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Openreach / Community Systems

The Project

Fair Cities *Brent* worked with Openreach to attract a more ethnically diverse workforce reflective of their customer base. The pilot gave disadvantaged people without qualifications who ordinarily could not access apprenticeship opportunities at Openreach, the opportunity to achieve relevant equivalence qualifications in 12 weeks.

The process included collaboration between Openreach, Community Systems and the employment, skills and education system.

Following a successful joint marketing campaign and direct referrals, 43 candidates with the will to make the most of this opportunity were selected to start the 12-weeks intensive pre-employment training programme with Community Systems

The training programme developed their academic study skills and prepared their capacity to re-enter the labour market as Openreach apprentices. This was achieved by Community Systems being in regular contact with Openreach to ensure the programme was effective and what we as the employer wanted.

The Partnership

The project brought together the local college, local community training provider (Community Systems), the wider referral community, Openreach and Fair Cities.

Dave Walsh (Head of BT Apprenticeships) provided inspirational leadership for the campaign by ensuring that all government agencies and partners worked as a unit to achieve the aims of Openreach, the government agencies and most importantly the potential recruits. Dave ensured that those working on the project stayed focused on what could be achieved rather than reasons why change could not happen. The results from this campaign are being used to inform several demand led government programmes including the Commission for Employment Skills Chaired by Sir Michael Rake.

Dave Baul and Myself (Openreach Academy Managers) up-skilled the government funded training provider (Community Systems) to understand the skills and knowledge required to succeed as an Openreach apprentice. This was achieved by dedicated engagement from the

programme and included presenting the benefits of Openreach directly to rooms of up to 40 ethnic minorities considering an application to Openreach.

I have personally had a two year partnership with Fair Cities and Community Systems after participating in a successful adult recruitment campaign. I supported Community Systems by ensuring that aptitude tests were put in place to select candidates with potential to develop the desired skills and attributes.

The Achievement

We recruited 27 apprentices from deprived communities in Brent, of whom 85% are from Black and Minority Ethnic backgrounds. All 27 were unemployed and 9 are Females.

Mark Rainbow

Openreach Academy Manager for Modern Apprentices