



Innovative practice case studies

Supply chain partner:
Growth Company

Harry Fox

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Growth Company

This case study explores an example of a larger organisation which works across multiple areas on behalf of different prime providers, but which is not itself a prime provider in any area. It is based on three interviews with Growth Company staff, and interviews with G4S and Ingeus.

This case study covers the Growth Company, an example of an organisation working on behalf of three different prime providers.

The particular positives include:

- They have an extensive understanding of the areas they serve and can share resource and expertise between different contracts they deliver.
- As a non-profit, they believe they are inclined to invest additional resource and ultimately improve the participant journey.
- They can share best practice across different areas.

Introduction and overview

The Growth Company are a non-profit organisation working across a range of employability contracts, as well as other areas such as justice, health, and business support. Within Restart, they operate in St Helens and Preston on behalf of G4S, Salford¹ and Trafford on behalf of Ingeus, and elsewhere on behalf of Maximus.² Some of these areas are shared with other supply chain partners.

The Growth Company had previously operated various other employability provision within these areas, including for the National Careers Service in the North West, and Support to Succeed in Greater Manchester.

They are a non-profit organisation which they believe creates a willingness to invest resource upfront and recruit additional staff. They also believe this additional resource, along with a culture of innovation, leads to greater innovation and a more supportive environment for the participant.

¹ Growth Company operate three different offices within the Salford City Council area, in Salford itself, Walkden, and Eccles. References to place names concern the local authority area rather than specifically the town or city

² None of the individuals interviewed for this research had direct oversight of Growth Company's work within the Maximus supply chain, so the focus here is on their work for G4S and Ingeus

There's a real culture of trying things out, so if we want to look at a different customer journey, or run different workshops, or try different things with our participant spend, there's a culture of just having a go and seeing if it makes a difference. The main thing is just our values and the supportive environment where we want to be the best, we want to do the right things by the participant and that's what we're driven by.

Growth Company

In particular, Growth Company prefer to over-resource their staffing to ensure that caseload sizes are good and individual Employment Advisors can provide a quality service to participants.

They have been flexible and adopted different models in different areas. For example, in Liverpool they centralise in-work support, but in St Helens and Preston participants remain with the same caseworker as they move into work. They go beyond prime provider requirements where appropriate, such as seeing participants more regularly than is stipulated by DWP.

Strengths of the supply chain model

Growth Company highlighted the value of their existing footprint, working relationships, and track record locally as a major benefit of their involvement in Restart supply chain. This aided the set-up of the design of the contract, for example having worked in Salford previously, they understood the importance of having offices throughout the area rather than expecting participants across the borough to travel to one central site. Upon appointment, the Growth Company already employed experienced employability professionals in the area, many of whom moved into managerial roles during the implementation phase of Restart. This ensured the team had a good working knowledge of the landscape, and enabled them to mobilise at pace. Additionally, they already had sites available based on delivering other contracts, meaning Restart could get underway within those, before moving into larger units when demand required.

Being embedded within an area, with pre-existing relationships with Jobcentre Plus and other stakeholders was overall a strength to the mobilisation and delivery of Restart.

You can hit the ground running instead of trying to put more legwork into getting those relationships, understanding that delivery and who's in the Jobcentre. It makes for an easier transition going into a contract if that legwork's already done. It doesn't feel as difficult to try and get that going.

Growth Company

Through working on different contracts, Growth Company have developed a strong understanding of the available employment support provision. This knowledge helps advisers to ensure individuals are referred

to the most appropriate provision. For example, in Greater Manchester, Support to Succeed or the 'Working Well: Individual Placement & Support' contract may be more appropriate for a participant than Restart. Being aware of the suite of support available helps ensure that individuals whose time expires on Restart can be referred to an alternative provision, ensuring continuity of support.

Strong local knowledge extends to advisers making effective use of wrap-around support and signposting. Customers often need support with housing, benefits, debt and other wider issues so having existing local partnerships with organisations able to provide suitable support is beneficial. A history of delivering employability within these areas supports advisers to make referrals where appropriate.

Working across three different CPAs enables Growth Company to share best practice across different areas, through regular meetings between operations managers. For example, one area had been reluctant to claim self-employment outcomes, so colleagues in other areas guided them this process. Use of a 'job coach' role in one area to work with more job-ready participants to run jobs clubs was shared and replicated elsewhere.

There are several benefits from delivering multiple contracts. Growth Company are well-placed to engage with Jobcentre Plus and other partners on a strategic basis and talk about the suitability of the suite of support provision rather than just about Restart. This influence extends to working with employers through a regionally centralised team who identify vacancies that can be utilised across contracts, meaning the Restart team have access to a greater number and variety of vacancies than would be the case with a smaller Restart-specific employer engagement team. Staff are also able to draw on expertise housed elsewhere in the organisation. For example, in St Helens there is a business support contract which delivers self-employment advice and Restart staff can utilise the expertise of this team where required. They also deliver the Creating Future Opportunities (CFO) Activity Hub which can better support participants with criminal records who are on probation.

Relationship between prime and supply chain

Growth Company describe positive working relationships with their prime providers. Primes provide support with training and offer them flexibility and autonomy to adapt within the guidelines set out by DWP. All three prime providers they work for run regular supply chain meetings bringing their subcontractors together to talk about best practice; G4S and Ingeus run this quarterly with the latter's forum held in-person.

Growth Company attribute the positive relationships to having open conversations and a collaborative mindset. They report that primes will push and challenge them where appropriate based on key performance data. However, Growth Company describe the approaches as supportive, focusing on helping them identify potential strategies to explore rather than prescribing specific actions. Conversely the primes are open to listening to challenges and will try to champion these with DWP. It is important

that prime providers recognise the contribution of supply chain partners, guide them, and are willing to listen to their ideas.

When you bring on a supply chain partner, you've brought them on for a specific reason, you've looked at what they do and how they do it, and therefore they are a trusted partner for you. They need that support and encouragement to continue that delivery, any pointers on how delivery can be improved, and also to listen to them when supply chain partners talk about ideas. [Prime] were excellent at that, you would put forward an idea, they would say 'yeah that works' and share that with the rest of the supply chain too.

Growth Company

Where primes are delivering themselves, this can add value and bring common ground to relationships. More broadly, they have a good understanding of what is working well and where the challenges lie which informs their discussions with supply chain partners around best practice. In cases where the prime does not deliver, they can also add value by convening activity on aspects such as employer engagement, sharing leads with supply chain partners.

Growth Company's performance is managed by prime providers through a review of formal data, with metrics such as job starts, first earnings and job outcomes. Ingeus have three trophies that they award to their supply chain partners at the month's end for organisations in the top positions on different metrics, recognising and celebrating good performance. Growth Company would welcome access to the performance data available to primes to understand their performance relative to other providers, and inform areas for improvement.

Challenges and mitigation

On occasions there have been differences between the views of the sub-contractor and prime on operational issues, with a prime initially focusing its onboarding resources and training on formalities and the processes of the contract rather than the practicalities of supporting participants such as priorities for staff training and onboarding. Subsequently, the prime recruited ex-advisors into the training team and this has since been rectified. However, there are some differences in approach between Growth Company and a prime, including in which types of participants should be prioritised for more intensive support. Differences in approach have also been observed in the warm handover process, with the prime provider setting expectations with participants that they only needed to attend in person once per month to match the minimum service expectations, while the Growth Company like some individuals to have face-to-face appointments more regularly.

When multiple providers deliver a contract, it can be difficult to engage Jobcentre Plus staff to explain the offer, as there will be some variety between providers. This can affect the degree of confidence with which Jobcentre Plus staff explain Restart to participants prior to referral. Participants, or their job coach,

may prefer a certain local provider within the supply chain, but this is allocated randomly. Where it works well, the prime and supply chain partners engage partners, such as Jobcentre Plus, collectively, with all organisations attending strategic meetings where appropriate so that both can build a positive relationship, and both visiting Jobcentre Plus sites together to talk about Restart.

Fairly managing the allocation of caseloads across a Contract Package Areas can create challenges for prime providers in ensuring supply chain partners can manage workload and ensuring staffing capacity. For example, when Growth Company found one site was receiving fewer referrals than anticipated, the prime provider rebalanced allocations in another area to maintain the contract value for them.