

Delivering employment projects

A practical guide for prospective delivery organisations for 'Building Better Opportunities'



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Version 1



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Executive Summary

This guide is intended to support organisations that are applying for funding to deliver projects under the Big Lottery Fund's '[Building Better Opportunities](#)' programme.

The guidance is presented in four Chapters. The key findings from these are set out below.

Employment interventions in context

- A key determinant of whether someone finds work is **whether they are looking for work** – which means having the confidence, tools and support to do that well.
- If you are working with disadvantaged groups **it is highly likely that your clients will not have received any recent employment support**, or may not have had great experiences of it.
- **There is a good chance that you could be working with people who are not claiming any benefit** and have slipped through the cracks
- **Read your LEP Strategic Economic Plan** – that will give you a good idea of how your project fits in with the economic and social objectives of local partners
- **Try to build links with Jobcentre Plus** – they can play a key role in reaching disadvantaged groups, have good employer links and may be well networked into other partnerships – contact details are [here](#)
- **Find your local Work Programme provider** – again this could be a source of referrals, employer links and partnership details – contact details [here](#)
- **Speak to your local authority, local colleges and training providers, Chambers of Commerce and other key local partners**

The most successful programmes are underpinned by:

- **Really good advisers** – who meet participants regularly, are motivational and inspirational, know their local patch and focus on outcomes (particularly on finding work)
- **Regular and active engagement by the participant** – through action planning, regular review and the opportunity to chart their own course
- **Effective management** – with clear line of sight of what is being delivered, to which participants, by whom and with what success; with the right key performance indicators and management information
- **Strong partnerships** – to ensure that the right people are engaged and that the right support is deployed – with good partnerships characterised by clear local leadership, active participation, shared and understood objectives, and regular engagement

Designing and delivering your project

- Think about **targeting your intervention** at those most likely to benefit – specifically looking at duration out of work, those not receiving support, those with multiple barriers
- Focus on getting the **Partnership Agreement** right – there is a summary of the BBO partnership requirements on the [BBO website](#)
- Focus on **leadership, shared objectives and ways of working** - with one person in the lead in each organisation
- Think through **how information will be shared** (on individuals and on services), what agreements may need to be in place, and what systems or processes might support this
- Consider how you will **communicate and review progress** – for example through steering groups or informally
- Find out **where your target groups live, where they go**, and what services may be most able to help
- As well as your direct delivery partners, try to **engage with wider local networks** like GP surgeries, advice services and landlords
- **Be realistic about the time that it may take for a project to get up and running** – in general it takes at least three months to start taking referrals and it will take time for processes to really bed down and to start seeing results
- Think about **how your assessment process will work** – in many cases this may be a single assessment, but if you have a strong focus on outreach then you may want to conduct the 'triage' element first
- **Make sure that advisers understand the assessment process** and are bought into it
- **Test and learn** – the assessment process is bound to need tweaking, so work with the frontline to refine it
- **Make sure that the assessment process is fully integrated** with the support that you're delivering – that it leads on to an action plan and is reviewed regularly
- **Action plans should lead into sequenced and co-ordinated support** – not just a set of referrals
- **Ensure that support services and participants are followed up** – and that there is clear communication about who is doing what, and what happens next
- **Be clear on who is ultimately responsible for co-ordinating support** – and what systems and processes they may need in order to do that

Understanding and supporting participants

- **Think through the skills that you need most for your advisers** – especially the extent to which they are managers, mentors or both
- **Map out what your advisers will deliver and how** – the stages of support, action planning process, frequency and nature of support, and key interactions
- **Ensure that you get your caseload assumptions right** – model this based on what your advisers will deliver, how frequently and for which participants
- **Expect that your first priority will be to build participants' confidence and resilience**, and address perceptions
- **Make sure that advisers have the tools to do this** – to develop written action plans, agree small steps, focus on behaviour change and address negative views
- **Think about the role that facilitated group sessions might play** in helping participants to make and deliver commitments, support each other and overcome setbacks
- **Target additional support at those who are most likely to benefit** – i.e. those least likely to secure work without addressing a health, housing, training or work experience need
- **Maintain a focus on employment** – 'place then train' models show that not all barriers need to be overcome before an individual can secure good quality work
- **Ensure that work experience and volunteering provide real experiences** – that they lead to workplace skills and help address employer perceptions
- **Where possible, continue to provide broader, personalised support** – so that participants can get the most out of any provision, continue to engage, and can consolidate their learning
- **How you tailor your support will depend on your participants' barriers** – but disadvantages overlap, so you will likely need to be ready to adapt
- **There is evidence out there!** Look at what's worked in other programmes aimed at people with similar characteristics and needs. This guide provides links to some of them throughout, with further learning are listed at the end.
- **Build action plans around participants' perspectives and the steps they can take** – specific disadvantages may be less salient than other factors
- **Ensure that additional help like training and volunteering includes ongoing adviser support** to keep those with more complex needs on track

Working with employers

- **Try to keep the offer clear**– and critically, link it up with what others are doing, so that it is coherent locally
- **Try to tap into local networks and use local data** – Chambers of Commerce, local authority teams and LEP contacts may all be able to help
- **Consider focusing on building lasting and deeper relationships with key employers and sectors** – understanding their needs and business
- **Think about the scope for a more agency-based model for those employers** – handling vacancies, sifting candidates and matching them to jobs.
- **Sell the benefits of supporting BBO clients**, and of offering a professional service at no cost
- **Focus on getting the job match right** – ensuring that the job role, expectations, responsibility, location and so on are a good fit
- **Ensure that there is ongoing contact and support** – particularly at the transition into work, and particularly for those with higher 'costs' from work
- **Consider when and whether transitional financial support (including emergency support) may be needed** – particularly for travel and childcare
- **Support may be light touch after the initial transition**, and many participants won't want ongoing support – but make clear that help is still there if things go wrong or needs change

Introduction

Building Better Opportunities

This guide is intended to support organisations that are applying for funding to deliver projects under the Big Lottery Fund's '**Building Better Opportunities**' programme (<https://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/esf>).

Building Better Opportunities (BBO) is matching funding from the European Social Fund (ESF) in order to tackle poverty, promote social inclusion and drive local jobs and growth. To apply for BBO funding, organisations need to respond to a 'project outline' published on the [Big Lottery website](#). This also includes the important dates and other information about the programme.

This is a **guide only**. Using the content of this guide is not mandatory and it should not be used in isolation to develop any BBO application. Whether or not you choose to use elements of the guide to inform the design of your project is entirely at your discretion. The Fund's assessment of BBO applications is entirely separate from this guide. However, we hope this guide does support you in making your own decisions about how best to design your project.

This guide is intended to be read alongside other materials published on the [BBO website](#). We want to provide evidence, insights and practical examples to help you think about the design of your project in order to achieve the biggest possible impact. **This guide does not replace or supersede anything contained in any of the above resources.**

There is also a **dedicated BBO ESF support resource**, available at <http://www.bboesfsupport.com/>. This is intended to provide support with ensuring that projects comply with ESF rules and regulations.

What's in this guide

Chapter 1 below sets out important **context** in employment interventions – looking at the labour market challenges, the role and breadth of local and national support, and how we understand 'what works' in supporting people to move towards and into work.

Chapters 2 to 4 then look at different elements of delivering your project:

- Chapter 2 focuses on **project design and delivery** – looking in particular at how you identify target groups, work in partnership, identify and engage participants, assess needs and manage the process of delivering support.
- Chapter 3 then looks in depth at **what we deliver for participants** – with a focus on the role of personal advisers, what we know about additional support like health, training, volunteering and work experience, and what works for particular disadvantaged groups.
- Chapter 4 covers **employer engagement** – including how we work with employers, align support alongside other provision, and support participants in work.

The guide then concludes with **further sources of learning** and support and a full **bibliography**.

In each Chapter, we:

...use pink boxes like this to talk about what this means for your project

...use blue boxes like this to talk about specific research or case studies

1. Employment interventions in context

What this Chapter covers:

It sets out some of the key concepts and challenges in supporting people who are out of work to move closer to and into work. It also summarises at a high level, the local landscape of employment and skills support, and where BBO projects may fit within this.



1.1 Employment and disadvantage

There are now more people in work than at any point in the past, with 73.6% of the 'working age' population¹ in work. However, underneath this headline, employment rates are far lower for groups that are disadvantaged in the labour market than for the population as a whole. Employment rates for **disabled people** and those with **no qualifications** are particularly low, with wide gaps also for **lone parents** and many **ethnic minority groups**. **Older people** are less likely to be in work than the wider population while **young people not in full time education** were hit hard by the recession.

More detailed analysis shows that those with **multiple barriers** can face significantly greater challenges in the labour market. Work by *Inclusion* looking at social housing, for example, has shown that the least likely group to enter work was older disabled people, who often had poor qualifications and who had usually been out of work for a long time.²

¹ Defined as those aged 16-64

² Wilson et al. (2015), *Worklessness, welfare and social housing: A report for the National Housing Federation*, National Housing Federation

Definitions

Most of the differences in employment rates between disadvantaged groups and the population as a whole can be explained by those who are not *looking* for work and/ or are not *available* for work – defined in the statistics as '**economically inactive**'.

Overall, economically inactive people account for **22%** of the working age population. Many of those who are economically inactive *want* to work, but are very disadvantaged in doing so and generally do not have access to support to do so.

The **unemployed**, on the other hand, describes *only* those who are actively looking for work *and* are available for work. Unemployed people account for just **4%** of the population – although just over a quarter have been unemployed for more than one year.

We don't have a good word to describe *everyone* who is out of work – i.e. the unemployed and the economically inactive. So most commentators and researchers use the term '**workless**' – which is also what we use in this guide.

The benefits system and employment support

People who are out of work can receive benefits because they are unemployed, because they are assessed as 'not fit for work' due to a health condition or disability, or because they are a lone parent with a child under 5.

Overall, 26% of the working age population are out of work but just **10%** receive a benefit because of this. So **the large majority of those out of work are not receiving benefits**. This will usually be because individuals are **not eligible**: for example because they have other household income (such as a partner who is in work), because they are in full time education, or because they are not UK nationals. However some people also slip through the cracks for other reasons. It is estimated that around one third of those eligible for JSA do not claim it³ – with take-up rates lower among single people, and often linked to programme requirements, the value of the benefits and stigma.

Generally, the **most disadvantaged groups do not receive structured employment support**. For example, research by *Inclusion* has estimated that just one in ten disabled people who are out of work are receiving employment support, and that just one in ten of those go on to secure employment⁴.

³ Finn, D and Goodship, J. (2014) *Take-up of benefits and poverty: an evidence and policy review*, Centre for Economic and Social Inclusion

⁴ Purvis et al. (2014) *Fit for Purpose - Transforming employment support for disabled people and those with health conditions*, Centre for Economic and Social Inclusion

So what might this mean for my project?

- Many of those that you will be working with are likely to be **'economically inactive'** rather than 'unemployed'.
- **They are likely to be disadvantaged** – and the more disadvantages that they have, the harder it will be for them to find work.
- A key determinant of whether someone finds work is **whether they are looking for work** – which means having the confidence, tools and support to do that well.
- If you are working with disadvantaged groups **it is highly likely that your clients will not have received any recent employment support**, or may not have had great experiences of it.
- **There is a good chance that you could be working with people who are not claiming any benefit** and have slipped through the cracks – although this may be determined by the rules of the specific project that you're delivering.

It is important that you also have a look at the data for the area(s) that your project will be working in. You might find some helpful information about local level data from:

- **NOMIS** – which brings together national and local data from DWP benefits, the Labour Force Survey and the Census – available [here](#)
- **Stat X-Plore** – which has data on Housing Benefit, Universal Credit and Personal Independence Payment (a non-means tested benefit paid to disabled people) – available [here](#)

1.2 The landscape of support

Local partnerships have always played an important role in supporting disadvantaged groups. In England, ESF funding has been notionally allocated between 39 Local Enterprise Partnership areas. The ESIF sub-committee for each area has engaged with local authorities, business and the voluntary and community sectors to determine their priorities for funding. All of the LEP Strategic Economic Plans are available on the [LEP Network website](#).

ESF is not the only programme. In general, it is unlikely that in your area the full range of provision has been fully mapped out or aligned. But it is nonetheless important that as far as possible you try to make yourself aware of what else may be available, how it fits with what you're delivering, and who the key local players are. This may include:

- **The [Work Programme](#)**, which provides employment support to most long-term JSA claimants and many 'new' claimants of ESA. This is commissioned nationally, often delivered through national providers, but also brings in some more specialist provision.
- **Jobcentre Plus-led support** – including local provision commissioned through the [Flexible Support Fund](#) and small-scale national programmes that are accessed through Jobcentre Plus (like the [Help to Work](#) programme or the [New Enterprise Allowance](#)).
- **Skills support**, delivered through colleges and independent training providers, but with generally limited funding available from government (targeted at [apprenticeships](#) and at [vocational training for those claiming JSA and some ESA claimants](#))
- **The [Troubled Families programme](#)**, where Councils are delivering support to certain disadvantaged families – usually where no-one works, children have been excluded from school, and/ or there is a history of offending
- And a range of **welfare, health, housing, financial and other support** often commissioned locally through Councils and Clinical Commissioning Groups. Much of this has reduced in scale as funding has reduced and 'ring fences' have been removed.

So what might this mean for my project?

- **Read your LEP Strategic Economic Plan** – that will give you a good idea of how your project fits in with the economic and social objectives of local partners
- **Try to build links with Jobcentre Plus** – they can play a key role in reaching disadvantaged groups, have good employer links and may be well networked into other partnerships – contact details are [here](#)
- **Find your local Work Programme provider** – again this could be a source of referrals, employer links and partnership details – contact details [here](#)
- **Speak to your local authority, local colleges and training providers, Chambers of Commerce and other key local partners**

1.3 What works?

Chapters 3 to 5 set out in more detail some of the evidence on 'what works' and why, with examples and ideas that should be useful for your project.

Overall, we consider that the key objectives of any employment and employability support are to ensure that participants are able to: **actively look for work; find the right work; get into work and then stay there.**

Achieving this means both removing barriers to work, and improving people's ability to then find and keep work. The evidence suggests that this means in particular addressing four key things:

1. Tools to look for work

Including confidence, resilience, the right networks, and practical jobsearch skills

2. Barriers that prevent work

Like poor health, caring responsibilities, a disability, transport costs and so on

3. The right skills for the job

Which may be interpersonal skills, organisation and teamwork, or vocational or professional skills

4. The 'signal' of being out of work

Which leads employers to overlook people because they have a gap in their CV

In all four cases, generally the longer that someone is out of work, the worse things get: confidence, resilience and networks get worse; barriers to work can get worse; skills become less relevant to the workplace; and 'signals' to employers get stronger.

Most interventions will address some but not all of these things. But where interventions do try to address all four of these things, they will tend to be more intensive, broad-based and often expensive – so for example combining adviser support, group work, focused training and work placements.

It is not essential or required that your programme should be seeking to address everything. Often your support will be part of a wider journey towards employment, and there is compelling evidence that often people don't need to address all of their barriers before they get there. But thinking about your programme in terms of the four objectives above may help in identifying where it can add most value, and where there may be gaps or future needs that may still need to be addressed.

So what might this mean for my project?

There are a number of key themes in the literature, and these are set out in the following chapters. In particular, the most successful programmes are underpinned by:

- **Really good advisers** – who meet participants regularly, are motivational and inspirational, know their local patch and focus on outcomes (particularly on finding work)
- **Regular and active engagement by the participant** – through action planning, regular review and the opportunity to chart their own course
- **Effective management** – with clear line of sight of what is being delivered, to which participants, by whom and with what success; with the right key performance indicators and management information
- **Strong partnerships** – to ensure that the right people are engaged and that the right support is deployed – with good partnerships characterised by clear local leadership, active participation, shared and understood objectives, and regular engagement

Lastly, it is important to caveat that while we know a fair bit about what works and why, **there is surprisingly little research that rigorously measures the additional impact of what we do.** Put simply, we tend to measure how many people get a job, rather than how many got a job who **wouldn't have got one without support.**

So in the following sections, we try to combine and interpret evidence from a range of programmes and interventions, but nonetheless caution should still be used in interpreting and using these findings.

2. Designing and delivering your project

What this Chapter covers:

It sets out key lessons on designing and delivering projects. It covers how you target your project, working in partnership with others, approaches to outreach and engagement, and how you assess participants' needs. It then looks at approaches to managing support and at some aspects of programme management.



2.1 Targeting support

In general, the target groups for your project will be specified in your [Project Outline](#). Projects are generally targeted at key disadvantaged groups that have been specified as priorities by the European Commission⁵ and/ or local stakeholders.

Within this, it is important to make sure that as far as possible you are targeting those who are **likely to gain the most from additional support**. When projects have hard targets for the numbers of people engaged and the proportion that should find work, there can be a lot of pressure to recruit those who are more visible, more in touch with services, and more likely to find work. For this reason, the minimum target numbers for BBO projects have been set at a relatively low level in order to give you room to work with the most disadvantaged. Key lessons on targeting interventions include focusing on:

- Those **out of work the longest** – generally the longer someone has been out of work the more disadvantaged they will be.

⁵ These include parents and carers, disabled people and those with health conditions, disadvantaged women, ethnic minorities, disadvantaged older people, ex-offenders, the lowest qualified, homeless people and migrants

- The **benefits that people claim** – those claiming Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) or lone parents on Income Support (IS) are much more likely to be disadvantaged. Those who claim **no benefits** may also be priorities.
- Those **not receiving other support** – which again tends to be those claiming ESA or IS (and in particular, those in the Support Group of ESA).
- **Multiple disadvantage** – the number of disadvantages is strongly correlated with poorer outcomes (i.e. the more 'barriers', the less likely you will find work)⁶. Looking at multiple disadvantage, therefore, could be an effective way to target support.

You may also want to think about having some **internal process to keep under review who you are supporting**, and the extent to which you are reaching the people that you originally planned to.

Case Study 1

Talent Match is a Lottery-funded and youth-led programme to support young people who are not in education, employment or training. Talent Match is well targeted because it focuses on:

- **Specific barriers** to participation – like disability, caring responsibilities, being a care leaver or ex-offender, having no qualifications and so on
- Those **not receiving support** through other programmes or provision – particularly, those outside mainstream employment and training provision
- Those claiming **no benefit or claiming ESA or IS**

In each region, a lead organisation is overseeing the partnership delivering Talent Match support. In many cases, these organisations have an **internal process** to ensure that those delivering services locally are reaching the right young people, which may be supplemented by data analysis and local research to understand the potential numbers of young people that would meet the criteria for support, the extent of local provision and the nature of participants' barriers.

So what might this mean for my project?

- Think about **targetting your intervention** at those most likely to benefit – specifically looking at duration out of work, those not receiving other support, those with multiple barriers
- Have an **internal process** to review whether you're reaching the intended groups

⁶ Berthoud, R. (2003) Multiple disadvantage in employment A quantitative analysis, Joseph Rowntree Foundation

2.2 Partnership working

BBO strongly encourages partnership working, which may include the participation of small voluntary and community organisations. Therefore many partnerships are likely to be new or will have new members. The most effective partnership models have⁷:

- **Clear leadership** – with one overall lead and designated leads within each organisation
- **Shared objectives** – agreed between partners and then owned together
- **Effective governance** – this can be light touch, but will often include having Service Level Agreements or Memoranda of Understanding between partners – and BBO requires every partnership to develop and sign its own Partnership Agreement
- **Open and inclusive ways of working** – good partnerships talk to each other, are proactive and challenge less constructive behaviour
- **Effective information sharing** – this can mean many things including shared databases, common management information or just collecting data in similar ways

Good partnerships are often underpinned by a **steering group**, but this will depend on the project design.

Case Study 2

The evaluation of **Action Teams for Jobs**⁸ found that establishing strong project level agreements and having a clear outline of responsibilities were key to effective partnerships.

Action Team respondents also highlighted the importance of *"not over-promising; evaluating which organisations to link up with to make sure all parties get something from the partnership; and effective and regular communication."*

Age NC⁹ is an example of a project that built new partnerships to deliver existing support. It ran in the North West and aimed to promote education and training throughout the working life. The partnership was led by The Lancashire Colleges Ltd, and included partners across local government, health services and the voluntary and community sector.

The partnership had a dedicated lead in each partner organisation. *"We have learned that the problem is gaps in information, not gaps in services. The best use of funding is to knock on doors and get the buy-in of stakeholders rather than develop new services."*

⁷ See for example Dickinson, P and Lloyd R.(2012) *Evaluation of the European Social Fund Innovation, Transnational and Mainstreaming projects*, Department for Work and Pensions

⁸ Casebourne et al. (2006), *Review of Action Teams for Jobs*, Department for Work and Pensions

⁹ Dickinson, P and Lloyd R.(2012) *Evaluation of the European Social Fund Innovation, Transnational and Mainstreaming projects*, Department for Work and Pensions

So what might this mean for my project?

- Focus on getting the **Partnership Agreement** right – there is a summary of the BBO partnership requirements on the [BBO website](#)
- Focus on **leadership, shared objectives and ways of working** - with one person in the lead in each organisation
- Think through **how information will be shared** (on individuals and on services), what agreements may need to be in place, and what systems or processes might help to support this
- Consider how you will **communicate and review progress** – for example through steering groups or informally

2.3 Outreach and engagement

Strong partnerships are particularly important for reaching and then engaging with disadvantaged people. In particular:

- ESF evaluations have shown the key role that **smaller and community based organisations** can play in reaching those outside mainstream support – including those not on benefit.
- **Statutory services** like Jobcentre Plus can also play a key role in identifying those who come into contact with public services but may not be well served by them.

Effective outreach also means **going where disadvantaged people are** – where they live, and the services that they use. Research¹⁰ suggests a number of critical success factors in delivering place-based outreach, including:

- **Co-location** – with landlords, health services/ GP surgeries, advice services and so on
- **Mobile provision** – particularly in more rural or isolated areas
- **Staff that work across locations** – rather than permanently based sessions
- **Piggy-backing on other events** – community events, open days, job fairs
- **Keeping in touch with partners** – making sure that partners understand your services, have clear and simple guidance, and get regular feedback on how things are going and the contribution that they're making
- **Not going overboard** – too much outreach can be daunting for people and may even get confusing

Case Study 3

Want to Work was an ESF programme in Wales focused on reaching people who were 'economically inactive' and not receiving support.¹¹

As a Jobcentre Plus-funded programme, it could draw referrals from local JCP offices, particularly of ESA and Incapacity Benefit claimants. However the service also reached out into local community services and particularly health services, recruiting people through a network of smaller partners and also direct, place-based recruitment.

In 2009 it had successfully recruited 2,937 people, with one third of those not on benefits.

¹⁰ See for example Casebourne et al. (2006), *Review of Action Teams for Jobs*, Department for Work and Pensions

¹¹ Riley et al. (2013) *Evaluation of Want to Work: Final Report*, Centre for Economic and Social Inclusion

Note that many evaluations have found that projects can take longer to get up to speed than is often anticipated. Optimism, positivity and creative are good. However, organisations can be unrealistically optimistic too. Plan to build up your rate of delivery and be cautious about how quickly you will be able to not only identify and engage people, but also to achieve the results that you are committed to deliver.

So what might this mean for my project?

- Find out **where your target groups live, where they go**, and what services may be most able to help
- As well as your direct delivery partners, try to **engage with wider local networks** like GP surgeries, advice services and landlords
- **Keep in touch with your partners** – with simple messages and guidance, and regular feedback
- Look for **opportunities to piggy-back** on things happening locally
- **Try to keep it simple** – too much outreach can be daunting and confusing
- **Be realistic about the time that it may take for a project to get up and running** – in general it takes at least three months to start taking referrals and it will take time for processes to really bed down and to start seeing results

2.4 Needs assessment

The way that you assess what support people may need will be different for different projects – one size does not fit all. However there is quite a lot of evidence from European approaches on the characteristics of effective assessment tools.

First, **be clear on what your assessment is for**. BBO is an employment programme, so your assessment of participants will want to focus on identifying **distance** from employment, **barriers** to employment and employment **support needs**. Underneath this, good assessment tools distinguish between:

- **Triage** – the initial assessment of *whether* someone needs support – which is often relatively quick, prescriptive, and screens participants into groups; and
- **Diagnosis** – the in-depth assessment of *what* support is needed – which is often more intensive, two-way, and more of a process than an event.

Both triage and diagnosis may happen at the same time, but they serve different purposes: one determines *who* you support, the other determines *how*.

Second, the European research in particular emphasises the **critical role that advisers play** in delivering assessment tools. The best advisers:

- **Are well equipped** – they have been trained to use the tool, have regular reviews to share learning, benchmark how it's used, and can modify the process
- **Are good with people** – they can build rapport with participants and getting underneath their issues
- **Understand what support is available** – they have the right information but also an understanding of how support may need to be sequenced and prioritised
- **Make plans** – with assessment leading into an action plan and a package of support
- **Empower participants** – drawing this together, assessment processes work best where participants are at the heart of it and feel that they own it

Case Study 4

Critically, assessment tools don't work where advisers don't feel like they own them! A good example of this was in **Finland**, where the employment service developed a highly effective tool which predicted long-term unemployment in nearly nine out of ten cases. However it had very little adviser discretion and had not been developed with adviser input. Within a few years the tool was withdrawn, as it became clear that advisers did not trust its results and over time they stopped using it.¹²

¹² Riiipinen, T. (2011), *Risk profiling of long-term unemployment in Finland*, Tempo Economics

Third, **try to keep it simple**. It is possible to identify those with greatest need from a short assessment. The evidence suggests that key indicators are both 'hard' barriers like work history, benefit history, qualifications, health and disability, caring responsibilities and so on; and 'softer' factors like confidence, resilience, having clear goals, and wider influences like parents, family and peers.

Case Study 5

In the **Netherlands**, the Work Profiler assessment tool uses just twenty questions and correctly predicts whether someone will become long-term unemployed in about 70% of cases¹³. In **Ireland**, the 'PEX' model correctly predicts 85% of cases from about eighteen questions.¹⁴

Finally, assessment is a **process rather than an event**. It can only work if there are clear and effective referral processes on to other services and support – and what matters most is how support is then tailored and personalised as a result. So assessment needs to be an integral part of the wider offer – ideally underpinned by shared data or common case management systems. And assessment will almost certainly be ongoing – with advisers or support workers able to work with participants to reassess needs, update plans and further tailor support.

So what might this mean for my project?

- Think about **how your triage and diagnostic stages work** – in many cases this may be a single assessment, but if you have a strong focus on outreach then you may want to conduct the triage element first
- **Make sure that advisers understand the process** and are bought into it
- **Test and learn** – the assessment process is bound to need tweaking, so work with the frontline to refine it
- **Make sure that the process is fully integrated** with the support that you're delivering – that it leads on to an action plan and is reviewed regularly
- **Try not to over-engineer it** – the initial assessment need not be too involved

¹³ Wijnhoven, M.A, Havinga, H. (2014), *The Work Profiler: A digital instrument for selection and diagnosis of the unemployed*, Local Economy, (Vol.29)

¹⁴ O'Connell, P.J, McGuinness, S, Kelly, E, Walsh, J (July 2009), *National Profiling of the Unemployed in Ireland*, The Economic and Social Research Institute

2.5 Managing support and referrals

Many projects are likely to include referrals into and out of different services, and multiple transitions between services. Where this works, support can be integrated and joined up. Where it doesn't work, participants drop out or get lost.

Evidence from previous programmes emphasise the importance of:

- **Active management** of referrals – ensuring that both services and individuals are followed up;
- **Sequencing and joining up support** between services – so that the referral process follows on from the action planning; and
- **Clear communication to participants** about what will happen next, who is responsible for what, and when they can expect things to happen.

All of this points to taking a **case management** approach, where support is overseen and followed up by a co-ordinating adviser.

Case Study 6

The value of this approach is clear in the evaluation of a **Cyrenian's ESF project in Swansea**¹⁵, which delivered impressive employment outcomes for particularly challenging clients (homeless people and drug and alcohol abusers):

"The model as a whole is greater than the sum of its parts, referrals are seamless from sub-project to sub-project and the participants understand the progression routes from one project stage to the next."

Where things don't work, it is often because referrals are passive and not followed up. The **evaluation of the 'Next Steps' service**¹⁶ found that many of those who did not go into learning nor work had had unclear or non-specific advice, had been referred on to provision but not followed up, and were not being actively supported by the Next Steps service.

It is important also to **manage expectations**. There can be a tendency when engaging and assessing participants to suggest that your support will exactly meet the participants' needs. This can lead to disenchantment and drop-out.

¹⁵ (2011) *Cyrenians Cymru Evaluation Report*, Wavehill Ltd

¹⁶ BIS (2012) *Next Steps Satisfaction and Progression Surveys: Annual Report*

Case Study 7

Evidence from Scotland suggests that ESF projects raised higher expectations than they succeed in delivering:

"The proportion of participants who expected to gain a qualification at 70% was much higher than the proportion who actually studied for a qualification (30%). Likewise, 64% of participants expected to gain a work placement through the course, when only 35% actually went on work experience. Perhaps greater clarity at the outset would make sure that aspirations are met and that participants do not get a misleading perspective on what they will get from the course."¹⁷

So what might this mean for my project?

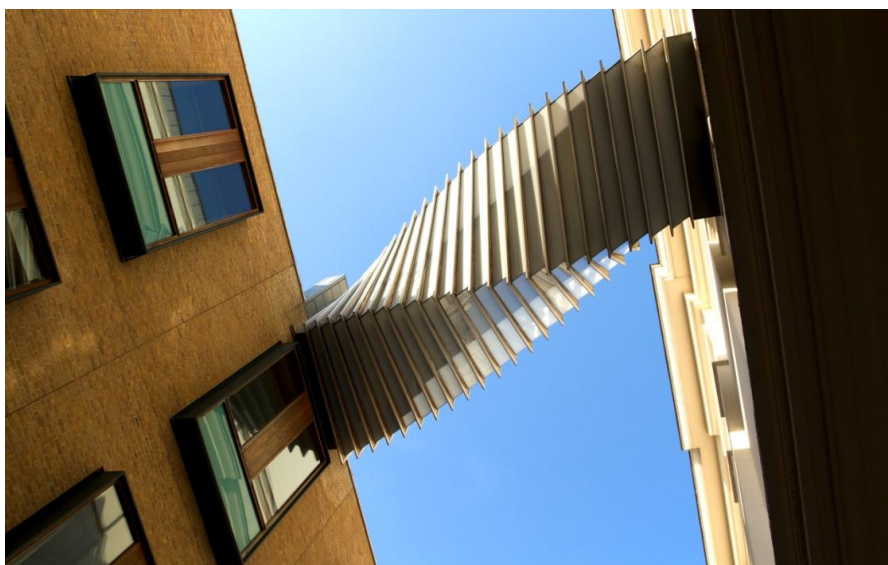
- **Action plans should lead into sequenced and co-ordinated support** – not just a set of referrals
- **Ensure that support services and participants are followed up** – and that there is clear communication about who is doing what, and what happens next
- **Be clear on who is ultimately responsible for co-ordinating support** – and what systems and processes they may need in order to do that
- **Try not to over-promise** on what support will be available
- **Avoid complacency** – be prepared to dedicate more time and resource in the early stages to reviewing performance data, speaking to partners, reviewing how processes and systems work, and taking corrective action

¹⁷ Hall Aitken (2012) *European Social Fund Participants Survey report*

3. Understanding and supporting participants

What this Chapter covers:

It looks in more detail at the support that projects deliver. It focuses first on the role of personal advisers or coaches, then on the effectiveness of additional support before looking at what works for participants with different characteristics.



3.1 The role of personal advisers

Personalised, adviser-led support is critical in supporting people to prepare for, find, enter and stay in work.¹⁸ The precise nature of this support will vary according to the needs of those supported and the nature of the programme, but there are common features. We consider that high-quality adviser support boils down to four key elements, set out overleaf.

There is some evidence on **what skills matter most for advisers**¹⁹ – around personal empathy and attitude, their understanding of employability and employment barriers, understanding of the jobs market, and practical skills in managing caseloads and organising

¹⁸ See for example Hasluck, C. and Green, A. (2007) *What works for whom? A review of evidence and meta-analysis for the Department for Work and Pensions*, Department for Work and Pensions Research Report 407; Martin, J. and Grubb, D. (2001) "What Works and for Whom: A Review of OECD Countries' Experiences with Active Labour Market Policies", *Swedish Economic Policy Review*, Vol. 8, No. 2

¹⁹ Sienkiewicz, L. (2012) *Job profiles and training for employment counsellors*, *European Commission Mutual Learning Programme for Public Employment Services*, European Commission

their work. The best advisers are mentors and managers: can motivate and challenge; work with partners; co-ordinate support; and provide practical help to prepare for work.

There isn't really conclusive evidence on optimal **caseload sizes** – these will depend on the participants and the project. However experience suggests that caseloads above 80 per adviser makes it very hard to deliver proactive and personalised support; while caseloads below 30 or 40 may only be appropriate for the most disadvantaged groups.

The characteristics of effective adviser support



So what might this mean for my project?

- **Think through the skills that you need most for your advisers** – especially the extent to which they are managers, mentors or both
- **Map out what your advisers will deliver and how** – the stages of support, action planning process, frequency and nature of support, and key interactions
- **Ensure that you get your caseload assumptions right** – model this based on what your advisers will deliver, how frequently and for which participants
- **Think about how you will support your advisers to learn and share**

3.2 Building confidence and resilience

Often, a key challenge in supporting disadvantaged groups – before you can begin to address specific barriers or start to prepare for work – is building up their **self-belief and confidence** that they can set goals and then achieve them. Good advisers are often adept at doing this, helping to instil belief and resilience through the process of assessment, action planning and support. However, behind it there is also research evidence from behavioural economics. This is best set out in the *MINDSPACE* report²⁰, which has a number of insights relevant to how we support people to build confidence and resilience.

- **Writing commitments down makes them more likely to be delivered** – we want to keep our promises
- **Small positive changes in behaviour can lead positive changes in beliefs** – in other words, you don't always need to change attitudes to change behaviour
- **We value smaller, more immediate pay-offs more than larger, later ones**
- **We want to do what other people are doing** – so-called 'norming'
- **We value losses more highly than we value gains** – so this loss aversion means that we tend to focus more on the risks rather than benefits of change

Case Study 8

In particular, participants may have deeply held and negative views about entering work. This is well illustrated in the **evaluation of Want to Work**²¹, which identified "*fear of coming off stable and guaranteed benefits*", "*concerns about not being better off in work*" and fears about job security as major barriers to participation. The possible benefits of going into work were often outweighed by these worries.

In this example, you can see how behavioural insights could play an important role in overcoming or addressing fears, by:

- Focusing on what you lose from not entering work, rather than what you gain – so how much worse off you are not in work (benefit calculators such as [entitled to](#) offer a quick and easy way for advisers to do this)
- Focusing on the small benefits – how much better off and how quickly – rather than the longer term ones
- 'Normalising' work – emphasising how many other people like them work

²⁰ Dolan, P., Hallsworth, M., Halpern, D., King, D. and Vlaev, I. (2011) *MINDSPACE Influencing behaviour through public policy*; Institute for Government and Cabinet Office

²¹ Riley et al. (2013) *Evaluation of Want to Work: Final Report*, Centre for Economic and Social Inclusion

Peer support and group engagement can also play a key role. This is well evidenced particularly in supporting those with common mental health conditions²² – where group work has been demonstrated to help participants to build confidence, follow through on commitments, support and reward each other, and overcome setbacks/ build resilience.

So what might this mean for my project?

- **Expect that your first priority will be to build confidence and resilience, and address perceptions**
- **If so, make sure that advisers have the tools to do this** – to develop written action plans, agree small steps, focus on behaviour change, and address norms and negative views
- **Think about the role that facilitated group sessions might play** in helping participants to make and deliver commitments, support each other and overcome setbacks

²² Audhoe, S. S., Hoving, J. L., Sluiter, J. K. and Frings-Dresen, M. H. (2009) 'Vocational interventions for unemployed: Effects on work participation and mental distress. A systematic review.' *Journal of Occupational Rehabilitation*, 20(1), 1–13

3.3 Additional support

Your project will likely have a range of additional support to help to address barriers to work, either funded directly or through wider partners. This may include health support, training, volunteering, work placements or financial inclusion. Again, there are some common lessons around what works in aligning and delivering additional support.

First, **maintain a strong focus on employment**. BBO is an employment programme, and there is a wealth of evidence²³ that models that prioritise rapid entry to the right employment – even for very disadvantaged groups – can be more effective than those that keep people back from work in order to address barriers.

Case Study 9

The **Supported Employment model** is a well evidenced²⁴ approach to supporting disabled people to quickly enter and sustain employment – typically described as a ‘place, train, sustain’ model. It has five key elements:

- **Engagement** – Raising the employment-related expectations of disabled people, their families, and relevant education, health and social care professionals.
- **Vocational profiling** – Identifying aspirations, learning needs, skills, and job preferences – which then inform how the adviser and participant search for jobs.
- **Job matching** – With a focus on a rapid transition to a sustainable job that matches the individual’s skills and aspirations.
- **Employer engagement** – working with employers as partners, with an ongoing relationship and a focus on learning skills on the job.
- **In-work support** – individually tailored, and building on the support within the workplace as well as out-of-work support where needed.

Core elements of this model are also found in related approaches such as Individual Placement and Support (IPS)²⁵. Overall this is a highly effective, if intensive, approach – but as importantly it emphasises that a rapid transition to employment can work, where you get the profiling, support and employer engagement right.

Secondly, building in **real experience of work** can play a key role in improving confidence and workplace skills, and addressing negative employer perceptions. Lack of work experience is a key barrier for many workless people. The key features of successful placements are that they:

²³ See for example OECD (2010) *Sickness, disability and work: breaking the barriers. A synthesis of findings across OECD countries*, OECD

²⁴ Ibid

²⁵ Sainsbury Centre for Mental Health (2009) *Doing what works, Individual placement and support into employment*. Briefing 37.

- Provide real experiences – based on what a job is really like;
- Are taken seriously by employers and have the right in-work support;
- Have opportunities to consolidate learning – including soft skills like teamworking, time management and organisation; and
- Are the right length – long enough to be meaningful, but not too long to substitute for paid work. Typically placements run from 2-8 weeks, although paid placements such as in Intermediate Labour Markets are often longer and can be very effective.

Case Study 10

Evaluation of the Work Choice employment programme for disabled people²⁶ provides clear evidence of the effectiveness of work placements and work trials.

"Work placements can provide valuable experience for participants who had little or no work history. Work trials can be used instead of interviews and formal application processes for participants who would generally not perform well at these. In some cases, these practices were resulting in multiple placements, and ongoing arrangements between providers and employers."

Thirdly, provision should be **flexible, supportive, and should look to provide broader support** to help to keep people engaged and benefiting.

So what might this mean for my project?

- **Target additional support at those who are most likely to benefit** – i.e. those least likely to secure work without addressing a health, housing, training or work experience need
- **Maintain a focus on employment** – 'place then train' models show that not all barriers need to be overcome before an individual can secure good quality work
- **Ensure that work experience and volunteering provide real experiences** – that they lead to workplace skills and help address employer perceptions
- **Where possible, continue to provide broader, personalised support** – so that participants can get the most out of any provision, continue to engage, and can consolidate their learning

²⁶ Centre for Economic and Social Inclusion (2013) *Evaluation of the Work Choice Specialist Disability Employment Programme: Findings from the 2011 Early Implementation and 2012 Steady State Waves of the research*, Department for Work and Pensions

3.4 What works for whom?

For BBO projects there is a particular focus on those furthest from work – and specifically disabled people and those with health conditions, disadvantaged women, ethnic minorities, older people, ex-offenders, the lowest qualified, homeless people and migrants. The evidence for some groups is less conclusive than others, but key insights are set out below.

Disabled people and those with health conditions

There is extensive research on support for disabled people and those with health conditions. This points to common themes around **personalisation; effective partnerships and employer engagement; highly skilled advisers that have small caseloads; and intervening at the right time**. Employment support for this group is also more likely to need to be long-term, and tailored to specific needs including any impairment.

Case Study 11

Fit for Purpose²⁷ explored in depth what works disabled people and for those with different impairments. Supported Employment was seen to have positive impacts on employment, when effectively targeted and properly implemented. Personalisation of services and effective employer engagement were also highlighted.

Minority ethnic communities

Although there is considerable difference between different ethnic groups, the research suggests that minority ethnic communities can be particularly disadvantaged in three ways:

- **Low awareness:** with a need for effective outreach, including through community and peer groups
- **For more recent migrants, literacy, numeracy and language barriers,** as well as a lack of transferable qualifications
- **Rapport with advisers:** with research by DWP²⁸ stating that *"customers from ethnic minorities place greater emphasis on personal contact and friendliness of staff than white customers."*

Women from some minority ethnic communities can be particularly disadvantaged from a combination of these factors – they may have lower awareness of the support available through statutory services; have less good English than their partners; and have fewer qualifications. Previous projects have sought to address this, most notably the Partner

²⁷ Purvis et al. (2014) *Fit for Purpose - Transforming employment support for disabled people and those with health conditions*, Centre for Economic and Social Inclusion

²⁸ Hasluck, C and Green A E (2007) *What works for whom? A review of evidence and meta-analysis for the Department for Work and Pensions*, Department for Work and Pensions

Outreach for Ethnic Minorities²⁹, which supported non-working partners who were not in contact with Jobcentre plus and who lived in areas of high disadvantage.

Case Study 12

A report published by the **TUC on Full Employment**³⁰ recommended that outreach programmes should be developed and introduced for individuals from specific minority ethnic communities that are furthest from mainstream support.

"Outreach programmes, grounded in local communities and with a clear focus on community engagement and partnership work, appear to have had some success in reaching those in particularly disadvantaged groups who are often outside mainstream support. There is a case for developing new programmes, with stable and longer-term funding, to meet these needs."

Lone parents and disadvantaged women

Disadvantaged women are a particularly diverse group. Many will have children, the number of children they have will vary, as will their age and the age of their children and their circumstances. They are known to cycle in and out of work³¹, whilst many will stay of benefits for an extended period of time. Support is more likely to need to support them to **build their confidence and upskill**; while also providing necessary **support with childcare and finding and applying for more flexible jobs**. **In-work support** for this group is also critical, particularly to help manage challenges around childcare and delays between starting work and getting paid.

Case Study 13

A study on **lone parents, health and work**³² supports this view:

"Lone parents on IS felt that a number of things would help them move into work: help with job search, a job matching service, help building skills and confidence, childcare information, and help with self-employment."

"Where lone parents have moved from benefits into employment they have been found to continue to need support in terms of help finding more suitable, less physical or less stressful jobs or help finding an employer who better understood the need to take time off work for childcare or health reasons."

²⁹ Aston, J. et al (2009) *Evaluation of Partners Outreach for Ethnic Minorities (POEM): Final report*; Department for Work and Pensions Research Report 598

³⁰ Wilson T and Bivand P. (2014), *Equitable Full Employment Delivering a jobs recovery for all*, Touchstone Extra

³¹ Evans et al. (2004) *Lone parents cycling between work and benefits*, Department for Work and Pensions

³² Casebourne, J. and Britton, L. (2004), *Lone parents, health and work*, Department for Work and Pensions

Older people

Research suggests that age itself is a barrier to returning to work, and that the specific needs of disadvantaged older people can include **IT capability and jobsearch skills**, **self-esteem and confidence**, and **uncertainty about transferable skills**. There is also a strong overlap between age and **disability and ill health**.

Case Study 14

A report for **Age UK** about employment support for unemployed older workers³³ echoed this view: *"A more sustainable but also useful approach would be to invest early on in equipping jobseekers with the skills to effectively look for work online and to make speculative approaches to employers."*

Staff attitudes and experience were also agreed to be key to effective support for older people: *"This included a need to treat older jobseekers with respect, build their self-esteem and encourage them, and build trust."*

Young people

Young people tend to move in and out of work and education more quickly than others, so it can be particularly challenging to understand what works. However for unemployed young people, research evidence³⁴ suggests that critical success factors include: having **smaller scale** programmes that feel less 'institutional' and are shorter in duration; **focusing on work experience and the transition to work** so as to address employers' concerns about work skills; and having **holistic support** in recognition that young unemployed people may need more help in adjusting to work habits and behaviours.

Case Study 15

A **review of training for young unemployed people with low qualifications**, commissioned by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, stated that:

*"A number of studies, point out that programmes that combine training with periods of work experience, contact with employers and assistance with job search, and that lead to recognised and relevant qualifications, are more likely to have positive impacts."*³⁵

For those further from work, **more intensive support** is likely to be needed, particularly as more traditional interventions may already have failed within education.

³³ Foster et al. (2014), *Employment support for unemployed older people*, Age UK

³⁴ Wilson, T. (2013) *Youth Unemployment: Review of Training for Young People with Low Qualifications*, BIS Research Report 101

³⁵ Ibid

Case Study 16

For example, an **OECD report**³⁶ categorised young people not in learning or work as 'left behind youth' and argued that advice and job-search support alone are unlikely to be effective for this group.

"For the most disadvantaged youth, who generally cumulate several social risk factors, more in-depth strategies are needed....While back-to-the-classroom strategies might prove counterproductive for them, training programmes taught outside traditional schools, combined with regular exposure to work experience and adult mentoring, are often better strategies for these disconnected young people."

So what might this mean for my project?

- **Labour market disadvantage can manifest itself in a range of ways** – around confidence and self-belief, jobsearch skills, low awareness of support, disengagement from less 'personal' support, poor basic skills and so on
- **The common thread is the impact that these elements have on participants' ability to find work** – so making work possible and desirable
- **How you tailor your support will depend on your participants' barriers** – but disadvantages overlap, so you will likely need to be ready to adapt
- **There is evidence out there!** Look at what's worked in other programmes aimed at people with similar characteristics and needs.

³⁶ OECD (2010), *Off to a Good Start? Jobs for Youth*

3.5 Multiple and complex needs

In many cases, your project will be aimed at those with multiple and complex needs – for example older people with low qualifications and poor health; or disabled young people; or disadvantaged parents from ethnic minority communities. This can present particular challenges in delivering employment and employability support.

First, where people have multiple and complex needs, **individual barriers are often under-reported** – and may only come out much later on. For example a survey in Scotland³⁷ found that twice as many ESF participants classified themselves as disabled as were recorded in management information.

Secondly, participants will often **not view one specific 'disadvantage' as their main barrier**. Many may point to factors beyond their control – with research by Inclusion finding that the most common barrier reported by disadvantaged social housing residents³⁸ found that the most common perceived barrier was the jobs market and employer attitudes.

Thirdly, multiple disadvantage **can also make it harder for people to engage with and stay in additional support**. This reinforces the need to ensure that training, volunteering and so on also include ongoing adviser support to help participants to stay connected.

Finally, **really entrenched disadvantage can often be 'hidden' from identification** – in particular those: with problematic drug use; homeless and vulnerably housed; with a history of offending; or with mental ill health³⁹. Many of these issues will not come out through formal assessment processes, but through ongoing engagement and support.

So what might this mean for my project?

- **Make sure that assessment processes and referral routes are flexible enough** to respond to hidden or multiple disadvantages
- **Build action plans around participants' perspectives and the steps they can take** – specific disadvantages may be less salient than other factors
- **Ensure that additional help like training and volunteering includes ongoing adviser support** to keep those with more complex needs on track

³⁷ Hall Aitken (2012) *European Social Fund Participants Survey report*

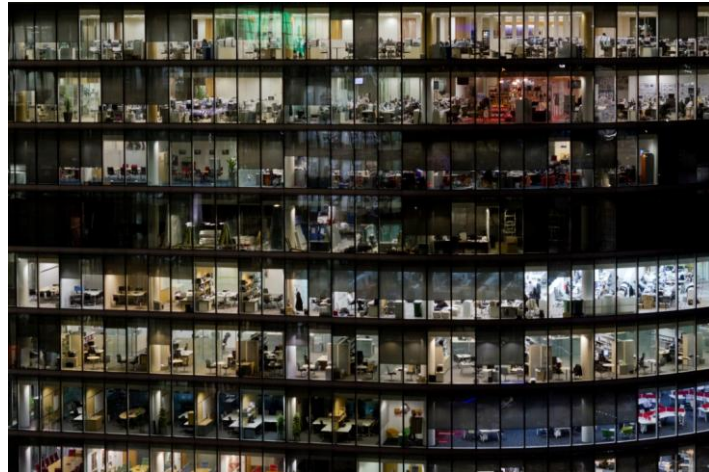
³⁸ Wilson et al. (2015), *Worklessness, welfare and social housing: A report for the National Housing Federation*, National Housing Federation

³⁹ Ibid

4. Working with employers

What this Chapter covers:

It sets out key lessons on approaches to employer engagement, and principles of supporting participants when they are in work.



4.1 Developing an employer offer

There isn't much empirical research on 'what works' in delivering services to employers, but there are useful insights from qualitative evaluations. Overall, employers tend to report better experiences when support:

- **Is straightforward and coherent** – avoiding everyone trying to talk to the same employers at the same time, with confusing or overlapping offers.
- **Meets their needs** – i.e. to find the right staff at the right time with as little hassle as possible. In practice, this means demonstrating that you understand their business, have people with the right skills, and can save them money compared with other recruitment approaches. Many of the best approaches run the recruitment service directly –handling vacancies, sifting candidates and matching them. This is often called the '**agency model**'.
- **Is flexible and responsive** – people want to feel like they're being listened to and that services are responsive. This often points to having dedicated employer engagement staff and resources that can focus on employer service.
- **Makes them feel good about themselves** – virtually all employers want to feel like they're doing the 'right thing' as long as it doesn't harm their business. And often, this will be good for their reputation.

- **Is timely** – employers will only generally want to recruit when they can afford to. The best approaches are based on a longer-term relationship and repeat business. Nagging employers will not work – being able to tap into networks, and using data and local resources to understand growing demand, is key.

Joined up for Business – Joined up for Jobs⁴⁰ is a good example of an integrated, employer-facing service in Edinburgh. It comprises three key elements:

1. **Recruitment Support** – with a single point of contact which uses an ‘account management’ approach to support key employers. This service provides vacancy handling, sifting and job-matching services where employers require that.
2. **Pre-recruitment training** – acting as a gateway to a range of partner services, across training, volunteering, wage subsidies and so on.
3. **Business Growth support** – the service goes beyond just vacancy support, and into wider support with HR, business growth, tax and so on – enabling it to build more lasting relationships with smaller employers in particular.

Focusing on more disadvantaged groups, the **evaluation of the WORKSTEP programme⁴¹** for disabled people emphasises the effectiveness of both agency-based and more individual-based approaches.

So what might this mean for my project?

- **Try to keep the offer clear** – and critically, link it up with what others are doing, so that it is coherent locally
- **Try to tap into local networks and use local data** – Chambers of Commerce, local authority teams and LEP contacts may all be able to help
- **Consider focusing on building lasting and deeper relationships with key employers and sectors** – understanding their needs and business
- **Think about the scope for a more agency-based model for those employers** – so handling vacancies, sifting candidates and matching them.
- **Sell the benefits of supporting BBO clients**, and of offering a professional service at no cost

⁴⁰ <http://www.joinedupforjobs.org.uk/employers/joined-up-for-business/>

⁴¹ Purvis et al (2006) *WORKSTEP evaluation case studies : exploring the design, delivery and performance of the WORKSTEP programme*, Department for Work and Pensions

4.2 In-work support

The literature suggests that a range of factors can affect people's ability to stay and progress in work.

At an **individual level**, attitudes and motivation, networks, and job satisfaction are significant drivers of retention and progression at all stages. Low qualifications are also a key indicator of greater risk of poor retention and progression.

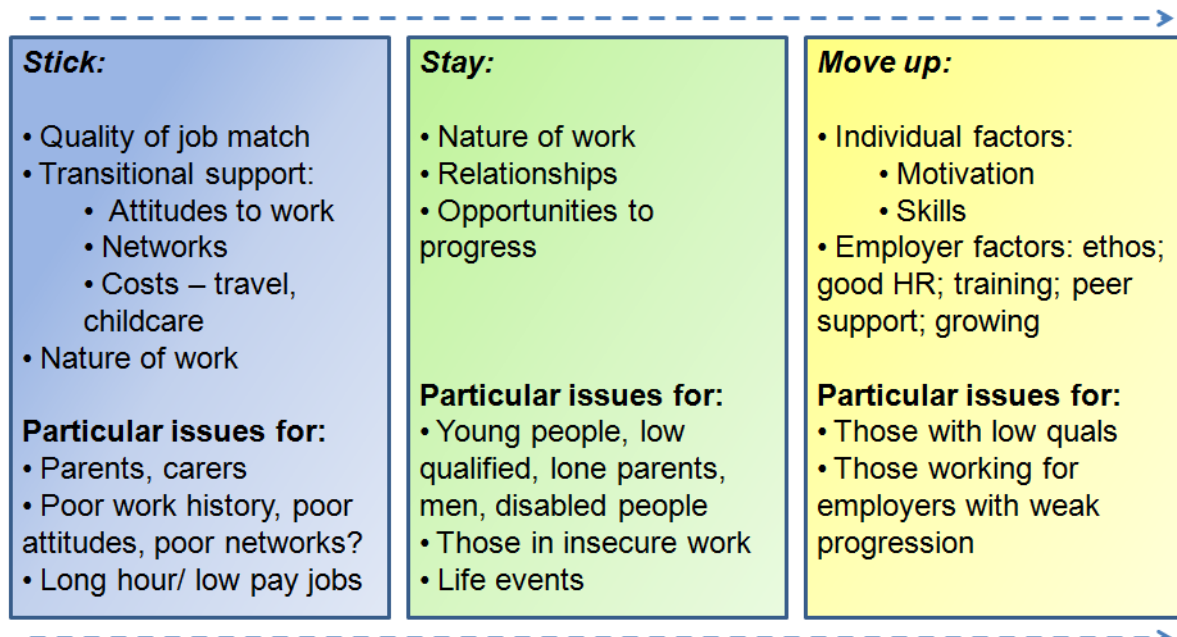
At a **company level**, while there is evidence that particular occupations and (low paid) sectors have poor progression, a range of other company factors appear critical – for example the quality of the work, the professionalism of HR and management functions, company size, turnover and growth potential.

We consider that there are three key stages:

- First, **sticking in work** – so managing the first week, day or even hours
- Then, **staying in work** – managing the first weeks and months, and in particular reaching the first pay cheque
- Finally, **progressing in work** – moving up either in that job or a different one.

A summary of the key factors affecting each of these, and who they matter most for, is set out below.

Factors affecting retention and progression



Critical to **sticking in work** is the **quality of the job match**⁴² – people in jobs that are a poor match are more likely to leave that job in the first few weeks. Alongside this, issues around **making the transition to work**⁴³ – including meeting additional financial costs and settling in – are also key. Those with caring responsibilities, disability and high costs (for example travel) are less likely to stick in work, while those with good support networks are more likely to. It also appears that people are less likely to stick in **poor quality jobs** – those with long hours, demanding and unsatisfactory work, and in difficult conditions⁴⁴.

Staying in work (retention) appears to be more connected with the **nature of the work itself** rather than individual characteristics. In particular, people appear more likely to stay in jobs where they have formed strong relationships, have rewarding work and have opportunities to develop and progress⁴⁵. However the likelihood of staying in work is also affected by life events, which in turn may affect some groups like lone parents and older people more than others.

Finally, the factors that affect **progression** are complex and encompass both individual and company factors. BBO does not have a specific focus on progression, but there is more detail on what works in the report *Work in Progress*⁴⁶.

So what might this mean for my project?

- **Focus on getting the job match right** – ensuring that the job role, expectations, responsibility, location and so on are a good fit
- **Ensure that there is ongoing contact and support** – particularly at the transition into work, and particularly for those with higher 'costs' from work
- **Consider when and whether transitional financial support (including emergency support) may be needed** – particularly for travel and childcare
- **Support may be light touch after the initial transition**, and many participants won't want ongoing support – but make clear that help is still there if things go wrong or needs change

⁴² NAO (2007) *Sustainable Employment: Supporting people to stay in work and advance*; Hakeney, S. et al (2009) *Staying In, Moving up: Employment retention & progression in London*, LDA

⁴³ Devins, D. et al (2011) *The Role of skills from Worklessness to Sustainable Employment with Progression*, UKCES

⁴⁴ Cheung and McKay (2010) *Training and Progression in the Labour Market*, DWP; Holzer and Martinson (2006) *Can we improve job retention and advancement among low-income working parents?* Georgetown University

⁴⁵ Graham et al (2005) *The Role of Work in Low Income families with Children*

⁴⁶ Wilson et al (2013) *Work in progress Low pay and progression in London and the UK*, Centre for Economic and Social Inclusion

Further learning, support and ideas

On Building Better Opportunities

For more information regarding the programme, including the Programme Guide, Frequently Asked Question and Answers and Project Outlines, visit the Big Lottery Fund [website](#).

On European Social Fund

A guide to delivering programmes with European funding can be found [here](#). The BBO ESF Support team provides support on delivering within ESF rules and regulations including eligibility, record-keeping, reporting, publicity and cross-cutting themes. Visit [here](#).

On Local Enterprise Partnerships

LEP Local Strategic Plans and other resources are on the LEP Network [resource area](#).

On 'What Works' in employment programmes

The National Archives hosts [all DWP research reports](#) from 1990 to 2011. These are easily searchable by subject area and keyword. More recent research reports are published on the [gov.uk website here](#), with shorter 'ad hoc research' [published here](#).

The [Inclusion website hosts all of our research reports](#), including many of those mentioned in this guide. The website includes presentations from all *Inclusion* conferences and events, which are a useful resource for case studies and good practice. Presentations from the 2015 Into Work Convention are [here](#), along with material from [2014](#), [2013](#) and [2012](#).

The Big Lottery has published useful learning from its Talent Match programme on a [dedicated webpage here](#). At the bottom of the page are links to good practice guides on working with young people and on partnership working.

The Institute of Employability Professionals is the professional membership body for those delivering employment and employability support. Membership starts at £40 per year. Its [website](#) contains best practice guides and blogs, which can be accessed by members.

The 'PES to PES Dialogue' is the European Commission's mutual learning programme for public employment services (PESs). The [website](#) contains resources on topics including partnership working, individual action planning and performance management.

The Nesta [Living Map of Job Innovators](#) is a useful source of case studies of interesting and innovative employment programmes. Users can search by theme, beneficiary group and standard of evidence.

Contact us

If you have any questions, comments or suggestions on this guide then please get in touch with us by email, to info@cesi.org.uk.

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