

BID Employment West Midlands evaluation

Final report June 2020



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BID Employment West Midlands evaluation: final report

1. Introduction

BID Employment West Midlands (BID EWM) is part of a portfolio of services delivered by BID Services to deaf and hard of hearing people in Birmingham and surrounding areas. The project funded by The National Lottery's Reaching Communities Fund was originally known as The STEP Ahead project but it has been extended in reach and activity with the support of additional funding and is now established as BID Employment West Midlands.

This report, at the end of the second phase of Reaching Communities funding, will reflect on the development of the service, highlight its achievements and look forward to how it can develop further. A focus of the report will be the partnership approach to recruitment with key employers that has been developed through a test and learn process over the last 2-3 years.

BID Services commissioned a light touch external evaluation of BID Employment West Midlands to support formative learning during project delivery and provide an independent assessment of outcomes achieved. The evaluation has tracked and informed the development of the service during the Lottery-funded period and this report brings together key learning points and reflections on the impact of the service, both within BID Services and externally.

Evaluation methodology

The evaluators supported the BID EWM team to develop a Theory of Change as a framework for understanding the link between the activities delivered and the difference they made for beneficiaries using the service. The Theory of Change was refreshed between the first Lottery-funded project and the continuation project (2017-20). An interim evaluation report was produced in December 2018. This final phase of the evaluation has focused on gathering evidence of delivery against the service outcomes and capturing the overall distance travelled by the employment service and beneficiaries. The research includes the views of beneficiaries, staff, partners, and employers, as well as monitoring and other data from the service.

The methods used were:

- Longitudinal tracking of a sample of beneficiaries' data (x 10)
- One-to-one and group interviews with staff members (x 5)
- Interviews with case study beneficiaries (x 3)
- Interviews with project partners (x 5)
- Interviews with employers (x 4)
- Review of monitoring data
- Employers online survey

The evaluators do not have British Sign Language (BSL) skills and accessed support from BID Services to facilitate communication with deaf beneficiaries. Interpreters were provided for the group staff discussion, beneficiary interviews and a 1-to-1 staff interview and provided excellent support. Evaluators briefed interpreters in advance so they could prepare.

Evaluation constraints

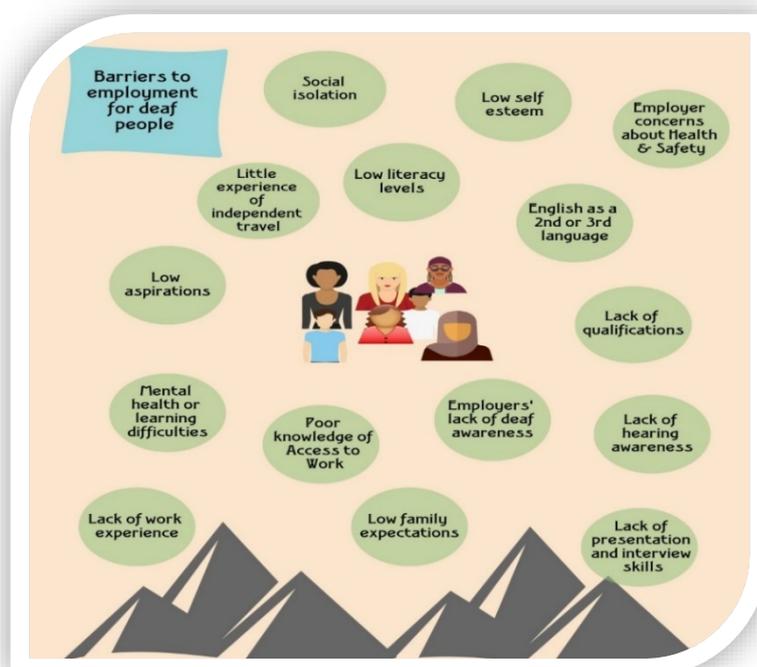
There were a number of factors that had an impact on the evaluation research process.

- The longitudinal tracking of beneficiaries was intended to follow both their work readiness (training, skills) and improvements in wellbeing (soft outcomes). These were to be captured by the employment team using tools called My Work Journey and My Life Journey at regular intervals during each beneficiary's engagement with the service.
- There were 2 issues with this for the evaluation. Firstly, data capture using the tools was intermittent, for reasons discussed later in the report, so there was not a robust dataset for analysis. Secondly, BID Services was successful in accessing additional funding for the employment service targeted to people aged over 29 years. Most of the tracking sample for the evaluation were in that age group and transferred out of the Lottery-funded part of the service. They could not be included in the tracking sample from May 2019 onwards. Therefore, the tracking approach did not generate the intended evidence.
- The employer survey did not generate enough responses to provide reliable evidence, despite being run twice. It has not been possible to include the very limited data it generated.
- The Covid19 pandemic meant that face-to-face interviews and discussion groups were not possible. However, data capture was completed on the phone or using online platforms with interpreters and this was very effective.

2. Project description

The purpose of the BID Employment West Midlands service is to provide deaf and hard of hearing people with specialist, tailored services and an accessible pathway towards sustainable employment, by addressing the barriers they face and encouraging them to aspire to fulfil their potential.

Figure 1



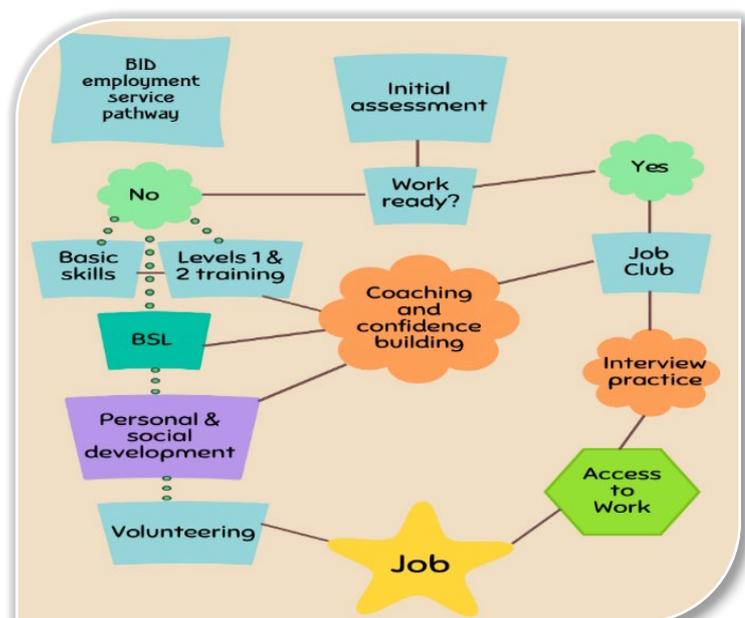
Some barriers only became apparent to the employment team as more beneficiaries accessed the service. For instance, the original project design assumed that most people would be work-ready or almost work-ready, so the focus was on preparing CVs, accessing job opportunities, job application support and improving knowledge of Access to Work funding for workplace adaptations and interpreter support.

Some beneficiaries were work-ready, however, in practice, a high proportion of people registering with the service had no or few basic skills – living in the deaf community many had not needed to learn English, Maths or IT skills; they were lacking in confidence about getting a job, were unprepared for workplace culture and expected behaviours, had limited aspirations and often their families had low expectations of them. People in this position were a long way from the workplace, they needed to learn a new language and about how to operate in the hearing world, as well as developing employability skills and knowledge. The project quickly adapted to develop new services to meet the additional needs of beneficiaries requiring pre-employment development, and has continued to extend the range of support on offer in response to need:

- Pre-entry level English for Work and Maths courses
- IT classes provided at the Deaf Cultural Centre every week
- Personal and Social Development sessions help people to learn about deaf history and culture, increasing their own wellbeing and confidence
- Employability workshops teaching skills including CV, application forms, interview skills, behaviour in the workplace and legal rights of deaf people
- Lifeskills for people with additional impairments or disabilities
- Driving theory school – delivered by a volunteer at the Deaf Cultural Centre
- British Sign Language (BSL) for international signers enabling people with no BSL or English language to access training and support to access jobs
- An Out of Hours service (Weds 5pm – 7.30pm) as a drop-in surgery for employed people to access support with planning their career progression and applying for new jobs

Figure 2

The beneficiary pathway has been refined over the life of the service. People take an individual path through the service and may access some or all of the activities in working towards their personal goal. Figure 2 provides an overview of possible routes through the service.

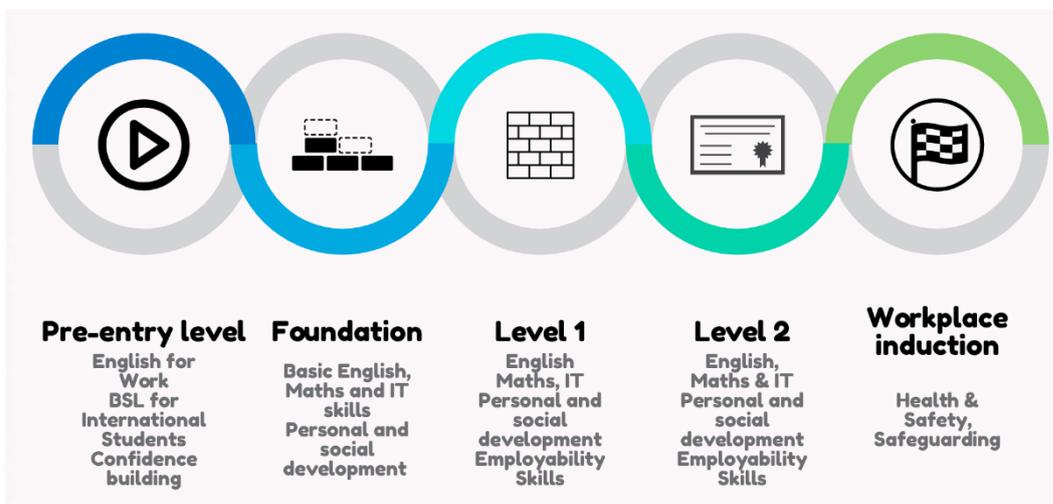


All beneficiaries can access support from a pre-employment mentor, conducts an initial needs assessment when people register. The in-house personal and social development trainer, in-house British Sign Language (BSL) training and employment coaches help with applying for jobs and an employer liaison officer who builds relationships with employers to open up access to jobs for deaf and hard of hearing people in new work sectors.



The team takes a coaching approach to supporting beneficiaries and a key facet of the BID EWM approach is a positive attitude and consistent encouragement and belief in beneficiaries' ability to reach their goals.

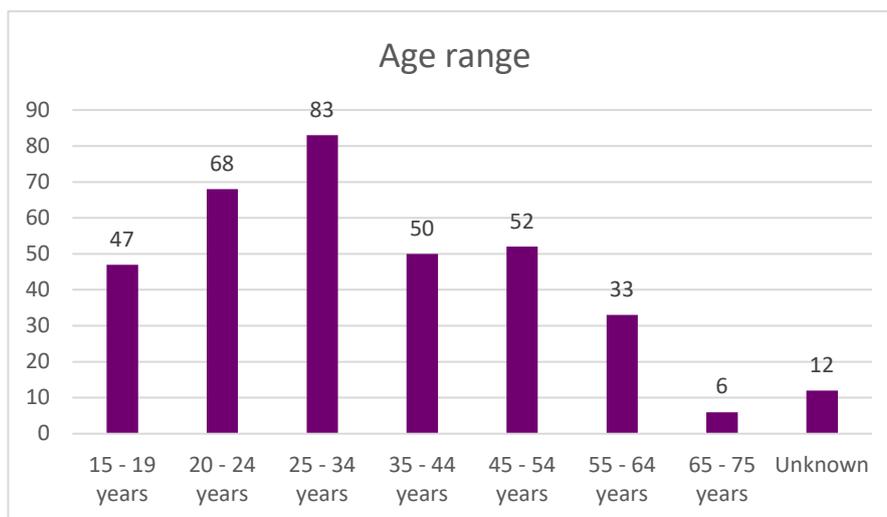
Figure 3 Beneficiary education and training progression route



Profile of beneficiaries

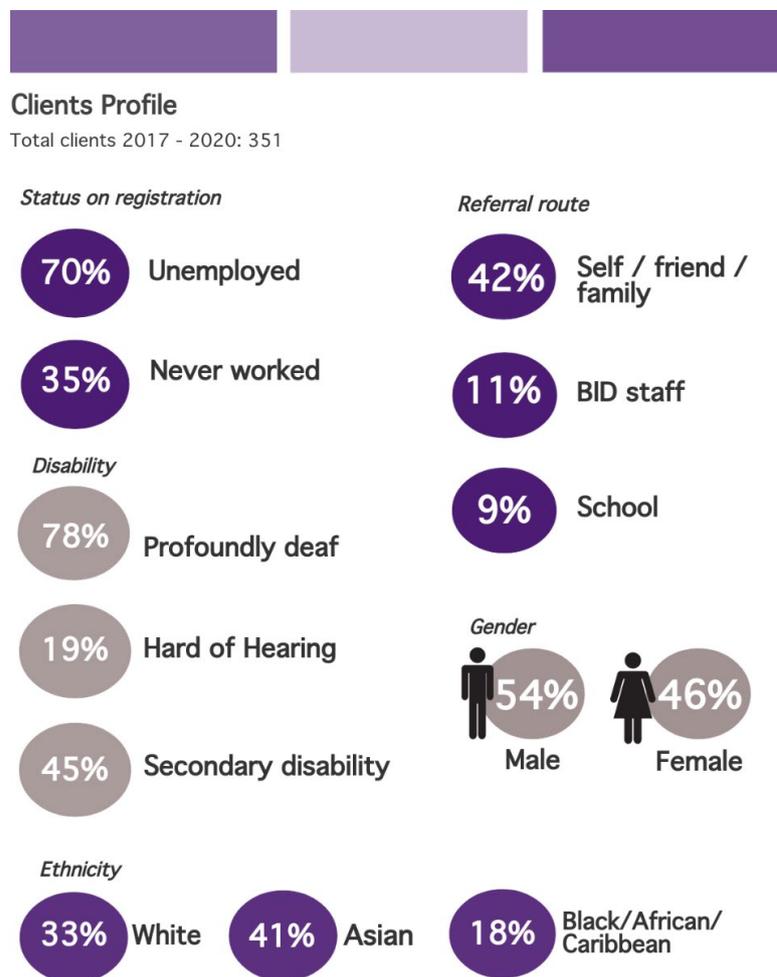
During the period 2017-2020, 351 people accessed activities provided by BID Employment West Midlands that were funded by The National Lottery.

Chart 1



The broad age range of beneficiaries reflects that the service focused on specific age groups at different times, depending on the match funding available (see p.6). People registered with concomitant programmes within BID EWM could access Lottery-funded activities to meet their individual needs. See Appendix 1 for the full profile of beneficiaries.

Figure 4



The project monitoring data highlights that a third of beneficiaries registering with the service had no work experience at all, including a considerable number of adults over 25 years. It also shows that a significant minority of beneficiaries (30%) were in work when they registered. This is an important aspect of the service; it is open to people who are employed but who want to change their job or progress in their careers. Deaf and hard of hearing people have traditionally been restricted in the kinds of job they could access, often to low-skilled work. A key element of the Lottery-funded service has been to successfully challenge the perception that deaf and hard of hearing people are limited in the work they can do and to open up routes to higher level roles, including management.

The data illustrates that many beneficiaries have complex needs, not only hearing impairment. People have learning difficulties, physical disabilities or mental ill-health, which may mean they never access paid work, but many have succeeded in completing education courses and engaging in other activities that have broadened their horizons and increased their skills, wellbeing and confidence.

The distribution of beneficiaries across ethnic groupings broadly reflects the deaf population in the Birmingham area, as does the gender split.

Development of service

The BID employment service was developed during a recession with high levels of unemployment and welfare reform and when deaf people constituted one of the groups furthest from the labour market. BID Services identified a lack of specialist providers with the experience and expertise to support deaf people in a competitive marketplace. The project was originally designed to test the need for a service tailored for deaf and hard of hearing people.

Other initiatives to tackle unemployment came along during the life of the project and BID Services engaged with some of them with a view to adding value to the employment service and extending its reach (see Figure 5).

Figure 5



Successful applications to deliver European-funded programmes, managed through Birmingham City Council, meant that the employment service team could grow and more people could benefit from support. Youth Promise extended the service to under-25s, when the Lottery-funded project was focused on over 25s. Youth Promise Plus (YPP) supported people up to 29 years, so at that point the Lottery-funded employment coaches focused on over 29s. When YPP was superseded by PURE (Placing vulnerable Urban Residents into Employment), the age criteria changed again and the Lottery-funded coaches moved to working with under-29s. In addition, BID EWM provided support to deaf and hard of hearing people aged 18-25 in the Black Country as part of the Talent Match initiative. All beneficiaries of any age could access elements of the Lottery-funded project – job club, personal and social development training, and education courses.

Managing these changing programmes concurrently was a logistical challenge; the staff team grew quickly from 5 to 15 people when YPP came online, the new jobs created opportunities for staff to change their roles, for instance some employment coaches chose to retrain as interpreters, so there was churn in staffing. Some beneficiaries also moved between programmes depending on their age.

There were also 2 sets of outcomes to achieve with each succeeding programme and, as all beneficiaries were accessing some support from the Lottery-funded elements of the service, it was agreed for YPP and PURE that progression outcomes could be counted for both programmes.

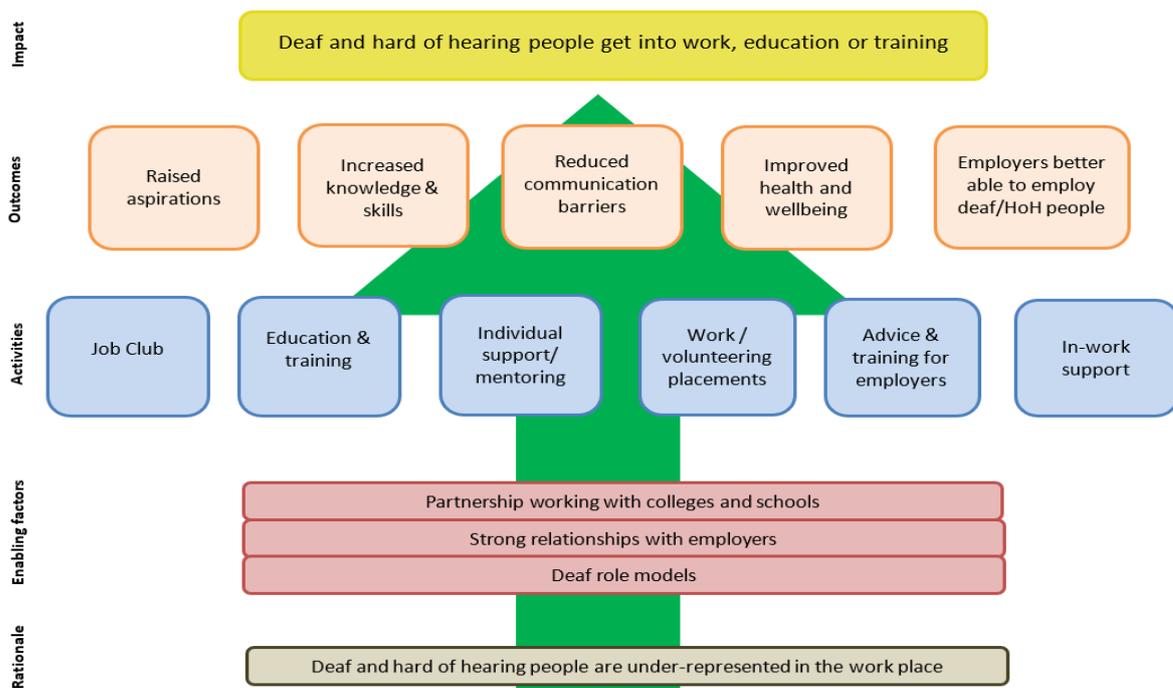
Delays in start dates for YPP and PURE meant that neither programme had mobilisation time to put new systems and processes in place; new staff had to begin immediate delivery. BID Services commissioned a new CRM data management system for the employment service but it has not yet been activated or used to record and manage data consistently, partly due to the lack of lead-in time. This has contributed to a lack of soft outcomes data collection to evidence the impact the service has had on the wellbeing of beneficiaries. It is a priority area for the further development of the service and already recognised as such by BID EWM management.

These difficulties are partly a consequence of the rapid growth of the service due to its recognition as a valuable employment support provider by Birmingham City Council and other partners, and its success in over-achieving against targets in supporting deaf and hard of hearing people into education, training and employment.

There were some employment initiatives that BID Services did not apply to join as a provider, for instance the Work Programme, because delivery was limited to short-term interventions which would not have been suitable for the deaf and hard of hearing people that BID supports. In addition, payment -by-results models would not be cost effective when working with people who needed considerable pre-employment support and time to progress at their own pace.

Theory of Change

Figure 6



The Theory of Change for BID EWM (Fig. 6) was developed during the first Lottery-funded project and refreshed for the second project. With a clear goal and outcomes, the staff team took a responsive and creative approach to meeting the needs of beneficiaries throughout the

funded period, continuing to develop training and education opportunities, and building new relationships with partners and employers, to improve the service.

The Theory of Change provides a framework for presenting evidence, in this report, of how the service strengthened the enabling factors that support its activities and delivered against its stated outcomes, which are aligned with the Lottery project outcomes.

3. Performance summary

Figure 7

Delivery against project targets

Summary of outcomes achieved by BID Employment West Midlands project May 2020

Outcome 1

Deaf and hard of hearing people have increased access to employment related support



351
achieved
117%

Target 3 yrs = 300

Outcome 4

Deaf and hard of hearing people achieve paid employment



Target 3 yrs = 65
175% 114 achieved

Outcome 3

Deaf & hard of hearing people achieve meaningful progression (can achieve more than one)



Target 3 yrs = 240
232% 557 achieved

Activity

Stakeholder contacts by Employer Liaison Officer
96% 217 achieved

Target 3 yrs = 225

The data in Fig. 7 shows that the BID Employment West Midlands project has over-achieved on all its funded outcomes. Outcome 1 relates to the support activities delivered by the project in the Theory of Change and the number of people who have benefited from support over the past 3 years.

Outcomes 3 and 4 relate directly to the goal of the service and the increased knowledge and skills outcomes in the Theory of Change. The figures highlight the different levels of progression people have achieved and, specifically, the number of people who have moved into employment or progressed up the career path into new jobs. Although most of the courses and training delivered through the service are not formally accredited, beneficiaries receive certificates of completion and compile evidence of their progression. Level 1 and 2 basic skills courses are recognised accredited qualifications delivered by BID's partner organisation Birmingham Adult Education Service. The service significantly over-achieved on its targets for these outcomes and, to some extent, this will have been because of the extra capacity brought into the team by the added value of the matched funding programmes which enabled them to reach more people.

The BID EWM team leader also held the part-time role of Employer Liaison officer and was able to build a strong network of stakeholders including referral agencies, delivery partners and employers whilst also managing the team activities.

Evidence relating to Outcome 2 (Deaf and hard of hearing people will have experienced increased confidence and mental wellbeing) is limited:

- Soft data capture systems remained paper-based and were inconsistently completed
- A higher volume of beneficiaries than originally expected made it difficult to keep up with regular soft outcomes reviews
- Team leaders had more than one role and had to manage competing priorities

Improved health and wellbeing is another Theory of Change outcome of the service and anecdotal evidence of improvement across the cohort is strong. At the end of the project, the staff team undertook telephone reflection interviews with 84 people who had exited the service to gather their feedback on the impact of the service for them.

People were asked to reflect on the My Life Journey and My Work Journey soft outcome questions and to comment on changes they had experienced. These tools were designed to support a joint assessment process between employment team staff and individual beneficiaries, capturing a baseline assessment at registration and changes in outcome measures over time. It appears from the limited collated data available (84 people) that most beneficiaries recorded scores that remained the same over time (c.50%), with c.37% recording overall improvements and c.13% recording decreases. These findings do not reflect the outcomes achieved by beneficiaries and indicate that the tools were not being implemented robustly or consistently.

Some people who took part in the reflection exit interviews remarked that their baseline self-assessed scores on the My Life Journey and My Work Journey tools had been higher than they should have been. Beneficiaries had initially given themselves high scores because they were, for instance, confident and had strong communication skills within the deaf community:

"I did originally mark this a six because I get on well with my deaf peers but now I realise that in general if I work in a hearing environment this would be more of a struggle."

Beneficiary

Case Study: Hanna

Hanna was 25 when she first registered with the BID employment service in late 2017. Profoundly deaf and with a disability which impairs movement, she is fluent in BSL as her first Language speaker, can use Sign Supported English and is able to lipread.

Hanna wanted help to realise her ambition of part-time work with deaf and hard of hearing children and young people, either in a deaf school or a hospital setting. She felt that she lacked confidence when looking for work and, because of her disabilities, she felt employers may be prejudiced against her.

She already had volunteering experience when she registered with the service and was working as a youth worker one evening a week with BID's youth club and volunteering one morning a week with BID's deaf elders group.

To help with her confidence, Hanna's employment coach supported her to access a number of the courses and activities on offer through the service. She achieved Level 2 English with Birmingham Adult Education Service, completed Personal and Social Development and employability courses, and enjoyed the Football with Goals group activity which combined sport with social development and confidence building.

Hanna's coach helped her to prepare and apply for a volunteer role in the Speech and Language Department of Birmingham Children's Hospital and helped her arrange Access to Work funding to support her when she was successful.

Hanna said about her coach and the rest of the employment team:

*"Just their approach **has helped me become more open minded** and I do see there's a lot of barriers and limited information for deaf people. But BID and the staff there seem to have that knowledge to make it more accessible."*

Hanna is now a more assured communicator and her confidence has grown. She knows more about how to work in a team and understands the importance of being reliable and prepared. She is aware of the need to be physically active and enjoys being more active for her wellbeing.

She feels she ready for the next step in her career and commented:

*"I just want to get out there and show people what I want to do – it doesn't matter about your disability or any barrier I'd just like to **show people you can do what you want.***

*(...) Before BID I didn't really know what to expect from a workplace. I started part-time volunteering there and it enabled me to sort of change my view on employment. Staff there and the people – each individual has their own story and **it inspired me to change my life.**"*

* Hanna was interviewed for the evaluation. Her name has been changed.

4. Raising aspirations, positive role models and reduced communication barriers

Early in the project, the employment team realised that many deaf and hard of hearing people accessing the service had low expectations of themselves, they considered their options for employment to be limited to low skilled work and therefore did not aspire to develop a career. The team identified the need to raise aspirations amongst beneficiaries as a key outcome in their Theory of Change.

The coaching approach the team brings to beneficiaries is grounded in positive thinking and modelling a 'can-do' attitude. The team encourages beneficiaries to think beyond short-term goals and to aspire to fulfil their dreams; they encourage people to take initiative, find things out for themselves and take control of their lives.

Some deaf people's experience was to be cocooned by their families, kept safe and not expected to achieve much or to make many decisions for themselves. Support services were wrapped around them with the intention of giving them the best life possible, but at the cost of their autonomy. As a consequence, people waited to be told what to do:

"[The employment team] helped shift that in me – lots of deaf people wait for help and I'm an individual and it does help to be proactive."

Beneficiary

An enabling factor in helping to raise aspirations is to provide deaf role models to inspire and influence deaf and hard of hearing people to achieve more. BID Employment West Midlands did this by recruiting deaf and hard of hearing people across the team to deliver the service.

"Deaf role models are massively important and integral. For me when I was younger I had deaf family, I've got a big deaf family and they would say to me deaf people are doing this and you can do that and I felt like I was a confident person."

Staff member

Beneficiaries reported that seeing deaf people in interesting jobs like employment coach, multi-functional trainer and team leader helped them think about their own dream jobs.

*"Sometimes people come to me and say hey you're lucky you're a young person and you've worked your way up and they say **we don't see that very often**, that doesn't happen and for me I want to show that it can happen ... to show deaf people can get into an organisation, can work their way up.*

*Some people can go to university and start in a higher-level role, but other **people can work their way up** and making them aware of how you develop and progress."*

Team Leader

Beneficiaries described the importance of being supported by deaf people in the team and how transformative working with someone who communicates in the same first language can be:

*“... the course was in BSL and run by a deaf man and so **having that in my first language it was brilliant.**”*

*“The **employment coach is deaf themselves**, so I found that really beneficial to meet my communication needs and just work in my first language.”*

*“... gives confidence and clear information and **things are clearly explained**. I think that as hearing people are talking I can miss that information, or not understand some of the words that they’re using, but when it’s a deaf person it’s just straight, easy to obtain what the message is.”*

Beneficiaries

Although the interpreter support available at BID Services is excellent, being able to communicate directly with their employment coach or trainer is very empowering for beneficiaries. It also helps people who live mostly in a deaf community to understand from the lived experience of a deaf trainer or coach why it is important to communicate in English as well as BSL to be able to operate effectively in a workplace with hearing people.

The team works with Braidwood School to help the deaf children at the school build a positive deaf identity and raise their aspirations. Some hearing parents of deaf children may have low expectations of them and the BID employment team is supporting the children to see that they will have opportunities and there are a wealth of employment and career choices open to them once they leave school.

The school is proud that one of the two deaf team leaders in the employment team is an ex-pupil. The Deputy Headteacher commented that this gives their young people a really accessible role model to look up to. The school recognises that BID Services has worked hard to achieve its ambition to be more reflective of the community it serves, these are the first deaf managers in the organisation in a number of years in a public-facing role visible to the wider community. The school values the work of the employment service and would, more generally, like to do more with BID to *“bridge the gap between our children and young people and the hearing community.”*

The multi-functional trainer from BID responsible for delivering personal and social development and employability skills at Braidwood School reported how he saw an ex-pupil from the previous year as a student at Dudley College earlier this year:

*“I saw them there and oh the transformation! Seeing them **high in confidence, positive, talking about their future**. There was no interpreter provided at the college initially, he sorted that out making sure there was access for himself and other deaf people there, and he was only 17. That was **a real proud moment** for me, and I saw how beneficial it was, that work we did with them.”*

Another approach to breaking down communication barriers for beneficiaries is the recent innovation of translating job advertisements into BSL and producing short videos to promote job opportunities on social media platforms. It is really helping the team to extend its reach and challenge both deaf and hearing people’s perceptions about what deaf and hard of hearing people can aspire to and achieve. Promoting jobs in BSL makes them much more accessible and helps to decode technical and job specific language often used in adverts.

Case Study: Alicja

Alicja is profoundly deaf and from Poland. When she first registered with the employment team in late 2017, she had been in the UK for 2 months and was working full-time as a chambermaid. In Poland, Alicja had been to university and had previously worked as an IT teacher for deaf people; she communicated in Polish sign language and had experience of office work and qualifications in therapeutic massage. She did not have BSL or English language knowledge but was keen to learn and to change her job, which was causing health problems.

While she continued with her paid employment as a chambermaid, Alicja's coach referred her on to the British Sign Language (BSL) for International Students course developed and delivered by the multi-functional trainer, and the English for Work pre-Level 1 course delivered by Birmingham Adult Education Service at the Deaf Cultural Centre where BID Services is based. Both courses run over several months. The improvement in her ability to communicate with both deaf and hearing people has been the catalyst in enabling Alicja to achieve her goal.

Her employment coach encouraged Alicja to think about what she really wanted to do, she knew she wanted to work with the deaf community and her coach helped her to apply for a role in a residential home for deaf people. She was initially successful in gaining a role as a member of the bank (temporary cover) staff. Her coach encouraged her to demonstrate her wide range of skills to the manager and to push for a full-time role. When a vacancy came up, Alicja's coach prepped her for the interview:

*"...I was so nervous and they helped me, advised me on what sort of attire I should wear, how to communicate so that I'd be picked for the job and said it's worth explaining what you've been through to where you are now, and **it seems to have made a difference** and my English level had improved and they (interview panel) noticed that."*

Alicja was delighted to be successful and achieve her dream job. She has Access to Work funding in place so that she can access interpreter support on the phone when she needs it. A key enabler for Alicja in building her confidence was the belief the employment team exhibited in her and the encouragement she received to see herself as a professional in the workplace.

*"My life has changed so much and having interpreters in place if there a problem in terms of communication and have that access in sign language - I don't feel deaf – **I feel like an equal citizen.**"*

Alicja's next ambition is to go to university:

*"I'd like to work internationally to support deaf people and a degree will help – the staff at BID haven't said "you're too old", they've said "**of course you can go to Uni!**"*

* Alicja was interviewed for the evaluation. Her name has been changed.

5. Partnership working

BID Employment WM built strong partnerships during the first project which have been sustained and extended in this funded period. The Employer Liaison officer created a contacts database of more than 270 stakeholders from engaging in networking and partnership development opportunities. The service has continued to work in partnership with Birmingham City Council and other providers to deliver city-wide programmes such as Youth Promise Plus and PURE.

The team has also built strong partnerships with organisations who have similar values and objectives to BID Services, where collaborative working provides win:win benefits and produces better services and more opportunities for deaf and hard of hearing people.

Extending educational opportunities with Birmingham Adult Education Service (BAES)

BID Employment WM built a strong partnership with Birmingham Adult Education Services (BAES), initially developing a pre-entry level English for Work literacy skills course and then pre-entry level maths and, more recently, IT courses.

Courses are delivered by BAES tutors at the Deaf Cultural Centre, a familiar environment for beneficiaries where they receive support from employment coaches and access Job Club and other activities. The IT tutors use the facilities funded by the Karten Network and have developed the range of training on offer from one or two sessions for beginners and improvers to Level 1 and Level 2 courses offering real opportunities for learners to progress and build skills.

In November 2018, BID Employment WM established a Karten Network Centre at BID Services, a new IT suite with full sensory laptops, a 55" interactive whiteboard and a new loop system funded from a Karten Network Award to support computer-aided vocational training, education and communication.

Karten Network Centre status confers an initial grant of £25,000 to set up the Centre and additional funding every 3 years to upgrade the facility. The additional resources enabled more people with sensory impairment to access training and employment-related support.



The courses use visual, creative, and learner-led approaches to ensure that competencies are built and retained. Knowledge is assessed at the end of each session using a simple visual traffic lights system – which not only tests learner knowledge but gives the tutor feedback on effective teaching techniques. The courses evolve and develop over time, building on what works, for example adding 1-day workshops about working in teams and work skills.

The IT tutor is supported by 2 BSL interpreters and the BAES English for Work tutor. Learners are encouraged to think about how to use the skills they are learning not only in work but in day to day life. Learners are encouraged to use a range of communication skills in the sessions, including lip reading and email, to prepare them for moving out of the deaf community and into the hearing world where they are more likely to be employed. The courses support learners to improve their English skills by asking them to follow simple written instructions to complete tasks.

The advent of Covid19 lockdown has accelerated everyone's technological learning. Tutors, employment coaches and beneficiaries have adapted their learning and delivery to online formats. Key learning is that using more technology-based learning and engagement techniques not only builds IT competencies but also saves people time and reduces journeys into the Deaf Cultural Centre. This makes training and employment coach support more accessible, for instance for people with caring responsibilities or travel barriers.

Case study: George

George was employed full-time as a qualified HGV driver from 1987 until 7 years ago when he became a single parent. He stopped work to look after his children and now he is ready to return to work. In the meantime, however, he is now required to hold an HGV Certificate of Professional Competence (CPC) to be allowed on the road, which requires completion of a 35-hour training course. George needs financial and interpreter support for the course and has been trying to secure the necessary funding to proceed. The BID employment team has been supporting George's with his application to DWP for funding.

*"(There have been) lot of issues and postponement and BID have kept **fighting my case with me and for me** and it's been a brilliant service."*

While the long process continues, encouraged him to refresh his CV and update his employability skills to help increase his confidence. He really enjoyed the personal and social development training and commented: *"the course was in BSL and run by a deaf man and so having that in my first language it was brilliant."*

George has engaged with the IT courses run by BAES and has significantly improved his IT skills, progressing from a Level 1 to a Level 2 course, and is more confident using IT. In fact, George reported that his confidence overall had improved considerably. He feels he is coping with life much better and is better able to connect with others.

* George was interviewed for the evaluation. His name has been changed.

Working in partnership with DWP

Since the National Lottery-funded programme started there has been a change in how employment advisors are structured in the local offices of the Department for Work & Pensions (DWP). As Universal Credit has rolled out, DWP customers are now assigned a single work coach who supports all their needs, rather than general and specialist advisers as before. BID Employment WM has a strong relationship with a disability coach in Birmingham whose role now is to enable his colleagues to provide the best support to disabled customers. He also encourages employers to become more aware of the needs of disabled employees and commit to being [Disability Confident](#) organisations.

Over the life of the programme, BID has become better known by DWP staff, who are more confident to recommend BID to customers and referral routes have strengthened.

Work and disability coaches from a cluster of DWP offices visited BID to meet the employment services team and better understand what they offer, find out more about the team and to see the facilities at the Deaf Cultural Centre. BID staff have also visited the 4 offices in the cluster to build relationships with work coaches. Through these exchanges, DWP staff were able to inform all their colleagues about the support services BID offer in order to make sure their customers with hearing impairment, or no hearing, were getting the best services possible.

*“If there’s a new claimant and they don’t know about these services **we will introduce them to what BID does** and (...), depending on their preferred way of communicating, we’ll give them details to follow up on.”*

DWP Disability Coach

Members of the BID team regularly attend the local DWP Disability Forum where support and training providers meet to share experiences and effective approaches to working with people with disabilities and impairments, in order to improve local services.

The Forum partners worked together to stage events and activities including a big Disability Confident event for employers in Birmingham and the Black Country. The aim was to sign more employers up to become Disability Confident and to encourage those who were already part of the scheme to progress and become Disability Confident leaders in their fields. Employers also met a range of providers, including BID, who support people with disabilities into work.

Looking to the post-Covid19 period, DWP are keen to know what providers are doing differently to support customers so that work coaches are up-to-date with what services are available, whether virtually or online. There are a lot of new claimants due to the crisis and coaches are looking to support career change and aspiration in people, including those with disabilities or impairments, by helping them to recognise their transferable skills. This is an established approach in the BID team who will be able to share their experience with DWP partners through the strong relationships they have developed.

Working together to support mental health – Jasmine Suite

BID Employment WM has an established relationship with the Jasmine Suite, a national in-patient facility for deaf and hard of hearing people that is part of Birmingham and Solihull Mental Health Foundation Trust.

The BID team offered personal and social development support to patients in the Jasmine Suite to help build their confidence, prepare for rehabilitation, and develop employability skills to take into the workplace in the future. Some initial sessions were delivered by the BID team trainer but it was found to be difficult for patients to commit to regular attendance due to ill-health.

The BID team was keen to persevere in looking at ways to support people. They are working with the manager, who welcomed the idea of confidence and skills training to provide stimulation for patients and help them to move forward: *“It helps with their recovery, to keep active.”*

He shared the opportunity with other teams connected to the Jasmine Suite, including those providing day services for deaf and hard of hearing people. A multidisciplinary team meeting was held with BID staff to think how to deliver the training in the most appropriate ways for the people using the facility. It was decided to try a co-production approach and involve the patients by meeting them informally, finding out what they would want from training and support and informing them about BID and how they can register as beneficiaries. This is on hold due to the Covid19 pandemic.

The manager of the Jasmine Suite credited the BID team with maintaining motivation to support patients following the initial pilot sessions, of providing consistent support and being prepared to engage with managers and clinicians to help secure buy-in to provide the opportunities to people on site.

*“That’s what you need as a manager, you can try and do as much as you want independently, but **it is a team effort**, you’ve got to have everyone on the same hymn sheet and when you do get that things move a lot better.”*

NHS partner

Working in partnership to engage employers

The BID Employer Liaison officer connected with Paddy Stanley Associates at a DWP Disability Forum meeting. Paddy Stanley also supports people with barriers to employment, as well as providing training to employers. His mission is to help employers think differently about people with barriers such as ability impairments or criminal convictions. He works closely with the construction industry, supporting large, national employers to broaden their recruitment pools and provide effective support for their employees' mental health and wellbeing.

Paddy offered to work with BID to deliver an Employers Engagement Day for local and national employers. The event was structured to team employers up with deaf and hard of hearing potential candidates in a participative process. Employers worked alongside candidates in small groups to develop business plans and present them to the whole room towards the end of the day in a 'Dragons Den' type exercise. It enabled employers to collaborate with candidates in real time, seeing their skills, knowledge and abilities and co-creating workable plans. Although most candidates had never presented anything before, they all stood up with their teams and took part in the presentations.

The final hour was open for employers and candidates to have 1-to-1 conversations to find out more about the companies represented and discuss possible work placement or job opportunities.

About 16 companies were represented at the event with 34 potential candidates plus interpreters and BID Employment WM staff in support. The event was jointly funded by Paddy Stanley Associates and BID Employment WM. The outcomes achieved were:

- Candidates reported increased confidence
- BID Employment WM made new links with employers from the construction industry, opening up new routes into work for their clients
- Employers increased their disability awareness and left with information about the Disability Confident employer scheme
- Employers offered work placements to 4-6 candidates, 1 person got a job

A follow up employers 'speed dating' event with potential deaf and hard of hearing candidates was planned but postponed due to Covid19.

"Before, during and after the day BID services were able to show potential employers they wouldn't be left on their own with a candidate they had no idea how to support going forward. (...)

*It was very important to show **the professionalism of BID services** so that employers could be reassured that they would get help with adjustments and some support from DWP but there was a professional, Birmingham-based organisation that could help them well into the future with their recruitment."*

Partner, Paddy Stanley Associates



Balfour Beatty Vinci was represented at the employer engagement event. It is a large, national infrastructure provider responsible, for instance, for the design and delivery of HS2 high speed rail line. The company encourages diversity and inclusion both within its own employees and the companies in their extensive supply chain, such as Tarmac.

The company is looking to develop clear pathways into the construction sector for people with a range of disabilities. It is supporting its supply chain to become more Disability Confident and is exploring different ways of getting people interested in working in the industry.

*“We’re thinking about how we adopt more **inclusive recruitment practices**, actually getting people on work trials with us so that we can see them in action rather than just relying on CVs which may not be the best way of assessing somebody’s capabilities. I think it will really change the way we inform the business to take those positive steps.”*

Skills Employment and Education Lead, Balfour Beatty Vinci

6. Working with employers – developing a recruitment support model

The final outcome in the BID employment service Theory of Change is “employers are better able to employ deaf and hard of hearing people”. The employment team has made significant progress against this outcome in the funded period by developing support for group recruitment of deaf candidates, providing deaf awareness training to employers and by successfully employing deaf people in a range of roles and acting as a role model organisation.

Working with UPS

About 3 years ago, the UPS warehouse near Tamworth, about 20 miles from Birmingham City Centre, was struggling to recruit. They had exhausted the local workforce supply and, with a high turnover of staff, were short of quality candidates. Experience at other sites told them that people with hearing impairments could be good workers so they looked to build relationships with local organisations who were supporting people into work.

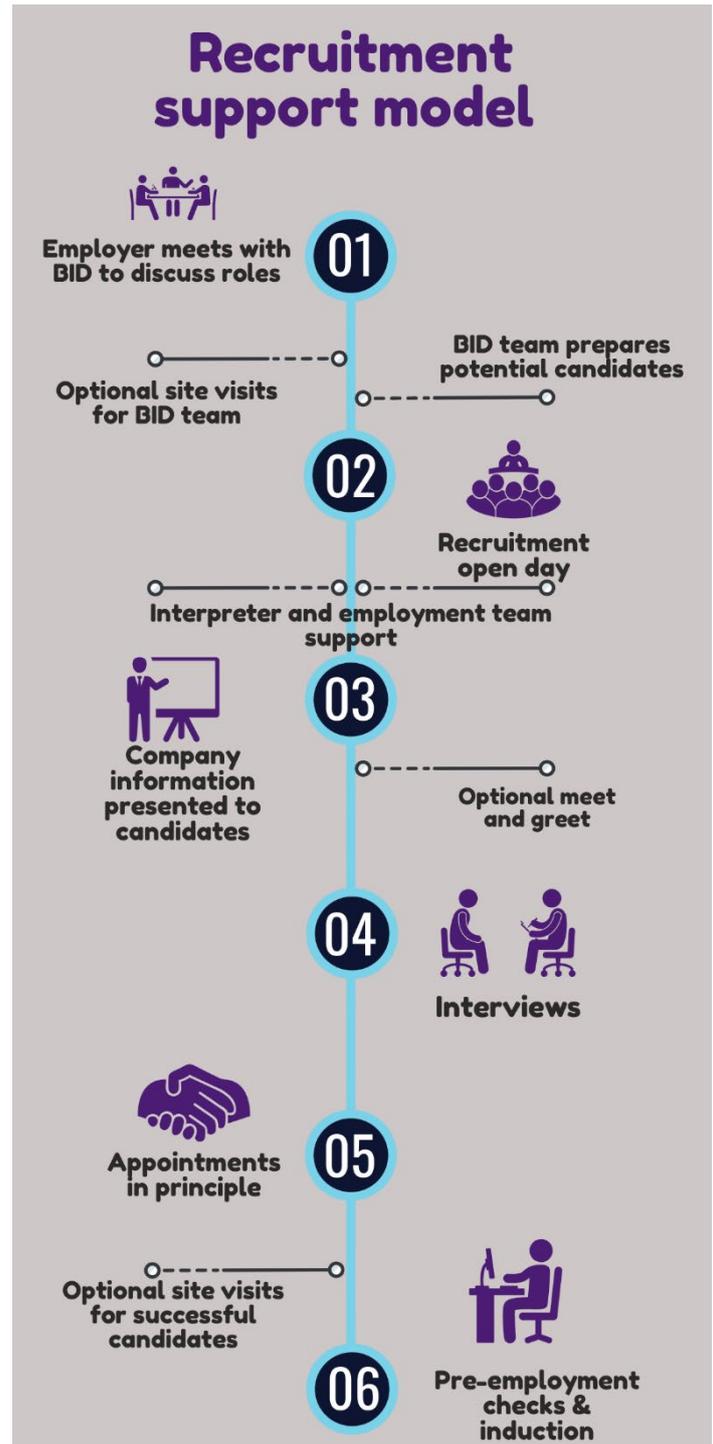
The recruitment manager visited BID Services and met the employment team. They discussed the roles on offer, he explained the physical nature of the work, the hours and pay on offer.

The BID team, including the manager and trainers, visited the warehouse site and to see how it works. This was so the team could describe first-hand what it was like to potential candidates. Following the site visit a recruitment day was planned.

The BID team prepared potential candidates before the day; UPS sent job specifications and information on the assessment process in advance so everyone could be familiar with what would happen. Due to the nature of their work, all employees need security clearance and must provide references for the previous 3-4 years and evidence of their eligibility to work in the UK. This proved to be a barrier for some candidates, especially if they had not worked before and had no work history, and therefore no references; they were unable to pass the security checks.

The recruitment day worked well, the UPS team were supported by the BID team including interpreters, and 10-20 potential candidates attended.

Figure 11



“One thing we do notice is if you interview people and they've not got the foggiest about UPS, but the hard of hearing guys had done a bit of research - whether BID told them to, maybe they did, but they all had a good understanding of what UPS was all about, when we were founded in 1907, that sort of thing impresses us.”

Manager, UPS

After the recruitment day, successful candidates visited the UPS site to see it in action. Then they began their probationary period. The manager gave the deaf/hard of hearing candidates more notice of the induction training so they had time to arrange interpreter support with BID. They all secured Access to Work funding to have interpreters in the workplace.

UPS have done this process twice at BID over the last 2 years and recruited 6-7 people each time. All the new employees passed their probationary periods and have sustained their employment, working at least 6 months in the business. UPS have found them to be good workers with a low turnover, providing stability within their teams. They found BID to be very proactive in supporting people into work, making sure candidates had all the documents they needed to apply and supporting both candidates and employer through the recruitment process.

The benefits to UPS of working in partnership with BID were that they were able to reach an untapped market of potential employees and recruit several during the process. The partnership was a good fit with UPS' equality policy and they found BID to be very positive in their approach.

“It's a one stop shop for an employer, go in there and not just hiring one person but 6,7,or 8 people –gets us a significant amount of people. Although it is 2 or 3 of us that might go out to BID for the day, it is worthwhile.”

This approach created such an effective precedent that the BID employment team then offered it to other employers as a tried and tested model of recruitment support. See Appendix 3 for two more examples of the model in action.



Deaf awareness training

During a visit to BID Services, the contract manager from Siamo Group met the employment team trainer who offered to provide deaf awareness training for the staff at the Ocado site. He adapted the training to fit the limited time people had to come together during the working day at the warehouse.

“BID have gone above and beyond, the training that they did on-site was something that they asked if they could come and do, it wasn’t something that I asked for, but on them doing it, it massively benefited the on-site team.”

Manager, Siamo Group

The manager described how the training helped people to overcome the uncertainty they might have felt in working with a deaf or hard of hearing person and not being sure how to communicate with them effectively or appropriately. Spending time with the profoundly deaf trainer, learning a few signs of BSL, and enjoying an informal but informative session helped them to feel more confident and comfortable about working with new deaf employees. It helped them to understand where deaf and hard of hearing people are coming from and how they might be feeling on entering the workplace.

*“He did some signing with us so we were able to learn that, it was very valuable for the on-site team and gave them **a much better insight** into a community that they hadn’t engaged in – it was very eye-opening. (...) It was such good training; I would highly recommend it to anybody.”*

As a consequence of working with BID and receiving deaf awareness training, the manager has applied to take a BSL course at a local college to be able to communicate directly with deaf employees.

Balfour Beatty Vinci

Balfour Beatty Vinci knows that, across the construction sector, there are perceived barriers to employing deaf and hard of hearing people. It is aware there will be existing employees for whom hearing impairment is an issue. The company asked BID to deliver deaf awareness training for its managers with hiring and recruitment responsibilities.



*“The deaf awareness training was received really well and was fantastic, it **broke down a lot of barriers** for individuals.”*

Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Lead, Balfour Beatty Vinci

7. Conclusions and learning points

BID Employment West Midlands has successfully demonstrated that there is need for an employment service tailored to the needs of deaf and hard of hearing people. Deaf people often require support in addition to employability skills; their journey into work may involve learning a new language (English), learning about the culture of communication in the hearing workplace, developing work-ready behaviours and attitudes and developing the belief in themselves that they can do it.

A key factor in the support provided by the BID employment team is their 'you can do it' attitude. They demonstrate patience and persistence in supporting people, offer endless encouragement at difficult points in their journeys and work at the pace of beneficiaries, however long it takes. Some people have been working with the team for years and may not be in paid work yet, but they have made progress and achieved key milestones.

The team is staffed by deaf role models who inspire beneficiaries to aspire to different kinds of jobs. Being able to see deaf and hard of hearing people as team leaders, employment coaches and trainers, and finding out first-hand how they achieved those roles, has been motivating for beneficiaries who contributed to the research and helped them raise their sights to pursue their own dream jobs. In particular, the employment of profoundly deaf people as team leaders was inspirational.

From beneficiary feedback, there is clearly a strong emphasis in training and coaching on working with other people in teams, which helps people understand why they need different communication methods and to develop collaborative behaviour and positive attitudes. People who were confident in the deaf community, and insulated from the hearing world, became equipped to navigate, cope and thrive in hearing situations. Similarly, the employment team has provided deaf awareness training to employers to help their workforces understand more about the experiences and communication needs of deaf and hard of hearing people, helping to overcome unintentional workplace exclusion and enable good team-working.

The BID employment service has captured the zeitgeist of changing perceptions and ambitions of deaf people, alongside other people with disabilities. Deaf and hard of hearing people are looking more to be enabled, rather than provided for. The service has developed a model of equipping and empowering people to make informed life decisions, focused on economic factors but intertwined with personal and social development and improved health and wellbeing. It has garnered considerable learning in being beneficiary-led that embodies the missions and values of BID Services as a whole.

The service has brought significant financial, intellectual, and social capital into the organisation. It has enabled BID Services to extend its role as an exemplar employer of deaf and hard of hearing people by supporting more deaf people into employment. Interviewees reported that there has been a change in expectations within the deaf community in Birmingham, being in work is no longer the exception. It has also enabled employers to see that hiring deaf and hard of hearing people is not as difficult as they may have thought, with a little planning and support from BID.

The service has enhanced the reputation of BID Services within the deaf community and with external partners and employers. It has also brought more deaf and hard of hearing people and outside agencies into the Deaf Cultural Centre, promoting its facilities.

Another key aspect of the service is that support does not end when a beneficiary achieves a job. There is help with applying for Access to Work funding for interpreter and equipment support and settling into a new role. People are signed off but can come back into the service at any time. This is important in supporting people's work journey – many deaf and hard of hearing people start with entry-level jobs, gain experience and confidence in the role and then want to progress their career path. The service is open for them to re-register and seek help with their progression, preparing and applying for new jobs. Staff expressed satisfaction in seeing people progress through education, into work and beyond.

Learning points

- BID Employment West Midlands grew exponentially as opportunities to participate in complementary employment programmes arose during the delivery period. Managing the programmes concurrently was a logistical challenge. BID Services does not appear to have been strategically prepared for the rapid growth of the service and there was a delay in putting the internal infrastructure in to support it. Eventually a new staffing structure was put in place, including the employment of deaf team leaders who needed additional support from the project manager as they were new to management roles.
- A lack of mobilisation time for additional programme delivery meant that new systems and processes, such as the CRM data management tool, were not activated. This has contributed to a lack of soft outcomes data collection to evidence the impact of the service on the wellbeing of beneficiaries. It is a priority area for the further development of the service and already recognised as such by BID EWM management.
- A higher volume of beneficiaries than originally expected made it difficult to keep up with regular soft outcomes reviews and staff were not trained to complete outcome tools consistently. Effective staff engagement with the systems, and appropriate training in how to use them, is as important as having the systems in place.
- The recruitment support model for employers looking to recruit groups of people has been tried and tested. It has been shown that it can be adapted to different employer processes. Key learning points to consider are:
 - it takes time to set up the process – recruit candidates, organize open days
 - employers need support from interpreters and team to convert presentations and induction training for BSL
 - employers' internal constraints/timetable changes can delay transition from recruitment process to starting work – candidates need to be fully informed about potential long lead-in time
 - employers value help with navigating Access to Work with employees

- Covid19 learning – experience in the pandemic suggests using more technology-based learning and engagement approaches builds competencies around using technology for work and increases opportunities for some people to access training and support because they do not have to travel to the Deaf Cultural Centre. Staff report it can be more effective and time-efficient too.

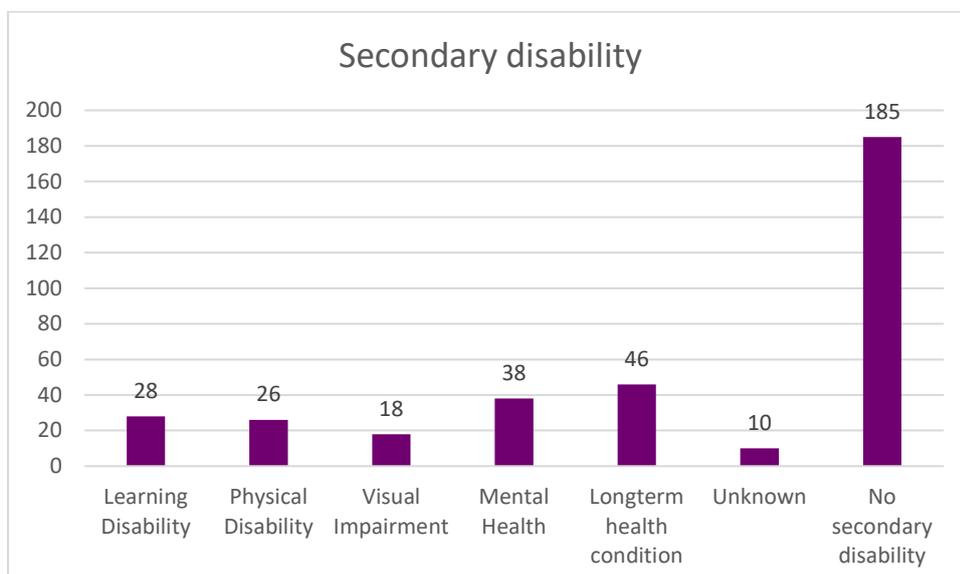
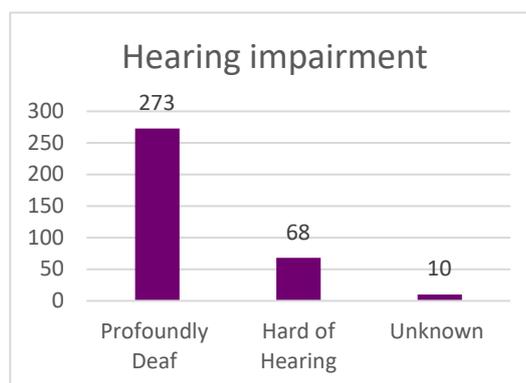
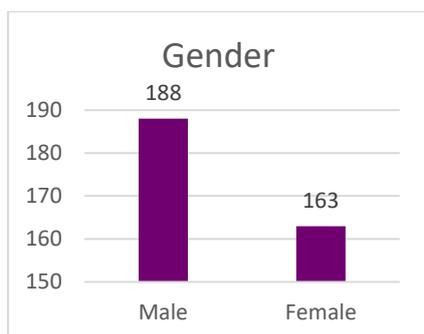
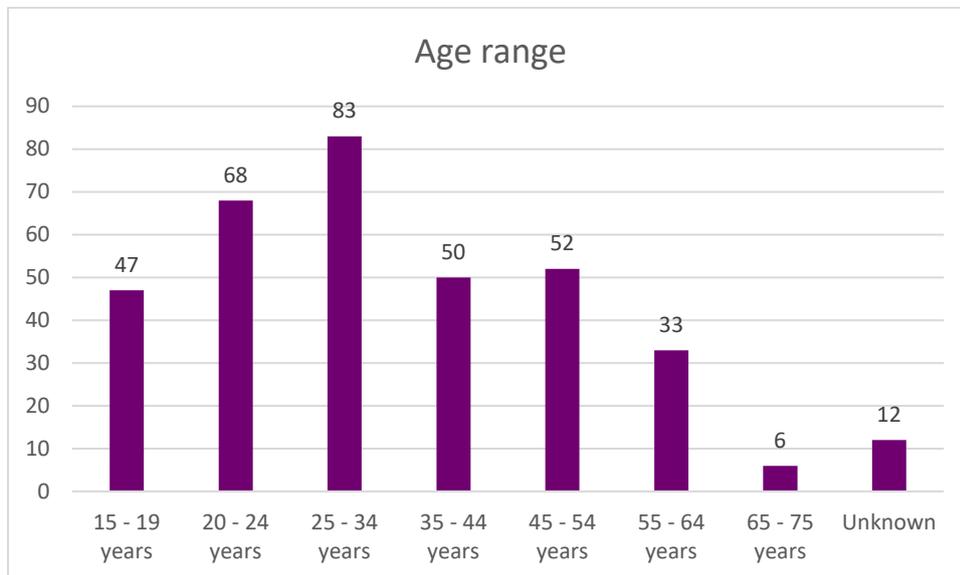
8. Recommendations

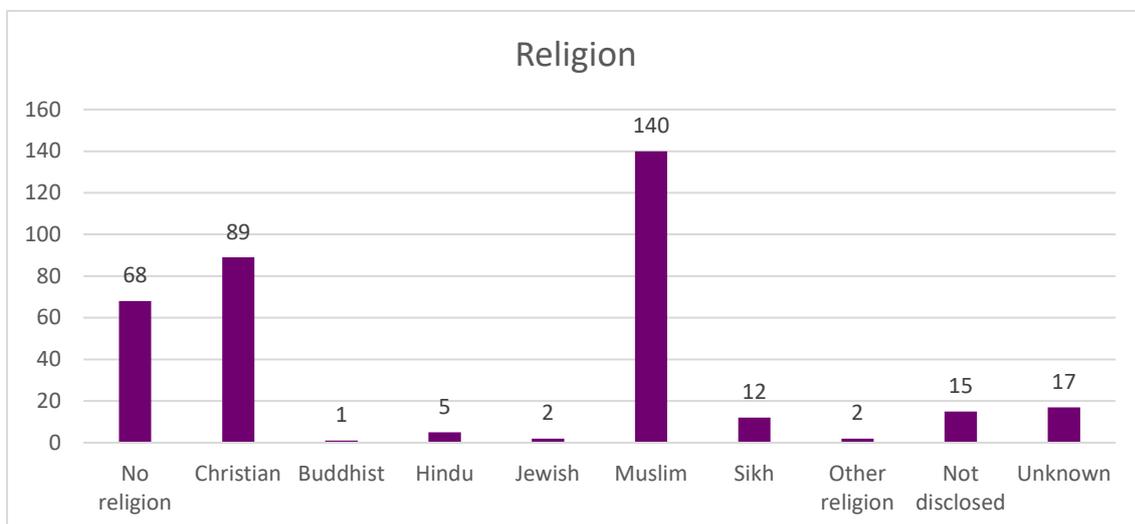
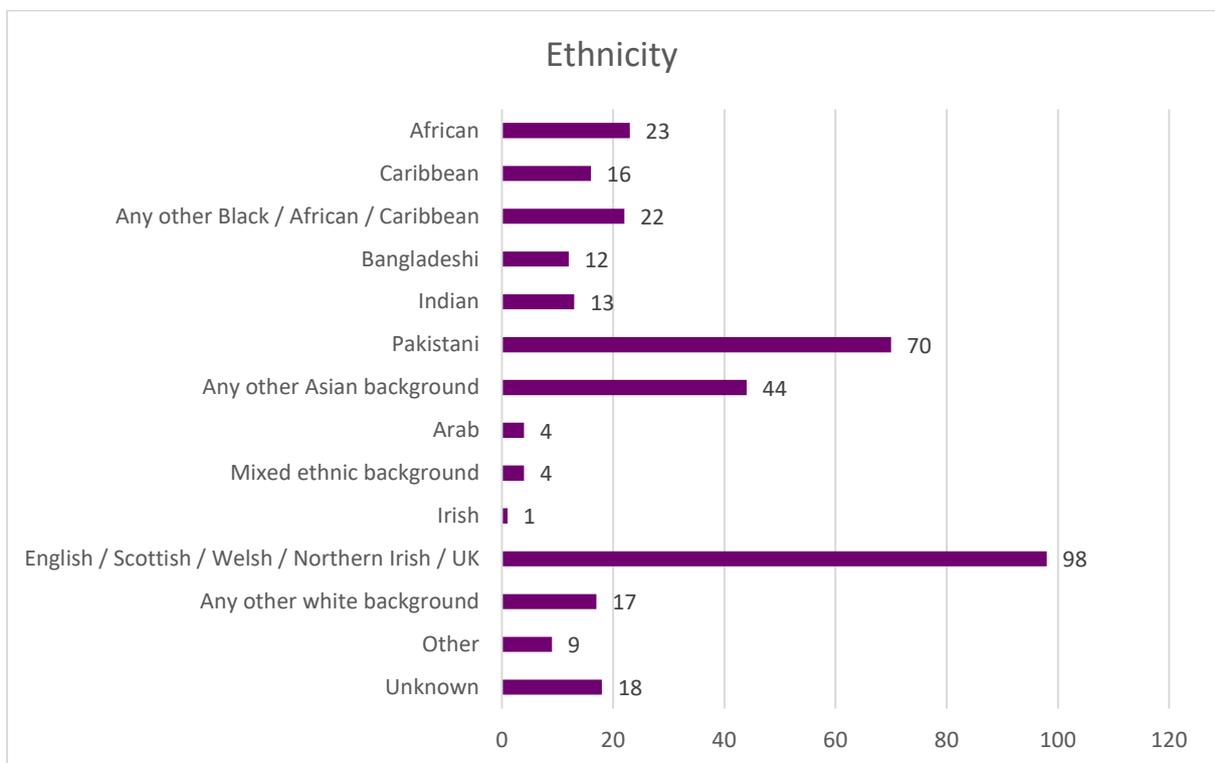
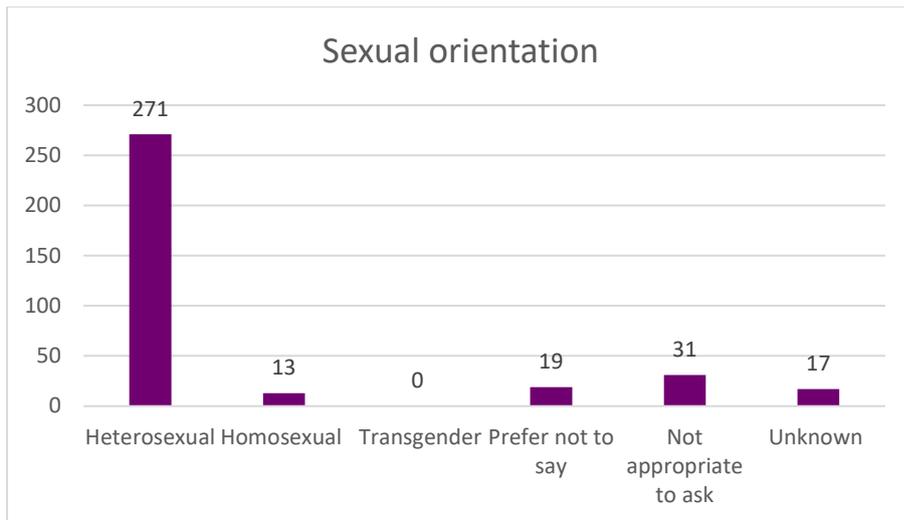
- Think about how to share learning from this project, through national networks, employment support platforms, opportunities to present experience and learning (with beneficiaries) at seminars and conferences (online in the short term).
- Build on contacts made with construction industry to offer employer engagement events and deaf awareness training. Link to their inclusion and diversity policies (see Balfour Beatty Vinci) and work with employers who are already engaged to extend opportunities further through their parent organisations (UPS/Siamo Group).
- Reflect on the learning from the service to inform the strategic planning of BID Services. Identify what can be shared across the organisation to inform other services and new opportunities. Develop an internal leadership development programme to support the career progression of deaf and hard of hearing employees into management roles. Then offer it externally to encourage more organisations to plan leadership development for employees with impairments.
- Promote deaf role models in a range of jobs to continue to motivate and inspire deaf people looking for work. Build on the work with Braidwood School to think how, as an organisation, BID Services can drive higher aspirations for young deaf and hard of hearing people and how can they have a voice in the organisation to shape the future.
- Explore whether the use of technology could extend the reach of the service beyond Birmingham and the Black Country to areas where there is no employment support provision.
- The exit reflection interviews were successful in gathering useful feedback from beneficiaries who have left the service. The team could consider checking in with people who have moved into employment at c.4, 6, and 12 months to capture longer-term outcomes.

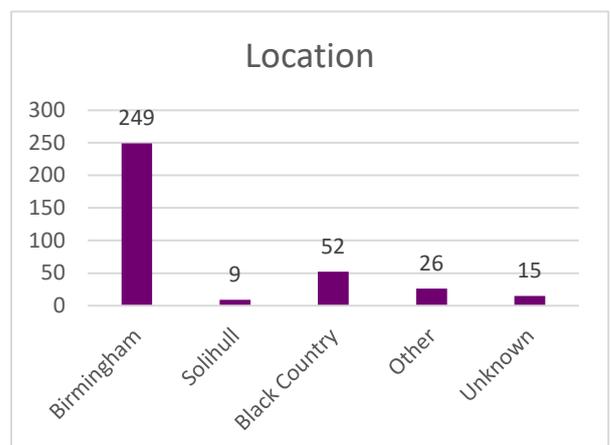
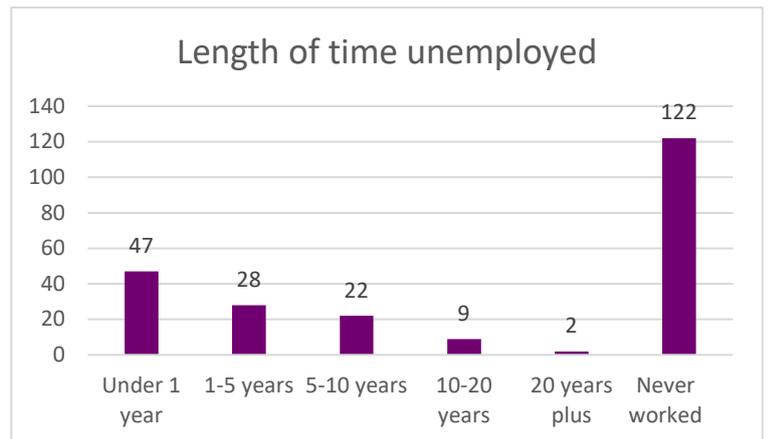
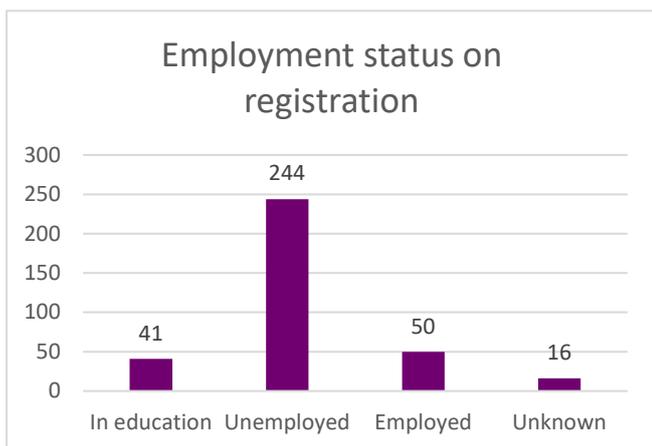
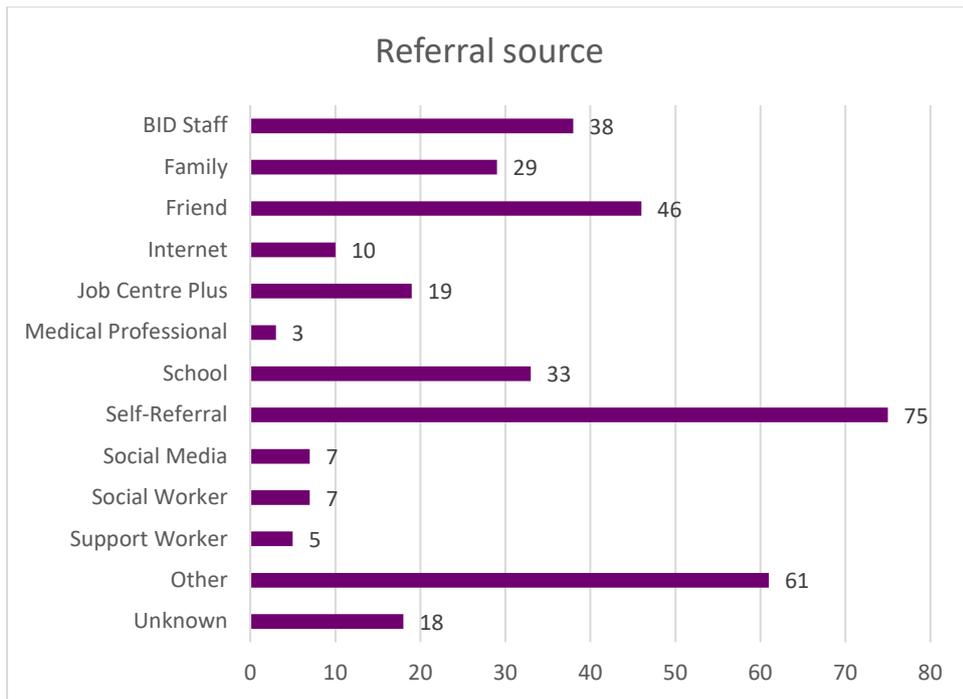
Appendix 1: BID Employment West Midlands registered client demographics & key statistics (The National Lottery-funded activities)

July 2017 – June 2020

Total number of clients for the period = 351







NB. Although BID EWM was not promoted in the Black Country, and the team signpost people to other organisations, agencies continue to refer into the service.

Appendix 2: Exit survey feedback June 2020

84 beneficiaries were contacted by BID Employment West Midlands in exit interviews.

The sample was 24% of the whole project cohort (351 people).

	Extremely Helpful	Helpful	Average	Poor	Very Poor	N/A
Initial contact/induction with the Employment service	57	25	1			1
Was Employment Coach available to help you when required?	47	18	3			16
Support sessions with Employment Coach	54	13	2			15
Were there enough resources available for you to help find employment?	37	27	1	2		17
How much did you feel respected by employment staff?	66	13	1			4
Training/workshops	34	7	6			37
Personal Social Development (PSD) & Employability courses	33	5	2			44
Did you feel that staff listened to your views and ideas?	50	22	4			8
English courses at the Deaf Cultural Centre	7	5	2	1	1	68
IT courses at the DCC	8	4	2			70
Maths courses at the DCC	1	2	1		1	79
Support in Job Club?	18	9	5		1	51

Appendix 3: Recruitment support model

Opening up new routes to work – Ocado/Siamo Group Ltd

BID Employment WM supported a candidate that applied for a role with Siamo who supply warehouse operatives to Ocado and other clients. The candidate did not meet the criteria to pass the recruitment assessments and was initially unsuccessful. However, the application led to discussions between the Siamo Contract Manager at the Ocado site and BID Services about the recruitment process and how it could be made more inclusive for deaf and hard of hearing candidates.

There was already one hard of hearing worker at the site who had passed the assessments unaided and this was why the Siamo manager was unaware that hearing impaired candidates might need the recruitment process to be adapted. They had already learnt, however, that hearing impaired operatives needed some workplace adaptations to be put in place, once appointed.

Siamo usually recruits through a group process where interested candidates attend an open day for assessment and interviews. The manager worked with BID to design a group open day tailored for deaf and hard of hearing people, the key differences were:

- Discussing the content of presentation slides with interpreters in advance, to ensure clear understanding of the roles on offer, recruitment process and workplace jargon
- allowing more time for initial assessments
- interpreters and additional support on hand from BID
- delivery at the Deaf Cultural Centre where BID is based

Following the open day, 10-12 successful candidates were invited to tour the warehouse site, with BID in support, to see how the roles they were interested in worked in practice. They then had 1-to-1 interviews with interpreter support.

People who passed these stages were next due to meet with the site manager for individual risk assessments to ensure the role they were interested in would best meet their needs and to identify any in-work support or workplace adaptations they might need. BID would then support them to apply for Access to Work funding. The risk assessment process was put on hold because of Covid19 and will be picked up again once the site is able to open to external visitors again.

There has been recognition within the wider Siamo Group that *“there are all these candidates out there who can do the job perfectly fine”* and the potential to open up more roles for deaf and hard of hearing people on other sites they supply. The Ocado site is providing a useful test and learn location and once the initial process has been completed and evaluated, Siamo will be able to build on it and offer it to other clients. Ocado is an ideal location to try out the new process as they are a Disability Confident employer, so working with BID fits their company values and they are willing to assist in any way that is needed.

The manager is keen to continue the relationship with BID, learn from the process so far and keep moving forward.

Recruitment pathway into the NHS

BID Employment WM connected with the manager of the internal agency for temporary workers (known as the Bank) at Birmingham and Solihull Mental Health Foundation Trust (BSMHFT) to discuss a possible route into work for their clients. The manager was interested in working with BID to increase the pool of temporary Health Care Assistants (HCA) to provide cover for the Jasmine Suite in-patient facility for deaf and hard of hearing people in the hospital.

BSMHFT provided recruitment criteria for the HCA role and BID promoted the opportunity and identified clients who were interested in being HCAs, and who met the criteria. They organised an open day at the Deaf Cultural Centre for potential candidates and managers from BSMHFT. Candidates heard presentations about the role and the Trust, completed applications and had panel interviews at the open day, supported by the employment team and interpreters.

Once through the pre-employment checks, new Bank staff needed to complete core training on how to work with patients in a safe, appropriate manner before they could go on to wards. BSMHFT realised that the training would need to be adapted for new deaf employees. They designed a bespoke version of the core training and BID provided interpreter support. All new deaf employees were trained together and it worked very well.

Redesigning training and setting up the bespoke sessions took some time to arrange and meant that new Bank staff could not be allocated any shifts until they were complete.

Successful candidates applied for Access to Work (ATW) funding for support in the workplace. This threw up an issue as Bank staff are retained on zero-hours contracts, without a set number of hours each week, and ATW needed to know how many hours in order to allocate funding. This situation almost meant that the new deaf employees would not be able to take up their posts. It took considerable time for the manager to negotiate with ATW to accept an average maximum number of hours and enable Bank staff to access ATW so they could start work.

A learning point was the need for candidates to clearly understand the difference between Bank, where there is no guaranteed work each week, and substantive roles, so that they have reasonable expectations when joining the Bank.

About 5 people joined the Bank as a result of the open day and two progressed to achieve substantive posts as HCAs.

*“Overall it was **a positive experience** to bring people into the Bank team (...) They (BID staff) are really lovely people. They supported us greatly on the day and with good planning beforehand. **We recruited some good people.**”*

BSMHFT manager

Acknowledgements

Merida Associates appreciates the contributions made by everyone who took part in the evaluation research.

Thanks to the external stakeholders who gave their time and shared their knowledge and experience:

Aman Sidhu, Balfour Beatty

Phil Bailey, Braidwood School

Grant Budge, Jasmine Suite, Birmingham & Solihull Mental Health Foundation Trust

Chris Graham, UPS

Fouzia Hussain, Birmingham & Solihull Mental Health Foundation Trust

Lyril Rawlins, DWP

Paddy Stanley, Paddy Stanley Associates

Sukhdev Tatter & Mark Holloway, Birmingham Adult Education Service

Kelly Yardley, Siamo Group / Ocado

Special thanks to the beneficiaries of BID Employment WM service who shared their stories and achievements with us.

We are grateful to the staff members who contributed to the research - thank you for your time, reflections and insight.

We would particularly like to thank the BSL interpreters who supported us in discussions and interviews with deaf and hard of hearing people.

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