



merlin

promoting supply chain excellence

REMPLOY EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

Assessment Dates: 05/12/2016 to 08/12/2016

ASSESSMENT SERVICES
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1. About the Organisations

Remploy was established in April 1945 under the 1944 Disabled Persons (Employment) Act introduced by Ernest Bevin, the Minister for Labour. The first factory opened in 1946 at Bridgend in South Wales making furniture and violins. Many of the workers were disabled people returning from the Second World War. Originally named the Disabled Persons Employment Corporation, Remploy adopted its current name in 1946. The association with the military has remained a strong feature in Remploy's work. From 2005, Remploy started closing factories and in 2013 announced the final closures of the remaining Remploy factories. However since 1988, Remploy Employment Services has operated to meet the employment needs of disabled people and those with health conditions and is now one of the UK's leading providers of specialist employment services for disabled people and those experiencing complex barriers to work. On 7 April 2015 Remploy Employment Services (hereafter known as Remploy) exited government ownership in a joint venture partnership with MAXIMUS - a leading operator of government health and human services programmes - and its employees, who have 30% ownership in the joint venture. This change of structure and governance has provided opportunities for the business; it has seen Remploy become more commercially competitive whilst maintaining relationships with employers in order to transform the lives of disabled people through sustainable work. Remploy works across England, Scotland and Wales, providing jobseekers, employers and partners with access to its services. Remploy engages likeminded Supply Chain Partners to complement its delivery and enhance the expertise and specialisms to support a candidate's journey into work. Supply chain relationships are also developed for areas where Remploy is delivering to build capacity, enhance performance and, where it is not delivering to expand the geographical coverage, to provide a better service to commissioners and candidates. At present, Remploy subcontracts 5% of overall delivery but this is set to increase to approximately 16% over the forthcoming period, although individual contracts may have a different mix dependent upon geography and specialism. Remploy always owns the candidate's journey and is accountable to the contracting authority, such as the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), for successful delivery of the services. It aims to work with Supply Chain Partners that reflect the company values. There are currently 11 end-to-end Supply Chain Partners within a total of 55 contracted and 63 potential Supply Chain Partners. The current range of contracts and their split is as follows: Mental health working: direct delivery 23%, supply chain 77% BBC: direct delivery 100% supported by specialists who support BBC employees Richmond Supported Employment programme: direct delivery 62%, supply chain 38% Work Choice: direct delivery 95%, supply chain 5% Specialist Employability Support (SES) programme: direct delivery 95%, supply chain 5% Experts by Experience (CQC): direct delivery 30%, supply chain 70%.

Since the last Merlin assessment Remploy has moved from Grant in Aid to a commercial contract which has lifted restrictions on subcontracting for Remploy and this has led to a rapid expansion of the supply chain. The Contract Management Framework has been reviewed, developed and shared with Supply Chain Partners for feedback and now includes additional complementary services. The key components of Remploy's approach to supply chain management include a structured procurement process, robust performance management, the desire for collaboration, creating a viable offer that builds capability and capacity, and being flexible within the commissioners' frameworks. This assessment reflects much progress and a strong momentum of continuous quality improvement.

2. Assessment Methodology

Planning conversations took place May and November 2016 where the scope of the Merlin Standard was discussed and agreed in accordance with the guidelines. All Supply Chain Partners involved in supporting Remploy to deliver its services were informed of the assessment via email by the Head of National Supply Chain Procurement and all received an invitation to take part in the online Merlin survey.

The assessment team (lead Assessor Susan Smith and team Assessors Lorna Bainbridge and Andy Richardson) interviewed representatives from 32 Supply Chain Partner organisations, including unsuccessful organisations and potential new subcontract partners.

The 60% sample included representatives of organisations who deliver a range of services and projects on behalf of Remploy, including 100% of end-to-end partners, as well as specialist or 'spot purchase' and other providers. Supply Chain Partners interviewed were at various stages of their working relationship with Remploy. As part of the assessment, Remploy staff were interviewed, including those involved in the strategic and day-to-day development and management of the Supply Chain Partners.

During the assessment, a number of written documents were made available, including those relating to supply chain design, improvement plans, Board report, contracts, Contract Management Framework, Quality Management Framework, communications, and contract and performance/quality management. Assessors also viewed the Management Information (MI) portal, the Management Information App, the new project launch dashboard and the new Supply Chain Portal.

3. Assessment Outcome

Overall	75%
Overall Outcome	Good
Supply Chain Design	80%
Commitment	74%
Conduct	74%
Review	73%

4. Areas of Significant Strength

A number of significant strengths and areas of excellence in practice 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.

- Due to the effective strategies, processes and activities involved in supply chain design, there is wide variety and scope of Supply Chain Partners across all contracts. The objectives of commissioners are clearly understood and communicated with potential Supply Chain Partners in a way that enables the development of enriched supply chains. (1a.1)
- There is clear strategy in place to support any TUPE activity. Appropriate consideration and expertise is used in each scenario. The most recent TUPE transfer of Remploy's own staff into Supply Chain Partners was assisted by Remploy, indemnifying any redundancy liabilities. As a result, Supply Chain Partners and staff feel that they are kept well informed and are supported throughout the process in a timely manner. (3a.2)
- Information security, health and safety, and environmental audit processes were cited as being highly effective, with extensive support provided to Supply Chain Partners from subject experts in Remploy. A number of Supply Chain Partners made reference to the effective information, advice and guidance provided which enabled them to operate more safely and effectively, such as locking server cabinets and improving emergency lighting as well as reducing their carbon foot print. (3b.3, 3b.4, 3b.5, 3b.7)
- Contract documentation is seen to be effective, clear and purposeful, guiding the range of relationships with Supply Chain Partners. They cite that feedback is actively sought and contract terms can be changed, subject to negotiation. Wider partnership expectations are often expressed through a Memorandum of Understanding that is seen to be very useful for such Supply Chain Partners. (2c.3)
- Payment arrangements are commended by a significant number of Supply Chain Partners as being fair and proportionate. Payments are made on time and flexibility around payments exists. (2c.2, 2c.7)
- Diversity and equality is inherent in the values that drive the behaviour of both Remploy and its supply chains. There are processes that ensure a true and honest commitment to diversity. (3e.1)

5. Areas for Improvement

The following areas for improvement-could be considered for review and improvement. The numbers in brackets cross-reference the findings to the relevant element and criteria of the Merlin Standard.

- There are issues reported by a number of Supply Chain Partners in relation to the clarity of business relationships. Some Supply Chain Partners are unclear about who to address certain issues to and some cite that they have had numerous Supply Chain Managers without any handover or communications about changes, leaving them feeling frustrated, isolated and unclear about their position. This should now be addressed through a period of consolidation of staff and staff performance management activity. (2a.4)
- Communications with Supply Chain Partners are variable during contract deployment. There have been numerous staff changes and the Single Point of Contact (SPOC) approach is inconsistent in its deployment. Remploy is already aware and has put steps in place to focus on continuing to improve two-way, meaningful, open and honest communications with Supply Chain Partners. (2a.5, 3a.3)
- More work could be undertaken to support and encourage the development of all Supply Chain Partners. This work has already begun, however Remploy could consider a more structured process of business review with its Supply Chain Partners to ensure for itself that they are fit for purpose and can support its future growth ambitions. (2b.1)
- As well as providing communication about bidding opportunities with Remploy, there could also be proactive communications about other business opportunities outside of Remploy. This would support the ability of Supply Chain Partners to build capacity and contribute to helping them build a more sustainable business. (2b.2)
- Remploy could do more to encourage Supply Chain Partner collaboration. Whilst there are good examples of collaboration between Supply Chain Partners and Remploy's own direct delivery staff, there is much less evidence of inter-supply chain collaboration. (2a.3, 3d.1)
- There is variable understanding of the actual management fee charged, based on the interviews with the Supply Chain Partners as part of this assessment. This was contrasted by readily available documentary evidence in the form of the offer letter that clearly states 'Pricing after the Deduction of a Management Fee' (of a given percentage) and further documentary evidence showing a case where the management fee had been reduced. Some Supply Chain Partners interviewed indicated that they felt the management fee level is Remploy's commercial concern, however there could be greater transparency and Remploy is asked to consider how this can be achieved. The new Partner Portal may assist in this regard and consideration might be given to presenting the support as options or a menu which may then result in different management fee agreements. (2c.8)
- Recent activity to address issues of environmental sustainability is recognised, however more work is required in order to fully embed policies and plans with measurable targets in this area. In addition, consideration could be made to introducing robust monitoring and reviews against the targets demonstrating environmental impact. (3b.7, 4a.6)

- Whilst Remploy describes that it has clearly defined 'Value for Money' across the contracts, in consultation with Supply Chain Partners this was not corroborated by all at interview. Some Supply Chain Partners can state this is by demonstration of 'excellent' practice by Remploy's own operational staff. However, Remploy could consider how communication of 'Value for Money' can be more explicit across all contracts and check Supply Chain Partners' understanding of this. (3d.5)
- Whilst there are effective communications regarding updates to legislation and regulatory requirements, the organisation could consider how more could be done to follow up and ensure action is taken in advance of the annual due diligence activity. (3a.4)

6. Areas Requiring Significant Development

Although the Merlin Standard overall has been achieved with a 'Good' outcome, there are a number of criterion within the requirements of the Standard where limited evidence was presented and which require significant development in order to support the organisation to achieve excellence in supply chain partnership working. The numbers in brackets cross-reference the findings to the relevant element and criteria of the Merlin Standard.

- Supply Chain Partners confirm collection of the data in relation to Diversity and Equality. However, due to volumes and time within the supply chain, the analysis and use of data has not yet started. It is anticipated that this will be resolved with time and the actions of Performance Managers when included in the monthly contract review. (3e.3)

Findings Against the Merlin Standard

1) Supply Chain Design

1a) Supply Chain Design

Remploy has a very clear understanding of commissioner, customer and other stakeholder needs and uses this intelligence to good effect when developing or reviewing the design of its Supply Chains. Remploy successfully achieves both scope and variety within its supply chain design through comprehensive procurement and engagement activities which ensure that it meets and exceeds the objectives and contractual requirements of the commissioner. Remploy builds robust supply chains composed of a variety of public, private and third sector partners to ensure the needs of the customers and local demographics are met. Remploy gains a good understanding regarding the commissioner's aims and objectives. It undertakes extensive research, and includes potential partners through inviting them to events whereby the organisation explains the contract and expectations, shares the commissioner's aims and objectives, and subsequently seeks feedback from them. Remploy recognises the value of local knowledge, experience and expertise in the delivery of similar contracts, which are subsequently used to design the bid and the delivery model.

Remploy has clear process and strategies in place that support the achievement of effective supply chain design. These include in-depth review of opportunity and service specification. All potential tender opportunities are sourced, reviewed and researched within the dedicated Business Development Proposal Centre. An assessment of the opportunity is made by internal stakeholders that include finance, operations and commercial teams and aims to ensure that the development of a supply chain meets the needs of the commissioner and customers, and is financially viable and deliverable. Service specifications are analysed in detail by the Bid Lead, Solution Design Manager and Operational Leads to identify and research specific requirements. Geographical coverage and the need for fixed premises and outreach services are considered. Demographic data and research is also carried out using a combination of desktop research and knowledge from delivery staff (branch and field-based) and Partnership Advisors to further inform thinking and decisions on the scope and variety of the Supply Chain Partners required. To further understand a region, Remploy uses available datasets such as NOMIS, to ensure an in-depth knowledge of the demographics and geography.

The views of external stakeholders such as local authorities, incumbent provider (if appropriate) and the commissioner are also proactively sought so that their knowledge, expertise and experience can be used in the supply chain design process. Latterly, ESF Partnership events are also held prior to offering an opportunity for collaborative input into supply chain design. As part of these events, potential Supply Chain Partners are invited to suggest how the supply chain can be strengthened by accessing their network of suppliers. One Supply Chain Partner commented *"Part of initial planning meeting was to look at 'real' need in locality and Remploy did some further research into the particular wards of Leicester and their specific needs. Research showed tender doc to be accurate. Whereas tender was for a wide range of wards, research allowed consortium to focus on specific needs in certain wards."*

All existing partners are invited to complete an Expression of Interest (EOI) for each new bidding opportunity through Remploy's website and other bidding portals. There are dedicated Partnership Advisors who forge and develop links with potential new partners that will enable Remploy to fully meet the needs of its customers and the service specification requirements. The EOI has been reviewed and simplified to encourage new partnerships whilst ensuring a robust approach. All EOIs are reviewed and scored to ensure that the organisation meets minimum quality standards and can deliver the specification requirements. An example of this is the introduction of two new partners to the Work Choice contract to provide knowledge, understanding and solutions to meet local needs in a specific geographical area. One was chosen for their specific training provision for long-term unemployed and the other as they have a social enterprise through which they encourage Work Choice customer participation and confidence-building through volunteering. Potential Supply Chain Partners are supported to identify, understand, assess and mitigate risks associated with being included in the supply chain early in the procurement process by providing an objective overview of potential contractual operational flows. This is gained through an understanding of NOMIS data and by translating operational forecasts.

Regional partnership advisors work to ensure local people's needs are holistically addressed. A staff member commented that *"We use a range of networks for information and this is useful to help guide what we do. ERSA, for example, keeps us up-to-date with what's happening in the sector"*. Partnership events and the frequent sharing of knowledge and expertise from each sector occurs. Remploy maintains a Services Directory that allows Supply Chain Partners to search for and work with local specialist providers to ensure customers get the support they need. Remploy also works collaboratively with partners by offering co-location within its branches and enabling customers to access multiple services through its own partnership network; for example, the National Careers Service operates support sessions from a branch and a local college runs a computer course twice a week. Remploy has relationships with over 2,500 employers nationwide that add value as they enable both Remploy and its Supply Chain Partners to place disadvantaged people into suitable, sustainable work, meeting the holistic needs of customers and local demographics. Remploy's dedicated Employers' Services team works to influence and guide a wide network of employer stakeholders, through advice and support in upskilling staff to recruit and retain disabled colleagues. These opportunities are brokered to Supplier Chain Partners through Affinity, which is a vacancy-matching programme. In addition, Remploy encourages Supply Chain Partners to retain ownership and links with their own existing networks of partner/support and stakeholder organisations, which remains appreciated and perceived as beneficial to candidates (customers). One Supply Chain Partner commented *"Encouraged to use our own local networks and the Service Directory – customer that was profoundly deaf – we sourced support."*

2) Commitment

2a) Collaboration, Cooperation and Communication

Remploy communicates proactively and effectively with Supply Chain Partners during all stages of the procurement process and in line with its Supply Chain Procurement process. The initial step for a potential Supply Chain Partner is to complete the online initial EOI available on the dedicated Partnerships webpage. This is always live and is not related to any specific bidding opportunity. Remploy has recognised that this can be a lengthy process for partners that are completing multiple EOIs for organisations and has therefore simplified its initial EOI to ask only for key information thereby reducing the barrier to entry and encouraging submissions. A typical Supply Chain Partner commented "*Straight-forward, more than a tick box, but would expect that as they need to really check us out.*" The procurement process ensures that detailed and bid-specific information is captured at a more appropriate time in line with Invitation To Tender (ITT) release. Supply Chain Partners are asked to complete detailed due diligence information at the point that the relationship progresses to a formal partnership. Bid specific EOIs are published on the website, external message boards and portals if required, and at this point Supply Chain Partners are invited to complete this second stage EOI and then engage in discussions and negotiations by email, telephone or at a dedicated Partnership event where discussions about timelines are communicated. A majority of Supply Chain Partners state that they are encouraged to share their views and any concerns they have about the process. Remploy has improved more recently in its ability in doing this, having learned from some less than positive experiences. A positive example is the Big Lottery Building Better Opportunities bid, where a multi-sector Partnership event was held with 12 organisations so they could talk directly and openly, thereby enabling Remploy to better understand the needs of Leicestershire and the support services available.

Following the completion of the second stage EOI, the Remploy Selection Committee evaluates and scores each one. This is communicated to Supply Chain Partners prior to their completion of the EOI. The outcomes of the evaluation are communicated to each Supply Chain Partner in writing after scoring and all have the opportunity to receive more detailed feedback. This is a newer process and so some of the current Supply Chain Partners were unable to corroborate this. Potential Supply Chain Partners can explain their understanding of the process.

Remploy consults with the majority of Supply Chain Partners about decisions, including the design of systems and processes through pre-bid submission co-design sessions, partnership meetings and for end-to-end Supply Chain Partners through monthly and quarterly reviews between Remploy Performance Managers and the Supply Chain Partner delivery lead. For example, two Supply Chain Partners advised Remploy that they considered performance targets to be too high and not in line with the target cohort group. This information was fed back to the Business Development team and the Remploy Board and the result was the approval being given to reduce the target in line with the feedback. During the implementation of the Specialist Employability Support contract, a Supply Chain Partner suggested a more streamlined referral process that was adopted. A further example is the development of a bespoke database on the Experts by Experience contract where views were sought on what would work best and even the choice of the system name. A Supply Chain Partner's view was that they were "*Genuinely involved in discussions and consultations regarding what the model should look like – identified which partners had what skills to bring to the table. Remploy then went about drafting the outline bid.*"

Collaboration, open participation and honest communication is expressed within Remploy's Contract Management Framework. Some Supply Chain Partners confirm that there is active encouragement to collaborate - *"Genuine attempts to collaboration"* said one Supply Chain Partner. For end-to-end Supply Chain Partners, where monthly performance meetings between Remploy's dedicated Performance Manager and the Supply Chain Partner are held, performance, how the partnership is working and whether there are any challenges from either side of the relationship are key points for discussion. Contract-specific steering groups are also held at varying frequencies. Examples of how Remploy states that it demonstrates and promotes a collaborative approach include events over the last four months on the topic of health and wellbeing where local community enterprises and customers were invited to come along and meet Supply Chain Partners. Remploy could do more to encourage Supply Chain Partner collaboration. Whilst there are good examples of collaboration between Supply Chain Partners and Remploy's own direct delivery staff, there is much less evidence of inter-supply chain collaboration.

There are issues reported by a number of Supply Chain Partners in relation to the clarity of business relationships. Some are unclear about who to address certain issues to and others cite that they have had numerous Supply Chain Managers without any handover or communications about changes, leaving them feeling frustrated, isolated and unclear about their position. *"Only had one visit in the year and we've heard nothing from Remploy since then. They seem to have had a major shake-up in personnel"* is typical of the comments in this regard. This should now be addressed through a period of consolidation of staff and staff performance management activity and it is clearly an improving picture already as some Supply Chain Partners acknowledged: *"We have an assigned person with clear roles and responsibilities and she is very proactive, responsive, as are others."* and *"I have regular contact with X and X."*

Remploy operates on the values of openness, respect, keeping promises, professionalism and passion. It aims to create a culture in which communication is open and honest and without constraint. Whilst the majority of Supply Chain Partners can confirm this, there are some that do not agree communications are as effective as they would expect. An illustrative quote is from one Supply Chain Partner as follows *"Remploy haven't shared the full submission that includes the financials and I would have liked to have received that – this would have helped us to understand how Remploy have structured the whole thing, not just our bit."* The Contract Management Framework defines the process that is to be followed to support, develop, performance manage and communicate with Supply Chain Partners and it is recognised by Remploy that a more detailed communications plan is required to implement this. However positive quotes from Supply Chain Partners included:

"Open, honest, very supportive, positive and encouraging."

"Excellent communications, not just good."

"Very open and honest in their communications."

"Clear communications, open and honest."

2b) Developing Supply Chain Partners

Remploy has supported the development of organisations within the network by offering opportunities to re-profile and increase volumes, which have enabled a number of partner organisations to grow and expand their business. Additionally, some Supply Chain Partners have been worked with to upskill in order to become involved in Access to Work. One Supply Chain Partner's capacity was developed through the Remploy Futures Programme. Audits and feedback of results have helped some Supply Chain Partner staff to develop a more meaningful understanding of performance management and improvement, and subsequently improve the business capacity and capability. Policies are shared with Supply Chain Partners to support and encourage them to develop their own processes. A staff member confirmed that "*We've arranged to go to see them to make sure their policies and procedures are up-to-date and effective and to give them any guidance.*" There is now more work starting to develop around a more structured approach to Supply Chain Partner development and this strategic approach is seen as very positive.

Remploy's Business Development team actively seeks additional funding and finance streams through continuous market engagement activities to analyse the trends and forthcoming bidding opportunities. In line with the Supply Chain Procurement process, all existing Supply Chain Partners are invited to submit an EOI in relation to every opportunity that Remploy seeks to be the Prime in. Existing Supply Chain Partners that have successfully completed full due diligence are categorised as an 'Approved Partner'. During the recent round of procurement for the DWP/ESF bid, a number of potential Supply Chain Partners had expressed a concern around a future gap in programmes between the end of their existing contract and the implementation of the DWP/ESF programmes. This could have led to the loss of experienced and qualified staff and a significant drop in funding, so discussions were held with Supply Chain Partners to explore the possibility of becoming involved in Work Choice to bridge the gap. Remploy's Partnership Newsletter is a new edition to the communication strategy with existing and potential Supply Chain Partners. The newsletter provides valuable market insight, an overview of our recent achievements and it is where future bidding intentions are openly advertised. A Supply Chain Partner commented that "*We've been supported to increase delivery over the years.*"

The development of Supply Chain Partners is supported and encouraged. These occur both during the implementation phase of a new contract, when Remploy provides a range of training and development opportunities to support the Supply Chain Partner's staff and this level of support continues throughout the contract delivery period. Monthly reports and the monthly review meetings enable the Performance Managers and Supply Chain Partners to analyse performance and arising training needs. An example is coaching around uploading essential outcome information onto the Adapt system. Performance Managers also spend time with Supply Chain Partner staff during site visits and this might include help to understand the details of the contract requirements, delivery model and compliance, and provides staff with the opportunity to raise questions. Remploy expertise is consulted wherever necessary, for example for disability guides or for advice from Disability Consultants. Remploy's branch network has supported knowledge through training support and sharing best practice, for example staff from one Supply Chain Partner recently sat with Remploy's Employment Advisors in branch to observe a profile appointment and learn how to complete the paperwork. Other examples include

safeguarding via e-learning, support with Remploy's MI system - the App - and training around uploading outcomes onto the system, Accredited Mental Health First Aid training and webinars about the Remploy online service and Expert by Experience contract.

The new Partner Portal is to be developed to have more online training package links available for Supply Chain Partners. Supply Chain Partner comments include:

"Training was around systems and around contract requirements."

"They have provided 'How to work with people with hidden disability, readjustments for people with disabilities'."

"Adapt, ESF standards, Quality Assurance and Compliance, and staff have visited the local branch and worked with us."

2c) Contracting and Funding

Remploy has managed processes and procedures to support procurement effectively in line with the requirements and expectations of the commissioners. To ensure a fair and transparent approach to procurement from the outset, all information is shared via the "Become a Partner" segment of the Remploy website which is the main source for Supply Chain Partners to submit their EOI information. All opportunities are advertised in this segment and include application details, guidance and deadlines. This ensures all parties have access to the same range of information and that they understand the process in place, including what is required, the scoring criteria and timeframes. Remploy recognises that prospective Supply Chain Partners are often tackling multiple EOI forms at any one time and has purposefully adopted its approach to reduce the administrative burden by only requesting specific, relevant information to each opportunity. For example, existing Supply Chain Partners would not need to re-submit generic information about their organisation unless it had changed. All completed EOIs are scored using a template to ensure fair marking. Feedback is provided to Supply Chain Partners with an additional offer of bespoke support to increase capacity. Due diligence is carried out robustly and for successful organisations, any further requests for information are made. Clear and regular communication with all potential Supply Chain Partners is maintained throughout the procurement process including outlining approach, forthcoming activities and requirement, timelines and next steps. During initial partnership events, Supply Chain Partners are provided with information regarding timeframes, next steps, selection criteria etc. Unsuccessful Supply Chain Partners are notified either by telephone or email, and are offered the opportunity for feedback on why they were not successful and areas they may need to develop to strengthen themselves for future applications. This was confirmed by Supply Chain Partners at interview as follows:

"A very thorough process."

"Pre-contract briefings done via telekits and video calls."

"Good all the way through."

"Effective process, what I expected, straight-forward."

Remploy works with Supply Chain Partners to ensure that all funding and payment arrangements are fair and proportionate and do not cause undue financial risk. During new procurement, financial arrangements are shared as soon as the information is available so that they are fully aware of any risk, can clarify any questions, negotiate where appropriate, and determine financial viability. Remploy ensures that all unit prices offered are fair, in line with performance expectations and are offered based on the Supply Chain Partners' existing infrastructure so that there is no additional risk attributed to them. If infrastructure is required, Remploy offers a

flexible shared risk financial model where risk is transferred equitably over the course of the contract by offering a service fee that reduces during the set-up months to initially support and improve cash flow, transferring to outcome payments when the contract is step up.

For example, when working with a new Supply Chain Partner, Remploy was flexible in terms of both solution design and financial modelling in order to develop a viable and fair strategic funding relationship.

Contract documentation is in place for all Supply Chain Partners and is seen to be very clear and understandable. There is a range of contract types in place, including contracts, Service Level Agreements and Memorandums of Understanding. Periodically, feedback is sought on contract templates and there are examples of contract terms being amended to suit the requirements of particular Supply Chain Partners - for example changes in clauses relating to insurance liability levels. There are clear roles and responsibilities for both the Supply Chain Partner and Remploy that are clearly defined, for example, who is responsible for referring people. Contractual documentation is periodically augmented with programme-specific provider guidance and Quality Matters newsletters, which are communicated to Supply Chain Partners through the email communications and Performance Managers. Supply Chain Partners commented that:

*"We did question a couple of things and we got these changed – so they showed they were flexible."
"Contract is only 22 pages long – you can see they've pared the DWP contract down to just the important bits."*

"Contract was easy to understand and in plain language. No variations to contract since then."

Remploy has a clear rationale for the allocation of market share. Senior staff state that they only make offers to Supply Chain Partners that they believe to be achievable and financially viable. The Head of National Supply Chain Procurement works with the Business Development lead to ensure volumes are calculated in line with the demographic evidence that highlights the potential number of beneficiaries that would be eligible for a contract. A percentage is allocated to each so that it offers volumes that are achievable and in line with a realistic number of potential participants. The majority of Supply Chain Partners confirm that following contract award, a face-to-face meeting is hosted to review the offer along with market share, volumes, performance expectations, finances and funding arrangements.

Requirements of Supply Chain Partners are taken into account in pre- and post-contract award processes and payment structures, for example, one Supply Chain Partner cited changing to receiving a service fee. Each contract is looked at individually and aspects of the contract and the Supply Chain Partner are taken into account when looking at the financial models which can be subject to a number of iterations until agreed. One Supply Chain Partner was supported with an upfront diminishing service fee that helped them to fund the setup of new offices and secure staff and other infrastructure. The service fee was weighted at the front of the contract and slowly diminished over a number of months; however, it did not affect the outcome of fees paid that were standardised across the contract. This initially puts the majority of risk with Remploy but after the service fee diminishes, the risk is shared between the Remploy and the Supply Chain Partner. Another example is where Remploy agreed that the service fee would be paid within 30 days at the start of the month instead of 30 days of the end of the month; this was to support cash flow and ensure that the Supply Chain Partner could use that money effectively. Remploy also agreed that the outcome fee would be paid within seven days of the DWP paying them (as Remploy only has one payment run per week), thus reducing the time it took for the Supply Chain

Partner to be paid for their outcome-based work. Another example was the adoption of a flexible approach to supporting a Supply Chain Partner by making two-weekly payment runs that suit the timing and frequency of its payroll, thereby supporting their cash flow.

There is variable understanding of actual management fee charged based on the interviews with the Supply Chain Partners as part of this assessment. This was contrasted by readily available documentary evidence in the form of the offer letter that clearly states 'Pricing after the Deduction of a Management Fee' (of a given percentage) and further documentary evidence showing a case where the management fee had been reduced. Some Supply Chain Partners interviewed indicated that they felt the management fee level is Remploy's commercial concern, however there could be greater transparency and Remploy is asked to consider how this can be achieved. The new Partner Portal may assist in this regard and consideration might be given to presenting the support as options or a menu which may then result in different management fee agreements. Despite this, the majority did understand and could explain the services Remploy offers as a Prime and whilst not knowing the value of the management fee, the majority did feel this support represented good value for money. The management fee from a Supply Chain Partners' perspective includes provision of Adapt (the client management system) which includes management information and reporting; access to the vacancy management system Affinity; access to Remploy Online - an innovative digital support service; access to development tools and materials; a dedicated central complaints handling team - including support for related media enquiries and provision of full-programme audit; compliance monitoring; DWP contract management services and a dedicated Supply Chain Partner Performance Manager. Typical Supply Chain Partner comments included:

"These were discussed during the lead up to the contract; I can't remember exactly what they were, but I guess they were acceptable, otherwise I wouldn't have done business with them."

"Management fee must be included in contract – someone in the organisation must have felt it represented reasonable value for money."

3) Conduct

3a) Demonstrating Commercial and Business Integrity

Remploy has clear and purposeful mission and values that reflect the commitment to support disabled people to progress into employment through delivering a high quality, customer-focused service. The senior leaders have set and communicated a very clear strategic direction for the organisation, supported by ambitions, values and aspirations for all customers. These are shared with the Supply Chain network, and are periodically reinforced at meetings and through other communications. Typical comments from Supply Chain Partners included:

"The service is designed around the client; they are at the centre of the delivery, not to get money."

"It's certainly not about the figures, the client is put first and that is how we work."

"Ethical, professional, done what they promised."

"Act true to their values."

"We were sent a document that explained their partnership proposition. We already knew them as an organisation. We share common values about adding value to our clients."

"We partner with them as we share their values."

Support for Supply Chain Partners when they have undertaken TUPE activities as a result of changes in contract has been robustly provided. In the last five years, members of the Human Resources (HR) team have managed TUPE transfers involving between five and 200 people both into and out of Remploy. For each contract, the approach to TUPE forms a key part of the implementation plan. Remploy's HR team takes responsibility for managing the TUPE process with a team member being appointed as lead contact for each TUPE transfer. The HR lead makes sure that local Remploy managers are involved in the process, from attending TUPE consultation meetings, to reviewing TUPE assignments. The HR lead is also responsible for involving a representative from each Supply Chain Partner, gaining their support for the implementation plan and commitment to work collaboratively on the transfer process. There is extensive communication with the transferees, the previous supplier and with Supply Chain Partners and this was corroborated at interview. An interview with a TUPE transferee confirmed that communication was effective before, during and after the activity, that the transition was managed well and people were made to feel part of Remploy. Recently, Remploy has offered to indemnify payments in TUPE transfer situations to benefit Supply Chain Partners and prevent any such barriers to entry into the supply chain.

Collaboration, open participation and honest communication are explicitly referred to within Remploy's Contract Management Framework. Where this works well, it is seen through Remploy facilitating meetings as well as encouraging the development of personal relationships between organisations. Contract-specific steering groups/best practice sessions are also held however this varies by contract. There is good direct collaboration between Remploy's Performance Managers and individual Supply Chain Partners to share skills and knowledge such that customers benefit by receiving a better service that meets and exceeds their needs. Illustrative quotes included:

"We have a good relationship with our current Performance Manager, though he's being made redundant and we have some concerns about the situation going forward."

"Relationships with Remploy's Development Director are good."

"Their intentions were very good. They have a genuine willingness to work with others."

"Very supportive, positive, win-win."

"X is very supportive and positive, especially to get us up and running."

Remploy has effective policies in place and procedures to support and maintain legislative and regulatory requirements and keep Supply Chain Partners up-to-date on legislation and contractual/statutory requirements in a timely manner. The Quality Matters Update (QMU) shares changes to contract guidance and processes, for example the new Benefit Cap Rates. There is also the Remploy E-bulletin to share political updates, government announcements and welfare updates on a monthly basis. Whilst there are some mechanisms in place to ensure that Remploy is confident that Supply Chain Partners have understood the information provided, this could be further improved.

3b) Quality Assurance and Compliance

Remploy has implemented an effective supply chain management framework to review and monitor the quality of the service delivery to customers across the network. The process used is proportionate to the level of the contract being delivered and is reflected in the Contract Management Framework. The approach to quality assurance and compliance has been validated in the achievement of "reasonable assurance" from the DWP PAT audit inspection in April 2016. Partners are subject to regular and ongoing compliance audits by the Quality and Compliance Team. The results of these audits, performance information, self-assessment and customer information inform continuous improvement. Observations have taken place in some specialist Supply Chain Partners. The framework is about ensuring that quality and contractual standards are being met. Staff commented that *"We don't just say no – we'll support any partner to develop and help fill their gaps."* Supply Chain Partner comments included:

"Good approaches to monthly Quality Assurance with checks on Continuous Improvement. Monthly reports on quality and a separate report on performance are provided."

"X actually came out to do the site visit to look at H&S and IS arrangements – also met all the delivery and back-room support – everything done pre-start was very thorough."

Various examples were shared across the network of how the quality assurance activities have informed and improved delivery. The findings from the quality assurance activity are used to identify key and current priorities and are used openly and effectively to improve the service delivered to customers. For example, the Quality and Management Information portal provides evidence of the compliance and quality of the candidate journey via the "real time" compliance reports and the file-checker report. The findings from the Quality and Compliance MI portal are shared with Supply Chain Partners and any areas of non-compliance are followed up for action and improvement activities. The monthly reviews are the platform to discuss and identify solutions for quality and compliance issues in addition to customer feedback. Examples include improvements to the quality of paperwork and more accurate customer files.

The provision of effective advice and guidance to customers is assured through quality assurance processes. As a **matrix** accredited organisation, Remploy's approach is to work with Supply Chain Partners so that Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) is defined within the standard operating procedures and model of delivery. There is also a strong emphasis on the development of partnerships and networks which results in the benefits from all staff in providing supported networks and local information-sharing protocols, providing open access to IAG via a variety of agencies and organisations; all with the same objective of fully supporting the quality of customer

services in order that they achieve their potential. There is also support with IAG by networking with a range of organisations to provide additional help to customers.

Examples include working with adult community learning providers who work with customers and deliver bespoke courses in ICT, drop-in and student support, confidence and motivation, and employability courses.

Data consent and information sharing policies are implemented across all aspects of work. All Supply Chain Partners are required to submit their Security Plan as part of due diligence activities and these are routinely checked annually. Remploy utilises a CHECK and CREST certified company to conduct annual penetration testing to identify any weaknesses in its systems. The company ensures that the key recommendations made by the penetration testers are promptly implemented. There were some examples of candidates' personal details being included in emails and these were duly notified to DWP; another Supply Chain Partner was asked to ensure their server cabinet was locked. Remploy has policies and procedures based on ISO27002 templates controlling both access to and the processing of core information. Supply Chain Partners' policies are reviewed as a minimum annually or sooner if the need arises.

As part of due diligence, each Supply Chain Partner submits their health and safety policy and accompanying procedures for checking and validation. Supply Chain Partners are contractually obliged to notify any serious or reportable incidents concerning customers and Remploy staff adopt an 'eyes and ears' approach to site visits. Remploy employs a full-time health and safety professional who has worked for an extended period in the field of health, safety and environment and who has a NEBOSH Occupational Safety & Health Diploma, NEBOSH Environmental Diploma, and Licensed IOSH Managing Safely & Working Safely Trainer qualifications. Supply Chain Partners have access to his support as requested. Ongoing, Supply Chain Partners are obliged to inform any substantive change to their policies or procedures and these are checked by the quality and compliance activities described. Supply Chain Partners corroborated this.

All Supply Chain Partners are required to submit their safeguarding policies and procedures as part of the due diligence process. As the safety of customers is paramount, Remploy employs a dedicated Head of Safeguarding who is responsible for ensuring all Safeguarding Policies and Procedures remain current and are regularly reviewed, and that all safeguarding issues are dealt with and escalated in accordance with its robust processes. Supply Chain Partners' documents are checked to ensure they comply with legislative requirements. The Head of Safeguarding commented that *"I look for both robustness and genuineness of policies – I have to have a sense that they've actually written it and it means something to them, not just copied from somewhere else."* Checks are also completed to ensure Supply Chain Partners adhere to, and undertake, baseline security checks as set out in DWP provider guidance. The processes are further examined for effectiveness by the Quality and Compliance team and the Performance Manager.

Remploy has an Environmental Sustainability Policy and plan in place that is reviewed on an annual basis to ensure that it is compatible and reflects current government legislation. Remploy also has a number of processes to ensure environmental sustainability is embedded and monitored throughout the supply chain. Examples include co-sharing locations instead of incurring new office space both at the supply chain design phase, and where the opportunity arises, during delivery. Consideration is given to public transport links to save customers money, encouraging them to use public transport and reduce CO₂ emissions. During the EOI process,

potential Supply Chain Partners are asked to provide a current Environmental Sustainability Policy which is reviewed by the Health and Safety and Environmental Sustainability Manager to ensure it meets requirements, with any identified issues.

There is ongoing support, if required, to meet minimum requirements. Thereafter, all policies are reviewed on an annual basis. During contract delivery, monitoring of the environmental sustainability activity of the supply chain is conducted through the Sub-Contractors Sustainability form (SDQ1). The SDQ1 covers: development plans; auditing of plans; staff training and consultation; baseline assessments; promotion of recycling and sustainable material; transport, water, waste and energy reduction; and qualifications.

There are a number of good examples shared by Supply Chain Partners about the way in which good and excellent practice is identified, shared and monitored across the supply chain. An example would be some recent workshops which provided networking opportunities and updated Supply Chain Partners on the plans of the organisation and what future programmes may look like. Audit findings are used to identify and share good practice systematically. The monthly Performance Meetings enable Remploy to identify excellent practice and disseminate it throughout the Supply Chain on a regular basis. The main concern of Supply Chain Partners was the regularity of meetings, as already outlined.

3c) Honouring Commitments

Pre- and post-contract negotiations are as clear and open as possible. Where any changes have to be made, these are fully explained and agreed with Supply Chain Partners. The Remploy values of openness, respect, keeping promises, professionalism and passion are employed. Requirements are made clear to partners at pre-contracting stage and reiterated or updated throughout the life of the contract. One Supply Chain Partner commented *"All payments on time and accurate and reflecting what was agreed during negotiations."* Any re-profiling that has taken place appears to have been in consultation and negotiated in an environment of openness, honesty and trust. For example, in one contract an extension was secured to the current contract and there were successful re-negotiations to the contract allocations including an increase for one Supply Chain Partner's contract value due to their previous over performance.

Whilst there is a dispute resolution process outlined in the Contract Management Framework and the Remploy extranet, Supply Chain Partners felt the relationship would mean that informal methods would be their preferred initial option. *"We heard about the appeals procedure during one of the sessions we had before we signed the contract, so I'm familiar with the principle of it. I think it's also included in our contract."* The informal route has been used to good effect by some Supply Chain Partners. Supply Chain Partners are aware of the Merlin Mediation Service however this has not featured in the assessment.

Within the different supply chains led by Remploy, there is an understanding of what each party is, and should, be doing. Delivery plans ensure that both parties are still honouring what was agreed prior to contracting. Supply Chain Partners in relation to this stated:

"The monthly conference call and share performance and benchmark against each other."

"Clear at the start, and reviewed monthly as a minimum."

3d) Performance

As stated previously, Remploy could do more to encourage Supply Chain Partner collaboration. Whilst there are good examples of collaboration between Supply Chain Partners and Remploy's own direct delivery staff, there is much less evidence of inter-supply chain collaboration. Remploy's annual Expo conference was referred to by a small number of Supply Chain Partners as being helpful in sharing information about working together to support the customer journey and achieve the quality and quantity required by the commissioner.

Supply Chain Partners are very clear about what they need to achieve and have contractual schedules and plans in place which detail the outcomes required on a monthly basis. Staff provide clear support and guidance. Performance Managers hold monthly one-to-one meetings with each Supply Chain Partner as part of the Contract Management Framework and documentary evidence was corroborated against Supply Chain testimony: *"The monthly conference call provides the opportunity to share successes, good practice, challenges, issues, etc. and learn from each other."* During these meetings a performance review is conducted and there is an opportunity to share good practice and innovative ideas about how to improve the service and process. The Contract Management Framework outlines all channels for regular performance review and these are discussed with various staff within Supply Chain Partners before bid submission, through negotiations and throughout the lifetime of the contract.

As noted above, Supply Chain Partners gave positive feedback on the openness and content of performance meetings, describing how they work closely with Remploy staff to measure, monitor and manage the delivery of the service, in order to achieve high quality outcomes.

Remploy's MI systems seek to produce consistent, accurate and appropriate performance information that is shared across the supply chain. Supply Chain Partners can either use Adapt or the MI App, however they are encouraged to connect with Adapt as this is a more comprehensive system. The MI App is designed to be used by Supply Chain Partners who find the cost of developing their own information security systems to be compatible with Adapt prohibitive. The Information Systems (IS) requirements are clearly defined early on in the procurement cycle and specified in Supply Chain Partner contracts. A single, dedicated Remploy IS point of contact for technical support is established during mobilisation for Supply Chain Partners. However a number of connectivity issues have been noted by Supply Chain Partners and Remploy is continuing to improve access to systems by working with them to make it more compatible with its IS infrastructure (most Supply Chain Partners currently access it through VPN). Access from VPN to an alternative approach is planned to be implemented by early 2017 which will improve both compatibility and access to both IS systems and MI reporting. Three Supply Chain Partners confirmed they are supporting the testing of this.

Whilst Remploy describes that it has clearly defined Value for Money across the contracts in consultation with Supply Chain Partners, this was not corroborated by all at interview. Some Supply Chain Partners can state this is by demonstration of 'excellent' practice by Remploy's own operational staff. However, Remploy could consider how communication of Value for Money

could be more explicit across all contracts and check Supply Chain Partners' understanding of this.

Remploy has established processes and accurate performance tools that measure and encourage demonstrable outcomes and performance improvement by Supply Chain Partners. These processes and tools are shared with Supply Chain Partners prior to contract commencement so that they can proactively measure and improve their operational inputs and outputs. Remploy and Supply Chain Partners measure distance travelled via initial assessment, regular reviews and tracking through action plans, objectives and updates. Specialist support Supply Chain Partners deliver interventions to customers to manage barriers to employment that further evidences distance travelled. All Supply Chain Partners described the importance they placed on measuring the progress of clients. Methods used across all contracts vary depending on the requirements of the commissioner and include data collection, case studies, client feedback, progress towards or sustainment of employment.

3e) Promoting Diversity and Equality

Whilst agreeing Supply Chain Partners' arrangements, Remploy ensures that processes are in place and in alignment with its own commitment to Diversity and Equality from the initial selection of Supply Chain Partners through to contract delivery and review. The Contract Management Framework details the expected commitment from Supply Chain Partners relating to Diversity and Equality. As part of the due diligence process, confirmation is made that all Supply Chain Partners have policies in place and when they were last reviewed. Remploy also asks if the Supply Chain Partner has been involved in any discrimination cases. If there have been any cases, these will be referred to Remploy's Diversity Manager for review; this would not necessarily preclude the Supply Chain Partner but the Diversity Manager will investigate and make appropriate decisions based on the information given. *"Remploy have a very clear approach to equality and diversity – they check it out with contractors (partners) right at the start and it gets reinforced through everything they do to be honest."*

When Remploy is successful in winning a bid, Remploy's Head of Workplace Development completes a further detailed due diligence review of policies to confirm if these meet the minimum requirement or if improvements are required. All of Remploy's contracts with Supply Chain Partners reference legal and legislative requirements and where applicable, commissioner diversity profile objectives. For example, some Supply Chain Partners' contracts have the commissioner's diversity profile objectives flowed down into their contracts. Partners made reference to clear evidence regarding Remploy's approach to diversity and equality when visiting the branches and head office: *"It's evident that it's embedded in Remploy, you just have to look at the centres and services, and they expect that from the partners."*

Remploy has a live Equality and Diversity report that is available for Supply Chain Partners to use to analyse trends and therefore improve or refocus on services; however there is little evidence to demonstrate this is being actively used due to some MI system connectivity issues. *"I don't know if Remploy collate or do anything with the data they collect from the MI system."* Supply Chain Partners confirm collection of the data in relation to Diversity and Equality however due to volumes and time within the supply chain, the analysis and use of data has not yet started. It is

anticipated that this will be resolved with time and the actions of Performance Managers when included in the monthly contract review.

4. Review

4a) Supply Chain Review

Remploy has a very clear understanding of commissioner, customer and stakeholder needs and uses this intelligence to good effect when reviewing the design of its supply chain. Stakeholder groups continue to be clearly identified and play an active role in receiving and giving feedback on the impact of the various contracts. There is collaborative working with stakeholders and Supply Chain Partners to deliver a service that meets local needs. The process for obtaining feedback from the customers accessing the service is relevant in that the outcomes influence the short-term activities of the network, the longer-term strategy and the supply chain mix. Remploy was noted as having used the original Merlin assessment in 2014 to improve, with one Supply Chain Partner commenting *"Merlin has been the turning point for Remploy, since the last Merlin assessment they have really listened and learned. There is much greater clarity and continuity as well as goodwill, support and mutual respect."*

The annual continuous improvement plan is generated from an overarching continuous self-assessment process in which all stakeholders are given the opportunity to input. Remploy Quality and Compliance Team is responsible for managing the annual Self-Assessment process (SAR) for both Remploy and Supply Chain Partner delivery. A national Quality Improvement Plan is formulated from the improvements identified in the national SAR. The Remploy Executive Team reviews and evaluates the National SAR prior to formal sign off. The formulation of individual SAR improvement plans for both Remploy and Supply Chain Partners ensures that all the differing strands of compliance and assurance measures identify the cross-cutting themes that drive improvements throughout the network.

Supply Chain Partners are kept informed of the wider policy of the commissioner and strategy information through a range of methods including a monthly political digest, newsletters, information on the extranet, emails, meetings and events. Supply Chain Partners described how their knowledge of commissioners' priorities has come through a number of sources including emails and updates, information directly from the commissioners and their own interest in the wider policy and strategy of organisations from whom they might receive funding. With regards to the monthly political update, one Supply Chain Partner commented *"Love it, everything in the same place and the links to read more."*

Both Remploy and Supply Chain Partners were able to share numerous examples of how the work they are delivering is having a measurable impact on the commissioners' wider social objectives. This included gaining and sustaining employment, improvements in adult skills and qualifications, and addressing poverty. Additionally, Supply Chain Partners have a measurable impact on the wider social objectives around health and wellbeing through the delivery of a holistic service to customers where they are referred on to relevant services that meet their needs. Partner comments included:

"We have a strong commitment to delivering on our social objectives and the quarterly meetings give us a good insight into what others are doing."

"You only have to look at the number of people we've supported over the years to get back on their feet and out of financial or fuel poverty."

The outcomes of the various processes and mechanisms to review and develop the Supply Chain have given rise to some changes, including the loss of some organisations from the partnership and the introduction of new organisations with different delivery or customer access; for example, a new partnership is being formed with a national learning disability charity. Regular reviews of working with key partners are carried out. Services are developed and enhanced based on the feedback received to ensure the service is meeting the needs of the customers. Gaps in the provision of the service are identified and decisions made as to whether additional Supply Chain Partners are required to improve performance. Evidence indicated that originally 5% of contracts were delivered by supply chains, which is now moving to 16–18%, predominantly due to Partners' performance typically being higher than that of the internal delivery - local knowledge and areas of expertise is evident. A member of staff commented *"You only have to have a look at how things have changed in only a short time to see that we're continually looking to evolve our supply chain approach. Always looking to encourage new partners to come on board or to take on board bigger numbers where they have a good track record."*

Remploy and the activities of its Supply Chain Partners are positively impacting on external stakeholders, such as how customers have been encouraged to develop themselves and their wellbeing including improved attainment, gaining qualifications, improved mental wellbeing and accessing skills and employment. Supply Chain Partners commented as follows:

"A number have gone on to gain permanent employment, further increasing their confidence and self-worth."

"It is helping the growth of the business and development of staff, and contributing to sustainable employment in the area."

"It builds self-esteem, it's the first time these candidates have achieved a qualification and as a result they are confident to start to applying for interviews."

"Candidates have progressed, for examples they are able to take part in group activities and work as a team – developing social skills."

"I think the whole ethos of Remploy is about having a positive impact on the wellbeing of people, whether they are an employee or one of the people we support."

7. Conclusion

This assessment provided the opportunity to review the Remploy Employment Services practices for the current contracts and projects against the Merlin Standard. There has been significant development work undertaken and the 12% increase in the Merlin assessment score in the two-year period since the last assessment is to be commended.

Between now and the next Merlin assessment in December 2018, the senior leaders should be mindful that any significant organisational or senior staff changes or additional contracts, for example a new contract using a significantly different supply chain may require a strategic review to ensure the organisation continues to operate in line with the Merlin principles.

In December 2018 Remploy Employment Services will be required to undertake a further assessment against the Merlin Standard in order to retain the accreditation. However, due to the commitment to continuous improvement, consideration could be made to a continuous improvement review being undertaken in December 2017. The purpose of the review would be to establish progress made against the areas recommended for further improvement following this assessment.

Assessment Type	REVIEW
Assessor's Decision	STANDARD MET
Lead Assessor's Name	SUSAN SMITH
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