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promoting supply chain excellence

Assessment Report

For

CDG - WISE Ability

By Rob Mottram

On behalf of emqc Ltd

Assessment Date: 12th & 13th November 2014

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About the Organisation

CDG – WISE Ability was formed in 2009 by Careers Development Group (CDG) and WISE Employment. It was formed to manage the delivery of the Work Choice program in Hampshire and the Isle of White. As a prime provider CDG - WISE Ability operate a 'managing agent' model, meaning 100% of programme delivery is carried out by members of their supply chain. The Supply Chain Partners were chosen for their expertise and experience in working with customers.

CDG - WISE Ability is committed to working with partners who share and support their core principles, to work towards a society in which employment is available to all.

CDG - WISE Ability believe in:

- Innovation and integrity in how they manage the Work Choice Programme and their supply chain
- Achieving and maintaining excellent performance and a quality service, and
- Encouraging customer self-sufficiency and empowerment through employment.

In 2010 the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) awarded CDG - WISE Ability the Work Choice Programme in a single Contract Package Area, Hampshire and the Isle of Wight. The Work choice programme is for people who, due to disability or a long term health condition, face complex barriers to finding, staying or progressing in employment. The key principles of the programme are:

- Supporting customers and their employers at their place of work
- Helping customers develop and progress into unsupported employment
- Achieving potential within longer-term supported employment, and
- Supporting customers to achieve their goal of sustainable employment

Assessment Methodology

A number of planning phone calls between the Lead Assessor and representatives of CDG - WISE Ability including the assessment coordinator, took place in September & October 2014 where support and guidance was given, including information as to how the assessment would take place and to agree which Supply Chain Partners would be interviewed. Following this meeting, CDG - WISE Ability created schedules for each of the assessors.

During the assessment, 100% of the end to end and protected placement Supply Chain Partners in which CDG - WISE Ability deliver Work Choice programme were spoken to, by telephone or in most instances face to face interviews. During the assessment, assessors reviewed a range of documentary evidence provided by CDG - WISE Ability, interviewed a range of CDG - WISE Ability staff, including members of the Board of Trustees and the Partnership and Contracts team who manage the contract delivery from a base in Southampton.

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All principles of the Merlin standard were fully assessed by a team of 2 assessors; Rob Mottram (Lead Assessor) and Neil Potentier who spent a total of 3 days onsite.

Assessment Outcome

Overall %	90%
Overall Outcome	Excellent
Supply Chain Design	Excellent
Commitment	Excellent
Conduct	Excellent
Review	Excellent

Strengths

A number of strengths were identified during this Merlin assessment and summaries of these are given below. The numbers in brackets refer to the criteria of the Standard to which the areas relate.

- Very strong emphasis on the activities of the CDG - WISE Ability supply chain network in having a positive impact on the disabled person it supports. Values and principles are shared, embraced and are embedded in organisational practices. (3a.1)

- Skillfully fostered culture, which promotes positive and supportive interactions between the supply chain. Interactions are underpinned by responsive and professional managers, who set high standards and raise both expectations and aspirations. (2a.4, 2a.5, 3a.3, 3d.2 & 3d.3)

- Very high levels of collaboration across the supply chain, including the sharing of resources, knowledge and ideas. These practices promote the sharing of best practice and create new solutions to complex problems. (2a.3, 2a.4, 2a.5, 2b.3 & 3b.8)

- Highly inclusive and effective approach to review activities. These activities support the development and continual improvements that have been made to ensure the disabled persons needs are met. (4a.1, 4a.2, 4a.5 & 4a.6)

Areas for Improvement

In order to support the organisation to further develop and improve its supply chain delivery strategy, the following suggestions for improvement are made. The numbers in brackets refer to the criteria of the Standard to which the areas relate.

- Support Supply Chain Partners to better understand and recognise the measurable impact they have on contributing to the commissioners wider social objectives and the value for money it offers. (3d.5 & 4a.4)

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- Ensure that the transition from a CDG - WISE Ability led Quality assurance approach to a Supply Chain Partner led approach maintains the very robust and comprehensive activities and outputs currently deployed across the supply chain.(2b.1 & 3b.1)

Areas Requiring Further Development

Because CDG - WISE Ability has met the Merlin Standard, as described in the assessment outcome above, there are no areas for development identified as requiring immediate action in order to gain accreditation.

Assessment Findings

Supply Chain Design

1a) Supply Chain Design

CDG - WISE Ability demonstrates a strong focus on working with a diverse set of partner organisations. Significant research was undertaken with support from an external organisation and a number of third sector representative's views were sought. Smaller, specialist and third sector organisations were encouraged and supported to engage with CDG - WISE Ability and innovative approaches, such as workshops, helpdesks and face-to-face support were used effectively to facilitate this engagement. In addition, CDG - WISE Ability undertook research on the local demographics, including researching the needs of customer and employers. Local labour market intelligence was also gathered which identified key employment sectors, sectors in growth and decline, local recruitment hotspots, inward investment activity, and local regeneration initiatives. Briefing sessions were also delivered to all potential Supply Chain Partners to support them in understanding the requirements of the programme, its payment structure and the vision and mission of CDG - WISE Ability.

100% of delivery of the Work Choice contract is undertaken by a network of 6 delivery partners. CDG - WISE Ability is a Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) owned equally by Shaw Trust (recently merged with the Careers Development Group) and WISE Ability. CDG - WISE Ability was created with the unique purpose to tender for the Work Choice programme and operates uniquely as a managing agent for a network of Supply Chain Partners. CDG - WISE Ability utilises a supply chain made up of nationally recognised charities and locally based organisations which deliver end to end provision, protected work placements and more specialist delivery partners. A key feature of the organisations selected was that many of them had pre-existing relationships with one another; this supported a more rapid establishing of cooperative and collaborative relationships.

CDG - WISE Ability have very effective strategies in place to ensures that customers have access to wider support services outside of the supply chain. A register of Specialist Support Organisations (SSOs) provide additional support to help customers improve their health and wellbeing.

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The CDG - WISE Ability Partnership Director manages these relationships, however all Supply Chain Partners are encouraged to identify suitable organisations as potential SSOs during the life of the contract. The register is frequently refreshed and organisations have been added through the duration of the programme delivery.

"…we feel empowered to identify and use wider networks to enhance customer support" – Supply Chain Partner

2 Commitment

2a) Collaboration, Cooperation and Communication

Supply Chain Partners readily confirmed that during all stages of the procurement processes, communications were clear and transparent. Opportunities to partner with CDG - WISE Ability were promoted widely, using press advertisements, email, telephone and through external events. Briefing sessions were delivered and interested partners were encouraged to attend. These activities helped CDG - WISE Ability ensure that potential partners understood the requirements of the programme, its payment structure and the vision and mission of CDG - WISE Ability. These events also allowed Supply Chain Partners to make important decisions in respect of becoming part of CDG - WISE Ability's supply chain arrangements. An external organisation with procurement expertise supported CDG - WISE Ability in communicating to all successful and non-successful partners. At contract 'go-live' a range of briefing and training events were delivered with staff attending from across the supply chain.

Supply Chain Partners within the CDG - WISE Ability network were very complimentary of the collaborative approach taken to how they contribute to decisions regarding the design and improvements to systems and processes. Supply Chain Partners were able to confirm that staff have been extensively consulted as part of the ongoing improvements made to programme documentation and Supplier Guidance during the contract delivery phase.

"*…they always consult on every version of paperwork"* – Supply Chain Partner

CDG - WISE Ability and its Supply Chain Partners were able to demonstrate and validate how they work in a highly collaborative manner and with open participation to deliver comprehensive services. This area was found to be of particular strength during the assessment. A varied and extensive array of activities are undertaken particularly at an advisor and team leader level, including quarterly practitioners forums where common issues, challenges and areas for improvement are discussed. Detailed case conferencing is used very effectively during practitioners' forums to raise awareness of customers needs and further support the delivery of more comprehensive services to customers. Advisers frequently share the details of employment opportunities with each other to good effect for the customers they serve. Steering Group meetings are used with senior operational staff to meet with key stakeholders such as JobCentrePlus and DWP to discuss consistency of programme delivery, quality assurance and continuous improvement.

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"…we truly are a real partnership, we're all in this together and CDG - WISE Ability facilitate collaborative working fantastically well" – Supply Chain Partner

"…I would say collaborative working is a real strength. We are always working together" – Supply Chain Partner

"…one of the SCPs ran a course on moderation and all partners were invited to attend" – Supply Chain Partner

The clarity of the communication is excellent. With a dedicated Partnership Director acting as a single point of contact for all partners the management of communication is both slick and highly effective. CDG – WISE Ability recognises the importance of clear, consistent and timely communication, as well as the requirement of all staff to understand fully what is expected of them. Supply Chain Partners were able to give a number of examples of how proactive and positive communications received from CDG - WISE Ability has encouraged them to improve performance and raise aspirations for customers. The Partnership Director uses an e-bulletin to communicate more formal information to the Supply Chain Partners. Contract management review activity takes place at least monthly between the Partnership Director and Supply Chain Partners and a range of documentation, such as service level agreements, contract management framework and a risk register supports this area.

"…the single point of contact is really good – messages are clear and we know where we are all of the time, they are responsive and clear" – Supply Chain Partner

Supply Chain Partners were able to validate that CDG - WISE Ability has created a culture which is honest, open and without unreasonable constraint. Communications between CDG - WISE Ability and its Supply Chain Partners are very supportive and open. Supply Chain Partners are actively encouraged to ask for further support and guidance, which is provided via email, telephone or at all-staff workshops. A 'no fear' culture has been established and Supply Chain Partner staff were able to readily confirm they feel safe to ask questions where they feel unsure about anything that requires clarification.

"…I know I can discuss anything with them" – Supply Chain Partner

2b) Developing Supply Chain Partners

CDG - WISE Ability partners are supported and developed very well. Supply Chain Partners validated that they felt the CDG - WISE Ability approach is excellent. A range of supporting systems and processes compliment the open and honest discussions that take place covering a range of challenges, the sharing of best practice and the training needs of delivery staff. CDG - WISE Ability believe strongly in their role as facilitators to ensure that Supply Chain Partners capacity is built and developed. CDG - WISE Ability have supported Supply Chain Partners in accessing additional funding opportunities by acting as a reference for partners bids and tender applications and through the good use of the SSO Register allow services to be built and developed to meet individual customers needs. Supply Chain Partners are signposted to external training by CDG – WISE Ability and are encouraged to take up qualifications, for example the Employment Related Services qualifications.

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CDG - WISE Ability has appointed Champions within the supply chain network that have specialist knowledge and expertise in a range of areas including Access to Work & Equality and Diversity.

"*...they are helping and supporting us with a project which is outside of Work Choice"* – Supply Chain Partner

CDG - WISE Ability has supported Supply Chain Partners with a wide range of training and development opportunities. This training is provided at no extra financial cost and has included initial system and programme awareness training and with the induction of new Supply Chain Partners members of staff. Additional one-day workshops with a Quality Consultant are seen as very useful and are valued by the Supply Chain Partner staff. It is equally seen as very important to CDG - WISE Ability in quickly ensuring staff are fully equipped to deliver against a challenging contract. These training events and workshops have ensured that staff rapidly become familiar with the customer and delivery journeys; outcome documentation; and the quality and compliance requirements of the programme. Since contract 'go-live' development opportunities have been regular and frequent, principally delivered through themed quarterly all-staff training workshops and practitioners forums. Whilst much of the development has focused on delivery critical activities, there has been significant development of advisers' knowledge in areas such as Deaf Awareness Training, Safeguarding and Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements. Surveys and reviews are carried out following training events to allow CDG - WISE Ability to analyse the effectiveness of the training and how it will be used in future operational activities.

"*...the moderation training helped me to improve and not just to comply" – Supply Chain Partner*
"*...they always help us with training new staff"* – Supply Chain Partner

2c) Contracting and Funding

Supply Chain Partners validated that procurement processes used by CDG - WISE Ability are fair and transparent. CDG - WISE Ability widely advertised opportunities and encouraged partners to make expressions of interest to work with CDG - WISE Ability. Briefing sessions were used well to support this process and obviate any ambiguity. An external organisation with procurement expertise supported CDG - WISE Ability in reviewing, scoring and shortlisting all Expressions of Interest. Senior managers of the parent companies of CDG - WISE Ability formed panels and Expressions of Interest were evaluated against a set of criteria. This process ensured internal moderation and discussions took place. Following this process, both successful and unsuccessful partners were communicated with, and where appropriate additional feedback provided.

Supply Chain Partners commented very positively about the funding arrangements, which broadly mirrors that between DWP and CDG - WISE Ability. Partners were clear from the initial negotiations what funding they would receive and when. Supply chain partners delivering an end-to-end service are paid both a fixed monthly service fee, alongside further outcome related payments as and when they are achieved.

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Written payment schedules are issued to Supply Chain Partners which details agreed profiles and assumed minimum levels of performance set by the commissioner.

Contractual documentation is clear and defines the obligations of CDG - WISE Ability and its Supply Chain Partners. Legally binding agreements were issued and contain CDG - WISE Ability contracting terms and conditions, which reflect a range of relevant documentation and requirements, including DWP Provider Guidance, Ofsted requirements, DWP's Quality Framework, DWP FAM requirements and Star Rating. All Supply Chain Partners confirmed they have clear Service Level Agreements in place, outlining their contractual obligations, payment structures and performance expectations.

Market share allocation is clear and Supply Chain Partners were able to validate their understanding of this during the assessment. Partners understand that market share was allocated based on their capability proposals submitted. Discussions took place between all parties to agree individual Supply Chain Partner share. Supply Chain Partners were asked to identified their local and national strategic links and how these would be developed to ensure that they could successfully deliver comprehensive and appropriate services that would meet the needs of the customers. Good and innovative methods were used by CDG - WISE Ability to ensure that following consultation with Supply Chain Partners appropriate payment structures were in place, for example in protecting partners from undue financial risk through the 'front-loading' of service fees which aided partners with the heavy costs associated with implementation and the promotion of customers progression to unsupported employment which commanded more rewarding financial incentives.

There is a successful strategy to manage the transfer of funds within the supply chain, which was validated by Supply Chain Partners. Details of the payment processes and timeframes are indicated within the Claims Timetable document. For partners, payments are made within 7 days following the claim submission deadline. There were no examples given by the supply chain where payments have been held unnecessarily or delayed and Supply Chain Partners are satisfied with the current arrangements.

"*...money is paid quickly and accurately"* – Supply Chain Partner

Not all Supply Chain Partners were clear on the fees paid to CDG - WISE Ability, however Supply Chain Partners indicated they felt very happy with the support they receive and that the quality of support received is excellent.

'*...I know they take fee's from what they get paid but its worth it for the support we get from DG WISE – Ability"* – Supply Chain Partner

"*...we're happy with CDG - WISE Ability taking a slice, they organise us well and they deal with the commissioner which allows us to get on and help the customer – that's what we are good at"* – Supply Chain Partner

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3 Conduct

3a) Demonstrating Commercial and Business Integrity

CDG - WISE Ability have developed supply chain arrangements to utilise partners who share its very strong commitment to its own organisation values, which include;

- innovation and integrity in the way the partnership network is managed,
- achieving and maintaining excellent performance alongside delivering a high quality service,
- encouraging customer self-sufficiency and empowerment through employment.

The CDG - WISE Ability partnership has a very strong focus on the *person* which it supports and staff at all levels display passionately their belief in a society in which employment is available to all. The CDG - WISE Ability Code of Conduct expects all persons to uphold the principles of: selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership. These values are reinforced on a daily basis with Supply Chain Partners through the behaviors and actions demonstrated by CDG - WISE Ability staff.

"*...they don't count beans they treat people as individuals with needs"* – Supply Chain Partner

CDG - WISE Ability has clear and effective strategies to manage the TUPE process and a clear position to support the transfer when such a requirement was made. CDG - WISE Ability engage the services of specialist independent HR legal advisors who provide support. CDG - WISE Ability took a pro-active role in ensuring that partners were clear about the legal requirements they may be bound by and that the approach taken was fully 'joined up' and consistent across Supply Chain Partners.

Interactions between CDG - WISE Ability and its Supply Chain Partners are very positive and supportive. This is an area of particular strength for CDG - WISE Ability. Staff are very well supported, informally and formally, on a daily basis and through less frequent structured performance management. Supply Chain Partner staff describe clearly how they feel empowered and very well supported to approach the CDG - WISE Ability team with ideas and on occasion concerns. The CDG - WISE Ability team know Supply Chain Partner staff well, which the staff like and this makes them feel valued and raises their motivation to deliver better outcomes for the customers they support. A number of events are undertaken by CDG - WISE Ability to further support this area, such as breakfast events to thank staff teams and organise an Annual Success and Celebration event which is attended by customers, stakeholders and staff within the supply chain.

"*...the team at CDG - WISE Ability are great - very supportive, they know all of the staff team here by name, they even know some of the customers, they care and that's evident through the way they say thanks, that motivates us to help even more people"* – Supply Chain Partner

"*...we love working with them"* – Supply Chain Partner

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A range of approaches ensures that Supply Chain Partners receive timely updates and support, which allows them to maintain legislative and regularly requirements. Site visit checks and e-bulletins are the main methods used to ensure all supply chain Partners remain compliant. Where Supply Chain Partners fail to meet requirements, clear action plans are developed to remedy any deficiencies.

3b) Quality Assurance and Compliance

CDG - WISE Ability uses a range of tools to ensure effective and proportionate approaches are in place to monitor the quality of delivery and customer experience within the supply chain. Quality Monitoring Visits are undertaken on a quarterly basis. Observations of delivery are undertaken at least bi-annually to ensure that Supply Chain Partner's programme delivery is compliant with DWP requirements and meets CDG - WISE Ability standards. Where issues are identified, clear action plans are developed to remedy any deficiencies. This approach is well liked by Supply Chain Partners and helps build capacity and improve quality of delivery.

Observation tools have been provided to the Supply Chain Partners and following training and consultation partners are beginning to embed observations as part of their own quality assurance activities. These activities allow CDG – WISE Ability to ensure the quality of the Information, Advice and Guidance given to customers, in addition to some Supply Chain Partners holding **matrix** accreditation. Activities to improve the quality of service delivery form a significant part of staff training workshops, forums and steering groups and these activities are complemented by other communications cascaded to Supply Chain Partners. Quality Improvement Plans are discussed and reviewed as part of contract management review activities and quality site visits which are undertaken. Current arrangements place too much reliance on CDG - WISE Ability to monitor this important area and CDG - WISE Ability need to ensure that the transition from a CDG - WISE Ability led approach to a Supply Chain Partner led approach maintains the very robust and comprehensive activities and outputs currently deployed across the supply chain.

CDG - WISE Ability have implemented policies and processes to ensure they maintain security of all data and assets within the supply chain. CDG - WISE Ability is certified to ISO27001 and requires Supply Chain Partners to meet data security requirements, which is monitored on a monthly basis. All staff receive Information Security Awareness Training and awareness is raised further during quarterly training workshops, which acts as an excellent opportunity to refresh staff, raise awareness and delivery training on current issues, such as dealing with bogus callers. A dedicated member of staff provided by one of CDG - WISE Ability parent organisations provides specialist support to any provider who doesn't meet the standard by providing practical advice. Partners see this type of practical support as very helpful. Supply Chain Partners are required to report any security weaknesses or events records and any breaches are investigated and recommendations of preventative action are made to stop a recurrence. During due diligence, Information Security audits and tests were carried out, including penetration testing, along with data storage checks. Site visits test continual compliance and Data Security is discussed and forms part of the performance review meetings. A recent audit conducted by DWP Provider Assurance Team awarded CDG - WISE Ability with the highest possible rating of Strong and commented on their effective

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data security controls with systems in place to ensure that all staff are trained, updated and aware of their responsibilities.

Healthy and safe work environments are assured by CDG - WISE Ability through processes at the due diligence stage to ensure the Supply Chain Partner meets CDG - WISE Ability required standard. Continued adherence to the standard is checked on an annual basis and form part of the quality monitoring activities, and is discussed during the monthly performance review meetings. A serious incident protocol is in place and is documented within the Supplier Guidance, which monitors and tracks any serious incidents in accordance with Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations.

People at risk and vulnerable groups are appropriately safeguarded by CDG - WISE Ability through a requirement to submit a range of policies as part of the due diligence process, including criminal record checks. Appropriate Baseline Personnel Security Standards (BPSS) checks are made to ensure that all relevant members of staff are in place. A single point of contact for any safeguarding concerns has been identified and Supply Chain Partners are aware of this person and their role. Continued adherence to the standard is checked on an annual basis and form part of the quality monitoring activities and is discussed during the monthly performance review meetings. Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements & Safeguarding Training has been delivered to Supply Chain Partners staff to further raise awareness and understanding, which is seen as very beneficial by Supply Chain Partners, particularly given the very vulnerable nature of the customers which they support.

CDG - WISE Ability has a Sustainable Development Plan in place and recent external audit results would indicate that this is at least good. A baseline assessment of the Supply Chain Partners commitment to environmental sustainability has been made and focuses on monitoring progress made against a range of targets, for example to reduce waste increase recycling and reduce energy consumption.

Good practice is currently identified, monitored and shared with the supply chain through a variety of methods, including steering group activities, training workshops and the very effective use of Champions. These Champions provide expert and specialist advice in working with specific customer cohorts and how to access additional funding streams to help customers sustain employment such as Access to Work. Case studies are requested from partners on a regular and frequent basis and the annual celebration event highlights and shares particular successes gained by customers engaged by the Supply Chain Partner network, for example with customers who sustain progression to open employment. These celebrations are extended to staff employed within the supply chain and awards are given to staff who make outstanding contributions in supporting customers.

3c) Honouring Commitments

Supply Chain Partners were able to confirm that contract negotiations were clear and open, and partner expectations have been managed effectively. Supply chain partners confirmed that customer volumes, management and service fees negotiated prior to contract award were honoured. In a small number of instances Supply Chain Partners have had volumes negotiated post contracting, however these changes were fully explained and in some

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instances led to increased market, with clear rational being given for the changes and why these were required.
Clear channels such as email and delivery partner meetings were used to communicate fully where Supply Chain Partners were encouraged to raise questions and discuss any areas of concern.

"…we asked for more and we got more" – Supply Chain Partner

Supply Chain Partners are aware of the CDG - WISE Ability formal dispute resolution process. At the time of assessment there had been no formal complaints from the supply chain. Supply Chain Partners have been provided with CDG - WISE Ability's written dispute resolution policy which details time bound expectations in which CDG - WISE Ability need to address any complaints.

CDG - WISE Ability have stated they would fully respect decisions made as a result of the Merlin Mediation Service if it had been deemed to have not acted in accordance with the principles of the Merlin Standard.

Good use of processes ensure that at every level within supply chains, all parties are aware of each other expectations. Clear written documentation is provided at all stages of the life of the contract and this is complimented by the very open, honest and supportive manner in which CDG - WISE Ability approach the management of the Work Choice contract. A flat management structure makes the senior management of CDG - WISE Ability visible and accessible to the Supply Chain Partner network which partner's value greatly and feel confident and comfortable to contact senior management where necessary with concerns.

"…Its great, I deal direct with XXXXXX, they make decisions promptly and I trust them to make the right decisions to support both us and the customer" – Supply Chain Partner

3d) Performance

CDG - WISE Ability has an excellent approach to performance management. A skillfully fostered culture has been developed by CDG – WISE Ability where the interactions that take place are mutually beneficial. Supply Chain Partners deliver services based on customer need, with the most appropriate Supply Chain Partner for that customer delivering the most effective services. Excellent collaborative working takes place a local level with partners meeting each other regularly and through careful facilitation by CDG - WISE Ability partners work very well in developing and sharing operational solutions. Comparative performance data is shared across the Supply Chain Partners, however this comparative view is balanced in the way success is measured and individual Supply Chain Partners respect their colleagues individual specialisms, strengths and areas for improvement. The Partnership Director meets with Supply Chain Partners on a monthly basis and reviews performance against agreed performance targets and measures.

"…we share high risk concerns with one another and come up with solutions" – Supply Chain Partner

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Clear communication channels support regular performance review, which are formally managed through monthly contract management review meetings. Supply Chain Partners confirmed these meetings provide excellent opportunities to identify any challenges or support needs that may be required. Supply Chain Partners performance is managed and monitored on a daily basis, Supply Chain Partners make weekly submission of forecast and actual performance Management Information. This information is used for the setting of monthly targets for Supply Chain Partners, but also gives CDG - WISE Ability a clear picture of any dips in performance. Performance expectations are clear, well defined and understood by Supply Chain Partners. The very open, honest and frequent discussions between CDG - WISE Ability are very effective in quickly identifying differences in the anticipated performance outcomes against clearly set and communicated targets. The information gathered and analysed ensures that support can be deployed quickly to ensure that the success of the entire supply chain is not compromised. Targets are also set and monitoring also takes place for softer key performance indicators, targets to increase levels of compliance and improvements to promote higher quality delivery.

"…we give them regular updates, they ask us challenging questions when we don't come in with the numbers we've promised, but its done in a supportive way not an accusing way" – Supply Chain Partner

Supply Chain Partners are supported by CDG - WISE Ability to use simple systems introduced at commencement of programme delivery to collect, measure and analyse Management Information. This simple approach to management information is well liked by Supply Chain Partners who feel it works very effectively for them, reduces administrative burden and allows them to focus efforts on helping customers. In addition, partners feel the information they receive from CDG - WISE Ability following these submissions provides accurate enough information to support delivery. Supply Chain Partners delivering end-to-end service are required to complete templates on a weekly basis, which is discussed and reviewed as part of the monthly contract management review activities by the Partnership Director.

3e) Promoting Diversity & Equality

CDG - WISE Ability and its Supply Chain Partners demonstrate a strong commitment to ensure an alignment of their commitments to Equality and Diversity. All partners are required to evidence that they have a suitable Equality and Diversity policy at due diligence, following 'go-live' CDG - WISE Ability developed and implemented an Equality & Diversity delivery plan. Supply Chain Partners are required to maintain their own Equality & Diversity policies and procedures, which are reviewed and monitored by CDG - WISE Ability. CDG - WISE Ability ensure that materials are made available to meet the needs of particular customer groups, for example providing information in easy-read and large text for the visually impaired. CDG - WISE Ability actively promotes the use of Access to Work funding, which is supported by a 'Champion' with expert knowledge of this area.

"…we get the referrals that we get, but we have worked more recently with a couple of SRO's which CDG – WISE Ability have put us in touch with and we are getting referrals now of young men who don't access the Job Centre" – Supply Chain Partner

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CDG - WISE Ability currently collects a range of Equality and Diversity data which is analysed on an annual basis to ensure parity of outcomes across all customer groups. Referral routes onto the programme are limited which means that directly influencing the referral types is limited, however CDG - WISE Ability has continued to establish relationships with additional Statutory Referral Organisations (SROs) in an effort to engage potential customers who are not typically engaged with Job Centre Plus services.

4 Review

4a) Supply Chain Review

CDG – WISE Ability's approach to how it actively seeks and uses feedback is excellent. Feedback from Supply Chain Partners is gathered on an on-going basis through face-to-face meetings and telephone calls. In addition to these activities a formal stakeholder satisfaction survey is conducted annually. Customer feedback has also been gathered as part of this year's self- assessment activity, through the use of customer forums, which complements how customers feedback gathered during their one to one review meetings held with advisors. External audits and inspections completed by commissioners, such as DWP Provider Assurance Testing and ESF Compliance Monitoring activities also provide valuable results and feedback, which are used to inform and improve practices.

Supply Chain Partners are required by CDG - WISE Ability to invest in Self Assessment activities, and partners recognise its importance process in driving continuous improvement plans. CDG - WISE Ability utilise the DWP's Self-Assessment Tool and a range of other assessment methodologies including the Merlin Standard and Ofsted Common Inspection Framework. Supply Chain Partners were able to confirm how a one-day workshop is facilitated by CDG - WISE Ability on an annual basis and brings together operational management and delivery staff working within the supply chain. These groups of staff are able to openly discuss and identify the supply chain's strengths and areas for improvement. This approach further fosters the high levels of transparency, honesty and collaboration across the partner network. CDG - WISE Ability accurately self assessed in preparation for the Merlin assessment. Annual Self Assessment Reports are shared with a range of stakeholders, including customers and is made available on the CDG - WISE Ability website.

"*…they held a SAR workshop – I was impressed"* – Supply Chain Partner

CDG - WISE Ability keep its Supply Chain Partners informed of wider policy and strategy information, usually via the Supply Chain Steering Group meetings, and where appropriate DWP policy is disseminated to partners via training workshops and via weekly e-bulletins. Supply Chain Partners find these email updates useful in helping them keep informed of any changes and the strategic direction of the commissioner. Publications such as the annual report, CDG - WISE Ability promote very effectively the good news stories of the people that they have helped, the levels of customer satisfaction and their performance.

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CDG - WISE Ability have continued to ensure that very effective review strategies ensure that the supply chain continues to evolve. These changes are primarily to the SSO Register, which provides specialist support to customers to meet their needs, and continues to be developed through the life of the contract. Activities undertaken by its Supply Chain Partners and governed by CDG - WISE Ability continue to have a very positive impact on external stakeholders, particularly the disabled people it helps. However CDG - WISE Ability need to ensure that all Supply Chain Partner staff are able to better understand and recognise the measurable impact they have on contributing to the commissioners wider social objectives and the value for money the delivery of the Work Choice contract provides the commissioner. CDG - WISE Ability provided a wide range of case studies to demonstrate how the activities of the Supply Chain have impacted positively on its customers.

Conclusion

CDG - WISE Ability has demonstrated behaviors that fully meet the requirements of the Merlin Standard, and Supply Chain Partners were highly complimentary about the approach taken by CDG - WISE Ability, particularly how collaboratively they work together as a supply chain. Supply Chain Partners also value the high quality interactions between responsive and professional managers of CDG - WISE Ability and how these behaviors and attitudes set high standards, both raising expectations and aspirations.

It was evident to the assessment team that CDG - WISE Ability are clearly very committed to further develop their excellent approach to Supply Chain Management to ensure the best possible outcomes for the disabled person they support.

Supply Chain Partners confirmed that CDG - WISE Ability actively display and the staff they employ behave in a highly respectful, open and honest manner, essential behaviors expected of a Prime contractor organisation.

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