

Case study2 : employer engagement

Skills for Security is the industry body for the security sector. It took employer demand as its starting point in a 'business first' brokerage approach to placing unemployed people in the Thames Gateway area. It appointed a former senior manager in the industry as a broker, who, from personal experience, had a close understanding of recruitment, skills and retention issues being experienced by the industry.

A significant amount of pre-employment advice was provided, including explaining the training requirements and realities of work in the security industry. The broker also provided employers with a candidate screening service which meant that the candidates for vacancies were more likely to be well motivated and suitable. Many potential candidates had preconceived ideas about the nature of work in the security industry which needed to be challenged. A literacy and numeracy test, followed by a screening questionnaire, were also used to assess candidates' suitability.

The broker arranged an industry-specific training package with an organisation, ATS, through which it was possible to draw on public funding. Successful completion of the training enabled candidates to be licensed for work in the industry. All received one week's initial training and were then matched to employers with vacancies. They received further training of up to two weeks once they were in work. The broker made an arrangement with the Jobcentre Plus district whereby candidates were able to undertake their industry-required training in one block rather than being caught by the 16 hour a week rule.

Specialist knowledge of a specific sector was crucial to the success of this 'business first' approach, as this helped to gain the trust of employers as well as ensuring that appropriate candidates were referred to them. Effective screening of candidates was critical, as was arranging skills training (drawing on existing funded programmes) and brokering flexible application of the benefit rules with Jobcentre Plus. A placement rate of 20 per cent was achieved in the face of a big drop in the security industry vacancy rate during the recession: Skills for Security considers a placement rate of 50 per cent to be achievable in normal conditions.