

CASE STUDY

Granger's Story:

Personal

Employability Skills



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Competence

Conduct and enable assessment.

This involves clarifying and agreeing the need for assessment; supporting the use of self-assessment activities; administering formal assessment.

Abstract/Introduction/Background

This narrative follows one of Leo's clients, Granger and his personal journey of change whilst on the Talent Match Employability Programme. Leo is an Information, Advice and Guidance practitioner working on the South London Talent Match Programme. This programme is designed for NEETs (not in employment, education or training) and aims to equip them with the skills and competencies to engage with the job market or to undertake relevant training to embed the skills needed to sustain employment in the longer term. Personal employability skills are broad. This case study focuses on communication, problem-solving, assessment and motivation.

Granger is a complex needs case. He presents with a multitude of latent issues. Some stemming from his family background, some from his lack of attainment within education but also issues that need to be addressed through assessment and additional service intervention.

Young people in the UK are nearly three times more likely to be unemployed than the rest of the population: 16-24-year-olds are three times as likely to be jobless. More than half of those unemployed feel anxious about everyday life situations with many claiming to avoid meeting new people. Nearly six out of ten unemployed young people polled said that anxiety has stopped them from asking for help, while 41% said it stopped them from leaving the house. This is according to a survey of 2,265 16-25-year-olds published in a report by youth charity, the Prince's Trust. It is also reported that the number of British young people living in poverty will reach 5 million by the end of the decade.

In the UK, there are a number of Government employment schemes, The Big Lottery Fund, the largest distributor of good causes money from the National Lottery, launched Talent Match, a national scheme designed by young people for young people, with the aim of helping those aged 18-24 who are 'hidden' from the mainstream and/or struggling to find the right support and career opportunities. Talent Match projects were led by a cross-sector partnership with the key focus on employers, particularly from the private sector. This was to ensure that it met local needs and that young people were given opportunities to improve their circumstances and their life chances. Talent Match differed from government programmes in that young people need to be genuinely involved throughout the design and delivery of each approach to maximize impact.

Key Words

- NEET (not in employment, education or training)
- IAG (Information, Advice and Guidance)
- Disengaged
- Assessment
- Local Authority Care
- Mental Health
- Low mood

- Employability Skills
- Key working sessions
- Removal of Barriers
- Employment
- Transferable employability skills

Key Characters

Granger (Client), Leo (Information Advice and Guidance Adviser) and Grace (Supported Living Keyworker – Adult that is assigned to work with young adults who are living independently within the Hostel)

The Case Study Story

About Granger

Granger is now 22 and has lived in South London for the last two years; he originally grew up in North West London. He had a strained relationship with his parents and was estranged from his father early on (aged 4). The impact of not having his father in his life is very evident as Granger struggles to build relationships with males and particularly those in positions of authority.

Granger left secondary school with very few qualifications. He didn't really enjoy college and felt that he was forced to go by his mother; this placed a great strain on their relationship.

Things came to a head with his mother after she called the police when he had been missing for three days. His mother had said to the police that she could no longer cope with him as she had 2 of his younger siblings to look after in the home. She also said that his behaviour was having a negative impact on them and was affecting their performance in school.

Granger was taken into Local authority care at the age of 17. He went into assisted living in a hostel and had a keyworker called Grace. Granger liked her and felt as though Grace "had his back". Grace was really concerned about Granger's mental health state and his lack of engagement with services. Grace tried to get Granger to engage with assessments to accurately chart his need, as although Granger engaged with her, she did not have all of the tools available to help him to achieve his potential and get him to fully participate in assessments. Grace also suspected that Granger was smoking cannabis (although at this point it was unproven).

Grace was seriously concerned for Granger as over the next 2 ½ years he withdrew from all help and literally lived in the room of his hostel, very rarely engaging with any of the other young people.

His Journey to South London and meeting Leo

After a serious incident involving the police, Granger was sent to live in a hostel in South London. Granger was upset, as he didn't have any family or friends in this area; he was also upset to lose the close relationship that he had with Grace, his keyworker. Grace was also concerned for Granger's mental health and raised this with her managers within the hostel. Granger went deeper into himself and his low mood worsened.

Granger refused key working sessions. Eventually, the manager of the hostel told him that he would have to sign up for a course or risk losing his hostel place. He begrudgingly agreed to sign up for an employability course. He was one of the first participants to join the Talent Match programme in South London. This was an employability programme aimed at getting NEETs (Not in Education, Employment or Training) back into work,

training or education. He met with Leo, his trainer on the employability course and on arrival Granger stated that he wanted to work within the digital media sector, that he was very creative and wanted to work within the creative industries.

Granger attended regularly throughout the delivery of the programme (as he knew the impact that this would have on his housing situation) and took part in the majority of activities delivered.

Leo's assessment and engaging Granger

Leo knew that he would have to be creative in his thinking to be able to engage Granger on the course. He quickly ascertained that there would have to be a raft of assessments conducted on Granger to appropriately facilitate his engagement on the programme and signpost him to appropriate services. He also understood that Granger's "journey of change" could take longer than the standard model, or the two years course duration. Leo regularly challenged Granger around negative thought patterns and the fact that he didn't engage with services. Leo created a bespoke learner plan for Granger. Through his initial assessment, Leo put Granger on a functional skills Maths course as Granger's Maths level was below standard. Granger was reluctant to trust Leo but Leo worked hard at breaking down Granger's barriers. Leo told Granger that he thought he had latent mental health issues and suggested counselling and that Granger really needed to engage with services, particularly his GP. As much as Granger did not like that Leo exposed his shortcomings, he started to let his guard down over time slightly and acknowledged to Leo that there was a problem and that he needed to "fix it!"

Granger still did not feel that he needed extra support around his mental health, and he found it quite hard to acknowledge that his housing situation had impacted on his abilities to build a positive pathway for himself. Leo had provided many opportunities for Granger, but he always seemed to find a reason why he could not attend or engage with the opportunities given. However, he did attend a week-long course in digital media run by the Prince's Trust, which he said he enjoyed. Leo had since offered him longer courses relating to this sector but Granger said this was now not the pathway he wanted.

Granger and Leo discussed his new chosen pathway of bar work and the implications on his benefits and rent. Leo advised him to speak to his local benefits office advisor so that he could roughly calculate how much he could earn and how much housing benefit would cover in relation to his rent. Leo felt as though Granger really had to make measured, thoughtful and really considerate decisions about his employment future and how this would affect his life situation. Leo also believed that bar work would not be the appropriate employment pathway as this would mean that Granger would not be earning enough, and also that Granger did not fully appreciate that he would lose his benefits when he began to work full time.

Leo set Granger a self-reflective (assessment) task for him to see a view of himself and what his barriers to employment were. What came out of this task was that there were not many areas that Granger would be interested in working in. He wanted to become a blogger on social media but was still reluctant to start this. He said that he created content, but still did not post or upload it. He said he was happy in his current situation. From an observational standpoint, Leo felt that Granger really did not seem happy in his life and his situation and just seemed to be living from day to day, in a very secluded way.

Towards the end of the programme, Leo felt that he really needed to ensure that Granger had the skillset (both soft and hard skills) to allow him to move forward within his life and his employability pathway. Leo brought in professionals from local NHS (National Health Service) to talk about mental health and the impact upon people's lives. Leo also made an appointment for Granger to see his GP (this went over and above the responsibilities of his role). Granger very slowly seemed to be opening up to Leo about how he felt about his life, but more than this Leo was working toward building Granger's resilience and tackling his longstanding reluctance to engage with males. Leo found this work with Granger both challenging and extremely rewarding as he saw Granger slowly come out of his shell and start to analyse different areas of his life.

Working on Grangers employability skills

In the last two months of the programme, Leo worked on specific job-ready skills with Granger. Granger completed five mock interviews and Leo got one of his colleagues to come into these sessions to act as a second employer. Leo gave Granger feedback on areas that he felt that Granger could improve, such as researching into companies before attending interviews, asking additional questions, trying to maintain eye contact, having an engaging and pleasant demeanour and being more confident when Granger spoke about himself. Leo also challenged Granger to go to a counselling session arranged by his GP, telling Granger that he “has nothing to lose, and everything to gain”, in tackling his mind and how he felt about himself. Granger disclosed to Leo that he did indeed smoke cannabis and that his former keyworker Grace was right about her concerns about him. Leo felt as though this was a breakthrough moment. Leo contacted Grace and got Granger to speak with her. This again strengthened the relationship between Leo and Granger.

Granger returned to Leo from his counselling session quite downbeat. Leo explained to Granger that this was due to him being in the uncovering stage of exploration and that a lot of his past locked away feelings were now starting to surface. Granger told Leo that he would continue with the sessions. This was like a breath of fresh air to Leo, as he realised that this was the beginning of Granger's process of recovery and a way to unlock potential in Granger's future. Granger also told Leo that he was happy to attend employer visits and actually wanted to do a short media creative course once the Talent Match programme was over. Granger completed his Maths qualification.

By the end of the programme, even Leo was surprised by the progress that Granger had made. Leo arranged for Granger to attend a short media course. Granger produced content and started his own podcast online. Granger started to volunteer at a local media company as an intern (with a view to obtaining paid work) to build his CV and work experience. Delivering a talk at his AGM (Annual General Meeting) Leo used Granger as a case study to show a young person's “journey of change” viewed through the lens of building employability skills.

Leo's self-reflection

Leo had to reflect on his practice several times during the Talent Match programme. He had to assess and carefully consider whether or not he had the composite skills to handle certain sensitive and complex cases with young people. He also had to develop his partnership working skills and analyse the results of these partnerships, thinking carefully about which ones needed to be fostered and which ones to withdraw from. He also had to forge close working relationships with services within the local area and provide adequate referral. This enabled him to signpost young people effectively and make informed decisions around appropriate employability pathways based on these relationships. This led to him identifying appropriate professional development and training courses for himself. All of this strengthened Leo's professional practice and led to higher confidence and self-efficacy within this role. It also encouraged Leo to look at the next steps in his career progression in the field of information, advice and guidance.

In the UK, there are a number of Government funded employment schemes, including those delivered through European Social Fund Objective 3 (ESF). The Big Lottery Fund, the largest distributor of funds for good causes (National Lottery) complemented these employment schemes with Talent Match. Talent Match was groundbreaking in its design; in its formative stages, it was shaped by grassroots employment and employability practitioners working alongside young people. In its delivery, young people continued to play an instrumental role in its on-going development as an employability programme, ensuring that it was authentically led by and responsive to the needs of young people. Importantly, Talent Match engaged with and embedded employers into design and delivery. Talent Match targeted ‘hidden youth’ – those who were not engaged in any mainstream support, especially those 18-25.

Questions, Comments and Topics of Discussion

1. What would you have done if you were in the place of Leo?
2. Can you identify the different stages where intervention was necessary?
3. If Granger was your client are there appropriate services within your country/locality to signpost Granger to?
4. Does this Case Study resonate with your experience of complex needs clients?
5. In your role, do you feel confident in assessing clients' needs? Also, does this process of assessment differ in your country?
6. Removal of barriers is a key way of working with clients with complex needs. Some of the work of an IAG practitioner is about initial/early identification/assessment of needs, even before the work of skills giving can be done. Is this true within your area of work or are there different ways of approaching this problem from a holistic perspective?
 - This study encapsulates the problems that can be incurred by practitioners within their daily work. It makes the practitioner carefully consider choices and pathways that clients are encouraged into. It also shows that some of this work may be outside of the remit of the practitioner, or that closer partnership working between other services is required.
 - Additional Discussion point: "How do we best support clients with undiagnosed Mental Health needs?"

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