

Employability in Scotland



Case Study

Remploy – Marks & Start programme

BACKGROUND

The Marks & Start programme supports four key disadvantaged groups; Disabled, lone parents, 16-24 year olds and Homeless. It is a structured development programme over a 2 or 4 week period. The programme provides hands-on experience of an Marks & Spencer's job. There is a buddy during the placement which gives participants confidence, develops skills and provides work experience in a live environment.

If a client performs well during their placement and demonstrates the rights skills and approach to the role they receive accreditation and gain a certificate. If accredited, participants have the 'right to return' which means if a role becomes available within the department they were working in, they can be offered this role without having to go through the recruitment process.

If a client is not accredited, they receive comprehensive feedback and return to Remploy for additional development.

WHAT WERE THE AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE PROJECT?

Marks & Spencer have committed to over 600 placements across the UK to disabled people, 140 of these within Scotland.

Marks & Spencer and Remploy work towards a KPI of finding work for a minimum of 50% of all accredited candidates.

WHAT HELP DID THE CLIENT RECEIVE ALONG THEIR EMPLOYABILITY JOURNEY?

Prior to starting their placement, clients attend a workshop at Remploy. This provides them with a full overview of the programme, information about Marks & Spencer's as a company, job roles and expectations.

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This ensures the candidate fully understands what is expected of them and gives them an insight into the organisation. It also allows them to meet our Marks & Start co-ordinator who will work with them throughout their placement.

Following the workshop, candidates attend a meet & greet at the store. This is important for the candidate as it allows them to agree shift patterns & the department they will work in, a buddy is assigned and uniform is ordered. This also removes a lot of the first day nerves as they have been introduced to key employees within the store. The uniform is an important part of the programme as it makes clients feel part of the team. It also makes the placement feel more like work which is a key focus of the programme.

During the placement, the client will work through learning modules within their department.

At the end of the placement a meeting takes place between the store, Remploy and the client to ascertain how the placement went and next steps.

This forms an important part of the overall programme as it allows all parties to contribute and provide feedback. Where candidates are not accredited, Remploy try to ensure this is delivered positively, identify further areas of development and agree next steps.

The Marks & Starts Coordinator at Braehead, Glasgow, talks about the importance of the relationship between Remploy and Marks & Spencer: "Our relationship with Remploy has been vital in making sure we place the candidates into the environment that suits their needs as well as ours as an employer. Communication is the key to our success stories. We work very closely with [the Account Manager at Remploy], who keeps us fully updated with candidates and requirements. Having this relationship helps us to work well together and achieve the goals we set."

She also states that: "I feel we have given the candidates opportunities, which helps build on their new confidence in the work place and therefore improving their overall wellbeing. We have candidates who have disabilities, out of work for a long period of time, confidence issues and lack of self-esteem. This programme helps them overcome their hurdles in life and gives them something to achieve."

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WHAT STAKEHOLDERS WERE INVOLVED IN THIS PROJECT?

Remploy identify suitable clients and deliver the programme for clients with a disability.

Other specialist providers may be involved such as Action for Hearing Loss where a client may require a signer for any part of the process.

WHAT WERE THE KEY OUTCOMES FOR THE CLIENT?

The key outcome is to move clients into employment, further training or education.

It is expected that 50% of the clients (2013/14) will find employment following their participation in the programme. This can be with any employer. Last year (2012/13) the target was 40% and Remploy achieved 46%.

WERE THERE ANY CHALLENGES THROUGHOUT THE PROJECT?

The biggest challenge is to ensure that the right support is put in place prior to the start of the placement as we need to ensure the experience is a positive one. Our Clients agree that we are able to liaise with the store to discuss any support needs and put these in place.

WAS THERE ANYTHING UNIQUE OR INNOVATIVE ABOUT THE PROJECT?

We have been able to break the mould and one of our stores have employed deaf candidates on the checkouts. With a clear plan in places, this has been a real success and has certainly changed perceptions.

WHAT LESSONS HAVE BEEN LEARNED FROM THE PROJECT?

Work Experience placements are only meaningful where there is real structure, agreed learning outcomes and the employer is 100% committed.

PROJECT SUPPORTING STATEMENT

David Parker – Client statement.

I felt my disability was hindering my ability to get a job. I felt employers didn't want to consider someone with PTSD or depression and anxiety. My own confidence hindered my ability to look for work, which fed the depression or stress I felt. I felt I was in a vicious circle.

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Anytime I was stuck my buddies couldn't have been more helpful and patient. They showed you what to do, but wouldn't do for you, so it ensured you were always learning.

This has been life changing for me. I learned so much and I did it in a difficult real life environment that wasn't a class room. I got a taste of real retail.

I've learned so many skills. I can now really see a good future ahead; I can actually see a future and can now plan my life.

The main thing is my confidence. They helped to build my confidence. I now feel better in myself and I'm comfortable in my own skin again. They taught me to handle working under pressure. I feel like I'm back to feeling like the old me. The store gave me time outs when I felt I needed them if things got a bit too much in the first week or two in a new, busy environment and that really made me feel supported.

Nataliia Baltramaitiene – Client Statement.

Out of work for 11 months after moving to the UK from Ukraine. Limited retail experience in Ukraine, however looking to progress since coming to the UK. Being deaf and moving to a new country, unsure of the adjustments employers would make, but have the skills to work in retail.

I have retail experience having worked in small shops in Ukraine. However I did struggle to find work in the 11 months after I came to the UK. I knew I had the skills necessary to work in retail, but I worried employers looked at my disability and thought I couldn't work in a large store. I love working with people and helping people, and have always looked to work in retail, so an opportunity to show my skills was really beneficial.

My buddy made me feel welcomed as part of the team. They put me at ease and made me feel like I belonged in store, even though I was only potentially there for 4 weeks. The store made everyone on placement feel like a full time member of staff. That really helped us to settle in. I got on with my buddies very well. Even those who couldn't sign, they made every effort to communicate with me and make sure I was ok.

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M&S helped me by giving me the opportunity to shine. They gave me a platform to demonstrate my skills which I hadn't had before. They didn't see my disability as anything to hold me back. They made me feel very comfortable and relaxed in the store and even customers didn't make me feel uneasy. I always had someone I could turn to if needed, but this was hardly ever needed as customers were good at making the effort to communicate and ask for what they needed when they realised I was deaf.

If you would like further information about this Project please contact Sandra Smith:

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For more case studies please visit the Employability Learning Network at www.employabilityinscotland.com

The views expressed in case study are those of the participants and are not necessarily shared by their employers or the Scottish Government



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Government**