



A group of 50+ clients in a session at Best Limited

## Short-listed Submission - Embedding Equality & Diversity

Provider name: Best Limited

Provider type: WBL

Provider overview: BEST provides training programmes that give people the right skills to find the right job. We also work with employers from across Yorkshire to help them recruit and develop the very best staff

Submission: Promoting age equality by: overcoming barriers and changing the mindset for over 50 plus unemployed people increasing the numbers of older people returning employment

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**Outline of E&D-related challenge(s) or obstacle(s) faced and why they needed to be addressed:**

Within one of the Bradford centres the Manager noticed a local trend of older unemployed people not being as successful as younger people in gaining employment. This was mirrored in centre with the New Deal customers attending the intensive job search programme.

Other issues were also identified while in centre; the customers were not mixing well with the other groups of the different age ranges, the older customers were withdrawn from the group sitting in the corner not interacting with the group and not undertaking in job searching activities. Also the older customer were not getting the same service and support as the more vocal and demanding younger customers.

The older customers especially in the 50 plus range also had different barriers including their different mindset of believing they are old, therefore are old and can't get work due to their age. This identified that the service for these older customers needed to be changed in order to improve contractual targets and dissolve any inequalities within the different age groups.



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**Groundwork, planning and interventions put in place to tackle highlighted issues :**

The Manager invited the 50 plus customers to attend a focus group to air their concerns with the programme. It was identified they had a different range of barriers especially with regards to their mindset and negative view points, lack of IT skills, difficulty mixing with the younger customers due to their disruptive behaviour, swearing and lack of respect.

The group also identified issues regarding the lack of training session, the delivery style of 'talk and chalk' was not suitable as the preferred style was to be on one to one coaching or through groups working together, mentoring each other.

The next step was to trial a specific group for 50 plus, so the tutor could target the individual barriers, not all the 50 plus customer wanted to move into a group specially for 50 plus. Therefore a few stayed in their group, which could be used as a control group to compare both groups. The tutor that was chosen to oversee the 50 plus group possessed great listening skills, patients and excellent IT skills.

The tutor develop specific training session to overcome barriers, to develop confidence through group work, and gain IT skills through one to one tuition. The training room was rearranged so that everyone could sit together and work together.

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**Impact the provider has achieved - quantifiable, distance travelled, how the good practice has benefited a range of stakeholders:**

Over the first 6 weeks each customer completed a questionnaire to monitor the improvements, instantly motivation and self confidence improved, by the tutor addressing specific barriers.

The biggest hurdle to overcome was the customer mindset to gaining employment due to their age. To help with this the Manger enlisted an outside company called Artwork to work with the group on changing their attitude. One of the greatest achievements was the improving percentages of customers going onto placement.

Previously it was very hard to convince the customers of the benefits of placements, as they saw it as 'slave labour', but with the new found confidence more customers went onto placement gaining new skills and experience, plus another way into employment. In a recent customer survey the centre received great praise from the 50 plus group, with comments stating how important it is to have an over 50 plus group and should be rolled out to other centres and how useful the IT sessions are.

For example one comment was 'the 50 group and the computer session are great. I have never used a computer before and now I am able to use internet and email.'

'The 1-2-1 support and advice in the 50 groups is the main reason for me gaining employment. I have regained confidence and self belief, the tutor is great and helpful.'

Job performance improvements didn't happen immediately but over time the jobs started to roll in. Previously In the first 3 years of the contract we ach 19 jobs. Since the start of 50 group 1/5/09 to present we have 21 jobs in one year! Due to achievements the 50 plus group was having, a 40 plus group was set up to tackle their own personal barriers, currently this is monitored.

**How partnership working and/or knowledge sharing have enhanced performance and impact:**

Working with Artwork to help tackle individual mindset on seeing themselves as 'old' therefore unemployable. Artwork worked with customers in a group environment and on one to one coaching to help tackle low motivation. Artwork also worked with the tutor to develop his skills to be able to challenge the customers barriers.

The programme was delivered over 3 weeks and was welcomed by the customers. Unfortunately this programme could only be delivered as a one off due to funding and cost of the programme. Now the tutor delivers training sessions improving confidence through group work.



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## Lessons learned through the outlined activity and further related development plans:

Still having retention concerns within the first week of the programme, due to all customers attending the same inductions, therefore some of the older customers find it difficult to mix with the under 25 customers. Unfortunately due to the numbers it is not feasible to have separate inductions. The 50 plus group has only been running for a year so the monitoring of progress is ongoing.

When the initiative was first set up the group were all at the same place, now with customer leaving and joining the group changes its dimension, with customer helping and supporting the new customers to the group .

Currently set up a development group to look at improving the centre across all centres for over 25 plus customers. Working with placement providers to promote age equality and eliminate age discrimination, building good working relationships with employers to see the advantages of recruiting older people. Within the centre now established a 40 plus group to support their particular barriers.

## Useful resources:

- ✓ Listening to the customer to understand their own individual barriers.
- ✓ Developing specific IT training for the specific age group.
- ✓ Though one to one and group work to improve self confidence.
- ✓ Promoting age equality to placement providers.

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