

Business ^{in the}

Community

Business Action on Economic Renewal

COMMUNITY
ENVIRONMENT
MARKETPLACE
WORKPLACE

BUILDING OPPORTUNITIES

Business and housing associations
working together to help residents
into employment: Lessons from
Birmingham and Bristol





Employability skills have never been more important. If the UK is to succeed in an increasingly competitive marketplace, we have a responsibility to build vibrant, economically active communities and help individuals take the steps to build better working lives.

This is even more important during an economic downturn. Business in the Community believes that, in more difficult times, it is critical to develop innovative ways to reach those furthest removed from the job markets. I am therefore delighted that Business in the Community, Wates, Midland Heart and Places for People have collaborated in support of this Pilot. Social landlords are uniquely placed to support some of the more vulnerable people in our society, while businesses can create the pathways towards sustainable jobs. Together the two groups can make a real difference to the lives of local people.

I hope the experience outlined in this report, combined with the accompanying toolkits for business and social landlords, inspire and support other housing providers and companies to create similar partnerships.

Stephen Howard,
Chief Executive, Business in the Community



Wates has a proud tradition of supporting communities and pursuing business in a socially responsible way. We are therefore delighted to be supporting the work of Business in the Community in promoting stronger social landlord/business relationships.

In 2007, Wates identified social landlords as an obvious, yet under-utilised, route for companies wanting to channel their community investment into communities in most need. The resulting research confirmed the opportunity to up the game in building cross-sectoral relationships to support local people by improving their employability skills and maximising their ability to work.

Three years on, I am delighted that the theory of multi-business partnerships with housing associations has been put into practice. My thanks go to all the other businesses participating and the Wates staff who have made this possible within our business.

Finally, I am proud that our knowledge of the business benefits has been considerably strengthened by the Pilot. However, I am even prouder of the achievements of those local residents in Bristol and Birmingham who participated in the employability opportunities on offer and who have achieved or will go on to achieve successful working lives.

Steve Trusler,
Strategy Director, Wates Living Space



Places for People's vision is to create new communities and transform existing neighbourhoods into vibrant places for people to live and prosper. To achieve this, we recognise that neighbourhoods need to be economically viable and that economic inclusion provides opportunity and choice for our customers. We therefore seek to provide a range of opportunities for our customers to participate in education, training and employment. Our work in this area has been recognised nationally through the Housing Corporation's Gold Award for "Tackling Worklessness" in 2008.

This Pilot has allowed us to embed our activity into the local economy of Bristol and develop new and lasting relationships with key businesses outside our existing supplier and contractor chain including Rolls-Royce and Hotel du Vin. Our customers have been offered a variety of employability opportunities which reflect those being offered in the wider economy and have benefited from direct engagement with employers.

I am delighted that Places for People has had the opportunity to be a key partner in this Pilot and look forward to securing an on-going partnership with local businesses to support our customers in Bristol into sustainable employment.

David Cowans,
Group Chief Executive, Places for People



Midland Heart is passionate about communities. We want to build opportunities that can help transform the lives of our customers and local residents. We were therefore delighted to work with Business in the Community to build partnerships with Birmingham companies to support people with their work ambitions.

The Pilot has helped us to develop valuable new approaches to resident engagement. It has also deepened our understanding of how to work with businesses from different sectors and the types of positive experiences they can offer local residents. Through harnessing this learning we are able to create benefits for our communities which have not been previously accessible.

Looking forward, we believe it likely that supporting customers to become economically active will become an increasingly important part of a social landlord's role. We are delighted to be playing a part in driving forward this new approach and hope that other housing associations will be interested to draw upon our experiences.

Tom Murtha,
Chief Executive Officer, Midland Heart

CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	05
CONTEXT	07
PILOT OBJECTIVES	08
BRISTOL	09
CASE STUDY – BEHIND THE SCENES	11
BIRMINGHAM	13
CASE STUDY – SIGNET & MENU OF OPPORTUNITIES	15
HURDLES TO SUCCESS	17
LESSONS LEARNED	18
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	19

111 residents

During the Pilot, **111** residents undertook **200** employability activities.

“I really like Mani’s personality – I think I could learn a lot from her. She is really young but has done so much. Although I have a job offer it is still early days. I will definitely still meet with Mani for as long as I can – I need her.”

Natalie, a 19 year old Lozells resident, attended the ‘Behind the Scenes’ day at Midland Heart, and was then matched with a job coach at Signet Jewelers Limited. She is now employed as a Support Worker.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

In 2007, Business in the Community and Wates commissioned research to explore how housing associations and business can work together to target communities in greatest need. The output of this research, the 'Building Opportunities' report and accompanying toolkits, outlined the business case for housing associations and business to collaborate on social issues. The research also provided examples of good practice and advice to organisations interested in creating similar partnerships. Strikingly, it found some great examples of one-to-one relationships between housing associations and businesses but few examples of partnerships developed outside contracting relationships.

ESTABLISHING THE PILOT

In response to this apparent gap, Business in the Community, with the support of the Tenant Services Authority and Wates, and in partnership with Midland Heart and Places for People, established a Pilot in Birmingham and Bristol aimed at increasing the employability of local residents.

In each location, a collaboration between a housing association and a number of businesses was established, with the aim of testing whether multi-partner collaborations could provide greater value to employability initiatives than single business relationships.

Residents were referred to the Pilot through local housing associations, supported housing schemes, and voluntary organisations. The Pilot created employability opportunities in sectors including retail, manufacturing, hospitality and construction.

EMPLOYABILITY OPPORTUNITIES CREATED

A wide range of opportunities were offered, including:

1. CV and interview skills workshops.
2. 'Behind the Scenes' group visits to workplaces where attendees learn about the types of available job opportunities.
3. Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) services.
4. Work experience placements.
5. 'Ready for Work' - a Business in the Community programme of employability training, placements and post-placement support.
6. Job coaching - ongoing one-to-one guidance.
7. Signposting to English for Speakers of other Languages (ESOL) courses, further education, volunteering, and mainstream employability programmes.

Through active brokerage individual residents were assigned to opportunities that matched their expectations and interests.

To support and encourage future activity, this report is supplemented by two practical toolkits: one for social landlords on how to work with business and another for businesses wanting to forge stronger relationships with social landlords¹.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

The Pilot ran from September 2008 to March 2010. Through the Pilot, 19 businesses provided time and resource to support the employability of 111 residents.

The Pilot has identified the following as key recommendations for future projects:

- Decide on the eligibility criteria at the outset. In developing a whole-neighbourhood employability programme, the offer must cater to all capabilities. Whereas, a targeted approach could result in getting more people into work but may exclude those most in need of support.
- Identify and consult with potential key partners, including residents' associations, businesses and local authorities, at the outset to ensure that the design of the project is fit for purpose. Where appropriate, residents should be signposted onto mainstream employability programmes.
- Identify the specific barriers that prevent residents from accessing employability support and address them. These barriers should be clearly communicated to the businesses so that expectations are realistic.
- Engage your key internal champions at the outset; without buy-in from all levels the partnership won't work.
- Ensure that roles and responsibilities between partners are explicit and that there is one clear point of contact for local residents and for businesses (this need not be the same person).
- Commit sufficient resource to maximise benefits. Resource levels will need to be in proportion to project aims, but it is recommended that there should be at least one full-time equivalent employee and administrative support to co-ordinate activities, plus commitment from partner organisations.
- Consider the use of a brokerage organisation to build the bridges between social landlords and businesses. Brokers often have the expertise in engaging across sectors, but need to be resourced.
- Understand the business case for involvement. Businesses with a commercial interest in the housing association will have an obvious business case for involvement. However, this does not mean that other businesses will not be interested.
- Remember to track outputs and celebrate success. Residents are most likely to be inspired by the example of other residents gaining employment.
- Engage local authorities, local strategic partnerships and local employment partnerships wherever possible. Projects achieve more if they are integrated into the wider effort to improve skills and employment outcomes.
- Recognise the unique role that social housing providers can play by engaging residents and encouraging their participation in employability programmes.

NB: A note on terminology - although the housing partners in Birmingham and Bristol were both housing associations, the lessons from this Pilot should be equally applicable to council-owned social housing and that managed by Arms Length Management Organisations.

¹ Please see Related publications on page 20.

CONTEXT

Unemployment has a considerable cost to society, particularly in disadvantaged communities. The Government estimates that the cost of labour market exclusion in deprived areas is £11.5bn per year².

Nearly half of all social housing is located in the most deprived fifth of neighbourhoods³, while, since 1985, the proportion of social housing tenants in full-time employment fell from 43 to 22%⁴.

Many social landlords recognise these challenges and are investing in improvements to enhance the life of their local residents. Examples include the provision of better facilities, access to home ownership and affordable finance and support for employability and enterprise programmes.

SOCIAL LANDLORD DRIVERS

There are a range of drivers for social landlords in this respect. First, by supporting economic opportunities for those they house they are explicitly supporting government aspirations around work as a means out of poverty. It seems likely that this focus on employment will increase rather than decrease in future.

Secondly, residents who gain and sustain employment benefit from an increase in confidence, well-being and motivation which may well benefit the local area.

Thirdly, a better mix of incomes in an area of social housing is documented as providing benefits to public services.

That said, the transition from benefit-dependency to wage-earning may create short-term challenges, which needs to be recognised.

BUSINESS DRIVERS

Businesses also recognise the benefit of economically active communities. Community investment that supports economic viability can be a source of business opportunity, innovation, and competitive advantage.

Companies enjoy a range of benefits from such investment, including staff development, employee and customer loyalty and cost savings in recruitment and retention. They may also benefit from better working relations with suppliers, wider influence in the marketplace, and a stronger corporate reputation.

In fact, 62% of employees supported to volunteer by their employers spoke favourably to customers, family and friends about what their company does⁵.

In light of the impact both groups can make to the employability of residents it is timely to explore what these groups can achieve together.

The table below shows the Menu of Opportunities made available through collaboration.

Menu of Opportunities
Pre-employability training.
CV and interview skills and job search workshops.
'Behind the Scenes' group visits to workplaces where attendees learn about the job opportunities available in that industry.
Career advice sessions.
Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) services.
Work experience placements.
Ready for Work training - a Business in the Community programme that equips people with the confidence and skills to re-enter the job market.
Job coaching - ongoing one-to-one guidance.
Signposting to English for Speakers of other Languages (ESOL) courses, further education, volunteering, employment and mainstream employability programmes.

² DWP, 2007 (quoted in 'Transforming places, changing lives', Communities and Local Government, May 2009, pg.2)

³ The Hills Report' - ESRC Research Centre for Analysis of Social Exclusion, 'Ends and Means: The Future Roles of Social Housing in England', John Hills, February 2007, pg.20
<http://sticerd.lse.ac.uk/dps/case/cr/CASereport34.pdf>

⁴ 'The Hills Report' - ESRC Research Centre for Analysis of Social Exclusion, 'Ends and Means: The Future Roles of Social Housing in England', John Hills, February 2007, pg.45
<http://sticerd.lse.ac.uk/dps/case/cr/CASereport34.pdf>

⁵ Business in the Community, 2007

PILOT OBJECTIVES

The Pilot sought to meet its key objectives in the following ways:

ONE: build stronger relationships between housing associations and business

Instead of businesses and housing associations working in isolation, the Pilot aimed to create employability opportunities with input from both groups.

Broker-led Steering Groups encompassing all key stakeholders were established in each Pilot area to project manage activities.

Bringing the different groups together helped to increase trust and understanding among the partners.

TWO: build best practice partnerships

To encourage best practice outcomes, the housing associations and selected businesses already had a stated commitment to support the employability of residents.

The Steering Groups aimed to capitalise on this interest, while the development of Menus of Opportunities sought to create a broad range of opportunities for local residents.

Progress was tracked throughout the Pilot, with examples of good practice and areas for improvement shared through Steering Group meetings, operational meetings, quarterly joint Pilot meetings and company review meetings.

THREE: deliver employability outcomes

The Pilot began to deliver employability opportunities in June 2009 and will continue to do so until March 2010. To date (January 2010), 200 employability opportunities have been created.

Businesses from a range of sectors, as well as voluntary sector and local council representatives were involved, ensuring a wide range of employability experiences. These varied from a CV workshop with a jewellery manufacturer, to visits to local government offices and job coaching with volunteers from a construction company.

The table below illustrates the breadth of sectors involved in each region.

Bristol	Sector	Birmingham	Sector
Bevan Brittan LLP	Professional services	Badenoch & Clark	Recruitment
Cabot Circus retailers	Retail	BXL *	Employability support
Cadbury	Food and drink manufacturing	Cleone Foods	Food manufacturing
Hotel du Vin	Hospitality	Midland Heart	Housing
Places for People	Housing	Morrison	Facilities services
Planning Inspectorate	Public sector	Signet Jewelers Limited	Jewellery manufacturing and retail
Rolls-Royce	Aerospace	Wates	Construction
Wates	Construction		

* BXL is a social enterprise company

FOUR: deliver sustainable partnerships

The Pilot helped housing associations work with new organisations; it presented business as a viable partner for future housing association activities.

It also encouraged local government to consider the role business can play and consider more partnership opportunities within their on-going employability programmes. By involving local politicians and local government it is anticipated that some of the principles of the Pilot will be progressed.

It is too early to say what the residual effect of these partnerships will be. However, by partnering housing associations with businesses, the Pilot heightened their understanding of the roles the other could play.

BRISTOL

Business in the Community worked with Places for People to build multi-sector business partnerships with companies in Bristol. The programme was called 'Housing Works' and particularly targeted Places for People tenants in South Bristol and St Pauls.

AREA PROFILE

The South Bristol area encompasses several neighbourhoods, including Hartcliffe and Knowle West, all of which suffer disproportionately from high levels of deprivation. The area has relatively few businesses and travel to other parts of the city can involve more than one bus journey.

In contrast, St Pauls is an inner-city suburb of Bristol situated just east of the city centre. While still comparatively deprived, it has a fairly strong economy with a number of medium-sized and large businesses.

Accessibility and economic activity emerged as significant factors in the level of uptake among residents in each of these areas.

BUSINESS ENGAGEMENT

- Business engagement was driven through an established group of business leaders to address the employability of disadvantaged people.
- The Steering Group managed the Pilot through bi-monthly meetings, which Aspire Bristol (a local social enterprise), Bristol City Council, Business in the Community, Places for People and Wates attended.
- Approximately 13 businesses were involved in delivering the Pilot, offering residents individually tailored employability support.

WHAT WORKED IN BRISTOL?

In Bristol, Housing Works harnessed existing business commitment to employability and local council involvement, which helped to ensure the success of the Pilot.

ROLE OF BUSINESS

- Businesses already involved in employability work extended support to the Pilot and encouraged other employers in their networks and supply chain to engage.
- Bevan Brittan LLP, Cabot Circus retailers, Cadbury, Hotel du Vin, Places for People, the Planning Inspectorate and Rolls-Royce worked together to deliver a number of different Behind the Scenes visits.
- Wates opened its Building Futures programme in Bristol to Pilot participants which created access for residents to a two-week placement in the construction industry.
- Businesses extended support offered through an existing Business in the Community programme, including pre-employability training, work experience and job coaching.

ROLE OF HOUSING ASSOCIATION

- Places for People promoted Housing Works through a radio advert and bespoke marketing materials. Housing Works created a distinctive identity for Pilot activities with which to attract residents.
- Places for People developed relationships with grassroots organisations and used an in-house database of residents from which to draw referrals.

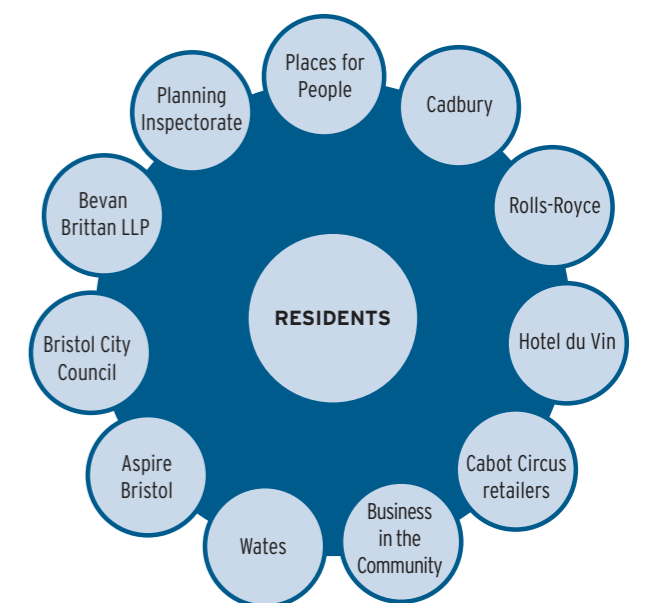
SIGNIFICANT PARTNERS

- Bristol City Council found synergies with its own employability agenda in its City Development Regeneration Team to enhance the Pilot. It also provided a link with the Council's Learning Communities Team to complement the Behind the Scenes visits and provide residents with additional learning support.

ROLE OF BROKER

- Business in the Community generated interest in the Pilot by tapping into a group of Bristol businesses already engaged in the employability agenda.
- It approached businesses with a set of employability opportunities that suited their time and resource capacity. In this way, companies were offered a spectrum of engagement from a one-off Behind the Scenes activity, through to the longer term commitment of job coaching.
- Close working between Business in the Community and Places for People ensured high quality, relevant and individually tailored programmes of support for residents.

BRISTOL STAKEHOLDERS



CASE STUDY BEHIND THE SCENES

18 pilot participants

Pilot participants in Bristol attended a Behind the Scenes Day to learn about potential career opportunities in key employment sectors in the city.

In Bristol, social housing residents were offered the opportunity to attend a Behind the Scenes visit to Hotel du Vin, a 40 bedroom boutique hotel in Bristol. Residents were able to learn about the different jobs in the hospitality industry, the skills and experience required, training and development provided, where jobs are advertised and the recruitment and selection process.

At the start of the day, participants met the General Manager who gave a tour of the premises and introduced the group to the staff team. Members of the events, catering, marketing and reception teams spoke to the group about their day-to-day responsibilities. Participants were encouraged to ask questions about the industry and the employment opportunities offered. Participants were also given the opportunity to interview some of the employees about their own jobs.

Behind the Scenes visits also took place to Bevan Brittan LLP (professional services), Cabot Circus retailers (retail), Cadbury (food manufacturing), Places for People (housing), the Planning Inspectorate (public sector), and Rolls-Royce (aerospace). The range of visits on offer was designed to raise aspirations and to support residents to consider employment across a range of key sectors in the city.

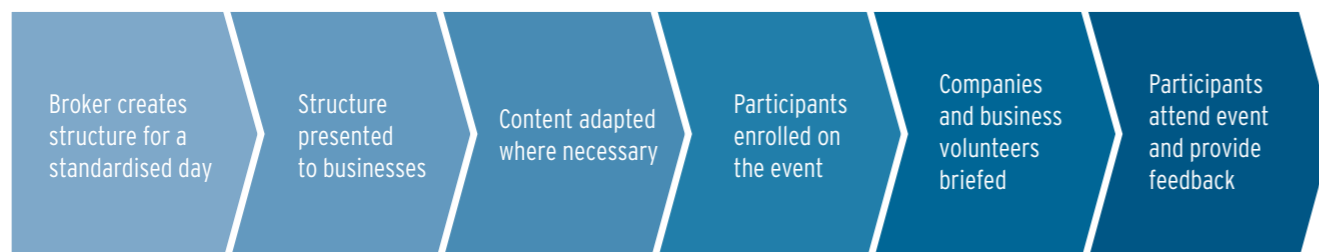
“Behind the Scenes has provided residents with an opportunity to learn about the range of job opportunities open to them in a variety of sectors – from hospitality to housing. The opportunity to meet with real business people offering practical support is invaluable in raising the confidence of our residents.”

Richard Davies,
Community Engagement Officer,
Places for People

“Through collaboration with housing associations we got to reach some of the most vulnerable people in our communities and help offer them a pathway towards work.”

Phil Bishop, Volunteering Co-ordinator, Planning Inspectorate

BEHIND THE SCENES PROCESS



OUTCOMES

- 62 residents have been signposted towards employability support such as Business in the Community's Ready for Work programme and Wates' Building Futures programme, which include work placements.
- 38 employee volunteers helped deliver opportunities to residents including volunteers to support the Behind the Scenes visits, job coaches and Ready for Work buddies⁶.
- 13 companies have actively supported the Bristol Pilot.
- To date, there have been a range of outcomes for local residents, including four starting employment, four starting voluntary work and eight enrolling in further education or training.

⁶ Ready for Work buddies are employee volunteers who support participants during the two-week Ready for Work placement.

BIRMINGHAM

In Birmingham, Business in the Community worked with Midland Heart to build multi-sector business partnerships. The programme was called 'Ready for Change' and targeted all residents of North Lozells.

AREA PROFILE

North Lozells is about two kilometres north of Birmingham city centre and is a deprived inner-city area with high unemployment. It has a thriving high street with many small retailers, but very few large employers. The current unemployment rate is over 20%, higher than the rest of Birmingham.

Although transport links between Lozells and the rest of Birmingham are adequate, the Pilot found that some residents were reluctant to travel outside the neighbourhood for employability opportunities.

BUSINESS ENGAGEMENT

- Businesses operating close to Lozells were targeted for involvement, as were businesses already engaged in employability work in the city.
- The Steering Group managed the Pilot through bi-monthly meetings, which Badenoch & Clark, Business in the Community, Cleone Foods, Midland Heart, Morrison, Signet and Wates attended.
- Five businesses and Midland Heart delivered a range of employability opportunities for residents.

WHAT WORKED IN BIRMINGHAM?

In Birmingham the depth of business engagement within the Steering Group and the integrated business offer to residents ensured a truly business-led employability offer.

ROLE OF BUSINESS

- Local businesses showed buy-in and ownership of the Pilot through strong contribution to the Steering Group.
- Businesses worked closely to design an integrated offer to residents, which meant individuals could experience complementary employability activities.

For example, Signet and Morrison delivered CV and interview skills workshops to residents, some of whom were matched with job coaches from Signet and Wates, while others received one-to-one employability advice and support from Badenoch & Clark.

- Signet delivered CV and interview skills workshops, offered work placements and widened application channels for their Christmas temporary vacancies to Lozells residents. This wide range of employability opportunities benefited many local residents.
- BXL, an IAG provider, enhanced the contribution of businesses by high quality facilitation of CV and interview skills workshops.

“Through partnerships like this, we can have a much greater impact than if we act alone. Linking up with Midland Heart, Business in the Community and the other companies has given us a much deeper reach into the North Lozells community.”

Nicola Linkleter,
Executive Director, Badenoch & Clark

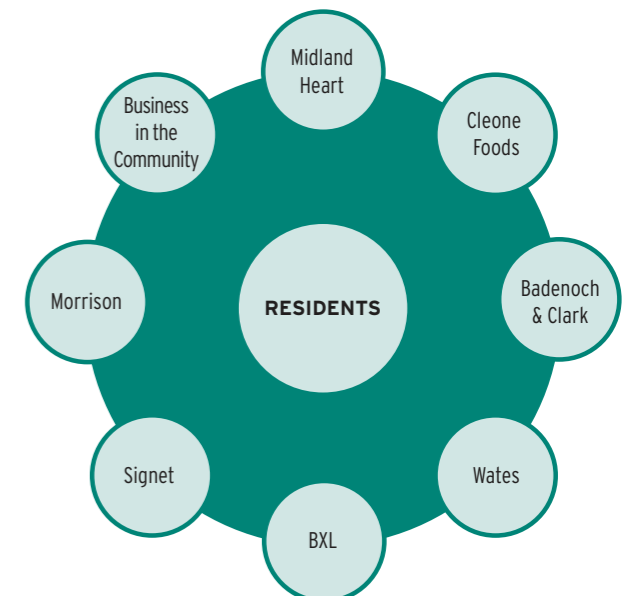
ROLE OF HOUSING ASSOCIATION

- Strong relationships were developed with the housing association's supported housing schemes which proved an effective source of referrals for the Pilot.
- Bespoke marketing materials were created which highlighted the benefits of involvement and were distributed to local community groups active in the target area.
- Trained staff delivered CV and interview skills workshops to residents.

ROLE OF BROKER

- Broker support for Midland Heart built capacity within the housing association. For example, a community partnership was brokered between Morrison and a Midland Heart supported housing scheme.
- Through a strong partnership with BXL, Pilot participants were given the chance to articulate their needs and aspirations, to identify suitable employability opportunities.
- The broker helped companies develop their approach to ensure opportunities met resident needs most effectively.

BIRMINGHAM STAKEHOLDERS



CASE STUDY

SIGNET: DELIVERING A MENU OF OPPORTUNITIES

25

25 employee volunteers helped to deliver employability opportunities for Lozells residents as part of the Pilot in Birmingham.

Signet, a local jewellery manufacturer and retailer, is one of the few large employers in Lozells. Building on company commitment to the local area, it was keen to support local residents through the Pilot by:

- Providing eighteen job coaches
- Hosting and providing volunteers for two CV and interview skills workshops
- Providing work experience placements
- Attending and contributing to all Steering Group meetings
- Opening channels to employment opportunities through its Christmas vacancy recruitment process
- Hosting a Behind the Scenes day

Signet's location offered residents easy access to activities which proved particularly valuable for less mobile residents and those with caring commitments. The range of activities they delivered enabled residents with varied skills, interests and needs to undertake employability activity.

By opening their doors to local residents, Signet employees gained a better understanding of the people in the immediate local community. Through job coaching they have developed ongoing one-to-one guidance which will continue beyond the Pilot.

Similarly, Signet's CV and interview skills workshops provided residents with valuable skills and increased confidence. The work experience placements gave insight to working within the neighbourhood's largest employer and more importantly allowed residents to bring their CVs up to date and gain a recent work reference. The opening up of recruitment channels will result in recruitment policies being adapted, potentially having a long-term impact on employment opportunities in Lozells.

"I was very nervous about attending the job coach meeting as I have never done anything like this before. But meeting Gurps made me feel happy about coming."

Lukasz,
Ready for Change participant

"The CV and interview skills workshops were very successful. Everyone involved was really proactive and wanted to learn. I definitely felt that they were very keen on getting back into work and were receptive to the help, advice and information being given to them on the day."

Elaine Allen, HR Business Partner, Morrison



OUTCOMES

- To date, six businesses have been engaged in the Pilot, collectively providing over 25 employee volunteers.
- Midland Heart hosted a Behind the Scenes day, engaging six residents.
- To date, 60 Lozells residents have signed up to the Pilot and 49 have undertaken one or more employability opportunity. Seven people have started employment and eight have entered further education.
- Best practice was shared through the West Midlands Regional Homelessness Strategy Implementation Group and the RegenWM Awards process.
- Morrison created additional value by instigating a community partnership with a Midland Heart supported housing scheme in Lozells.

HURDLES TO SUCCESS

The Pilot was not without challenges; the most significant of these are outlined below.

COST AND RESOURCE

- Initial underestimation of the co-ordination necessary for effective project management. This included the need for consistent data capture, presentation of comparable findings and the creation of clear recommendations for replication.
- Although one primary point of contact in each housing association was critical; it would have been preferable to have at least one other point of contact during the Pilot. Turnover of employees created some project management issues.

CLIENT GROUP

- All partner organisations underestimated, to some degree, the hidden barriers to work faced by residents and how these would impact upon success. These included aversion to travel, drug recovery and childcare issues.

PARTNER ROLES

- There was some uncertainty over roles and responsibilities at the outset. In addition, the business broker overestimated the employability work currently undertaken by the partner social landlords, who need resourcing in order to deliver support to local residents.
- The Pilot could also have benefited from greater consistency of senior leadership within each partner organisation.

LESSONS LEARNED

For housing associations and businesses that are just getting started, keep the following in mind:

RESEARCH AND CONSULTATION

- Consult organisations who deliver employability programmes in the area, businesses on their capacity for involvement, and residents about preferences.
- Projects should not try to replicate existing local provision, but should integrate existing offers. Using an understanding of the local landscape, shape the activities you will offer to business and residents.
- Commit time to examining the barriers faced by local people and if possible find ways to overcome them.

RESOURCE AND MANAGEMENT

- Ensure that partners have the resource to effectively engage residents. Resource levels need to be in proportion to project aims, but it is recommended that there should be at least one full-time equivalent employee and administrative support to co-ordinate activities, plus commitment from partner organisations.
- Each partner will need sufficient time to secure internal buy-in to ramp up to activity delivery and to nurture networks between the businesses, housing associations and residents.
- Ensure that partners' roles and responsibilities are clear and that there is one clear point of contact for local residents and for businesses (this need not be the same person).
- Consider the use of a brokerage organisation to connect social landlords and businesses. Brokers often have expertise in engaging across sectors.
- Create realistic expectations with your key partners. Approach business and residents with a clear remit of their involvement and what they should expect.

These options should be presented in a varied and flexible Menu of Opportunities so that partners can commit a small amount of time initially.

- Create a distinct identify for the project that separates it from existing initiatives and highlights the business input.
- Remember to track outputs and celebrate success. Residents are most likely to be inspired by the example of other residents gaining employment.

BE OPPORTUNISTIC

- Engage a cross-section of local businesses including some that are recruiting or likely to recruit in the near future. Look to housing association contractors, but also reach out across the different sectors represented in the area.
- Maximise the possibility of success by targeting areas that have some larger employers in proximity, which are accessible by public transport. Experience shows that some residents will not be able or prepared to travel far from home and that larger businesses are most likely to have the capacity to engage.
- Identify the different business drivers for companies to get involved. With larger companies these may be stated in community investment policies.
- Understand local government priorities and how employability features in them, this will identify synergies between your work and theirs.
- Engage local authorities, local strategic partnerships and local employment partnerships wherever possible and appropriate. Projects achieve more if they are integrated into the wider effort to improve the skills and employment outcomes of local people.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1 HOUSING ASSOCIATIONS NEED TO MAKE EMPLOYABILITY A CORPORATE PRIORITY** against which resource is committed. This resource can be used to explore how working with business can complement existing activities. There must be a foundation upon which to build collaboration with business.
- 2 EFFECTIVE EMPLOYABILITY INVESTMENT.** Given the investment housing associations are increasingly willing to make in resident employability, it makes sense that they should seek out the most effective ways to do this. By working with business, housing associations can make the most efficient investment by creating activities that truly reflect the local economy.
- 3 DIRECT ROUTE TO COMMUNITIES.** If businesses are interested in addressing disadvantage in local communities, working with housing associations is the most direct route to some of the most deprived neighbourhoods in the UK.
- 4 PARTNERSHIP POTENTIAL.** Resource may be an issue for smaller housing associations, thereby limiting their ability to support employability programmes locally and build the necessary relationships with business. In such cases smaller housing associations could work with other local housing associations.
- 5 OVERCOMING FINANCIAL BARRIERS.** There is a need to tackle perverse incentives that currently discourage residents and landlords from moving away from the stable income stream that housing benefit provides. Benefit policies should be more supportive of residents pursuing employment.
- 6 ENCOURAGING COLLABORATION.** There remains a need to build understanding among social landlords of the opportunities to engage with business and build confidence that the private sector will be receptive to approaches from social landlords. There is a clear role for national housing organisations in fulfilling this role.
- 7 RESOURCE COMMITMENT.** If there are growing expectations that housing associations should provide greater support for the employability of their residents, this will need to be recognised by funding bodies.

FURTHER INFORMATION

In addition to the Toolkit for Social Landlords that accompanies this report, the following sources of information may be useful:

British Chambers of Commerce
www.chamberonline.co.uk

Business in the Community
www.bitc.org.uk

Chartered Institute of Housing
www.cih.org

Communities and Local Government
www.communities.gov.uk

Homes and Communities Agency
www.homesandcommunities.co.uk

iN business for neighbourhoods
www.inbiz.org

National Housing Federation
www.housing.org.uk

Tenant Services Authority
www.tenantservicesauthority.org

The Housing Forum
www.housingforum.org.uk

RELATED PUBLICATIONS

Building Opportunities: Businesses and social landlords working together (Business in the Community, 2008)

A Toolkit for businesses: Building opportunities for businesses and social landlords to work together (Business in the Community, 2008)

Tackling Worklessness: A toolkit (Chartered Institute of Housing, Helen Cope, 2008)

Business in the Community publications are available for download from www.bitc.org.uk/socialhousing

Acknowledgments

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Business in the Community - Community Impact

The Community Impact team supports Business in the Community members to address key social issues in communities of greatest need. We offer strategic leadership and programmes that enable businesses to share time, skills and resources that make a positive impact on the bottom line as well as society.

We campaign with our members to collaboratively address key social issues:

= EDUCATION - building effective and sustainable partnerships between schools and businesses to ensure all young people leave education with the knowledge and aspirations that will equip them to enter the world of work

= EMPLOYABILITY - removing barriers to work for socially excluded groups, including people who are homeless and ex-offenders, to ensure they seek opportunities to gain and sustain employment

= ECONOMIC RENEWAL - maximising the value of investment, enterprise and employment opportunities in our most deprived communities to increase social equity and cohesion



I think. Therefore I du Vin.



Business in the Community - mobilises business for good. Our members commit to take action on the key issues of today, be that people or planet, and create a unique platform for collaborative action.

www.bitc.org.uk

Business in the Community

137 Shepherdess Walk
London N1 7RQ, UK

T +44 (0) 20 7566 8650

F +44 (0) 20 7253 1877

E socialhousing@bitc.org.uk

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