



merlin standard

**REED IN PARTNERSHIP LIMITED**

**COMPACT REPORT**

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## 1. KEY INFORMATION

Assessment Type	ACCREDITATION REVIEW
Assessor's Decision	STANDARD MET
Anniversary Date	04/07/2022
Assessment Dates	07/07/2020 – 09/07/2020
Lead Assessor's Name	LORNA BAINBRIDGE
Customer ID	C15968
Assessment Reference	PN104840

## 2. ASSESSMENT OUTCOME

<b>OVERALL OUTCOME</b>	<b>93% Excellent</b>
1. Design	90%
2. Procure	95%
3. Contract	100%
4. Funding	87%
5. Develop	100%
6. Performance Manage	97%
7. Quality Assurance and Compliance	88%
8. Review and Close	88%

### 3. METHODOLOGY

Reed in Partnership Limited (referred to as Reed or the Organisation throughout the report) continues to be mandated by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to be accredited against the Merlin Standard due to being a Prime delivery partner for several of their programmes. Reed has other supply chains as a result of holding contracts with various commissioners, and these were also included in the scope of this Merlin assessment. Organisations that hold the Merlin Standard are required to be re-accredited every two-years, and consequently, Reed came forward for re-accreditation in line with its anniversary date.

The Merlin assessment team included Lorna Bainbridge (Lead Assessor) and Susan Smith (Team Assessor), supported by a Coordinator from within Reed. The Lead Assessor started working with the Coordinator in January 2020 to establish the scope of, and discuss the logistics for, the assessment. The dates when the interview evidence gathering would take place were confirmed, and an initial project plan agreed which was later amended to take account of the Covid-19 lockdown.

A booking form and a spreadsheet declaring a list of past, present and potential Supply Chain Partners (referred to as Partners throughout the report) was submitted by Reed to Assessment Services Limited. The list identified Partners delivering an end-to-end (tier 2) service, integration / specialist (tier 3) and ad-hoc (tier 4) services.

In advance of the interview evidence gathering, all 113 Partners; past, present and potential were invited to participate in the Merlin online survey, with responses being received from 30%. The results of the survey informed the focus of the interview evidence gathering and contributed to the overall scoring.

The Lead Assessor liaised with the Coordinator throughout the planning phase to review and agree the adjusted virtual interview schedule. All documentation required for the accreditation review; Self-Assessment Questionnaire (SAQ), Pre-Assessment Notes (PAN) and interview timetable were shared in line with the agreed timescales, enabling the assessment to take place as planned.

The assessment team spent two and a half days each reviewing documentary evidence and undertaking interviews via Microsoft Teams and telephone with Reed staff involved in the strategic and day-to-day management of their supply chains. Also, 27 (24%) of the declared Partners were interviewed by telephone, which is in line with the published Merlin scoping framework for Covid-19 virtual assessments. These interviews included past, present and potential Partners delivering a range of services; end-to-end, specialist and ad-hoc.

The following report provides an overview of the findings against the key criteria within the Merlin Standard, evidenced across the supply chains. In addition, areas of strength and areas to consider for development over the forthcoming two years are highlighted.

## 4. ABOUT THE ORGANISATION

Reed – a private sector organisation states that it *'provides public services that change people's lives for the better'*. The mission is *'to aim to deliver services that positively transform people and their communities'*. It defines itself by its core values that have been adopted across the organisation and supply chains; *'we work together'*, *'we are fair, open and honest'* and *'we take ownership'*.

It supports individuals, businesses, families and communities to prosper – and since 1998 has delivered over 60 welfare to work contracts for DWP, working with over 25000 employers to place over 135000 people into employment. Over the years it has diversified, and whilst the business continues to be routed in the employment arena, it has entered into the delivery of skills and youth services. To support the delivery of its programmes, Reed gains funding from different commissioners, for example, DWP, Department for Communities Northern Ireland (DCNI), European Social Funding (ESF), and the National Citizen Service Trust (NCST).

To meet the customer's needs and those of the commissioner, Reed recognises the value of working in partnership with other organisations and agencies and, as a result, has designed supply chains to deliver the services across the employment and youth contracts, while providing all skills contracts through direct delivery. The following provides a list of the current contracts whereby a supply chain has been designed to provide the service and the breakdown of delivery; direct and supply chain:

### **Employment:**

- Work and Health Programme (WHP) named Better Working Futures – 60% direct delivery / 40% supply chain commissioned by DWP.
- Intensive Personalised Employment Support (IPES) named Working Ways – 60% direct delivery / 40% supply chain, commissioned by DWP.
- Steps to Success (S2S) – 40% direct delivery / 60% supply chain, commissioned by DCNI.
- Work Routes Greater Cambridgeshire & Greater Peterborough (GCGP) – 73% direct delivery / 27% supply chain, commissioned by ESF DWP.
- Work Routes Herts – 80% direct delivery / 20% supply chain, commissioned by ESF DWP.
- Work Routes Cornwall – 55% direct delivery / 45% supply chain, commissioned by ESF DWP.
- Work Routes The Marches – 65% direct delivery / 35% supply chain, commissioned by ESF DWP.
- Work Routes Families – 54% direct delivery / 46% supply chain, commissioned by ESF DWP.
- Work Routes 50+ West London – 91% direct delivery / 9% supply chain, commissioned by ESF DWP.

### **Youth:**

- National Citizen Service (NCS) East of England – 100% supply chain, commissioned by NCST.
- NCS West Midlands – 10% direct delivery / 90% supply chain, commissioned by NCST.

## 5. AREAS OF SIGNIFICANT STRENGTH

A number of significant strengths were identified during the Assessment, and these are described below. The numbers in brackets refer to the criteria of the Standard:

A robust approach to designing supply chains continues to be undertaken, which includes extensive research and consultation and takes into consideration the commissioner's objectives and contractual requirements. Reed subsequently engages with a broad range of organisations and agencies from different sectors including; public, private and third sector (charitable, social enterprise and community interest companies). Housing Associations, Local Authorities, large colleges through to small independent training providers were evidenced as being part of the supply chain mix. For example, within the NCS contract in the East of England, the supply chain is made up of 52% voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations, 24% Local Authority, 12% private and 12% college, with 59% of the overall mix being small-medium enterprises. The organisations and agencies are of varying sizes and based locally, regionally and nationally with the aim of addressing the current and changing needs of customers. Partners confirmed that their views and opinions were sought in relation to the design of their supply chain. Partner comments included: *"They listen to what we have to say about customers and geography"*, *"We were asked for our views on what would make up a good supply chain"* and *"We are asked about other Partners that could add value to the supply chain."* (1.1)

Consultation with potential Partners is an integral part of Reed's approach to designing the supply chain and the services to meet customer needs. A number of Partners spoke of meetings and one-to-one conversations which contributed to developing the activities of the supply chain prior to the bid being submitted. Some examples included sharing information regarding the delivery model and ways of working, which were subsequently cited within the bid submission and utilised throughout the initial stages of designing the systems and processes. One Partner commented *"We were involved in their bid and really involved in design – they see us as a trusted partner. For example, we influenced their design on school recruitment patterns."* Once the contract is live, Reed continues to consult with Partners to establish what is working well and identify areas to improve, including the systems and processes and reporting mechanisms. Partners referred to reviewing the Customer Service Standards (CSS), the delivery model and first-time validation rates with Reed to contribute to improving performance across the supply chain. (1.3)

Reed recognises the importance of working in partnership with Partners to ensure the successful delivery of the service. Consequently, Partners made frequent reference to: *"One team", "It's a true partnership", "We're in it together", "Fairness in the way they operate" and "There is never any us and them."* Partners are encouraged to work collaboratively, with specific reference made to how over the last 12 months they have been working more openly with the direct delivery element of the contract, including sharing data, practices and resources as well as co-locating. Also, Partners spoke of sharing vacancies and resources across the supply chain and working together on the development of key activities, for example, the NCS Graduate Programme. One Partner commented *"We have shared training and premises with another Supply Chain Partner. In the last 12 months we have collaborated more with Reed's own delivery – we go to their branches, share best practice and share vacancies."* (1.4)

The procurement and due diligence processes are consistently robust, irrespective of the service to be provided; end-to-end, specialist / integration or ad-hoc. A range of methods are used to promote the opportunity to work with Reed with all potential Partners having to submit an Expression of Interest (EOI). Partners confirmed that the EOI was straightforward, not onerous in any way and that they could contact Reed to gain clarity regarding the requirements. In addition, Partners confirmed that regular communications were forthcoming and in line with the timescales outlined. Subsequently, the EOI is judged and scored and Partners advised of the outcome. Partners believe the selection process to be open, fair and transparent. Similarly, whilst being robust, due diligence was viewed as *'fit for purpose'* and what would be expected of a Prime, such as Reed. Several Partners spoke of the support gained throughout due diligence, including the development of policies to ensure they meet the minimum requirements. (2.1)

A comprehensive strategy is in place to complete the Transfer of Undertakings Protection of Employment (TUPE) for those transferring in or out of Reed. The approach taken to any TUPE activity is to ensure a smooth transition for the employee. Consultation and communication are viewed as paramount to support employees at a difficult time and, as a result, Reed ensures support is readily available for individuals, including the provision of information, advice and guidance in a timely manner. TUPE transferees consistently confirmed the support available from Reed and the fact that it was an *"easy"* transition. Similarly, the affected Partner organisation valued the presence and input from Reed to undertake the transfer with minimum disruption to staff, as well as customers. Comments from Partners included: *"The transition went really smoothly, and the support in person was invaluable"* and *"Reed facilitated the transfer to ensure timescales and legal requirements were met."* Some comments from TUPE transferees included: *"During the TUPE process, Reed facilitated my individual needs", "It compares very well with my other experiences of TUPE – very smooth, I can't think of anything that can be improved"* and *"The TUPE process included very honest, clear and transparent conversations."* (2.2)

Performance expectations and funding / finance arrangements are openly discussed before contract award, which results in potential Partners having a clear understanding of key contractual components. Partners are encouraged to submit their desired volumes within the EOI, and these are subsequently negotiated before contracting. Partners confirmed that there was an open, honest and transparent approach to negotiating volumes, funding / finance and performance expectations prior to signing the contract. Partner comments included: *"There was a negotiation before bidding, and Reed checked with us to ensure it was viable"*, *"We submitted our volume requirements within the EOI, which was further discussed with Reed before the contract was drawn up"* and *"Very open negotiations and that continues."* (2.4)

A contract / Service Level Agreement (SLA) is devised and shared with potential Partners prior to starting the delivery of the service. Reed ensure all Partners clearly understand the contractual obligations before signing, and if appropriate, make changes to, for example, the language to provide greater clarity. Similarly, in the recent contract variations, for instance, CVo3 and CVo4, Reed has been proactive in ensuring Partners clearly understand the impact. The Finance Director has hosted supply chain and individual remote meetings to explain the variation and subsequently undertaken a range of financial modelling activities to ensure the viability of the contract for each Partner. Partner comments include: *"There were some tweaks made to the contract, which we were happy with"*, *"They really check that the contract is still viable"* and *"Any contract variations are put swiftly in place."* (3.1)

Performance expectations are discussed at length with Partners at various stages; prior to submitting the EOI, upon contract award, onboarding and throughout weekly and monthly performance reviews. Consequently, Partners clearly understand what is expected of them throughout the life of the contract. Management information is readily available to enable Partners to monitor and evaluate performance, and as a result, they can respond to under-performance quickly. Partner comments included: *"Performance expectations clear and there was good negotiation about volumes and our capacity"*, *"We have had two performance calls a week during Covid-19 to look at performance"*, *"Reed works with us on our caseload to maximise performance"* and *"I have regular meetings with the Regional Director to look at top-line performance, and we discuss expectations."* (3.2)

Payment arrangements are clearly defined in a schedule contained within the contract, or in the case of tier 3 and 4 Partners, within the SLA. Partners explained that they discussed and agreed the process to raise invoices, and confirmed that this is straight-forward, and subsequently, payments have consistently been made accurately, and in a timely manner. Also, the remittance advice provided by Reed gives a clear indication of payments made to enable Partners to reconcile their records with ease. Partner comments included: *"They are great at paying, we have never had any issues"*, *"Absolutely no issues, ever"*, *"Only provider that pays when they say they are"*, *"Never missed a payment and always correct"* and *"They've continued to make payments on time over the last few months."* (4.2)

Reed actively supports, develops and encourages its Partners to fulfil their contractual obligations from contract award and throughout the life of the contract. This starts through the sharing of policies and procedures to enable Partners to devise such documentation to meet the contractual requirements. An extensive onboarding activity is provided for all Partners prior to mobilisation providing staff with specific information relating to the contract. For example, CSS, key performance indicators (KPIs) and milestones, the customer journey / delivery model, paperwork, compliance requirements through to reporting functions. Throughout the life of the contract further support is provided, for example, marketing collateral, learning and development activities, as well as advice and guidance to ensure delivery of services under unprecedented circumstances, such as Covid-19. Partner comments included: *"We have learned a lot from how they operate – they are very professional and helped us become more commercial"*, *"There was help to develop our policies after very good due diligence checks"*, *"We have learned so much working with them – it has put us in a good position for future contracts"* and *"We have learned a lot about supply chain management from Reed's approach."* (5.1, 5.2)

Reed actively supports Partners to evolve, build capacity and develop comprehensive services to enable them to remain viable and sustainable organisations. Opportunities to access additional funding are shared with Partners, and support, including the provision of references for any subsequent bid. In addition, Supply Chain Managers actively respond to growth requests and opportunities to work in other areas to enable Partner organisations to diversify. Partner comments included: *"New opportunities are shared in their weekly bulletin, and we've already had a discussion about the new ESIF (European Structural and Investment Fund) programmes"*, *"We get chances to bid with them in other contracts"* and *"We know if we perform well there is a high possibility of getting more schools allocated to us."* (5.2)

Partners referred to learning and development needs being identified throughout the monthly Contract Performance Review (CPR), and the impact subsequently being measured. Some examples of the results of targeted training include; first-time validation rates improved from 71% in January 2020 to 92% in April for one Partner organisation; an improved PCO (Performance Compliance Officer); and successful In Work Support calls increased from 57% to 75% due to improved tracking within another. Learning and development activities provided recently by Reed that have been valued by Partners include; masterclasses on remote delivery of services, managing your team remotely, returning to the workplace, as well as quality and compliance throughout lockdown, to mention a few. Partner comments included: *"There is a massive amount of training and support from the Supply Chain Manager"*, *"The safeguarding training from Reed was outstanding"*, *"We evaluate the training in the performance meetings and they also do observations to check the impact of the learning on Adviser performance"* and *"We just have to reach out and ask for training – they have helped us improve our safeguarding reporting."* (5.3)

Partners spoke consistently of a positive and supportive relationship with the Supply Chain Manager, as well as the Supply Chain Executive, who are their main contacts. However, other named Reed staff within finance, quality, compliance and learning and development were referred to as being readily accessible, positive and supportive, when required. Partners consistently referenced communication as being open, honest and without unreasonable constraint. Similarly, Partners confirmed that they had felt well supported over the past four months as the Country has faced a lockdown due to Covid-19. Ongoing communications, including daily contact on occasions, has supported Partners to adapt their delivery to enable them to continue to provide services to customers. Partner comments included: *"The main contact is the Supply Chain Manager, and we have regular communications", "The lines of communication are clear", "Very clear, transparent and responsive", "Our Supply Chain Executive is great – so supportive", "Quite relaxed, informal, supportive and helpful – it's all about working together", "Clear communications delivered with flexibility and empathy which has been invaluable in Covid-19", "We love the regular feedback from Reed staff", "There are really positive communications", "Communication is really strong", "Genuine pleasure to work with", "Open, honest and transparent from day one", "They are appreciative of what we do – we recently had a 'shout out' in the bulletin, it's great for staff" and "A great relationship developed and X (Supply Chain Executive) has contributed to that."* (6.1, 6.2)

A robust approach to performance management has been designed and implemented, which typically includes weekly tele-kits with the Supply Chain Manager; however, these were increased to twice weekly over the past four months. Also, monthly CPRs executed, before Covid-19 were face-to-face, but are currently undertaken remotely. Partners believe these activities are proportionate to the contract and provide the opportunity to discuss issues and challenges, as well as what is working well. In particular, Partners have felt well supported throughout lockdown as discussions have focused on the continuous delivery of the service, as opposed to managing performance against targets. In the event of a Service Failure Notice (SFN) Partners have felt well supported. Several Partners spoke of being on an SFN due to under-performance and how quickly they had addressed the issue due to the extensive support from the Supply Chain Manager and Supply Chain Executive. Partner comments included: *"Weekly calls are good as they look at the forecast going forward", "There is a really strong performance review culture", "They were very supportive when we were on a PIP (Performance Improvement Plan)", "It is always 'we' with Reed – you see this when you are on a PIP, and they help you pull the action plan together and not just leave you to it" and "We were on a SFN and turned our performance round in three months."* (6.3, 6.5)

Orion is the Client Relationship Management (CRM) system used by Reed for the employment contracts, and Salesforce for the NCS Programme – as required by the NCST. Partners consistently made positive reference to Orion and the reporting mechanisms which provides a plethora of management information to monitor and evaluate performance at different levels; contract, team and individual. In the event of additional reports being required by a Partner, Reed has responded positively and swiftly. Partner comments included: *"We have used Orion since the start of the contract, and it is great – I can find anything I need to monitor and guide the team", "All the reports are set up, and I use them on a daily and weekly basis", "They share stats daily which is really helpful" and "PCO analysis weekly is great – indicates our performance against the Customer Service Standards which allows us to rectify any issues."* (6.4)

The identification and sharing of effective practice are actively facilitated by Reed, which starts at the early stages of a contract through the CPRs and partner forums. Subsequently, throughout the life of the contract, Partners willingly share what is working well and areas for improvement to support the entire supply chain. Partner comments included: *"Reed is very transparent about sharing best practice – we have learned from another Supply Chain Partner about how to best offer telephone support", "Sharing best practice is really open from Reed and the other providers – we've learnt so much", "We've picked up good tips for employer engagement and in-work support", "X shared their sign-up process, which was really useful" and "We've shared our practices for doing remote observations, which was really useful."* (6.6)

A range of policies, processes and activities have been designed and implemented to address the quality of service delivery and compliance requirements of the commissioner and to protect the Partners and Reed. Partners confirmed that audits, file checks and observations of practice were proportionate, robust and mitigated any risk. In addition, reports from Orion are available to identify and inform action to be taken to ensure compliance against a number of the CSS. Partners are encouraged to gain feedback from customers, which is reviewed throughout the monthly CPR to establish the quality of service, which contributes to identifying issues, for example, customer's lack of understanding regarding an action plan. Partners explained that findings from the activities inform improvements, which are followed up by Reed to ensure implementation. Partner comments included: *"As a result of QA activity, we have changed how we do job matching", "They look for important quality matters like the CVs produced and the customer journey", "Action plans have to be SMART, and often we identify a training need in this area", "We had Pharos, Assessment Services and Reed observations last year, and this year the activity timetable has been quality assured and we've had feedback, and support to address the requirements" and "The CMO report highlights compliance issues, and we have twenty days to correct them, which is monitored."* (7.2)

A subject matter expert reviews Partner's Modern Slavery Act 2015 policy statements throughout due diligence and, as a result, Reed had provided advice and guidance to ensure the policies meet the requirements. Throughout the life of the contract further information relating to Modern Slavery is shared through the weekly bulletin, and special briefings and training. Partner comments included: *"Reed checked our policy statement to ensure it was ok", "Regular reference to safeguarding, prevent and modern slavery in the bulletin" and "Regular information and access to training for our staff."* (7.5)

Reed provides feedback and updates from commissioners promptly through a range of communication methods, for example, emails, bulletins, throughout the CPRs and when appropriate, tele-kits and conference calls. Partners found the tele-kits and conference calls of particular value over the past four months – even when there were minimal updates. The Organisation uses the findings of external audits and assessments extensively to shape the services and drive continuous improvement. There was evidence in this Merlin Assessment that Reed had responded positively to the feedback provided in 2018 as significant improvements had been made in key areas. For example, working with Partners to undertake the annual Self-Assessment Review, resulting in a Quality Improvement Plan, further development of management information reporting functions and providing a range of learning and development activities, plus others. Partners spoke of the six-monthly Evaluation of Service, whereby they are invited to provide formal feedback in relation to the partnership; however, all were quick to state that feedback is welcomed at any stage. (8.1)

All exiting and exited Partners were completely clear about the processes, expectations and obligations for contract closure. Clear exit plans are in place, which are discussed and agreed with Partners at the appropriate point – typically six months prior to a planned exit. These plans are documented and reviewed throughout the monthly CPR and regular communications with the respective Supply Chain Manager. Final audits are undertaken in a timely manner, and support is provided by Reed as required. Partner comments included: *"We constantly keep in touch and I would work with them again", "Nothing but positive things to say about Reed", "They are one of the best", "We had a good Supply Chain Manager to ensure we were on track throughout – planning an end goal and working backwards from that", "There was a clear plan which we worked through with the Supply Chain Manager", "Really worked with us to ensure the contract was viable right through to the end", "Final payments were made on time, they are so good at paying you" and "We would definitely work with them again- this was our most successful contract."* (8.5)

## 6. AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT

Two areas where further development would be beneficial were identified during the Assessment. These are for the Organisation to consider as a contribution to continuous improvement. The numbers in brackets refer to the criteria of the Standard:

The use of wider networks is actively encouraged through the Route Planner Tool and the provision of services accessible through local organisations and agencies to support the delivery of comprehensive services. In addition, Reed contracts with a number of tier 3 and 4 Partners with the aim of supporting the end-to-end Partners by providing additional services to clients. Interviews with Partners indicated that more could be done to integrate these Partners (tiers 3 and 4) into the supply chain and, where appropriate, enable them to further promote the service provided. (1.2)

Partners' environmental sustainability policy and plans are reviewed at due diligence, and subsequently, updates are requested on an annual basis. In addition, Partners made reference to updates and the sharing of best practice from Reed in relation to environmental sustainability within the Partner bulletin. Whilst Partners delivering the S2S contract spoke of on occasions reviewing performance against environmentally sustainable targets during the monthly CPR, this failed to be a consistent practice. In the future, consideration could be made to adopting a similar approach with other contracts and reviewing the performance against environmentally sustainable targets. Additionally, Partners may value further discussions relating to the updates and practices to embed environmental sustainability within their organisation further. (7.4)

## 7. FINDINGS

The feedback below is reported against key criteria of the Merlin Standard, aligned with the "Plan-Do-Review" business cycle.

PLAN
<p><b>Through planning an effective supply chain, the range of Partners and how they are engaged ensures there is a group of organisations that cover a diverse range of providers that all understand the requirements of the contract and their contributions to achieving the desired outcomes.</b></p>
<p>Refer to Section 5 – Areas of Significant Strength; how Reed has considered a range of organisations in its supply chain. (Criterion 1.1)</p> <p>Reed review the design of the supply chains throughout the life of the contracts to ensure they continue to meet the current and changing customer needs. Doing so has resulted in new Partners being brought into a supply chain to address specific needs, as well as new organisations and agencies being included in the Route Planner Tool. Partners confirmed that due to their successful performance, in the event of a Partner leaving the supply chain, they were approached to take over the provision. One NCS Partner spoke of schools being reallocated across the supply chain to ensure young people's specific needs could be met.</p> <p>Refer to Section 5 – Areas of Significant Strength; clear and effective strategies to manage the TUPE process. (Criterion 2.2)</p> <p>Refer to Section 5 – Areas of Significant Strength; clearly defined performance expectations. (Criterion 3.2)</p> <p>Before contracting discussions take place with Partners about funding and payment arrangements to ensure they are fair, proportionate and do not cause undue financial risk. Several Partners referred to financial modelling to ensure the anticipated volumes and unit prices made the contract viable. Similarly, Reed provides Partners with a clear explanation of the payment terms and conditions to enable Partners to manage their cash flow. Partner comments include: <i>"There was flow down from DWP, and we never requested any changes to payment terms"</i>, <i>"The payments process is simple, easy to work with"</i> and <i>"Right from the start the finances were clear."</i></p> <p>The contract variations from commissioners throughout Covid-19 have been consistently explained to Partners. Subsequently, Reed has actively reviewed the funding of the respective contracts with the aim of minimising the risk to Partner organisations and ensuring the contract continues to be viable. As a result of financial modelling Partners have been in a better position to make critical decisions regarding the delivery of the service and, if necessary, the furloughing of staff. Partner comments include: <i>"The payments process is clear, and no claw-backs during Covid-19 has really helped our organisation"</i>, <i>"X explained the new funding, which made sense"</i> and <i>"Reed has been open and transparent from the start, they have supported us so much over the last few months."</i></p>

**DO**

**Supply Chain Partners are supported to develop their services to meet or exceed expected performance and quality assurance requirements.**

Refer to Section 5 – Areas of Significant Strength for the findings of the key Merlin criteria within the Do section, 5.1, 6.2, 6.3, 6.4 and 7.2.

## REVIEW

**Review and evaluation is used to demonstrate the impact of the services delivered and continuously improve service delivery.**

Reed evaluate the impact of the service on the key targets of the respective contract and the wider social objectives of the commissioner. These are shared with the supply chains through the bulletin and partner forums and some examples from 2019 included:

**8,425** people moved into work,

**14,622** people gained new skills and qualifications through training,

**10,720** young people took part in NCS and contributed over 500,000 volunteering hours to their local communities,

**6,149** people have lost weight on the NHS Diabetes Prevention Service,

**4,692** people have been supported to quit smoking, 4,848 to lose weight, 1,927 to increase their physical activity, and 839 to eat healthier on their integrated health contracts,

**201** schools in London now have an Enterprise Adviser helping to create links with local employers and improve careers education, and

In total, more than **25,000** people joined and benefitted from Reed services in 2019.

Partner comments included: *"The data is visible for all the supply chain – the social impact is on health and wellbeing, financial management skills and housing", "We have delivered over 250K volunteering hours", "We have helped 600 people into work as a result of our work on this contract and 300 have remained in sustainable employment", "We achieved over 100% of our contract targets to work with the 50+ in our area – 65 have stayed in employment for more than six months", "We co-locate in a community hub and as a result can give our customers real live work experiences" and "Getting people close to the labour market and then into work has a positive impact on their mental state and contributes to reducing reliance on medication and the NHS."*

The impact of the services on the intended customer groups, staff, external stakeholders and the wider community is continually being monitored and evaluated by the Partners and Reed. This is subsequently reported to the commissioners and other interested parties, for example, Local Authority, community groups and JobCentre Plus. Partners consistently referred to good news stories used to capture the impact on different customers, which included individuals overcoming significant barriers, and continuing to progress through to those who haven't worked for many years gaining sustainable employment. Partner comments included: *"There is impact on the community through increasing social mobility and also creating safer families and better children's outcomes", "Our business has grown as a result of the opportunity to work with Reed – they are the jewel in the crown for us", "Working with Reed on this contract has impacted on staff's confidence and skills, which has influenced their ongoing continuous professional development", "It provides customers with the opportunity to gain non-accredited training to start them off and build their self-confidence", "We've had so many nice success stories which we like to share" and "Staff really go above and beyond to support people, they want to make a difference to people's lives."*

## 8. CONCLUSION AND CONDITIONS OF ACCREDITATION

In conclusion, this accreditation review provided the opportunity to review the practices of Reed for their current contracts against the Merlin Standard. The senior leadership team should be mindful that any significant organisational or senior staff changes, and / or being awarded additional contracts using a significantly different supply chain may require a strategic review. Similarly, any decisions reached by the Merlin Mediation Service / Independent Complaints Examiner may also result in a strategic review being required to ensure the Organisation continues to operate in line with the Merlin principles.

### Holders of the Merlin Standard Accreditation must:

- Maintain and continually improve upon their approach to Supply Chain Management.
- Cooperate with annual Reviews as required by Assessment Services Ltd
- Inform Assessment Services Ltd ([merlin@assessmentservices.com](mailto:merlin@assessmentservices.com)) or their Lead Assessor if the key contact name or contact details change.
- Inform Assessment Services Ltd of any significant changes made to the organisational structure, senior management or systems that may impact on their accreditation; email: ([merlin@assessmentservices.com](mailto:merlin@assessmentservices.com))
- Inform Assessment Services Ltd immediately if they gain additional contracts.
- Inform Assessment Services Ltd of any serious complaint or rise in numbers of complaints received from Supply Chain Partners.
- Not undertake or omit to undertake any activity that may be misleading and / or may cause Assessment Services Ltd and / or the Merlin Standard to be brought into disrepute.
- Only use the Merlin Standard Quality Mark for the areas within the scope of the accreditation and in accordance with the guidelines.
- Ensure in cases where accreditation is withdrawn or where they do not come forward for Accreditation Review, remove from display any certificates or plaques issued by Assessment Services Ltd and do not display the Merlin Standard Quality Mark, nor refer to being a former holder of the Merlin Standard.
- Be aware that Assessment Services Ltd reserves the right to remove any accreditation and / or certification previously applied if payment is not received for services provided.
- Submit their Booking Form for re-accreditation to the Merlin Standard at least four months prior to the accreditation anniversary date ensuring all pre on-site activity is completed in a timely way including planning, payment, completion of the Self-Assessment Questionnaire (SAQ), Pre-Assessment Notes (PAN) and interview scheduling. Accreditation Reviews are due 2 years from the anniversary accreditation date; it is expected that organisations will be assessed by this date or will risk being de-accredited.

## ASSESSMENT SERVICES



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