
Solent Jobs Programme

Outcomes and Review 2019





Forward

“Southampton City Council was delighted to work with Portsmouth City Council and Wheatsheaf Trust to deliver this innovative and successful programme of support to people with long term and complex barriers to work. The results of this study prove that an intensive and flexible programme, responsive to local needs and integrated with local services, maximises outcomes. Moving into work is of great benefit to an individual, in terms of financial security, social interactions and improved health, but the benefits do not stop there; as cities we also benefit from healthier communities, a more robust labour market and reduced demand on public services. I commend this programme to national and local policy makers as a way forward, to strengthen local labour markets and meet the disability employment gap.”

**Cllr Darren Paffey, Cabinet member for
Aspiration, Schools and Life Long learning**

Introduction

From 2016 to 2018 the Solent Jobs Programme delivered an innovative employment support programme to over 1,000 long term unemployed people who had health conditions or disabilities.

This programme, part funded by the European Social Fund and Southampton and Portsmouth City Deal aimed to promote partnership working and service integration in the Solent area, especially between employment and health services. It focused on addressing skills shortages in the Solent area to meet business recruitment needs and was aligned with the government's Work and Health agenda, and its commitment to reducing the disability employment gap. Key to the programme was the need to improve employment outcomes for people who had not been helped by previous welfare to work programmes and were at risk of being left behind and facing social and economic exclusion. Such efforts were aimed at improving the local labour market, whilst also making the case for sustained local funding in the future by demonstrating the effectiveness of devolved programmes.

Led by Southampton City Council, working closely in partnership with Portsmouth City Council, Wheatsheaf Trust and neighbouring local authorities the Solent Jobs Programme has helped over 320 people into permanent employment. This is a hugely positive result. By working at a local level we have reached many of the most excluded people and by tailoring support specifically to their needs we have achieved a positive result with them.

The Programme has had a positive impact on so many lives with measurable benefits for peoples' well-being, confidence and self efficacy, as well as their financial and economic security. This report highlights some of the key outcomes, statistics and lessons learnt. We are also delighted to share with you over the following pages some case studies and narratives that demonstrate the range and scope of the programme.

Key results:

1,153

people engaged with complex barriers to work

793

local businesses engaged

243

people achieved paid work placements and 121 unpaid work tasters

354

new job starts

Delivering the programme

Solent Jobs Programme covered the cities of Southampton and Portsmouth, and areas of urban or rural deprivation, including Gosport, Havant, and the Isle of Wight.

Key delivery partners

- Southampton City Council (lead)
- Portsmouth City Council
- Wheatsheaf Trust

Together we worked with Hampshire County Council, Isle of Wight, Gosport and Havant Councils to ensure we reached their businesses and resident communities, working with their services where possible.

The co-operation and support of Jobcentre Plus staff in all these areas was vital to the success of the programme, and the job centres accounted for 93% of all referrals.

The Solent Jobs Programme forged strong working relationships with a range of agencies, including mental health services, primary care, chronic pain services, occupational health, third sector, family and housing, employer networks, advice agencies, DWP, employability and training providers and a host of others.

Structure of the programme

- intensive case management, skills and employability support;
- mental and physical health support,
- subsidised job (known as a Transitional Employment Programme or TEP)
- open employment and in work support

Participants were referred onto the programme and their needs assessed and an individual Action Plan completed. From this point they could receive up to one year's support. The programme was designed to be flexible and tailored to individual needs.

Embedded in the programme was the opportunity to experience high quality work placements, paid at the Living Wage. This Transitional Employment Programme (TEP) was a distinctive feature of the programme and was designed to allow participants to gain real work experience and support to help them transition to open employment.

“[My adviser] said she doesn't want me to run before I can walk... I don't feel I'm being rushed into something.”(Female, 62)

Key statistics

- 78% participated in the programme for more than four months
- 4001 individual support sessions provided and 11,221 client contacts recorded
- Average case load of advisor was 28-40
- Average length of time to move into work was five months

Participants

Eligibility for the programme was limited to those who were long term unemployed (2 years plus) with a health condition. The majority were claiming Employment Support Allowance, or for more recent claimants, Universal Credit.

Participant characteristics:

- 713 men
- 440 women
- 35% unemployed for 6 years or more
- 100% had a health condition, of whom 52% had multiple health conditions
- 49% had a mental health difficulty as primary or secondary condition
- 37% over the age of 50
- 7% black and minority ethnic
- 9% ex-offenders
- 62% with no qualifications or at level 1 only
- 80% living in a workless household

As can be seen from these key statistics all participants had multiple and complex barriers to employment. Many had been unemployed for 10 years or longer and experienced social isolation, lacking motivation and self confidence.

“[SJP] helped me to come out of my shell...I was in a shell for over ten years, ...and no-one could get in... I can phone [my adviser] up any time and she phones me back and I can ask her anything, if I’m not sure about anything, she will work for me to help me.”

Disabilities or health conditions were seen by many participants as their main barrier to employment and they also believed that employers would not be interested in them. The experience of work demonstrated to some that this was not always the case:

“Because it gave me the confidence to be able to go back and do work again. I was petrified because I didn’t know what to expect. I hadn’t worked on a shop floor for years. But the people there, they’re lovely, they actually made me welcome and it was lovely...”



Case Study: Lance

After leaving school, Lance worked in construction, progressing from general labourer to site manager but 15 years ago was involved in a work-related accident, resulting in life-threatening injuries and loss of his left leg. Since his accident, he has been on a long journey with his physical and mental health. He experienced bouts of depression, and not being able to work was a main contributing factor.

Lance was referred to SJP in early 2018 by his Jobcentre Plus work coach. He saw SJP as 'his last chance' of moving closer to the labour market.

After his first meeting, he immediately felt comfortable enough with his advisor to share his whole story. '[We] had a big connection... we liked each other straight away... he knew, and that's why we clicked, really... I was completely honest with him, I told him the whole story... Where I was struggling to get work, it was making me more depressed. [My adviser] picked up on this

Lance accessed a range of support through his engagement with SJP. For example, he went to confidence building classes, which he found very motivating:

"I got so much out of going to each of these classes, and sharing my experiences, and listening to their experiences... We did a lot of motivational things, and I did learn a lot... it was really good for me, on how to deal with, you know, getting back into work."

He also accessed support with CV writing which he found particularly useful, as was the voluntary work with The Prince's Trust supporting vulnerable young people.



Outcomes

Lance is currently preparing to climb Mount Kilimanjaro this August for an Alzheimer's charity. His advisor shared this with the manager at BH Live, a large sports and leisure complex in Portsmouth. He was originally hired through the TEP, which he did for two months, before being offered a permanent position in the maintenance department. Lance now has a 30-hour contract and is looking to progress his career.

Securing a permanent position has had a positive impact on Lance's wellbeing. "[Now] I've got another purpose in my life, and I'm starting to get myself back again, and how I used to be. I have got something to get up for, and I do feel important, and it's actually given me more push to actually go. So this job... it's given me more confidence to keep moving forward, and that's exactly what I want to do."

Support provided by the Solent Jobs Programme

Solent Jobs Programme offered specialist support to participants with a range of needs, including mental health issues, learning difficulties, physical disabilities and long term health conditions. There was also external support focused on promoting healthy lifestyles and the links between good health and good work.

The delivery model was flexible, enabling additional services to be introduced in response to staff and participant feedback. Examples include:

Solent NHS Trust Occupational Health and Wellbeing Service was contracted to provide both clinical support to programme participants and also deliver wider education and training to programme staff. Giving them the confidence to address health barriers and to change participants attitudes about 'not being able to work'. Over 50 participants received direct clinical support and OH staff extended their experience and learning about dealing with the impacts of being out of work for a long time.

The Autism Centre for Research on Employment (ACRE) at Portsmouth University developed an autism profiling tool which offered a comprehensive assessment for people with Autism Spectrum Disorder who are in employment or actively seeking employment. An IEP (Individual Employment Profile) was produced which aims to support people to better understand which jobs could be right for them; and a cognitive profile which is intended to help employers better understand an individual's strengths and weaknesses, and what reasonable adjustments could be beneficial in the workplace.

Around 50 assessments were completed for Solent Jobs Programme participants and Employment advisers received training on Autism Spectrum Disorders and the use of the tool. The funding received from the SJP contract has enabled ACRE to improve the assessment process and make the software more efficient. They launched the free IEP service in April 2019.

SAFE mental health support

SAFE tailored a three-day course, based on Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) to fit with Solent Jobs Programme, focussing on mental health support. SAFE ran 13 three-day courses with ten people in each. The course involved a range of 45-minute modules which aimed to unpick the reasons why people were struggling to move forward and to identify their strengths and transferable skills. It aimed to increase participants' resilience and self-belief and the group setting gave participants the chance to support one another.

Employability and Well being courses

A range of other courses were commissioned to support participants and give them a structure and progression pathway.

“They’re pushing me forward, getting things sorted, so we know that in a few months, then, potentially, I could have some work, part time work or whatever.”

(Female, 36.)



Image: Occupational Health Assessment

Case Study: Richard

Richard has Asperger's Syndrome which affects his ability to interact socially and communicate. This, alongside other barriers, resulted in him having a patchy employment history, with long periods of unemployment.

When Richard first joined SJP, his adviser felt that his confidence, self-esteem and sense of purpose were really low. This was coupled with high social anxiety, paranoia, isolation and depression.

Support accessed

Richard worked closely with his adviser to find an employment opportunity that was very local and not people facing. Together they did mock interviews and job searches and he also attended the weekly job group.

Through the support, Richard's desire to work and self-confidence grew.





Outcomes

Richard was offered an informal interview at a local supermarket and was offered a TEP there the same day. His adviser ensured that his employer understood Richard's needs. His employer was very supportive and reassured Richard that there was no expectation for him to interact with customers, and that his role would focus on stock replenishment.

According to Richard's adviser, he thrived in this role. Providing a safe and friendly working environment helped Richard to gain confidence. Shortly after starting he began to interact with his colleagues. According to his employer, his communication skills vastly improved too and he was able to talk to his manager about his workload and tasks, enabling him to complete work to a high standard.

Richard's adviser supported him throughout the TEP and helped him overcome issues such as timekeeping.

Richard was subsequently offered a permanent position at the store. Richard's employer is extremely satisfied with his performance:

“He is now a more confident person and is able to engage with the public and his colleagues. He has gone through the [company] training programme and is a fully valued member of my team.”

Supermarket manager

Richard has an extremely positive view of the programme. Unlike other programmes he has engaged with, he feels that the support that he got from his adviser and employer has met his needs. He also attributes improved wellbeing and confidence to his new job:

“The experience of SJP was very different to any other help I have ever received before, because I actually received the help I needed to get into work. . . Eleanor and Mark are incredibly supportive, and they listened to me. Working has made me happier and more confident. It has been a great experience.”

Working with employers

A key aim of the Solent Jobs Programme was to test new approaches to working with Small and Medium sized Enterprise (SME) employers and open up new job opportunities for the target group. The Transitional Employment Programme (based on an ILM model) offered participants and employers a subsidised work placement (part time) for up to 6 months, paid for by the programme. A full time Business Engagement Manager was employed and started with a strategic approach, to inform employers of the support offered and the potential untapped workforce. This often led to a mis-match in expectations and demand and so a more focussed approach was adopted, sourcing placements according to the individual's needs and job aspirations. This worked well and during the programme over 387 placements were sourced, of which 248 were paid TEP placements.

'It gave me a tool which I could use to 'sell' to the employer, especially if the employer was uncertain in the beginning.' (Business Engagement Manager)

The average cost of a TEP placement was £2,266

Once on a TEP advisers continued regular contact with participants and employers to ensure both parties were supported, issues were dealt with and information provided for transport costs and the Access to Work service. The payroll was handled by Portsmouth City Council temp agency which ensured compliance with employment law and promoted good practice (e.g IT and anti bullying policies had to be followed).



'I think it's marvellous for employers because it actually lets them see that they're losing out if they don't offer (opportunities) to people that wouldn't ordinarily get the job, in the usual way, '

(Solent Jobs Programme adviser)

Advisers also highlighted that it was important to provide support that focused on the TEP as a means to securing open employment, rather than as an end in itself, from the outset. This was key to maintaining participants' motivation, and ensuring employers could not grow complacent once the TEP was secured.

Crucial to the success was having a member of staff who focused on employer engagement as it allowed advisers to dedicate more time to their caseload.

The most common sectors offering jobs were retail and customer service, warehousing, transport and logistics, childcare and health care, business and office and hospitality.



Image: Nigel at Traco

Case study Michael

Michael has had depression and anxiety for most of his life and has been in and out of hospital for treatment. Over the years, his condition has had a huge impact on his ability to secure and sustain work and he was out of the labour market for eight years. The medication he was on, combined with stress, led to him developing a severe stammer and made him drowsy.

Support accessed

Michael explained to his advisor during an in-depth discussion about his needs and aspirations, that he held a long-term interest in locksmithing. Michael found the support from his adviser invaluable, especially her approach which enabled him to pursue his own goals:

“She always, pushed me to use my own thoughts about how I wanted things to go and then she sort of guided me in the right directions. PCMI was the first one that actually treated me like a human and tried to help me to get what I wanted out of life.”

On the same day as his first appointment, his adviser visited a local locksmith and arranged a TEP for Michael. She made the employer aware that he had a stammer which Michael felt helped overcome some of the challenges associated with disclosing invisible health conditions.

Michael's adviser provided him with in-work support, visiting him and his manager regularly during the TEP. He attributes adviser support to securing the role, but also recognises that his determination to move back into work played a key role:

“If I needed any help I just let her know... I mean she was brilliant, honestly... without Rachel I still think I would have been struggling to get my foot in the door... I'd been wanting to go back to work for about eight years, but my doctor wouldn't let me because of my medication. In a way it sort of built my momentum up that once I got to the point where I was so fired up for it that there was no way I was going to fail.”



Image: Michael at Amberley Security



Outcomes

When Michael started the TEP, he knew very little about locksmithing. He has now worked there for two years – now on a permanent contract - and has gained the technical skills needed to complete various tasks and taken on more responsibility such as delivering training to new starters. Since moving into employment, Michael has noticed a significant improvement in his speech, skills and knowledge, and confidence:

“I couldn't string a sentence together; ...I couldn't even say my name in one go, you know. Since I've been working, which is just about two years now, within the first few months my speech improved so much that I no longer have a speech therapist... My confidence... has grown.”

Michael recognises that his health condition is a life-long issue that he has to manage. However, he describes the programme and moving into employment as life-changing; having joined during a particularly low-point in his life, he now feels much more positive.

Impact and outcomes

There were many outcomes reported as a result of the programme

Participants reported

- improvement in wellbeing (measured by Warwick Edinburgh wellbeing scale)
- 85% felt they had Increased confidence and mood
- 96% felt their condition was more manageable
- Improved organisational and social skills
- Improved attitudes to work, and increased readiness to work
- More job specific skills and recognition of transferable skills
- Reduction in social isolation

Employers feedback was similarly very positive, with 100% (of those surveyed) saying they thought the programme provided an effective recruitment service and would recommend to other employers.



28%

participants gained
a permanent job



34%

people gained
work experience



58%

people completing a TEP
placement gained a job



Image: Paul, SJP Advisor

Cost benefit analysis

The Learning and Work Institute conducted a robust CBA, using methodologies in line with Treasury guidance to calculate the value of the programme, compared to its costs. The overall benefit to cost ratio was calculated at 1.76 (i.e. for every £1 spent there was a return of £1.76 in benefits to society). This is a strong result and indicates the benefit of conducting large employment programmes with this level of support.



Key elements for success

The provision of the TEP paid work placement was considered to be key to success. It was the element that differentiated the programme from others, and attracted participants and employers. Those who undertook the placement improved their employment chances significantly.

Long term unemployed people with a health condition have complex and varied barriers to employment and a case management structure with intensive support over a long period of time is necessary to help move people out of their daily routine and progress into work.

Partnership working at a local level with flexible, tailored services beyond the usual employment and health divide ensured participants were given holistic support and helped them to progress.

Resourcing the referral process over and above business as usual was the best way to secure participation in the programme from the target group. The referral process was resource intensive and challenging and only by gaining staff trust and buy in were we able to work with the high numbers concerned.

A separate business engagement role was critical to reaching out to employers, advising staff on opportunities and matching participants with the jobs available.

What next?

The Solent Jobs Programme has proven to be an effective model. Some elements are being carried forward into the nationally commissioned DWP Health and Work Programme but we believe there is more learning from this programme which can be taken forward into other policy arenas. We will work with local and national government and urge the bringing together of resources from the NHS and DWP to tackle the issues of unemployment and ill health. Locally we have been successful in initiating three new programmes which continue the legacy of Solent Jobs Programme, albeit in slightly different directions.

- **Well@Work** - a combined Southampton and Portsmouth project aimed at employment retention support for employees struggling at work and at risk of losing their jobs due to mental health or musculoskeletal conditions.
- **Workplace Well Being** - a Business Engagement programme in Southampton to encourage employers to support the health of their workforce and provide a range of resources to promote healthy workplaces
- **Solent Employability Support** - a project to support long term unemployed people with complex barriers and chaotic lifestyles, integrating support from housing, health and social care services.

Thanks to

Funders:

European Social Fund and
City Deal

Partners:

Portsmouth City Council

Southampton City Council

Wheatsheaf Trust

Solent NHS Trust

ACRE at the University
of Portsmouth

SAFE

Solent LEP

Seeds of Belief

Genius Within

Health trainers

Jobcentre Plus - for actively
seeking participants and for
all their support

Participants for contributing
their views to the evaluation
and sharing their stories

Employers for providing
placements and job
opportunities

Learning and Work Institute
for the Evaluation and
Impact Assessment



Image: Bongzi at Premier Inn



Delivering services on behalf
of Jobcentre Plus, Department
for Works and Pensions

