



Shared Employer Engagement – examples of success

The Prime Provider Network

The Prime Provider Network (PPN) consists of employer engagement representatives from all Prime Restart Providers. It meets monthly in a collaborative model designed to respond to the needs of the employers involved in Restart. The PPN aims to provide effective employer engagement at a national level through vacancy sharing and supporting ‘single point of contact’ account management for employers that operate across contract boundaries. The group is run and supported by the ReAct partnership at IES. The PPN is also a valuable forum to build cross-organisation relationships which facilitate learning and supports collaborative working. This collaboration also enables the sharing of insights about the labour market and participant context and how to best meet employer needs.

The examples below illustrate how the PPN collaboration is supporting Restart providers to secure employment for participants.

AKG, Maximus and Ocado

Whilst planning a new site, Ocado identified a need for 350 drivers. AKG was their main contact in another Contract Package Area (CPA) supporting Ocado at another site. Through the PPN, AKG introduced Ocado to Maximus, the Prime in the CPA where the new site was located, and briefed Maximus on how AKG had supported Ocado Logistics. This support had included asking a talent acquisition manager to brief staff at the provider’s branch that would be submitting candidates, implementing effective pre-screening, and working closely with the local talent acquisition for regular feedback.

Maximus used the briefing to build a local approach with the head of talent acquisition and the local talent acquisition manager for the new site. Ocado was invited to brief of all the local Restart branch on the details of the roles and what was required of candidates.

With the support of two dedicated account managers, Maximus used this information to work with employment advisers to submit candidates for pre-screening sessions, both before the roles went live and during. Suitable candidates were then supported to apply on the day and shared their names with Ocado, who then provided Maximus with a weekly spreadsheet tracker on the progress of their applications.

Finally, Maximus had a site tour on for their employment advisers to understand more about the benefits for working for Ocado Logistics. One of the agreed actions with the site manager was to organise site Information tours for participants who were considering a career with them.

As of October, over 30 applications had been submitted, with 20 already starting work at the new site. The talent acquisition team at the Ocado site said that this had been a positive experience for their organisation.

Serco and AKG - Opening doors to careers in custody

A collaborative initiative between Serco's Justice & Immigration (J&I) Division and the Restart Scheme is helping individuals facing long-term unemployment take their first steps into careers as prison custody officers.

What began as a conversation between Serco's Employer Engagement Team and the Justice & Immigration Division to explore recruitment challenges has evolved into a powerful example of cross-sector and cross-provider collaboration. Fosse Way prison in Leicester was identified as a pilot site, and Serco's training team developed a bespoke, week-long pre-employment course designed to give participants a realistic insight into working in custody.

Although outside of Serco's CPA, the Employer Engagement Team travelled to the Leicester delivery site to support screening sessions alongside B2B, a supply chain partner of AKG. Together, they identified 11 suitable candidates from the local community eager to explore a career in custody.

The introduction to AKG was facilitated through the ReAct Partnership, which brings Restart Scheme Employer Engagement Teams together to share best practice and enable nationwide employer support. Through this collaboration between Serco and AKG, the Pathway to Prison Officer Programme at HMP Fosse Way offered participants:

- An escorted prison visit to experience life inside the establishment;
- A talk from a serving prison custody officer, sharing their journey and the realities of the role;
- Skills development sessions focused on success profiles and presentation skills; and
- Tailored support to begin their recruitment journey with Serco.

By the end of the pilot, all 11 participants expressed a desire to pursue a career in custody. AKG are now actively supporting them through applications for the initial training course – the first formal step toward becoming a prison custody officer. Feedback from participants has been overwhelmingly positive. Here's what some of them had to say:

It's been a great week and has really opened my eyes to the variety of employment opportunities working in a prison.

The guest speakers were amazing; they obviously enjoy their jobs and they really motivated me.

I've learnt loads and can't wait to apply to be a Prison Custody Officer. I'm so excited!

Reflecting on the week, Wyn Jones, Contract Director at HMP Fosse Way, said:

I'm incredibly proud that Fosse Way has been a part of this incredible collaboration with the Restart Scheme. The energy and commitment from everyone involved to bring the programme to life has been second to none and will make a lasting impact on the participants involved.

Andy Bowie, Director of Employability, Skills and Training at Serco, added:

It's great to see how our Employer Engagement Team has been able to work outside of our area to support Restart Scheme participants to consider a career in our prison. I hope this programme is just the beginning of what I'm sure will be a transformative journey for many individuals in our local communities.

As of October, four Restart participants have successfully secured roles, with another four progressing through the recruitment process. This pilot has not only opened doors to meaningful careers in custody but also demonstrated the power of collaboration across sectors and regions. With such promising outcomes, Serco is excited to explore opportunities to replicate and scale this model - bringing hope, purpose, and employment to even more individuals across our communities.