



**National Standard for Work Experience Organisers Award  
Re-Assessment Report**

**ASSESSOR'S REPORT:  
REDBRIDGE BUSINESS EDUCATION PARTNERSHIP (ReBEP)**

Key Organiser contact – name and job role	Colinda Brown Senior Work Experience Coordinator
Date of reassessment	October 9 <sup>th</sup> 2007
Name of assessor	Craig Grewcock



## **Introduction**

Redbridge EBP contacted CEI during the summer of 2007 concerning reassessment at the end of the three year award period. The EBP proved keen to proceed following its original assessment in 2003. Contact was made by the senior work experience coordinator, Colinda Brown. The portfolio had been revised as a result of restructuring and a range of information was forwarded at an early stage to the CEI assessor.

ReBEP is a limited company and a registered charity. Its operations are located in the Borough of Redbridge to the east of the city of London. The main urban centre is Ilford and there is easy access from the surrounding M25 motorway.

Main changes identified by the senior coordinator were that the team has increased in size and they are now dealing with more post-16 schools. It may be noted that since the last assessment, the EBP has developed its own training facilities, establishing a training academy in nearby Romford aimed at entry-level training in numeracy, literacy and practical skills; and has also created a very successful radio station into which young people are regularly placed.

## **Organisational background**

Originally established in 1991, the EBP has grown substantially in recent years. Its range of activities, its operational profile and sphere of influence has increased significantly. The organisation has very recently moved to pleasant and spacious offices close to Dagenham. In the period between assessments, there has been a complete change in work experience coordination staffing. The work experience team consists of three main work experience coordinators who receive support from the health and safety officer.

Four other teams make up the EBP; the work-related learning team, the employer engagement team (which is also very important in terms of work experience support) , Vocational Inclusions Team and an effective administrative team.

ReBEP is still part of the Business Education Links London East Consortium.

The EBP offers a work experience service to all schools in Redbridge, giving centralised coordination to 16 secondary schools, 2 colleges and 2 pupil referral units. They also work with various units for students with special needs. Approximately 50% of the schools find their own placements and the EBP has confidence in good school co-ordinators, who now have substantial experience. Currently the hardest area to find placements is in the construction industry.

Places are arranged for both pre-and post-16 students. Most pre-16 placements are non-vocational; post-16 are directly linked to vocational or specific areas of study. Most schools go out on work experience at the same time each year in two week blocks. Service level agreements are sent out annually. The operation is bound by the LEA code of practice.

All placements are visited in order to carry out health and safety checks and to establish job descriptions. There are reciprocal agreements through the EBP network for out of area placements.

## Method of assessment

Following initial contact, guidelines on the reassessment were forwarded to ReBEP. Prior to assessment, CEI received a new storyboard which addressed each of the quality criteria; company information and a list of services offered; a copy of the schools database and an employer placement list; an organisational chart and the latest development plan. The EBP had issued feedback questionnaires both to a sample of schools supported and employers used well prior to the assessment visit.

The assessor reviewed each section of the storyboard, identifying key themes for discussion during the reassessment visit as well as the main items of supporting evidence that would be required in support of the EBP application for the award. During the visit, the storyboard was examined in detail and the specific evidence items reviewed.

The assessor was with the EBP from mid-morning until mid-afternoon. It should be noted that:

- all quality criteria were addressed in the storyboard;
- all necessary evidence was readily made available to justify storyboard statements.

Assessment activities were well organised with a comprehensive range of documentation available and with access to the senior project coordinator. The assessor was able to meet other members of staff including the general manager, the office manager and the health and safety officer.

One particular element focused upon during the review was the recommendations from the last report. These were:

*"To further improve the service they give, Redbridge Business Education Partnership Work Experience Team should consider the following actions:*

- *Update important documents giving guidance e.g. LEA Code of Practice (1999);*
- *Carry out plans to improve feedback from employers and students on the quality of the placement organisation as a matter of priority;*
- *Provide opportunities for school co-ordinators and work placement supervisors to meet, share and discuss best practice and agree minimum quality standards;*
- *Re-develop the website - share good practice and aid to recruit employers".*

The assessor can confirm that all of the above have been completed since the last assessment.

Key strengths identified were:

- increased links with post-16 schools;
- EBP involvement in front line vocational training;
- professional organisation and robust administrative systems;
- successful restructuring, regular research and strong planning processes;
- the establishment of a virtual staff library and enhanced IT links.

## **Meeting the standard**

### **1 The service meets client and stakeholder needs**

The assessor focused on the following particular issues and/or examined the following evidence:

- the schools list and the schools timetable;
- an example of an individual schedule for a long-term placement;
- an example of a service level agreement;
- the pre-16 diary for students;
- an example of an employer and student evaluation form.

All evidence required was readily available. ReBEP continues to meet client and stakeholder needs. There is a clear colour-coded timetable for school block placement, usually over a two-week period. All schools have a work experience coordinator who liaises with the EBP on a regular basis. There is substantial evidence of regular liaison with the possibility of negotiation when required.

Employer liaison officers source placements for all schools and there is careful monitoring of employer placement used and also clear methods of communication. It was noted that it is still sometimes difficult to gain regular feedback from employers; the EBP continues to try to find methods of encouraging this.

Students complete evaluation forms, receiving a certificate when this is done. Examples were given of negative student feedback and the ways in which this was dealt with. There is an excellent student diary which is well used by students.

### **2 Clear strategies exist to improve the performance of the work experience team and to review progress**

The assessor focused on the following particular issues and/or examined the following in a discussion about the new business/action plan;

- the way in which the staff structure has been changed or reorganised and the reasons for it;
- a discussion with an Employer Liaison Officer about their job;
- an example of minutes from a fortnightly Coordinator Team Meeting;
- examination of the work-related Learning Package offered to schools prior to placement;
- a discussion about the new Parent Talks and review of the parents' PowerPoint presentation;
- progress with the Employer and Business Partner Recognition event;
- the Services for Schools booklet.

Nearly all evidence was readily available. The employer liaison officer was on holiday at this time, but her role was explained by the senior project coordinator. Of particular interest was the way in which the company links target earnings to commission when generating placements, something which

acts as a real incentive. Targets are set, for example, at 50 placements per week.

Planning is a real strength in this EBP and a new action plan was written in March 2007. This was examined by the assessor. There was evidence of substantial development and progress since the last assessment and a detailed discussion was held with the general manager on both national and local trends and relationships. Specific information was given on the approach of the EBP to the current uncertainties linked to the new diplomas. An extensive review of work experience in the Redbridge area has recently been completed with plans for qualitative research to discover how the provision of work experience is viewed by stakeholders.

Particular attention is being paid to improving communications further and increasing targets for retention of local businesses. The manager noted that "the old dealing with employers and marketing was not working". It took two years to sort everything out and it was a major organisational challenge. There are regular team meetings involving all staff, and since the last inspection there has been the introduction of regular meetings with school coordinators which has proved beneficial.

The EBP is currently working with seven schools in providing an additional work-related learning package. A PowerPoint presentation for parents has provided a new focus in motivating both students and their parents.

At a summer recognition event, 100 employers and business partners attended a buffet for discussions on work experience development and received a certificate.

### **3 Learning and development is planned to achieve the work experience team's broad aims and business planning objectives**

The assessor focused on the following particular issues and/or examined the following evidence:

- the intranet introduced in 2003;
- the Staff Handbook;
- a visit to the staff "library".

All evidence was readily available. There is now a "virtual" staff library, with staff able to access online copies of documentation relating to work experience, procedures, legal issues, child protection and health and safety. The system was demonstrated to the assessor by an administrative member of staff.

Individual monthly meetings take place between staff and their line managers and there are the expected systems of annual appraisal and induction. Several staff were asked about recent training provided for them and all were able to confirm their involvement.

#### **4 Work experience providers are effectively recruited and retained**

The assessor focused on the following particular issues and/or examined the following evidence:

- the Veryan database;
- methods of classifying employers;
- an example of a tracker spreadsheet for sourcing placements;
- plans for events to recognise top employers;
- examples of the "employer returned" schedules.

All evidence was readily available. The EBP uses the Veryan database system, adding new systems and processes since the last assessment. This was "highly rated, it's an excellent tool". It should be noted that the EBP has negotiated with Veryan to develop its own bespoke reports of particular value in their localities. The assessor was able to view these.

There are targets for employer retention. All employers are regularly contacted by the employer liaison officer or by means of mail-out. Professionally produced documentation is available for them and the options for taking block or extended students are always raised. Care is taken to ensure that employers are regularly thanked for their input.

#### **5 The work experience team effectively delivers the schools' placement needs**

The assessor focused on the following particular issues and/or examined the following evidence:

- the positive and negative aspects in delivering school placement and needs;
- specific examples of how good and bad feedback is followed up
- examples of student applications

All evidence required was readily available. The storyboard gave a detailed breakdown of the approach undertaken in delivering the schools' placement needs. The system used is clear, carefully structured and professionally managed. The EBP "can guarantee that all students will receive a placement".

Problems associated with placements are usually related to travel issues and paperwork. The clear aim in the EBP is the desire to "give kids exactly what they want". Positive outcomes are visible at the end of the placement. There are good informal school relationships with regular on-site visits. The perception is that the EBP gives the school "good value for money".

Examples were provided of how bad student feedback is followed up. One of the main concerns relates to the quality of self-employed placements and increasing amount of subcontracting currently taking place. The EBP has to ensure that they highlight to a subcontractor, for example, that they take on board the work placement health and safety responsibility.

## **6 Work experience placements are safe and focus on the welfare of the student**

The assessor focused on the following particular issues and/or examined the following evidence:

- health and safety practice and issues;
- the company Health and Safety Policy;
- a copy of a completed health and safety Visit Form.

All evidence required was available. There is a clear health and safety policy and their relationships with the local borough and schools on all matters to do with health and safety. An EBP representative, qualified to IOSH level, visits all placements within the borough and there are reciprocal agreements for placements elsewhere. There is a grading process for all work opportunities with high-risk placements visited every year, medium every two years and low risk every four years. Students are asked to complete safety activities in their diaries while on placement.

The assessor was able to meet with the EBP health and safety specialist for a discussion.

## **7 Placements provide quality experiences**

The assessor focused on the following particular issues and/or examined the following evidence:

- the concept of providing quality experiences for young people - what exactly makes quality?
- examples of any placement problems which have been dealt with in the last year;
- content of debriefing sessions provided for students by ReBEP;
- examples of completed student evaluation forms;
- examples of completed placement provider evaluation forms.

All evidence required was available. There is regular evaluation of all placements by employers and students whilst on placement will be visited by a teacher from the school. There was evidence of teachers feeding back problems to the office in order to get immediate action.

ReBEP also organises briefing and debriefing sessions for students with activities based around their work experience. Debriefing will take place immediately after work experience finishes with business partners also brought in and a range of activities provided for students. Activities include reviewing the diary of their experience and focusing upon key skills, particularly communication, and using the experience for drafting CVs. ReBEP is developing a new project folder for specific placement areas, for example catering, where students are given a "mini project" to carry out during their placement period.

The coordinator had a clear view of what constituted a quality work experience for young people and was able to give examples of placement problems which have been resolved during the last year.

## **8 Schools are actively encouraged to meet national and/or local quality standards**

The assessor focused on the following particular issues and/or examined the following evidence:

- minutes or outcomes from the termly Work Experience School Coordinator Meetings;
- a copy of a completed Service Level Agreement.

Evidence required was made available. Local quality standards include service level agreements and agreed deadline tables. "Value added" is exemplified in pre-and post-work experience activities provided by the EBP. Termly work experience coordinator meetings help practitioners to network and share best practice. Attendance at the sessions is invariably good.

## **9 Regular networking with partners leads to continuous improvement standard**

the assessor focused on the following particular issues and/or examined the following evidence:

- the parent PowerPoint presentation;
- examples of staff training which have taken place in the last year;
- the work experience Procedures Manual.

Evidence required was readily provided. The EBP has a particularly strong track record in liaising with other organisations and in sitting on important committees and working parties associated with work-related learning. The work experience coordinators have a caseload of specific schools with whom they make regular contact. They have worked closely with schools in developing new materials and the assessor was able to view the new parent Powerpoint presentation.

There is a detailed website which describes the organisation's activities and this is backed up by promotional and explanatory materials. Interestingly, a work experience procedures manual has been put together for staff and also for school coordinators which explains the whole process step by step. The latest plan is to put guidance on "finding your own placement" on the EBP website, to be used by parents and students.

## **Conclusion**

ReBEP has grown markedly over the last three years under strong leadership and through careful research and planning and with new staffing. Evidence shows it to be an important and successful provider in the east and north-east of London area, giving a professional work experience placement service as well as a range of additional services to a large number of local schools. All recommendations from the previous assessment have been implemented and all quality criteria were amply supported by appropriate evidence.

## AWARD RECOMMENDATION

The recommendation of the assessor is that Redbridge Education Partnership ('ReBEP') once again receives at the national standard for work experience organisers award

This Award is valid for a period of three years from the date of receipt of the Award Certificate.

*This report is based on assessment of materials submitted by the organisation, a visit to the organiser and feedback from staff and users. CEI cannot be held responsible for approving or accrediting any schemes or programmes which do not meet legal or required standards.*

**No criticism of the organisation or any individual is intended or implied within this report.**