

Developing Face to Face Advice and Guidance at National Careers Service, North East.

A case study June 2012



The Client

CfBT Advice and Guidance, a subsidiary company of CfBT Education Trust, is the Prime Contractor for the National Careers Service in the North East. Funded by the Skills Funding Agency the National Careers Service provides telephone, web and face to face support for adults. Regional Prime Contractors like CfBT Advice and Guidance are contracted to deliver the face to face component of this integrated service.

A team of CfBT Careers advisors provide one-to-one and group-based Careers Information, Advice and Guidance on a whole range of career related issues to adults aged 18 and over across the whole of the North East region. They help people make the right choices about skills, careers and qualifications and plan their career development.

The mission for the National Careers service is: "To give everyone access to the best information, advice and resources that help them make more effective skills, careers, work and life choices".



We had used the Windmills Job search and CV writing resources since around 2003, but I was conscious that we and our clients would benefit from access to the wider Windmills portfolio

Colette O'Brien
Training and
Development
Coordinator, CfBT

Project Rationale

The impact of changing economic conditions and uncertainty has brought different demands on the CfBT advisors and their clients, with increasing numbers of more qualified clients looking for support. The team recognised the need for new and different resources to supplement and enhance the face to face work they were already doing.

A few of the CfBT team were familiar with the Windmills career management programme and had used Windmills job search and CV writing materials in the past , however it was recognised that there was scope to use much more of the now expanded Windmills portfolio. Wider consultation with the advisor team confirmed that the Windmills resources would be useful and many advisors expressed an interest in becoming Windmills Champions.

Partnership working is very important for CfBT and being able to offer Windmills would give CfBT additional resources to use with customers, which would also benefit partners. In the same way the recently formed Employer Engagement team recognised the need for additional resources to work with customers under threat of, or being made redundant, that would be valued by employers and again it was felt that the Windmills approach and resources would be useful for this client group.

It was agreed that a Windmills license allowing a group of trained Windmills Champions access to a wider range of the Windmills career and life management tools met both those organisational needs and priorities.

The aim was to give advisers new skills and resources to work with our clients and for us to have additional resources and activities to offer to our partners and their clients.

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The Project

In consultation with the CfBT Training and Development Co-ordinator, Colette O'Brien, Windmills selected a range of tools from across the Windmills portfolio of products. The variety of tools reflected the different needs of the clients accessing CfBT support. This would allow advisors to 'pick and mix' when designing events and client interventions thereby providing a flexible and client centred service. The 20 tools decided on were organised under a 3 stage cycle.

Three Stage Cycle.

Several advisors were interested in Windmills and the first 15 advisors attended a 2 day Windmills Champions Training Programme, delivered in December 2011 at the CfBT offices in Gateshead. In an intensive 2 days the CfBT advisors were given the opportunity to experience various exercises for themselves. As well as getting the benefit of seeing the activity delivered, this approach familiarises the Champions with the content of the materials and resources and provides an opportunity to consider their own personal development.



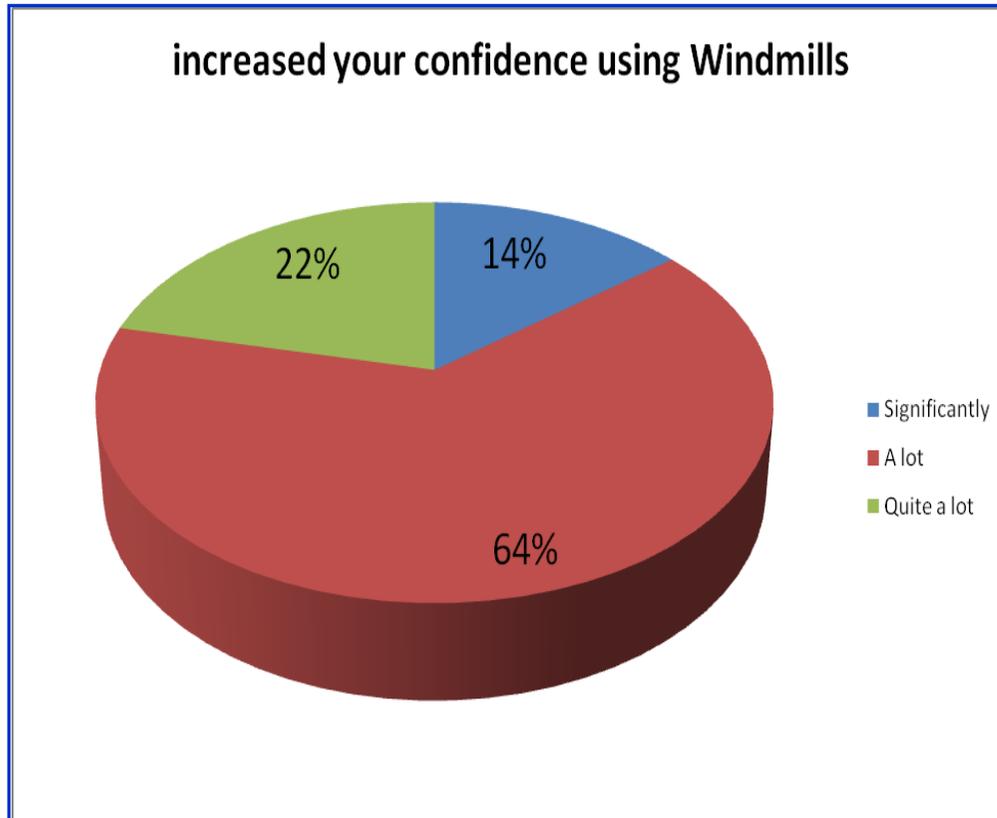
In addition throughout the two days the Champions were given alternative delivery approaches, delivery hints and tips and different applications for the various resources and materials.

On day 2 some time was given to allow the Champions to discuss and share possible suggestions and applications for using the materials and developing project ideas for incorporating Windmills into their service provision.



The programme 'has given me skills and knowledge and resources to use with clients as well as help to evaluate my own life goals and WLPG blend'

Immediate Impact



Feedback from the Champions at the end of the 2 day programme was extremely positive with Champions reporting the training had been beneficial from both a personal and professional perspective. One Champion described the training programme as *'extremely useful'* having given them *'new tools and inspiration to help our client groups.'*

Another looking to the wider organisational benefits highlighted the main benefit as having *'some tools and resources which are equally useful for more qualified and/ or experienced customers.'*

Overwhelmingly the Champions stated that the training had helped them feel more confident about using the Windmills materials and confirmed that they were now more equipped to build Windmills tools and materials into their work with clients.

Similarly when asked if the training had increased their ability to use the Windmills materials 23% of the Champions reported that this had been significant, while 62% felt it has increased 'a lot'.

When asked more specifically “what three things have you gained from the Champions programme” responses included;

- Confidence
- A new set of activities to do with clients
- How to use tools in group and individual sessions
- Can confidently incorporate Windmills tools into sessions
- Help with designing and developing delivery programmes
- Increased knowledge to deliver a more interesting session to customers

At the end of the second day of training the Champions were keen to put their learning into practice and eager to start using the Windmills resources and materials in their day to day interactions with clients.

One champion was looking forward to *‘using the resources – starting tomorrow’* and had *‘already made plans for the skills cards and the golden ticket’*.

One action for another Champion was to *‘use the information to develop my IAG practice’* and to build *‘the use of the resources into sessions’*.

The Champions recognised that using Windmills would create more opportunities for participation and interaction in their individual and group sessions and to introduce an element of ‘fun’ that would be beneficial for both the client and the advisor. *‘Using the tools doing more fun groups will help clients and will balance my WLPG ’*

One Champion felt *‘personally energised’* having gained *‘increased knowledge to deliver a more interesting session to customers’*

For several other Champions the training had inspired them to think about the development of longer term projects creating new sessions for specific client groups. Several interesting ideas were discussed during the training. One group were particularly enthusiastic about using Windmills resources to *‘create a workshop on skills and confidence to use with long term unemployed clients’*

Colette O’Brien, Training and Development Coordinator for CfBT described the training as *‘a great success’* and added *‘I think the whole exercise has given us confidence in the resources and the activities we can now provide, and this was the aim of the project, to give us additional resources that we could use with all our clients.’*

Ongoing Impact

As part of the Windmills evaluation process the Champions were asked to provide a Reflective Summary reviewing their early experiences of using the Windmills materials and resources. The reflective summary has two main purposes; critically to highlight the impact the new approach and activities have had on their clients and secondly to encourage the Champions to reflect on the effectiveness of their own practice and performance when applying the Windmills principles and tools and to identify areas for improvement and personal development.

Four months after the training programme the feedback from the Champions remains positive, with the majority of the original 15 champions having made excellent progress in incorporating Windmills resources and materials into the National Careers Service provision offered by CfBT.

A key theme to emerge from the reflective summaries highlights the flexibility of the Windmills approach and tools. The Champions have been using the activities and materials across a range of different client groups including:

- Clients who have been unemployed for any length of time from 6 months to thirty years
- Clients attending vocational training and development programmes run by partners such as Cable Com
- JCP and government work programme clients
- Unemployed graduates
- Employees facing redundancy or those adjusting to new roles in a smaller workforce
- Clients with health problems, disabilities and mental health issues

Rather than simply training deliverers of pre-packaged programmes, Windmills believes in creating capacity builders or Champions...

One Champion found that the Windmills materials could be used to engage potential clients and promote the National Careers Service provided at CfBT.

Another champion reported using the Windmills materials with

' a group of 6, most of whom have mental health issues, all participated and enjoyed the session and gave very positive feedback in the end.'

A strong message that also came through from the Champions' reflective summaries was the recognition that using the Windmills approach and tools had improved and developed their professional practice.

Several were planning to shadow others or work in teams to deliver giving themselves the added confidence to try out different activities with a variety of different client groups. One champion realised that this would help her to *'stop taking the group for granted and thinking that they will react badly to the exercises'*.

The majority of the Champions who recorded their reflections remarked on how enjoyable it had been for them as practitioners to work with the Windmills tools and materials. One Champion was *'surprised at how easy it was and how much fun it was with clients'* another was pleased at *'how the group seemed to work well with the skills cards, I was pleasantly surprised and that made it more enjoyable.'*

'I was pleased with the structure it gave to my session and the interactive nature of the exercise allowed clients to immediately engage. I was able to include all personality types and allow them each to explore what was important to them.'

The Champions were delighted with the resources not least because of the response and feedback they had been getting from the clients and groups they were working with. How the Champions feel the Windmills materials have impacted on their delivery can be illustrated by the comments below:

I got a round of applause at the end of the session which was nice

Feedback from customers has been positive with everyone saying they would recommend the session to a friend.

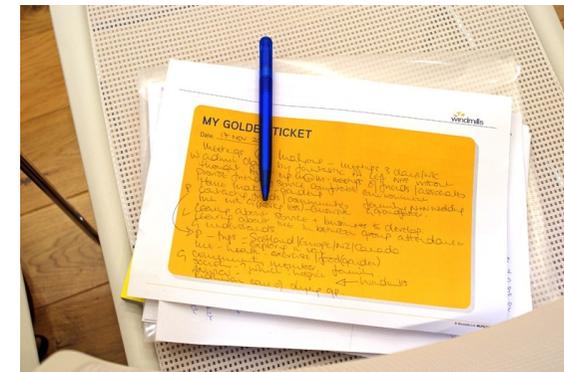
The skills cards exercise helps to raise the client's self awareness, and sometimes even self esteem. Clients have said following the session they feel "lifted" as they didn't feel before that they had any marketable skills due to the fact that they hadn't been in a working environment for so long.

Colette O'Brien,
Training and
Development
Coordinator at
CfBT confirmed
that 'feedback
from advisors is
that the
activities have
been well
received by
clients and the
Champions have
enjoyed using
the resources.'

Apart from a general sense of positive benefit and impact for the CfBT clients some Champions reported more specific 'success stories' from their sessions. One father with a young son wanted to return to work but was considering a less stressful career. Discussing wlpq and exploring his current and desired wlpq blend, had allowed him *to focus on the important aspects of his life at the current time and prompted further discussions with his partner*.



A 'magic moment' for both the Champion and client was when the skills cards activity had prompted a very quiet and 'sceptical' client into looking further into a career change he had considered but never discussed with anyone. The Champion remarked that the activity had proved to be *'an excellent introduction to his next session and a great motivational tool within this session'*.



Similarly during one session a client working on his Golden Ticket had mentioned that teaching was something he had always wanted to do but saw the time it would take to go down the University route as a barrier to achieving that. Other routes were discussed and the champion provided the client with some information on adult teaching and PTTLS. The client emailed to say

'Thanks for this morning; I think most of us got something really useful out of it. To hear some of my co-trainees, say that it was useful is a real compliment to your technique and what you had to say'.

Two weeks later the same client emailed again to confirm that he had attended his first C&G 6302 PTTLS session and was really looking forward to an interesting and challenging course.



Organisational Impact

Colette O'Brien, Training and Development Coordinator for CfBT Advice and Guidance, when asked to evaluate the effectiveness of Windmills project said:

We are very pleased with the work Windmills has completed with us. The impact of the training has been that our Champions are empowered to help their clients more effectively using the range of resources now available to them. The Champions are enjoying using the resources and are really happy to have access to new and different activities. The support and training course from the Windmills team has been excellent.

Having received several requests from other advisors who have not yet been trained as Windmills Champions, CfBT is looking to provide another 2 day Champions training programme.

