

Case study 3 : employer engagement

RBLI is a prime contractor for the Pathways to Work programme. It identified the care industry as a sector with substantial unmet recruitment needs and the Sussex and Kent south coast as having a high concentration of care homes. It took employer demand as its starting point in a 'business first' approach to welfare to work.

RBLI appointed a dedicated broker who developed a close understanding of the recruitment, skills and retention issues being experienced by 39 care employers in the area. The broker identified that these employers had been swamped with large numbers of Jobcentre Plus customers, many of whom had no particular motivation to work in the care industry. She obtained the agreement of a number of employers to participate at an early stage in the recruitment process in presentations about the realities of working in the industry at group sessions of potential recruits. This, together with other more direct screening processes, meant that the actual candidates for vacancies were more likely to be well motivated and suitable and so more acceptable to employers.

The broker made arrangements for candidates to receive a three-day pre-employment training course with Working Links, which had a European Social Fund-funded pre-employment training programme. She also arranged with local Train to Gain providers for candidates to be trained to industry standards, if accepted for a job.

This case study reflects RBLI's employer-focused approach in its own mainstream services: 'our professional integrity and commitment to maintain high quality customer focused provision means we can be relied upon to only put forward candidates with the right skills, aptitude and attitude to succeed in the employer's workplace' (RBLI brochure). It demonstrates the benefits of locally specific, sectoral solutions achieved through well thought out brokerage. Employer engagement has been achieved by treating employers as the customer, involving them cost-effectively in the initial stages of the recruitment process and supporting them to develop better recruitment and retention practices. Employer trust in the broker and effective screening of candidates were critical, as were brokering work preparation and skills training. As a result, a high placement rate of 60 per cent was achieved.