

COMMISSIONING SPECIFICATION

Introduction

The Oldham Partnership is seeking to commission delivery of a series of interventions in a programme of activities to support Incapacity Benefit (IB) claimants into sustained employment of at least 16 hours per week for 13 consecutive weeks or more to contribute to a Local Area Agreement Economic Development and Enterprise Block stretch target.

Expressions of Interest are invited for delivery of one or more of the identified interventions,

- A** – Outreach, engagement and referral
- B** – Building confidence
- C1** – Work experience
- C2** – Pre-recruitment training
- D1** – Job matching
- D2** – Sustained employment

It is anticipated that the programme will comprise a dual approach with the

- **‘person centric – supply led’** strand featuring a range of options within the outreach and engagement, work experience and job matching components appropriate to the individual’s needs and the
- **‘employer centric – demand led’** strand concentrating on the outreach and engagement and pre-recruitment training packages components designed to service employment opportunities identified with a specific employer.

This information is supplied as guidance for the commissioning process only as it is recognised that in delivery the individual clients employment pathway plan may straddle a number of activities influenced by their current position of being

- a) ready and willing to access work
- b) willing but need work preparation / training
- c) or for whom work may be a longer term goal

It is envisaged that programme monitoring will be undertaken by a representative identified by the Skills and Workforce Full Employment Group.

Expressions of Interest should be submitted on the template provided and addressed as below to arrive no later than: **4.00 pm on Friday 8th September 2006**

Private and Confidential – E o I – IBIW Alison Wells Oldham MBC Policy and Commissioning Unit Level 14 Civic Centre West Street Oldham. OL1 1XL

Programme Specification

Programme Title	Increasing the number of IB claimants into work
Objective	To increase the number of IB claimants, living in one of the 7 priority wards, into sustained employment of at least 16 hours per week for 13 consecutive weeks or more.
Target Groups	IB claimants resident in Hollinwood, Coldhurst, Werneth, St Mary's, Lees, Alexandra (including NDC area) and St.Pauls categorised as those (1) ready and willing to work (2) willing but need work preparation / training (3) for whom work may be a longer term goal.
Interventions	A Outreach, engagement and referral B Building confidence (Transitions model) C1 Work experience C2 Pre-recruitment training D1 Job matching D2 Sustained employment E Positive promotion to employers
Number of beneficiaries	100
Duration of Programme	1 st October 2006 – 31 st March 2007
Funding available	£150, 000.00 - 160,000.00 over total programme
Additional Requirements	<p>Delivery organisations will be expected to work alongside JCP provision to provide the client group with an additional menu of supportive and complementary interventions to stimulate return to sustained employment</p> <p>Delivery organisations will be required to liaise with each other and refer clients to other interventions in order to meet the employment pathway plan needs of individual IB claimants.</p> <p>Delivery organisations may wish to consider incentivising IB client participants completion of interventions. This must comply with JCP rules on earned income.</p>

Programme interventions

Intervention type	Funding available	Outputs required
A. Outreach, engagement + referral	5,000 - 5,500	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engagement discussions identifying an individual employment pathway plan and resulting in 100 clients being referred to the next suitable intervention.
B. Building Confidence	12,000 – 14,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 20 clients supported through a range of bespoke activities eg self esteem, skills analysis, occupational awareness and examining vocational options.
C 1. Work experience	63,000 – 65,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 20 clients involved in work experience opportunities of a maximum 26 week duration on a paid * basis. <p>*Must comply with JCP's 'permitted work earnings' rules.</p>
C2. Pre-Recruitment Training	48,125 – 50,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 35 clients participating in bespoke pre-recruitment training packages in conjunction with an employer offering employment on successful completion of package.
D1. Job matching	4,800 - 6,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 80 clients individually 'matched' to employment opportunities, through IAG, application and CV support, interview skills and negotiated facility for post appointment support.
D2. Sustained Employment	15,000 – 16,125	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 75 clients complete 13 consecutive weeks or more of at least 16 hours per week sustained employment
E. Positive promotion to employers	3,000 – 3,375	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Activity developed to promote positive case studies and / or role models to support the transition from IB claimant to employee from both the client and employer perspectives. NB This aspect is unlikely to be contracted separately but a fund to be accessed by delivery partners.

Please refer to the relevant detailed background context for each intervention as supplied by the Skills and Workforce Full Employment Group.

Background context for each intervention

Introduction

National experience confirms that most new claimants of IB have every intention of returning to work. However, the greater the time spent disengaged from the workplace and in receipt of benefits the likelihood of their return to the labour market decreases. The development of further barriers to employment after this point is inevitable and many clients will approach the prospect of returning to work with anxiety, a lack of confidence and an erratic work history. This must be taken into account in the development of new programmes that focus on employment and employability – not disability.

A. Outreach, engagement and referral

Each client will proceed through the initial outreach stage, whereby they will be assessed in terms of access to employment. Project(s) are sought which engage and refer individuals to the other employability related programmes stated within the plan. This approach will be piloted where possible, from GP surgeries to bring together employment advisors and healthcare professionals. Alternative options will include working with other outreach organisations, such as voluntary and community based groups, mainstream providers who work with IB claimants (potentially including New Deal for Disabled Persons (NDDP) job brokers) and information, advice and guidance providers. This initial element will determine the employment pathway plan for each client.

It is proposed that a fee per individual referred is used.

B. Building confidence

Project(s) aimed at the harder to help incapacity benefit claimant and focusing on structured activities which build confidence and aspiration. An interesting local model, as illustration, is 'Successful Transitions' (see below). This element is aimed at those that are furthest away from re-entering employment and should focus on supporting the client through a range of bespoke activities such as developing self esteem, skills analysis, occupational awareness, examining vocational options leading to pre-recruitment activity such as work experience.

It is proposed that a fee per individual completing this element is used.

Successful Transitions Model

Operating for several years in Tameside and Stockport, Successful Transitions aims to involve incapacity benefit claimants furthest from the labour market, giving them some confidence, improving their social networks. Funded by Job Centre Plus and the European Social Fund for three years, the course is accredited by the Open College Network and runs for two mornings per week for 13 weeks. Although the course gives a qualification in voluntary and community work and job seeking skills the emphasis is firmly on social interaction and providing participants with a structured programme. By committing to attend the sessions participants are reintroduced to the discipline of turning up for work but in a relaxed, informal environment. Small groups of six to ten participants provide support and discuss concerns to build up self-esteem. The group also go on visits out of the local area to give them confidence at dealing with situations outside their immediate neighbourhood and introduce them to volunteering opportunities.

The Programme is delivered twice a week from 9.30 to 12.30 for 13 weeks, which would be a total of 26 sessions.

Session 1 would cover an introduction/induction to the programme, an opportunity for participants to assess if it was appropriate for them and a chance for them to meet the delivery team.

Sessions 2 – 13 would cover an Open College Network (OCN) course on Personal Development (including volunteering). This section would also include visits to venues offering volunteering opportunities and team building sessions for participants as well as support with portfolio building. Individual tailored internet searches for volunteering vacancies and support with applications would be included.

Sessions 14 – 25 would cover an OCN unit in Work Preparation and would include resource awareness, occupational awareness, skills analysis, CV writing, application form filling, letter writing and interviews and would lead to clients being in a position to apply for a range of opportunities with confidence. This section could include a range of visiting speakers offering in work benefits guidance, information on mainstream Jobcentre Plus support, information on training and education and work placements and further visits to boost confidence and social networking skills.

The programme should include regular support sessions for the peer mentoring/action learning sets, allowing people to feed back information, challenges and success, update their action plans and learn from each other. Session 26 would include a celebration and establishment of action plans and peer mentoring/ action learning groups.

Each OCN unit requires approximately 30 hours of learning and the production of a simple portfolio. Evidence can be written, printed from the internet, highlighted handouts, quizzes, discussion notes, audio tapes, photographs, video tapes, group posters, tutor statements etc – this flexible approach gives a high level of success and therefore a positive feeling about educational achievement.

Both the OCN courses require participants to review and reflect on their skills and experience and recognise the value other people, including potential employers, place on these.

The delivery should be relaxed, participative and encouraging with basic skills support embedded “by stealth” in order to build confidence and self-esteem.

Facilitated discussion during both the courses and coffee breaks would develop communication and social networking skills and raise awareness of support such as ESOL, basic computing and skills for life courses.

C1. Work experience

The Intermediate Labour Market (ILM) approach has shown that the best way to engage people who are furthest from the labour market is to offer them a wage and meaningful work. With added support and capacity building, progression in terms of soft skills development and overall employability naturally follows from participation. The emphasis should be on preparation for work but the package should include training towards a qualification, personal support, career planning and aftercare support.

For incapacity benefit (IB) claimants who require a supported approach to work, the transitional nature of work experience is ideal because it gives participants the opportunity to 'test' work and identify to what type of environment they are best suited, any additional support they may need and crucially, help to alleviate any fear they may have of the working environment.

Alternative options would be to develop voluntary work experience programmes, which would provide a range of similar outputs but may take a longer time frame to achieve and may have a lower retention rate. Evidence suggests that progression rates onto sustainable employment through work experience equates to 80% as opposed to 30% of clients that are engaged through volunteering programmes.

The % conversion from work experience to sustained employment increases where the employer remains constant ie the work experience is used as a paced induction to a vacancy.

During their work experience it is envisaged that the IB participants will be paid, ideally at the 'going rate' for the work, and as a minimum at the national hourly minimum wage rate, providing this complies with JCPs 'permitted work earnings' limit. Deliverers will be expected to work with JCP representatives to establish this for each individual.

It is anticipated that deliverers will agree a phased contribution from the work experience provider during the work experience period.

It is proposed that a fee per individual completing a work experience placement, of a maximum of 26 weeks, is used with a further output on conversion to employment status through D1 Job Matching

C2. Pre-recruitment training

Projects will be sought that provide bespoke pre-recruitment training to meet employers needs, designed in conjunction with an employer and lead to a job outcome with the employer. This element underpins the "demand led – employer centric" model, meeting the sector specific skills needs of the employer.

Projects will need to demonstrate a track record of engaging with employers, the design of an appropriate pre-recruitment training plan to meet the employers needs. In return the employer will offer sustainable employment

outcomes (of at least 16 hours a week for 13 weeks or more) to IB clients that successfully complete the pre-recruitment training.

The IB clients will be identified through the engagement stage (A) and will be offered job matching support where necessary (stage D).

It is proposed that a fee per individual completing this element is used.

D1. Job matching

Information Advice and Guidance provision, offering careers advice, interview and application support and post employment support. This element of the proposal could include help from a Job-coach to support the customer with vocational profiling (specialised in-depth assessment) and job matching; and to help the customer and employer with induction, on the job training and setting up natural support arrangements. Expected to be useful for customers who are new to an occupational area or those who may need additional time and support before becoming fully effective employees.

For those incapacity benefit claimants that are identified as being closest to the labour market this element may follow on immediately from the initial outreach session.

For those IB claimants identified as having greater needs this element may be undertaken after the work experience or pre-recruitment training element.

It is proposed that a fee per individual matched with an employer is used.

D2. Sustained employment

This may involve a variety of mechanisms to support the clients retention of the employment opportunity of at least 16 hours per week for a minimum of 13 consecutive weeks eg 4 weekly tri-partheid meetings, telephone calls, assistance with travel arrangements etc

It is proposed that a fee is paid for clients who retain employment of at least 16 hours per week for 13 consecutive weeks or more.

E. Positive promotion to employers

Employers are a crucial part of the required efforts to help more disabled people move into sustainable employment, yet have been largely overlooked in the DWP Green Paper.

It is important for Oldham to actively promote incapacity benefits claimants to employers as potential employees and strive to change the misconceptions that many employers have about disabled people and the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act. Particular attention should be given to employers' attitudes towards employing those with mental health conditions.

The action plan proposes that activity is developed to promote positive case studies and/or role models to support the transition from a claimant based model to an employer needs based approach. Whilst this element will not immediately increase the number of IB claimants returning to work it will contribute to the development of a sustainable framework for introducing the Pathways to Work programme in late 2007.

It is not planned to commission this intervention separately but as an integral part of the composite programme.