



Pathfinder Project-

Hume region

Pilot Phase Evaluation Report

Pathfinder Project-Pilot Phase Evaluation Report

Background

In response to a presentation in late 2005 by Dr Trish Corrie, Manager, *On Track*, concerning regional “early school leaver” data the Hume LLEN regional working party embarked on a project to offer support to early school leavers in the post compulsory age group.

A steering group was formed comprising each of the LLEN, schools, Goulburn Ovens TAFE, ACFE representatives, and a “Jobs Pathway” provider. The aim of the project was endorsed:

.....” to identify and trial a model of agreed protocols for the referral of early school leavers to education and training, employment and or welfare support services with a view to establishing agreed practices across all secondary schools in the region”.

It was agreed that 2006 would constitute the trial phase. In order to achieve our aim it was decided that schools could enter into a partnership with their local LLEN to implement agreed protocols for the referral of young people who left school prior to completion, or its equivalent, or employment. It was envisaged that all young people would have access to referral and support services in relation to further education, training, employment and or welfare support. TAFE Institutes in the region and Adult Community Education providers also supported this approach by participating in this project.

Characteristically young people exit school in a range of “not so happy” circumstances. In some instances however a successful pathway beyond school may be established either by the student, the student’s family or by a concerned teacher. In many cases however the pathway is not so easily found. This project aimed to provide a way forward for those situations.

The Trial Phase

The steering group agreed on a number of principles from the outset:

- The project would be developed as a joint initiative of LLENs and Hume regional office
- Each of the LLEN could develop the project in a manner which was relevant to their community
- Even though there may be a variation in local approach, accountabilities to the students would remain consistent, eg. the time between referral from the education provider and contact being made with the student
- Schools would be invited to participate in the trial
- Each of the LLEN would be the first point of contact with the schools
- The trial phase would be conducted with the view that the learning gained would inform an approach which would be available for all schools in the region beyond the trial phase
- For the purposes of this project, the students receiving offers of support would be in the post compulsory years, although it was acknowledged that younger students also disengage from school and require support.
- Students would continue to experience support until a successful placement was made ie providers represented in the steering group agreed to continue to offer support for repeat referrals.

The steering committee met regularly to discuss issues and implement strategies in partnership with the schools who agreed to be part of the trial phase (Refer Appendix 1 Table 1) This group of schools was not fixed at the outset and some schools joined the trial during the year. Some non-government schools participated in the trial as member schools of the LLEN. Outcomes and data reported in this evaluation refer to government schools only.

Importantly a model of referral was developed to underpin the trial (Appendix 2) Also a package of documents was developed for the trial These included student consent proformas, referral templates and Memorandum of Understanding (MOU's) for transfer of personal data. These documents were developed using the templates designed for **On Track**.

In May 2006 a forum of participating schools was held to identify issues for improvement. The main issue for consideration was that of achieving prior student consent and the potential workload this imposed on schools. This view was not shared by all schools represented and further discussion at steering group level concluded that it was important to maintain the position that all Year 10 students be offered the opportunity to record their consent to receive support in the event that they leave school before completing Year 12 and without a plan for further study or employment

During the trial phase it emerged that there was no activity in relation to this project in the schools within the Central Ranges LLEN area.

In November 2006 NETRACKS, GMLLEN and NELLEN submitted an evaluation report providing data on referrals. (see Appendix 1 Tables 1-6) and comment on challenges to the project which are discussed in the next section Case studies were also provided (Appendix 3)

Challenges encountered

The following is a summary of issues raised by each of the participating LLENs

- Each of the LLENs reported the issue of keeping the focus alive in schools Comments such as below support this situation.

"The project appears to have slipped off the radar for most schools involved. The Coordinator needed to spend more time at the schools making a presence and keeping the project visible. NETRACKS"

"Keeping the program active in each school to ensure all eligible referrals are received" GMLLEN

"The dissemination of information within the schools has not happened. There have been cases of young people leaving school without a pathway and it's often too late to re catch them. Anecdotal information provided by local service provider supports this and at times it is only by pure luck that the young people have been picked up. It would appear that there is still work to be done in finding and catching these young people." NELLEN

"Awareness of the Pathfinder program however has not spread much beyond the key staff involved". NETRACKS

- The lack of suitable referral options has also been reported as a challenge. Anecdotal evidence would support this claim, however additional specific research is required before conclusions can be reached.
- The establishment of referral teams in the NETRACKS LLEN was a positive outcome in that a new stakeholder group was brokered by the LLEN with a common focus, however the initial plan to develop school based reference groups has had limited success due to time constraints on school staff. In participating schools a smaller group of two to three staff have met regularly.

“Through word of mouth there have been cases of young people leaving and only by chance have some of them been picked up. This is highlighting that Pathfinder has the capacity to work, but it needs to be visible amongst all staff with the schools involved ”NELLEN

The Next Stage

Late in 2006 the Post Compulsory Division, OLT, invited applications for funds to develop a regional response for a “youth commitment”. The application submitted by Hume was successful enabling the appointment of a project worker in early 2007 to build a broader sustainable approach to the support of early school leavers in the post compulsory years. The challenge remains to extend the project to a broader group of schools and education and training providers, employment agencies and welfare agencies in the region. The aim would be to build a robust accountability for each young person from the ground up.

Conclusions

1. This project is an example of LLENs working in partnership with the Department of Education Hume regional office to achieve a common aim: to support young people make a successful transition in the post compulsory years. The support of the LLENs in appointing dedicated workers is to be acknowledged as a critical factor in the conduct of the trial phase
2. Twenty - nine young people were contacted as a result of this trial phase and have established outcomes in reengagement in school other training or employment Anecdotal evidence is that other students have left school and have not been referred to this project. This remains the focus of the next phase.
3. The issue of no project activity in the schools within the Mitchell shire of CRLLEN remains a challenge and needs to be a major focus of the next phase.
4. The work conducted at Mansfield Secondary College points to the importance of young people receiving support at the point of leaving school rather than being contacted when outside the school gate. NETRACKS reported the significant impact of support received by students offered by an independent person resulting in that young person re-engaging in school. This is an important finding. (Refer Appendix 3: Case Studies)
5. The challenge reported by the LLENs of keeping the focus alive in schools needs to be addressed in the next phase. The establishment of a champion in each school is critical to success as is support from school leadership. Perhaps the establishment in schools of one person having the responsibility

when a student leaves could be considered. Alternatively building a higher profile of this project amongst many more teachers and school leaders could be the approach.

6. The trial phase and evaluation did not point to any gaps in the protocol templates or MOUs provided to schools and education providers. However it is apparent that schools have developed variations in “exit documents” and the benefit of developing common exit forms remains to be addressed
7. There was no evidence received by the LLEN of any follow up at the three month stage as suggested in the model of referral (refer Appendix 2). This remains to be given attention in the next phase.
8. The issue of sustainability will be a focus of the next stage as the financial support of each of the LLENs cannot be continued indefinitely.
9. In order to build a sense of agency accountability- a commitment to youth across sectors in education, training and welfare the project needs to achieve a prominence in broader forums for example the Hume Regional Managers Forum

Appendix 1 Referral Data

Table 1: Participating secondary schools

CRLLEN	No participating schools
GMLLEN	Cobram Secondary College McGuire College
NELLEN	Continuing Education Centre Wodonga Senior Secondary College Rutherglen High School Tallangatta Secondary College Marian College Myrtleford Secondary College Catholic College Wodonga
NETRACKS	Galen Catholic College Wangaratta High School Benalla College Ovens College FCJ College The Centre (ACE)

Table 2: Total number of referrals: 25 out of school

Outcomes and data reported in this evaluation refer to government schools only.

Referrals	Age				
Gender	15	16	17	18	19
Female	1	3	1	6	2
Male	1	1	7	3	

Table 3 Total Referrals 4 (students who are at school at the “point of leaving”

This data provide by NETRACKS only as part of the model developed by this LLEN included contact with students at ‘point of leaving “

Referrals	Age			
Gender	15	16	17	18
Female		1		
Male	1	2		

Table 4: Referral destination

NELLEN did not provide information on individual referral outcomes but reported the young people referred had found their own placements

Referral from provider	Referral destination				
	school	ACE	TAFE	Employment	Other
Gov school	7	1			2
Non gov school					
Parent/other <i>please state</i>			1 (referral from employer)		
On Track Connect					1

Table 5: Multiple referral

(where students have experienced more than placement post school)

NB This data was reported by NETRACKS only

Referral from provider	Referral destination			
	school	ACE	TAFE	Employment
Gov school		1	1	1
Non gov school				
Parents other <i>please state</i>				

Table 6: The process in each LLEN

GMLLEN	The GMLLEN employed a project worker to provide a referral contact Each young person referred was allocated a Case File consisting of the original referral and Case notes recording the type of contact (Phone, Mail or in person). Case Notes recorded the number of contacts, issues and actions for follow up. A data base was developed to capture this information.
NELLEN	The Pathways Coordinator was the staff member who received the referrals and made contact with the young people.
NETRACKS	NETRACKS Pathways worker provided a referral service for the Wangaratta and Benalla schools The NETRACKS Mansfield project worker serviced the Mansfield area The model developed for this LLEN was the establishment of a school based reference group comprising key contacts including education providers, welfare agencies and local government youth services. In Mansfield this group includes employers and local ACE representatives. The discussions of these groups centred on sharing information regarding service provision and joint planning initiatives
CRRLLEN	Contact was made with several schools in the early stages of the project, however no activity was established in relation to this project

Appendix 2: The Referral Process

Stage 1 Consent of all YR 10, 11, 12 students sought and recorded annually



Stage 2 In the event that a Yr 9 (Post 15) 10, 11, 12 leaves school/ACE/TAFE with no full time employment or further education/training arrangements in place, then that student is informed by the enrolling organisation that future contact will be made with an offer of support.

The choice for student to opt out is always available.



Stage 3 The local LLEN is notified by school/ACE/ TAFE and information in relation to the student is sent to the LLEN. A Standardised format for the transfer of information is desirable and this aspect is to be a significant focus of the project. (refer draft MIPS summary sheet)



Stage 4 The local LLEN makes contact with the student (where possible) The style of referral will vary according to the individual approach of the LLEN. However some elements will be consistent

- Within 3 weeks
- Pathway information offered
- referral to another agency (*possible*)

The referral agency to contact LLEN if place is not active or not appropriate



Stage 5 As an additional check Not later than 3 months after referral is made the local LLEN initiates follow up contact with the referred agency to ensure the placement is active. The young person is contacted again if referral is not active.



Stage 7 The School is required to collect data at 6 months for early school leavers The destination must be recorded on CASES (MIPS Accountability requirement) ACE/TAFE also have requirement to follow up at 6 months. Details could be sent to LLEN (for further discussion)



12 month follow up Issues/ barriers/trends reported to LLENs and schools

Student to remain in cycle if first placement is unsuccessful



Appendix 3 Case Studies

Case Study 1

16yo female who had some problems with attending school regularly and fitting in with her peers. Support had been offered through the school welfare group. To assist with school engagement a School Based New Apprenticeship was organised in a field of her strong interest – Horse handling.

School attendance improved slightly.

The student moved to Melbourne for a short time to attend school. This was not successful so she returned to her school. Distant Education was being organised which was well attempted.

It appeared that the training modules had not been developed for the traineeship so it was impossible to catch up. The hours of work were being reduced.

The idea of leaving school was discussed and the possibility of investigating an industry based traineeship with a nearby trainer who had indicated an interest. Whilst this was being followed up the young lady moved to Northern New South Wales to work as a Jillaroo.

The NAC and the trainer are currently meeting to talk about possibilities for 2007.

Case Study 2

16yo young man who was causing disruption in the class, leaving school during the day, not completing set tasks and generally not wanting to be at school. He also said that he wanted to leave school. His mother indicated that she would let him exit school if he had a full time apprenticeship.

The young man was also suspended for his behaviour.

Discussion occurred around the possibility for work experience – in outdoor work.

Followed up on several areas of work.

He completed the [Safe@Work](#) modules for Building and Construction prior to commencing work with a bricklayer.

Visits to the workplace indicated that he was working well, punctual and was able to do the heavy work.

The work experience resulted in a new interest and need to return to study.

Another suspension occurred which resulted in a meeting with the Assistant Principal, his mother, the Pathfinder worker and the student. Several options were discussed such as Distance Education, working through the school's online subjects from home, pre apprenticeship course and a link to the Community Shed for building mentorship.

Further meetings were held to discuss the continuation for study.

Pathfinder worker also kept in touch with the young man's mother to support her through this time.

An offer to work with a family friend in Canberra as an arborist was accepted. He had been there before and it worked out well. There has been an offer for a apprenticeship in 2007.