



Submission Details

Organisation or individual to which this submission relates (if different from above):	Local Government Association
Approximate size of organisation (number of employees) if applicable:	260
Number of employees covered by the initiative if applicable:	20



Most effective partnership

Background

When nearly a fifth of all UK social worker jobs are vacant (over 5,500¹), the financial impact of hiring agency workers, alongside the social impact of under-resourcing care cannot be understated.

This is the story of how a partnership between the Local Government Association (LGA) and Jobsgopublic found a solution.

A dire national shortage

Despite an influx of new professionals every year, attrition remains high and retaining experienced workers is proving to be a major underlying issue that has taken its toll.

With the number of experienced workers dwindling, the industry has been left on its knees.

It began at the PPMA awards

Whilst attending the PPMA awards two years ago, an award-winning social worker recruitment project recognised on the night sparked a lightbulb moment between Suzanne Hudson of the LGA and Jon Dilling from Jobsgopublic.

Discussing her opinion that recruitment in social work had become a national problem, Suzanne explained an idea she had for a nationwide scheme focussing on getting experienced individuals back into the profession.

Previously, councils had found it too expensive to kick-start programmes to help returning social workers, but at that moment, the 'Come Back to Social Work' idea was born and Jobsgopublic was inspired to help make this a reality, **free-of-charge!**

Objective

To motivate qualified social workers who'd fallen out of the profession to return, thus:

- Tackling the skills shortage, particularly within child protection, which was faster than training up newcomers.
- Reducing agency staff usage.

A successful project would create a blueprint that could be scaled up nationally.

Strategy

Jobsgopublic partnered with the LGA, with input from Department of Health (DH) and Department of Education (DfE) to trial a pilot programme.

The pilot was developed in partnership from the outset:

- Suzanne Hudson at LGA spoke to ex-social workers and it was clear that many wanted to get back into social work but couldn't fund it or get recredited.
- A project steering group was assembled and chaired by the LGA, with representatives from Jobsgopublic, four councils, two Government departments and Skills for Care.
- Jobsgopublic and LGA did a presentation to key stakeholders including DfE representatives and social workers.
- The LGA presented its idea and Jobsgopublic undertook a presentation around how it could look and how the process could work.
- Jobsgopublic talked the LGA through a host of recommendations based on previous campaigns.
- Jobsgopublic provided free advice, advising on best practice, making sure it worked.

The partnership in action

- Jobsgopublic was tasked with building an application microsite, informed with input from LGA and two social workers.
- Communication was sent out by the LGA to all local authorities across the country, outlining how they could support the programme.

¹ Department for Education, [published by the BBC](#) 2016

- Employers were invited to take part in the interviews, offered shadowing opportunities and the chance to take part in an action learning set and one of the coaching sessions to offer mock interviews.
- Only those out of the sector for less than five years could be accepted onto the programme.
- Candidates had to apply via a talent pool to find out if they were suitable, using Jobsgopublic's technology to streamline the process and facilitate it before handing over to the training provider.

The strength of the partnership was particularly well demonstrated with the communications:

- Sub-groups nominating themselves to own different elements of the plan.
- The LGA securing free advertising through its network and online media.
- Jobsgopublic providing free PR and working with the LGA comms team.
- A separate comms plan to encourage councils to engage.
- Agreeing messaging to promote why people should return to the profession.

Candidate experience

The campaign launched on time on 6th September 2016. Interviews took place in October and the programme started in November – running through to January.

Candidates received:

- A free 13-week in-depth refresher training programme that went over and above the HCPC requirements.
- Training from a host of external experts including some from Kings College, and The Reflective Practice.
- Help re-registering and returning to practice on finishing.



Innovation

A nationwide first

The first scheme of its kind nationwide, the LGA made an innovative decision to take on this project having never done anything of this proportion before.

Free-of-charge work

In another company first, Jobsgopublic decided that it would give something back to the important but struggling field of social services by offering its assistance to the LGA completely free of charge.

This included:

- Developing a microsite.
- Use of Jobsgopublic's Talent Pool and full ATS System.
- Professional training.
- Project management and expert advice throughout.
- Help with some of the group sessions.
- Interview guidance.
- Taking part in action learning sets.

Jobsgopublic doesn't even make any commission when a social worker from the programme gets placed.

Without Jobsgopublic, the LGA would have struggled to implement the pilot and would still be struggling to find a method in which to help social workers who were reaching out in the hope of getting back into the industry.

Results/impact

Success in enrolment

- Applications opened September and closed October 2016.
- 169 candidates registered on the microsite, 44 applicants were invited to, and completed, a second stage form.
- 20 candidates were selected for the pilot.
- 100% success rate of candidates that went through, with no-one dropping out.
- The campaign successfully achieved national reach, with over half (57%) outside London and the South East.

Candidate progress

- All 20 candidates completed the programme.
- Some reported that they successfully re-registered as social workers simply by starting the programme – HCPC accepted their applications as they had evidence of using their skills and knowledge.
- On the 13th March, all candidates will be given their certificates, allowing the LGA to work alongside them, providing guidance to find the right employer. All candidates are guaranteed an interview.

Candidate feedback

“It’s helped me to regain my confidence and given me a better insight into the areas of work I wish to pursue”

“Renewed sense of purpose: determined to be successful.”

“It’s given me the determination to succeed to be a great social worker and be the best children’s social worker in England.”

Impact on social workers

20 candidates took part in and completed the programme. A follow-up survey completed by the candidates demonstrated that 96% felt they had made progress, with 73% saying this was significant.

Furthermore, a large number of candidates returning have said if it hadn’t been for this programme, they wouldn’t have been able to have come back.

The ROI

The programme is delivering a financial savings to councils two-fold:

- 1) **Reduction in agency fees:** It costs around £30-35/hour to hire agency staff compared to £15.71 for an employee. With this programme, councils can vastly reduce agency fees.
- 2) **Cost to recruit:** The CIPD estimates that it cost £24,000 to replace/recruit an employee, including training, a cost councils can’t afford. Through this programme we’re able to deliver trained social workers, taking the financial burden off councils.

Future

After a successful roll-out, many councils are now expressing an interest in using the framework.

The pilot flagged an alarming number of social workers looking to get back into the field, so the demand is clearly there. Considering the lack of budget connected with the pilot, the sky’s the limit when more budget becomes available.