

SEMLEP

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Local Enterprise Partnership

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IMPACT

European Social Fund
Programme delivering
for communities in the
South East Midlands



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Take a look at the impact of the European Social Fund Programme...

Projects described in this document are receiving funding from the European Social Fund (ESF) as part of the 2014-2020 European Structural and Investment Funds Growth Programme in England. The Department for Work and Pensions (and in London the intermediate body Greater London Authority) is the Managing Authority for the England European Social Fund programme. Established by the European Union, the European Social Fund helps local areas stimulate their economic development by investing in projects which will support skills development, employment and job creation, social inclusion and local community regenerations. For more information visit <https://www.gov.uk/european-growth-funding>.

SEMLEP's remit is to take a strategic view on how best to prioritise ESF funding to deliver growth and jobs in the South East Midlands area. We also provide technical assistance, funded by the ESF, to projects who wish to apply for funding through the ESIF Growth Programme.



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The European Social Fund invests in people to develop their skills and find better jobs.

It achieves this by funding local projects that work to combat social exclusion and poverty by providing better access to training and job opportunities. There is a strong focus on providing tailored and specialist assistance to people who are disadvantaged or face multiple barriers getting into employment.

From 2014-2017, 25 projects in the South East Midlands received a share of nearly £30million from the ESF to assist local people and businesses. These projects have supported people in our communities get into, or back into, work or, develop their skills through training and education to progress in their workplace or start their own business.

There's more to come. Throughout 2018, further projects are invited to apply for funding in the remaining phase of the ESF programme.

This document takes a look at the successes of just a small selection of the local projects in the South East Midlands, through stories told by people who have directly received support. These show the potential and impact that this targeted support can have in raising people's aspirations, helping them work towards reaching their potential and enhancing the quality of their lives.

A full list of the ESF-funded projects delivering in the South East Midlands can be downloaded from the SEMLEP website.

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Actively Strengthening Resources

The ASR project supports young people aged 15 to 24 who live in communities with higher rates of crime, violence and racism, through a range of initiatives to help them shape a better future for themselves.

The aim is to support young people into employment, apprenticeships or training and to achieve this, they focus on tackling issues such as drug and alcohol abuse and anti-social behaviour.

Originally focussed on developing young people using sport, ASR has evolved into a project that supports people through a number of initiatives tailored to the specific needs of young people in each community, supported by a team of devoted young volunteers from within the local community.

info@asrproject.co.uk
01582 431117



I had never had a job and didn't need to work as I had planned on going into university but that changed. I was lost and couldn't see a pathway.



Adil's Story

Having studied with friends for more than 6 years it was hard to see them move on to university and continue their studies. However due to personal issues and family responsibilities as the sole provider of the household, I needed to take a gap year. I had never had a job and didn't need to work as I had planned on going into university but that changed. I was lost and couldn't see a pathway. I felt I would be stuck looking after my family and not be able to continue my education.

I visited ASR with the hope that I would get support in unravelling the issues that I was facing. It was important for me to understand the world of work and get employment so that I could support my family if things didn't change. I was enrolled on their Employability Course which gave me a great insight into what employers want to see and what they expect.

As I did so well in the course, I was offered a job at ASR. That was the best feeling in my life. I was able to see the journey I took, from where I started to how I grew in the space of a few months!

And in January 2018, I joined Aston Business School to continue my education, but I still work at ASR over the weekends.

Skills Support for the Workforce

Skills Support for the Workforce helps businesses develop skilled employees through funded training and development. This supports employees' progression, while helping the organisation develop the skills levels they need to be more competitive and meet business objectives by improving productivity and profitability.

There are a wide range of options from non-accredited to accredited qualifications, short or longer courses at varying levels. Priority sectors include, health and social care, logistics, food and drink, manufacturing, visitor economy, construction, science and engineering, creative, retail, warehousing, transport, high-performance technology, fashion and textiles and financial and business services, water and energy.

The programme is funded by the European Social Fund and the Education and Skills Funding Agency.

www.tchc.net

As the home manager for Oak Lodge Residential Care Home, I was delighted that the Health and Social Care sector was one of the priority groups for the SSW Northamptonshire project.

I partnered with TCHC to support my staff in keeping up-to-date and current with their uncredited short courses within the care sector.

Ellen's Story

I want to ensure that I provide the best opportunity for my staff. TCHC has signed up thirteen of my employees onto this project and they have just completed their second training session. I was impressed with the professionalism of TCHC's staff and the smooth transition from completing the training needs analysis, to the first training session, which was within two weeks.

The staff have a great opportunity during the training to ask questions, clarify thoughts and challenge the trainer, thus making a very interactive refreshing session. The training is having a positive impact on the quality of the life and well-being of the residents in the home.



Support into Employment

Through the Support into Employment project the NOAH Academy supports some of the most vulnerable members of the community in Luton, including people who are, or are at risk of alcohol and substance mis-use, anti-social behaviour or are at risk of homelessness, exploitation or are living in poverty.

This project aims to give people something meaningful to engage in, to earn money and become more financially independent.

The NOAH Academy works with people to tackle some common barriers to employment including lack of training, no evidence of employment or working in a voluntary capacity, lack of understanding of what is expected of the employee in a working environment or an inability to speak English. At the academy we address these issues and provide extra support through volunteer employment mentors to guide people through the whole process of finding work and keeping it.

www.noahenterprise.org
www.luton.gov.uk

Sharif's experience

I came from Afghanistan in January 2010 as an asylum seeker. I was alone with no friends or family as I had to leave them all behind. Before I came to NOAH I experienced a lot of exploitation, people would offer me work and not pay me what was agreed and some didn't pay me at all. I was desperate to improve my English and get a good job and, so I came to NOAH. Staff at NOAH looked after me and I completed ESOL classes and some voluntary work which really helped.

In my first eight weeks I learned so much.
I enjoyed the reading and writing and learned to fill in forms and create a CV.

Eventually with this support I was able to get a job. I currently work twelve hour shifts but have still been able to attend English classes. In Afghanistan I worked as a triage nurse in a hospital, when my English is better I hope to do this again.



In to Work

'In to Work' supports unemployed people living in Milton Keynes, Luton, Dunstable, Bedford, Cherwell and Aylesbury Vale.

Launched in January 2017 the project focuses support on people currently on Employment and Support Allowance (ESA), older workers, migrant workers and people living in rural areas. Support includes help with creating a tailored CV, completing Better off Calculations, confidence building workshops and interview skills.

Through the project people have access to current vacancies through MAXIMUS' partnership with Remploy. This includes vacancies with large employers such as Tesco, Marks and Spencer's and Costa as well as work placements and different ways into work.

In to Work is funded through the European Social Fund, commissioned by Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). It is delivered by MAXIMUS along with local partner The Disability Resource Centre who also bring specialist experience and proven performance in supporting people with disabilities.

www.maximus.co.uk
www.drcbeds.org.uk

Jenny's Story

After losing my sight, I struggled to find work. I spent five years job searching and with over 40 unsuccessful interviews I felt rejected. For me, the obstacle was people being able to see past my disability. I felt that as soon as they saw my cane, they made a snap judgement.

I had been on every course and programme that a job centre offers so was apprehensive about starting another one. However I found Maximus was informative, rewarding and gave me useful job searching skills. I was given help to write cover letters, review and update my CV and tailor my CV to applications. We did mock interviews and set goals all of which were really helpful.



Now I'm a customer assistant for a leading supermarket chain. I feel like a weight has been lifted off my shoulders. I'm a more positive and happy person.



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Luton Aspire

The Aspire programme supports young people who are not in employment to access exciting job opportunities, college courses or training programmes. The programme provides dedicated and professionally trained Luton Aspire advisors to support, inspire and guide young people aged 16 – 24 into employment, education or training. Support is offered through one-to-one and group sessions designed to guide participants through the process of building a career step-by-step.

www.luton.gov.uk Youth Adult Service

Lane's Story

I finished school without any real job qualifications and just as I was due to start college, I became pregnant. I was positive about being a mother, but living in my own mother's house and caring for twins, I just didn't see any way to build a future. I met Nicola from Aspire when she visited one week with the family support worker.

Nicola worked with me to identify my skills and my areas of interest.

Nicola outlined the training and education opportunities I could access to reach those goals and for once, I could see a plan for a real career. Nicola helped with more details than just the career plan. She helped me through every hurdle to get to it. I worried about childcare costs while I was training or working. How could I afford someone to watch the twins? Nicola was there to tell me about 'Care to Learn' funding. I worried about how I could get around public transport with the old, clunky double stroller I use to move the twins. Nicola helped me source a new, lighter one through 'Save the Children'. Given my new opportunities, Nicola helped me locate a young mums facility, a place I could move to with my children.

I've now gained my level 1 childcare qualification and started working towards the next one. I'm also due to start a work placement with a plan to gaining an apprenticeship.

I had always enjoyed children and had imagined one day being a nursery nurse.

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Working Progress, Employability Support

Working Progress helps people back onto the path of employment. The project offers rounded support to participants, varying from confidence building and mentoring, to CV writing and money advice; all of which focuses on the needs of the individual.

It focuses on supporting people with additional barriers to work. This includes people with disabilities, carers, black and ethnic minority groups, over 50's or ex-offenders. Working Progress is provided by 16 Commsortia Members, a consortium of voluntary, community and social enterprises (VCSE) coming together to deliver services and contracts for the people of Northamptonshire and working in partnership with the University of Northampton.

The project is part of the Building Better Opportunities (BBO) programme and is funded by European Social Fund and the Big Lottery Fund.

www.commsortia.org.uk



Sultana's experience

I left college 20 years ago to be married and have a family, but now I've raised my children and I wanted to begin a career. Although I have some health and social care skills, I had never worked in a job before. I approached Dostiyo [Urdu for Friendship], the Asian Women's Organisation in Northampton and part of the Commsortia who runs the Working Progress project and was able to volunteer there while taking training courses.

I volunteered in their office, the Wellbeing Café and at the Central Library, all while taking courses in Food Safety, Catering and First Aid. The people there also helped me with job searches, applications and interview skills.



Their training and job practice helped me to get work in a local primary school.



As the Lunchtime Supervisor, I am strengthening my experience in food services and the work hours fit around my family.



My Future

The My Future project invests in young people, helping to equip them with job-related skills. It works with people aged 16 to 18 who are not in work or education and provides them with specific training and support.

It is designed to help young people build their confidence, help them to explore their career options and get them ready to take their next step, whether that is getting a job, an apprenticeship or starting a college course. The project consists of 12 days of workshops over six weeks with exciting activities to develop the individual in a relaxed environment.

My Future is funded by the Skills Funding Agency and European Social Fund, and is run by TCHC.

The programme is delivered by a number of partners including Reactiv8 The Nation.



Abbie's experience

My life had too much noise. I had problems at home with my family and I was struggling to keep my emotions in check. In school, I couldn't focus. I was leaning towards dropping out. My teacher realised that I was struggling and I was becoming disruptive, so she told me about the My Future programme.

After doing Reactiv8's programme, I found it improved my confidence and helped me to learn to control my emotions. I enjoyed it all. The course has taught me techniques to recognise situations that are stressful and how to control my emotions. I'm much calmer now and less angry towards people.

I've really enjoyed taking part in the programme. I've got some life goals now and that's helping me do to better in school.



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**Education & Skills
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Employee Support in Skills

This programme provides initial support for SME employers in the South East Midlands area through an advice helpline and by providing a Training Needs Analysis. It also provides support for individuals (aged over 16, who are not in training) through regulated and non-regulated pre-apprenticeship training to increase their chances of success.

The aim of the programme is to increase the number of people, both employed and unemployed, entering apprenticeships at all levels and works with Jobcentre Plus to identify suitable unemployed people who would benefit from support into an apprenticeship. Apprenticeship support can vary in duration from a half day to 4 weeks or more and can comprise an individual qualification or unit or, several interventions brought together in one programme.

SEMLEP's Velocity Growth Hub works with the advice service to signpost employers interested in taking on an apprentice. The employer will be guided through the process and directed towards suitable apprenticeships/providers able to deliver the chosen course.

www.northamptoncollege.ac.uk

Dasa's story

I have always wanted to work with children and was hoping to move straight into an Apprenticeship when I finished school. However, I quickly realised I needed to bump up my childcare skills and experience though, so when I got an email from Northampton College about the Introduction to Health & Social Care and Children and Young People's Settings course, I knew that would be the perfect stepping stone.

The course has given me the basic understanding I need to now get onto an Apprenticeship. I now know about important safeguarding issues and the different milestones children go through.



I have also gained lots more confidence, met new friends and have a much better-looking CV which will stand out to employers.



I am really looking forward to starting an Apprenticeship soon and I know I would not be in the position were it not for the ESF-funded course.

Enterprising People

Enterprising People, enables local community organisations to offer wide ranging support for people who are unemployed, people with disabilities or who are disadvantaged to help them kick start their employment and enterprise dreams.

The programme, coordinated by TCHC, offers a tailored package of support to meet the needs of individuals. The aim is to support them into employment or start their own business so they can improve their circumstances. The range of help on offer includes developing a business idea, looking at skills, interests and hobbies for enterprise opportunities; assessing the business viability and refining the offer. It also looks at the legal requirements, business finance and funding opportunities, putting together a business plan, sales and marketing and how to be a business success.

Enterprising People is funded by the Big Lottery Fund and the European Social Fund.

www.tchc.net



Karen's experience

I woke up one morning to find myself a single parent. I was alone and had to find work but needed this to fit around raising two children. I had always had a dream about starting a business in photography, my hobby but I had no business training and doubted I was actually good enough for people to pay for my skills.

Get on the road to self-employment

Enterprising People offered me training in business start-up, professional training in photography as well as personal development courses. They have helped me to believe in myself to achieve it. Since completing the programme, I am about to launch my photography business. You can see my work at www.karenjeffrey.jimdo.com



Support to Understand your Money

The 'Support to Understand your Money,' (SUM) programme enables participants to understand their financial responsibilities and how they can enhance their prospects and better manage their resources. The overall aim is to help them to progress into training and work.

The project offers an initial assessment with a dedicated Personal Adviser and ongoing support throughout the project including one-to-one mentoring for people who need it. The mentoring includes assistance to develop their Individual Action Plan that identifies their barriers, issues and needs, training sessions on money management, IT, benefits and employability skills and support to move back into learning and work

SUM is a Building Better Opportunities (BBO) project. BBO brings together funding from the Big Lottery Fund (BLF) and the European Social Fund (ESF) to help tackle the poverty and social exclusion faced by the most disadvantaged people in England.

www.voluntaryworks.org/top-menu/support-understand-your-money-sum

Mikela's story



I was a homemaker raising four children – the youngest just 6 when I tried to get a job.

I had not had the opportunity for education, had no UK qualifications and knew little about IT. I admit even my English skills were not strong, but I had only ever needed to cook, clean and care for children.

This programme gave me the support to write my CV, gave me some IT training and helped me understand how to write good application forms and practice my interview skills. They also helped me to budget so I can manage my money better as well as informing me about benefits available to me. Working one-to-one with my coach, I was able to find work as a cleaner and enrolled onto English language courses at a college. I now have weekend work as a carer and I'm getting training for this position and for better ones in the future.



Skills Support for the Workforce

Skills Support for the Workforce (SSW) is a programme developed to upskill employees within small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the South East Midlands. It provides recognised accredited qualifications and bespoke training courses to enhance your employees' skills, increase the competitiveness of your business and boost the local economy.

Aylesbury College is part of Serco's network of expert organisations chosen to deliver the SSW programme which is co-financed by the European Social Fund and the Education and Skills Funding Agency.

skillssupport@serco.com

Helen's experience

Tiggywinkles is the world's busiest wildlife hospital. We take in, treat, rehabilitate and release around 10,000 sick, injured or orphaned British wild animals every year.

Helen Harvey, Education and Communications Officer at Tiggywinkles found out about the support available through SSW when enquiring with Aylesbury College about advice and guidance courses.

The low cost / free training is beneficial, as a charity as it means we can focus our funds into the work we do while still giving our staff key training and skills.

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Through the SSW programme, an Aylesbury College Adviser carried out a Training Needs Analysis with Tiggywinkles and found that team leading support was needed, along with a need for advice and guidelines understanding and core customer service requirements.

Through the SSW programme Aylesbury College were able to deliver Level 2 Distance Learning courses to 10 staff members at Tiggywinkles including Certificate in Principles of Team Leading, Certificate in Principles of Customer Service and Certificate in Information, Advice or Guidance.

Work Readiness Action Programme [WRAP]

The Work Readiness Action Programme (WRAP), managed by Goodwill Solutions C.I.C, is delivered across Northamptonshire by a partnership of 12 organisations. The aim of the project is to help support unemployed people, many with distinct barriers, such as homelessness, preventing them getting into sustainable, full-time employment by offering them a range of meaningful support including; improvement of their social mobility, supporting the next step in their progression for further education, coaching and mentoring, or assistance to deal with precarious housing positions. The project also provides pre-employment training, access to Construction Skills Certification Scheme Card, and work experience that leads to vocational qualifications such as warehousing and mechanical handling.

WRAP is part of the Building Better Opportunities (BBO) programme. BBO brings together funding from the Big Lottery Fund and the European Social Fund (ESF) to help tackle the poverty and social exclusion faces by the most disadvantaged people in England.

www.learningacademy.org.uk

Gary's experience

I joined the programme in February 2017 after serving time in prison. Through WRAP, I passed my Reach, and Counter Balance truck licences and earned an N.V.Q in Warehousing and Storage.

After that, I was referred to a Construction Skills Certification Scheme course and got work experience on a construction site. Since passing my Telescopic Handler Licence, I've been in continuous employment and enjoying the opportunity and responsibility the position demands. I can look forward now to a settled future with my family. I can give something back to my community, using sponsored bicycle rides to raise money for charity.

Community Led Local Development [CLLD]

The Community Led Local Development (CLLD) programme supports different schemes to improve the lives of residents in Luton. This allows people in the most deprived areas of Luton to have access to projects that help them overcome issues that prevent them from finding better jobs.

The programme benefits groups such as younger people, older people, black and ethnic minority communities or people with mental or physical health conditions. It encourages communities to come together.

The programme aims to increase the employability and aspirations of young people; develop progression routes into employment; tackle lack of basic employability skills in communities and help prevent barriers to employment for particular sections of the community. The programme also improves the co-ordination of voluntary and community groups, promoting and enhancing community cohesion and integration.

www.luton.gov.uk



Luton Street League

The Luton Street League Project is designed to promote community cohesion.

We target people that are at risk of belonging to or becoming involved in gangs, committing gun or knife crime by offering engagement, training and job opportunities through sport.

Working with The Luton Town Football Club, Bedfordshire Cricket, Luton Adult Learning and the Prince's Trust, the project has created 5 weekly football and 5 weekly cricket centres across Luton for 16-25-year-olds. Each centre also provides opportunities with local employers and education and training providers.

The project is targeting:

- sporting events to reach 400 participants,
- mentoring programmes for 50 most at risk,
- 25 cohesion workshops and engaging
- 40 local employers for job training and work / volunteering opportunities for 125 people.

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Migrant Engagement Project

The project is designed to support people who are unemployed or economically inactive, focussing on the most difficult to reach communities. The MEP programme delivers 10 weeks of activity offering participants up to 50 hours of support and delivered by bilingual advisors.

Participants are offered employability skills training and a range of group workshops such as:

- 'Why an Apprenticeship?' covering benefits, preparation and help in applying for apprenticeship vacancies.
- Introduction to Traineeships
- 'Working for Yourself' entrepreneurship skills key to self-employment, an attractive option where an individual is struggling to find work with an employer
- Basic Communication and Numeracy
- Digital Skills for the Workplace
- Employment for All supporting those specifically with work limiting illnesses

Participants are supported to find matching employment opportunities using our 'Migrant Skills Register' which enables employers to access a pool of migrant skills.

Polish British Integration Centre
www.pbic.co.uk



Zaafira's story

I had lived with my family and never had a job in when I arrived from Pakistan in 2015. I didn't imagine I had any skills to offer an employer and I didn't feel my English was very good. My friend and I decided to go to the Active Integration Project that was being held at the Neighbourhood Centre. They said they would help people that wanted to work here.

The AIP project helped me with English. They offered people that could speak to us in our own language and explain more about working here.

They also got me an interview with FACES, a volunteer group that helps families having a hard time adjusting here.



They also gave me training that could help me work in childcare or family support. Now I am a volunteer Community Champion and I help other women in my neighbourhood that want more independence and the opportunity for a career.



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ESF Community Grant Fund

The Community Grants Programme makes funds available in the form of small grants to third sector organisations, to reduce unemployment rates and inactivity amongst very disadvantaged communities. Funding is for local groups to work with people to raise their skills and confidence and help them to move closer towards learning and work.

The funding supports unemployed adults in under-developed areas and individuals under-represented in the labour market, especially people with low or no qualifications, those lacking literacy and numeracy skills, lone parents, people with disabilities, learning difficulties or health conditions, people aged 50 or over, people from ethnic minorities and young people not in employment, education or training.

The grants will support a wide range of activities which will include initial help with basic skills; taster work experience including voluntary work; training, advice and counselling; confidence building; job search assistance including the provision of equipment and other assistance necessary to secure employment and first contact engagement activities.

Diversiti UK Learning and Development



The aim of our project was to provide a unique programme for disabled people and people with additional needs such as mental health issues and learning difficulties move closer to work. We delivered workshops in employability skills, Health and Safety, teambuilding and confidence building.

We provided work experience in our training business, where participants learnt admin skills such as answering the telephone, inputting data, managing a database, meeting customers, budgeting and other office skills. This provided them with up to date knowledge and invaluable experience, which is welcomed by employers. Where people were ready, we supported them into either paid or voluntary work. We provided advice support and guidance in all aspects of people's progress towards employment.

This ESF funding was absolutely brilliant for our organisation. It allowed us to really see if we had what our participants needed.

As a small organisation it also gave us greater stability and meant that we were able to invest other income in our infrastructure rather than for direct support. It has also given us greater confidence to be able to go on to secure other funding and we have so far been successful in receiving a small pot of funding from Santander to support this client group.

Offender Rehabilitation

The HMPPS and ESF-funded project is designed to help offenders move towards social inclusion and mainstream provision.

All clients take part in a series of core activities, which will help to address the multiple barriers that they may face. There is also the opportunity for participants to undertake additional supportive measures, short courses and training which can help secure sustained employment upon release.

The project is directed towards those offenders aged 18 years old or over that are:

- Sentenced prisoners with up to three years to serve or on remand (women only) or,
- completing a post-custodial license/supervision period or serving a community order.

Examples of core activities include accommodation support, disclosure of convictions, employability skills & industry specific training, money management, obtaining I.D, personal development, and referral to mainstream activity.

Kevin's story

I was in prison for 12 years for violent crime. I came out and wanted to 'get a life' but didn't have real employable skills so I asked for help. I got Health and Safety and Fork Lift Operator Training and started applying for positions through the counselling sessions.

Ixon also helped me with writing a new CV and how to talk to employers that ask for a Disclosure and Barring Service [DBS] check.

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I got a job as a driver's mate for a kitchen company but five weeks into the role they did a random DBS and released me for my record. I took some comfort that my manager was on my side and told them what a good job I was doing.

From that point on, my counsellor and I decided the best approach was to bring up my record up front when applying for jobs. I would offer the interviewer a copy of my disclosure letter so we could stop there or agree that it wasn't going to be an issue. It ended some interviews very quickly but it started the talk honestly and was easier afterward.

I'm in a paid job now, continuing training and looking for a better one.

Volunteering: Your Pathway to Employment

The project enables participants to develop new skills, increase self-confidence, build a demonstrable work-record and enhance their employability through volunteering.

It provides a half-day course, along with one-to-one information, advice and guidance to help participants to become 'volunteer ready'. Activities include completing an assessment of their skills, knowledge, interests and motivations for volunteering and their extra support needs; assistance to find out more about and select suitable volunteering opportunities that meet their career needs. The project provides some very practical assistance including helping people to complete application forms and arranging interviews or information sessions with volunteer-involving organisations. Participants can also be accompanied to interviews and supported to advocate their own skills.

This ESF-funded project targets people who are unemployed and economically inactive, including people who face many barriers getting into work from across Bedford Borough, Central Bedfordshire and Luton.

This project is scheduled to start in Spring 2018
volunteer@cabeds.org.uk



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- My Future
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- Support to Understand your Money
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- Work Readiness Action Programme [WRAP]
- Community Led Local Development [CLLD]
- Migrant Engagement Project
- ESF Community Grant Fund
- Offender Rehabilitation
- Volunteering: Your Pathway to Employment

A Full list of European Social Fund projects can be downloaded from the SEMLEP website.



Notes

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