



# Client Feedback on Aimhigher Northamptonshire Training Programme

**Dr Asteria Brylka**

**November 2017**

Institute for Social Innovation and Impact  
(ISII)

## Contents

<b>1 Introduction.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>2 Client Feedback on Aimhigher Northamptonshire Training Programme .....</b>	<b>3</b>
2.1 Feedback on the Training Programme .....	3
2.2 Changes that occurred due to the Training Programme .....	6
<b>3 Conclusions.....</b>	<b>7</b>

## 1 Introduction

This evaluation presents client feedback on a training programme delivered by Aimhigher Northamptonshire for unemployed and economically inactive people in Northamptonshire between August, 2016, and November, 2017. Aimhigher Northamptonshire delivered this training programme as a partner organisation in two county-wide employability enhancement programmes: the BBO WRAP programme led by Goodwill Solutions CIC and the BBO Working Progress led by Commsortia. The presented results are based on the analysis of data that comes from 12<sup>1</sup> semi-structured, face-to-face voluntary interviews conducted with Aimhigher Northamptonshire's clients in both BBO programmes. Interview participants were guaranteed confidentiality and, therefore, the results presented in this report have been made anonymous.

## 2 Client Feedback on Aimhigher Northamptonshire Training Programme

Interviews were conducted with 12 clients and the foci of these interviews were: (1) client needs and whether these needs are met by the BBO programmes and (2) client perception of the currently existing support for individuals like themselves and how this support fulfils their needs.

### 2.1 Feedback on the Training Programme

Clients who joined Aimhigher Northamptonshire's Training Programme found out about the provision from the Job Centre or other career advising professionals:

*"I learned about this programmed from the Job Centre (...) So they recommended me to go to the meeting within the Job Centre to find out a bit more about the course beforehand."* (P11)

*"It was something obviously the Job Centre mentioned to me and I thought, 'Yes'."* (P7)

As visible in the excerpts below, client motivation behind joining the training was to improve their skills needed for finding employment:

*"I wanted to improve my skills and - because it was aiming higher to get the skills. I needed to get a job because I wasn't getting anywhere."* (P8)

*"Well at the time I was unemployed and interested in a career in customer services rather than retail. And I had a good working relationship with [name] and he said, 'You ought to go on this'. (...) I'm glad I did."*(P4)

The clients enjoyed the training programme as such, as well as its different aspects. Clients emphasised that they appreciated a casual way of teaching by Ann and Phil and respect that Ann and Phil and other instructors had to each and every client. The latter manifested in, for instance, giving extra explanations and instructions to those clients who needed them in a manner that was discreet and did not make the person feel uncomfortable:

*"And the tutors were absolutely brilliant, you know. They were very good. Well they had patience but they made it enjoyable, they made it funny as well."* (P8)

---

<sup>1</sup> The numbering of the participants is the same as in the two BBO programmes.

*“But I just enjoyed going there because we - as we through the weeks, got on, we got a really good team in the group, so I really went for their company and to learn things at the same time. (...) The tutors were good. They made you feel at ease. They got us all working together as a team, which was good. We did some fun things as well as the learning.” (P13)*

*“It had a - it was taught in a very informal way so it wasn’t like being at school or anything like that. Found it very useful meeting the other people, meeting Phil and all his different colleagues. So - very well taught by all of them. To me it was informal, it’s the most informal formal course I’ve ever been on. And so it was easy to learn, very well structured, wonderful people, brilliant guy in charge. All the other professionals I met, lovely to talk to, brilliant.” (P4)*

*“Since joining the programme, they have given me a lot of help. And it’s more like a refresher (...) I liked it as a whole as well because Phil was nice. If we didn’t understand anything he would go back and just explain it to us again. If one of them was struggling with some of the words, it was like, he would go round, just explaining what that meant. (...) And sometimes if there was a word that I didn’t know, again he would do the same for me. It was not just for one person as such. He was equally nice to everybody in that respect.” (P11)*

*“(...) if you were struggling with anything or didn’t understand anything, they’d come over to you and obviously explain it - explain it more, do you know what I mean? They wouldn’t, like, obviously say, ‘What’s the matter?’ kind of thing. They’d come over to you. So you wouldn’t feel ashamed or feel embarrassed because you couldn’t spell a word or something like that. They were really, really helpful, really helpful. Because obviously some people say, ‘What’s the matter’ and obviously say.... But no, they came over to you so you didn’t feel...” (P7)*

What the client found particularly attractive was that they were helped with realising what sort of jobs they would like to apply for, the structuring of their CVs, and that they were provided with the opportunities to exercise an interview:

*“(...) they just touched on the composition of the CV, the importance of the opening profile because that’s what employers tend to look at. (...) But it was the preparation for the interview and as Phil was saying, they kept hammering home that all interviews these days are competency-based. You know, ‘what if’, ‘what’s this’, and so on. And so the preparation there was absolutely superb, I can’t fault that. (...)” (P4)*

*“We went on - we had different things. You ask questions of yourself to find out what sort of job you should be going for, which I found fascinating. And we did interviews, so we had mock interviews so we interviewed people and they interviewed us. So it was learning what sort of questions you might be asked. And we looked at our CVs and things like that. So it was a very long, good programme.” (P8)*

*“I worked with both Phil and Ann and some other members of their team. I was very happy, learned a lot of good skills and I’ve developed them and fine-tuned some bits and pieces and I’ve improved in my own understanding (...) So we did lots of things, we went for job*

*with [company name], we did a letter of application, we also had to do a - how to best deal with a letter of complaint, so Phil showed us how to do that.” (P9)*

*“It was fine, she [Ann] was very informative and helpful and then she explained about trying to help with CVs. So I went through and did a bit of CVs through another company from the Job - but the Aim Higher was more into help with interviewing and making sure everything, the CV was more **XXXX** so it’s more helpful. And then they can, kind of like doing it, like a mock interview type as well. So it builds more confidence and you know you are - they are there for advice and support (...) it was some talking but then you still got the PowerPoint and then you got the booklets that you had to fill out as well. I think I’m just happy about it really.” (P10)*

*“Ann and Phil have been giving me some help with my CV.” (P15)*

Another aspect of the Training Programme that the clients found important was the improvement of their communication and social skills which occurred largely due to meeting other people who were in a similar situation as themselves during the training. Meeting other individuals in the same situation had also a soothing effect:

*“I really enjoyed it because I love being with people.” (P4)*

*“Well I think it’s a good chance to meet new people in the same situation, more or less get to know others. (...) Helps you communicate more. You can get to know others, communicate and generally make new friends. And maybe like I’ve done, keep in touch with one or two of them at the end of it. (...) it makes you know that you are not in the same situation and that you are not just alone, other people are stuck in the same situation as you. It gives you - it helps you relax, sort of boosts the confidence up with them at the same time, knowing that you are all in the same position, you are all looking for work, that you are all here to learn.” (P11)*

The clients also found exceptionally useful the help that Ann and Phil have provided them since the Training Programme was finished, that is staying in touch with clients and supporting them on on-going basis if needed with, for instance, a CV advice or re-practising a job interview:

*“And then they’re still getting in contact as well even - and just finding out, updating and finding out how I am, so that’s quite nice.” (P10)*

*“And it’s like Phil said, if I ever need anything, especially interview skills, if I’ve got an interview coming up I can contact him and he’s willing to go over some skills with me and just run through, sort of practice interviews to help build that confidence up before I go for an actual interview. (...) he just keeps in touch. And like today, I’ve come down to say what’s happened, sort of catch up really and again, like I say, he’s just gone through my CV, sort of editing bits out for me, pointing out how I could reduce it to keep it onto the two pages.” (P11)*

*“And then ever since that course has finished I’ve been meeting either with Ann or with Phil, just to do basic job search for job searches.” (P7)*

*“(…) we’ve kept in contact as well.” (P15)*

The clients feel comfortable and enthusiastic about recommending the Training Programme to other individuals in a similar situation:

*“I would recommend it. They were very friendly and helpful, and even now after the course has ended they continue to remain in touch and just point out ways to help you out.” (P11)*

*“And I thoroughly enjoyed it. (...) I would thoroughly recommend it to everybody. Definitely.” (P4)*

## **2.2 Changes that occurred due to the Training Programme**

Clients described many positive changes that happened in their life due to their participation in the Training programme. These changes include boosted self-confidence, re-gained sense of purpose in life, and improved job-seeking skills. The improvement in job-seeking skills manifests in invitations that clients get to job interviews:

*“But that is one good thing that the course gave me, apart from the skills, was it lifted me up and gave me a bit more belief in myself. (...) it’s given me a structure and a purpose back into my life which I had lost and that’s why I was feeling very down at home.” (P4)*

*“Confidence. Being able to look at a job description and gain some advice, ask whether it is for me or isn’t. I went for a number of job assessments and interviews with some very big stores (...) And although I didn’t get the job there I said to myself, ‘I’ve got a template in my head and I know what to do’. (...) It’s kick started my confidence. Where before it wasn’t getting anywhere as much, this course has helped (...)” (P9)*

*“It helped me get interviews for some jobs. (...) getting back to having, to have a CV, because that was more of a panicking situation.” (P10)*

*“(…) each time I’ve sort of got more knowledge on how to write my CV. Whereas before, when I first came to doing a CV I had no idea what I was doing, I needed a lot of help to make it. (...) I mean, I still need the help these days but not as much as I used to, I can get by on my own now. (...) More or less the confidence side of things. As with all the employability skill courses that I’ve done, I’ve gained more confidence as I’ve done them.” (P11)*

*“I feel - obviously I’ve met quite a few friends and they all stay in touch with each other. And I feel more confident in myself so I’ve obviously learned something new and yes, learned something new and I feel more confident myself. Probably to approach people and don’t be afraid to ask if you are struggling with something, don’t be afraid to ask for the help.” (P7)*

*“Well I seem to put more detail into my CV when I’m sending it off. Normally I just send it as it is but now I’ve learned how to tailor it and stuff so -... (...) And I got an interview so I must have been doing something right!” (P13)*

*"I'm more confident. I know that I've got to update my CV a lot, which I've done. I now know what kind of jobs to be looking at, suitable for me and I know I'm going to enjoy. So **XXXXX** 'There's a job that I'll like doing'. And sort of being more relaxed and a kind of interview-... I feel ready to go and do a job interview. Whereas before I was a bit like, 'Oh my gosh, **XXXX** at me, I don't really want to do this'. But now I'm more like, 'Yes, okay'. I'm more chilled out about that." (P18)*

### 3 Conclusions

The feedback that was provided by the clients of Aimhigher Northamptonshire on the Training Programme that they had attended was very positive. The clients, who attended the training with the aim of becoming more employable, felt that they either gained or refreshed many job-seeking relevant skills, such as the preparation of a customised CV or interview skills. The clients emphasised that all activities during the training were interactive and conducted in a group and enjoyable. They also mentioned that teaching and learning was more informal than in other courses that they had attended in the past and, therefore, the training provided by Aimhigher Northamptonshire made them feel particularly comfortable and engaged, which benefited their learning process.

One of the important features of the training was that all clients were treated in the same respectful way by the instructors and that they all felt that their needs and needs of anyone else were met by the instructors during the training provision. The clients also emphasised that apart from the improvement of job-seeking skills, they very much enjoyed a group character of the training that enabled the clients to meet other people in a similar challenging life situation to their own. This experience not only helped the clients to feel more relaxed and accepted but it also contributed to establishing a few new friendships among the clients. Among other benefits of the training, the clients pointed out boosted self-confidence and positive job-seeking outcomes like invitations to interviews.

Last but not least, the on-going and individualised support that is provided by Aimhigher Northamptonshire to their clients even after the provision of the training had ended was mentioned by the clients as something exceptionally helpful that makes Aimhigher Northamptonshire stand out among similar service providers in the region. This individualised and on-going support that is provided after the training to the clients on regular basis helps them cope with the job-seeking situation, allows them to refresh what they learned during the training, and provides them with emotional support if needed. The clients felt very enthusiastic about recommending Aimhigher Northamptonshire and their training to other individuals who are looking for employment.