

Rolls-Royce plc, Derby

When the need arose to transfer staff from the civil aerospace division and their families to Germany to work on the V2500 engine, the company made sure of a successful transition by offering both cultural and language training in the months before the move to Dahlewitz.

As well as being one of the largest and best-known employers in the East Midlands, Rolls-Royce plc is of course a global brand. The company employs around 35,000 people world-wide, of whom 21,000 are in the UK. Forty per cent of its employees are therefore based outside the UK - including 5,000 in the rest of Europe and 8,000 in North America.

When the need came to transfer Derby-based employees to work on the V2500 engine in Dahlewitz, near Berlin, the team at the Global Mobility Centre in Derby began work to assist staff in the move. As well as providing practical help with issues like accommodation, they also made sure that language and culture were part of the package on offer to staff.

Global Mobility Centre Adviser Claire Webber explains: *"We asked around two dozen staff and their families to relocate to Dahlewitz for a period of between six months and three years, and the response was overwhelmingly positive. Such a venture is a major task in itself, but to give ourselves every chance of success, we wanted to ensure that the employees involved arrived in Dahlewitz with an understanding of the cultural differences between the two countries and with some competence in the language."*

To this end, the company arranged for visits to the German town in advance of the move. Staff were briefed on the German way of life and on the importance of respecting local norms. *"Being part of the European Union,"* comments Claire, *"the expectation is that everywhere else operates like we do in the UK. But there are important differences, even down to the way you should address people, and we wanted staff to be aware of these."*

In addition, Rolls-Royce engaged the services of a Derbyshire-based training provider to offer German language training to staff as well as to their spouses and partners in advance of the relocation. A

package of ten, weekly, two-hour training sessions were organised. These focused on equipping those involved with basic competence in German, allowing them to deal with everyday situations: introducing themselves, shopping, travelling on public transport and eating out.

“We recognised”, said Claire, “that we couldn’t make everyone fully competent in German in such a short time. But staff – and their spouses and partners – have realised that following this initial training, they will during their stay have a great opportunity to bring their language skills up to a very good level. We believe that this, coupled with their cultural awareness training, will be a key element in the success of their stay in Dahlewitz.”

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| <p>Contacts</p> <p>www.rolls-royce.com</p> <p>This case study was written by Peter Harvey of the The Language Business, on behalf of the Regional Language Network</p> | <p>Regional Language Network East Midlands helps East Midlands companies access more international trade opportunities by breaking down language and cultural barriers. The RLN offers a central point of contact for information and support on international communications, and provides valuable commercial information through events, newsletters and briefings.</p> <p>RLN East Midlands, UK Trade and Investment, International Trade Centre, Innovation House, Riverside Park, Raynesway, Derby, DE21 7BF.</p> <p>Tel: 01332 826432 www.rln-eastmidlands.com</p> |
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