

WELCOME

At the time of writing this, the sun is shining and it's slowly getting warmer - so let's hope that summer is around the corner and we can say goodbye to what seems to have been a long, damp and grey Winter/Spring.

Earlier in the year, we asked parents & carers to undertake a survey to help us get a feel for how our provision is perceived. We also held a survey of our students for similar reasons, but from a slightly different perspective. I am not one to quote surveys ad-nauseam just for effect, so forgive me for offering you a small snap-shot.

I was delighted with the results - 100% of respondents said they were happy with SWRAC as a provider and 95% felt that we are meeting student's support needs. From a students point of view, 95% felt that we are helping with independence skills and the same number felt that we were helping with skills to help with paid or voluntary work. The surveys were more extensive than this and I'd be very happy to send you all the results, if you'd be interested, please email me at adriangunner@swrac.ac.uk.

Many of you will know about our Thrive programme which we run at Merley & Dorchester. The programme seems to have caught everyone's attention and is proving very popular. So much so that we are running out of space at Merley! The good news is that we have now secured yet another premises in Winton which I am very excited about. It is a lovely self-contained property which used to serve as a language school and is pretty much 'ready to go'.

Along with the normal rooms you'd expect, it has a garden, a separate annex and a self-contained apartment which we will use to help people learn how to live independently. I am hoping we will get the keys in June, with a view to opening to a first cohort in August/September. We are intending to maintain the provision at Merley so this will mean geographic convenience to more people as well as help us meet demand.

Finally, I have been very conscious of the fact that we are all going through huge cost of living pressures at the moment and, without wishing to be any way political, this has manifested itself through strikes and withdrawal of labour.

From a parental/educational perspective, this can cause huge inconvenience to parents when schools/colleges are closed. However, I just wanted to place on record my huge thanks and appreciation to all the staff who work for SWRAC.

Despite going through all the same financial pressures as everyone else, our staff have never let us down nor caused us to have to close our doors for any length of time.

Even through the darkest days of Covid their willingness to 'keep going' was so apparent - so thank you all !!

Adrian Gunner

ADRIAN GUNNER
MANAGING DIRECTOR

SURVEY RESULTS



Parent/carer feedback

100%

are happy with SWRAC
as a provider

95%

feel we are meeting
student support needs



Learner feedback

95%

feel we are helping with
independence skills

95%

feel we are helping with
skills needed for paid or
voluntary work



BOSCOMBE CENTRE UPDATE

Kerry Pedder

The last few months have been big on community projects here at Boscombe.

One that has just finished was a six-week work placement with the Social Canteen, a Grounded Community project run from a local church building that provides hot meals to those in need.

Learners from the Prepare for Work course spent every Friday helping to prepare and serve food, which they thoroughly enjoyed. We even had parents emailing in to say how thrilled they were with the project and how the young people loved the community giving element of it. It was such a success, that it's running again for the next group.



BEAF ARTS CO is also being attended by Prepare for Work and they have put together a project, working in collaboration with Recreate Dorset to offer the young people from SWRAC creative activities each week at The Old School House in Boscombe.



This will include filming, photography, collage and drawing. The group will also meet local street artists and look at the artwork in Boscombe to help inspire them in the workshops.

BEAF is running its festival in June (16th to 25th) and it is also hoped some of the students will get involved as volunteers.

Inside the centre, we've finished a small renovation project in a very tired communal area. Over the Easter break we gave the space a new lease of life, fresh lick of paint, new colour theme and installed a tea station, new blinds and chairs.

In other news, we have welcomed the next round of traineeship learners on the six-week employability course who are working towards June work placements. Project Search interns are also coming up to their last rotation, with a very significant difference in their confidence and ability levels quite evident. It's clear that they have thoroughly enjoyed the course and experiences more and more as the months have gone by with very positive outcomes expected.

LEARNER'S VOICE



Jade joined SWRAC on the Prepare for Life course in 2019. She then progressed onto the Prepare for Work course and has recently completed a Supported Internship with GolfCatcher. Now employed at a local golf course, Jade also presented on her journey at a huge Supported Internship Event in the area in March.

"I have loved the opportunity to be here and have learnt new life skills."

"Staff are always really supportive and have helped me with my learning in the classroom and in the work placement."

"When I started at GolfCatcher, I first worked upstairs in the driving range, then I went to work on the grounds and then the cafe downstairs."

"I have learnt to be more confident in myself when talking to customers. I am able to use my own initiative and not worry too much if I make mistakes. I always felt part of the team."

"I have now accepted a part time paid job working in the cafe at Christchurch Golf Club working 3 days a week."

"Presenting at the event grew my confidence even more."

JADE



SAVE THE DATE - THURSDAY 22ND JUNE

Sports Day



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DORCHESTER UPDATE

Tracy Perren

As everyone returns fresh from the Easter break and the daffodils finally make an appearance on our beautiful site, we've been getting creative here in Dorchester.

The post-16 vocational group have been doing incredible things with expressive art. Using a variety of mediums, we've seen learners create designs for a speaker system, combining footballs with papier mâché and turn one of the walls in our corridor into a stunning mural.

They've also started a Food Wise unit which has resulted in some delicious meals being cooked up.

The Prepare for Life group has been busy working on the Safeguarding and Prevent units, for which our brilliant tutor, Maria, and LSA, Melia, asked the class to create a news report and record it.

To make it a bit less of a heavy topic, they came up with the idea about a girl that had been radicalised and was forced to sell flip flops. Even though this sounds silly, they took it seriously and made sure they covered all of the very important points, such as; how to keep safe, what to look out for, who and where they can go for help.

It was nice for them to work in a different way and to challenge them selves by recording it. They all felt very proud of what they had done.

The supported internships at McDonalds are about to begin and continue at RSPB Café with great success. We've also had our first THRIVE student spend some time there which was a huge step for them and a goal we have been working towards since August.

The THRIVE group have also been on a visit to Sandbanks Hotel in Poole to see how a large commercial kitchen works, and they really enjoyed that.

We've also been working closely with a learner who is due to start with us in September with a smooth transition.

As a little project, he has been helping us create a sensory garden. Planting will begin shortly and we'll have Lavender, Lambs Foot, Sunflowers and herbs - anything aromatic that makes it a lovely area for anyone to enjoy.

LIVERPOOL CENTRE UPDATE

Bev Kennedy

It's been an incredibly busy few months for us in Liverpool.

Following lots of engagement in the local area, our name is certainly out there and we have already welcomed some new starters, with many more to join in August.

We attended Sefton Parent Carer Forum Local Offer Live in March, which was held at Aintree Racecourse, and gave us a great opportunity to tell people about what we do and how we can help. We were also able to network with similar services, many of which we can signpost to for additional support when needed.

With referrals still coming through and many visits and transition days booked, we have recruited two more Learning Support Assistants and an Engagement Officer to ensure we provide the best possible experience to our learners.



For the learners themselves, they've been hard at work with Taking Root in Bootle and their Bloom project, which sees them go out and tend to local flower beds or assist with street clearing, whatever the weather!

We've also just finished building a studio apartment set up in the centre to simulate a household, which will be great for helping to develop life skills.

As we head into summer, there are lots of educational visits booked. Art has been a big feature, with learners finding real interest in making models, so we'll be going out to local art galleries and also heading down to Crosby Beach to see the Antony Gormley life-sized sculptures for some inspiration.



SUPPORTED INTERNSHIP EVENT

Maria Fincham

The first ever National Supported Internship Day took place on Monday 27th March 2023.

To mark the occasion, SWRAC hosted an event welcoming an audience of over 70 people, including local employers and local authority representatives, to celebrate the importance of supported internships, what they include, how they can benefit businesses as well as our learners with SEND.

The day was filled with informative and heart-warming presentations from employers and some of SWRAC's supported interns themselves, who spoke about their achievements and their supported internship journey.



Paul Barran of GolfCatcher expressed the many ways in which supported internships had enriched his business. One of the interns who had been placed at GolfCatcher, Jade, presented on her own journey with the business, which has resulted in her gaining employment at GolfCatcher. This was supported by a letter from her mum which said how this milestone has had such a wider positive impact on the whole family.

Jade wasn't the only learner to speak publicly either, with Harry and Adam presenting on their experience at the Carlton Hotel. All three of them did fantastically well and we are very proud of their achievements.

Chris Trusscott, McDonald's franchisee from the Weymouth and Dorchester area, explained why his business provides supported internships and Helen Lewis from BCP Council spoke about Project Search, to demonstrate how supported internships work in practice at BCP.

Other learners joined us for the day too, helping to make up and hand out goody bags and to meet and greet the attendees. They were a great advertisement for why employers should consider supported internships.

If you know of any businesses who would be interested in getting involved, either in the form of supported internships, work experience, taster days or presentations to learners about their industry, get in touch with SWRAC's work experience co-ordinator - dionnepolychronopoulos@swrac.ac.uk.



THRIVE UPDATE

Rachel Rainsbury

Following the success of the Thrive Christmas lunch, we've launched a quarterly afternoon tea event that aims to raise money for charity.

In March, we hosted around 45 parents and carers and the learners did an incredible job at planning the event, from what food would be served to where people would sit, as well as creating promotional posters beforehand.

During the afternoon tea, they prepared, served and cleared away the food and also presented about the chosen charity and advised people how they could make donations.

Each learner has nominated a charity that will get pulled out of a hat, and this time, we raised an amazing £181.60 for the March for Men campaign. This was in addition to another £500+ that a learner had raised himself by doing a sponsored walk! SWRAC was presented with a certificate from the hospital for our efforts!

The next event in July will be hosted by our learners and it will be a Sports Day! Learners and tutors over in Boscombe and Dorchester will be our attendees this time and we will be looking at a total of 45 people again. What's even more exciting is that AFC Bournemouth will be helping to host the whole day! Also, if the sun is shining, THRIVE will be holding a BBQ, delivered by our learners and our handy Chef, Callum.

We've got back into baking in a big way too, in fact, we are setting up a monthly THRIVE café on a Friday morning, which will involve the learners selecting recipes, buying the ingredients and making sweet treats for everyone to enjoy. To add to this, our learners will learn how to use real money, whilst selling the cakes to our staff for a very small fee.

We also had a visit from some furry friends from Helpful Hounds Assistant Dogs. Peter, a Trustee C.E.O Volunteer, kindly came to Merley House and gave our learners a great insight into what the Helpful Hound dogs do and how they can help all types of people. He then allowed each of them to spend some time with his pooch. Following this, we are hoping to raise money for them at one of our charity events, as well as spreading the word.

Another huge achievement this year has been the friendly link we have formed with Café in the Park, Winton, which is part of The Parks Foundation. This independent charity is devoted to enhancing Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole's parks and green spaces for everyone to enjoy. From this, one of our learners has been offered a fortnightly volunteering opportunity within the café. He is already thriving and confident enough to be left to volunteer independently under the supervision of the lovely Manager, Carole.

It's set to be an enjoyable summer with progress being made in all areas!





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INDUSTRY VISITS

Lorna Clark

In a three-day event organised by BCP Council at the end of February, we were able to introduce our learners to the marvellous world of manufacturing.

Three industry visits were set up with local manufacturing firms and approximately 30 students from various courses got the opportunity to learn about this sector and the opportunities it could provide.

Across the three days, we visited:

- Yunex - who make traffic lights for the UK and also 64 countries worldwide
- Sunseeker - luxury yachts that we can only dream of
- Mauvevorx - marketing company who make stands, posters, and other display material for shops and businesses

As a careers adviser, I know our young people choose job ideas from the most widely known jobs.

They say the jobs they see. However, there are so many 'hidden' jobs that people know nothing or little about; why would they?

So, visits like this provide an opportunity to find out what else is out there that might appeal. Jobs in manufacturing are available at all abilities from entry level, which require minimal, if any, qualifications, right up to degree level. This means our learners have the chance to go in at the bottom and progress according to their interests and abilities.

Seeing is definitely believing and all of the learners loved going to the sites to experience different types of manufacturing, with many of them expressing an interest in work experience.

We're now looking at other industries we can explore, such as emergency services, to give our learners a real breadth of knowledge when it comes to the labour market and job types out there.





SPOTLIGHT ON ENGAGEMENT TEAM

Dom Weir and Dawn Standerwick

Ensuring people are supported from the very first contact with SWRAC is extremely important to us, and as the organisation has expanded over the years, we made the decision to set up a dedicated Engagement Team.

Whether you are a learner, parent, carer, professional, employer or other local organisation, Dom and Dawn will always be your first port of call.

Friendly, approachable and extremely knowledgeable, they are the people who find out what you are looking for and what you need, provide you with the relevant information and then put you in touch with the right people who can help progress your journey, whatever that may be.

From hosting on-site show rounds and conducting outreach visits for potential learners to connecting employers with the careers and work experience team and arranging guest speakers, the Engagement Team has a complete 360 view of everything that goes on here.

Both Dom and Dawn, who are based at Boscombe and Dorchester respectively, have a real passion for establishing community links and both spend a lot of time promoting SWRAC and creating new relationships in the area.

Dom, who has a background in youth work spanning 20 years, has been with us for three years. He said: "It's really important for anyone who wants to engage with SWRAC for whatever reason to have a guiding hand from day one and feel welcomed. Although it's a very busy role, needing excellent customer service and multi-tasking skills, we always find time to welcome people to the centres. Only then can people truly understand the positive environment and meet the genuine and honest people who work here."

Following a corporate career in HR and a transition to adult employment services, Dawn joined us last November so she could help people find their path much earlier in life.

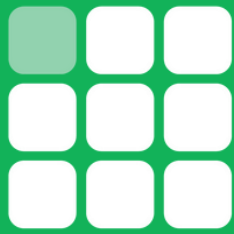
She added: "SWARC seemed the perfect fit for me because we support people early on to realise their potential. The Dorchester centre is in such a lovely setting, in the heart of a tight-knit community that I am working on building connections in. The role is so diverse, but with little wins every day, like seeing the relief on parents' faces when they visit and knowing their child will thrive here."

For any enquiries, email:

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THANK YOU!