

Assessment Report

Investors in People assessment report for NEW START

Undertaken by
Bill Twiss
on behalf of Investors in People North of England

Project Number:15/2356

Date: 18th August 2015

Accreditation Date	18-month interaction due	Accreditation Expiry Date
18 th August 2015	18 th February 2017	14 th August 2018

Commercial in Confidence

Introduction

New Start is currently accredited as a Gold Investor in People. It provides a range of services for children and adults and has three residences for children. The service profile includes: supported tenancies, community housing, New Roots, Key 2 the door, leaving care, the Harmony Project and Prospect Lodge. All bring strengths to the communities New Start serves and contribute to its viability and sustainability.

Since starting in 1997, the business has grown. In many ways it has bucked the trend in the sector through remaining positive, demonstrating some excellent successes with its service users and securing new projects. It is keen to expand further through managed growth and through seeking work that fits with its values and ethos. Since the previous review it has built its team through appointments both in care roles and business management. The business has achieved ISO accreditation for its Adult Care and its children's homes are judged to be good by the Office for Standards in Education.

20 people took part in discussions about New Start's Investors in People practices. This is within the sampling guidance give by the United Kingdom Commission for Employment and Skills for an organisation of this size.

Outcome

New Start Limited meets the Investors in People Standard and by meeting 196 evidence requirements it has again achieved Gold accreditation. On behalf of Investors in People North of England, I would like to congratulate it on this achievement. The discussions were interesting and it was pleasure to talk to members of the team about their work, enthusiasm for making a difference to people's lives and their aspirations for the future. I thank everyone for their contribution and the welcome that they gave to me.

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AN OVERVIEW – WHY IS NEW START a GOLD INVESTOR in PEOPLE?

Summary of Key Strengths:

The way the business operates is firmly rooted in its values and ethos, people relate well to them and believe very strongly in making a difference to service users' lives. The planning culture is inclusive and is communicated well, which enables people to clearly understand their impact on business objectives. Engagement with service user stakeholders is excellent and the business is building great relationships with agencies, commissioners and consortia partners. **(Indicator 1)**

The learning and development culture is a clear strength of New Start. It is innovative and goes well beyond mandatory needs. People enjoy learning and putting it into practice. The business uses different learning methodologies to support people's professional and personal development. There are excellent role models for continuous learning and people have real empathy with service users' needs. The learning and development culture values people's interests, talents and also puts previous or transferrable skills to good use. The business understands its capacity needs well and very effectively aligns skills, learning and recruitment to them. **(Indicators 2 and 8)**

The culture of inclusion runs through everything the business does and is a critical factor in the services it provides. It has an in depth knowledge of the sector it serves. Recruitment is fair and open and results in attracting and often appointing good quality candidates. The business is very flexible in its approach to working patterns and makes sure that people can achieve a sensible balance between home and working life. People are good team players and see this as one of the factors that makes New Start a great employer. Equally, they are willing to take ownership and responsibility, be adaptable and responsive to a huge complexity and diversity of service user need. Ideas and innovation are welcomed. People feel that consultation works well through methods like team meetings, supervision, appraisal and daily discussion. Through these methods, they can discuss not only their performance but also their career aspirations and what assistance they may need to work towards them. **(Indicators 3 and 7)**

The business benefits from a leadership style that is open, forward thinking and fully committed to investing to get the best out of its people. As a result it is in a unique position to offer different services, remain sustainable and invest income back into its development. In the leadership team, there is a good blend of business and professional skill and knowledge. The business is clear about its future succession and leadership needs and will meet these through a combination of recruitment and development. People are inspired by the leadership team who are hands on and practical and will often step in, when needed, to help cover shifts. The approach to performance management is exemplary, non-intrusive and developmental. People have no fears in giving constructive upward feedback to their managers. **(Indicators 4 and 5)**

Performance measurement is critical for the business so that it can manage its finances well, constantly improve the quality of service and meet the needs of its commissioners. It has different methods in place that measure quantity and quality. Its weekly quality monitoring, in child care, for example, gives it an immediate picture of what is working and where improvements are possible.

The business uses information and feedback well to improve and add new services. It is successful with tenders and bids having recently won a new project in Sefton and started a three year New Roots project to help refugees settle into the area. The successes in child care will lead to further homes being added. The longer term vision may well see New Start as an *"all age, all services"* care provider. **(Indicators 9 and 10)**

Development Potential

People give the business great credit for its communication and consultation culture and feel that its openness, vision and plans are positive features. They do feel that it would be useful to have greater cross-service knowledge so that they gain a wider understanding of what each part of the business does, the importance of their contribution and the bigger picture of how New Start is developing for the future.

(Indicator 1.6)

New Start has an excellent track record on retaining its people but knows that there are some “hotspots” for example in the children’s homes where there is more of a risk of people leaving and of it having to use agency staff. There are, of course, plusses and minuses to using agency staff. The business could examine how it may further develop its approach to recruitment through its plans to strengthen Human Resource Management and through involving relevant expertise in the recruitment and selection process. The benefits could be:

- Continuing to use “agency to permanent” as a route to permanent recruitment
- Reducing or eliminating agency costs
- Reducing perceptions that permanent staff are spending some counter-productive time in making sure agency staff work to New Start’s high standards

(Indicator 3.6)

Looking ahead and as part of both succession planning and its future leadership development and capacity building, New Start is acutely aware of the need to retain talents and to recruit where needed. It is successful in doing this through its family approach and external appointments. It is now expanding to the point at which it will need to strengthen its Human Resource leadership. This could:

- Contribute to recruitment and identify role model future job descriptions and person specification based on the characteristics of business’s high performers
- Reduce the need for and costs of external advice
- Provide assistance to managers so that they are skilled in taking ownership of people management matters
- Develop Human Resource Analytics to measure performance

(Indicator 4.4 and 4.9)

The business has grown exponentially, achieves well in is different in its approach and structure. It has a tendency to be over modest about its achievements and uniqueness. Conversely, it recognises the dangers of being over confident. It could:

- Make more use of technology and social media
- Use good practice cameos in its publicity documents
- Develop an Investors in People case study for the website

(Indicator 6.11 and 6.17)

The business could make better use of information technology and it is currently working to bring the skills in to do so. It has had some difficulty with recruiting and retaining people with the right information technology skills and has learnt from this experience. It is also in an area of the city where broadband capacity is not as good as it could be. The main impact that people would like to see from this development is:

- Improved use as a communication tool
- Improved speed and reliability
- Removal of time consuming frustrations through delay and duplication

(Indicator 10.1)

FOCUS for the REVIEW

Future Planning for Building on Success: Indicators 1, 9 and 10

"I come into contact with a lot of the Support Workers and no one ever has a bad word for this organisation."

"We achieve many positive things for our service users – moving on to independent tenancies, entry to work, volunteering."

"As a Key Worker I feel absolutely encouraged to bring fresh ideas and innovation to our service."

The business plans strategically and in considerable detail for what it wants to achieve. It looks at both the long and short term needs. Its plans demonstrate that it has a very good understanding of its stakeholders, the markets it serves and local demographics. The culture of consultation and taking social responsibility into account is exceptionally strong and indeed is the very reason for New Start's existence. The planning process looks to stakeholder needs and to what is possible through commissioning arrangements. The managers refine the business plan at their Away Day and it is then cascaded to staff for their comments and input. At the detail level there is good practice in empowering people to develop behaviour management plans or plans for helping adults to become more independent.

The values serve the business very well and in their work and commitment to improving people's lives people use values like: care, compassion, trusts, respect and quality of service to guide it. In highlighting what the values mean for people and their work people cite:

- Respecting people and their needs, whatever their background may be
- Working cohesively in teams to consistent expectations and standards
- Making a positive difference to service users' lives through: care, education, recovery and in some cases moves into training, voluntary work or paid employment

New Start uses a range of relevant Key Performance Indicators to guide, assess and monitor its performance. It is also subject to regulatory inspections for its social housing provision and its services to young people in its care. It controls its resources well and has good expertise in place to monitor and report on its management accounts. It has strength in having different strands and projects so that it spreads risk and amortises its central administration costs across these projects. This is effective in cost-efficiency and in investing in innovation.

The business's commitment to sustaining continuous improvement remains at the heart of everything it does. Most of its child care provision is independently judged as good and all will achieve this at their next inspections. It achieves full compliance with its social housing inspection criteria. Since its previous Investor in People review the business has achieved ISO 9001 for its adult care and has also achieved the Wellbeing Charter. The business has:

- Opened a new home in Knowsley
- Significantly grown the New Start Childcare Team
- Recruited a new Psychotherapist to make services more specific to needs
- Developed more in-house training
- Recruited a new skill to deal with refugees through its New Roots Project
- Enabled over 40 adults to recover from addiction and dependency and enter employment

New Start demonstrates a very inclusive approach to everything it does. In reporting to stakeholders it regularly reports to its representative board, its staff and more publicly and widely through annual reports.

New Approaches to Learning and Development: Indicators 2, 3 and 8

"When I moved over there was a learning curve for me – I quickly became comfortable in my new role."

Training has come on a long way since I started in 2009."

"We always aim to recruit people with passion and who see us as the place they want to be for a career in child care."

"Our manager is the best I have ever had in my career – encourages personal development and wants you to take responsibility for it."

New Start's learning and development culture has always been one of its key strengths. It keeps people up to date with changes and constantly adds to their skills and knowledge profile. It regards Level 3 qualifications or their equivalent as a minimum for most roles. There is no complacency in the approach to learning and development and a key innovation is in developing in-house training capacity through a recent appointment. This is producing significant benefits in:

- The focus on New Start's needs rather than generic needs
- Cost effectiveness
- Accessibility and attendance
- Being able to adapt quickly to changing needs and differing learning styles

Part of this innovative approach is to use staff meetings as additional sources of learning and development on topical matters or changes. The business is well aware of differing learning styles; it consults and evaluates to identify what works well and where changes can be made to make development even more effective and accessible. It is developing its learning culture so that it goes well beyond minimum standards, for example in prevention and post-vention work with children who have been through trauma in their lives. It is now introducing more of a coaching approach to people's personal learning plans.

People throughout the business confirm that they have ample opportunities to put their learning into practice. They feel well-equipped to use their knowledge well in key areas like: providing benefit advice, safeguarding, managing behaviours and in safe working practices. The business values coaching much of which is informal and offers people help and advice to learn from their colleagues, rectify shortcomings or to understand policy and procedures if they are new to New Start. The business supports shadowing and has, for example, done so for someone who is interested in becoming a Support Worker. Learning keeps up to pace with topical developments, for example, those on mental, health, legal highs and the implications of the recent Community Care Act.

New Start continues to use its learning and development resources well. It brings together a budget, time, people, external and internal expertise to meet its development needs. It has, for example, used external expertise to look at the future resourcing of aspects of its work through a Commissioner's perspective. It is open to supporting higher level qualifications and is helping a member of the team complete a Masters degree.

Looking outside itself to share and exchange knowledge, the business holds and funds a North West Conference for professionals in the sector. This is successful in attracting nationally recognised expertise on topical issues like Emotional Wellbeing, Child Sexual Exploitation or Safeguarding. New Start uses expertise of others in its performance management. It brought in an Assistant Director of Social Services from a large City Council to review and advise on its provision and performance. As it moves into consortium arrangements it sees the importance of sharing knowledge and information and has recently benefitted from this by gaining another service in a neighbouring local authority.

The business's values are very strong on equality and diversity and reflect the community that it serves. It extends this to its investment in staff development and people confirm that there are no barriers to accessing it. Its expertise in education and psychotherapy enable it to understand different learning needs and styles.

People see New Start as a great employer and when asked, no one gave it a score of less than 9 out of 10. As well as the worthwhile and challenging nature of the work, people value the approach to work-life balance. They confirm that the business is sensitive to personal needs, is family friendly and makes adjustments to working patterns where possible. It understands the benefits this returns in staffing flexibility, team cohesion and in staff retention. It has, for example, adjusted the working pattern so that a member of staff could gain the qualifications needed for a promoted role in property maintenance.

People confirm an open and fair approach to recruitment that usually involves a panel approach to short listing and interviewing. Once interviews have been arranged and conducted, people confirm decisions are made quickly and that their induction to New Start is effective.

People's Views and Commitment to Successes:-Indicators 4 and 5 and Indicators 6 and 7

"In our managers there are different characters and styles – all of them trust and respect you, give regular supervisions and appraisals and talk to us every day."

"I can see the next step – Assistant Residential Care Manager and then on to Manager."

"I am lucky enough to do a job I love and actually get paid for it!"

People comment that the business is very well-managed and led. The leadership culture makes sure that managers work in line with New Start's core values and recruitment brings relevant talents to the business. In both Adult Services and in Child Care the business has brought in very talented people with a great wealth of knowledge and experience. The Board of Trustees supports the work of the business through a non executive, constructive and critical friend approach. The founder still serves on the Board and has been recognised as a Member of the British Empire for his work.

The inspiration to succeed and grow comes from the very top and people see the *"family business"* culture and style of leadership as *"spot on.....dynamic and committed.....open and listening.....in it for the long-term."* People feel that managers are very practical and hands on and are therefore good role models for the business's expectations, values and its drive for improvement and sustainability.

The feedback culture works well and blends the formal like supervision and appraisal with the less formal such as team meetings, daily discussions and open access to leaders. Additionally, people value feedback from their service users, inspections and contract reviews. The business welcomes views and ideas from staff and people confirm they: *"can say it as it is.....have no fears in approaching managers.....ask for help and advice at anytime."*

New Start's performance management culture goes well beyond standard appraisal or supervision. In the homes, for example it has a weekly Quality Performance Management system which involves reporting to senior leaders on what is working and on any improvements that are needed. The business benchmarks well and sees this as increasingly important as it moves more into a consortium approach to tendering for its contracts. Benchmarking enables it to:

- Be clear about its role and the impact and benefits of consortium working
- See its comparative position with others through OFSTED inspections
- Establish quality frameworks through using the ISO model

Recognition and reward for success differs for people. Whilst financial reward is important, for everyone seen during the review, the successes of the service users are an important part of the reward and recognition strategy. The business benchmarks its reward and recognition strategies through comparisons and its knowledge of the care, social housing and education sectors. Throughout the business, there are very high levels of motivation; people are driven by the values and their roles in making a difference to service users' lives.

Key2 the Door, a project working in Southport, remains a very successful service that works with people to ensure that they make the most of their independence and sustain it through managing their tenancies effectively. The children's residential care offers security, safety and very focused support to help young people turn their lives through understanding the root causes of their behaviours and helping them to take the steps needed to improve.

The business has to work to policy, procedure and guidance and it has a good business support function that looks after these aspects. Consequently, people have a good understanding of their decision making roles and where or how they can seek support if faced with the unfamiliar. There are good examples of people making decisions and putting their ideas into practice for matters like:

- Tailored activities for service users
- Behavioural therapies
- Engaging people in projects like New Roots
- Prioritising maintenance work or managing case loads

The business values people's personal development and is able to use interests and talents effectively. It benefits from transferrable skills and people's interests outside of work. Staff, for example, run a Wednesday football session for service users and the new approach to learning and development is a great example of how previous professional knowledge is used well.

Appendix

Investors in People Feedback Matrix: Green = met, Yellow = met with development points, Red = not met.

Evidence Requirement	Investors in People Indicators										
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
1	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Yellow
2	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green
3	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green
4	Green	Green	Green	Yellow	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green
5	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green
6	Yellow	Green	Yellow	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green
7	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green
8	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green
9	Green	Green	Green	Yellow	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green
10	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green
11	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Yellow	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green
12	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green
13	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green
14	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green
15	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green
16	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green
17	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Yellow	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green
18	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green
19	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green
20	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green
21	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green
22	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green
23	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green
24	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green
25	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green
26	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green
27	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green
28	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green
29	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green

6th GENERATION INVESTORS in PEOPLE FRAMEWORK

The consultative and in depth review of the Investors in People Framework is nearing completion and will be launched nationally in late summer, 2015. It will move from ten key evidence themes to nine and will be based on three key principles of: leading, improving and supporting. It will allow New Start to be assessed against developed, established, advanced and high performing practices. Your Investors in People Practitioner will be in touch before your next review to discuss this in more detail. Broadly the new framework will focus on:



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