

Jobs First – One Year On Report

Jobs First Programme – background and development

Social Bite is on a mission to end homelessness. Through an extensive range of programmes and knowing the barriers a person faces in a situation of homelessness, Social Bite focuses on creating trusting relationships and real opportunities, so people can make a positive change in their own lives.

The Jobs First programme centres on the idea of trust and provides real jobs and extensive wrap-around support to people who have experienced homelessness. The intended impact of the Jobs First programme is:

- At an individual level – people experiencing homelessness have access to person-centred support throughout their employment journey
- At a system level – employers across the employment market are equipped with knowledge and resources to offer supported employment to people experiencing homelessness and believe in the value of providing these job opportunities.

The role of the support worker is to create a supportive relationship with a Jobs First employee to allow that person to begin to understand the challenges and pressures they are facing out with the work context that may not be visible, even to them. By creating opportunities to reflect and having someone on your side that is not there to judge, Social Bite hopes to help people identify these external stressors and support people to work through them. The support is delivered in a trauma informed way. It is also led by the individual. Experience has shown us that leading a person in a certain direction is not conducive to a person's recovery. Importantly we also provide support that is strength or asset based rather than simply focusing on needs.

It can often seem to be the best way forward to begin looking at all the things that are going wrong for a person and try to fix them one by one. Our approach is equally to focus on the resources and skills that a person has and try to nourish these and get a person to the point where they can recognise these in themselves.

Finally, support for Jobs First employees continues throughout an employment contract. All our lives have ups and downs and for a person that has had difficult and traumatic experiences these can be greater, and a person may not always have the support and tools to deal with stressful situations that are thrown their way. Support is there throughout to help a person to become more resilient and create opportunities for self-reflection throughout their employment journey.

Jobs First – outcomes

Measure of Success	Outcome 1	Outcome 2
Target	Jobs First Employers: 8 over 3 years	Jobs First Employees: 20 a year
Actual Y1	7 <i>7 further employers are interested in participating in the programme</i>	28 <i>No. of employees includes 13 people who have left their position which will be explained in the report</i>

Jobs First Employees

Employment can, on the face of it, appear like an opportunity available to everyone. However, any opportunity is wrapped up in several existing factors that may not initially be apparent. Many of people we work with have had to overcome difficult circumstances to simply survive. What is often sacrificed along the way are things such as completing education, gaining qualifications or having identifiable work experience. These things are necessary in a competitive working environment to get your foot in the door for many entry-level jobs.

We know that unemployment is disproportionately higher for people who have experienced homelessness or people who are currently homeless, with just 6 in every 100 in a job compared to 70 in every 100 for the general population.

Jobs First programme focuses on providing real job opportunities to those who have experienced homelessness. The crucial part of the programme is trauma informed support that is offered to every employee as part of their employment.

Since the Jobs First programme has begun, Social Bite has received **82 referrals** for **33 positions**.

There have been **28 people employed** since October 2022, including 13 individuals that left the programme due to mental health issues.

The individuals who left the programme were given practical and emotional support with a focus on helping them manage mental health issues. Unfortunately, the individuals resigned due to a decline in mental health linked to their life circumstances. Like all those

who leave Social Bite programmes, we continue to support those individuals to ensure they don't fall into worse circumstances.

Equally, the individuals left the Jobs First programme with the benefit of having recent work experience and we will be able to provide a reference as to the work they successfully completed during their time on the programme. In this way, the benefits of the employment are not lost. Instead, their time with Social Bite forms part of the process of recovery, which in most cases is a long-term journey of rehabilitation.

The above employees are included in the total number of people participating in the programme, as they received significant support and are therefore part of the project.

We have also gathered feedback from those who decided to leave the programme and it is shown below:



Why is the support crucial?

Good employment, or 'Decent Work' to use the International Labour Organisation (ILO) terminology, is defined as *"work that is productive and delivers a fair income, security in the workplace and social protection for families, better prospects for personal development and social integration, freedom for people to express their concerns, organize and participate in the decisions that affect their lives and equality of opportunity and treatment for all women and men"*.

We know that work that is meaningful is a fundamental need, however, we need to acknowledge that the relationship between work and homelessness is complex.

There can be simple, pragmatic issues that can seem like insurmountable barriers to someone that is experiencing homelessness. For example, without an address, a person cannot get a bank account, without a bank account a person cannot get a job, but a job can be a crucial step to a person recovering from homelessness. This impossible cycle can become de-motivating and exhausting for anyone going through it. The impact of trauma that may have led the person to become homeless as well as the consequences of being homeless, already discussed, can make the working environment a difficult place to navigate. We have found that people often find it hard to trust other staff and their manager and to have confidence in their own personal strengths and qualities.

To summarise, there are individual barriers that prevent a person from being able to access the opportunity of employment and the employment market is often not set up in a way that can support a person with an experience of homelessness to sustain employment.

A case study from the perspective of one of the Jobs First Training and Support Workers

Lenny was referred to the programme through a charity partner as they had lost their job due to COVID-19. They had been staying in a hotel during this period due to their current situation but had managed to remain positive and upbeat.*

I first met with Lenny at the charity partners premises to make them feel comfortable and to build a rapport. Lenny was really motivated to get back into work and improve their life. They had some experience for the role they were applying for which was great and they were keen to be involved in the programme as they felt the support would be beneficial for them.

Lenny was supported to the interview with the employer. Although they were late to the interview due to getting lost LENNY was very prepared, was able to talk about their previous experience and asked relevant questions regarding the company. The employer was very impressed and offered Lenny the job.

Lenny was supported to get all the documents needed to prove their right to work in the UK, which was stressful for them, so they were pleased to have support from Social Bite and their referral partner. Through the great partnership we have with referral partners Lenny was assisted with a travel pass to get them to work until their first pay day. They would not have been able to attend work without this assistance. Lenny was also given some clothing, safety shoes and all essentials to assist them with starting work.

Prior to Lenny starting work I provided training to the team in which they would be working regarding issues affecting those with a background of homelessness and regarding our trauma informed approach. I feel this training was essential to the programme as it gave the employer a better understanding of the issues that Lenny may have faced, and they were equipped with the knowledge to assist Lenny and further candidates in their role.

When Lenny started work, they found the environment and the new routine overwhelming. Through the relationships built with their employer and Social Bite Lenny was assisted to adjust to these using the weekly feedback loop meetings and support meetings. Through having open communication with all parties and a safe space to address any issues Lenny was facing, it allowed Lenny to find positive solutions. Lenny has improved tremendously to the point where they feel confident at work and working on their own initiative. Due to Lenny's success their feedback loop meetings were moved to monthly, with regular support meetings. Lenny has now been employed for around 6 months and is nearing their probation period.

Lenny has not only excelled inside work but also in their personal life. Lenny has moved into their own property, built on their self-confidence and skills and is beginning to regain control of their life. It has been great to see Lenny smiling when we meet and see them building up trust in themselves and others around them. Lenny is now planning for the future and feeling positive about their next steps.

**Lenny is not this person's name and was made up for the purpose of this case study*

Jobs First Employers

We believe in trusting relationships being crucial not only when it comes to offering support to people but also when it comes to working with our partners. We work on building long term relationships with employers, as this is necessary to enable long-term cultural change within these organisations. The long term relationship with an employer will also assist in creating a working environment, where a person affected by homelessness is able to thrive. Another critical factor for an employer partner is that its leadership team is passionate about the programme and committed to the wider objective of supporting individuals experiencing homelessness to secure employment. Employer partners must be able to provide suitable job roles that are paid.

Since the Jobs First programme has begun, Social Bite has been approached by **23 employers** interested in participating in the programme.

Social Bite is currently working with **7 employers** on the Jobs First delivery. These include:

- Baxter Storey
- Nairns
- Mitchells and Butlers
- Andron
- Marston Holdings
- Scotia UK
- Holroyd Howe



Social Bite is currently discussing the programme with **7 additional** employers and hoping to sign partnership agreements with all of them.

11 employers that expressed initial interest in the Jobs First programme withdrew for various reasons, including inability to commit to the programme due to financial and staffing constraints or the job offer being inappropriate for the group of clients Social Bite is working with.

Employer partners are the organisations that Social Bite will work with to deliver the Jobs First programme. As the programme is based on the idea of trust, it was important to clearly define roles and responsibilities for each partner. Social Bite is responsible for managing the relationship with all employer partners, providing them with the necessary support to deliver the core elements of the Jobs First Programme. Employer partners are responsible for working closely with Social Bite to tailor, and implement, the Jobs First programme in their specific location and context.

As the trusting relationship underpins the Jobs First Programme, we want to learn and evaluate the programme. In order to be able to achieve that, every 6 months we have feedback sessions with each employer. The picture below shows some of the areas of improvement identified by employers.



Main challenges/achievements

Providing employers with a training package prior to Jobs First employees starting with them has given employers the tools needed around homelessness in the workplace, trauma informed practice, the feedback loop, support worker role, boundaries, and challenging behaviour.

This has been done in a variety of ways to suit the employers needs such as face to face, online via teams or zoom and video content. Feedback from employers indicates they fully understand their role in the programme and have built on their knowledge around homelessness and have tools to assist people in the workplace.

Employer feedback has been positive around assistance with the recruitment process and having a more informal approach, with Social Bite supporting with the process. Also, employers have spoken about the support given when having to have difficult conversations with employees such as absence levels and mental health and supports put in place to manage this.

From having built strong relationships with employers this has allowed those who may have ordinarily failed probation to pass and thrive in their role due to the employer and Social Bite having regular contact and realistic expectations. These relationships have also been valuable when having to end placements for jobs first employees as both parties fully understand one another's point of view. We will continue to ask employers for feedback around the programme every six months to gain valuable learnings and insights.

Feedback provided by employees and employers enabled us to make some changes within the programme and those include:

- Shorter training sessions for staff teams
- Training being provided in different ways: video content over teams and face to face sessions
- Providing employees with support around inductions, training and paper work prior to starting their role or on their first day with Social Bite
- Frequency of feedback loops when employees are excelling during probation and flexibility when needed. Also arranging times to meet the needs of the employer and employee
- A more robust system on making sure candidates have all documents needed prior to interviews.

Charity Partnerships

We have championed partnership working on various levels from the beginning of the Jobs First programme. Over the years of running various programmes, we have built greater understanding of how important it is for a person to be able to access real opportunities at the right moment. Therefore, we have focused on working with our partner organisations on referral pathways for the Jobs First programme.

Social Bite, since the Job First Programme started in October, has reached out to **63 charity organisations**. The main focus of initial involvement was to provide awareness of the Jobs First programme and to encourage organisations to place referrals.

Social Bite established clear criteria for the candidates and referral process for the charity organisations. We created a questionnaire for charities to ensure they understood what the



Jobs First programme was, the criteria for this and their role in the referral process. We will continue to use this questionnaire with new charities to help us develop communication around the programme.

When a job opportunity arises the Senior support worker for Jobs First will get in touch with your organisation to send a job description to see if you have any suitable candidates. At this stage the candidate would be required to send a CV to Social Bite.

Should the candidate be unsuccessful at the CV or Interview stage, but all parties feel they would benefit from further involvement with Social Bite would look at getting them involved in workshops around self-confidence and employment to equip them with the skills needed to progress. An additional training programme with Social Bite will also be discussed with individuals at this point. This will help people to move forward and give them a springboard to becoming involved in the Jobs First programme.

Scale Accelerator

Social Bite participated in Spring Impact's Scale Accelerator programme to scale the impact of the Jobs First programme. Spring Impact supported Social Bite to:

- Develop a replication model linked to Social Bite's strategic objectives
- Assess the financial viability of the replication model
- Improve the team's understanding what it takes to scale a project.

This process was hugely important to get right given the strategic importance of Jobs First to Social Bite. For Jobs First to be successful, we need to work with a vast number of employers from various sectors. Getting additional consultancy allowed the team to test various approaches with different employers. It allowed Social Bite, as an organisation, to think deeper about the context of the programme and how the programme is shaped going forward (including creation of systems, documents and processes needed to take the model forward).

The consultancy resulted in Social Bite Design Report that provides comprehensive information about a scale strategy and replication model for how Jobs First will work with employers to achieve these objectives.

Summary

Social Bite has successfully run the Jobs First programme in partnership with several leading sector employers. Over the last year, this has created job opportunities for people experiencing homeless to access supported employment.

Social Bite will continue to source employers from more sectors to provide as many diverse job opportunities as possible. We will also continue to seek regular feedback on the partnerships development and from people we support to further develop and improve the programme.



We are currently working on a proposition to evaluate the programme and learn how the delivery can be improved. Our hopes for the programme are as follows:

- To build on our existing employers partners
- To have variety of employment opportunities
- To build on our existing referral partners
- For the programme to become common practice within the employment sector
- To continue to support those who have experienced homelessness.