

North west city residents' jobs hope - a ground-breaking recruitment and training service that brings employers and local job-ready candidates together

North West City Jobs is a Birmingham-based initiative that is delivering a unique new service to local businesses, companies moving into the area and, most importantly, to local residents who may have missed out on employment opportunities in the past. They are all discovering diamonds right there under their feet. Johanna Smith investigates.



Birmingham city centre looks almost like a Renaissance city. And the North West of the city is undergoing a renaissance of its own. Work is coming back to what have been derelict and deprived areas, where potential employers are finding a real welcome from North West City Jobs.



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Susan Coke, Training Co-ordinator

Birmingham is a vibrant city and a thriving economy, but that creates problems of its own. Employers are investing a lot of money, time and resources trying to find the very best recruits to fill expanding vacancies while lots of really motivated local people with strong latent talent are being overlooked.

That's where North West City Jobs comes in. It's not an employment agency, more a group of dedicated people with a mission to bring the right candidates into the selection process. And they have some revolutionary techniques that make it all happen - techniques that have been proven to deliver real added value for employers and sustainable

job opportunities to the community. It works.

The service is offered at no charge to employers, provides a filtering process, unique customised pre-interview training and options for ongoing training. It is difficult to imagine a better scenario and early experiences with organisations as diverse as a major retail chain, a local health trust, the UK's largest casino, a successful restaurant, a chain of fish and chip shops and the UK's fastest growing healthy fast food chain have been fantastic.

"There are a number of really exciting initiatives bringing together employers and potential recruits

from areas of high unemployment within the city," explains Waheed Nazir, Assistant Director - Regeneration and Development Planning, Birmingham City Council. "The name describes the geography and our biggest single task will be to fuel a new employment hub located at the old IMI Witton Headquarters, a 90 acre prime development site that could eventually provide 2,000 new jobs. That's one end of the scale. We are also here to help existing small and medium sized businesses and new entrepreneurs, and that's where we have been proving our approach. Early projects have been very warmly welcomed by local businesses and have trained up and employed local people who may not have been in employment for years. The smiles say it all."

Susan Coke, Training Co-ordinator, adds her perspective "I work right at the front line, in the community. That means I can understand what a major leap it



Enthusiastic participants at a recent customised training session

can be into employment after, perhaps, years of not being in employment. That's what excites me most about the job. Once we are in partnership with an employer, we go to extraordinary lengths to make potential opportunities known in the area. But it's not just about numbers. What employers want is a fully screened process, so we do all the sifting to ensure we have a group of suitable candidates. Then, before the employer ever sees them, we put them through a one to three week customised training programme. It is developed specifically for the potential jobs - so far, ranging anything from the leisure industry to the health service. That in itself acts as a further filter, so at the end of the day the employer knows that they have a pool of really motivated, job-ready people to interview. What really fires me up, though, is the fact that the jobs are real opportunities, not stop gaps, and our early recruits are staying the course. We are making a real difference."

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Kyle Stott, Community Involvement & Training Co-ordinator



Kyle Stott, Community Involvement & Training Co-ordinator, feels just as strongly. "It's not just the potential impact on businesses - the cost savings, the reduced hassle and so on - the crux is really about helping unemployed people from one of the highest areas of unemployment in the country and coming up with the first practical solution where everyone wins. We deliver in community settings where local people feel comfortable.

The Hub will be a major opportunity, but existing small and medium businesses can also have a significant impact, helping people

into employment, helping the micro economy and local economy."

Meanwhile, Waheed stresses the benefits for business: "Our mission is to provide businesses with highly motivated, well-prepared 'gold standard' candidates, effective from day one of recruitment. Bottom line, that equates to better retention rates and improved productivity. For local residents it means they are well informed and better matched to good jobs."

