



## Good Practice – Nominee

### Achieve Northwest Connect- Employer Engagement Group



Achieve NW established an Employment Engagement Group (EEG) to increase employment opportunities for participants and to respond to local demands for skills within the North West. We analysed our current practice to increasingly focus on developing effective employment engagement activities by embedding employability targets within performance management. We aimed to provide clear information for employers, clarifying expectations and the mechanisms for, and benefits, of engagement. The group is led by Traci Rabaca (Team Manager) and includes a 'lead' Case Manager from each contract area – Gav Theaker (Lancashire), Helen Wood (Merseyside),



Gabriele Wackwitz-Marshall (Cumbria), Lou Burton & Natalie Flack (More Developed) who meet monthly to develop a coordinated and integrated approach to employer engagement. As the work of the group has proved such a success a part time employer engagement worker has been appointed to offer support. EEG enabled case managers to widen their knowledge of employers in order to help improve employment outcomes through using robust, localised labour market information in a more cohesive manner; and to contribute to other CFO3 outcomes such as supportive measures (work trials/placements). We recognised there is no 'one size fits all' approach to engaging with employers, the needs and capacity of all businesses will be very different. This group has had a significant impact on Achieve employment outcomes resulting in achieving or over-performance of contractual targets.

**Good practice achieved:**

- Agreed a method for sharing the range of employment intelligence being collected from case managers through dissemination at team meetings.
- Provided a single point of contact for employer engagement for each area.
- Targeted employers to assess current and projected job opportunities and the nature and the requirements of these, understood current recruitment practices, jointly agreed and promoted the benefits of recruiting Achieve participants.
- Provided support/signposting for employer recruitment, training and in-work support that helped provide the right Achieve candidates.
- Enabled CFO3 services to be better tailored to employer needs so enhancing the chances of Achieve participants in particular areas or geographies find sustainable employment (Cumbria where they are out performing in employment outcomes)
- Helped employers appreciate the benefits of recruiting offenders as they might never have recruited or considered recruiting from this group before.
- Developed effective, ongoing, trusted relationships with employers
- Targeted marketing strategy devised for new and current employers who have worked with Achieve participants (newsletter sent quarterly) resulting in wider participation of the group.

**EEG ensured reliable, value for money responses were developed:**

- Effective job matching
- Employer participation: emphasising the business benefits of recruiting offenders, i.e. resource savings (time and money), increased productivity, contribution to corporate social responsibility, pre-employment screening, training (in-work) and, through it, the provision of appropriately skilled staff, and aftercare.
- Reducing duplication: Through coordinating the efforts of Case Managers leading to greater clarity and less confusion for employers.
- Performance: Delivering outcomes for employers
- Challenge: Meeting employers' needs and negotiating alternative recruitment processes to help Achieve participants compete on even terms.



HM Prison &  
Probation Service



### **For CFO3 participants:**

- **Motivation:** the prospect of a real job with a specific employer can have a positive effect on individuals' motivation and confidence.
- **Vacancies:** Opportunities for real jobs offering pay and progression; increasing the likelihood of employers recruiting from local candidates