

MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of Provider: Hackney Recruitment Partnership
Date of visit: 29 August 2007

Context

Hackney Recruitment Partnership (HRP) manages the Workstep contract on behalf of the London borough of Hackney. HRP provides an employment and progression service to Hackney residents with learning difficulties. It is part of the learning difficulty services based in the borough's community services directorate. Six members of HRP's staff are involved in the Workstep programme. They include a full-time Workstep co-ordinator and a Workstep employment adviser, reporting to the two development managers, who work as a job share and report to the borough's access service manager. HRP's contract with Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) is for 22.5 places on its Workstep provision. Currently there are 19 participants on the programme equivalent to 17 full-time places.

Hackney is a borough in east London where most employers are small local businesses or voluntary organisations. Hackney borough council and the city and Hackney teaching primary care trust are the largest employers in the borough. In 2006 less than 60% of the working age population were in paid employment. The London borough of Hackney is ranked as the most deprived local authority in the country in the government's index of multiple deprivation. According to the 2001 census, 40.6 % of the residents are from minority ethnic backgrounds, the third highest proportion in the London boroughs.

HRP was reinspected in May 2006 when the Workstep provision and all aspects of leadership and management were judged to be satisfactory.

Achievements and standards

How well are participants achieving and what standards are they reaching in the workplace?	Reasonable progress
--	---------------------

The development of participant's vocational and personal skills was judged to be good at the May 2006 reinspection with participants successfully maintaining and developing work skills and many learning additional vocational skills. Participants continue to achieve a good range of additional skills and competencies by attending formal classes or individual employment related sessions that focus on particular barriers to employment. Good use is made of Hackney council's training programme

and all participants have access to these training opportunities, where necessary support is provided to encourage attendance. Good opportunities are also provided by other training providers particularly in the area of horticulture. Employers and supervisors report high standards are achieved by participants in the workplace. Progression into open employment is slow with one progressing since the reinspection, although three participants are ready to progress or only require some further development.

Development of personal and employment related skills

How effective is the development planning and review process in preparing participants for progression into open employment?	Reasonable progress
--	---------------------

The reinspection identified that although some participants progressed to open employment or to a new job role at work, planning for progression was insufficient. Development planning and reviews were satisfactory with reviews of participants progress managed well although some targets for progression were too general. Development plan reviews are regular and take place at least three times a year and involve supervisors as well as participants. The format for recording reviews has improved. It is more straightforward and makes the progress made by participants easier to monitor. Development goals are clearer and more employment focused. Medium- and long-term targets are now more realistic and, in most cases, appropriately challenging. Employers or workplace supervisors are formally involved in the setting and reviewing of targets. Previously agreed targets are reviewed and where necessary amended. Courses relevant to specific roles are identified during reviews. For example, one participant working in a care home received training in caring for dementia patients and in using reminiscence with care home residents. Participants working in estate environment services for Hackney Homes achieved level 1 qualifications in amenity horticulture. The development of personal skills is related well to employment but some areas identified for improvement are not reflected in targets.

Literacy, numeracy and communication skills development

How well are participants' employment related literacy, numeracy and communication skills assessed and developed?	Reasonable progress
---	---------------------

Arrangements to meet participants' literacy and numeracy needs were judged to be satisfactory at the reinspection with some effective individual training at work. Some good partnership work is developing with other organisations to increase the opportunities available to participants. The pre-entry level English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) class provides a good route into Workstep for participants with poor language skills and learning difficulties. Initial screenings for literacy and

numeracy are appropriate and where necessary will trigger a diagnostic assessment. Participants are offered specialist literacy or numeracy classes and given time off work to attend classes. Where a participant does not want to attend a formal class or the host employer is unable to provide relevant training, employment advisers provide good individual training and support. Learning materials are well adapted to meet personal needs with a good use of appropriate pictorial representation where necessary. HRP facilitates a providers' forum to identify training and development needs for Workstep participants and others. This forum has proposed some innovative training particularly for participants with learning difficulties.

Supplementary activities to support employability

How effective is the use of additional activities and support to develop and sustain employment?	Reasonable progress
--	---------------------

Since the reinspection, additional activities have been put in place to develop personal, social and employability skills. Workstep participants who feel they are socially isolated or have few opportunities to meet other people are helped to register with a London based dating and friendship service for adults with learning difficulties. Alternatively, those with higher support needs can be referred to the leaning difficulties service out-of-hours service, or the community resources service for one-to-one support to access other activities. Other participants complete a leisure profile to identify possible activities take part in or interests that can be developed. Theatre trips for Workstep participants have been organised to provide an opportunity for participants to meet each other informally. Some participants are encouraged to attend a healthy living group. Participants value these supplementary activities and can identify how they help develop their employability.

Quality assurance arrangements

How do quality assurance arrangements for development plans, on-the-job training and progress reviews improve participants' achievement and progression?	Reasonable progress
--	---------------------

At the reinspection, quality assurance arrangements were satisfactory with a comprehensive, quality manual that managers and staff used well. However, some of the monitoring activities were judged to be too superficial and did not provide staff with sufficient feedback on the quality of their work. HRP's Workstep quality assurance framework is comprehensive. HRP managers and the Workstep co-ordinator monitor closely most of the activities affecting participants including initial interviews, jobseeker and employee development planning and progress reviews. HRP has updated its quality review documentation to include specific comments and actions on staff performance. It has introduced an induction checklist for new employers to ensure that they have received the correct supporting documents and

that changes in workplace supervisors are recorded. It makes improvements quickly in response to employers' and participants' feedback. HRP now observes the quality and relevance of the teaching of other providers where its participants attend. However, HRP has not monitored all processes in accordance with the frequency intervals suggested in the quality assurance framework. The self-assessment report identifies the need to monitor development plan reviews more regularly. HRP acknowledges that it needs to improve target-setting for participants. Comments on quality review documents do not always refer to HRP staff or identify good practice. The quality improvement manual is satisfactory in that it documents clearly the key processes for each participant. It does not, however, set sufficiently clear standards for the quality of these processes.

The self-assessment process

What is the impact of the self-assessment process and action-planning on improving provision?	Reasonable progress
---	---------------------

At the reinspection, the self-assessment process was satisfactory but the development plan was not sufficiently detailed. The self-assessment process now includes detailed analysis of feedback from employers, participants and job seekers. The current self-assessment report is comprehensive. It is overly descriptive in parts. The current action plan, however, lacks sufficient detail in some of the actions required to bring about measurable improvements.

Equal opportunities policy implementation

How well is the equal opportunities policy implemented?	Reasonable progress
---	---------------------

The promotion of equality of opportunity was judged to be satisfactory at the reinspection. However, HRP did not have sufficient detailed plans for implementing some aspects of Hackney Council's equal opportunities policy. Since then, it has worked closely with the council's equalities and diversity team. Some Workstep participants have contributed to, and presented at, some of the borough's equalities consultations. The council's Disability Equality Scheme makes direct reference to the Workstep programme. HRP has worked with the equalities and diversity team to devise recruitment methods which enable participants to progress to other jobs in the council. The self-assessment report acknowledges that the adaptation of corporate policies into accessible materials has been slow. HRP has adapted its health and safety procedures, anti-harassment and anti-bullying policy and disability statement into more accessible language with appropriate images. HRP also identifies that the adaptation of corporate training for staff with learning difficulties and low levels of literacy has been slow. HRP now delivers its own health and safety training.

Effectiveness of recruitment policy

How effective is the recruitment policy in filling vacancies?	Reasonable progress
---	---------------------

At the reinspection in 2006, the recruitment of participants to the 10.5 vacant places remained slow and HRP had made little progress since the previous inspection. At the time of the visit, 5.5 vacancies remained. HRP has employed an additional employment adviser to recruit more participants. HRP has improved its recruitment of people with a wider range of disabilities. It has improved the advertising of Workstep across the borough. The council's intranet now includes links to the Workstep programme. From April 2006 to March 2007, the occupancy rate increased from 47% to 69%. In August 2007, the occupancy rate was 76%.

Staff training and development

How effective and responsive is the training and development of the Workstep team?	Reasonable progress
--	---------------------

HRP identifies training needs through monthly line management meetings, team meetings and at appraisal. Most staff have participated in training to improve their skills. Most training has related to disability awareness, administrative and management skills, equality and diversity and protection of vulnerable adults. Staff apply their training well. Following training in dyslexia awareness, the co-ordinator has compiled a useful resource file and a checklist to use with participants who have dyslexia. Staff demonstrate increased awareness of the problems vulnerable adults face. Training for child protection is planned. However, HRP acknowledges in its self-assessment report that the evaluation of training is insufficient. Currently, it evaluates the quality and impact of training informally through team meetings.

Inspection reports are available on the Ofsted website (www.ofsted.gov.uk).