

The Work Programme

The Government has set out a number of major welfare to work reforms designed to support people to find and remain in employment. Over the last 12 months the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) has designed, contracted and put a 'Work Programme' (WP) in place. The WP creates a structure that allows providers greater freedom to tailor the right support to the individual needs of each customer. The WP will replace an array of existing programmes for unemployed people.

On Tuesday 26 July 9.00-10.00am, Rose Regeneration and East Midlands Councils (EMC) hosted an online debate about the Work Programme (WP). This was held on the Local Economic Growth Network (LEGN) community of practice: <http://tinyurl.com/24dxsgg>

The debate was intended to provide opportunities for Members to discuss the transition of existing programmes to the WP; the involvement and activities of public, private and voluntary sector providers; and how/whether the scheme can meet the Government's target of helping 2.4 million unemployed people find jobs over the next 5 years.

The debate was chaired by David Kirkham (Nottinghamshire Employment & Skills Board and Nottinghamshire Fit for Work Programme) and the panel included: Dez Grant (Senior Partnership Manager, Jobcentre Plus, Central England); Andy Pidluznyj (External Relations Manager, Jobcentre Plus, Lincolnshire, Nottinghamshire & Rutland); Alison Dobbs (Operations Manager, Igneus).

Introductory remarks from the Chair

David Kirkham's thoughts on the opportunities and challenges that the WP presents:

- The WP is a payment by results model, but what results are we looking for? Is it fair to say that- for providers- they are just financial? Are we aiming to see more people in work? Or less economic disadvantage?
- The WP is heralded as a 'black box' approach- allowing providers to invent and have freedom to develop approaches according to local needs. But how are those local needs identified and what role can we play in shaping the response?
- In the past we have used a whole range of local/discretionary funding to address the gaps and test other 'worklessness' approaches, perhaps focusing on deeper rooted economic disadvantage. What have we learnt from this that can bear influence over the way in which the WP develops? How can we assume this role within economic development?

The DWP response on the latest Work and Pensions Select Committee Report on the WP stated that- "the Department expects [WP] providers to develop and maintain effective relationships with local partners, ensuring that services continue to meet the needs of individuals and communities throughout each contract package area." (NB: a contract package area is a 'delivery area', which are mainly regional).

Therefore, what role can we now play- as economic development partners within local authorities, the third sector and private sector- to influence the implementation of the WP for our local areas?

WP delivery model

In mentioning a black box approach, all primes were allowed to develop and implement a service delivery model that they felt would deliver the WP objectives. In this Contract Package Area (CPA) we are delivering the contract, with A4E being the other prime in the area. Our delivery model incorporates engaging with our supply to chain to deliver either end-to-end services or certain elements of the delivery model. We have established an ACE (Accessible Community Experts) network of partners and providers that will support us in the delivery of this programme. This network will help address clients needs and barriers to employment such as debt, housing, convictions etc. These include Citizens Advice, Probation Trust, Framework Housing, Clarion for deaf clients, Mencap, Phoenix Futures. This network continues to be developed by our contracts team to ensure we can also respond to local needs of our clients.

Alison Dobbs, Operations manager, Ingeus

Communication with Prime Contractors and the role of local authorities

I have found that as a local authority, prime contractors have little interest in what we have to offer. Perhaps they consider that we are trying to take over their role by linking with partners in our area? Communication between primes and local providers, whether they be subcontractors, other non-contracted private and third sector deliverers or public sector, is key. In covering a region, primes are likely to struggle to come to terms with the idiosyncrasies of localities and I think we have a lot to offer in steering delivery to the needs of the local economy.

As a district council we are very involved in local economic development and in an area such as West Lindsey with Growth Point status for Gainsborough and a massive growth in population for the town over the coming 10-15 years, it is essential that we link in to delivery of worklessness support to ensure that our local residents are being equipped with the experience and skills to prepare them for growth sectors.

From successfully delivering Future Jobs Fund and developing excellent relationships with local providers, I find myself sidelined and unaware, not only of what is being delivered, but also who is delivering it on a local basis.

Nicoya Palastanga, Employment and Skills Project Manager, West Lindsey District Council

I very much agree Nicoya - I think that Districts have a key role to play in this agenda and I wonder what the best process for ensuring they are fully engaged in the delivery arrangements for the programme are?

Ivan Annibal, Rural Practitioner, Rose Regeneration

Perhaps I can bridge Nicoya's comments with Alison's- I sense a degree of frustration in that district council's wish to connect but are being rebuffed? But Alison has given a view on a very inclusive community approach for Ingeus here in Nottinghamshire. Do others experience similar issues and can we do more to share these views and highlight good practice nationally?

David Kirkham, Strategic Manager- ESB/ Director Fit for Work Service, Nottinghamshire: City & County Employment and Skills Board

Local authorities can play a role in helping to shape the approach to local WP through direct contracting conditions - in awarding contracts - to support local training, and also through the consideration of applying appropriate Planning policies (both through the LDF and the detailed planning approvals of developments). This is only really suitable in the case of major schemes which can have an impact, but in pursuing a growth agenda LA's can help make a difference which gains momentum and encourages contractors to apply such approaches on a voluntary basis in the long

run. Procurement is perhaps another way in which through the encouragement of local inter-trading and purchasing, local training can also benefit. LA's need to approve appropriate policies to pursue these agendas and it is not always easy to achieve this. Economic Development Officers also need to work closely with their Housing colleagues in addressing programmes such as Decent Homes where there is often substantial funding being defrayed and where the projects could include a training element in the contract.

Michael Robinson, Economic Development & Tourism Manager, Newark & Sherwood DC

I know that some LA's have incorporated training and employment requirements into the LDF documents. I'm aware of Wakefield's policy, which I was involved in drafting, it's here

http://www.wakefield.gov.uk/NR/rdonlyres/83A90EB9-AF77-4285-A8B6-BF34FF7AF533/0/LDF_DraftDeveloperContributions_SupplementaryPlanning.pdf

See paragraph 6.10. Wakefield's LSVT landlord, Wakefield District Housing has been really successful in using leverage from its Decency programme too.

However, a lot hangs on councils implement planning policy. We know that certain sectors are much better at creating entry level jobs than others. I'm thinking of supermarkets and the fast food sector in particular. The big 'but' on these though, is the sharp intake of breath that most planning officers will emit when confronted with an application from one of the major operators in either of these fields.

John Erskine, Senior Manager, Regional Programmes, Homes and Communities Agency

Newark and Sherwood have an Employment and Skills Group for the district that brings together partners that deliver worklessness support services. We would welcome representatives from the WP to attend these quarterly meetings so they can link in with us as the LA and wider partners.

Julie Beresford, Economic Development Officer, Newark and Sherwood District Council

We recognise stakeholders including Local Authorities are very interested in engaging with WP primes and have facilitated this recently, for example, with the Mansfield Area Strategic Partnership. Could we support West Lindsey and others with this?

Andrew Pidluznyj, External Relations Manager, Jobcentre Plus

I'm not currently involved in programme delivery or from the local authority side in managing relationships with prime contractors, but in the past when I have been, the relationship with DWP providers has sometimes been problematic.

Alison has mentioned agencies which support clients in areas such as debt, housing or offending issues. Given that many of these agencies are losing budgets, and I'm particularly thinking of advice providers such as CABx, how will the work programme model support their work? My experience in the past is that DWP contractors think this support appears by magic, and it's something that they don't need to worry about paying for.

John Erskine, Senior Manager, Regional Programmes, Homes and Communities Agency

I think that as time goes on and the WP is implemented you are likely to see more engagement, particularly in joining up existing services to work programme delivery. At the strategic level it will depend on how Primes propose to involve authorities within their governance and stakeholder engagement models they proposed within their bids.

Caroline Masundire, Associate Director, Rocket Science UK Ltd

It seems to me that the ACE players are key to WP in terms of wider engagement in our region; can you tell us more about the approach to identifying and supporting them in their mission Alison?

Ivan Annibal, Rural Practitioner, Rose Regeneration

Just to provide you with an update on some of the meetings I've had with regards to economic development. I've met with Niki Jenkins (head of ED at Notts City council) and have also presented to the "working Nottingham meeting" our service delivery model. We are looking especially to how our Employer services team can link up, offering a "joint offer" from the LA, JCP and Prime. We explored as to how we could supply clients to help fill vacancies via the "employer hub" that is being developed and ring fence vacancies in the council's planning and procurement. We also discussed how we could identify and maybe work together on responding to clients needs if local provision was not available. I've also met with representatives from Mansfield and Ashfield council who were very keen for us to link into local community experts and partners to help progress clients. In addition, also focussing on the employers our clients go into, we work with them to see if they want support and advice with growing their business. We have also set up an initial framework of partners, 3rd sector organisations, providers etc from those that had registered an interest to work with Ingeus via our website. We contracted with organisations on a national level to be part of the ACE network, but we are developing more local networks in response to local needs.

Alison Dobbs, Operations manager, Ingeus

Alison, We at Broxtowe would also be interested in meeting with you to discuss linking in with ourselves as the LA but also with local partners and E&S organisations through our Skills, Training and Employment Partnership.

Samantha Dodd, Economic Development Officer, Broxtowe Borough Council

I am due to meet with one of the WP providers this afternoon where I hope to learn more about the programme and the plans for how this is going to be implemented within the Newark and Sherwood area. We work closely with the providers of discretionary projects and wider Jobcentre Plus initiatives to help ensure support is getting to those that need it most. The discretionary projects that have taken place in N&S have been effective in supporting the areas with the most need and help to tackle issues such as generational unemployment and help those that have been out of the job market for some time to gain the confidence and self esteem to become job ready and tackle multiple barriers. We are keen to work with the WP providers and hope that linkages can be made with existing projects that are still active to continue this good work.

Julie Beresford, Economic Development Officer, Newark and Sherwood District Council

Employer Engagement

I have to admit to not having read up on details of the WP but trying to pick up some threads here, I wonder how much the language and complexity of the systems in place will prove to be a turn-off to employers? Perhaps LAs can help in this respect through simplification and promotion of any advantages from recruiting through the WP.

Gary Bosworth, Reader in Enterprise and Rural Economies, University of Lincoln

How should we support the engagement of employers in the WP? Whose responsibility is it to do this? Jobcentre Plus is a major partner in employer service delivery- can we create more 'joining up' with primes and them for the benefit of employers?

David Kirkham, Strategic Manager- ESB/ Director Fit for Work Service, Nottinghamshire: City & County Employment and Skills Board

Jobcentre Plus has been talking jointly with Ingeus and A4e about a collaborative approach to employer engagement; we also recognise the need to involve wider stakeholders in this approach. A good test would be with a specific recruitment exercise to learn from working together, to simplify the offer to employers.

Dez Grant, Senior Partnership Manager (Central England), Jobcentre Plus

The WP is being sold as the solution to all. Are unrealistic expectations being placed on the WP?
What is the WP provider expectation of partners?

Trish Adams, Economic Regeneration Officer, Nottinghamshire County Council

Sharing Best Practice

It sounds like a regional network may really help develop good partnership practice. It may also help understand the differences we are experiencing as the WP evolves. Can we do this nationally too, particularly given the emphasis DWP is making on 'expecting' primes to engage locally with partners in local areas. Another issue is how do we understand the differences of delivery within each prime model- for example Ingeus for Nottinghamshire directly deliver WP services more than A4E who sub-contract- so what does this mean for community partnership/district engagement. There is no one size fits all!

David Kirkham, Strategic Manager- ESB/ Director Fit for Work Service, Nottinghamshire: City & County Employment and Skills Board

I wonder if the wider issue of networking might be addressed through a dialogue between Jobcentre Plus, Contractors and East Midlands Councils. It seems like just the sort of approach which would be particularly valuable from a regional perspective?

Ivan Annibal, Rural Practitioner, Rose Regeneration

I take Ivan's suggestion of a dialogue between Jobcentre Plus, Work Programme Providers and EMC to look a pan regional approach. This could be wrapped up with the current activity already underway. I'll look to take this forward with EMC.

Dez Grant, Senior Partnership Manager (Central England), Jobcentre Plus

A4E have their own unique service delivery model but they too are also linking into to the support and expertise available in the area. It is very clear to us that the WP will not succeed without utilising the expertise available through our sub contractors. Whether they are delivering end to end services such as Papworth and In Training in Leics and Northants or whether they are delivering specific services for us. In addition to the ACE network we are also linking in with organisations such as JHP Training, ENABLE and North Nottinghamshire College to deliver some vocational route ways for clients to provide them with work experience and accredited training.

Alison Dobbs, Operations manager, Ingeus

I am all for diversity and competition but isn't there a risk that Ingeus and A4E will end up duplicating each other's work in some areas? Are there mechanisms for you to share intelligence or is competition the key driver here?

Ivan Annibal, Rural Practitioner, Rose Regeneration

Just to echo other comments, it's important we use existing networks such as Local Strategic Partnership groups to take a joined up approach to worklessness.

Andrew Pidluznyj, External Relations Manager, Jobcentre Plus

I'm open to contact from partners wishing to join up activity on the WP in the East Midlands to come via myself, unless you already have good links locally. I can be contacted at dez.grant@jobcentreplus.gsi.gov.uk

Dez Grant, Senior Partnership Manager (Central England), Jobcentre Plus

In our role as economic development agency for the county, we have invited WP primes and local stakeholders (including representatives from borough and district councils as well as local delivery bodies) to participate in a Northamptonshire Worklessness Steering group. The first meeting will take place next week. We will also use this forum to engage with the ESF families contract once announced. The group will facilitate sharing of information and ensure that regional providers are supported to understand local needs.

We have had some engagement with A4e, both prior to and since winning the WP contract. We have not been able to engage with Ingeus thus far, but a representative is due to attend the Worklessness group next week.

Fiona Galbraith, Economic Development Project Manager, Northamptonshire Enterprise Partnership

Can we find ways to ensure that WP partners have the necessary engagement with local strategies - I agree that district level intelligence and partnership is key - especially to our very localised skills economies - whilst ensuring that resources are properly allocated to all our priorities - helping clients?

Roy Harper, Independent Skills Practitioner

EMC's Executive Director, Jan Sensier and myself are meeting with the contractors in mid September to discuss the local authority role but we'd agree it might be a good opportunity then to meet with Jobcentre Plus too.

Peter Williams, Policy Advisor, East Midlands Councils

Skills and Training

How does training and skills now fit with the WP and its black box approach? What methods can we use with our partners to integrate employment and skills delivery locally? How can we support WP delivery to be employer responsive?

David Kirkham, Strategic Manager- ESB/ Director Fit for Work Service, Nottinghamshire: City & County Employment and Skills Board

Programme Design

I find the WP approach fascinating and depressing at the same time. What happened to all the networks pre-WP including Government, agencies, private sector, JCP and LAs were they just binned? I do not detect any leap forward in delivery or results just out with the old and in with the new. Were LAs consulted about how this new way would work and their role? I may be just a cynic but maybe LAs are not considered relevant to the initiative which is private sector led. Discuss...

Jim Hanrahan, Economic Development Practitioner, Econdev Solutions

Through our Skills, training and employment partnership, we have found that many of the partners out there are unaware of each other, and the services which they provide. Our role as the LA has been to bring these organisations together to create and strengthen links to provide the best support to those who require it. Hopefully, when the meetings with contractors have taken place, then the future role of the LAs will fall into place and become clearer. For now, we shall continue with our current approach to ensure that the requirements of our local people are met.

Samantha Dodd, Economic Development Officer, Broxtowe Borough Council

For people who work with colleagues in fields such as mental health or learning disabilities social work, the idea that services users are involved in choices about their care provision and in the co-design of services is increasingly a 'given'. Indeed most of us are used to this when we discuss surgical procedures or the like with our GP, where we are given the choice of where and when we can have our operations, and also have access to information on the quality of providers. How will the Work Programme meet this kind of customer expectation? Especially given the number of highly articulate redundant public sector workers it may be dealing with over the next few years!

John Erskine, Senior Manager, Regional Programmes, Homes and Communities Agency

Closing Remarks from the Chair

Thank you everyone for your input. There are a number of issues concerning engagement and networking, sharing good practice, which we have an offer from EMCs to develop. Alison has made some great contributions about how Ingeus is developing their engagement role. We've also had some great contributions regarding the relationship the WP has to economic development activities- such as sector engagement and procurement outcomes. John's touched upon a great point regarding health and the personalisation of support budgets too, which should really be addressed within the WP context. In terms of a final thought from me:

The WP has been designed to incentivise reward for sustainable outcomes. But do we have sustainable jobs in our economy accessible to WP clients? What should our role with the welfare to work community now be in supporting the development of sustainable opportunities?

David Kirkham, Strategic Manager- ESB/ Director Fit for Work Service, Nottinghamshire: City & County Employment and Skills Board

Contact details

For more information regarding Lincolnshire, Rutland and East of England, our Operations manager is Celli Jepson who would be more than happy to update you on any activities happening in that patch. Celli's email address is cjepson@ingeus.co.uk (*posted by Alison Dobbs, Operations manager, Ingeus*) I welcome all the invites and requests for my involvement from you. I am more than happy to describe our delivery model and the Work Programme and explore a joined up approach across the CPA, please don't hesitate to get in touch: adobbs@ingeus.co.uk