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Investing in jobs and skills

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## *Project Case Study*

### **Project: Skills for Jobs, Warrington Borough Council**

#### **Project Overview**

The Skills for Jobs programme is managed by Warrington Borough Council and delivered across Warrington by two delivery partners, Warrington Disability Partnership and Warrington Collegiate.

The programme works with people over the age of 18, who are unemployed and have a skills gap which may be preventing them from gaining employment. It offers flexible, customised support to help individuals develop their skills and improve their chances of gaining sustainable employment.

Warrington Borough Council received funding for the programme totalling £245,490 from the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) as part of its 2007-10 European Social Fund (ESF) Co-finance Plan.

#### **How it Works**

The programme works through three distinct 'Routeways'. The first is the sector routeway, a demand led approach working with employers to develop pre-recruitment training. The second is the individualised routeway, providing customer friendly and intensive support to meet individual needs and aspirations. The third is the employability skills routeway which aims to progress participants already engaged in learning into sustainable employment.

Participants are referred to the programme through a range of local stakeholders, delivery partners and the wider Skills for Jobs Strategic Partnership.

As part of the project, Warrington Disability Partnership's team of employment advisers offer a package of support. Key to this support is the Skills for Jobs Action Plan which helps to identify participant's skills gaps, barriers and employment interests. The advisers then work with participants to address the issues raised on the action plan by providing a range of help, advice and support. This support includes signposting to appropriate training, CV development and help in completing application forms.

The Skills for Jobs training is delivered through Warrington Collegiate and includes an introduction to a number of courses, such as IT, customer service, first aid, food hygiene and general employability skills, such as interview techniques. Warrington Collegiate also delivers tailored pre-recruitment courses for employers in Social Care and Housing under the sector routeway.

The programme aims to support beneficiaries into long-term employment and supports participants for up to six months after they have entered employment through an ESF funded Job Coach. The Job Coach works with both the employee and the employer to ensure that ongoing staff development benefits both the individual and the company. By supporting the employee at the start of their employment any barriers or issues that arise can be addressed, which in turn improves staff retention.

### **Impact and Success**

One of the notable successes to date has been a pre-recruitment project working in partnership with Golden Gates Housing which was delivered as part of the sector routeway.

Following investment to improve housing in Warrington, Golden Gates Housing, which manages Warrington Borough Council's social housing stock, identified four full-time permanent positions for skilled labourers. Partners working on the Skills for Jobs programme met with the company to discuss how they could help meet the needs of the employer.

Working closely with Golden Gates Housing, Warrington Disability Partnership managed the application process, assessing the candidates suitability prior to referral to the pre-recruitment training.

Warrington Collegiate was then able to develop a course for the successful applicants, working closely with Golden Gates Housing to address the skills required for the positions. The course included job specific training such as manual handling, asbestos awareness as well as personal development in areas such as confidence building and personal presentation.

Over 100 enquiries were received for the positions and Warrington Disability Partnership conducted 50 assessments. The shortlist was reduced and 16 candidates attended the two week pre-recruitment training. Golden Gates Housing guaranteed interviews for all candidates who completed the course.

In addition to the four positions initially identified, as a result of the strength of the candidates, Golden Gates Housing decided to develop a number of other roles. Four other participants were offered one year fixed term contracts whilst two were offered six month contracts. The employer has now extended the six fixed term contracts by a further 6 – 10 months.

The programme demonstrates what can be achieved through effective partnership working and successful engagement with employers. Angela Perry, Director of Property Services at Golden Gates Housing said: "Through the recruitment programme we met some really high calibre and enthusiastic applicants. It's a tribute to the staff running the Skills for Jobs programme that the whole process ran so smoothly and I believe Golden Gates Housing has some excellent new members of staff as a result."

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