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Changing Horizons Final Report

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1. The Report

1.1 Overview

3SC ran the DWP Changing horizons contract in Nelson from January to December 2018. The programme was designed to provide support to 100 customers through 10 sets of 4-week courses which helped improve their knowledge, understanding and language skills when applying for jobs. The intensive support was delivered by our partner, the square metre, through a mix of 1-2-1 and group sessions designed to enhance individual employability skills and prospects.

Customers were referred to 3SC by the local JCP, their details were securely input on our bespoke IT platform. 3SC then informed the delivery partner and assigned the customers to a course. The customers were then contacted regarding the arrangements and expected to attend.

Each participant received an initial in-depth diagnostic and planning interview upon induction onto the provision with a dedicated trainer. The square metre worked with them, creating and agreeing a detailed work plan for each person.

Participants engaged with an intensive course of activity for 4 days a week over a 4-week period. The aim was to start and complete customers on the course. No job start KPI was put into place.

1.2 Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

Broadly the KPIs were aimed at improving the employment prospects of customers. 80% of customers were targeted with completing the 4-week programme with no more than 3 absences during the course. Some customers were reviewed on a case by case basis in terms of their absence. Those customers who entered employment during the course were still classed as completers.

1.3 Achievement

Key Performance Indicator	Target	Achieved
100 customers attend and complete the Induction	100%	100%
80 customers complete the programme	100%	111%

2. The Contract Story

2.1 Background

This contract was one of our first Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS) awards and one of the first to use our new support programme IT portal. These portals are designed on a contract by contract basis to match the needs of the specific programme being delivered. Access to the portal was managed through a series of free logins assigned to each individual member of staff involved with the delivery of this contract, this included DWP team members. We identified a suitable venue called the ACE Centre and the local library to deliver the programme ensuring a stable, familiar base to engage with the customers.

This contract was aimed at those currently in receipt of JSA / ESA & UC and living with language barriers. The parameters were later widened to accommodate other customers that didn't have language barriers but still required support in moving closer to the job market.

There were some extreme cases represented at the beginning of this contract; for example, customers not being able to attend without the permission of their partner / family due to their culture and beliefs. This naturally represented something of a challenge and was an aspect that was not anticipated to the extent to which it occurred. This was overcome by the excellent approach of the DO. They actively engaged with the families to give reassurances and a description of the course, environment and attendees. This created feelings of trust for all parties which then helped increase the number of customers attending the course.

2.2 Courses and Sessions

The courses started well, however when it came to process the invoices we were informed by DWP that the invoicing process was being changed. This caused a delay in processing our DO's invoices for the first few courses, but once all the SOPs were put into place, payments then ran smoothly.

The 3SC IT portal allows live management information tracking, this demonstrated the accuracy and commitment of the team and the customers who attended. However, after a compliance check, we identified that the customers' individual support plans (ISP) needed improvement. The contract performance manager worked with the DO to put an action plan for improvement into place and 3SC continued to monitor the ISPs. Halfway through the course the DO's contract manager left the organisation but the trainer remained. A

replacement contract manger was provided by the DO and operations ran smoothly from then on.

Provision started with introductions between the customers and discussions focussing around employability but without the restrictive feel of a traditional classroom. The team got to meet each other and through a process of one to ones and group work, the journey of confidence boosting began.

Sessions included:

- Basic English skills, learning the alphabet in phonics, creating sounds and learning present, past and future tenses as well as other language skills.
- Interview practice including interviewing their peers and role playing.
- Skills analysis, planning, goals and next steps. These sessions were innovative in their structure with small teams being tasked with creating businesses and conducting the whole recruitment process.
- Each group was given the opportunity to shape the course and each session was tailored specifically around the needs identified. For example, during the IT sessions, customers identified the following as priorities:
 - Setting up an e-mail account
 - Creating a C.V.
 - Drafting a cover letter
 - Understanding internet safety
 - Job searching accounts i.e. Indeed & UJ match

2.3 Customer Activities

The activities were designed to be fun and enjoyable whilst building empathy, team work, understanding and communication. They joined up with a local library group called VOICES that focusses on women's rights, the idea being to create shared understanding and a network of support in Nelson. The range of activities was diverse and stimulating and even included attending a play to celebrate National Women's Day.

Some customers' underlying issues were quite severe. The relationships built during the courses enabled them to participate fully and many customers were very open about their circumstances and feelings. This was highly beneficial and facilitated provision of support above and beyond the customer's requirements. Some examples include:

- One customer was suffering from alcohol related problems, the DO supported her and introduced her to the alcohol and drugs team in Burnley. She was able to access professional support and advice. We have been informed that this customer has kept in touch with the trainer and is doing well, even returning to college to complete her health and social care training.
- Another customer had serious problems with an abusive son who had beaten and robbed her. The DO helped her to get support from local organisations and the police. The customer has reported that the DO helped in ways beyond what was expected.

2.4 Good News Stories

We also had good news stories throughout the contract as customers secured various employment positions and achieved their goals, some specific examples include:

- Employment as a retention advisor at B.T.
- Warehouse work via an agency (the DO now has links for the benefit of future customers)
- A customer was interviewed as a care worker and was still undergoing the interview process when the course ended.
- Customers signed up at Nelson and Colne college for GCSE English and other courses including ESOL.
- A customer reported to the DO that she now has the confidence to go out and work again after a difficult marriage break up.

3. The Summary

3.1 Conclusion

This has proved to be a very successful contract meeting one KPI and exceeding the other.

Some early difficulties were resolved by good contract management, a proactive approach and the adoption of innovative solutions. Essentially, the contract was small with challenging finances and this was exacerbated by referrals from DWP that were at times, slow to come through. However, the use of our own IT portal alleviated some additional costs and issues allowing for a far more agile management approach.

Another reason for the contract's success was the selection of a settled partner who had a good team with knowledge of the local area. This was re-enforced with clear and regular lines of communication between all parties. The DO was able to focus on providing an environment and approach that was engaging and conducive for learning. This was invaluable as a tool to break down barriers with a potentially vulnerable client group and we are able to demonstrate that all customers moved forward.

Comments from our DWP Contract Manager included 'This is the highest performing contract that has ever been commissioned in the Nelson area for this customer group' and 'We have been very impressed by the 3SC I.T. and reporting systems – an invaluable tool'.

Key performance indicators for this contract were fully met and we were pleased to exceed the target associated with customers completing the training. As demonstrated in this report, this contract has made a fundamental difference to the lives of many of the customers that took part.