

**This document was archived in January 2017  
as it does not reflect current policy.**

## Boosting employment prospects for local residents: Halton Borough Council

**URN:** 52104

**Local authority:** Halton Borough Council

**Date published:** 26 November 2013

**Reference:** 130241

### Brief description

Halton Borough Council (HBC)'s Employment, Learning and Skills Division works very effectively with employers, local partners and other providers to develop outstanding employability provision.

### Overview – the provider's message



'We recently strengthened our adult learning service by joining it with employment and skills to make our Employment, Learning and Skills Division.

Within the division, we have developed the Halton Employment Partnership (HEP) to maximise the impact of work with external employers, the different departments within the council and other partners, including referral contractors for the government's Work Programme for the unemployed. We design the programmes with employers and then work with the agencies and community partners to recruit learners and then we support them with their applications. This means that we have a one-stop shop complete employment offer to support both local employers and unemployed residents.

Our employability programmes offer unemployed local residents with opportunities to help them develop the skills, knowledge and attitudes that employers are looking for, so that they can compete for local jobs when they become available.

We make sure that the programmes are developed to a high standard by ensuring that our staff have the skills and expertise in teaching adults and in the specialist sectors. We believe

that our team of tutors deliver inspirational teaching, learning and assessment that have led to outstanding outcomes for the learners.

Our partnership work with large employers is outstanding. They appreciate our support in helping them to meet their corporate and social responsibility by working with local people.'

*Alison Bowen, Skills for Life and Employability Curriculum Manager*

## The good practice in detail

The Halton Employment Partnership (HEP) acts as the recruitment and training interface between referral agencies and employers. Staff work with employers at an early stage to understand their recruitment and training needs so that they can design [bespoke pre-employment programmes](#) specifically linked to business development and recruitment drives. Recent programmes have included retail, logistics and customer care. The employment, learning and skills staff then deliver bespoke and generic programmes, working with employers and recruitment agencies. The provision also offers learners access to a wide range of interventions, including jobs and work experience, through outstanding engagement with employers.

The [inspection report](#) graded the employability provision for learners aged over 19 as outstanding, noting the following: 'Staff are very skilful at motivating the often demoralised learners to attend the employability programme. After the initial resistance, they engage well in learning, particularly enjoying creative teaching and learning activities. Learners see the value of validating their own skills and prior knowledge as essential building blocks to a successful employment outcome.'

## Five steps to successful employability provision

1. The dedicated employer engagement team links closely with prospective employers to identify current and future employment opportunities.
2. Discussions with employers on programme design focus exactly on the specific vocational skills and more generic employability skills that employers regard to be critical for the recruitment process and for sustaining employment.
3. The National Careers Service team provides information, advice and guidance to learners on an on-going basis to help them identify their career and employment goals and the steps needed to achieve them.
4. The tutors use a combination of information on learners' employment goals, initial interviews and initial assessments to identify personal barriers to employment and prioritise personal learning targets.
5. The team of tutors deliver learning programmes that develop essential sector-specific vocational and generic employability skills. This involves:
  - the development of computer skills and work-related English and mathematics skills linked to specific vocational areas
  - work experience and work tasters
  - workshops to support learners to complete the job applications

- individual support to assist learners in accessing internet-based job searches and job application processes such as [Universal Job Match](#) to search and apply for jobs
- additional support in developing skills in managing a bank account, moving to a monthly personal or household budget, time management and journey planning for learners who make the transition from benefits to paid employment.

Teaching and learning activities enable individuals to increase their confidence and develop outstanding levels of personal, social and employability skills.



A high number of learners have gained sustainable employment and many more improve their prospects of employment by joining further training programmes in areas such as information technology, retail, construction, hospitality, logistics, English and mathematics and customer care.

David Parr, Chief Executive, summarises: 'Employment, learning and skills are key priorities for the Council. We are creating an economically prosperous borough that encourages investment, enterprise and business growth, and improves the opportunities for learning and development, together with the skills and employment prospects of both residents and workforce so that they are able to feel included socially and financially.'

## Case study on sector-specific programmes in retail

The sector-specific programmes in retail included a bespoke six-week pre-employment training programme that included valuable work experience in a multinational supermarket (Tesco).

The course included:

- an introduction to the retail sector
- working in a retail team
- training in time management, customer service and handling complaints
- project on retail displays and promotions
- discussions on selling and the psychology of buying, and security and loss prevention
- an overview of consumer law



A [full report on the project](#) gives full detail – some features include:

- exceptionally strong partnerships with Jobcentre Plus

- a recruitment hotline
- the screening of learners' literacy and numeracy skills
- interviews for 1,000 unemployed people
- an induction day
- pre-employment programme.

## Provider background

Halton is part of Liverpool City Region and is an urban, industrial area whose growth employment sectors include logistics, customer service, science and construction. Two main towns in the borough are Widnes and Runcorn. The Employment, Learning and Skills Division of [Halton Borough Council](#) works across a range of community learning programmes and strategic partnerships, including children's centres, employers and community projects. Programmes are offered throughout the borough.



Are you thinking of putting these ideas into practice; or already doing something similar that could help other providers; or just interested? We'd welcome your views and ideas. Get in touch [here](#).

To view other good practice examples, go to:  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/goodpractice](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/goodpractice)