

Case study 2: effective networking

Paritas

To help us to provide a recruitment service and promote diversity in the workplace we need to work with a range of expert partners in the fields of employment, health and business. This ensures a professional and tailored approach that enables us to match employers' needs with skilled trained workers, some of whom may have additional support needs. In 2009 we were recognised for our partnership work with employers when we were a runner up in the Jobcentre Plus Local Employment Partnership Awards.

Key to our successful networking is the establishment of an Employer Engagement Forum whose membership comprises many different organisations including DWP Prime Contractors, Business Partnerships, Jobcentre Plus, local colleges, Mental Health Associations, NHS representatives, and many third sector and charity organisations, including carer organisations. We meet once every two months and are able to distribute notes and emails to each other to help us all keep up-to-date on new things being offered in the area that might be of assistance to our customers.

Some people may think it too time consuming to meet up, but we believe the benefits of having a formal meeting make it worth the investment. We can all keep up to date with other areas of work, we avoid becoming too isolated, and we can share good practice and make sure we are able to understand and make good use of the services on offer in the area too.

We often invite employers to speak at our meetings. They tell us about their recruitment practice which is useful for us in terms of understanding their needs. This gives us the opportunity to ask them questions on a number of topics, for example about the recruitment of older jobseekers. They also talk to us about what we can do to help people find and keep a job.

Our networking activity enables us to refer our customers to appropriate organisations, and helps us introduce just the right support at the right time to help them find work. An example of the success of our networking approach relates to an older jobseeker who had been recently referred to us by Jobcentre Plus. We discovered she would need to update her office skills to achieve her job goals. We quickly referred her to our contact at the local college where she was able to update her computer, office and Excel skills. She was then referred back to us. After some work on her CV and interview skill training she soon found work with the local council.

Another example is a carer who found it difficult to find employment that would fit in with her caring responsibilities. We referred her to our local Independent Living Centre who provided carer support so that she could work for more hours. This really broadened her employment opportunities.