

Case study 4: self-employment – Business Support Kent (BSK- CIC)

BSK runs business support services in Kent and Medway working closely with other partners including welfare to work organisations. Participants in its recent self-employment programme were recruited in Medway (where high unemployment and low aspirations make it particularly challenging to get unemployed people back into work).

The programme was delivered in a group environment (groups of 10-15 candidates). Stage 1 enabled candidates to reflect and take stock of their situations, review previous career paths and decisions, share experiences and concerns with other candidates and focus on the future. Stage 2 focused specifically on the pros and cons of self-employment using business games developed by [Enterprise Taktix Limited http://www.enterprisetaktix.com](http://www.enterprisetaktix.com), a subsidiary of BSK. These enable people to discover what it means to run a business and whether they have the entrepreneurial qualities and skills to do so.

Before undertaking the programme the average level of confidence amongst the participants was 3 on a scale of 1 to 10: afterwards this had risen to an average of 7. All candidates reported improved skills and entrepreneurial awareness. At the time the programme was evaluated, 22 per cent of participants had gone back to work. An outstanding example was an ex-construction industry manager who had lost confidence due to redundancy and who has now set up a business placing unemployed labourers in local construction projects with an arrangement to supply some of the workforce to build 7,000 houses a year over the next 20 years.

This programme suggests that self-employment should be considered as a significant option for jobseekers, even in an area of high unemployment and low aspirations. It demonstrates the cost effectiveness of group sessions based on structured frameworks and with provision for one-to-one support. Being run by a business support organisation facilitated onward referral to business start-up support.