



Spark Update – No 21

28th February 2013

We have had a busy couple of months at the start of the New Year and there are encouraging signs of business development. In particular:

- i) We have continued with one-to-one tuition for two pupils referred to us from RBC and we had a meeting with three of the RBC commissioners. There are encouraging signs that they have recognised our role in tutoring and preparing pupils to return to mainstream education.
- ii) We have had provisional acceptance for a grant funded project to train unemployed people in IT familiarisation and the use of the GOV.UK Universal Jobmatch system.
- iii) We have applied to Learndirect to be a Life in the UK Test Centre.
- iv) The John Madejski Academy has accepted our proposal to provide one-to-one training on-site for their failing students.

The Learndirect bid has taken a lot of time and has included discussions with Impact International regarding the best use of the site to deliver the service. If we win this contract, the anticipated numbers taking the test are substantial.

We have been in contact with several training organisations in London Street with a view to collaborative working and, when time permits, we need to follow these up.

There is still a lot to do but the last two months have seen considerable progress.

1. Premises

The premises are excellent although we are not making sufficient use of the Quiet Room yet. There is good potential for expansion into other parts of the building.

We have installed the signage and updated this with details of our Security Training courses.

We are about to have a quarterly meeting with Impact Plus where we will discuss the heating and lighting bills and the possibility of installing a separate meter.

2. Reading Borough Council

I attended the follow-up to the “Building a Better Future” event in the Town Hall in November. This was run jointly by the Local Government Authority and the RBC. This discussed approaches to tackling youth unemployment and disengagement.

Joe also attended the RIALN meeting on 14th February.



Paul Stephens and two colleagues finally visited us on 7th February.

3. Wokingham BC

Nothing to report.

4. Service Development

The only significant addition to our established range of services lies in our bid to Learndirect which, if successful, would establish Spark as a Life in the UK Test Centre.

We have been awarded the status of BCS Qualification Approved Centre for ECDL Levels 1,2,3 and Advanced, and for Computer On-line Basics.

We are continuing to recruit volunteers from Reading University.

5. New Business

- i) The one-to-one tutoring service is gradually building up, with two students at present and a realistic hope of more to come. JMA have also accepted our proposal to provide on-site training for failing students.
- ii) Our application to Job Centre Plus for a grant for £24,000 to run training courses in IT skills with a direct reference to using Universal Jobmatch has been provisionally accepted.
- iii) We have applied to become an Authorised Test Centre for PearsonVUE.
- iv) We need to up our contacts with local agencies such as Connexions and Maximus, as well as local organisations such as Graft, TABS Training and The Mustard Tree. At present we get few if any referrals from these organisations.
- v) We are continuing to run SIA Security training courses.

6. Charity and Fundraising

We still do not have the time or resources to put effort into raising funds, which requires considerable effort from a team of people.

Our plan to join the Thames Valley Chamber of Commerce and BITC could help as it will give us access to larger organisations in the area. We will pursue this when we can afford the subscription.

Another initiative is to email our existing database of parents and customers to ask their support, not just for direct giving but also for suggestions regarding who to approach for donations. We need to find somebody to do this.



7. Publicity & Marketing

We have ordered an update to our signage to include SIA training.

We continue to attend RBC meetings such as "Building a Better Future" and RIALN.

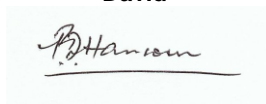
We met Jayne Parsons of Community Savings & Loans (situated in London Street) to discuss support for the Job Centre trainees in budgeting and money management.

8. Action Items

Item	Who
i) Premises <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Request a separate meter for measuring power use and billing accordingly 	Joe
ii) RBC <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to attend RBC educational and training meetings 	Joe; David
iii) Wokingham BC	
iv) Services <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue looking for new volunteers 	Joe; David; Tom
v) New Business <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Follow up contacts with local agencies Follow up meetings with Graft; TABS & Mustard Tree 	David; Joe David; Joe
vi) Charity & Fundraising <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Look for further grant opportunities Identify initiatives for fundraising activities Join Thames Valley Chamber of Commerce 	David; Tom All staff David
vii) Publicity & Marketing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Publicise our new location & meet key influencers Distribute fliers & literature 	David; Joe Joe

We need help with these actions so if any of you can assist in any of these areas please contact Joe or David.

David



28th February 2013

Joe

