. Under the 'A Place for Growth' theme, the CSGN aims to increase employment and training in land based 'green' and 'low carbon' industries with the objective of not only providing meaningful work experience and support for young people but also to improve local greenspace for everyone to enjoy.

What are these Case Studies for?

This report is one in a series of six case studies which demonstrate that for a relatively modest investment, outdoor based training and employment projects can have profound and far reaching impacts on the lives of people furthest from the labour market. The reports are intended to inspire other organisations to take similar approaches and to inform interested parties, such as Local Authorities, in order to encourage a supportive environment for such initiatives.

Getting in Touch

To discuss this case study please contact:
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For further information on the CSGN and other case studies please visit: www.centralscotlandgreennetwork.org

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