

POLES APART??

Scores of young people in the North East have been helping to develop the entrepreneurial and teaching skills of Polish adults thanks to Tyne and Wear Education Business Links Organisation (TWEBLO) and one of its consortium members.

Youngsters from three schools in Sunderland, aged 9 to 14, spread their 'learn by doing' approach to skills development to nine Polish visitors when they spent a week in the North East city gaining an insight into how TWEBLO strategically supports the engagement of businesses in the work of schools with the overall aim of developing entrepreneurial flair and work readiness in young people.

The Polish visitors were hosted by leading TWEBLO consortium member Education Business Connections Limited (EBC) which had been commissioned by Polish partner the RC Foundation of Gdansk to train teachers and trainers in the third sector. The training focussed upon how to deliver innovative and creative enterprise education and work related learning programmes to young people and how to actively engage businesses in that work.

Initially EBC Chief Executive Barbara McClennan spent a week in Gdansk training the Polish visitors before they travelled to Sunderland to shadow EBC staff and put their learning into practice through assisting EBC in delivery of activities to young people, backed by a number of its business supporters.

The pilot project partnership between EBC and the RC Foundation has been funded by the European Union with the aim of developing transnational links which can see EU countries sharing best practice and new ideas.

Barbara, a previous runner up in the North East's prestigious Social Entrepreneur of the Year awards, said: "The Polish education system is much more formal than the English system and teaching has historically been quite rigid compared with the approaches now used in the UK. Traditionally businesses have had little or no involvement in working with schools. Preparing young people for the world of work is done in a very theoretical way. The purpose of the project has been to show the value that can be added to young people's learning, development and preparation for the world of work and adult life by real employer engagement in their experiences – the whole ethos behind the work of EBC and TWEBLO."

With both practical and theoretical learning under their belts the visitors returned to the Pomorski region of Poland to put their learning into practice by delivering five events for young people themselves – based on the EBC model – and to strengthen the partnerships they had forged during their visit to Sunderland.

A partnership between TWEBLO and the RC Foundation was one of those forged and TWEBLO hopes to be able to support the RC Foundation in the development of a consortium based on its own model. Graeme Miller, Managing Director of TWEBLO said: "This project was a huge success and TWEBLO was delighted to be able to support the sharing of best practice by one of its key consortium members to an international audience. TWEBLO is considered one of the best business links organisations in the country and it is fitting that we have played such an important strategic role in the fostering of international links and sharing of best practice to a country that is still at a development stage in terms of education business partnership work."

TWEBLO was one of several organisations, including the City of Sunderland, to provide vital funding to support some of the activities delivered by EBC during the Polish visitors' stay which saw them delivering three of EBC's programmes which had originally been developed thanks to TWEBLO funding:

- Welcome to the World of work
- Enterprise Day
- Skills for Work

Fun-focussed hands-on activities saw key employability skills developed including team work, communication, task management, time management, task prioritisation and listening to instructions. The young people also explored ethical and moral dilemmas in the workplace, identified the characteristics of good and bad employees, gained an insight into job descriptions and job roles as well as taking part in a mini enterprise which saw them becoming part of a company

charged with developing and producing a product with the aim of making a profit.

During the week the Polish EBC also organised an International Partnership Speed Networking event bringing together the Polish visitors and representatives of leading organisations across Sunderland in the hope that other, similar partnerships could be forged. The Polish visitors met with representatives from both the public, private and third sector and this was backed up with fact-finding visits to several projects to further drive forward the partnerships. The group also enjoyed a Mayoral reception and visit to several local cultural bases.

The RC Foundation hope that, following evaluation of the pilot scheme, it can be rolled out across the Pomorski region and potentially the whole of Poland.



**YOU CAN FIND OUT MORE ABOUT THE PROJECT BY VISITING:
WWW.EBCLTD.ORG.UK/EBCSPOLISHLINKS.HTML**