

## Mears Group adds to their team using DWP's SWAP programme

3 years ago



Mears Group, the UK's leading housing solutions provider, has recently engaged with the Department of Work and Pensions' (DWP) SWAP programme to connect two jobseekers with permanent employment in their Milton Keynes call handling facility.

The DWP's SWAP programme – Sector-based Work Academy Programme – connects people trying to enter the job market with opportunities in local businesses. SWAP's are an opportunity for jobseekers (claiming Universal Credit, Jobseeker's Allowance or Employment and Support Allowance) to improve job prospects, learn new skills and get experience of working in particular industries such as care, construction, or warehouse work.

In Milton Keynes, The MK Council Neighbourhood Employment Project Manager approached Mears' customer success manager, Claire Foden, to collaborate on a SWAP initiative. Recognising that attracting new talent to the housing solutions sector is an ongoing challenge, Claire was keen to drive the initiative forward, support Mears' commitment to social responsibility and secure employment for vacant roles within Mears Group.

At the end of the process, that included a two-week DWP SWAP training programme followed by interviews, Mears offered roles to two individuals who have been employed as call handlers for the past four months.

The benefits to Mears and the employees are numerous; both individuals have become trusted and valuable members of the call handling team, while gaining valuable skills and experience that will set them up for the future.

One of them commented on how the opportunity has positively impacted him: “Since joining Mears I have been able to settle into a routine which is great for my condition. I have been identified as someone who can progress at Mears and am looking forward to this. Customer service is really important to me – it’s been amazing so far.”, and another commented: “It is nice to be back in work after two years out of work. I am lucky to have a supportive manager and great colleagues at Mears.”

Minister for Employment, Mims Davies MP said: “It’s great to hear about people getting into work and progressing at Mears, with the support of our Sector-Based-Work-Academy programme (SWAP). What’s great about SWAPs is that this training is connected to live vacancies, offering people the best chance at landing that all important job.

“Our Plan for Jobs, including the SWAPs scheme, is supporting people across the country on their way to work into exciting new sectors, from housing to hospitality, by giving them the skills, experience and opportunities they need.”

Managing Director of Mears and MK resident, Peter Baldwin said: “I am very proud of our new colleagues – they have already become much valued members of our team here in Milton Keynes and I look forward to seeing them develop. Initiatives like this should be used by all companies – as shown in this case we can make a real difference to people’s lives within a supportive environment.”

Claire Foden of Mears added: “We are delighted that the SWAP programme has worked so well for Mears and has resulted in them becoming valued members of our team. We will continue to engage with SWAP and look forward to bringing more people into the team across the UK.”

For more information on the DWP SWAP programme, please visit  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sector-based-work-academies-employer-guide>

*Image credit: Mears Group*