

A helping hand

Louise Parfitt speaks to Paolo Orezzi, NSL service director, about '100 people, 100 jobs in 100 days' – an initiative run by Radical Recruit and supported by Marston Holdings – that is offering people who are homeless the chance to get back into work



'We've employed nine people through the scheme so far: eight are now civil enforcement officers and one is a CCTV officer. All are doing a great job. One has been an absolute breath of fresh air – he is one of the most disciplined people I have ever met. All he needed was someone to come along and give him the opportunity.'

NSL service director Paolo Orezzi is passionate about this partnership between Marston Holdings (NSL's parent company), recruitment agency Radical Recruit, and the

homeless charity St Mungo's, to support homeless people back into work.

Last year, Orezzi and two of his colleagues – account director Jeremy Landey and head of recruitment Kellie Newell – got in touch with St Mungo's to see if they could offer homeless people work opportunities. Fast forward to August this year, and St Mungo's had teamed up with Radical Recruit to pilot an innovative recruitment project to get '100 people, 100 jobs, in 100 days' – funded by the Greater London Authority (GLA), – and was ready to take Marston up on its offer. 'This was the kick-off to a truly great partnership that has accelerated at a rate of knots since,' says Orezzi.

Catalyst for change

One of the catalysts has been Covid-19. Many homeless people were temporarily housed in hotels at the start of the

first lockdown, so they had a fixed address and could be more easily employed. 'I guess this is one of the few benefits to come out of the crisis,' says Orezzi.

St Mungo's identifies people capable of sustaining paid employment and Radical Recruit prepares them for interviews so they can get back into the workplace and start, or restart, their careers. Many of the men and women supported on the programme have attended courses in English offered by St Mungo's, and all have received support to put together a CV, make applications for jobs and get ready for interviews.

Once there is a pool of people that Radical Recruit has endorsed, Orezzi runs a session to introduce them to Marston and talk about career opportunities. If candidates decide they want to apply for a role, they take a test; if they pass, they are offered an interview.

“When I got the job, it felt really good. It felt like now I can start getting back on the right path. I've worked hard to learn about the company and the role to make sure that I will do well. It was empowering. My future looks bright now”

Andrei is one of the people who has been supported by the project

'I have run two recruitment days to date, which have been attended by 36 people. Of these, 24 went through the testing phase and, so far, nine have been offered employment,' explains Orezzi.

Those who do not pass the test are given feedback on the areas they need to focus on. 'We all know how frustrating it is to apply for a job and be rejected without ever knowing why, or what we need to do to improve our chances, so I treat people as I like to be treated,' says Orezzi.

'I sit down with them on a one-to-one basis and explain why they didn't progress to interview, and what they need to work on. And it works! One candidate who failed the test worked on the areas he needed to, resat the test, and passed with flying colours.'

Future funding

The project in London has been successful, and there are now a number of other companies on board. Plans are being made to launch a similar scheme in Manchester, with Radical Recruit and Marston taking the lead.

The big challenge facing the London project now is what happens when its funding ends on 16 December. Founder of Radical Recruit Emma Freivogel has launched a crowdfunding campaign, and there is work being done to gain grants from some local authorities.

'Homelessness is on the rise on account of Covid-19, with more than 100,000 people made homeless since the first lockdown started and tens of thousands at imminent risk of becoming homeless in the coming months,' Freivogel says.

'For many people, employment is a viable solution to their homelessness, so we are looking to partner with businesses that have recruitment needs, and diversity and inclusion or corporate social responsibility commitments to meet.'

For Orezzi, the advantages of the project extend far beyond businesses' social responsibility; he believes what employers gain from it cannot be overestimated.

'There is an untapped pool of talent that can benefit a lot of businesses, so I'd encourage more to get involved,' he says.

'The problem of homelessness is huge, so we are not going to be able to help every person on the street. But we can help some of them, and we can make a difference.' 

Get involved

To find out more or how you can get involved, please contact Emma Freivogel at Radical Recruit on emma@radicalrecruit.co.uk
If you wish to donate to the crowdfunding campaign to help the project to continue, please visit crowdfunder.co.uk/radicalrecruit