Ready to Start
Project Report

Leonard Cheshire Disability

ready to start

BARCLAYS
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Foreword

The need to support people with a disability or work limiting health condition has long been established with much research conducted over the years into the barriers and challenges that disabled people face.

What has been so refreshing with Ready to Start is that we have been able to deliver a very practical programme of inclusive business support coupled with the involvement of disabled people themselves. This has resulted in an outstanding level of positive outcomes for those who took part in this ground-breaking programme. It has helped literally hundreds of people make the transition from benefits to supporting themselves, saving the Treasury a total of £3.5 million per annum in benefit payments. A fantastic range of businesses has been created and the programme has demonstrated very clearly that disabled people should be considered the new talent-pool that the wider economy has been looking for in terms of enterprise innovation.

We hope that the Ready to Start model will be adopted and further supported by those people who influence policy and government spending. It is time to recognise that many ‘contracting models’ currently do not take account of the support that is needed and that competition between different providers should not get in the way of good practice. Recognition that a range of interventions from specialist providers is a delivery model that works. Whilst it has been challenging to deliver at times, the outcomes speak for themselves.

We shall continue to create innovative new services for disabled people who tell us how important it is they continue to receive support to start, grow and deliver value for their businesses.

Jane Fletcher
Director, Innovative Projects
Leonard Cheshire Disability
Barclays Perspective

Barclays and Leonard Cheshire Disability started working together on a three-year programme called Ready to Start towards the end of 2006. With an extensive background in supporting community investment programmes, we were keen to focus our support on a long-term project that actively demonstrated Barclays inclusive approach to banking and enterprise.

Ready to Start provided a fantastic opportunity for Barclays and Leonard Cheshire Disability to work together. Through the sharing of our knowledge and expertise, we could help address the lack of support for disabled entrepreneurs, provide much-needed signpost training and advice, and challenge and change attitudes towards disabled people in the business world.

In terms of practical support, Barclays provided £3 million funding for Ready to Start which enabled the programme to be implemented across the country. We also actively encouraged our employees to volunteer their time to become a ‘Barclays Buddy’ and share their expertise with the disabled entrepreneurs on the programme.

As we approach the end of Ready to Start, I am delighted the programme has achieved and surpassed its goal of helping 600 disabled people to start their own business and it has been fascinating to see the wide range of new business ideas. In addition, the programme has also helped support hundreds of others explore new opportunities whether entering further education or securing employment.

A strong relationship has developed between Barclays and Leonard Cheshire Disability through working together on Ready to Start and we will continue to work together across a variety of different business areas through our Barclays Money Skills initiative.

On behalf of Barclays, I would like to congratulate all Ready to Start participants who have undertaken this incredible personal journey; they should feel extremely proud of their achievements. We are delighted to have helped highlight the need to support people with disabilities so they can realise their full potential and create a substantial and lasting impact on the lives of these entrepreneurs.

John Davis
Marketing Director
Barclays Local Business
Tushar Patel

After contracting polio as a child, resulting in irreversible paralysis to his legs, Tushar Patel determined to overcome his disability. He achieved a degree in Multimedia Systems then focused on web and IT development whilst simultaneously undertaking a comprehensive sports training programme.

Success and prestige as a wheelchair athlete followed, when he represented Great Britain at the World Championships and Paralympics. His extensive knowledge of the sport led him to commentate for the BBC Paralympics in Athens 2004.

In 2006, together with his business partner, he launched Oxygen IT, providing a portfolio of IT services including maintenance and repairs, network installation, technical support and website development. Ready to Start provided feedback on his business plan, advice on VAT registrations and a grant towards marketing and advertising.

Three years on Oxygen IT is a strong and expanding business. Commercial contracts provide support, maintenance and website development to a range of clients, with demand growing to the point where elements of their work are now outsourced.

“I would never allow my disability to prevent me doing anything and enjoy the challenge of a new goal. Running my own business has provided the freedom to pursue success and achieve these goals.”

Tushar Patel

In the sporting arena, Tushar recently achieved thirteenth place in the wheelchair category of the Great North Run 2009 and continues to strive towards his goal of competing in the London 2012 Paralympics.

www.oxygenit.com
Executive Summary

Ready to Start (RTS) received £3m funding from Barclays and has been running since October 2006. In that time it has supported nearly 1400 budding disabled entrepreneurs with over 70% reaching a positive outcome. 735 disabled people have set up a business and a further 274 progressed into employment, training or found the confidence to take on a volunteering role for the first time. It has halved the number of benefits claimed by participants, saving the Treasury an estimated £3.5m per annum.

RTS has benefited from being funded by a corporate funder which has given us tremendous flexibility to be able to provide a truly client centered approach, starting from where the client is and what the client needs.

Three key elements of the project have been identified by clients as those that have really made a difference to them and provided the right support to enable them to achieve their goals. They are:

The team of RTS Regional Coordinators who recruited clients and developed relationships with key partner organisations to both refer and provide services to our clients. Alongside this they motivated, supported and coached clients to move through an individual development path and linked them with appropriate local support and services.

Distance Mentor support by both our own internal team of Distance Mentors and working with Mentors from three key partner organisations, Destiny, Northern Pinetree Trust and Meganexus. This support worked alongside the face-to-face support provided by Barclays Buddies, employees of Barclays who provided their expertise to support the start-up process. This mix enabled intensive, individual support that not only supported the enterprise focus but also helped clients look at how they would manage any health requirements around their business needs.

A small Development Fund was instigated part way through the project when we recognised that clients were often stopped from launching their business for the need of very small amounts of money. We offered a small fund of a few hundred pounds for business critical purchases such as equipment, insurance or marketing materials that would otherwise prevent the client from moving forward. Alongside this we also provided refurbished computers with the appropriate adaptations and software and a year’s membership of either the Federation of Small Businesses or a similar trade body to provide ongoing support and networking opportunities once the business was launched.

All these elements have combined to enable us, with support from Barclays, to plug a gap in provision and provide much needed expertise and targeted support to disabled people to enable them to become economically independent.
Ready to Start was formed out of a strategic partnership between Barclays and Leonard Cheshire Disability in 2006.

During this time the Government had a target of moving 1.5 million disadvantaged people into work, of whom one million were receiving Incapacity Benefit. Research into the barriers disabled people face when trying to find work identified that 50% of disabled people of working age are unemployed; a significant cost to the public in terms of benefit payments and a massive waste of human talent. Self-employment is an important option for many disabled people, evidenced by the fact that 20% of disabled people already working have chosen to be self-employed (Employers Forum on Disability figures 2006). Regrettably, for some disabled people, it is the only viable route to employment.

The Ready to Start programme aimed to tackle this important social issue head on, giving access to skills training, support and advice needed to start a business. The programme operated with the help of local Barclays staff and a network of local delivery partners, and was initially centred on 27 locations across England and South Wales.
People with a disability are not a homogenous group. Across society people have different needs which can change at various stages of their life and business development. We believed that a client-centred approach, which recognised and responded to individual needs, would produce the best results. This would often require different agencies to work in partnership, tackling specific barriers that may be outside or on the fringes of the business development.

The tentative approach to starting a business sometimes adopted by disabled people meant that it could take longer for them to (a) recognise that their idea for developing an independent income source was actually a business, (b) develop the business, or (c) accept that they had the potential to achieve this in the first place. It was important to recognise that for some disabled people start up would take a long time, rarely coming with quick fixes.

It was recognised that for some disabled people the traditional language of business could be off-putting, with words such as ‘enterprise’, ‘business’, ‘self-employment’ and ‘entrepreneur’ sometimes viewed as different from developing an independent income source or giving oneself a job. People with a disability are often likely to see starting a business as a route to work which complements their values or enables them to balance their lives, rather than be an end in itself. To address this, rather than focusing primarily on profit we sought to identify and address what help an individual needed and to treat business start up in a holistic manner placing the client at the centre of the business proposition.

As a significant number of the Ready to Start clients would be in receipt of Incapacity or other benefits the issues implicit in coming off benefits needed to be considered. Coming off benefits can be fraught with challenges, not least of which is the difficulty in returning to them should the business fail. For many disabled people, establishing whether they would be better off in self-employment and being confident that they could earn sufficient money to keep a roof over their heads while managing their health was a proposition that required careful thought and planning.

Since confidence in oneself and the ability to generate an income is critical to becoming self-employed, it was vital that partner and wider support organisations take an empowering approach. Clients were helped to make their own informed choice about the potential advantages of self-employment versus traditional employment options. The flexibility of self-employment was particularly important for some people with a disability, whilst for others it was, and remains, the only viable route to employment.

For some disabled people start up would take a long time, rarely coming with quick fixes.
Case Study

Carol Laskey

Carol, a Registered General Nurse with twenty-seven years experience, was told that she would never nurse again following a hip replacement caused by advanced osteoarthritis.

Carol determined to continue to use her nursing skills and started her own business providing Advanced Cosmetic Procedure (ACP) treatments. Ready to Start provided her with mentoring, a laptop, and membership of the Federation of Small Businesses.

“Although a little daunting at first, starting my own business has definitely improved my life for the better. It has given me the confidence and drive to get back into the work place and make use of my skills.”

Carol Laskey

In April 2008, Carol launched The Laser Clinic, specialising in providing a full range of aesthetic treatments to enhance clients’ physical appearance and psychological wellbeing. In under 18 months Carol has over 400 clients on her books, and employs four nurses and two receptionists. The Laser Clinic is going so well there are already plans to expand.

On a personal level, Carol is currently on a waiting list to have her other hip replaced but believes that being self-employed gives her the freedom, flexibility and independence to make a living whilst effectively managing her disability.

www.swindonlaserclinic.co.uk.
From the outset, it was clear that a vital feature of Ready to Start would be its client centred, flexible approach. We were able to do this because our funding came from a corporate source thus giving us greater flexibility in the design of the key services. It meant that we could start from where the client was, and what the client needed. This allowed us to be much more organic in our approach and to change and mould the project as time went on as part of our on-going approach to listening to what our clients were telling us they needed.

A National Steering Group was formed consisting of the key stakeholders from Leonard Cheshire Disability and Barclays and including representatives from several partner organisations including Prince’s Trust, Action for Blind People and Business Link London and from our clients, the entrepreneurs themselves. This forum enabled the management team to discuss and agree delivery modes, processes and joint working methodologies that were endorsed by the Steering Group. The wide representation of the group proved exceptionally helpful throughout the project life as, beyond monitoring and supporting the project growth, members’ external views were able to guide ongoing development.

**Project Infrastructure**

The role of the Regional Coordinator (RCO) has been fundamental to achieving success and Leonard Cheshire Disability invested time in recruiting a diverse, dynamic, self-starting and caring team who successfully balanced large client caseloads with creating and managing partner relationships. Without the right people in this challenging role, the project simply would not have achieved the success it has done.

As well as connecting clients to partner services and mentors, in many cases RCOs offered direct one-to-one support to clients in areas outside of business support that were imperative to the individual to enable them to try to start a business. This has included advice on benefits, housing or self management.

*Regional Co-ordinator team acted as the key worker to ensure that the client received the full range of services and support they needed to succeed.*
Volunteer Support
Barclays staff became involved in RTS, utilising their expertise by providing one to one support to potential entrepreneurs. Following appropriate training and induction, the volunteer buddies met with the RTS clients on a regular basis and worked through the issues and challenges they faced in setting up their business. Through the course of the programme 150 buddies have supported RTS clients.

Online Project Management
Providing full and accessible information about the project and managing client and project data were addressed simultaneously in the Ready to Start website, www.readytostart.org.uk. At the front end was an electronic and fully accessible source of information about the project. Publicly accessible, it provided a range of information on Ready to Start and its partner organisations, including interactive activities for disabled people considering self employment, featured case studies and enabled online applications to the programme. It provided a complete tool to project manage recruitment both of disabled entrepreneurs and volunteer buddies.

Behind the public facing website sat an extensive extranet held on secure servers which monitored applications and client progress through the programme. Through the extranet, clients had access to learning resources covering all areas required to start a business as well as sample business plans, cash-flow spreadsheets and marketing plans. The extranet also enabled the project to report against monthly profiles including the recruitment of clients onto the programme and project outputs including businesses created, clients into employment, training or volunteering. All the reporting data was collated from the client’s initial application form, the development plan agreed between the client and the RCO, referral data and ultimately an exit interview that identified outputs.
Project Launch

The project, launched in October 2006 in London and running over a three years period, intended to recruit 1200 eligible people onto the Ready to Start programme, supporting 600 into sustainable self-employment.

Excellent media coverage was achieved and over the life of the project 290 media insertions have been achieved including 22 in national print media and the remaining were regional press, radio and online.

Following the national launch, the project hit the ground running to launch in 27 locations across England and Wales. The high profile events were designed to raise awareness of the project and, in particular, to attract and engage potential partners who could refer clients onto the RTS programme. They were all very well attended with high profile guests including local MPs and Mayors, and the National Launch was supported by actress Jane Asher.

### RTS Initial Locations

**North West**
- Warrington & Merseyside
- Lancashire (Preston)
- Greater Manchester
- South Cumbria

**North East**
- Newcastle
- Middlesbrough

**Yorkshire & Humberside**
- Leeds & Bradford
- York

**West Midlands**
- Worcester & Kidderminster

**Central Midlands**
- Birmingham, Black Country & Coventry

**East Midlands**
- Derby & Nottingham
- Leicester

**East of England**
- Peterborough
- Ipswich & Haven Gateway
- Bedfordshire
- Thames Gateway & South Essex

**London**
- pan London

**South East**
- Southampton
- Oxfordshire & Northampton
- Mid Sussex
- Mid Kent

**South West**
- Plymouth
- Bristol
- Swindon

**South Wales**
- Swansea, Cardiff & Newport
Good partner relationships were vital to the success of the project. In the regions where partner networks were established, significantly higher numbers of successful business start ups were achieved. Partner agencies referred nearly 43% of RTS clients.

Establishing partners across the country was a key part of the implementation plan. For this strategy to be effective, Leonard Cheshire Disability needed not only to create effective awareness of the project but ensure that the project aligned with the goals of the partners and did not compete with them. The common experience of Regional Co-ordinators was that it took some time for partners to fully understand what the RTS project was and how it could complement their own services, but once they did, referrals would start to flow. The relative success of RCOs to recruit clients onto the RTS programme was greatly influenced by the number of available supportive partners across all regions.

As Ready to Start was funded by Barclays and was not financed through any public funding, this made it easier for partners to work with the project in a non-competitive way. Another advantage of the project to partners was not only the provision of complementary services but the knowledge, advice and support of Leonard Cheshire Disability in areas that were not directly business related. Roger Wilkins from Business Link South West (www.businesslinksw.co.uk) felt RTS was a ‘very good project’ and not only did their clients benefit, but so did Business Link as they learnt a great deal from working with the project and Leonard Cheshire Disability, as disability equality is high on their agenda. This is one of the ways that the project was able to demonstrate that it filled a gap in provision to disabled entrepreneurs.
Feedback from partners consistently stated that working with the Ready to Start project and the Leonard Cheshire Disability team was enjoyable and that a professional and valuable service was provided to their clients. The partnerships created were not superficial, with many of the partners that participated in this project keen to continue working with LCD. For example, the partnerships created with Destiny and Action for Blind People have grown and flourished, with excellent cross-referral of clients and partnering together for future projects.

Quotes and Feedback from RTS Partners:

“I am very impressed by the RTS project, as I think it has achieved great success with developing entrepreneurs. I think it illustrates what a well resourced project can achieve, and I think the resource issue is one important factor. I also think that the quality of the project and programme management process is another major factor in the success of RTS. The support of the sponsor [Barclays], and their supportive nature and commitment to RTS success was a key factor.”

George Nahlis,
Business Link in London

“Well managed project that exceeded all realistic expectations ... produced good research which we have used ourselves”

Mark Causton,
Action for Blind People

“Very good project and a shame it is coming to an end. We are keen to work with Leonard Cheshire Disability again”

Roger Wilkins,
Business Link South West
Entrepreneur Awards

REGIONAL WINNERS

John McLean
RJM Consultancy
Dyslexia caused John a number of challenges as an employee, resulting in a lot of stress and frustration. Running his own business provided a way to manage these. RJM Consultancy supplies regulation compliance audits to medical and pharmaceutical companies across UK, Europe and USA.

Maria Zedda
Wideaware
Maria, a deaf entrepreneur, founded Wideaware to provide access consultancy and disability equality training both online and face to face, and has trained over 1,000 people in the last 3 years. She is providing free e-moderation training to disabled trainers and lists the London 2012 Organising Committee among her clients.

Gareth Thompson
Lawn and Leaf
When Gareth’s son was born, he determined to turn his life around and create a positive legacy. He launched Lawn and Leaf in June 08 to provide lawn mowing, hedge and tree cutting in Essex. He currently employs one full time staff member and intends to expand in the next 12 months.

Judy Wynne
Infection Protection.Org
Judy has produced an in-depth information and product pack to help people understand and avoid the risk of infections such as MRSA and C.difficile in their home environment, at care homes and on admission to hospital. Being fully independent of the pharmaceutical industry, she recommends and sells only the safest, most effective products.

Lamis Nemgbhard
Nembs Ltd
Lamis overcame the pain of her degenerative spine to launch her alcoholic cocktail company in July 09. Careful planning enables her to attend food shows where she showcases and sells her gift packs. She intends to employ people to do this in the future while she develops additional flavours and markets.

Martin Roberts
Karma Kayaks, Kids and Family Cycles Ltd
Martin, who was diagnosed with Parkinson’s Disease 10 years ago, gained so much benefit in managing his condition from sport that he was motivated to start his two import businesses. His key brand is an innovative child-carrying trike, called Bellabike, targeted primarily at the ABI bracket.

Hayley McKune
Skin & Tonic
Disabled in a serious road accident, Hayley retrained in holistic and alternative therapies. She now specialises in working with people with emotional, physical or body issues, bringing the benefits of the beauty industry to people that were not being catered for.

Stephen Collins
Lazarus Mobility
Born with cerebral palsy, Stephen was inspired to overcome his physical difficulties and prove that he could function as a successful businessman whilst simultaneously helping others to gain mobility and make life easier. Operating as both an e-retailer and from shop premises, he sells high quality products that are fit for purpose.
HIGHLY COMMENDED

Marion Gill
Simply Fancy Frock
Marion struggled with her work as a nurse following her heart attack. Feeling that she needed to work from home, she returned to her passion for sewing by founding Simply Fancy Frock. She supplies handmade, made to measure dresses for brides, bridesmaids and flower girls, prom dresses and evening wear.

Lisa Hutt
Deafine
Lisa is a firm believer in equality and especially that deaf people should have the same access as their hearing peers. To bring down barriers, she launched Deafine which provides organisations and individuals bespoke sign language training, interpreter services, and consultancy, especially in DDA requirements.

Adrian Carter
Carter Caterers
At the age of 11, Adrian decided he would run his own business. Being hospitalised for a year, and told he may have to live in a care home for rest of his life at 18, did not stop him. Supplying an exquisite combination of Caribbean and English food, he fully intends to be the first Caribbean caterer to have a chain of restaurants similar to Nandos.

Daniel Male
Joey Pouch
Daniel was diagnosed with Primary Pulmonary Hypertension at the age of 20. Now he lives with a line fitted into his chest and a pump carried safely, comfortably and discretely in a prototype Joey Pouch. He makes a range of pouches to hold different types of pumps, bags or portable medical machines.

James Ramplin
Tiptree Clocks
After being made redundant for the second time in 4 years, Jim decided to take control of his own destiny and trained in the service and repair of antique and modern mechanical clocks. He views clocks as ornaments as well as time pieces and through sympathetic repair and service returns them to their former glory.

Joe Brown
Joe Brown’s Egg Round
Success at interview eluded Joe due to his autism, diagnosed when he was three. A family friend suggested that he sell locally produced free-range eggs to local residents. Now working at full capacity, Joe delivers eggs from a pedestrian trolley to over 300 residents plus staff at local businesses.

Richard Morris
Enigma Creations
Richard is a talented artist and chose to make his living from his art after extensive health problems ruled out traditional employment. As well as doing commissions and selling prints of his artwork at exhibitions he also produces cards and runs arts and crafts workshops.

Emma Reilly
Fizz Bang Interactive
Emma overcame fear, prejudice and huge self-confidence issues to set up her own business providing internet marketing and design services including social media marketing. The business is now so successful that she is considering taking on an employee and developing her own e-commerce software.
Adapting the Project

As RTS progressed, the rigorous reporting processes began to identify areas where the project could become more effective. Two areas, in particular, were identified:

It became clear that we were being contacted by clients who were clearly outside the geographic areas that we were able to cover with the original 27-location model.

We also identified that some disabled people with sound business propositions were being prevented from moving forward with them for want of comparatively small sums of money to pay for essential business items, such as basic equipment or legally required insurance cover.

From these two areas, the Distance Mentoring model and the Development Fund were born.

Distance Mentor Model
Creating a distance mentor model meant we were able to open the programme up to disabled people from across most of England and South Wales. Initially services were provided by three external partner agencies, Meganuxus, Northern Pinetree Trust and Destiny. However, it was quickly realised that more mentoring hours were required and that there was a need for a central overview of how mentoring was delivered. In spring 08, the RTS Distance Mentoring team, comprising a dedicated in-house team together with the pre-existing partner agencies, began supporting clients via telephone, email and web-based technology.

Mentors worked with clients on their business plans, their marketing and their vision for their business. For all clients mentoring proved a valued opportunity to explore fully all the options available. It gave the entrepreneur the opportunity to reassess essential skills needed for themselves and the future development of their business, and to create an awareness of the needs of an increasingly diverse business development sector.

The telephone and e-mentors proactively provided an average of two hours contact time with each RTS client per month using the method and schedule of contact agreed between them. Additionally they responded to ad-hoc requests for support.

For all clients mentoring proved a valued opportunity to explore fully all the options available
In addition to 1-1 support, as the project progressed we introduced both regional and national group distance mentoring around themes. This included both Sectors – creative, construction, catering, retail – and Business Skill areas like marketing, maximising web presence, and Inland Revenue. We also began to record these sessions so that we could use them as podcasts to reach a wider audience than were able to participate in the original group.

By working with a mix of support from RTS staff, local agencies, volunteer buddies giving face-to-face 1-1 support and distance mentoring both online and by phone, we were able to offer the support of the RTS project over a much wider geographic area than originally envisaged, stretching from Cumbria to Cornwall and the South Coast to Newcastle, and meet the needs of a diverse client group.

**Development Fund**

RTS clients already had the option of applying to the project for a refurbished computer complete with any appropriate disability adaptations and software and a printer.

In addition, to meet the clear problem that had been identified, money was set aside to support a discretionary fund which could be used to purchase business critical items for those clients who would not be able to launch their business without it. The flexibility to use project funding in this way illustrates the benefits of this project and has without doubt contributed significantly to its success in delivering on project outcomes.

**Post Start up Support**

We found that many clients, once their business had launched, were reluctant to leave the support offered by the programme. To address this, we instigated a Ready to Start Phase 2 which provided a continuing but reduced level of support and mentoring to clients and one year’s subscription to a business support organisation once they finally left us.

Many clients opted to take out membership of the Federation of Small Businesses which provides networking events, advice and resources to their members, including access to free business banking, a legal and tax helpline and preferential rates for a range of services. Others opted to use this funding to secure membership of a trade or professional body or their local Chamber of Commerce.
Richard Berry

Richard has experienced a number of serious health problems including multiple operations for a snapped cruciate ligament, cancer and a heart attack at 32.

He decided to pursue his keen interest and talent for woodwork in a business venture with his nephew, Michael. In February 2009, Y Knot opened for business in Hill Morton, Rugby. The shop sells handmade and bespoke garden furniture including chairs, benches and planters, plus a range of tropical plants to local people and the commercial sector.

Richard first heard about Ready to Start through his local job centre. The project provided him with one-to-one mentoring and support towards business purchases including fire extinguishers, telephones and electrical equipment.

Y Knot has already made quite a name for itself, supplying furniture and planters to pubs, nursing homes and local residents, and its commercial contracts supply restaurant chains up and down the country including Zizzi’s, ASK, Pizza Express and Las Iguanas.

y.knot@ntlworld.com

“Ready to Start came along at just the right time; it was fantastic to know someone was there at the end of the telephone to provide advice. I do work long hours but running my own business is a fantastic motivator and I have so much more flexibility.”

Richard Berry
‘I literally needed someone to say “You can do this” and give me help with the benefits issue. Both of these were supplied and then away I went.’

‘I am ill often and so my business is very small but it has given me an empowerment I couldn’t have predicted would be so personally valuable. I could at last give an answer to “what do you do?” And for this I will be eternally grateful.’

‘I found the experience positive and useful.’

‘I am very pleased to have been able to be part of it. Although the funding was limited it meant a lot to me and enabled me to move forward.’

‘I would not have started my business without your encouragement and support.’

‘It has been very inspiring and helped me through some difficult times and gave me the belief to carry on.’
Communication Methodology

The project used a number of methods to maintain contact with clients and to get client feedback

Network Meetings
Alongside the virtual networking opportunities, we recognised that some clients would benefit from meeting other entrepreneurs face to face and each Regional Coordinator set up a series of Network events in their Region. For some, this involved a small group of clients meeting together to share their experiences and challenges, sometimes with input from a guest expert on a subject of interest. In other cases RTS joined forces with partner organisations to bring RTS clients in contact with other budding entrepreneurs in larger scale meetings.

RTS Newsletters
Staying in touch with clients and partners via regular quarterly newsletters was a key element of the project. Initially in PDF format, the newsletters later became available in HTML email, and online, and were also supplied in hard copy to those clients who did not have internet access. As well as giving project updates and progress, the newsletters showcased some of the many client successes and achievements.
Online Network
We were keen to encourage entrepreneurs to work peer to peer and support each other and set up an online network to facilitate this. Bristol based Stephen Hilton, a volunteer with many years experience of creating online forums, did a lot of work to instigate the network and used a small number of entrepreneur champions to get the network up and running.

Although it was something that RTS clients indicated they would like to have available, in reality it has been quite challenging to get a critical mass of clients to use the network; but it is the start of an ongoing facility that we are confident will grow and grow.

Online Business Directory
As more disabled clients succeed in launching their businesses, many of them have been keen to use the services of other disabled entrepreneurs thus generating a micro economy. To help Ready to Start clients identify each other, as well as offer their services more widely, the project has created an online directory of disabled-led businesses that will be searchable both regionally and by product or service. It can be found at: www.yoodo.org

As the RTS project comes to an end we will transfer the online network and Business Directory onto the ‘Yoodo’ portal (www.yoodo.org), an initiative from Leonard Cheshire Disability, so that it continues to be available for entrepreneurs from across our enterprise projects to use to communicate and support each other and to offer free advertising of their business to all portal users.
The Outcomes

### Age Profile

- 18-29: 9%
- 30-45: 44%
- 46-65: 46%
- Over 65: 1%

### Disability Profile

- Physical: 43%
- Sight: 5%
- Hearing: 6%
- Mental Health: 24%
- Other: 22%

### Outputs

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Actual</th>
<th>Targets</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Recruited</td>
<td>1,382</td>
<td>1,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business start ups</td>
<td>735</td>
<td>600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment outcomes</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Further education</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voluntary work</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Referrals</td>
<td>3,137</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Benefits

- **Incapacity Benefit**: 737
- **Income Support**: 401
- **Job Seekers Allowance**: 348
- **Housing Benefit**: 133
- **Tax Credit**: 159
- **Referrals**: 3,137

The above change in the number of benefit claimants as a result of the RTS projects equates to an **annual saving of £3.5 million** in benefit payments*

*This figure is based on calculating average benefits at the lower rates but excludes any Return to Work Tax Credits*
Business Sectors
Our clients have started businesses in a huge range of sectors

Health
- Complementary & Alternative Therapies
- Caring & Counselling
- Personal Development
- Hypnotherapy
- Disabled Mobility
- Adaptive Aids
- Nursing Agency

Services to Business
- Recruitment
- Customer Service
- Secretarial & Administration
- Business Services & Information
- Caribbean Catering

Home & Lifestyle
- Tattoo Shop
- Beauty Therapies
- Gardening & Landscape Design
- Toys
- Astrology
- Pet Therapies
- Cake Making
- Life Coaching
- Domestic Cleaning

Media & Creative
- Writing & Publishing
- Arts & Crafts
- Media & Entertainment
- Photography
- Design
- Clothing & Fashion
- Engraver
- Casting Agent
- Diamond Cutter

Buildings & Maintenance
- Architecture
- Electrical Engineering
- Maintenance
- Painting & Decorating
- Security

Leisure & Travel
- Cruise Ship For Disabled People
- Sound System Hire
- Travel
- Entertainment And Magic Shows

Consultancy & Professional Services
- Lawyer
- Events Management
- Proof-Reading
- IT Support
- Website Design
- DET Training

Retail
- Bespoke Clothing
- Mobility Aids
- Pet Products
- Designer Jewellery
- Bicycle Repair
- Watch & Clock Repairs

Other
- Charity & Social Enterprise
- Motor Trade & Motor Sport
- Reclaimed Materials
- Manufacturing
- Environmental
- Import & Export
- Funeral Planning
- Inventor
'Many thanks to all of you Ready to Start Staff and Volunteers for giving me such opportunity to achieve my goals and I’m very grateful to continue receiving your help and support until I’m ready to start trading.'

'Very efficient when compared to Government backed projects.'

'My Barclays buddy and Ready to Start coordinator have stood behind me right from the start. Their support has made all the difference.'

'Please keep up the great work you’re doing.'

'I just wanted to give you an update. I have really enjoyed the last few days, it would not have been possible without your support. I have qualified in both 2 day Nail Extensions (silk, acrylic, fibre, tip & dip and weekenders) and have also passed my manicure & pedicure courses. Thank you all for believing in me.'

'I really appreciate the help I’ve received from RTS, which has enabled me to continue despite the financial difficulties we’ve experienced.'
Wendy Irwin

As a former airline stewardess and door supervisor at nightclubs for ten years, Wendy enjoyed interacting with others and dreamt of owning her own security business. The dream went on hold when severe domestic violence led to a physical and mental breakdown.

Despite this, Wendy rebuilt her life and confidence, successfully raising her two children and realising her dream. Girls On Doors Security, or ‘GODS’, was launched in 2007. Covering London and Essex, GODS provides female door security for a range of events and venues, plus home security whilst owners are away.

Ready to Start provided Wendy with funding towards a company van, a laptop, mentoring and substantial support from her RTS Regional Coordinator.

Since its launch, GODS has been a fantastic success. Wendy employs fifteen staff and has recently started an associated company, Gents on Doors. GODS has provided security at a number of events including the opening ceremony of the Tank Museum in Bournemouth, attended by The Queen and received testimonials to its professionalism from the Metropolitan Police.

www.girlsondoors.co.uk
www.gentsondoors.co.uk

“I have faced a number of challenges on both a personal and professional level but starting GODS has proved an incredible journey.”

Wendy Irwin
External Evaluation

In April 2009 we commissioned Pedantic Consulting to carry out an independent 360 degree evaluation of the RTS project. What follows is a summary of their findings.

Ready to Start (RTS) was an ambitious and innovative 3 year national project which began in October 2006 and was funded and partnered by Barclays. It has engaged with nearly 1,400 disabled people wishing to start up their own business and is on track to surpass its target of creating 600 businesses through the initiative as well as over 200 other positive outcomes.

The project is an obvious success and has demonstrated that it fills a gap in service provision to disabled people to help them receive mentoring, financial support and sign-posting to relevant organisations and information as well as giving them essential motivation and encouragement to succeed.

The partnership with Barclays includes ‘Barclays Buddies’ who have volunteered their time and expertise to mentor disabled entrepreneurs. The level of Buddies available has naturally gone up and down with an extremely impressive high point of close to 150 Barclays Buddies signed up to support RTS Clients. The project adapted to include Distance Mentors to supplement the Barclays Buddies and Leonard Cheshire Disability runs its own team of mentors as well as using external agencies to provide the mentoring service to RTS clients.

The evaluation methodology included client survey questionnaires; an in-depth one-to-one interview with several clients from each Region; and client feedback from a Focus Group. Pedantic carried out a similar exercise with Barclays and LCD staff involved in the project as well as getting feedback from a number of partner organisations around the country.
**RTS Clients Evaluation Summary**

82.4% of clients stated the service was useful. All evidence collated from the survey, the focus group and the one-to-one interviews is that clients felt that the RTS programme was a positive and helpful experience, with almost a third (31.1%) stating it was very useful to them.

75.3% of survey respondents stated that they were satisfied with the management and delivery of the Ready to Start programme, with over a third (34.2%) being ‘Very Satisfied’ with the service.

93.3% of clients stated that they thought the project should continue. 80% said that they would recommend the service to others. They particularly valued that they were working with people who understood people with disabilities and they did not feel they were treated like a number.

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**Most Useful RTS Service**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RTS Service</th>
<th>% of Clients stating ‘Most Useful’ Service</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Development Fund</td>
<td>44.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentoring</td>
<td>24.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clarifying Business Idea</td>
<td>11.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other*</td>
<td>8.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing Business Plan</td>
<td>6.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R&amp;D Support</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Signposting/Referral</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*For ‘Other’ RTS Clients named:

- Membership of Federation of Small Businesses
- Meeting like-minded disabled people
- Confidence building and motivation
Pino Pace had been a Barclays local business manager for five years when he was asked to help RTS entrepreneur, Anne Conneally, start up her nursing agency.

“Leonard Cheshire Disability suggested that we met outside of a work setting, and that made a huge difference,” he said. “Being away from what I was used to made me more aware and more flexible in the solutions I offered. I noticed for example that when I gave Anne copies of research that I had carried out on her behalf she would glance over the top and move on. Later I realised that this was because of her dyslexia and so I had to take that time to break things down and use analogies that Anne could relate to.”

Pino recognised the importance of his relationship to Anne and offered ongoing positive reinforcement. They often remarked that when Anne secured her first paying client they would celebrate with Champagne and scones.

Anne said, “Pino believed in me and that I would achieve the identified goal. He listened when I didn’t know what to do and offered guidance, and helped in practical ways especially around payroll and financial areas. The great thing was that I was able to trust him and know that his advice and input were above board. I know he was on my side and he believed that I was able to achieve my goal. When at times, I lost my way, he was there.”

“Pino believed in me and that I would achieve the identified goal. He listened when I didn’t know what to do and offered guidance, and helped in practical ways especially around payroll and financial areas.”

Anne Conneally
With Thanks

One of the most positive and important aspects of Ready to Start has been the fantastic contribution made by the Barclays Buddies and the individual volunteers who joined Leonard Cheshire Disability specifically to support the programme. Their support and encouragement of our entrepreneurs made such a difference to the motivation and morale of everyone in their efforts to get their businesses off the ground.

Two volunteers in particular deserve special thanks:

**Stephen Hilton** gave his time and expertise in helping us set up our online forum which will remain a key feature of ensuring our entrepreneurs can stay in touch with us and each other.

**John Hemsley**, a former Leonard Cheshire Disability Trustee, chaired the steering group and provided strategic support for the programme as a whole. His guidance made an important contribution to the changes we made to the project and the final outcomes.

..... and finally

All new services require effective project management and Linda Holland, as the National Project Manager, created a dynamic team around her and provided the leadership necessary to make RTS such a success.