

# RED SHIRTS IN THE COMMUNITY—THE WAREHOUSE GROUP

Since 2016, The Warehouse's Red Shirts in the Community programme has helped more than 1100 young people who are not currently in employment, education, or training, gain retail skills and experience the workforce.

The programme is operated by The Warehouse in conjunction with the Ministry of Social Development, which recommends and provides the participants. Skills Organisation, operates as the navigator or 'mentor' for the participants, and also assesses adherence to New Zealand Qualification Authority standards.

Each participant is mentored through the programme by Skills Organisation, which also provides 90 days of pastoral support to the participants, with the aim of finding paid employment within three months of graduating. Participants are generally made up of young people (aged 16 to 24 years) not engaged in employment, education, or training.

The programme was developed over a period of 18 months, with three pilots taking place across a range of The Warehouse stores. The third pilot resulted in a 76 percent success rate in assisting the participants into paid employment within three months of programme completion. Alongside the hard skills learnt by the participants, an unanticipated benefit was the soft skills gained such as increased teamwork, self-esteem, respect for others, engagement in conversations, and self-confidence.

The Red Shirts in the Community programme is now the largest public-private partnership of its kind working on social inclusion and youth development in New Zealand. This year it is being rolled out to 57 stores nationwide.

Most recently the programme has been included in a digital platform known as Accelerator. Young people can access the platform for workplace training programmes and connect with potential employers in a blended learning environment that incorporates gamification of content and a mentoring component.

From late 2019, Accelerator will recruit participants through online platform Youth Hub, provide access to training modules needed during their three weeks in store at The Warehouse. It will also offer 90 days further follow up and pastoral care support to participants as they complete their training and prepare work-ready documents such as CVs and references.

Red Shirts in the Community will be the first training module on Accelerator. Once it has been successfully delivered as a digital programme, it will be extended to other sectors and employers who can offer on-the-job training opportunities for young people.