

Creating powerful partnerships

**POST LAUNCH PRESS RELEASE**

Employers and education professionals agreed unanimously that the continued decline in advice and guidance in schools was adversely affecting both the career choices of young people and their development of the necessary employability skills employers seek. They were equally unanimous in their view that the new educational charity EmployabilityUK, launched on 30th June, offered schools, employers and young people a way forward that would address many of these concerns.

Guests at the launch, hosted by the Development Centre of University of Wolverhampton, were welcomed by Sir Geoff Hampton, CEO of Education Central, who was first to highlight the current lack of support for young people making these critical life choices and endorse the work of Di Vernon, CEO of EmployabilityUK. Di has worked with a team of expert volunteers to develop and pilot a mentoring programme for 2 Academy Schools. Her partnership approach in working with schools to identify their priorities and then sourcing local employers to support the delivery of an agreed action plan has been highly successful in raising the aspirations of young people and enabling them to develop the skills they need for employment. Students at both schools have benefitted from a purpose built mentoring programme as a result.

No one was in any doubt as to the success and impact of the programme, though the highlight for the audience was the confidence, and thoughtful input of 2 of the programme’s graduates who engaged the audience with accounts of their journey from being very reluctant participants to highly enthusiastic ambassadors of the programme. Through their involvement they had learned the benefits of seizing every opportunity to develop skills, network, meet and talk to people of all ages about their career paths, and even come along to speak to a large audience about their experiences and aspirations.

Their personal stories were supported by their teacher who not only commented on the transformation from their “total reticence” at the first meeting to their “confidence in discussion and ability to challenge teachers about the tasks they were set in a mature and appropriate fashion”. Their grades had improved, as had their oral and written language.

But employers involved in the programme had also found huge benefits. Mentors commented how their own skills had developed through working with young people, and employers had seen this as a way of developing the leaders and managers of the future. The well managed programme enabled them to bring sustainability to their corporate social responsibility agenda and give employees meaningful volunteering opportunities, regardless of age, experience or role.

Keith and Di are now considering applications from schools for the next phase of the programme and talking to employers interested in developing a bespoke volunteering programme. Anyone interested in finding out more should contact: Diane Vernon.

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**Sir Geoff Hampton, CEO of Education Central** said: *“It is crucial that all pupils receive good quality advice and support when determining their career pathways. The EmployabilityUK programme combines this with the opportunity for work related experience and mentor support. It has the potential to make a significant contribution at this key time in a young person’s life.”*

**Chairman of Trustees, Keith Fraser of West Midlands Police** said *“EmployabilityUK’s aim is to give young people the right skills for their future. The CBI, the British Chamber of Commerce, through national surveys, have all recently identified the skills gap between young people leaving education and being ready for work. EmployabilityUK is what our young people need to support education to deliver what employers, the country, but must importantly young people need. I am so proud to part of an organisation which will make a positive impact on many young people’s futures.”*



Students from South Wolverhampton and Bilston Academy presenting to a business audience at the Launch of EmployabilityUK on 30th June 2015.

EmployabilityUK is a registered charity regulated by the Charity Commission. Its mission is to provide an employer engagement solution to schools and colleges, bringing business and education together to enhance the aspirations, opportunities and career prospects of enthusiastic young people aged 11-19. It does this by working with schools to develop sustainable employer engagement and delivering bespoke face-to-face mentoring programmes. It is staffed entirely by volunteers.