



FastTrack Recruitment Programme: A Case Study



Introduction:

This case study examines the FastTrack Recruitment programme undertaken by Escalla for Brent Council to recruit and train a new team of Customer Service and Benefit Assessment Officers. The Case Study has been written by Brent Council and provides a first hand account of their experiences of trialling a different approach to recruitment and training.

Background:

The Benefits Service within Brent Council had been experiencing higher levels of turnover than was expected during 2014-2015. We had been operating with around 15 staffing vacancies representing approximately 15% of our overall staffing complement. This was due to a few factors. The Council had made a decision to reduce its reliance on agency staff and instead to recruit to fixed-term contracts, some appointments to posts had not worked out and generally our recruitment and training processes were

taking too long. In addition to this we constantly had to review and forecast future years' savings targets to ensure we remained in budget. Those of you working in local authorities will know that from start to finish, recruitment tends to take anything from 3-6 months before staff are effective.

All in all, this was just working against us and it was a continuous battle to stay ahead of recruitment without the service starting to be impacted upon. This is obviously a manager's worse nightmare!

So with this all in mind we needed to change tack. We needed a way of staying ahead of the game recruiting high calibre staff and avoiding managers being so knee deep in recruitment at the detriment of their day-to-day management duties.

Escalla happened to approach us as they had seen our job vacancies advertised. They explained what they did and what they could do for us. This gave us an alternative way of operating and opened our minds to trialling something different. Once we'd considered what we wanted discussions took place with the Council's Procurement team. A bid pack was advertised and companies were invited to bid for the service.

Whilst other companies showed an interest in different aspects of our specification the only company who could deliver both the recruitment and training aspects we required was Escalla. Following a full procurement and evaluation process Escalla were notified they had been successful; and from here onwards, it all changed.

"During 2014/15, we had been operating with around 15 staffing vacancies representing approximately 15% of our overall staffing complement"

"Overall the process Escalla have put in place, has enabled Brent to employ 15 great customer services officers. Escalla found a number of candidates with the right attitude and motivation to do a sterling job!"

Collette Hamilton, Customer Service Centre Manager



What was different about Escalla's model?

- Escalla recruit candidates based upon their potential and transferable skills rather than their experience, helping to recruit committed staff from the local community who may not have been given an opportunity under traditional recruitment methods.
- This includes advertising for candidates using a short and concise job advert. Candidates were required to be able to demonstrate their ability to meet four key areas.
- Thereafter followed telephone interviews whereby shortlisted candidates were then invited to a recruitment day.
- This included them seeing the potential workplace they could end up working in, completing an assessment and then those who passed the assessment having a short face to face interview.
- Candidates who passed both the assessment and interview were then invited to the training
- They look at the aptitude of candidate and provide them with training to do the job. This may sound fairly obvious or even common sense to some but how many local authorities do this? Aren't we all subject to lengthy job descriptions and person specifications rarely really testing a candidate's attitude to the extent needed?
- It was rigorous process consisting of a telephone interview, assessment day, referencing, DBS checks, psychometric testing, intensive training and a final exam and interview, ensuring only the best candidates were selected.
- During training candidates were monitored by the trainers and regularly assessed.
- Detailed reports and assessment test results were provided to managers at Brent to use as part of the final selection process.
- The final selection process included a final stage interview.
- It enabled us to recruit and train a team of new staff whilst maintaining business as usual.
- It enabled us to recruit and train a high number of staff quickly in about 6 weeks. ”



Candidate testing as part of the assessment day

What we like about Escalla:

- The Escalla team are really passionate about how their model works and it does!
- The Escalla team are highly organised, flexible and do what they say!
- They deliver what they promise and can be relied on 100%



What we like about Escalla:

Our requirements changed during the recruitment programme meaning we had to recruit additional officers across two different job roles (Benefit Assessment Officers and Customer Service Officers). Escalla were able to build these changes into the programme as it was running and remained flexible throughout, leading to a successful outcome.

Remember though that you still need to play your part in the process. Yes, you can ultimately be involved as much or as little as you want in the process but you need someone to oversee the programme and manage it from an internal perspective with Escalla.

The Costs:

We found that the FastTrack programme was competitively priced and provided good value for money especially when you consider the cost against your own internal recruitment costs and the time saving in management time. As with anything you can discuss different options and costing structures.

The Outcomes:

The new staff have brought with them a new freshness to the service. They are all so enthusiastic, committed and positive in their approach. So when Escalla advocate they recruit

for attitude and train for skill, they really do. The new staff are performing past all expectations in a short space of time. Within four weeks they were performing to the same levels of experienced staff members. The officers haven't "just" filled our vacancies but have helped to make a massive step change in the performance of the teams they work in and all of this is of benefit to residents and Brent overall.

Would we do it again?

Absolutely! Based on our experience to date we will be looking to continue with the FastTrack recruitment and training model to help with future requirements. There have been so many benefits from this new approach.

Author: Kerry Standing: Service Manager, Brent Council

"Escalla's approach was both refreshing and highly professional. They have provided us with high calibre candidates with excellent skills and who have proved dedicated and very quick to learn. Perhaps most importantly, Escalla's recruitment process has enabled us to attract and select from a large group of applicants, in many cases people whom we might not necessarily have attracted or identified through traditional methods." **David Oates, Head of Service**

"Escalla have done an excellent job with choosing and whittling down the appointed candidates. They have selected well rounded officers whose main focus is most certainly based around good customer service. The team are enthusiastic and very willing to learn. Whilst none of the candidates have had housing benefit experience, they have grasped the basic outline of what HB is in a very short space of time. I put this down to Escalla using a very effective process of filtering out what a good customer service officer should want to achieve within their role. This has made it even easier for Brent to deliver high quality services to its residents." **Geraldine Rodney, Acting Team Leader**

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What our candidates thought:

"I found the Escalla training process very comprehensive and enjoyable. The 10 day course was intensive, however the training itself was broken down so that each individual had a clear understanding of the key principles and the HB calculations. The trainers were very supportive and I believe that they taught the course very well."

Sarah Allie, Customer Service Officer

"The training programme in terms of curriculum was exhaustive and covered a wide range of benefits in general, (DWP and HMRC ones as well), and then going into very specific depths of HB, more than we expected from a training course. Greg, our trainer, pushed our limits while also being very nurturing and encouraging. We even asked for homework and he was available via text, to guide us through this even in the evenings and weekends. Overall I was very satisfied with the teaching material and support."

Gabriel Mikehazi, Customer Service Officer

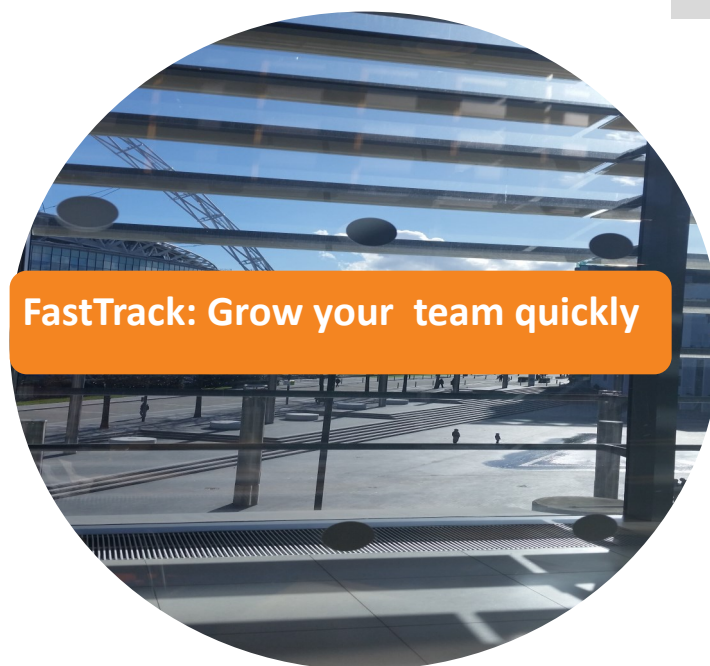
"My experience with Escalla from the very beginning was intense but very interesting. I had doubts from the beginning that so much

could be taught in so little time but it was explained really clearly and by the last day I felt like I had been in benefits for a long time. This was made even better by the fact that our trainer was excellent and supportive. I would recommend any new starter in benefits to do this course."

Mikael Ellis, Customer Service Officer

"Using Escalla has proven that as an organisation, we do not necessarily have to plan 6-8 weeks of training in order for the job / work to be completed to a high standard. The candidates have approached the role with the right attitude and this is demonstrated by the standard of their work. The successful candidates have exceeded our expectations and shown nothing but a can do attitude."

Sradha Patel, Acting Team Leader



Want to find out more?



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Escalla's Accreditations:

