

Embedding Social Value in your supply chain



PM Training has doubled the size of its business over a four year period by using social value as a key factor in companies' recruitment decisions.

The Staffordshire training provider has traditionally worked with private businesses, helping young people often with few formal qualifications, to get trained and into a job. It has also long supplied direct services such as gardening and estate caretaking under contract to councils and housing associations. However, over the past two years it has greatly increased the number of companies who take apprentices through partnerships with Staffordshire's local authorities.

The councils invite their suppliers to a seminar and make it clear they expect business owners to create apprenticeships for young people. The "sell" is not just about creation of jobs, but also about working with a company that connects disadvantaged young people with life-changing opportunities. PM Training's parent company the Aspire Group has persuaded its own suppliers to adopt this approach also, while private companies

like Seddon have also enthusiastically told their suppliers also to take on apprentices. The result is hundreds of new apprenticeships created and a far wider reach than PM Training could have managed on its own.

The company has grown from a staff of 60 and turnover of £2.4m in 2008 to 190 people and £5.8m in 2012. It also has four training centres now, one in each council area of North Staffordshire.

Will Nixon, deputy chief executive of the Aspire Group, says: *"We say to councils, businesses and others: 'We are your corporate social responsibility agency. By working with a social enterprise you are getting what you want from an apprentice, supporting your clients' social objectives and meeting your social goals.'"*

PM Training provides 1,500 training and job places a year and sees 77 per cent of trainees progress into a job. Surpluses made by the social enterprise are gift aided to Aspire's charity the Realise Foundation and used to create further apprenticeships – continuing a virtuous circle of social value.

