



merlin

promoting supply chain excellence

Assessment Report

For

Rehab JobFit

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On behalf of emqc Ltd

Assessment Date: 17th – 20th June 2014

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About the Organisation

Rehab JobFit is a third sector led partnership of the Rehab Group and Interserve plc which delivers training, support and employability services across the UK. Rehab Group has extensive experience in supporting a wide range of customers to realise their full potential and enables the achievement of a real step change in people's lives to deliver a better future. Interserve, as one of the UK's largest employers, brings a wide variety of sustainable job opportunities as well as extensive supply-chain management expertise.

JobFit have been delivering the Work Programme in Wales and the West of England (CPA 13 & 12) on behalf of the Department for Work and Pensions since it went live in June 2011. The Work Programme contract in England is part financed by the European Social Fund. JobFit also delivers the government's Mandatory Work Activity programme in South West England and Wales and very recently added Community Work Placement delivery in Devon, Cornwall, Dorset & Somerset to its portfolio of contracts managed and delivered on behalf of commissioners.

JobFit subcontract 100% of its front-line delivery to a broad network of 21 'end to end' providers from the private, public and third sectors. A broad spectrum of services are available to support customers with a range of specialist providers offering additional support which is available on a non contracted basis and accessed via a Specialist Intervention Fund.

Assessment Methodology

An initial planning meeting between the Lead Assessor and a number of representatives of JobFit, including the assessment coordinator took place in March 2014 where support and guidance was given, including information as to how the assessment would take place and to agree the Supply Chain Partners who would be interviewed. Following this meeting, JobFit created schedules for each of the assessors.

During the assessment 21 end to end Supply Chain Partners which represents 100% of the supply chain delivering Work Programme in CPA 13 & 12 (Wales and the South West of England) on behalf on Rehab JobFit were spoken to. 75% of the supply chain delivering CWP were spoken to along with 100% of Mandatory Work Activity providers.

During the assessment, assessors reviewed a range of documentary evidence and IT systems provided by JobFit, interviewed a wide range of staff, including senior managers and customer facing staff from the Supply Chain Network and a range of staff from JobFit.

All principles of the Merlin standard were fully assessed by a team of 3 assessors; Rob Mottram (Lead Assessor), Sonia Renzo and David Folland who spent a total of 12 days onsite.

Assessment Outcome

Overall %	80%
Overall Outcome	Good
Supply Chain Design	Excellent
Commitment	Good
Conduct	Good
Review	Good

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.

- ▲ Use of funding, particularly innovation and specialist fund to support customers and meet their holistic needs. (1a.2, 1a.3, 2b.2, 2a.3)
- ▲ Collaboration, communication and co-operation, which supports successful working relationships within the supply chain.(2a)
- ▲ Demonstrating business and commercial integrity, evidenced through the recent procurement processes and activities. (2a.1, 2c.1, 3a.2)
- ▲ Approach to providing the highest level of support to Supply Chain Partners in maintaining data security and assets. (3b.4)
- ▲ Commitment shown to further develop and refine services and approach to Supply Chain Management (2b.1, 3b.1, 3d.2, 4a.5)

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. However, the assessment team acknowledges that many of the points identified below were flagged as areas for improvement within the organisations Self-Assessment Questionnaire and are already under development. The numbers in brackets refer to the criteria of the Standard to which the areas relate.

- ▲ Ensure that Equal Opportunities data is collected, analysed and used throughout the supply chain.(3d)

- ▲ Ensure Supply Chain Partners can calculate the Value for Money (VFM) of the services they receive from JobFit, this may include clarifying the costs of support provided by JobFit. (2c.8, 3d.5)
- ▲ Cascade JobFits SustainAbilities project, which includes environmental sustainability targets and wider social objectives of the commissioner, throughout the supply chain to ensure that wider social and community impact is measured. (3b.7, 4a.3, 4a.4, 4a.6)
- ▲ Further enhance and embed the tools used to measure performance and quality assurance and ensure that all staff and Supply Chain Partners have the appropriate knowledge and skills to support this approach. (2b.1, 3b.1, 3d.2, 4a.5)
- ▲ JobFit may wish to consider utilising industry specific websites (other than their own) to promote future partnership opportunities to help them reach as wide a range of partners as possible as well as further developing their own website to contain information to help partners. (1a, 2a.1 & 2a.3)
- ▲ Continue to embed the values driven by Partnership Plus with all Supply Chain Partners on an ongoing basis.
- ▲ Periodically remind partners of the Merlin Mediation Service. (3c.3)

Areas Requiring Further Development

Because Rehab JobFit 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

Since the last assessment in 2012, JobFit have developed and further enhanced their supply chain design. Whilst continuing to deliver Work Programme and Mandatory Work Activity, JobFit have added to their portfolio of contracts delivered on behalf of commissioners using a fully managed supply chain network with the recently added Community Work Placement programme in the South West of England. JobFit utilise regional champions to bring local knowledge and support the development of supply chains that meet customer needs and support the Commissioners' objectives. JobFit work to a number of key design principles, including using end to end delivery partners, no single organisation receiving more than 20% of the total indicative referrals, mix established and new entrants to delivery and ensure a wide network of specialist providers deliver complimentary services on a call off basis. JobFit have successfully supported new entrants to the Welfare to Work market who have become experienced and highly effective providers and make valuable contributions to the overall success of the supply chain.

100% of delivery is subcontracted to a range of partners who provide 'end to end' services to customers. Specialist support is provided to customers through spot purchase arrangements made using the ring-fenced JobFit Specialist Fund where bespoke support is accessed for hardest to help customers and those furthest away from the labour market. This fund has been used to provide more traditional support for customers who require motivation and confidence building to more unusual support, such as Reiki massage sessions. JobFit have brought together a blend of organisations from public, private and the voluntary and community sectors. Approximately 50% of the supply chain is from the voluntary sector, 38% are private sector and the remaining 12% are made up of third sector and public sector organisations. This supply chain design demonstrates the commitment made by JobFit to ensure that supply chain networks would contain the widest possible range of experience, cultures and to most effectively provide support to customers.

"...would definitely work with JobFit again" - Supply Chain Partner

JobFit uses effective strategies to support the provision of comprehensive services to customers outside their supply chain. The JobFit specialist fund is an intervention fund designed to be used to deliver bespoke and additional support customers furthest away from the labour market. This fund is ring-fenced and JobFit managers within geographic areas are targeted to spend this budget. A clear formal process allows Supply Chain Partners to bid for funds for any services they wish to use with customers. Effectiveness of the use of this fund is monitored by JobFit and the lessons learned from the use of this funding is used in future bids and tendering opportunities.

Evaluation of the use of these funds is shared with all Supply Chain Partners which promotes it effectively and encourages others to use the funds available. These provisions have resulted in some positive outcomes for customers and increased performance. An additional fund, known as the innovation fund supports larger projects, for example the Business Incubation Unit based in North Wales. This project brought together strategic partners of JobFit and using Welsh government and Lottery funding a grade 2 listed building in the Colwyn Bay area was acquired and converted from a disused public house into a three story social enterprise featuring bistro and training kitchen and learning and development units with business advisors to give support to customers who are wishing to setup in self-employment. Similar projects are now being replicated in other areas of Wales and the South West.

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; Supply Chain Partners described the approaches used during the recent procurement activity for Community Work Placement as being excellent, with JobFit providing consistent and effective communications. A very clear and well-documented Expression of Interest process has been developed and has been used during the recent procurement process for Community Work Placement. Opportunities to work with JobFit are e-mailed to partners who have previously expressed an interest in working with JobFit, as well as being advertised more widely on the JobFit website. It was noted however by assessors, that the website could be improved to provide more information on how JobFit support organisations during 'live running' through its Partnership Plus approach, and by sharing testimony gained from existing Supply Chain Partners to promote and strengthen this area further. Regional managers communicate and share updates as the procurement process develops with interested parties, written Expressions of Interest are scored using a matrix and a combination of both 1 to 1 discussions and group sessions provide additional clarity to partners.

"...What we have seen so far indicates they seem to be very thorough, clear and vigilant; I've been very impressed" - Supply Chain Partner

JobFit Supply Chain Partners validated and were able to give a number of examples of where JobFit consult with them to inform decisions. Since the last assessment in 2012 and following consultation with partners, JobFit have developed and launched Partnership Plus. Partnership Plus is a Supply Chain Management Framework, which contains a number of key documents including a Charter and a supply chain methodology, the development of which came after consultation with Supply Chain Partners. It's launch has been well received by partners. Considerable consultation has taken place with Supply Chain Partners, particularly in developing appropriate practices to support customers in receipt of health related benefits and the development of a new front-end IT interface for use by advisors.

A range of activities are undertaken by JobFit which promotes collaboration and supports the delivery of comprehensive services to customers. Supply Chain Partners meet on a regular basis at forums where best practice is shared, Supply Chain Partners are encouraged to look up what works well with customers and why. This area has been strengthened and is assisted by a Best Practice Manager employed by JobFit who focuses on feedback provided by Supply Chain Partners and helps deepen an understanding of issues and challenges which are faced by the Supply Chain Partners and the customers they support. Buddy systems build strong connections between well performing partners, which contribute to this area of strength.

Much of the clear communication which exists within the JobFit supply chain is attributable to the regional manager and performance manager structure used by JobFit. These managers spend considerable time working with Supply Chain Partners and provide the primary source of clarification for contractual concerns or operational issues. Performance managers are experienced practitioners within the welfare to work sector. The Partnership Plus approach also contributes greatly to this, alongside many other areas of the standard. The charter within the approach sets out the following:

- What JobFit will do and what, in turn, will ask Providers to do.
- Is clearly linked to the values that JobFit expect of its staff to display, and asks providers to demonstrate
- Gives joint ownership for achieving success on contracts
- Holds each other accountable, providing the opportunity for Providers to challenge when they do not believe JobFit are fulfilling requirements
- Highlight to Providers, where behaviours or activities are not meeting requirements
- Demonstrates open commitment to improvement

Supply Chain Partners were able to validate that JobFit has created a culture in which communication is open and honest. The operating model is built on a mutual desire for all parties to succeed, with JobFit wholly reliant on the success of the Supply Chain Partner network which it supports. JobFit respects and values the views of Supply Chain Partners and recognises they have been selected based on their abilities and knowledge of their local job market. Supply Chain Partners believe the robust conversations that take place between themselves and JobFit contribute to the demonstration of excellence in this area.

"... we can be open with JobFit, their role is there to support us in our deliver we have to be honest otherwise we will all fail" – Supply Chain Partner

"...Any concerns will just pick up the phone and speak to my performance manager" – Supply Chain Partner

"...they are always willing to listen to what you say" – Supply Chain Partner

"...more supportive approach, greater openness and transparency over the past 12-16 months" – Supply Chain Partner

2b) Developing Supply Chain Partners

JobFit supports and encourages the development of Supply Chain Partners well, through a range of activities. For example JobFit encourage specialist providers to attend, monthly forums and make presentations to their peer organisations, best practice sharing is promoted amongst partners to discuss what is working well, such as the GOALS 2 day motivational course, opportunities to job-shadow other Supply Chain Partner staff and training is available to front line advisor staff in a range of areas including substance misuse and Better off Calculation training. Supply Chain Partners benefit from the availability and support given by subject area specialists who offer very useful consultative approaches to develop partners knowledge. This type of support is provided at no additional cost and covers areas such as data security and health and safety which is valued greatly by partners. A 'Claims and Validation Team' set up by JobFit has also benefited the supply chain allowing partners to develop a deeper understanding of the processes and requirements of the commissioner in making appropriate and validated claims, it has also resulted in an increase in claimable performance. A centralised Contact Centre supports Supply Chain Partners in ensuring that referrals into JobFit are managed appropriately, allowing partners to concentrate their efforts on contract delivery and providing positive customer experiences.

JobFit have committed to make partnership arrangements with a significant proportion of Supply Chain Partners who are from the Community Voluntary sector, this has supported the on-going development of a number of smaller providers including new entrants to the UK Welfare to Work market. Their commitment to these types of organisations continues and is demonstrated in the recent supply chain make up for the delivery of Community Work Placement programme. In many instances these smaller, more specialist and less experienced partners (within the Welfare to Work sector) make important contributions to meeting JobFit's collective performance targets.

Due to differing funding regulations between CPA 12 (England) and CPA 13 (Wales) access to additional funding is managed appropriately and where possible European Social Funding is used to support customers by Supply Chain Partners. In Wales, JobFit have successfully challenged a ruling which now allows eligible customers to access apprenticeships. Partners continue to utilise the Innovation and Specialist funds.

JobFit promote and facilitate a range of activities, to develop staff with operational staff receiving very useful and relevant training required to help them carry out their role more effectively. All end to end delivery partner staff have been recently trained in using JobFit's E-WP CRM system, over 11 dates, 380 staff received training. Additional training and awareness raising has taken place with partner staff receiving sessions delivered in a range of topics including Self-Employment Champion Training, Substance Misuse Awareness, Mental Health awareness & Better off Calculator training, some of which have been delivered by external training specialists and funded by JobFit. Work Focussed Solutions training is provided to advisors and aims to ensure they have the relevant questioning and conversation styles to encourage customers to come up with solutions to problems themselves, this training has been developed following discussions between JobFit and JobCentrePlus.

One to one support has been given by Contract Managers to help Supply Chain Partner staff to better understand the recently launched balanced scorecard, however, whilst the approach is commended by the assessment team and liked by partners it is recommended that this area of training is re-visited with partners to ensure clarity of this powerful tool, and to ensure that the tool can be fully utilized. JobFit may wish also to consider mandating some training topics, such as data protection and safeguarding training to ensure all partners receive consistent messages and level of understanding.

"...training has got better over the last 18 months" – Supply Chain Partner

2c) Contracting and funding

Supply Chain Partners confirmed that JobFit used procurement processes that were fair and transparent. Formal written procurement processes and defined scoring criteria have been further developed since the assessment in 2012. A formal Expression of Interest process enables the selection of preferred Supply Chain Partners to take place against standardised criteria, information gathered through the expression of interest form includes understanding geographical coverage, experience of working with a wide range of customers and track record in delivery of previous employment and training programs. JobFit held local engagement events and where possible emerging delivery model options were shared with interested Supply Chain Partners. The approach taken by JobFit to contracting and funding has been refined and strengthened with specialist members of JobFit staff forming bid review teams who judge completed documentation against a clear scoring matrix. The organisation demonstrated and Supply Chain Partners validated verbal and written confirmation was provided to all partners regardless of outcome, with detailed feedback available on request.

JobFit utilise a range of different funding arrangements based on the contracts being delivered. JobFit provide tailored arrangements that meet Supply Chain Partner individual needs. Front loading of payments minimises risk for partners and allows JobFit to shoulder some of the financial risk associated with the delivery of large scale employability programmes, however a small number of providers referenced challenges faced with declining numbers of customers leading to questions over the future financial viability of contracting with JobFit. Partners understand these factors are as a result of the contract and not something JobFit can influence. During the 'on-boarding' process JobFit provide as much information to partners as possible, as it becomes available to them as the prime contractor from the commissioner. There remains no fixed funding arrangements in place with those suppliers engaged on a call on/call off basis, where the specialist fund is used by partners to provide support.

Supply Chain Partners were able to validate that JobFit provide the appropriate contractual documentation to sufficiently define obligations of both JobFit and its Supply Chain Partners. Easy to understand, contractual documentation reflects the contract held between the commissioner and JobFit. Contracts define minimum performance and service levels for partners.

JobFit take a patient approach with partners and allow them time to consider options when making decisions regarding contractual arrangements which is well received by partners. The Partnership Plus approach also contributes greatly to this, the charter within the approach sets out clearly expectations as described on page 8.

'...what we have seen so far is that they have been very thorough, clear and vigilant and we have been impressed' – Supply Chain Partner

'they were patient with us, even though the situation was quite urgent' – Supply Chain Partner

Market share is clear, allocation is agreed between JobFit and the Supply Chain Partner and is based on a number of factors, including where possible allocating sufficient market share to make delivery financially viable. Demographics, Supply Chain Partner capacity and area of specialism form part of the decision making process. Allocations agreed are as expected by partners and seem to fully understand how they contribute to the overall performance and success of the contract.

JobFit demonstrate and their Supply Chain Partners were able to validate that the strategy to manage the transfer of funds within the supply chain is good. A dedicated team of staff based within JobFit support contractually compliant claims to prompt payment. Where claims cannot be validated, team members provide telephone support to partners to ensure that the claim can be promptly resubmitted. A self-billing process is in place to further support this process.

Supply Chain Partners were unclear on the management fee paid to JobFit, however Supply Chain Partners indicated they felt happy with the support they receive. Fees are discussed and explained to partners during the contracting process, it may be worth JobFit considering the reminding and refreshing with partners the level of management fee payable and the support they receive for the payment.

'...I know they cream money off the top, I don't know what it is though' - Supply Chain Partner

3 Conduct

3a) Demonstrating commercial and business integrity

In October 2013, JobFit launched 'Partnership Plus', embedded within this is the JobFit charter which supports the methodology employed by JobFit to ensure core principles are embedded in organisational practices. The charter contains the 5 core values which JobFit and its Supply Chain Partners are governed by, which are listed below;

- Professional
- Accountable
- Collaborative
- Customer Focussed
- Excellence

Supply Chain Partners were able to validate, particularly those partners who have more recently joined the partnership that the procurement processes used ensure an alignment of values between JobFit and its Supply Chain Partners with which they work. JobFit staff are expected to display the values identified above and these values have been incorporated into 1:1 and appraisals. Supply Chain Partners are also expected to display commitment to the values outlines within the charter. JobFit may wish to consider further ensuring and embedding these values with its partners on an ongoing basis.

'...that is why we chose to work with RJF [JobFit] as their values are similar to ours' - Supply Chain Partner

JobFit have improved their approaches to TUPE process considerably. Proactive and effective, JobFit have utilised the expertise provided by Interserve to good effect. JobFit have provided considerable support to a number of members of staff and organisations which has resulted in smooth transitions for customers. In a small number of cases JobFit supported Supply Chain Partners by agreeing to share financial liabilities, and act as a broker to support the transfer of staff between local authorities. During the assessment partners and their staff were able to confirm where staff had been transferred, and in some cases these transfers resulted in more favourable terms for the employee.

'...individuals had no problems, the transfers were handled with sensitivity' – Supply Chain Partner

Interactions between JobFit and its Supply Chain Partner staff are very positive. These relationships are very well developed and supported by effective and regular interventions by Performance managers, including 1:1 coaching of Supply Chain Partner staff, monthly contract review meetings, collaborative meetings and a range of conference calls all contribute significantly to the strength in this area.

JobFit ensure timely updates to legislative and contractual requirements occur in a systematic and effective manner. Recent changes to governance arrangements have resulted in a communications matrix being introduced which defines prescribed channels to relevant parties. Email updates contain documents and direct links to any relevant information are followed up by member of the supply chain management team to check for understanding and adherence. Where required, access to training is provided to support Supply Chain Partners staff to ensure understanding.

3b) Quality Assurance and Compliance

JobFit have further enhanced and strengthened its approach to ensure quality assurance and compliance arrangements. An effective and proportionate approach ensures the quality of delivery and customer experience within the supply chain. A review took place in January 2014 of the quality assurance framework. The framework currently enables Supply Chain Partners to recognise and understand the standards required and sets out the processes JobFit will use to monitor Supply Chain Partners against these standards. Performance managers also carry out monthly compliance spot checks, with the findings used to identify trends and areas of improvement.

JobFit Compliance and Quality managers conducts annual Process and Systems audits, these are based on DWP Provider Assurance audits, a subsequent report is produced in a user friendly format which highlights strengths, non-conformances and any other observations. The report findings feed into an organisation action plan. JobFit have committed to achieve ISO9001 within the next 12 months. External audit activities, such as DWP Compliance Monitoring Officer reports indicate improvements in this area.

JobFit continue to provide all Supply Chain Partners with very comprehensive support to ensure they maintain security of all data and assets. Due diligence activities require partners to meet a required standard. A dedicated member of the JobFit Management team provides specialist support to any provider who doesn't meet the standard by providing practical advice and cost effective solutions. Partners see this type of practical support as very helpful. Supply Chain Partners are required to report any security weaknesses or events to the Information Security Compliance Officer who records and investigates the incident and makes recommendations of preventative action to stop a recurrence.

'...a gentleman from JobFit spent two days with us and identified a couple of areas where we were exposed, he helped us put measures in place' – Supply Chain Partner

Healthy and safe work environments are assured by JobFit and form part of the due diligence activities carried out by JobFit prior to contract delivery. Supply Chain Partners are visited by a Health and Safety Manager who conducts audits and makes an assessment of the suitability of the premises prior to service delivery. Annual Process and systems audits are conducted and focuses the reporting of workplace violence and the use of risk assessment with Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) customers. Supply Chain Partners are also reminded of their commitment to health and safety during monthly reviews where a risk based approach is taken.

People at risk and vulnerable groups are appropriately safeguarded by JobFit through due diligence activities undertaken prior to contract delivery for all Supply Chain Partners. All Supply Chain Partner staff are required to receive safeguarding training and be in receipt of appropriate level Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks. Partners are audited to ensure they have appropriate trained and designated safeguarding officers in place.

JobFit recognise the current weakness they have in the promotion and awareness raising of the importance of environmental sustainability. The approach is strengthening and an Interserve produced SustainAbilities plan supports JobFit in making commitment to ensuring environmental sustainability is addressed. Targets for example to reduce carbon emissions are agreed and in place, however, this plan has not yet been shared with Supply Chain Partners. JobFit have identified that Supply Chain Partners are at different stages of their development against this area and are working with them to ensure all partners have appropriate and proportionate targets relevant to the level of delivery. JobFit ensure Supply Chain Partners adhere to DWP environmental sustainability requirements through the contract review process.

Excellent practice is currently identified, monitored and shared with the supply chain through a variety of methods. A Best Practice Manager compliments Performance Managers by working with Supply Chain Partners and its staff to identify using a range of activities and meetings. A monthly performance review process, which is carried out by the Supply Chain Manager enables them to collate and discuss with partners their approaches to contract delivery and identify areas of excellent practice. The Best Practice manager facilitates meetings for all levels of Supply Chain Partner staff, including front line advisory staff, who have formed their own informal networks and peer support mechanisms, which also provide very valuable opportunities for staff to meet, learn from each other and share ideas.

3c) Honouring Commitments

Supply Chain Partners confirm that contract negotiations were clear and open, and partner expectations have been managed effectively. Contractual expectations are made clear from the outset, using written documentation which is made available to potential Supply Chain Partners and complimented by the availability of dedicated locally based Job Fit management. Where JobFit didn't have total clarity from the commissioner/procurer it provided as much information which it had available at that time. Partners understand this approach and do not feel it to be something which undermines the strength of the relationship.

'...JobFit kept us informed as we went through the procurement process' - Supply Chain Partner

JobFit have recently implemented a claw-back system to deal with any extrapolation of claims imposed on them, this requirement is applied to all partners and was communicated openly and fully to Supply Chain Partners in writing and also followed up by a web-based meeting to answer any questions or queries that Supply Chain Partners had as a result of the contractual change.

Supply Chain Partners are aware of JobFit's formal dispute resolution process. At the time of assessment there had been no formal complaints from the supply chain, however it is likely that the strong communication channels which exist would allow issues to be discussed honestly and openly, which is testimony to the strength of the relationships between JobFit and its partners.

JobFit senior managers 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.

Processes, and good communication at every level within supply chains ensure that all parties have clarity on a wide range of expectations. Partnership Plus contributes significantly to this area, and this is complimented by monthly contract performance review management. Target setting is clear and minimum performance levels are agreed through negotiated discussions. Regular meetings between Supply Chain Partners are used to share information about collaborative performance and ensure all parties expectations are being met. It also allows plenty of opportunity for partners to discuss a range of areas with JobFit and seek clarification if required.

3d) Performance

JobFit have a well thought through approach to encouraging Supply Chain Partners to work collaboratively to support and promote the performance of the entire network. Regionally based Performance Managers take responsibility for a number of providers, in some instances across contracts, and provide partners with adaptable and flexible support. One to one support provided is regular; Performance managers are responsive and experienced. Weekly performance review is conducted, either by telephone or face to face which focuses on data driven performance measures. Monthly Supply Chain meetings involve all partners and comparative performance information is shared in the form of league tables. Reinforcement of communications and checks on understanding are also carried out along with a range of standardised topics including dealing with challenging customer groups and how best to use Wage Incentive to the benefit of customers.

JobFit manage Supply Chain Partners using a Performance Management Framework, the framework is supported and delivered through the supply chain management team and the supporting processes, methodology and range of management tools used by this team. Performance managers conduct weekly performance meetings, where business priority targets are set and performance against targets are reviewed, key performance measures are monitored formally and any training requirements are identified.

Recently launched, a balanced scorecard has been developed and is being used with the JobFit Supply Chain Partners. The scorecard focuses on key performance drivers, which scores provider performance against agreed indicators. The use of the scorecard is enabling a more focused contract performance review, which in turn allows JobFit to identify areas of underperformance and risk. The use of these tools allows for open and frequent discussions to take place and ensure all parties understand performance targets. Where performance fails to meet expectations, Supply Chain Partners are requested to produce performance improvements plans which details the actions that will be undertaken to improve performance levels within agreed timeframes. This approach is seen as supportive by Supply Chain Partners.

JobFit have a well-developed Management Information system which is used by Supply Chain Partner's who deliver services on behalf of JobFit. Developed over a number of years the system continues to be refined to ensure that its supports the users effectively. A suite of centrally produced management information is available to partners. This information gives key information pertaining to a range of key performance indicators, such as job starts, attachments and job sustainment. Alongside this, ad-hoc reporting is also available which enables partner staff to develop specific reports based on their requirements. A recent improvement has been the implementation of a new user interface, known as E-Work Programme (E-WP) which provides a more user friendly interface for partner staff to use, training has been provided to nearly 400 staff to ensure they are equipped with the relevant skills to use the system fully.

JobFit need to ensure that Supply Chain Partners can calculate the Value for Money (VFM) of the services they receive from JobFit, this may include clarifying the costs of support provided by JobFit. JobFit is utilising well its specialist innovation funds to effectively foster innovation and provide customers with support, at no cost to either themselves or customers with Supply Chain Partners using ring-fenced funds.

3e) Promoting Diversity & Equality

JobFit have ensured through considerate selection the arrangements for the Supply Chain Partners are aligned very closely to their own commitment to Diversity and Equality. Expressions of Interest require potential partners to supply equal opportunity policies for review by JobFit, these policies are checked on an annual basis through system and process audits. Diversity and Equality is a requirement by Supply Chain Partners to cover with customers during induction, which is monitored by JobFit Quality and Assurance Managers. Customer satisfaction surveys also allow opportunity for customers to raise any issues, to date no issues of this type have been raised via this method.

Promotion of Diversity and Equality is managed well by JobFit. As at the previous assessment in 2012, there is a clear commitment by JobFit to ensure that all customers who require services delivered in Welsh receive this. A range of bi-lingual marketing materials are made available to partners. The centrally based JobFit referral team also has Welsh speakers which ensures that customers at 'first contact' can engage fully and their requirements are supported by advisors who conduct sessions in Welsh where required.

JobFit have identified that the way in which Equal Opportunities data is collected, analysed and used within the supply chain is currently underdeveloped. Data relating to diversity and equality is currently captured, however this is not consistently or accurately captured by Supply Chain Partners. JobFit have identified this and are working with Supply Chain Partners to develop a deeper understanding of these requirements. JobFit are committed to develop this area and the recruitment of a dedicated analyst will allow for more robust monitoring and use of data with the Supply Chain Partners. Partners with specialist skills and understanding in diversity and equality are encouraged to work where possible with certain customer cohorts and share best practice with other member of the Supply Chain Partnership.

4 Review

4a) Supply chain review

JobFit have developed an effective approach to the systematic collection and use of feedback from all stakeholder groups, this feedback is reported on a monthly basis to its board of directors. JobFit also ensure feedback is gathered from participants at the training events that are run with Supply Chain Partner staff. Informally, very useful feedback is provided to JobFit via its Supply Chain Managers who have developed open and honest relationships with the Supply Chain Partner managers they work with. A formal survey of Supply Chain Partners took place prior to JobFit launching Partnership Plus.

The on-going review of this important group of stakeholders is planned by JobFit to assess the effectiveness of their approach to supply chain management and ensure they continue to improve practices. An "ask the team" email address allows partners to ask questions and give feedback.

'...we can't complain about JobFit, they were very green but have got up to speed and are doing a good job' – Supply Chain Partner

'...They have developed themselves and got better as a business, they have now got a good infrastructure, their support is good and has grown' – Supply Chain Partner

Partners are encouraged to complete Self Assessment activities and produce a Self Assessment Report which focuses on improving services provided to customers and other stakeholders. Good news stories regarding the customer journey continue to be collected by Supply Chain Partners and are fed into JobFit via the performance review process. JobFit participate fully in external auditing and assessment activities, such as DWP Provider Assessment Tests (PAT) and Monitoring Officer Visits, the results of which are used to inform and improve practices. JobFit have a very realistic view of themselves which was demonstrated in the accuracy of the self-assessment questionnaire submitted in preparation of the Merlin assessment. JobFit accurately indicated many of the areas for improvement identified by the Merlin Standard assessment team.

The Interserve produced SustainAbilities plan will contribute greatly to keeping Supply Chain Partners informed of wider policy and strategy information, once launched to the partner network. Currently Supply Chain Managers regularly communicate with partner's the policy objectives of procurer and commissioner; partners also receive alerts via its partner portal. Considerable review activities have taken place since the last assessment in 2012, which has resulted in a number of significant changes which affect the supply chain, these included, embedding a new leadership team, mobilising a new organisational structure, improvement to core governance and the development of new operating functions.

Review of current arrangements have led to an evolution of supply chains to meet customer needs, for example the increase in ESA customers has led to changes in provision and support provided using Innovation and Specialist Fund. An increased emphasis is placed on projects which support customers wishing to pursue self employment opportunities as this has been identified as a preferred option for work, for instance the Business Incubation Centre and the contracting with specialist self-employment advisers to provide initial and ongoing support to customers.

JobFit have continued to ensure that the design and review of supply chain activities has a positive impact on external stakeholders and during the assessment were able to provide case studies to demonstrate how the activities have impacted positively on its customers.

Conclusion

JobFit has demonstrated behaviors that fully meet the requirements of the Merlin Standard, and some areas of good practice and excellent practice have been demonstrated.

It was evident to the assessment team that since their last assessment JobFit has committed fully to the management of its Supply Chain Partners and continues to develop their approach, striving to a more consistent and structured model, the development of Partnership Plus and the accompanying charter demonstrates JobFit's commitment to this area.