

The Life Support project

The Life Support project¹ is run by The People and Work Unit, a charity based in Abergavenny, South Wales.

The project, funded by ESF Objective 1, The Oak Foundation and The Rank Foundation, was set up in August 2003 to

“pilot and embed a programme for personal development, training and support that will enable young adults to progress from unemployment or unskilled work to skilled jobs in health care with a particular focus on nursing”².

The project is currently running out of ‘The Strategy’, Bryncynon and Rassau, Ebbw Vale and has seen some considerable success, with a large number of its first two cohorts going on to successfully access the full time nursing degree at the University of Glamorgan³. The project is on-going and, on completion, the charity plans to begin a new run from September 2008 in the area of Glyncoch.⁴

Science Shops Wales were approached by 3G’s, (Gurnos Estate, Merthyr Tydfil) and asked whether we could be of any help in securing a sustainable project of this sort for the people of Merthyr (and in particular the Gurnos Estate).

On further investigation, it was discovered that the People and Work Unit and Glamorgan University had previously been in discussions regarding the sustainable continuation of this initiative with the University hopeful of matching some funding. Unfortunately, the negotiations foundered due to institutional complications (departmental re-organisation).

The charity is keen to take the project forward and are still hopeful that they will be able to work with the University, both as a service provider as well as potential funding provider, possibly under the new Convergence programme⁵ that is due to run between 2007 – 2013.

Whilst discussions with staff members at the charity have revealed that the project is unlikely to run on the Gurnos Estate in the immediate future, it is suggested that Science Shops Wales be involved on some level with the project to try and help ensure the sustainability of this extremely worthy initiative.

¹ The charity also runs a ‘Build It’ project with a similar focus

² http://www.peopleandworkunit.org.uk/projects/life_support/index.htm

³ Although access is not guaranteed, UniGlam is acting as a partner on this initiative

⁴ Changes to be made but it is understood that the new project will be of a similar scope

⁵ Previously Objective 1