

PROJECT UPDATE

Empowering learners with dyslexia

An Ako Aotearoa co-funded project that commenced in May 2016 is already providing learners with dyslexia with the assistance they need to be successful in their tertiary studies.

The Ako Aotearoa co-funded project *Evaluating the effectiveness of support interventions for dyslexic learners in multiple learning environments* aims to provide valuable information for tertiary educators and institutions about how best to support learners with dyslexia.

The five tertiary education institutions and outside suppliers involved in the project – Primary ITO, the Skills Organisation, Service IQ, Whitireia New Zealand and Capital Training Limited – are sharing knowledge, expertise and resources to achieve mutually beneficial outcomes. More importantly, the project is helping individual learners with dyslexia to complete their qualifications and experience success in their careers. The research will determine how effective this support is in guiding tertiary learners with dyslexia to successful outcomes.

The industry trainee – Chris Lloyd

Chris Lloyd, now a qualified drainlayer in Hamilton, is an industry trainee who may have withdrawn from training if not for the work of this project.

Chris was struggling to complete his qualifications because of dyslexia. Like other people with dyslexia – Chris is very capable orally, but reading, writing and spelling are challenges for him. Chris was enthusiastic at his job, but did not handle the paper work well and therefore was not succeeding in his industry training.



His training advisor from The Skills Organisation encouraged Chris to be part of this project, which involves evaluating the effectiveness of a wrap-around support package developed at Primary ITO.

This package has five components:

1. A screening to determine if the trainee has dyslexia.
2. Provision of quality information about dyslexia to the trainee – including the positive aspects of dyslexia.
3. Encouraging the trainee to take ownership of their condition.
4. Provision of information about dyslexia to tutors, employers, work colleagues and family, including how best to support people with dyslexia.
5. Access to human and technological support. The human support is most often a mentor.

Chris was screened for his dyslexia by a Primary ITO staff member and had a mentor from the Primary ITO mentoring programme to work with him to complete his qualifications.

One of Chris's supervisors, Ollie, reports that "the project has been an absolute success for Chris. Without the assistance provided, in particular the mentor and use of a Smart pen, Chris would not have got through."

Ollie says “Being involved in the project gave us better information about how we could work to get the best out of Chris, and showed us how to help him complete his training and succeed in his work with us.”

Chris recognises the value of his mentor, David Lees from Primary ITO. “My mentor was very useful. I could not have done it without him.”

Over the course of Chris’s involvement in this project, he has successfully moved from being at risk of non-completion, to the present situation where he is considering studying for a further qualification.

The mentor - David Lees

The key to Chris’s success was the support of his mentor – David Lees. David is one of many mentors who have been recruited and trained by Primary ITO to work with industry trainees to complete their training. David provides his time, wisdom and experience for free to help trainees succeed. The Skills Organisation and Primary ITO are both part of a national project to support trainees with learning differences, so it made sense to share mentor resources.



David gets a lot of satisfaction from being a mentor; even changing the dates of a trip to Australia to meet the needs of one of his trainees. He is keen to see young people achieve and believes that providing encouragement to the trainees is really important.

David describes how Chris was over the moon when he passed his qualification; phoning him after finishing the exam to tell him “I am pretty sure I smashed it.”

As well as plumbing and drain laying, Dave has helped apprentice jockeys and trainees from the dairy sector. “Having technical knowledge is useful” he says, “but the real contribution a mentor provides is purpose, motivation and organisation.”

About the project (due for completion in 2018)

Project aims

This project builds on an Ako Aotearoa Regional Hub-Funded project that investigated the learning experiences and needs of adult dyslexic trainees in the Primary ITO. That project in turn had built on earlier hub-funded work that developed a training and support model for dyslexia, to help inform decisions about how to best support trainees in the classroom and workplace contexts.

The aim of this larger current project is to evaluate the effectiveness of a suite of interventions for supporting dyslexic learners in a number of sectors beyond the primary sector. In line with best international practice, the interventions explored will target learners who have been tested and identified as dyslexic, as well as their employers and tutors.

Meet the team:

Mike Styles (project leader) Primary ITO
Lee Agnew, The Skills Organisation
Sue Turnbull, Capital Training
Dr Lesley Petersen (lead researcher),
Petersen Consulting

Marianne Farrell, Primary ITO
Mike Kelleher, Capital Training
Dianne Boss, ServiceIQ
Mary Silvester, Whitireia New Zealand

Visit the project space at: www.ako.aotearoa.ac.nz/support-interventions-for-dyslexic-learners