

Tucked away behind vibrant Shepherd's Bush market in an unmarked side street, Broadway, a support organisation for homeless people with severe substance misuse problems, isn't easy to find.

But despite its discreet location, there is nothing low-key about Broadway's success with its troubled clients, nor about its HR achievements. Thanks to its ongoing investment in staff development, Broadway has gained a reputation as a beacon of good practice, winning a National Training Award last year, as well as being listed among the *Sunday Times* 100 best small UK companies. It was also the first London charity to achieve the new, tougher Investors in People (IIP) leadership and management standard, receiving special praise for achieving cultural cohesion with remarkable speed following its creation from the merger of two smaller charities in 2002.

Helen Giles, HR director at Broadway, explains that the origins of its learning and development strategy lie both in the belief that line management in the UK as a whole is poor, and the difficulties that all organisations in the homeless sector have in recruiting competent and experienced staff.

"We don't see learning and development as sitting on the edge of HR strategy," she says. "We are known for being innovative and experimenting with new add-on services and solutions, and one of our strategic commitments is to quality. We realised early on that it was stupid to keep advertising for people and that we were going to have to grow our own."

The result was a trainee scheme that takes people from a wide range of backgrounds – Giles mentions curtain fitters and scientists as well as new graduates – and trains them from scratch in providing support to people with substance misuse problems, who sometimes have mental health issues, debts and other concerns that have brought them to sleeping rough on the streets.

The sector tends to attract applicants who want to get into homeless care for "the wrong reasons", as it pays better than other forms of care work, while candidates with the right attitude and personal competencies are often kept out through lack of experience. The scheme tackles all these

issues, putting candidates through a gruelling selection process involving assessment centres, testing, role-plays and behavioural competency-based interviews. This results in only a handful of trainees being chosen twice a year.

Giles stresses that the organisation will only invest in people with the potential to excel and eventually move into a junior management or a specialist area. They can then also provide a pool for succession planning.

One of the innovative aspects of the selection process is that clients are included as full members of the interviewing panel, a practice that is very much part of Broadway's ethos of client involvement in service delivery.

"By the time you get in you feel like you've won the Eurovision song contest," says Hannah Faulkner, a current trainee. "It takes so long that you know you must be the best."

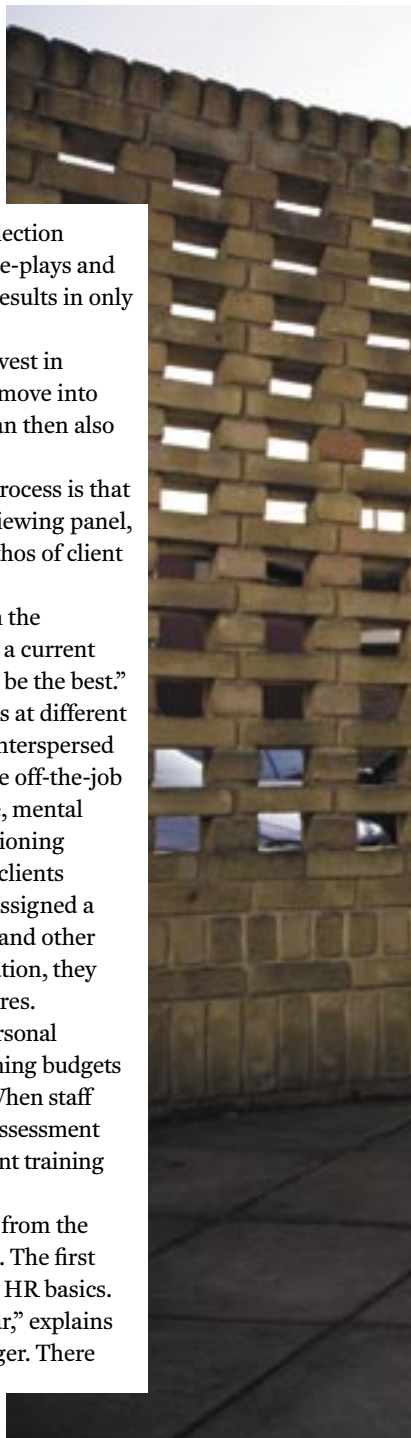
The year-long trainee scheme offers placements at different hostels and centres run by Broadway. These are interspersed with seminars, supervised casework and intensive off-the-job training covering such areas as substance misuse, mental health and "motivational interviewing" – a questioning technique akin to life coaching, designed to help clients take control of their own lives. Trainees are also assigned a mentor and participate in visits, job shadowing, and other developmental activities. After a six-month probation, they are free to apply for vacancies in Broadway's centres.

But training doesn't stop there. All staff have personal development plans and teams have their own training budgets to spend on improving skills for service delivery. When staff reach management level – again after a rigorous assessment process – they embark on a two-phase management training programme that Broadway delivers internally.

"Whether someone gets promoted or comes in from the outside, they have to learn our ways of managing. The first thing they get is three half-day workshops on the HR basics. Then there is a modular programme over one year," explains Richard Banks, learning and development manager. There

BY REBECCA JOHNSON

ON BROAD





Helen Giles, HR
director at Broadway

WAY

Charities working with homeless people often struggle to find good staff. That's why one organisation, Broadway, is growing its own – turning everyone from curtain fitters to scientists into skilled carers

TARGETED TRAINING

Lisa O'Doherty became a project manager at Broadway a year ago and embarked on phase two of the charity's management training programme. "I did 'creativity and innovation'. We focused on specific areas where work was quite dry and hadn't changed for a while, such as meetings, and put forward lots of ideas. Since then we've had speakers in to meetings, plenty of external visits, and meetings are now much more interesting.

"For example, we had someone speaking from a service we send clients to for detox or alcohol counselling. Now when we refer clients we can talk to them about what it involves and what they will get out of it. We do visits to other hostels every few weeks and someone brings this information back to the team and shares best practice."

"We are a learning organisation," says Kirsty Telford, assistant manager at the Shepherd's Bush centre. "We are a happy team and enjoy being here and clients can sense that."

Staff and clients are trained together on some issues – for example, first aid. "We particularly targeted drug users so that in an emergency they would know what to do," Telford explains. "We had a client who overdosed in the lane and someone who had refresher training resuscitated him. It was awful – fortunately, he survived."

is also on-the-job learning in the form of coaching from line managers, and a quarterly half-day "surgery" with HR to reflect on working practice.

The second phase, which kicks in when staff reach mid-management, involves training in strategic planning, project management, managing multiple priorities, influencing and negotiating and facilitating innovation and creativity (see panel, above). Flexibility is built in so junior managers with a specific training need for one of the phase-two modules can access that module individually. There are also quarterly management forums to promote ownership of the corporate agenda and share best practice.

"We deliberately have a structure with a junior management tier," says Banks. "It doesn't matter if people need a bit of hand-holding; the structure is designed to facilitate this. We also encourage them to train in coaching skills." A key component of leadership at Broadway is a focus on managers systematically developing and coaching their own staff.

The organisation also puts great emphasis on managers taking responsibility for their own continuous professional development. The charity runs its own action learning sets as part of its efforts to use skills within the organisation to provide learning to staff and clients alike. Managers can use these learning sets to discuss live issues and find solutions.

At senior level, Broadway engages in external action learning sets with other homeless organisations. These are part of an initiative sponsored by the London Housing Foundation, whose remit is to build better

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practice in the homelessness sector. There is also a successful executive coaching scheme for senior managers, using board members who volunteer their time for free.

These initiatives have enabled Broadway to raise standards of client service delivery by building teams of highly knowledgeable staff. Since 2004, satisfaction among their 2,000 or so clients has risen from 70 to 79 per cent, while the proportion of clients expressing dissatisfaction has fallen from 19 to 5 per cent. In a 2005 syndicated staff survey, Broadway outperformed other organisations on development, outscoring the sector average by 26 per cent. Some 93 per cent of staff agreed that training and development was relevant and useful for their jobs, 92 per cent said managers listened to their ideas, 93 per cent said their appraisals accurately reflected their performance and 90 per cent said their induction gave them the knowledge to do their jobs well – up 15 per cent on 2003 and 22 per cent higher than the sector norm. Absence rates are half the sector average, at



Centre stage: Broadway provides support to people with substance misuse problems who have been sleeping rough



only 3 per cent. And despite the volume of development activity, training cost-per-head is only £268, thanks to effective skill-sharing practices. "We are continually going through the process of assessing needs and evaluating how interventions have gone, and measuring the impact on the organisation," says Giles.

But Broadway has not stopped there. It has also extended its development expertise outwards. Following a competitive tender process initiated by the London Housing Foundation in 2006, Broadway has been the sole deliverer of a project called Beyond a Helpline, an HR capacity-building initiative aimed at smaller homelessness agencies without their own internal HR functions. Each organisation taking part receives an HR audit, a tailored action plan and advice and training on policy development, running appraisals and so on, plus a regular HR surgery.

"Part of our pitch – our unique selling point – was that we would need to train all managers," Banks says.

"Early evaluation shows good outcomes," Giles adds. "We have built an HR consultancy service to support other organisations that 'gift aid' money back to us. They say it is fantastic value. It helps to build best HR practice in the broader charity sector and brings money in for us, so everybody wins." ■

Further info

Helen Giles is speaking at the CIPD's HRD learning and development event at London's ExCeL on 17-19 April » www.cipd.co.uk/hrd ☎ 020 8612 6248

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