

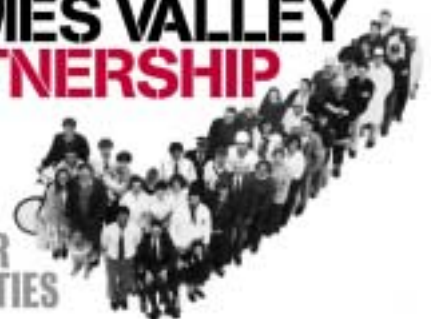
WELCOME TO THE WORKING WEEK

An evaluation of
year one of Slough
Activate @Sara Lee

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**THAMES VALLEY
PARTNERSHIP**

WORKING
FOR SAFER
COMMUNITIES



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1. Introduction to Activate

"It's not knitting"

What is SloughActivate @ Sara Lee?

SloughActivate @ Sara Lee is a new development in alternative, work related learning for year 11 students. The project started in September 2001 and is located in a discrete office suite within the headquarters building of Sara Lee in Slough.

It is important to clarify at the outset that SloughActivate is not providing work **instead** of education. Neither is it a 'time filler' until the trainees are old enough to leave full time education (it is *not knitting*, as one member of the steering group put it). Although work experience can be a key component in each trainee's individual plan, the bulk of the trainees' time (three days per week) is focused on work related **learning** at the project base.

The following edited extracts from the SloughActivate Business Plan (November 2001) explain the intention of the project more fully:

The purpose of the organisation:

Through an educational programme, to re-build, develop and maintain self-esteem, confidence and a sense of purpose in the target group of young people and, by so doing, develop a 'spring board' from compulsory education to either further education or work based training, thus allowing the targeted group to achieve qualifications/accreditation beyond that which would have been possible at school.

Objectives in Year 1:

Support the development of in the region of 15 trainees as follows:

- Achieve sustained attendance.
- Assist in developing a sense of self belief and achievement.
- Demonstrate the value of teamwork.
- Develop, review and deliver on personal action plans.
- Gain confidence in themselves and their ability.
- Enhance their understanding of the demands on them to be part of an employed culture.

For the project to be able to prove its success, the trainees should have, or be on the way to, the achievement of securing work related qualifications.

How has the project been set up?

Activate has been created through close partnership working between the LEA, local businesses and training organisations. Each sector is represented on the project steering group with line management provided through the LEA.

The partnership with Sara Lee Household and Body Care UK has been crucial to establishing the project and the support of the company continues to be a key factor in its development. Sara Lee is a multinational company, with its UK headquarters in Slough. As well as housing the company's managerial and administrative staff, the Sara Lee building in Slough serves as a packaging and distribution base, thus providing a significant diversity of working environments and job types. In a bold and tangible development in community involvement, Sara Lee have refurbished a section of their headquarters building to purpose and provide it rent free to Activate. The project base is a discrete unit with the building, sharing access and all general facilities with the rest of the work force.

Other local businesses (under the umbrella of Slough Business Community Partnerships) along with Slough Borough Council and Berkshire Learning and Skills Council, contributed in kind and financially to equipping the project and setting up its initial operation.

The salary for the Centre Manager is met by the LEA (Slough Borough Council). East Berkshire college provide a seconded member of staff with specific responsibility for IT development. Additional staffing has consisted of a part time learning mentor (3 x 3 hours per week) throughout the year and an additional trainer/supervisor (0.8 FTE) since February 2002.

The project generates income through a charge to the releasing school, which broadly represents £3,000 per full time trainee and £1500 per part time trainee.

Additional funding has now been secured from GOSE (the Government Office for the South East) which will allow a new component of short term 'roll on, roll off' placements to be developed during 2002 /3. This, along with extending the main cohort of students to 24, is the major anticipated development during the second year of operation.

Who are the trainees and what do they do?

During this first year 18 trainees have attended the project, almost all on a full time basis. Trainees are year 11 students who were either excluded from school, liable to be excluded or self excluded. The trainees continue to be on roll either at their referring school or with Northbrook Pupil Referral Unit. Potentially relevant candidates for the project are considered to comprise up to 5% of the mainstream school cohort. These are all young people who have been referred through Slough's EOTAS (Education Other than at School) system, which serves as a clearing house to determine the most suitable placement for all students needing to be educated outside of mainstream schools. A range of specialist options are available through EOTAS in addition to placements at Northbrook Pupil Referral Unit. (It is proposed that, while the PRU provides an appropriate supportive environment for young people who can't cope with school, Activate is better suited to those young people who have outgrown school).

Trainees spend three days per week at the Activate base with the remaining two days being intended for work or college placements, or sporting activity.

The three days at the Activate base are committed to work related learning (the project does not offer GCSE or other 'academic' qualifications). In addition to individual learning objectives, trainees are supported to work as a group to develop skills and tackle tasks and challenges. Each trainee has their own dedicated work station and computer.

The main qualifications on offer this year have been the portfolio based Vocational Access Certificate, OCR Work Preparation Certificates, Basic Literacy and Numeracy qualifications (at levels 1,2 and 3) and the ASDAN Youth Award Scheme. However, the project aims to achieve far more in terms of personal, social and work related development than can be encompassed by qualifications alone and I intend to explore these aspects throughout this report.

A range of work specific training courses, (e.g. presentation skills, Health and Safety at Work, reception skills and Dignity at Work), have been provided by the training departments of local companies.

Work placements are an essential component, both to achieve work related qualifications and in order to extend wider learning and skills development. The nature of the project allows for considerable flexibility in the set up of placements, depending on the capacity of the trainee, including scope for long and short term placements. These can take place with any suitable employer in Slough, through the brokerage of Windsor Slough Education Business Partnership. While Sara Lee is included among potential work placements it is not intended to accommodate large numbers of trainees in that regard. (The significant and distinct function of Sara Lee is rather to provide a real life work setting, day in day out, for the core activities at Activate).

In practice, the take-up of sports related activity has been limited during this first year although it should also be noted that the 'extra' days have been used to good effect for individual support and in some cases to reintegrate trainees who were struggling with the programme.

2. The Intention and Methodology of This Report

This evaluation was commissioned and took place during the final term of the first year of operation of SloughActivate @ Sara Lee. The extent of the evaluation has been defined by the resources and the time available.

The function of this evaluation is to provide an external overview of the ground covered so far by the project and the prospects for future operation. While the report may be utilised to support further funding applications or indeed to publicise and disseminate the model, its primary intention at this stage is to assist in refining practice and inform the development of the project.

Limited statistical evidence is available from monitoring and recording carried out during the first year of operation. This is incorporated in the executive summary.

The bulk of the evaluative work consisted of interviews with a representative sample of the people closely involved with the first year of operation. These broadly divide into three groups:

- Trainees at Activate (11 interviewees)
- Staff at Activate (4 interviewees)
- Other interested parties (12 interviewees)

Responses are presented in this report grouped under these headings.

Interviews were based around a framework of questions (see Appendices A and B), allowing scope for exploration of topics of particular concern to the interviewee.

The intention of this report is to offer the experiences and opinions of those involved as accurately as possible. However, editing and collating are a necessary part of the process and it is important to acknowledge that responses are reproduced here selectively, collectively and as accurately as possible from notes taken at the time of interview.

My thanks are due to all 27 interviewees for the honesty and thoughtfulness of their responses.

3. Executive Summary (Including Available Data and Specific Outcomes)

3.1 Achievements in Year One

It is evident that the placement at Activate represented a significant gain for the trainees involved. These are all students who were likely to benefit little or not at all from year 11 in mainstream school. Activate has taken on a highly demanding cohort of trainees, retained them within an educational context, provided them with a positive learning experience and provided them with the spring board to pursue further opportunities in employment or training.

Specific measurable achievements are detailed below. In addition, the evaluation found that less measurable achievements (for instance improved self-management, maturity and understanding appropriate behaviour in context) may represent an even greater gain for these particular young people.

- **Attendance:**

Average attendance at Activate is recorded as 60.7 % for the full cohort of 18. In practice this means that all bar 3 trainees were within a whisker of achieving 50% attendance.

Put another way:

Proportion of attendance achieved. *	Number of trainees (out of 18) achieving that level of attendance
0 – 30%	1
30 – 50%	6
50 – 70%	5
70 – 100%	6

(* This is represented as a proportion of the maximum possible attendance for each student according to their individual circumstances, not as a proportion of an assumed annual norm.)

Given that the majority of trainees were either not attending school at the end of Year 10, or had poor attendance predicted to decline during Year 11, this can be taken as a significant achievement. Nonetheless, this is seen by the project as an area for improvement (see below).

(source - SloughActivate @ Sara Lee project statistics 31.5.02)

- **Qualifications Gained:**

Trainees worked for the **Vocational Access Certificate** throughout the year as their primary targeted qualification.

8 trainees achieved the full Vocational Access Certificate (6 units).

The remaining students gained units towards the Vocational Access certificate as follows:

4 trainees	4 units
2 trainees	3 units
1 trainees	2 units
3 trainees	1 unit

8 trainees gained full **OCR Work Preparation Certificates**.

9 trainees took the **AQA Basic Literacy Exam** and gained certificates at levels 1, 2 or 3.

10 trainees took the **AQA Basic Numeracy Exam** and gained certificates at levels 1, 2 or 3.

The following short courses were certificated as **NVQ level 2 equivalent**:

5 trainees	Health and Safety level 2
2 trainees	Equal Opportunities level 2
1 trainee	Reception level 2

6 trainees took the NVQ level 2 employment award.

In addition, 1 trainee took **4 GCSEs** at her referring school and 1 student gained an **NVQ 2 in Carpentry and Joinery** at East Berkshire College.

Again, in the context of students expected to gain little or nothing by way of qualifications at the end of their compulsory education, these can be taken as a significant achievements.

(source - SloughActivate @ Sara Lee project statistics update 10.7.02)

- **Work Experience:**

7 trainees maintained work experience placements over a sustained period of at least a day a week for 6 weeks (in two cases this rises to 2 days a week more or less all year).

Given the focus of the project on work related learning, this is recognised by the project as an area for development during year 2.

(source - SloughActivate @ Sara Lee project statistics 31.5.02)

- **Gains from Partnership Working**

This project has come about through an unusual level of co-working and co-operation between education and business. Clearly the provision of a high quality venue by Sara Lee is a unique and crucial component in the venture.

Less obvious, but significant to the stakeholders interviewed, is the way in which educational and business professionals have learned from each other's working practice.

3.2 Cost and Cost Effectiveness of Activate

It is difficult to establish definitive costs, never mind cost effectiveness, after one year of operation and it was never the intention of this evaluation to do so. However, it does seem relevant to outline an estimated cost per trainee for the project and to provide at least a limited context for comparison.

A crude figure (without complex adjustments for all aspects of giving in kind or uncosted partnership working and excluding set up costs) for year one of operation was established by the project as follows:

Actual Expenditure (salaries and expenses)	£ 78,000
To which should be added a sum for full time F.E. secondment, say	<u>£ 30,000</u>
Giving a total of	£108,000

If we divide this figure by 18 trainees we arrive at a **notional cost of £6,000 per trainee at Activate during year one of operation.**

This can be taken as an indication of the **direct** cost attributable. It would clearly be possible to arrive at quite different figure, taking into account all aspects of uncosted support and giving in kind. For instance, to take only the most obvious and significant single example, the estimated rental equivalent for the project base is £50,000 per annum.

Whichever way we do the sums, the cost of a placement at Activate needs to be considered in the context of the wider cost of social exclusion as well as the specific educational costs for a pupil excluded from school. Some indicators of comparative cost are as follows:

- The Standard Spending Assessment for a secondary school pupil in Slough for 2001-2002 was £3,965.81 (Hansard – Parliamentary questions to the Secretary of State for Education and Employment 6.2.01). This figure excludes some direct funding, including funding from the Standards Fund.
- Each young person in alternative education costs significantly more than a pupil educated in mainstream. This additional figure was judged to be at least £1,800 according to Parson in 1996 (the cost of a place in a Pupil Referral Unit then being £4,300 compared to £2,500 for a place in mainstream school). (C.Parsons *Exclusion from School: the public cost*, Commission for Racial Equality, 1996).

- Home Office research suggests that around 60% of those excluded from school go on to become young offenders (National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal, Report of Policy Action Team 12).
- The average response cost in dealing with the behaviour of a young offender (made up of prosecution, incarceration and supervision as well as family intervention and care) is estimated to be around £52,000. (NACRO – *Wasted Lives*, 1998).
- The direct cost of offending to **other people** is estimated to average £22,700 per young offender (M.Liddle, *Wasted Lives: counting the costs of young offending*, 1998).

It may be possible to arrive at a more considered judgement about the actual cost of Activate after a second year of operation. At that time it may also be possible to incorporate the findings of ongoing research by the Youth Justice Board into the cost effectiveness of preventative interventions with young people.

3.3 Specific Areas for Development and Refinement in Year Two

- **Qualifications**

While retaining the exclusive focus on work related learning, there is scope to stretch the trainees by offering a range of further options. The Vocational Access Certificate could probably be completed earlier in the year by most students, leaving scope for further NVQ qualifications. A more substantial IT qualification, utilising the excellent individual facilities, should be possible. There may also be more scope to offer GCSEs off site for relevant trainees.

- **Attendance**

Even given their previous status as poor or non attenders, the project is keen to improve attendance at Activate throughout the year.

- **Work Placements**

In addition to their intrinsic merit, appropriate work placements are crucial to achieving work-related qualifications. Extending and refining work placements is understood as a major priority for year two. The goal for a project of this type must be that all trainees benefit from actual (rather than simulated) work experience throughout the year, either through one or more sustained placements, or through a series of 'tasters', according to their individual readiness and capacity.

- **Mentoring**

The idea of establishing a system of mentoring (and specifically e-mentoring) between trainees and members of staff at Sara Lee was raised several times, both in terms of both high hopes and of disappointing take up during year one. It will be important to review the mentoring scheme, including the ownership of the scheme, capacity to run it effectively and the emphasis on email, if the idea is to match its potential.

- **Recruiting and Retaining the Most Appropriate Staff**

It is recognised that this is a highly demanding and quite specialised area of work. Although there may be recognised areas of subject specialism (for instance, work related learning and IT) the main focus is likely to be on behaviour and personal development skills for all core staff.

To this end, the model of learning mentors, possibly around a youth work rather than teaching model, could be usefully extended. However, it will be vital to ensure that mentors are trained and briefed and incorporated as full members of the team.

- **Extending the Cohort of Trainees and Refining Selection**

The project exceeded its projected numbers in year one (working with 18 trainees where 15 were targeted). The intention is to take on 24 trainees in year two and also to develop short-term placements on a 'roll on, roll off' basis for students at risk but still retained in mainstream schools.

More sophisticated and informed selection of students will be crucial to the success of this expansion. The project is determined that it will not move 'up market' and will continue to take students genuinely on the margins of mainstream education, regardless of academic ability. However, there are now understood to be genuine constraints on the appropriateness of the project working with trainees manifesting profound emotional and behavioural problems. These constraints are two-fold:

On the one hand is the risk that extreme behaviours could overwhelm the project and jeopardise good will and vital partnership working. A well-prepared and well-intentioned working environment can be expected to tolerate a degree of inappropriate behaviour resulting from inexperience and youth. However, too numerous or too outrageous instances of such behaviour could be difficult for an employer and for Sara Lee in particular, as the host company, to sustain.

On the other hand and of equal importance is the question of maximising trainee gain (ie. if the trainee is not capable of undertaking a substantial, albeit sheltered, work placement, s/he will not gain maximum benefit from this work related learning project).

It is important to stress that the behaviour of even quite challenging trainees has always been properly managed and contained by Activate during this first year. However, the importance of selection in realising Activate's optimum potential, making it sustainable and allowing it to grow should not be underestimated. The project will seek specific guidance from the Education Psychology Service and require full information from schools, in order to recruit the most appropriate candidates for Activate, with specific reference to their capacity to undertake a work placement. (The intention is that recruitment will continue to be fully within the context of the EOTAS (Education Other than at School) panel so that students can be allocated the **most** appropriate placement, without Activate becoming a 'catch all'.)

3.4 Broader Areas of Concern

Two key areas of concern identified by stakeholders as relevant to future development were as follows:

- That sources of funding might 'dry up' or, alternatively, that the pursuit of opportunistic funding might cause excessive or inappropriate expansion.
- That the project could be overly reliant on individual 'key players' (on the project staff, on the steering group or within the crucial business partnerships). There was consensus that structures should be set in place to safeguard against over reliance on individuals.

3.5 Promoting and Extending Good Practice

Those involved are properly proud of what they have done. With due caution being paid to the ongoing status of Activate as a pilot, there is a wish to promote the lessons learned and extend the practice embodied in the project. This should be recognised as ambition in two quite distinct (but not necessarily exclusive) directions:

- That the model should be promoted in order to generate similar projects elsewhere in the country.
- That the methodology, of work related and individualised learning, should be promoted in order to achieve systemic change within mainstream education (the logic of this being that projects like Activate might eventually cease to be necessary).

Clearly it is too early to measure success on either of these fronts, but these ambitious goals should be borne in mind, alongside the crucial measure of Activate's success as a discrete unit of alternative education.

4. Trainees' Experiences and Opinions

"They treat us like a normal person"

I was able to interview 11 of the 18 trainees attending Activate during the first half of the Summer term 2002. Of these, 4 were female and 7 were male, one was of African Caribbean heritage and one was Asian, the remainder being white British. All interviews were conducted one to one, on site at Sara Lee.

Does Activate represented an improvement to the educational experience of these young people a year ago?

The trainees interviewed were unanimous in describing their (varied) educational circumstances a year ago as wholly unsatisfactory to them. It is clear that Activate has responded to young people genuinely on the margins of mainstream education and unlikely to constructively complete year 11 in a conventional setting.

Some trainees were actually excluded:

"I was excluded – staying up late all the time. I was out of school completely for 4 months."

Others had strong negative feelings and had been in the process of excluding themselves:

"Horrible! I hated it and I was skipping – because you can get away with it. I didn't like the lessons or the atmosphere. It was hard work. You couldn't learn even if you wanted to. There were no teachers, hardly."

"Rubbish. I wasn't going to lessons. The teachers don't really teach properly – they just put stuff in front of you. I would have been kicked out of school by now – I wanted to be kicked out!"

Some experiences were more complex, but the trainees continued to be clear that mainstream education hadn't been working out for them:

"Actually, it was going OK for me but then there was this one incident and I was out of school for a month, trying to get into another school. By November it was too late, they wouldn't even let me drop back a year. I still feel a bit gutted I couldn't keep on and take my GCSEs."

"It wasn't so good – the teachers were annoying, moaning on at you the whole time and the other students distracting. I mostly went to the lessons but it wasn't any use. I was a bit suspicious about Activate at first though – it might be even worse than school!"

It seems clear that, for whatever reasons, these trainees were unlikely to have thrived without a specialist intervention.

Has Activate provided a successful alternative to conventional schooling for these year 11 trainees?

With one exception, the trainees were clear that Activate represents a fundamentally different experience to being at school:

"It doesn't compare to school a bit – it's completely different and completely better."

Some of the ways in which it differs are fairly obvious and, arguably, superficial:

"You get short hours, you finish at 1.30."

"You can get fag breaks."

"You can wear your own clothes and jewellery."

However, some simple differences were understood to signal a more radical departure from the way in which schools work:

"We're on a first name basis with the staff. That's just a starting off point, it was comforting right from the start – it signals that it's not like school. It's like working with friends, not with a higher authority."

In fact, the single strongest theme was probably the trainees' affirmation of the potency of being treated 'like an adult'. Most trainees made mention of this:

"The staff treat us like an adults – not like something out of a rubbish tip."

Sometimes there was a quite sophisticated understanding of what might be at stake:

"There's more freedom to express yourself. At school you get no chance to say if you don't like something, but here you can have your say and get listened to. You get to make your point at least."

Computer access was specified as a plus by almost all the trainees:

"Working on the PC is much better than working out of a book – and I have my own desk."

Associated with this, and possibly more significant, was the high value placed on having an individual designated work station and the associated capacity to work independently. This in turn was closely linked to the style of teaching and learning provided:

"You get more work done because there's more privacy to do your own work and, actually, more time to get on with your work, less time is wasted."

"You can work at your own pace and just ask for help, there's always someone available (contrast – in school you could ask for help but it would take ages)."

The working atmosphere was commented on, along with the evident value of the work to be done:

"It's more peaceful than being at school. There's not so much mucking about. People behave differently here and keep their aggressiveness out of Activate. They are happy and less stressed."

"At school half the work is rubbish – on old scraps of paper. Here it's clear what it's for and you know it counts. The work is for you, you know where it is going and what it counts towards (VAC, ROA etc.)."

The question of choice and self-determination is clearly central:

"To behave like you did at school would be stupid. You choose to come. If sometimes some people don't come it's because it's a bad time in their life, or whatever. You can ring up and explain."

"You don't get disrupted by just one person mucking about, they would just say 'go home' if they had to."

*"Here you can get on with things **because** it's like a free environment."*

What have the trainees gained from a year at Activate?

Many of the trainees stressed that their personal and interpersonal skills had developed greatly during the year and that they now had a much more mature outlook. This had specific reference to appropriate behaviour at work, but also went beyond that:

"I've grown up a bit and I'm more sensible. Yes, I'm definitely more adult in behaviour. I'm more mature, because of the environment. In an office you have to act older."

*"My attitude **has** changed. Alright, I'm young and I want to have a laugh and a joke – but I used to be really stupid – I'd look for a fight and stuff. I wouldn't go looking for it now – that's changed."*

"My character has changed and I know my strong points. I'm more mature, I can communicate and take responsibility for setting up work for myself."

"I've matured in the way I speak to people, including strangers. I don't think I could have had this conversation a year ago."

Three trainees (all female) specified that their personal development had been reflected at home as well as at Activate:

"My attitude has got better. Last year I was mouthy to my parents. They treat you well here and I go home with a better attitude."

"I've grown up. Helen and the others talk to us like adults and you respond that way and then go back home and talk and behave like adults."

Many of the students made specific reference to increased IT skills:

"I've learnt loads about computer skills, keyboard skills, IT skills – I can do loads more now."

This might be expected from many of the trainees who expressed an interest in computers. However, one computer enthusiast expressed a contrary view:

"No, I haven't learnt anything new about computers that I didn't know already."

In contrast, several students with an avowed **dislike** of computers acknowledged that they had gained useful skills in a work related context:

"I've learnt loads of work based stuff – like Fax and answering the phone properly and taking messages and more about computers (even though I don't like them!)"

"I didn't know any thing about working in an office but I do now – I'm much better on computers, I've learnt a lot more than I knew before. (I'm still not interested but I know it!)."

Even one dissenting voice was able to damn with faint praise:

"I haven't learnt anything much new – mind you, I've done more here than at school!"

What did the trainees not like about Activate?

Many of the trainees said that they had been really happy and had no reservations or complaints at all. However, it would be inaccurate as well as unrealistic to say that everything was perfect for all trainees. For instance, two trainees specified that they didn't like the early start time and a majority of those interviewed complaining about the length of the breaks:

"The breaks are too short. They got shortened after a complaint that we weren't spending enough and were making a noise. It's like they don't think we're professional enough looking – especially the office people."

While short breaks are helpful (and perhaps necessary) in terms of containment and behaviour management, it is arguable that longer breaks would represent a more significant regular exposure to the adult working world. Here, as elsewhere, is a judgement call where the project has to measure potential gain against the possible risks of allowing this young and still volatile group too much 'rope'.

Two other trainees had a specific complaint of unfair treatment or undeserved blame:

"I got blamed for stuff, for downloading porn. That really annoyed me – I wasn't allowed in. There wasn't a proper investigation."

There were other individual complaints:

"I don't like working on computers."

"Office dress code (you can't wear jeans but it's not as bad as at school)."

"The smokers room is dirty and not so good."

"I find the other kids a wind up. There can be a lot of confrontations."

"Some staff are annoying and can wind me up – like a teacher."

Unhelpful behaviour from staff, as identified by the trainees was specified as follows:

"Sometimes they try to be the boss."

"When they don't understand or don't care that makes a big difference."

*"They jump in on what you **do**, instead of working out what's wrong."*

"The worst is to expect blind obedience and not discuss it."

One trainee in particular felt that Activate had not fully lived up to the promise of treating him like an adult:

"But it is still like school. It's not like real work. We get silly little tests which are too easy and pointless. I need more real business challenges, like spread sheets. You don't actually have individual adult access to the computers."

What do the Activate staff actually do to make the project work?

Here I was trying to probe what had contributed to making this a substantially successful placement in comparison to what had gone before. The broad theme has already been established:

"To treat us like adults is the most important thing they do."

In fact, there is more to it than this. What the trainees value is that they are being treated **well** in an adult way, which is to say, being treated with respect:

*"..... and if you get treated well **you** treat someone back like you want to be treated. The staff respect us so we show respect back."*

Many of the trainees specified being talked **to** rather than shouted **at** as the distinctive positive feature demonstrated by staff at Activate:

"What's much better (than school) is the staff not shouting."

"They talk, not shout. They talk to us not at us."

"At school you get bossed around and pointed at."

"When people tell me what to do I shout at them! "

"Best of all is when they will reason , not bark orders at you"

Further positive approaches by staff were headlined as follows:

"They trust us to do well."

"They understand when we have problems and try to work out what the problem is and help you sort it."

"They have a laugh. A sense of humour is really important."

*"They **explain** the work to you."*

"They encourage you – they big you up."

On the other hand, this is not cloud cuckoo land. Trainees were clear that there are specific expectations about behaviour:

"Any swearing here and you get sent home. You have to respect (the staff)"

"Yes, we had a falling out. They sent me away but also they encouraged me and I came back."

Is Activate just an easy option?

Trainees' responses to the, admittedly provocative, proposal that Activate, with its short hours and different rules might be a bit of a doss were trenchant and illuminating.

Responses ranged from numerous direct statements of what was considered to be self evident:

"I've definitely done more work than I would of at school – because I never went and when I did I did no work!"

"Look at my attendance! It started bad but is now good."

"You should see how much we get done between 8.30 and 1.30. It's useful work and it's loads more than I would get done in school."

Through more considered responses:

"Well, you are here on your own choice. If it's a bad day you still have to get on with it. If you are really not up to it you can ring and explain. I've had much better attendance than I would have at school – I was in the front gate and out the back."

"No. If I was at school, I'd just say 'I'm not doing that!' and that would be it. Here they would tackle it. That's not an easy way but it's more use."

To the positively gnostic:

"NO! Why? 'Cos it's not. Like, you have to do work otherwise we wouldn't do nothing would you?"

What does Activate need to make clear to new trainees at the outset?

Only one trainee felt that he had not been given an accurate picture of what to expect:

"I didn't really understand how it would be. It's been a lot different than I thought. They should make it more clear what will happen – about the limits of the responsibility and control the trainees will have."

Other than that, the trainees felt they had been accurately and effectively briefed:

"Everything they made clear to me was all I needed to know. They tell you the truth and don't leave out anything important. They're not just trying to get you in – there's no point coming if it's not right for you. Everything they told us – it was exactly like they said."

There were a few suggestions:

"Tell them it's not the same as school, otherwise they'd start with the same attitude and not be willing."

"Trainees need to have respect for the staff. I didn't at first and I got chucked off. You have to learn. I took it more carefully when I came back – I wanted to come back."

"Tell them what you can and can't do – up front like in any job."

5. The View From Inside – What Activate Staff Think

"..... like working to mend a broken piece of machinery"

During May 2002 I spoke individually to the Centre Manager, the seconded FE lecturer, a trainer and supervisor (0.8 of full time) and a part time learning mentor (3 x 3 hour sessions per week). The interviews were loosely structured on the basis of the same key questions used for outside stakeholders (see appendix B).

What do the staff value about the project?

The staff are clear that the project is providing a genuinely valuable and practical alternative for disaffected young people:

"It provides a new direction - a second chance which is not school based for young people who felt hopeless about education"

"It is an opportunity for growth and change and a chance to take some responsibility. I have seen evidence of this in the attitude and response of some students since I came (in January)."

"At the very least, these young people are remaining on the circuit and are accessible to other services and provision. "

Attendance was cited as a clear indicator of success along with other, 'softer' indicators:

"From September to Easter, at least, we had really good attendance."

*"Activate does really well on **retaining** students. "*

"I've seen trainees grow more able, develop better body language, respond better to new adults or just increase their level of attention and retention – whether it's from 2 minutes to 10 or from 10 to 20 !"

The location and high quality environment at Sara Lee was felt to be very significant:

"The environment (of Activate at Sara Lee) does appeal. Trainee behaviour, including the lack of vandalism, demonstrates that this high quality environment is respected and valued."

Staff identified various elements, which have contributed to working effectively with these trainees:

"The high staff/student ratio is important – it can allow something like a mentoring role."

"Being patient and persistent works. We provide a lot of support and recognition."

"The morning briefing session is very important to set trainees up with clear tasks to work independently."

"The best strategy seems to have a time limited approach to a specific task and then move on."

"There has been enough flexibility for those who haven't worked out in the group to come in separately. Some of them have then been able to reintegrate."

What could Activate do differently?

On the basis of a first year of operation which has been both highly demanding, and a great success, the Activate team had high hopes and aspirations for developing an even better service. They identified a number of areas for development.

Work experience was specified as the most significant single area where more could be achieved:

"We didn't get 100% on work experience. I know that there are a lot of obstacles, including some trainees having no previous experience of anyone going to work in their families. But that's what I want to aim for all of them."

"Without work placements the qualifications (VAC and OCR) are very difficult. Simulated placements do provide a safety net but it is better not to rely on them. This may need to be a factor in recruiting trainees, they really need to be a position to take on an industrial placement."

It was felt that there was still scope to improve **attendance**:

"I'm pleased with attendance and the work we have put in with parents but I'd like to take that further and avoid the fall off later in the year."

There is scope to be **more ambitious** about the range of qualifications on offer:

"There should be more challenge, higher expectations and more ambition academically. It's good to keep to a work based qualification but some could take it to a higher level."

"Next year we will know from day one what is needed and can achieve more. We may be able to complete the VAC by February and move on. This will keep the momentum up for the trainees. Some students could achieve a work based NVQ level 2."

Specific working methods already in place at Activate can now be **refined and improved**. Many trainees have previously experienced both school work and school rules as arbitrary and often meaningless and have discarded both. These aspects can be addressed explicitly and resolutely from the start:

*"The trainees often like to **see** where their pieces of work go, what they are **for** and we will be able to make this more evident right from the start."*

"I want to improve the understanding and adherence to acceptable standards of behaviour. We need to be very clear about setting ground rules early on and working against the potential for negative 'pack' mentality, which just isn't acceptable in this context."

"At first when I arrived the rules and regulations seemed a bit vague or loose. I had the chance to run a group with the trainees to identify a code of conduct. It was a hard session but it seemed to work. For me, as a youth worker, I am standing in the middle alongside the trainees but that makes it even more important to know where the rules are. Logically these things should probably be set up at the start."

In addition to the properly high level of individual support, it is recognised that many of these trainees are deficient in group work skills and that this should be a specific focus:

"We need to do much more work on team building early on – it's not that they're not prepared to work as a team – I've realised that they really just don't know how to do it!"

"I'd like to introduce more games and group challenges and projects to help the group cope with real life challenges coming up."

Extending and refining the cohort for Activate

There were strong opinions about the **recruitment of the next cohort**, both in terms of what is sustainable and also identifying trainees to gain **maximum** benefit from Activate. There was unanimity that the project should not and cannot be a 'catch all' provision and that there needs to be proper and effective selection of trainees:

"A big intake next year could make it difficult to manage for the project and for Sara Lee, especially if there are too many in on one day."

"This placement is not suited to every one and schools need to give us full information. If a trainee is wrongly recruited it is likely to have negative impact for them."

"There need to be more testing interviews to make sure we take on the right cohort."

It was agreed that selection of trainees should **not** be based on academic ability but that the trainee's capacity to take on a work placement **would** be a key criterion:

"This is about behaviour and motivation not academic ability, which will always be varied – VAC can accommodate that range."

"We can't be all things for all people. Those who are reluctant for work placement won't get the best from Activate."

There was some divergence of views on the behavioural criteria, which ought to apply. At one end of the spectrum was a clear statement that:

"This is not an appropriate place for people with behaviour problems."

Whereas the prevailing view was more modified:

"We especially need to check out in appropriate placements in terms of some extremes of behaviour. This time I will check them through the educational psychologist – we can still take appropriate risks but we need a fuller understanding of what we are taking on to make properly informed decisions. They need to show evidence that they can cope in a work environment."

Effective ongoing staffing for the project.

This first year has been a bold step into uncharted territory. The lessons learned will be crucial to making the project sustainable and the team's honest reflections on what is required for this type of work provide a good basis for future recruitment, training and staff development.

It seems clear that behaviour management skills and experience are crucial for the core staff. Where additional subject specialism or technical knowledge is needed, it may be best bought in or provided off site (FE college expertise might be effectively deployed in this way):

"We need the right staff with the right behaviour management skills to sustain this project."

"I would recruit staff on the basis of EBD youth work type skills. I think that works much better in this setting. I don't think a knowledge specialist is what it takes."

***"It needs to your cup of tea.** Some people can understand these sort of kids as broken or damaged and know how to deal with them on that basis – like you would with a broken piece of machinery! Not every one has the strategies for that."*

"Staff from an FE setting would need to understand what they were going into. Many lecturers in FE have students who are motivated to learn and you only have to tell them once. Often you only see students once a week, even if you do have a difficult group. Here you're with them day after day."

"The knock backs need to not affect you too much (as a teacher). You can't take it too personally."

Some of these core skills, including establishing a rapport and maintaining appropriate boundaries with challenging young people, could well be provided by extending the use of mentors with youth work skills to work alongside staff with established teaching credentials. However, it will be crucial that such a role is properly supported and integrated into the work of the project:

"At the moment my (learning mentor) role lacks a level of ownership and knowledge of what is happening. It would be better to be more involved in staff meetings and so on. There are a lot of able young people who may need more stretching."

"On the other hand, there are some with particular difficulties. It is important to have enough information to know what you are working with."

"At the moment I see myself as just a support worker, not properly a mentor. There needs to be more in service training and a better definition and understanding of roles to make that happen. I need to have it down more exactly what I'm doing."

6. The View From Outside – What Other Interested Parties Think About Activate

“It thinks out of the box”

Having looked at Activate through the eyes of the trainees and the staff, I want to fill the picture out from the perspective of informed and interested individuals outside of the day to day operation. In the time available, I was able to speak to twelve individuals. Although the range is not comprehensive, the responses do reflected a diversity of expertise. Included are representatives from Sara Lee and other local businesses, CfBT Careers, Thames Valley Chamber, a referring school, an educational psychologist and the head teacher of the local Pupil Referral Unit plus the chair of SloughActivate Steering Group (several interviewees were also members of the Steering Group).

All interviews were conducted in person on the basis of the outline questions in appendix B.

What are the successes of Activate ?

Interviewees were able to confirm that Activate has provided an exciting new opportunity for students who were otherwise likely to gain very little from their final year of compulsory education:

“Every one of these trainees, whether or not they were perfect for Activate, were Year 11s who could not have been sustained where they were.”

At the same time, it was emphasised that Activate does not function in isolation. Its effectiveness comes as part of the wider continuum of alternative provision in Slough:

“It sits in the context of Slough already doing innovative and dynamic things. It is part of EOTAS (Education Other Than at School) and it doesn't stand on its own.”

The project has **relevant** aspirations and has demonstrated **real gains** for trainees:

“It is constructive, realistic and thought through without replicating conventional methods.”

“It is a brave project. It has been set up with clear and real world objectives and it is a form of action research into what can be done. What it has set out to do it has done, without false promises and unrealistic expectations”

“There are many aspects of success; it is motivational for disengaged students, it is more easy to make and recognise progress, the small groups work well for these students and the vocational experience is enjoyable.”

“Anything that provides a realistic, worthwhile alternative to doing nothing, frankly, has got to be good.”

The **achievements of staff** with a challenging group of student in a untried context were applauded:

"I've been really impressed at the way that rules and standards of behaviour have been clearly laid down and abided by."

"The respect for the building is good – there has been no damage and the trainees and staff have actively gained confidence within the company (Sara Lee)."

"They have found practical routes for disruptive clients to get involved and take responsibility – for instance 'phone answering and meeting and greeting visitors."

"The workers 'gel' well together – they give an aspect of parental support without being overbearing."

The emphasis on **work related and vocational learning**, along with the successful location at Sara Lee were seen as crucial to the project's success:

"It has held its work-based identity and not been side tracked to GCSE."

"The vocational emphasis allows a new start without cutting off options. In particular it can lay the ground for further work based training – NVQs etc."

"The location has been brilliant and critical in terms of acceptance – trainees and visiting educational professionals have gained a lot."

"Activate is low profile (in Sara Lee) and properly so. They are part of the work force and just come in and get in with their job."

There have been other, possibly unexpected benefits to working so closely with business:

"The composition of the steering group, and in particular the chairing of it, frees us of the educational hierarchy and of some conventional expectations."

"It seems clear that a lot can be gained from the interaction between education and business. The two parties come to the table with sometimes startlingly different perspectives and each can learn a lot from the other. In particular, business practice brings a dynamism and a determination to get results which can usefully challenge educational orthodoxies and assumptions."

However, a note of caution about the proper limits of business involvement should also be heeded:

"Business people can end up stretched too thin. We need to hand over the skills we can offer, rather than always delivering. Also, there is a danger if business people ending up thinking they know what is going on in educational terms. Business people need to ensure that there are proper safeguards for their involvement – starting but not ending with self awareness."

What are the main areas for development?

Interviewees were able to identify a number of areas for development of the project after the first year. In common with Activate staff, there was a particular concern to **stretch the trainees** and ensure that they gained the maximum possible benefit from the project.

"It may be possible to broaden the curriculum access and resource that off site (including options for GCSE) with Activate holding onto its focus on work related learning."

The capacity of the project to fulfil the students' full potential had particular relevance for referring schools:

"Parents (and the school) will be properly concerned about students' progression on a full time course at Activate. We will need to be absolutely sure this is the best placement for the individual. Will there be a full National curriculum offer or, alternatively, what level of NVQ will be aimed for? We need to be clearer on these aspects. If we are talking about almost complete disapplication (of the National Curriculum) will involve parents and they will have concerns."

There was again a commitment to extending the effective use of **work placements**:

"I'd like to see the project and the local business community develop work placements, really good and purposeful work placements."

Sara Lee, as the host company, was happy to consider requests to participate in work related training:

"I would like Sara Lee to be more actively involved with Activate – including training input. We may be able to develop a link on the European Computer Driving License. The way forward will be for Activate to present us with a needs profile and for Sara Lee to see if they can match the need from a real working environment."

Mentoring was considered to be an area with significant scope for development:

"One disappointment is that the e-mentors within Sara Lee didn't really take off this year. For the new cohort we will introduce the (option) of a mentor at the induction stage. "

"The in house mentor scheme (at Sara Lee) hasn't really got off the ground this year. I think this is an opportunity missed on both sides. To be honest the trainees were sceptical about the usefulness. It needs working on. The mentor scheme can have a development function for the staff."

A proper note of caution is reflected in these comments, along with a suggestion that the mentoring scheme may be one area requiring a rethink. Any mentoring scheme will only be as useful as those being mentored believe it to be. It will also be important to proceed with care and with the proper structures and safety measures in place.

I would propose that it will be important to test the emphasis on mentoring by e-mail. Does this match the trainees' needs or indeed those of the mentors? Is it possible for these trainees to start, and maintain, a significant relationship by electronic means alone or might it be necessary to establish meaningful contact in person as well? It may also be worth revisiting the question of where the most relevant mentors (in terms of ethnic background and life experience) will be found – it may be that the factory rather than the office floor has a greater relevance to some trainees. None of this is to undermine the potential usefulness of mentoring but rather to reinforce the necessity of devoting considerable effort and expertise to making a mentoring scheme both successful and safe for all involved. Some thought should be given to where the time and expertise to run such a scheme will be found – be it within the Activate team, within the staff of Sara Lee or through an outside individual or agency.

Defining and refining the appropriate cohort of trainees

This was addressed as a specific area of importance for the development of Activate:

"This is not a coat to fit all – we should ask more at the point of entry. (However, we also need to collectively ensure there is suitable provision for all – through sifting at the Alternative Provision Panel.)"

"It needs to be possible to say no where candidates are not best suited to Activate. The whole allocation needs to work properly throughout alternative provision in Slough."

"It's a question of selecting the trainees who will get the most out of the experience on offer. Refining the selection process will help."

*"Selection can be (and is being) refined. Activate offers a modified curriculum in a work environment. There are some, particularly those with profound **emotional** issues, for whom this will not be appropriate or enough."*

"The trainees need to be at a level where they can cope with the work place environment to gain the optimum benefit."

"Oh yes – the project will continue to be committed to those on the margins and in high need. Intellectual ability will not be a bar – it's a question of behaviour that can benefit from a work place environment."

"Is Year 11 too late? Maybe we should identify and recruit at Year 10? (This on the basis of the proposition that 4 or 5 terms are needed to ensure a fundamental behavioural and attitudinal impact on seriously disaffected students)."

The school perspective was quite illuminating and should be borne in mind:

"There is a problem with part time placements for the fairly obvious reason that these students are already struggling in school and if they lose curriculum access it is even more difficult for them to cope if their attendance at lessons is fractured. Even success at Activate can throw the problems at school into even greater relief."

"The roll on roll off model has been discussed and has some possibilities – but it could also run the same problems as part time placements on Activate (see above)."

Leading from this, the relationship with schools was held to be vital for the project to achieve its full impact:

"We need to resolve the proper and best degree of ownership to be retained by schools. I would want a member of staff visiting Activate regularly, and secondments for staff development."

Hopes and fears for the future of Activate

These stakeholders expressed substantial optimism now that the vision of Activate has been tested in practice:

"Most of my worries have been dispelled, now we've go through the problems of year one and things are looking positive still."

However, this was qualified with caution about the appropriate rate of growth and development of the project:

"We need to build on a good pilot year to cope with higher numbers without a loss in quality."

"Success needs to be managed over an extended period of time and needs to be tempered. There needs to be a long term vision to change mind sets."

Concerns about funding, development and growth

Unsurprisingly, there is a very practical concern about potentially insecure funding:

"My only real fear is around the insecurity of funding which is dependent on bids."

"Funding streams change. The need is to prove effectiveness now and strengthen the position."

Leading on from this, the pressure to respond opportunistically to available sources of funding brings us to fears about growth. Along with optimism and confidence in the early success of the project, there is significant concern that the next stage of development should be managed well and, in particular, concern to ensure that Activate does not grow too quickly and beyond its own capacity:

"Growth could present problems: the industrial context is important and it might become too much for Sara Lee if it went to far. From where we are now, it looks like a core group of more than 24 could be tricky."

"I hope that we will handle growth well. We need to consider carefully the extent & speed of growth and make sure that Helen remains in control and has the right staffing."

"The roll on roll off trainees will engage for a shorter time and their capacity to engage and understand will be tested harder. The induction will be crucial (the current full time trainees have learned to respect and observe the ground rules. They have risen to the challenge because they have been expected to.)"

"Roll on roll off will open new avenues but also brings additional stresses. I would in some ways have liked to see another year of peace/ consolidation before building again."

"I have some concerns about the increased numbers and shorter duration of placement with Activate indicated by the roll on roll off development – this will be a pressure for Activate, but for Sara Lee as well. We will need to be confident of the induction process being robust enough for this new intake in particular. There must be (and has been) clarity of rules and regulations."

"It is vital that Helen has the right support and the right staff in place for the next developmental stage."

"We need some stability to test the model for the next couple of years. As we change and develop we need to remember it is still an ongoing pilot."

"I wouldn't advocate trying with less staff, especially in these early stages. On the other hand, higher numbers should be sustainable if we can retain the staff/student ratio."

"We need realistic resources to match expectations (of development) in a second year."

Strengthening structures

As Activate develops, there is a concern to strengthen its structures and reduce reliance on individual key players (I think this must be understood to have reference to all key partners as well as activate staff):

"We may be at risk if key personnel go."

"Development has got to be carefully managed and controlled, with proper safeguards and the LEA as well as the Steering group will need to play a part in placing parameters on where this project goes."

"We need an AGM to institute proper process so that we stop and consider and don't just assume that we must continue as we are."

"Responsibility needs to be spread and held through designated tasks so that the strength of the project doesn't rest on some few individuals." (I understand this to have reference to the Steering group, the LEA, and project staff).

"Helen (the Centre Manager) has had a crucial catch all role – maintaining the business relationship, the relationship with education and with the trainees has been crucial in this first year but can't be continued at that pitch on all fronts. Next year she will need to take a less hands on and more head teacher (or managerial?) role."

Is it possible to be too successful?

There was also some concern that Activate could be **too** attractive and even suffer from its own success. This was voiced tentatively and in different ways (sometimes as a hope and fear simultaneously) but something of the sort was raised by three different respondents and feels worth recording for all its ambiguity:

"A higher profile and Activate being held as a shining example may put trainees off, it might make a more public categorising of them as a problem."

"Like other special programmes, the high quality provision, premises etc. could offer a more attractive option – in fact attract those on the border line of exclusion. Draw them in as it were. (This might be less of a factor if the model could be continued within the school system.)"

"Activate could suffer from the effects of its own success – there could be too much demand. The option of feeding the model back into school remains but it will still be very demanding of time and of individuals with particular skills which are in short supply."

One interviewee also sounded a warning note about the danger of being too accommodating to the trainees, although it was recognised that the project has a difficult path to tread:

"It is possible that the supportive flexible approach could go too far. Can they be ready for the real work place? It is a hard balance to be supportive and yet represent real work place expectations. Are we sometimes appeasing the clients too much?"

The ambition to promote and extend good practice

There is considerable ambition to promote the good practice embodied in Activate and allow more people to see what can be achieved:

"Now that we have set Activate up, it can model what work related learning looks like for anyone so that they can realise what is possible."

"I'd be happy with more outsiders, particularly from education, coming in. I'd like to see it recognised as a centre of learning. We need to see the bigger purpose but not lose sight of the core."

At one level this opens up the prospect of **replicating the model** in other places:

"Activate could do with more press coverage."

"On a strategic level, I would like to see this as best practice spread to other areas."

"I'd like the idea to be 'sold' to other companies."

"The programme has a lot going for it and could be extended across the country."

On another front, the **ideas and approaches** embodied in Activate could be transplanted back to schools:

"We need to consolidate and refine the model we call Activate and then (after, say three years?) look at how that model of good practice can be moved out. For instance, is it sustainable in this form or does it need to be put into schools?"

"We should share teachers from school – which will be more messy and time consuming but increasingly valuable all round."

"In practical terms, the roll on roll off development can be a major development in influencing the broader education system."

Many of those involved shared a fundamental ambition to **promote systemic change** within the education system:

"If you work outside the model you can really change things – but not if you let yourself be constrained by the timetable. We are sitting on some quite new thinking but schools could do it if they would free up the curriculum."

"I hope that the lessons of how children can be re-engaged can be taken on by schools. This will need a philosophical change at the top. I would like to see schools able to take on and develop this alternative provision. The whole view of management and curriculum vision would need to move on but the conveyor belt of the National Curriculum and League Tables doesn't allow it to happen."

"We may even not need to be here if at some point we can help the schools to take this on."

A parent's perspective

I was able to speak to the parent of one trainee. Her experiences confirm much of what has been said about year one of Activate @ Sara Lee:

"Activate has really turned him round. Since he's been there I've seen a big change in him. He's matured. We never really talked before but now he tells me what's going on. He was quite shy but now he's come out of his shell."

*"To be honest, **I'm** more relaxed and more happy in myself!"*

"He's come to realise he's got to buckle down to work."

"The one to one attention from staff has made a big difference. At school I don't think they had the time. Also, it's more relaxed than at school - just listening instead of shouting is the thing."

In conclusion

The structures and demands of school life work well enough for a lot of young people. Others try them and test them, find them wanting and reject or are rejected by them. Activate leaves behind the 'us and them' discipline of school and, in a new setting and a new relationship, is able to respond to challenging teenagers individually, generously and with respect. Not all the gains are measurable in exam results or perfect citizenship, but for these young people they are real gains nonetheless.

Appendix A

SloughActivate @ Sara Lee

Outline Questions for trainees (all Year 11 & assumed 2 terms + at Activate)

- I don't really know what Activate is like – off top of your head tell me 2 x good things and 2 x not so good.
- How were things for you this time last year?
- How is it compared to being at school?

(Prompt – If different – how ? How are you treated ? What do the staff do? What do they do that works?)

- What do you think you've learned?
- Is it a doss?
- How have you changed over the past year?
- What are your plans right now (what's your next step)?
- What do you hope to be doing in a year's time?
- What would you want to change at Activate?
- What would **you** tell a mate who was thinking of coming on Activate?
- What 's the one thing **they** ought to tell the trainees right at the start ?
- What one thing sticks most in your mind about Activate?

MD 8.5.02

Appendix B

SloughActivate @ Sara Lee – interim evaluation May / June 2002

Context and explanation for interviews with team members, partner agencies and other interested parties.

SloughActivate @ Sara Lee has been up and running for the best part of a year now. This evaluation seeks to gauge and celebrate success to date and also bring to explicit focus areas of concern or areas for development.

The following edited extracts from the SloughActivate Business Plan (November 2001) may serve as a useful context and starting point for discussion:

The purpose of the organisation:

Through an educational programme, to re-build, develop and maintain self-esteem, confidence and a sense of purpose in the target group of young people and, by so doing, develop a 'spring board' from compulsory education to either further education or work based training, thus allowing the targeted group to achieve qualifications/accreditation BEYOND THAT WHICH WOULD HAVE BEEN POSSIBLE AT SCHOOL.

Objectives In Year 1:

Support the development of in the region of 15 trainees as follows:

- Achieve sustained attendance
- Assist in developing a sense of self belief and achievement
- Demonstrate the value of teamwork
- Develop, review and deliver on personal action plans
- Gain confidence in themselves and their ability
- Enhance their understanding of the demands on them to be part of an employed culture

For the project to be able to prove its success, the trainees should have, or be on the way to, the achievement of securing work related qualifications.

..... (an) objective is to develop on Year 1 as follows:

*Increase the programme to support circa 40 trainees **in year 2** through a roll on roll off programme*

Interviews will seek to address the following basic questions:

- ***What does Activate do well?***
- ***What could Activate do better or differently?***
- ***What is your hope for the future of Activate?***
- ***What is your fear for the future of Activate?***

Beyond that, interviews will be informal and will offer full scope for interviewees to raise issues of concern to themselves.

I look forward to speaking to you soon.

Mark Dewhurst [Independent Evaluator through Thames Valley Partnership.]

[Please feel free to contact me directly by telephone - 01865 245116 or email mark.dewhurst@virgin.net]

Major Contributors to SloughActivate @ Sara Lee are:

Sara Lee Household and Body Care
Slough Borough Council
East Berkshire College

Berkshire LSC
Black and Decker
Centrica
Citroen
Honda
Masterfoods
Slough Estates
Slough Observer
Slough Social Fund Limited
Thames Valley Chamber
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