

Getting People into Work

Remploy Consultancy case study

Generating positive employment outcomes for young people with disabilities



Introduction

Between February and July 2012 Remploy Consultancy delivered the LSIS funded 'Getting People into Work' project with the aim of generating positive employment outcomes for young people with disabilities living in Yorkshire. This was achieved by bringing together Colleges, training providers and supported employment providers through a series of workshops. The purpose of the workshops was to improve the way in which young people progress from education into employment by identifying and acting upon specific opportunities which could be funded through existing core funding streams so that any new project activities could be sustained beyond the duration of the project.

The project partners were:

- Remploy;
- The Skills Partnership;
- Intraining;
- Sheffield College;
- Leeds City College;
- Barnsley College; and
- The Source.

Aims

As a result of the workshops the group agreed on three broad aims to explore further as pilot activities.

1. Employer engagement: defining a two-way referral process as follows.

- Provider referrals to Remploy to maximise their expertise and develop strong relationships with employers.
- Remploy referrals to providers for vocational training and Apprenticeship opportunities for learners once in work with a view to sustaining employment.

2. Specialist support for learners with disabilities and their employers.

- Utilising the skills of Remploy staff to support learners with disabilities to achieve employment/ placement and provision of pre and in-work support to sustain employment.

3. Build provider capacity to support learners with disabilities and their employers.

- Utilising and combining the skills of all the project partners to up skill staff e.g. effective Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG), support skills, understanding Corporate Social Responsibility to provide a better service for disabled learners and utilise this to grow the employer base.

Pilot Activities

Delivery of Level 1 “Workskills’ qualifications to disabled learners at the Sheffield Remploy branch

Remploy and Sheffield College explored the possibility of delivering accredited ‘Pre-Employment’ qualifications at the Sheffield Remploy Branch under the umbrella of Sheffield College’s accreditation and funding. It was agreed that a small pilot could be implemented to potentially deliver up to 40 accredited qualifications by the end of the current academic year, 2011-2012. This adds enormous value to Remploy’s existing provision by providing disabled candidates with recognised accredited qualifications rather than just informal training. The outcome of this activity was as follows.

- Remploy candidates are better qualified.
- The self esteem and confidence of candidates is significantly improved through the acquisition of what in many cases will be their first accredited qualification.
- Candidates are more attractive to prospective employers.

To date, 34 Remploy candidates have now successfully completed the Level 1 BTEC Work Skills course and so far thirteen are now in work or have a job offer.

Level 2 Contact Centre training delivered to disabled learners

Sheffield College and Remploy identified an opportunity to work together to provide disabled learners with a level 2 Contact Centre qualification. Remploy identified and referred ten of their disabled candidates looking to work in a contact centre environment and referred them onto the course specially designed by Sheffield College. Seven out of the ten learners have now completed the course and passed the exam. Through Remploy’s relationships with local contact centre employers, the learners will now be supported into full time sustainable employment with the potential for them to progress onto an Apprenticeship.

Eight Remploy candidates have now successfully completed the Level 2 Contact Centre course and two are now in work or have a job offer. Further courses have now been scheduled for delivery in 2012-2013.

Delivery of Level 2 Customer Service training

The Skills Partnership (TSP) and Remploy have identified an opportunity to work together to provide disabled learners with a level 2 Customer Service qualification. Remploy identified and referred ten of their disabled candidates onto a four day Customer Service course specially designed by TSP and delivered at the Remploy Branch in Sheffield. .

Fifteen Remploy candidates have now successfully completed the Level 2 Customer Service course and gained a Level 2 qualification. Ten are now in work or have a job offer. We are now exploring ways of rolling this pilot activity out to other regions from Remploy branches across the UK.

Apprenticeship referrals

Remploy and TSP have set up a referral process enabling Remploy to provide information and refer disabled learners and their employers directly to TSP. TSP then design and deliver an Apprenticeship programme to meet the employer’s needs. So far two disabled learners have been successfully referred onto Apprenticeship programmes.

Pre-employment training for foundation learning students

Leeds City College and Remploy have identified an opportunity for Remploy to deliver pre-employment activities including CV writing and interview skills to foundation learning students at Leeds City College. This could potentially be funded through Additional Learner Support (ALS), a funding stream identified during the second workshop as a sustainable way of supporting learners into work which has previously not been utilized. A detailed proposal has now been finalised. Delivery will begin in September 2012 when Remploy will initially begin working with 15 disabled students.

What the Partners have to say

Dave Dale of Sheffield College said, "Before we began working with Remploy on the LSIS project, we had no idea how much support was available for disabled learners from supported employment providers and the way they can work with both the learner and the employer."

"The workshops have enabled Sheffield College to form a real partnership with Remploy and to access support for both disabled learners and employers."

"The project has enabled us to access a completely new, difficult to reach client group of disabled people, who traditionally don't have a history of accessing training and qualifications."

"Similar organisations to Sheffield College would benefit enormously by replicating the activities delivered as a result of the LSIS project workshops. We now need to disseminate the work carried out and expertise developed on this project to ensure that other providers, learners and employers benefit from what we have learned."

Debbi Sharkie of The Skills Partnership, co-ordinated the Customer Service qualifications delivered at the Remploy Branch. Debbi said about the project, "Although we knew of their existence, the project has really opened our eyes to how Remploy engage with and support learners into employment and how we can work together in the future."

One of the main barriers for TSP was effective engagement and support for employers. The workshops have helped us to overcome this by developing partnerships with supported employment providers such as Remploy. The project has really helped TSP to engage with a wider range of learners and to share best practice with other providers, including FE Colleges".

Karen Jordan, Manager of the Remploy Branch in Sheffield said "Collaborative working between Colleges, training providers and Remploy has been long overdue. By working together we can all concentrate on what we're good at which reduces duplication and ultimately benefits the customer by giving them the skills and qualifications they need and making them much more attractive to prospective employers."

What the learners have to say

Kevin Brady who achieved a Level 1 Work Skills qualification as a result of the project said, "The course I did really helped me and gave me the confidence I needed to get a job in facilities management at Asda."

Comments from other learners who attended and successfully achieved qualifications include, "I'm so proud that I've actually achieved an accredited qualification in Customer Services."

"The Remploy and TSP staff were all so friendly and patient."

“The Work Skills course has given me so much confidence and I’m now really keen to start applying for jobs.”

Challenges

Our key challenge on all pilots was finding ways to overcome the challenges between Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and Skills Funding Agency (SFA) funding, identifying sources of core funding to enable the pilot activities to be rolled out and sustained. We have resolved this with the utilisation of flexibility funding and additional learner support funding for the delivery of qualifications and pre-employment training.

Bureaucratic processes proved to be a challenge when it came to collaborative working and setting up some of the project activities. We overcame this by removing as much red tape as possible and keeping systems and processes as simple as possible.

Impact

In addition to the successes to date highlighted earlier, the pilot activities have built a sustainable relationship with Remploy in the Yorkshire and Humber region enabling partners to access a previously untapped source of disabled learners in need of vocationally specific skills, training and qualifications. Once this activity has been proven as a pilot, there is no reason why similar activities could not be rolled out across the UK.

Awareness amongst the provider group about the partnership opportunities between training providers and organisations like Remploy and the support available from supported employment providers will enable changes to be made to existing delivery processes. This will allow models to be developed by other members of the project provider group in order to increase job outcomes.

The pilot activities have added enormous value to Remploy’s existing provision by providing disabled candidates with recognised accredited qualifications rather than just informal training. The delivery of Level 1 accredited ‘Workskills’ qualifications will undoubtedly increase the employment opportunities for disabled learners by providing them with a qualification that employers recognize and value. Work place learning opportunities will also be increased through the marketing and brokerage service provided by Remploy, leading to increased sustainability of employment.

The delivery of Level 2 accredited ‘Contact Centre Operations’ and ‘Customer Service’ qualifications will undoubtedly increase the contact centre employment opportunities for disabled learners by providing them with a qualification that employers recognize and value. Work place learning opportunities will also be increased through the marketing and brokerage service provided by Remploy, leading to increased sustainability of employment.

On September 31 2012 a Celebration and Awards presentation event was held at the Remploy Branch in Sheffield, where more than 30 learners received their certificates.

Top Tips

- Allow each partner to focus on their particular area of expertise.
- Keep an open mind about what is possible.
- Explore every possible funding opportunity.
- Celebrate your success with your partners, employers and learners.

Next Steps

We are now exploring ways of rolling out the pilot activities to other regions from Remploy Branches across the UK.