



FDI Training events Partnership Workshop

Exploring the partnership needs of Online Centres
London, Manchester and Birmingham 2019

As part of training for the F programme, we asked roughly 100 centres to name...

- A successful relationship your organisations has

As well as giving the job title of the person they are in contact with, why they partner with them and how referrals work.

- A relationship your organisation would like

As well as giving details about why they want to partner with them and ideas on how to engage.

We then gathered their answers and have collated them here, in order to gain some useful advice and guidance about how to partner with particular organisations on a local level.

Relationship we have	Relationship we have	Relationship we'd like	Relationship we'd like
Name	Name	Name	Name
The person who we're in contact with	The person who we're in contact with	The services and support they provide	The services and support they provide
The services and support they provide	The services and support they provide	Why we want to have a relationship with them	Why we want to have a relationship with them
Why we partner with them	Why we partner with them	Ideas for how to engage with them	Ideas for how to engage with them
How referrals work	How referrals work		

Observations

- We have ordered the responses in terms of highest demand in order to hopefully make this guidance as useful as possible, to as many centres as possible.
- Centres gave more responses for the partnerships they have, rather than partnerships they want.
- The responses for desired partnership and existing partnership both fell in to roughly the same categories, with centres giving similar answers for both sides - indicating a need for best practice and guidance to be shared between Online Centres.
- JCP/DWP scored the highest for desired relationship, but also second for an existing relationship. This indicates both the level to which DWP leans on the Network to support digitally excluded people. But also the inconsistency with which the two engage one another.
- Citizens Advice, Local Businesses and Banks, and to a lesser extent Care Homes, NHS/GPs, Libraries and FE Providers, scored higher for desired partnership than existing. This indicates a need for further partnership exploration from Good Things, but also raises questions about the willingness of these organisations to partner with others.
- JCP/DWP, Local Charities and Councils scored higher for existing partnership than desired. This indicates they are a good organisation for a Centre to partner with and willing to engage. However for JCP and Local Charities this is clearly not the case across the board.

Organisation	Relationship we'd like	Relationship we have
Total	87	97
JCP/DWP	14	26
Other local charity	12	33
Citizens Advice	9	1
FE Providers/ Colleges	8	5
NHS/GP Service	7	4
Local Business	6	0
Carers/Care home	5	2
Schools	5	5
Council	5	9
Libraries	4	3
Banks	3	0
Housing Association	2	2
Religious Org	2	1
Other	5	6

Methodology

For the 14 identified groups, we have taken the information provided by centres who desire a partnership, and those who currently have a partnership with them, to provide guidance on:

- Best people to contact
- What you can offer them
- What they can offer you/ Why you should partner with them
- Best Practice for referrals

JCP/DWP

Best people to contact

The large majority of centres with partnerships contact the individual work coaches themselves. Others recommend contacting the centre manager or local partnerships manager. Ask the coaches about the process for getting on the local providers list. Centres also discussed the need to refresh the partnership occasionally due to staff turnover at the JCP itself.

What you can offer them

The majority of centres offer the JCPs the ability to give customers a level of support that they themselves aren't currently providing. Particularly customers who need more intensive one to one support, especially with Universal Credit. Although a recent Government contract has been awarded to Citizens Advice to offer digital support for UC. Other centres have found success in sweetening their offer by tailoring the support offered to the individual e.g, CV writing, interview technique etc, as well as work placements/ volunteering opportunities to those people with little work experience.

What they can offer you/ Why you should partner with them

Offering your services to JCP gives you direct access to a large pool of digitally excluded people, as well as those who may benefit from other services you provide. Dependant on the depth of your partnership, and the people referred, this can also become a source of volunteers. Whilst the numbers referred to your organisations can help you to complete other funded contracts, in the vast majority of cases, JCP do not offer funding for the support Online Centres provide. A excellent suggestion was that job opportunities can be passed both ways between organisations.

Best Practice for referrals

Centres mostly receive referrals via phone, this is made easier if you have an appointments system. As mentioned earlier on, making regular face to face contact with the work coaches helps to keep the partnership fresh in the work coaches minds.

Other Local Charities

Best people to contact

Varied! This group is made up of a large variety different local community organisations so there wasn't much consistency in answers. But, it is clear from the responses that these relationships work on a personal first-name basis and are founded on face to face contact, so be sure to book visits rather than create something via phone or email!

What you can offer them

Most responses that involved a local charity talk about mutual benefits to both organisations. For example, you may be able to support a particular audience group that they may struggle with, you may have a venue or space that they can use or tutor/volunteer that can support their work. Can you perhaps offer training or expertise in a particular subject area, that they otherwise wouldn't be able to provide? The benefits shared aren't necessarily learners focussed, you could exchange bid writing or quality assurance expertise too.

What they can offer you/ Why you should partner with them

From the responses given its clear that partnering with other charities broadens the scope and abilities of both organisations. Heres a list of some of the benefits: exposure to more diverse audience groups, covering a larger geographic area, a wider range of services offered, higher contract targets become more achievable, shared costs, shared resources, extra routes lines of communications to promote your service, a wider net for funding opportunities.

Best Practice for referrals

Many responses make reference to learners first having an initial chat or assessment, or completing an application form. Once learner need is identified, the preferred method of referral appears to be email or appointment. Referrals for the most part seem to operate best with a personal touch, with staff knowing the staff they are referring to personally. A phone call or email to the learner about their new appointment is also a common response.

Citizens Advice

Best people to contact

Responses make reference to the centre managers ideally, but advisors can also help! CAB open days are also mentioned, as well inviting your contact to visit your centre to better understand your offer.

What you can offer them

As mentioned previously, a [Government contract has been awarded to Citizens Advice](#) to offer digital support for Universal Credit, which started in April 2019. Therefore any support you can offer linked to job seekers will be of particular relevance. It's worth noting that Citizens Advice can only offer advice, not tuition, and work by prescribed appointment times. Therefore, if you have an offer that can help people who have multiple barriers and issues, and need more intensive one to one support, this will be particularly relevant when approaching them. Case studies are a huge help in these situations!

What they can offer you/ Why you should partner with them

Many responses make reference to the broad range of issues that Citizens Advice support people with, and how many of the issues involve a digital transaction. Therefore they will have exposure to many digitally excluded people and increase the number of learners visiting your centre. Putting this in reverse, Citizens Advice offer guidance on a wide range of legal issues that your learners may face, including employment, housing, immigration and debt issues. So if you are faced with a question from a learner that you or your staff cannot answer with confidence, a partnership with Citizens Advice can be helpful.

Best Practice for referrals

Responses for existing relationships with Citizens Advice were limited (only 1!), but there were a few ideas from those who were seeking a partnership, particularly arranging face to face meetings with managers, using case studies and success stories.

FE Providers/ Colleges/ Schools/ Nurseries

Best people to contact

As well as volunteer/funding managers or coordinators, responses make reference to heads of particular subjects/departments at the college, for instance IT, English or Maths, or in the case of nurseries and schools, the headmaster or manager (this conversation is made easier if you have children of your own at the school). Research departments at Universities can also be relevant if they require access to your particular audience groups.

What you can offer them

Volunteering opportunities to students as well as access to your lower level students who are ready to progress on to higher level accredited courses. You can also offer them an additional marketing avenue for any open days or courses they may have planned. Offering a workshop club to students is also mentioned, as well as offering ESOL support to mothers at local nurseries.

What they can offer you/ Why you should partner with them

A progression route for your learners to advance on to and achieve their aims. One response makes reference to colleges providing compliance and quality assurance support, as well as funding opportunities. Again, marketing opportunities are available through open days to promote your centre.

Best Practice for referrals

Examples of centre to college referrals include the college renting a training room once a week to meet any new referrals. Examples of college to centre referrals include face to face appointments or meetings with the learners, to complete initial assessments to gauge their level of learning. Offering an in school homework club is referenced a few times as a good way to start referring parents to the centre.

NHS/GPs/ Care Homes and Carers

Best people to contact

Responses make reference to many different organisations across the NHS, not just GPs. It may be worth making contact with a local pharmacist, Healthwatch, drop-in centre or even a CCG. Dependant on local services, it could also be worth approaching more specialist services that some digitally excluded people may use, such as physiotherapists. These contacts could then be leveraged in order to make further contacts.

What you can offer them

Responses from centres who have existing relationships make reference to specific health and well-being classes or content. For example if you have specific classes around the NHS website, or booking appointments, or ordering prescriptions. If you run social groups as well, these can be promoted to support any lonely or isolated patients examples include basic cooking or art classes. Your offer of partnership work may be made more appealing if you can offer your service or a coffee morning in the GP surgery itself!

What they can offer you/ Why you should partner with them

Centres speak about accessing a wider range of learners, but in doing so also being able to bid for different sources of funding by addressing different health related issues. GPs and other health services are also key local hubs for you to raise awareness of your service. One response mentions health professionals giving talks or advice to learners at their centre on a semi-regular basis.

Best Practice for referrals

Referrals are primarily one way, from health providers to centres. Besides the usual telephone and email routes, centres recommend getting reference on their website if possible, attending team meetings and leafleting.

Local Councils and Libraries

Best people to contact

Responses given at the workshop for the most part refer to the Adult Education department of the council, but also the Transformation teams and Housing and Benefits departments. For libraries, they refer to individual library managers or staff, rather than a particular partnership role.

What you can offer them

Many councils and libraries are limited in the services they can offer at the moment, so any additional services your organisation offers, that aren't offered via the council or library, for example support with Universal Credit. Referral of learners from their service can also be welcome if they are over capacity. If a council or library is currently going through a digital transformation, you could also offer digital skills support to their staff as well as the general public on how to use the new digital services.

What they can offer you/ Why you should partner with them

Many responses refer to using Library or Council rooms and equipment to host training sessions. Other also refer to funding opportunities through Adult education departments to help them meet targets on various contracts. If the council doesn't currently offer basic digital skills support, you can also offer to help encourage people to use their online services. A partnership can also lead to further contacts within the council for other departments that may be useful to your learners, for example Housing departments.

Best Practice for referrals

Referrals are predominantly done via email, although there are references to signposting learners on to the centre and online application forms.

Local Businesses and Banks

Best people to contact

This is a varied group including for example local job agencies, shopping centres. We received no examples across all four events of positive existing relationships, so if you have one to share, please put it in to the Online Centres Facebook group!

What you can offer them

Ideas include recruitment candidates for job vacancies, volunteers, promotion opportunities for their services, customer referrals.

What they can offer you/ Why you should partner with them

Good promotion and marketing opportunities, job vacancies for the unemployed, business advice.

Best Practice for referrals

Centres recommend mutual visits between both organisations.

Housing Associations

Best people to contact

This group included supported living organisations, homeless shelters and charities. Contacts include centre managements, engagement teams or volunteers.

What you can offer them

Some housing association do not offer tuition in basic skills such as English, Maths and IT, so offering to provide these services on their behalf can be a big incentive. Social activities and groups can also be a big lure for those who are homeless or living in sheltered accomodation. Similar to councils, if a Housing Association starts the process of making their services digital, you can offer support to their customers to start using these services.

What they can offer you/ Why you should partner with them

Social housing can give you access to thousands of learners who you otherwise may not be able to reach or have contact with. They often provide marketing material to their tenants about the services that available. Responses also make reference to shared venues for training.

Best Practice for referrals

Most responses mention referral forms between centres, but others describe more formal handovers such as organised group sessions, or having staff based in either parties organization.

Religious Organisations

Best people to contact

Centres describe having contact with faith leaders such as priests and Imam's, but also English language teachers who may be based there, or outreach or community workers.

What you can offer them

Basic digital skills classes, as well as tuition for basic english and maths if they aren't offered already. Employability and benefits support sessions are also mentioned by centres. You can also offer them a space/venue for their own faith groups and activities.

What they can offer you/ Why you should partner with them

Many responses include using the religious organisation as a venue to host training sessions, as well as access to learners with ESOL needs and volunteers from varied and diverse backgrounds.

Best Practice for referrals

Centres with relationships talk about face to face introductions, or possibly being introduced through learners or volunteers who already know the correct person to speak with.

Other

Here is a list of some of the other suggested organisations that didn't quite fit in to the other themes, as some potential partnership routes:

- Tech companies e.g, Apple stores, Google Garages
- ECDL
- Local Internet Cafes
- Trade Unions
- Immigration Lawyers
- Age UK
- Big Lottery
- PC refurbishers
- University of the 3rd Age