



DEVELOPING LIFE SKILLS
AND MENTAL TOUGHNESS
THROUGH VOLUNTEERING

Empower – Be The Change is a social enterprise founded in May 2016 based in North Wales. Empower combines accredited soft skill training with volunteering and mentoring to create better skilled, better qualified, confident empowered individuals through the delivery of 3 bespoke programs:

1. Volunteer to Employment

Building confidence, self-awareness, increasing team member skills and enabling individuals to realise and achieve their potential through accredited training and volunteering.

2. Mentor Program

Creating highly skilled mentors through accredited training and appropriate mentoring opportunities.

3. International volunteer placements

Creating inter-cultural learning and personal development opportunities in partnership with FSL India.

Empowers programs seek to reduce unemployment, reduce poverty, increase community cohesion and increase individual's soft skills.

Partnership with AQR

An essential element of Empowers work is to accurately and effectively measure and track changes in individual's soft skills. Firstly, for individuals to develop greater self-awareness, strategies and skills and secondly to independently assess the effectiveness of our interventions.

We became aware of AQR through another local partner and came to understand AQR's interest and passion in using appropriate measures and tools to monitor changes in individual's soft skills. MTQ48 is a holistic tool which captures information at an individual level across the key components of personal resilience that Empower is most interested in affecting through its interventions, namely; confidence, commitment, challenge and control.

For this reason, Empower uses MTQ48 to assess individuals across all our programs.

St. Christopher's School

In October 2016 Empower partnered with St Christopher's school in Wrexham to run our first volunteer to employment program. St Christopher's school is the largest specialist school in Wales with just over 300 pupils, all of whom have some form of physical, mental and/or learning disability.

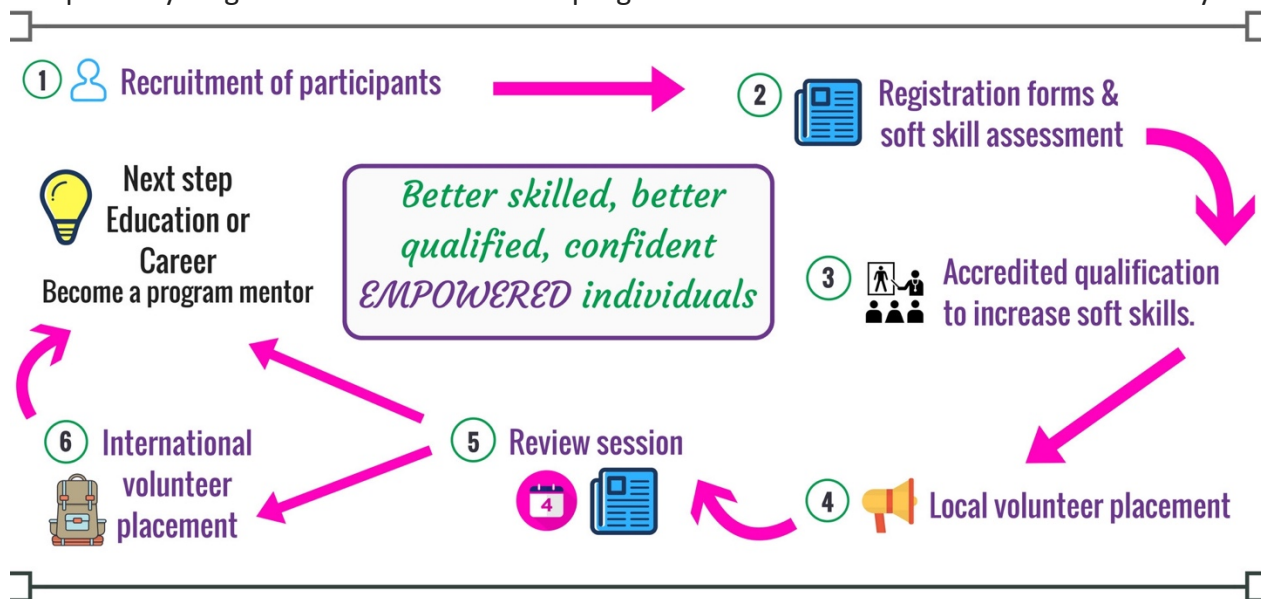
14 of the eldest students having completed Sport Leaders level 2 in 2015/16 had opted to complete Sport Leaders level 3 (equivalent to an A Level) during 2016/17. The level 3 qualification requires all candidates to complete a minimum of 20 hours volunteering in a community sports club. Given the additional learning needs of the students the school were apprehensive about the confidence and self- management skills of the students to successfully complete this element.



Empower was commissioned by the school to deliver its volunteer to employment program to address this issue with the primary objectives to:

1. Build individual confidence to successfully complete a volunteer placement in the community.
2. Build individual confidence and self-awareness to enable each student to make an informed choice about their future career/education plans.
3. To enhance their skills as a sports leader over and above the technical coaching skills required to undertake this role.

The pathway diagram below illustrates the program which was delivered over an academic year.



October 2016 - Baseline MTQ48 assessments completed.

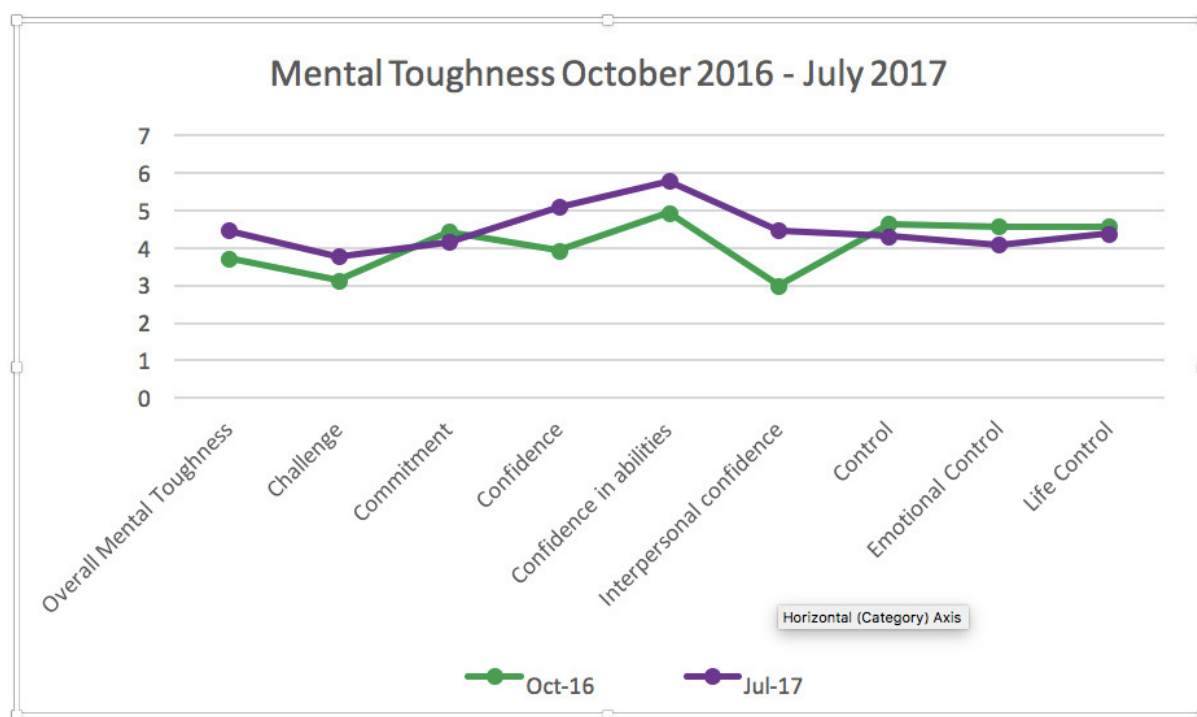
Completion of 2 day ILM Effective Team Members course 1-1 mentoring

November 2016 – Volunteer placements in the community

February 2017 – MTQ48 retest and 1-1 mentoring

July 2017 - MTQ48 retest and 1-1 mentoring and presentation of ILM qualifications

The chart below shows the changes in MT from the first test to the final test. The results from the second test are not reported below as the testing at this stage was completed purely for Empower to check that the program was moving in the right direction.



Key Findings

- Across the group overall Mental Toughness increased by **0.75** sten points with 5 of the group also shifting into a different sten range.
- The biggest change in the group is in overall confidence, increasing by **1.15** sten points and notably inter-personal confidence by **1.45** points. This was the primary focus of the program as we wanted the students to develop greater confidence and belief in both their abilities and also their interactions with people outside of the security of the school setting.
- Across all control elements the group scores reduced slightly by **0.34** sten points. At an individual level only 4 pupils scored lower on these scales with the majority of the group remaining the same. We did not expect this element to change significantly because of the age and nature of the group and the limited opportunities for the students to increase their level of “control”.

The MTQ has provided an invaluable tool in tracking both individuals and the overall impact of the program. In reviewing the data both Empower and St Christopher’s are confident that the program achieved the outcomes originally set out.

Impact on the students

Perhaps more notable is the visible changes in the student’s confidence. The videos captured after the course in October 2016 and in March 2017 demonstrate a noticeable difference in the student’s confidence and self-belief.

October 2016: <http://bit.ly/2fHWaIR>

March 2017: <http://bit.ly/2oDCjhz>

The volunteer placements have had a profound impact on the group with some individuals completing in excess of 50 hours volunteering and many opting to continue volunteering over and above the requisite 20 community hours. This is further supported by the testimonials received from the student's.

"The course has given me confidence to explore volunteering opportunities outside of the school environment."

"I feel more confident now and that I am able to offer my services to the local groups in the community."

"I am more aware of leadership styles and how leaders develop. The course has given me the confidence to work in the community without the support of my teachers and peers."



Impact on the school and looking forward

The school also recognise and value the positive impact of the program and have taken every opportunity to build on this with further training opportunities, celebration events and recognition of the student's achievements

"I cannot thank Empower enough for believing in the Sports Leaders at St Christopher's. The impact of the ILM course and the MTQ48 has been amazing. All of the students will be placed and actively volunteering in the community. A number have already begun their placements and have been so positive about the experience. Thank you Empower for giving them the confidence to believe in themselves."

In September 2017 Empower will be delivering the program again to the next group of students and 4 of the students from this year's group will be progressing on to our mentor program.

Links to other programs

Following the delivery of this program Empower delivered a further 3 volunteers to Employment programs across North East Wales with individuals ranging in age from 15 to 56 years old.

We have noted similar changes in the overall mental toughness of all our participants and the biggest change across all groups being an increase in confidence and ability to take on and manage challenge.

The MTQ48 has been integral to our programs and continues to provide an invaluable tool in supporting individual participants and tracking the impact of our work.