



Final Report



Capital City Partnership Review of the Employer Offer

**Rocket Science UK Ltd
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Executive Summary

This Report presents our findings, conclusions and recommendations from our review of the Employer Offer of the Joined up for Job (JU4J) partnership.

The Employer Offer is designed to present employers with a clear, obvious and appealing source of recruits who will do a good job for them. While the objective is to identify and meet the recruitment needs of employers, the underlying purpose of the partners is to help unemployed people find and keep work. It is therefore not a conventional recruitment offer:

- It is focused on employers with vacancies which are realistic for unemployed clients.
- It only helps place currently unemployed people into work. In practice, there is a particular focus on longer term unemployed people or those facing a range of barriers as they make progress towards work.
- The partners are competing in the market on behalf of unemployed people and are seeking to present employers both with a better, more rounded service and with work ready candidates who can do a good job.

The context for this review has three aspects which need to influence the design and delivery of an effective employer offer:

- ***The economic and political context.*** The Joined up for Jobs (JU4J) partners are operating for the first time in a 'loose' labour market. After a decade of sustained economic and employment growth – leading to unemployment being at a historic low 2 years ago – there is now relatively high unemployment and fewer vacancies. The most optimistic forecasts are for a long climb out of recession. Significant public sector spending cuts will mean reductions in public sector employment after a decade of significant growth and reductions in funding with non statutory services like economic development and employment being particularly vulnerable.
- ***The welfare to work policy and practice context.*** The new UK Coalition Government is implementing significant changes to welfare to work policy and practice across the UK. The Work programme will introduce even more significant Prime Contractors who will be responsible for a larger group as eligibility starts at a maximum of 6 months unemployment for 18-24 year olds and 12 months for those 25 and over (compared with 12 months for all customers under New Deal). Which Prime Contractors are selected, and how they choose to deliver locally will significantly affect the role of the JU4J partners and the experience of local employers. The funding model is likely to lead to a significant rationalisation of local provision.

- ***The recruitment practice context.*** From an employer's perspective, the JU4J Employer Offer is part of a wider array of recruitment services. Employers have choices in terms of both intermediaries and approaches and the use of the web is becoming ever more significant for both individuals and employers.

This context means that:

- Effective action on employability is as important as it has been for over a decade.
- The partners face a period of significant change and uncertainty and will need to focus on actions which are reasonably robust in the light of these changes if they are to get a solid return on their effort.
- Over time, local welfare to work providers may need to become part of the Work Programme to survive, partly because of its wider client group, partly because other sources of DWP money will be restricted and partly because alternative sources of funding are likely to shrink.
- The focus of the Work Programme on funding by outcomes will increase the focus of local providers on performance. This, together with the need to be able to finance the cash flow demands of outcome related funding and the desire of most Prime Contractors to subcontract to a limited number of local providers in each area, may encourage the rationalisation of local provision. Taken together with the evolution of the training market, and a much stronger link between training funding and jobs, we can therefore expect changes in the infrastructure of provision.
- The Employer Offer is part of a highly competitive recruitment market made up of a wide range of providers, intermediaries and private recruitment agencies and a range of different techniques – including websites, advertisements and word of mouth.
- The relationship with Prime Contractors will be extremely important – and the commitment of the Primes to working with the JU4J partners and creating an effective employer engagement approach.
- Since the Prime Contractors vary significantly in their approach, financial models and values, the choice of Primes will be important. The partners may wish to ensure that the area attracts bids from the Prime Contractors who have a commitment to partnership approaches and building the local infrastructure of providers.

- Making sure that vacancies are uncovered and that employers get the right recruits – from welfare – at the right time will be fundamental to success. This in turn means:
 - Widening the range of employer relationships in a coherent way to maximise opportunities;
 - Ensuring the quality of employer relationships is good enough to spot all job opportunities, and ‘market’ individuals with skills and attitudes who will benefit the employer;
 - Ensuring there is follow up support to help employers deal with any teething issues and help embed individuals in work;
 - Providers need to further enhance the skills and work readiness of their individual clients to ensure that they are appealing to employers and that they can compete with others who have just lost jobs or are changing jobs.
- These changes raise significant issues about what the partners can do to create an appealing environment for new entries into the local provider market, and avoiding actions that may discourage new investors.

The unfolding context creates a major issue for the partnership. More than ever, circumstances require collaboration rather than competition, but there are significant forces that are already driving more competition and less collaboration – and these forces are likely to strengthen. There is a business case for greater collaboration:

- A clear and coherent offer to employers and an organised supply chain for them
- Building the scale and range of opportunities for unemployed people in an increasingly competitive labour market (in other words, making the cake bigger for service providers serving unemployed people)
- Improving the dynamics of client flow through the network of providers with enhanced cross referrals to ensure that at any stage both individual clients and employers are getting the service they need.
- Developing a shared commitment to performance which means that providers are helped to tackle their weaknesses and deepen their areas of strength – so providing systemic quality for employers and individuals.

There is a need to ensure that providers and other partners are clear about this business case and its implications – otherwise any employer offer will deteriorate over time as providers compete with each other for clients, vacancies and employers.

Findings

Our discussions with employers suggest that the way the 'Employer Offer' is designed and delivered needs to take account of a number of issues and requirements:

- With some notable exceptions (eg large retailers keen and able to recruit unemployed people; employers with a strong CSR commitment; local businesses keen to help young people in the area) most employers simply want the best person for the job and have little interest in whether recruits are employed or unemployed. So the JU4J partners can only 'sell' their unemployed clients in terms of their work readiness and potential contribution rather than their unemployed status.
- Employers are not interested in who delivers the service – they just want a good service. And it is not interesting to them that it is joined up – this is an expectation rather than a selling point. In other words, service structure and parentage is not important – effective delivery is.
- Employers are becoming increasingly cost conscious in how they recruit, making the free service of the JU4J partners more appealing.
- Employers prefer to deal with a particular individual who over time develops a strong understanding of their needs, style and values and uses this to actively to identify appropriate candidates and draw their attention to people who could do a good job for them.
- Employers want a clear and obvious place to go for support. Most of the employers we interviewed recognised this to be Jobcentre Plus.
- Employers expect a high quality service. What this means is:
 - A rapid response to an approach
 - A quick and accurate understanding of their requirements
 - Meeting these requirements rapidly in terms of a short list of work ready candidates
 - Follow up to ensure that their needs have been met and to help them deal with any early issues
 - Each response being part of a deepening longer term relationship
 - The availability of add on support
 - The coordination of the offers available from public sector organisations, with employers being made aware of other help which may be valuable.

- Funding for employability is becoming tighter and this is tending to increase the competitive pressures on providers. This is producing a range of responses, for example, providers failing to share vacancies which they can't fill, or widening their offer into new sectors. Some of these responses may improve the employer offer, while others may not and it will be important for the partners to be clear about the behaviours expected of partners to ensure that employers experience the best possible service.
- It makes sense – for both employers and individual job seekers – to create 'Employment Hubs' where there are concentrations of relevant jobs. All three of the existing hubs have been badly affected by the recession, in particular the two that have focused on the construction sector.
- The Academies have delivered mixed performance and most have reverted to the role of more conventional sector-focused provision as the funding for their wider sector role has been used. At a time when job growth is more 'speckled' than sectoral (ie it is happening where there are well managed, probably export focused businesses), it makes sense to draw on a network of account managers to gain usable intelligence about opportunities and trends and accept academies in their current role as sector focused providers.

Conclusions

The current economic situation – and the likely trends over the foreseeable future – taken together with an evolving policy developments and significant public sector spending cuts mean that the partners are operating the employer offer in a context which differs in nearly every way from that which existed at its creation.

This raises some fundamental issues for the partners:

- The competitiveness around vacancies combined with more limited funding means that there is a temptation for providers to compete rather than collaborate – and to generalise rather than specialise. It will be important for the partnership to ensure that the business case for collaboration is understood (ie it builds a bigger market where everyone can have a larger slice).
- A period which is forecast to display relatively slow economic and job growth suggests that the partners will need to be both more active in their engagement with employers – uncovering latent vacancies and removing all the issues and barriers that discourage employers from creating jobs – and link their work more strongly to business development and inward investment.

- Many of the more reliable long term pipelines – for example in the health sector and more widely in the public sector – are drying up and in the private there is evidence that job growth is occurring in a much more scattered way related to the quality of company leadership and ambition rather than to sector characteristics. This means that partners need to rethink their approach to sectors and to reconsider the value of other types of targeting.

The current economic situation means that sustained efforts on the demand and the supply side are required:

- The lack of vacancies mean that the partners need significantly to extend their engagement with employers – notably with those who may have opportunities (as opposed to vacancies) which are realistic destinations for unemployed people.
- Unemployed clients need to have higher levels of work readiness if they are to compete successfully for jobs in a loose labour market.
- Employers need to experience a high quality service or they will be tempted to recruit employed people and use other recruitment services.

The Employer Offer should be presented as a free, quality assured recruitment service which draws services and resources from a wide array of publicly funded sources.

The current funding environment means that the increasing competition for funding between some of the partners is threatening effective collaboration. This reinforces the significance of the Customer Charter and specifically the commitment of providers to ensure that employers are sent the best possible candidates. There needs to be a clear recognition that providers are mutually dependent in ensuring the best service to employers.

It does not currently make sense to create a new brand for an Employer Offer. The Jobcentre Plus brand has a high profile, has wide recognition and the service provided by – and through - JCP has a positive reputation. However, it is important to send a strong signal to employers that the different public organisations are working together to meet their needs. There are some simple practical ways of displaying this – for example by all front line staff having business cards which present their own organisations but under an ‘umbrella’ identity. This umbrella identity could be Joined up for Jobs which was recognised by 30% of the employers we interviewed. But it will also be important to ensure that employers experience the practical benefit of this by effective cross referral and ensuring that they gain a package of help as appropriate from the resources and abilities of the partners.

There is a significant difference between open market responses (where employers announce vacancies and respond to allcomers) and selective responses (ie pre-selecting for final tests/interviews by employers). There seems to be scope further to strengthen the selective response for employers, but it needs to be done well and the short list needs to be made up of people who could all do a good job for the employer.

There needs to be a strong connection between the identification of employer needs and the identification of candidates – this can be done either by the same person working with both employer and individual clients, or by close working relationships between ‘employer service’ staff and ‘individual service’ staff. Ideally, the final stages of individual routes to work would involve some bespoke to meet particular employer requirements.

We have identified 8 areas for action to develop an enhanced and effective employer offer:

1. Being clear about what the employer offer is – for both partners and employers.
2. Widening active engagement with employers who have realistic jobs for currently unemployed people and extending the routes to the employer market.
3. Deepening employer engagement by extending the current account management system for employers.
4. Driving up the quality of the response by the more active management of performance and behaviours.
5. Promoting added value services for employers such as the use of short list selection as a free specialist service, PACE and bespoke skill development.
6. Building on the current ‘Joined up for Jobs’ brand to send a strong signal to employers that there is a commitment from partners to work together to meet their needs.
7. Working closely with Prime Contractors both before and after final selection to ensure that employers continue to experience a coherent, high quality service focused on their needs.
8. Creating a central development and management resource to support the offer, including the creation of a central source of information, insight and intelligence.

In the following section we set out the detail of recommended action in these nine areas.

Recommendations

In this section we present the eight point plan which has been developed with the partners to enhance the employer offer:

- 1 Clarity about the employer offer: The partners should agree and adopt a clear and simple definition of their employer offer. We propose that this definition be:

The employer offer is a service for employers which provides them with the recruits they need when they need them plus the full range of related public sector support to help them recruit, retain and develop their staff.

The employer offer is therefore a recruitment service which provides employers with unemployed people who have been helped to gain the skills, attitudes and confidence to do a good job for an employer – and provides the employer with the confidence (and back up support) to recruit and develop them. Retention of people in work is likely to become ever more important as funding becomes more strongly related to sustaining employment for significant periods and in work support should be a focus for the partners).

- 2 Widening employer engagement. We have identified three aspects to this:
 - o The partners should widen their active engagement with employers who have realistic jobs for currently unemployed people. This will involve a marketing plan which recognises the different markets and needs among employers. This plan will therefore carefully disaggregate the different employer markets and ensure that partners can respond to their different situations and requirements. This is likely to require some differentiation by location, size and sector and the clear allocation of responsibility to organisations (see below).
 - o Realising the potential of front line staff: The partners should ensure that all front line staff across the public sector who engage with employers are in a position to recognise cues which may suggest an employment or skill issue and are able easily to ensure that employers get a follow up service to respond to this need.
 - o The JU4J partners operate in a large and diverse market, with competing offers and other organisations who work directly with employers. The partners should develop working relationships with recruitment agencies who deal with jobs relevant for their client groups and also consider ways of ensuring that web opportunities are identified and put in front of their clients.
- 3 Deepening employer engagement: As part of a strengthened approach to employer engagement, the partners should significantly extend the current account management system for employers and ensure that the skills and systems are in place to support its credibility and effectiveness.
- 4 Improving service quality: The partners should further enhance the quality and coherence of their offer through the more active management of performance and behaviours. This approach should include:
 - o Building on the current Customer Charter approach particularly in the area of employer engagement skills and approaches and the development of collaborative approaches to ensuring employers get the best candidates.

- Designing and implementing regular systematic reviews of employer experience of the offer (as opposed to their experience of individual providers) and acting to deal with any issues or failures that are identified. These reviews will allow the partners to identify longer term performance trends and also highlight both exceptional and poor performance and take action accordingly.
 - Enhancing candidate quality to ensure that their individual clients are fully work-ready on presentation to employers. This could involve final stage bespoke training to meet the needs of signed up employers.
- 5 Promoting added value services:** The partners should have a particular promotional effort on driving up the use of added value services – for example:
- Selected short lists which will help to ensure that employers only spend time on work ready candidates and help to strengthen the perception that candidates are waiting and ready.
 - The provision of bespoke skills development for new recruits.
 - The availability of the PACE service to help employers cope with redundancies (and benefit from those made redundant by other employers).
- 6 Branding:** The partners should recognise the current awareness in the market of the Jobcentre Plus brand and should not seek to compete with this. However it is important that they project a strong sense of cohesion by building on the current 'Joined up for Jobs' brand - or using a new, more 'employer focused' brand - to send a strong signal to employers that there is a commitment from partners to work together to meet their needs. This could involve continuing the multi-party endorsement of literature, events and initiatives and the use of business cards which display the partnership logo alongside individual partner identities.
- 7 Work Programme:** The partners should work closely with Prime Contractors both before and after final selection to ensure that employers continue to experience a coherent, high quality service focused on their needs. This could involve:
- Ensuring that the best Prime Contractors bid for the area containing Edinburgh by promoting a clear understanding of the significance and coherence of the infrastructure.
 - Conveying a clear sense of a commitment to working closely in partnership with Prime Contractors to ensure a high performance service for individuals and employers.
 - Working closely with the selected Prime Contractors to ensure that there is a shared approach to performance management and improvement.

- 8** A central support service: These recommends imply a significant development and support role which in our view required dedicated support at the centre on behalf of all partners. This central role should also include the creation and maintenance of a support and resources database for use by partners, account managers and employers. These should include:
- The full array of services for business – but with a focus on employment, skills and workforce development.
 - Insights and intelligence drawn from engagements between account managers and employers.

1. Introduction

Background

This is the Final Report of our review of Edinburgh's Joined up for Jobs (JU4J) Employer offer. JU4J is Edinburgh's Jobs strategy and brings together the key partners in Edinburgh to improve the co-ordination of employability services across the city.

Edinburgh has developed a comprehensive partnership based approach to tackling employability across the city, with a focus on demand led models and customer focus. The employer offer that the partners have developed has three components:

- A 'no wrong door' approach for any employer looking to recruit from welfare, backed up by a seamless partnership service
- 9 sectoral academies which were established with a view to developing particular employer relationships within their sectors and providing bespoke training and support to provide a match between clients skills and aptitudes and employers needs
- 3 Employment Hubs - St James Centre Development, North Edinburgh (Waterfront), now badged 'Jobzone' and Craigmillar (PARC programme – all of them major areas of physical regeneration which provide a ready source of construction jobs during the development phase and then jobs in the employers who move in as well as involved in maintaining the environment of the developments.

Our review was designed to explore the effectiveness of these approaches, and importantly to step back and examine the overall model to identify what is working, what isn't and what the scope for improvement is.

The operational objective of JU4J's Employer Offer is

"To deliver a quality, joined-up service to employers for their recruitment and retention needs through a single point of access".

Specifically, the Employer Offer seeks to:

- Ensure that employers in Edinburgh can get access to the full range of recruitment support
- Provide a gateway to all appropriate services, not just those delivered by individual organisations
- Enable employers to recruit from a wider pool of candidates, including those at a disadvantage in the labour market and in vulnerable groups, to help them get the right person for their jobs

- Ensure that jobseekers in Edinburgh will benefit from a wide range of contacts with employers and that those employers are willing to take reasonable steps to assist them into work.

This Report sets out our findings, the issues that have emerged from our work – notably from our interviews with employers and stakeholders – our conclusions and our recommendations. It has been based on workshops which explored our initial findings and thinking as set out in our Interim Report and a subsequent note of issues for a second workshop.

We have interviewed all the key stakeholders and most of the main providers to gain their insights. However our focus has been firmly on employer perceptions and experience and understanding what the employer offer from the partnership needs to be like to be appealing and appreciated.

We have concentrated on ‘the basics’:

- What kind of service are employers looking for?
- What kind of services are employers aware of and what is the employer experience of welfare to work services in Edinburgh?
- To what extent is the current employer offer succeeding in meeting the needs of employers?
- What does the employer offer need to look like in order to respond to the needs of employers and enhance their recruitment of people from welfare?

It is important to point out that this is not a detailed evaluation of the JU4J approach or the Academies or the Employment Hubs: we have not examined their performance in detail and are not in a position to comment on this. However, we have explored the important aspects of all these in terms of the employer experience.

What we have done

Our work started in March 2010 and has been based on the following methods and process:

Desk research

Desk research was undertaken to understand the background to the project, establish the context in which the project was operating, identify the systems and protocols in place, examine the process of delivering the project and identify the outputs and outcomes of the project so far.

We have interviewed all the key stakeholders in the Employer Offer. This included intermediaries, partners, Academies and Employment Hubs.

We set ourselves a target of carrying out 100 employer interviews. We have in practice contacted over 200 employers and completed 78 interviews. From this number we identified volunteers for 10 more detailed follow up interviews.

The Report is structured as follows:

- Section 2 looks in more detail at the background and context to the Employer Offer and its aims and objectives;
- Section 3 provides summary of our findings;
- Section 4 presents a discussion of the issues arising from our findings
- Section 5 sets out our conclusions and recommendations.

2. Background and context

With the Edinburgh economy emerging slowly from the effects of the recession the context for this review is very different from the context of a tight labour market in which the JU4J approach and its employer offer has developed. In addition, the review takes place during a period of significant change in national policy and practice. It is important that these are taken into account in reviewing the Employer offer and developing recommendations. The most significant changes are the following:

- The new coalition Government is seeking to change the welfare support system by enhancing the incentive to work, making welfare to work services more focused on the outcome of sustainable work, and simplifying both the benefits system and welfare to work support. Specifically, the Government is ending all current welfare to work programmes and combining them in a new single Work Programme which will allow a more flexible response to individual needs; take forward approaches using the AME/DEL switch (ie supporting approaches which bring longer terms benefits in terms of reduced spending on benefits, subject to Treasury approval); and ended any further applications for the Future Jobs Fund.
- Significant and sustained reductions in public expenditure which will mean:
 - Cuts in benefits and the resources available for welfare to work and related support.
 - Reductions in public sector employment after a decade of growth.
 - Growing significance of private sector opportunities as the economy emerges slowly from recession.

While these cuts have been postponed for a year in Scotland, it will not reduce their severity in the medium term.

- Unemployment is now relatively high and still rising which means that unemployed people seeking work are presenting themselves in a highly competitive labour market.

The Joined up for Jobs approach was launched in 2002 and has evolved (notably through City Strategy status in 2006) over a period of sustained increases in employment in both the public and private sector. Two years ago unemployment in Edinburgh was at historically low levels, and the main focus was on helping people on Incapacity Benefit to make progress towards a sustainable job. This focus was helped by the need of employers to consider unconventional sources for their recruits in a tight labour market. While those furthest from work remain a priority for DWP and JCP, in practice the recession has meant an increased emphasis on those leaving jobs, to help them make a rapid return to work.

For the first time the JU4J approach is operating in an environment of relatively low demand for labour and strong competition for every job with reasonable pay and conditions. It is unlikely that approaches developed in a different era will still form the best approach:

- Employers can more easily find well qualified and experienced people for most jobs. So welfare to work providers need to 'raise their game' to ensure that their clients are able to compete for work.
- Employers are likely to revert to more traditional sources of recruits and be less prepared to 'meet someone half way' who has previously been unemployed.
- This presents real challenges for those further from work in terms of both the number of appropriate opportunities and the level of readiness required to compete successfully for the jobs that do exist.
- High quality trusted relationships with employers will become even more valuable in helping to uncover and fill 'latent vacancies'.
- The pipelines that could be developed for larger employers in the public and private sector have become less reliable as replacement demand slows and new jobs are put on hold.
- Providers are likely to find collaboration less attractive as they compete for reduced funding and fewer vacancies and seek new ways of ensuring their financial security.

The other implications of the changing context for the Employer Offer are:

- DWP will be seeking 'more for less'. This means that Prime Contractors will have more of their contract money being linked to their clients finding and staying in work.
- Prime Contractors are likely to be offered larger contracts under the single Work Programme (than under Flexible New Deal) and any local approach and partnership will have to work closely with Prime Contractors to ensure the provision of a clear and consistent service for both employers and individual clients. These Prime Contractors will be even more significant new players in the local landscape than the FND Primes were. In developing our conclusions and recommendations we are aware that this remains an area of uncertainty.
- Prime Contractors vary widely in their approaches, delivery models and values. This means that the choice of Prime Contractors in an area will become even more important: some will subcontract everything and others may choose to deliver up to half the service themselves. Primes may choose to bring in major subcontractors from outside the area. The partners will need to adapt their approach and relationship depending on which kinds of Prime Contractors are selected – and also seek to apply influence in the selection and perhaps co-commissioning of Prime Contractors.

- The linking of payments more strongly to sustained job outcomes will mean that only financially secure organisations will be able to fund the start up period of Work Programme sub-contracts, even if part of the risk is absorbed by the Prime Contractor (eg by passing on all the up front payment at programme entry) or a financially secure local partner.

This context is important to the JU4J Employer offer:

- It needs to involve Prime Contractors. The objective of the partners should be to have the highest performing Prime Contractors for the benefit of local people seeking work and local employers. The extent to which Prime Contractors work with local providers – and the performance of these providers – is therefore critical.
- It requires close engagement with employers, which suggests a standard marketing approach of clearly disaggregating the employer market. To date this has been done by sector, but it can also be done by employer size:
 - Large employers in the private sector – whose needs are more predictable and whose HR departments regularly review forward requirements.
 - Large employers in the public sector – who will still have a significant replacement demand and who are often keen to contribute to employability approaches.
 - Small and Medium sized Enterprises (SMEs) who provide 40% of private sector employment yet are often overlooked in employability approaches.
 - Microbusinesses (Sole Traders who may employ one or two people), where the evidence is that appropriate support can produce significant numbers of new jobs.

....or by occupation. There is strong evidence that for many entry level jobs the requirements of the different sectors have more in common than they have differences – for example around the need for ‘soft skills’ and customer care.

- It needs to have a high profile and a strong reputation for high quality delivery if it is to meet the needs of employers – and provide effective support to individual clients – and succeed in a highly competitive labour market. This has implications for profile, ease of access, building trusted relationships and supplying appealing candidates.

3. Findings

3.1 Employer interviews

We carried out two rounds of employer interviews. During the first round we aimed to gain a significant sample and had relatively short telephone interviews with 78 employers from over 200 employers who we contacted. When we were clear about the messages and issues arising from these we went back to 10 of these who had volunteered for a longer more in-depth interview.

In addition we designed a short survey for Jobcentre Plus staff to use with employer contacts during a week in July 2010.

In this chapter we present the findings in three sections (First Round Interviews; Second Round Interviews; JCP survey) because of the very different nature of the interviews and the samples.

First round interviews

We gained potential employer interviewees for our first round interviews from three sources:

- CCP JU4J October 09 event attendance list
- CCP Caselink database
- JCP Employer Database
- Chamber of Commerce
- Health and Social Care Academy
- Access to Industry list of employers who attended the JU4J event

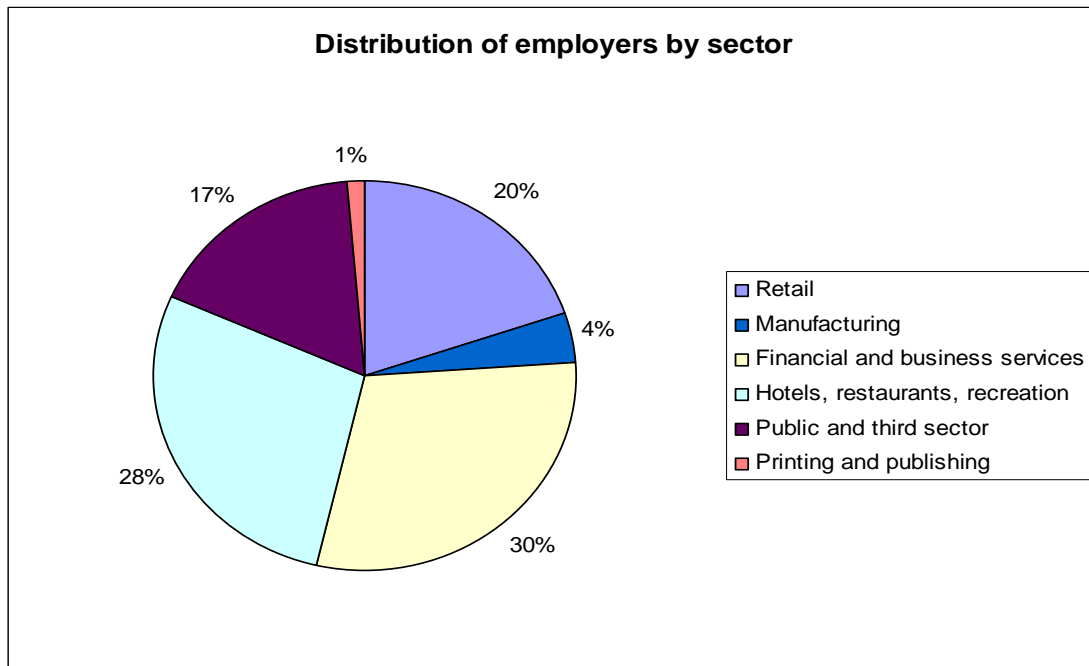
All of the above contacted employers and asked them to opt out of being contacted.

We also used the CEC Top 100 Employer contact list: our contact with these needed to be on a "cold call" basis.

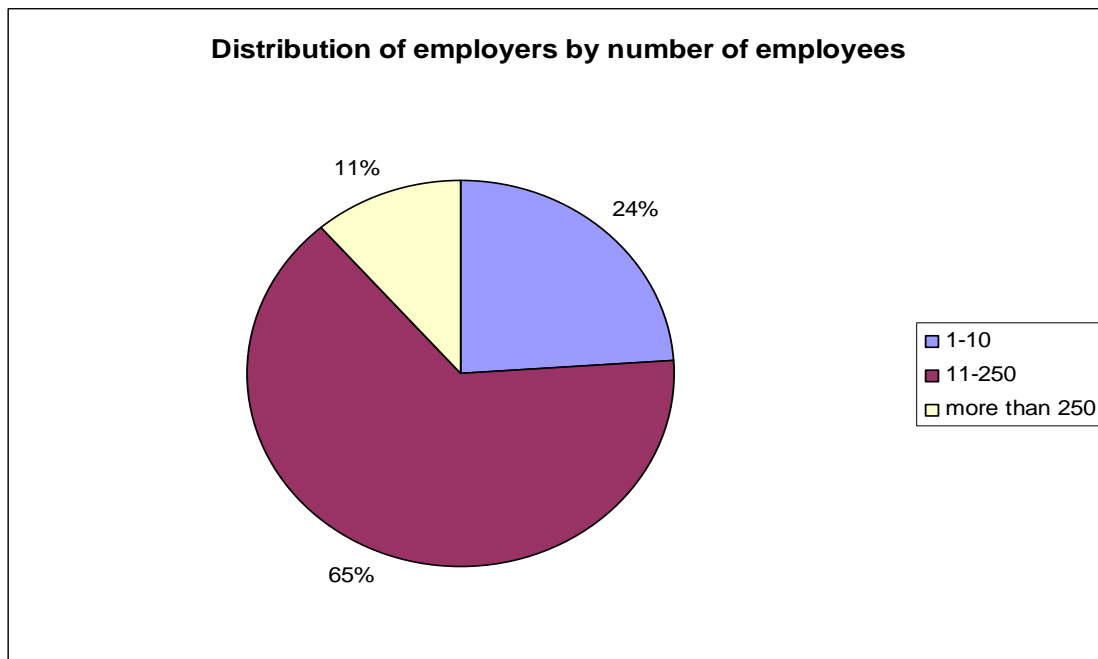
The FSB provided 2 employers (they asked employers to opt in).

To date we have contacted over 200 employers and have completed 78 employer interviews. The source of the contacts that we drew upon means that there is a risk that the sample is weighted towards those who are more likely to know about Joined up for Jobs, as it is likely that they have drawn on the services of the partners. 31% of those we interviewed were drawn from the names provided by JCP.

The profile of the interviewees to date is described in the figures below:



The analysis by sector shows that all the key sectors in Edinburgh have been substantially represented in our interviews.



This analysis by employer size shows that employment across all three size ranges was represented and that SME employment was particularly strongly represented.

Messages from employers

Awareness

30% of the employers we interviewed were aware of the Edinburgh Jobs Strategy/Joined up for Jobs.

“Do you mean the Jobcentre?”

“Yes I am aware of Joined Up For Jobs but don’t really use it. I just contact the Jobcentre.”

66% of employers had used JCP to support them in the recruitment of staff and almost every employer recognised or made reference to the Jobcentre or Jobcentre Plus during interview. Nearly all of those using JCP said they would recommend it to other employers.

Employers consistently stated that Jobcentre Plus is the natural contact point:

“Jobcentre Plus will always be the first point of call.”

“It is an automatic reaction to use the Jobcentre. The Jobcentre is the first point of call.”

There was a general lack of awareness of providers other than Jobcentre Plus. During interview employers were prompted and asked about specific providers. The majority of employers stated that they had not only not used the services described but also had also never heard of them and were therefore unaware that this support was even available.

“If they (public sector agencies) don’t come knocking to us then we don’t know of the services.”

“Had I not gone along to the (Joined Up For Jobs) event I would never have know about any of this.”

Employers did however refer to services accessed *“through the Jobcentre”*. Employers were often unable to identify whether they had received direct Jobcentre Plus provision or whether they had been brokered on to another service by Jobcentre Plus. There is therefore the possibility that employers had received support from the Joined Up For Jobs partners – but were simply unable to identify the source of the support.

A relatively small proportion of employers (18%) could identify having used a public sector agency other than Jobcentre Plus. Other publicly funded provision volunteered by employers included:

- Remploy
- Sectoral Academies
- Action for Employment
- Into Work
- Ingeus.

Employers also mentioned Get Ready for Work (a programme rather than a provider).

Service providers used by employers

Two thirds (66%) of employers had used Jobcentre Plus to support them with the recruitment of staff.

“Jobcentre Plus is the main recruitment method.”

“We use a system which links to Jobcentre Plus, this logs all our vacancies.”

Most of those who had used Jobcentre Plus or another publicly funded provider had used the service for **vacancy posting**. Employers described both positive and negative experiences of vacancy posting support (these are outlined below in the section on employer’s views on service improvement).

Employers had also received other support, including:

- Pre-recruitment training – very few employers cited that potential recruits had received any pre-recruitment training. However, employers were not always aware of whether or not potential recruits had received training from the agency before they were put forward for recruitment;
- Screening of potential recruits – employers highlighted that the CV’s of potential recruits were sometimes pre-screened, a few employers had also received pre-screening interviews of potential recruits;
- Work Trials – a few employers cited that they had taken on individuals as part of a Work Trial;
- Support with recruitment logistics (e.g. provision of interview rooms); and
- Aftercare – post employment support was predominantly cited as simply being a named contact but was highlighted as beneficial for both the employer and the new recruit.

On the whole employers felt that the service was easy to access and was relatively straightforward (NB nearly all these employers were referring to Jobcentre Plus).

"It was an easy process. They [Jobcentre Plus] are nice and pleasant to work with and are very professional."

"Jobcentre Plus is relatively easy to access."

"The process is excellent, the service has always been first class."

Perceptions of service quality

Nearly all of the employers using Jobcentre Plus said they would recommend it to other employers. The main reason was because it was a free service.

"I would recommend it - It's a useful service for other employers because it's free."

There was evidence that the appeal of a free service had increased with the pressures of the recession, with some employers stating that they had stopped using paid for services and particularly recruitment agencies and newspaper advertising.

A few employers highlighted that they would recommend Jobcentre Plus but only for a certain type of staff vacancy (i.e. non-specialist or low skilled).

"Yes I would recommend it but it depends on what calibre of staff you are looking for."

However, there were some negative perceptions of the Jobcentre brand. One employer in particular highlighted that:

"There are issues around battling area managers' perceptions about the Jobcentre. The main reason they don't use it is because of internal perceptions."

The negative perceptions were around the historically poor calibre of recruits.

A number of individuals mentioned that they continued to use Jobcentre Plus provision when they had moved from other employment. This appears to demonstrate brand loyalty in relation to Jobcentre Plus.

Employers views on service improvement

We asked employers about ways of improving the current service. Most of the responses related to improving the calibre of potential recruits and suggestions included:

- Vocation specific pre recruitment training;
- Soft skills training;
- Increased screening of potential recruits.

“Better screening of recruits – issue is the candidate’s lack of the right attitude.”

“Individuals need to be more closely tailored to the vacancies.”

“I had 11 interviews scheduled but only 4 turned up – there needs to be better screening of interviewees: making sure they send people that are interested in getting back into work.”

Suggestions for specific areas for service improvement included:

Improved processes for vacancy posting

Feedback from employers on the online process for vacancy posting was particularly varied (NB most employers seemed to be referring to Jobcentre Plus’s Employer Online service but given the number of websites with almost identical names on the web it is not possible to be entirely sure):

“It’s a really handy and quick process for online vacancy posting.”

“I find the website a bit un-user friendly [for vacancy posting].”

“The website [the vacancy posting element] is not easily accessible.”

Employers highlighted the value of a joined up online vacancy portal that can be drawn on by different providers. However the common theme seemed to be that the accessibility of the Jobcentre Plus website (now on Directgov) and process for posting vacancies needs to be improved. A number of the employers suggested that the process for vacancy posting need to be improved considerably – focusing on making it more user-friendly and easier to access.

“There needs to be better processes for vacancy posting.”

Pre recruitment training

Employers highlighted a number of different areas where pre-recruitment training may be beneficial to them: sector specific training e.g. cash handling, food hygiene; and pre-recruitment training that focused in readiness for work e.g. time management, communication. However some employers stated that they had their own structured

training programmes and that they would not find pre-employment training of potential recruits beneficial.

This view was held predominantly by larger employers who have established recruitment processes in place – they highlighted that recruits would have to take part in a structured induction and recruitment process which would include pre-employment training such as health and safety, hygiene, cash handling. This emphasises the importance of tailoring provision on the basis of the nature (e.g. size, scale, and existing recruitment process of individual employers) of the individual employer.

Increased screening of potential recruits

This was highlighted by employers as a key area for improvement.

“There needs to be better screening of recruits – issue is the candidate’s lack of the right attitude.”

“Individuals need to be more closely tailored to the vacancies.”

“I had 11 interviews scheduled but only 4 turned up – there needs to be better screening of interviewees: making sure they send people that are interested in getting back into work.”

This is also an important issue in terms of changing the previously mentioned negative perceptions of public sector employability provider recruits.

A relationship that continued after recruitment. A number of employers said that they would appreciate continued support after recruitment. That is when a range of issues can arise and with support these can be nipped in the bud.

Second Round Interviews

We interviewed in-depth 10 volunteers from our first round interviews.

What public support organisations are employers using?

Jobcentre Plus had been used by all the employers to advertise at least some of their vacancies. Generally, these were lower-level jobs and employers tended to advertise their higher-level jobs elsewhere.

Beyond JCP few there seemed to be ***little take up or awareness of other support***. There were a few exceptions:

- A retail chain, which recruits many people in a short space of time for new stores, contacts JCP in the first instance, then Remploy to seek candidates. *“Realistically there is not an alternative way of getting that volume of applicants.”* However, when only one or two vacancies are available JCP is still the only point of call.
- One employer used another provider directly, having been referred some years ago by JCP and stuck with them.
- A hotel chain was aware that their JCP registered vacancies are distributed also by Remploy; they also take advantage of training which JCP have made available through the PCT partnership around hospitality (*“This is absolutely welcomed”*)

What public support services do they use?

The service sought from JCP was **almost entirely the advertising of a vacancy**. Several employers would **prefer a sifting process** to reduce the number of inappropriate candidates (especially those who experience large application numbers), but only some were using such a service from Jobcentre Plus.

One employer used an **end to end** service from JCP without wanting to be involved in the selection process. Those not wanting an end to end service often want to be part of the selection as they know exactly what they want. This was particularly true where employers felt that the **employers are the best interviewers** as they know what they are looking for.

People were **overwhelmingly happy with the JCP service**:

“JCP is always good...I don't have anything negative to add.”

“I would give them 100%”

This approval is particularly around aspects that take the effort out of recruitment. This includes having a **known point of contact** who understands the employer's needs already, retains records from previous recruitment campaigns by that employer, and has a quick or easy system of contacting followed by getting an advert out quickly.

Perhaps demonstrating the strength of support for using JCP, one employer continues to advertise jobs through the JCP even though they had only ever received one application and had never filled a vacancy this way.

What other recruitment methods are employers using?

A number of employers were advertising on their **own websites** through which they could receive many applications.

A **small number used recruitment agencies** but almost all examples of this were before the recession and the use of agencies was reducing. *"We are bringing down our costs by not using recruitment agencies"* (Hotel chain). Even before the recession, agencies were principally used to fill more specialist (management/ specialist qualification) or hard to fill roles (eg office roles in a retail company).

There are examples of employers using **Gumtree** as a significant and free recruitment resource. For one employer this was the principle means for recruiting all of their Therapists, dental nurses and dental associates and was found to be very effective: *"Gumtree works – it is very successful"*. Another employer uses Gumtree as *"nowadays people use the internet more than a Job Centre...people coming in have said that they found [the advert] on Gumtree"*.

Newspaper adverts were not used by any of the employers. They have not received sufficient response from them to justify the cost.

Attitude to unemployment

Employers generally felt that **unemployed people could mostly fulfil the requirements** for their vacancies.

"Most vacancies we can fill with unemployed people, as long as they have a willingness to learn." (Hotel chain)

"If they have got experience, whether unemployed or not, it is not a problem as long as they are prepared to be retrained" (Charity)

They often stressed that they were seeking the **best person for the job** irrespective of history (this includes fulfilling necessary qualification or experience requirements).

"[Unemployment is] not something that affects our decision." "The best candidate will be successful whether unemployed or not" (Retail chain)

The roles that the employers were expecting to be filled by unemployed individuals were generally basic / low-level jobs. In most cases, it was only for these jobs that it was considered worth using JCP to recruit for. There was also sometimes an attitude that people with more options would not want these jobs, so they are best filled by the previously unemployed.

Some positions are seen as less suited for the unemployed, although, given experience and qualifications again, it is not unemployment that necessarily hinders and application, but perhaps other factors such as confidence. *“It would be more difficult to take on straight from unemployment...[but this is] not important given qualifications, experience and confidence”.*

Several of the employers offer training (in-house) and use this to ensure that all new recruits are able to fulfil their role. In some cases, this extended to retraining or catch-up before employment for those unemployed (one employer spoke of this particular need with respect to those coming out of long term maternity leave). A retail chain gives two days of training to new recruits in advance a new store opening, which leaves them agnostic over whether pre-recruitment training would be valuable as it may result only in duplication.

One employer was seeking to fill positions for car washers. She recruited only by word of mouth, particularly among her Polish workers (for whom she had much more respect), and through an independent provider (whom she contacts and who then send a worker – end to end service). She was choosing to use the provider as she thought no one else would want the job and also her personal commitment to helping the unemployed (following family experience): *“This is not a job someone with options would choose to do;” “I honestly thought that...there were some poor souls [in remand] can't read and write...give them a chance”.* She was not at all happy with the recruits (*“[those recruited] through Action 4 employment, sometimes they disappear overnight...I find that they don't turn up to work...end up in jail”*) she received and identified many areas that the provider could improve, but she continued to recruit from the long term unemployed.

None of the employers had formal commitments to employ unemployed individuals although some offered interviews to all those from certain disadvantaged groups (eg a retail store interview all applicants via Remploy and the LEP).

Changes from the recession

As expected, some employers find it **easier to recruit** now: *“the recession has made a much wider pool and we have found it easier to find people ready to work.”* (Retail chain)

This has enabled these employers to use cheaper recruitment practice, for example, using their own website or Gumtree. Two employers noted that there were **more skilled people who were now unemployed** and one had recruited management positions from individuals who had been made redundant from higher level jobs.

“[We are] increasingly finding CVs through the Job Centre [Plus] with more experience that can fill higher level role” (Hotel chain).

A hotel chain also suggested that for *“those unemployed for a length of time there was a suspicion of why they were unemployed for a length of time. Seeing this more and more [following the recession] makes me less suspicious”*

However, employers were not linking the recession to finding *better* recruits for jobs. Some even continue to have difficulties finding enough applicants.

Contents of a 'great' service

Each employer suggested different requirements from the contents of a 'great' service, for example:

- A sifting process: *"a really good pre screening [of applicants] would make our jobs easier"* (Hotel chain). *"When we advertise a position there can be hundreds of candidates even though most of these do not meet basic requirements"* (Retail chain).
- More training for unemployed candidates (around interviews, CV presentation or work readiness): *"Nothing is required afterwards, but getting candidates ready for our assessment days and interviews [would be part of a 'great' service]"*.
- Help (probably financial) training new recruits who need help before undertaking their new role.
- There was also evidence from two employers that past financial incentives had encouraged them to recruit unemployed people on those occasions.

A comprehensive service was sought by some of the employers, although this was referring to complete support in recruitment rather than specialist pre-recruitment training or ongoing support after recruitment. *"One point of contact taking everything from start to finish for us"* (Retail chain). In this case, training for unemployed candidates (for customer facing roles) would help these candidates get the position and any ongoing support offered would similarly be beneficial for their application; on the other hand, overall the employer is undecided on the value of these as recruitment support.

Execution of a 'great' service

It was clear that it would be **difficult to change the recruitment approach** of many of these employers who are using tried and tested methods (and sometimes even continue with them when they recognise that they are not fully successful). Although **once engaged this may be an asset if their experience is good**:

"We go back to places where we have set up a good relationship and the service is impeccable" (Retail chain).

It is also worth noting that the larger companies are restricted to preferred providers for training and recruitment support, although this is not necessarily linked to the Joined Up for Jobs offer.

A service design feature appreciated by a number of employers is having a **known point of contact**, *"I like knowing I can phone up one contact all the time"*, although three employers don't feel they currently have this anywhere.

All the employers knew about Jobcentre Plus, few had thought about any other service that was available, yet alone used it. One employer attended JU4J seminars/events but still does not feel very well informed, nor does she choose to use wider support.

How to get the message across

We asked employers what the best way of contacting them would be:

Email – Email was resoundingly chosen as the "best way to get in touch with me and employers like me". The recruitment staff said that they actually read their email, and, if they have a spare moment, might go back to look at emails suggesting initiatives or promotions. One recruiter said that she was not comfortable with using computers and this would not be a good way to get in contact with employer like herself.

Leaflets – The employers often suggested that no-one reads leaflets or paper publicity of this sort: *"People don't even look at them". "Generally when you get post you just throw them out"* (Retail chain).

Seminars/events/fairs etc – A few of the employers already attend such events, a few more would like to in the future. Two employers were both receptive to this idea, although one was clear that he would only be interested in regional level events.

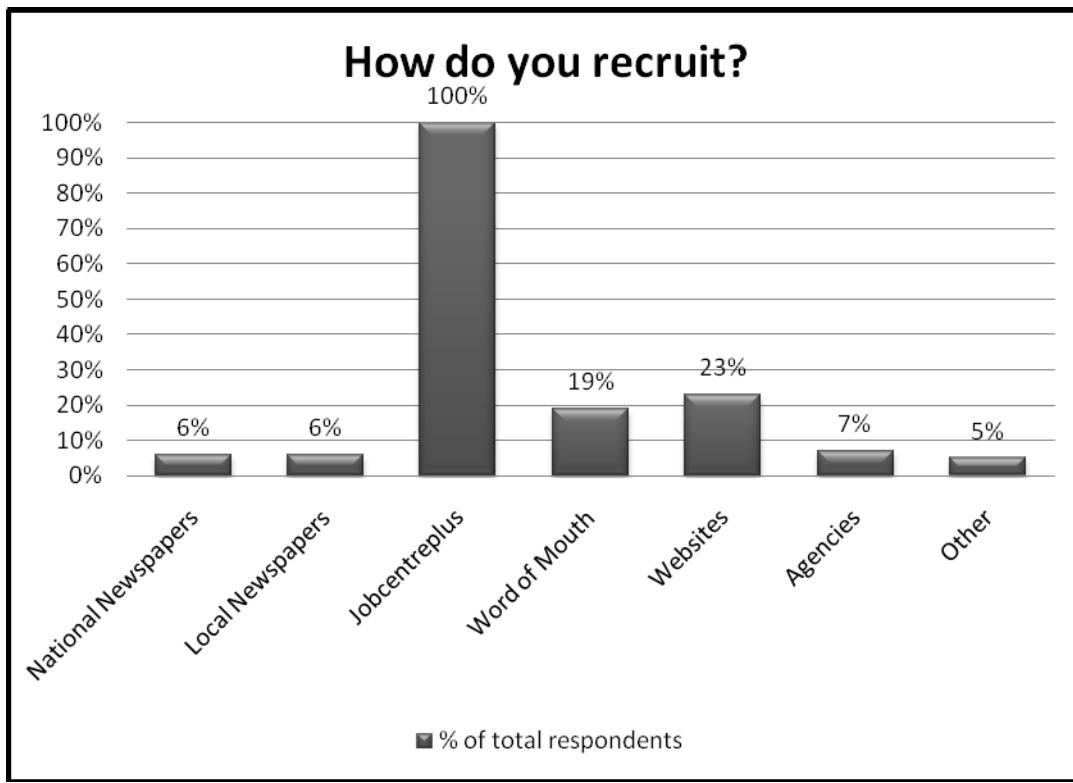
Magazines/Trade magazines – Magazines were sometimes mentioned as a way to make employers aware. It seems that it is not recruitment magazines but sectoral magazines that are actually read. One employer suggested that the magazine adverts they would read and be interested in around this are *'when you are sitting waiting for someone at the council offices'* or in JCP offices.

Telephone – Telephone was recognised as a way to get in touch, particularly as a back-up to emailing. However, this consultation is self selecting towards telephone users. *"Just come and talk to us that's how we found out about Jobcentre Plus"* (Hotel chain).

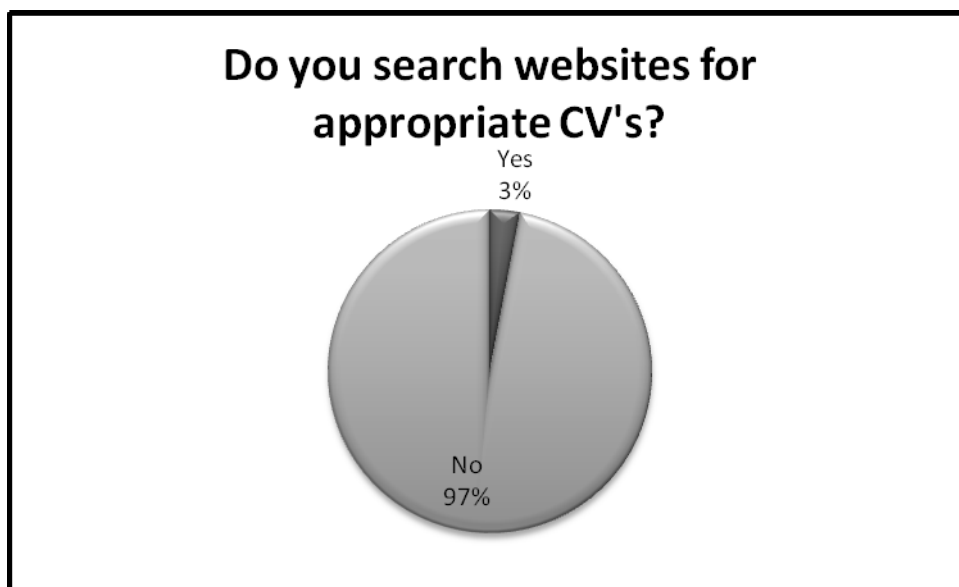
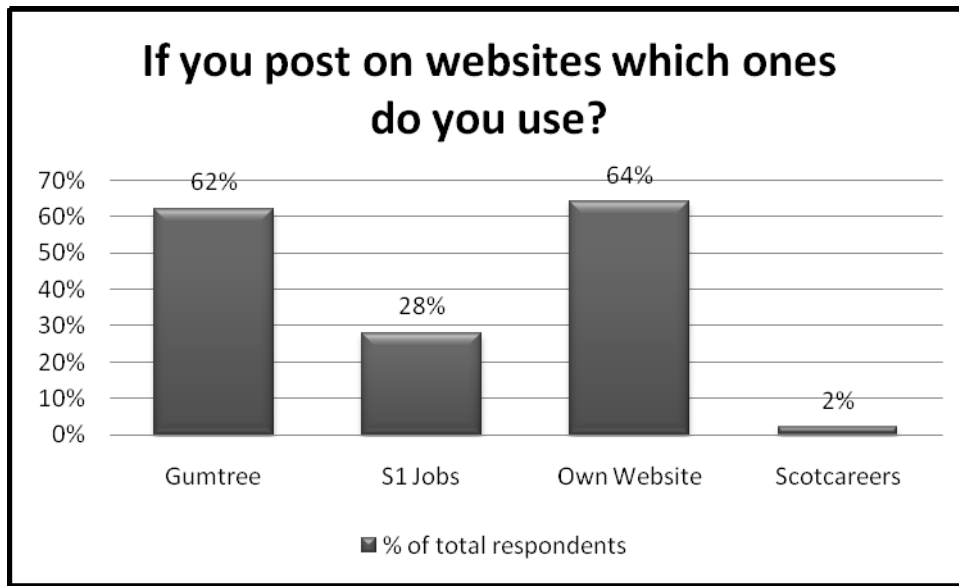
JCP account managers - An important part of the public sector support for many employers was their single point of contact at JCP. In some cases, the point of contact has been lost or they have not yet gained one, but known individuals as a contact point seemed overwhelmingly to be a favourable idea. There were also examples of account managers pointing out new initiatives or training offers etc (although the examples were all older examples and this might not happen so much anymore). *"If channelling all information through one place it should be through the account manager"* (Hotel chain).

JCP employer survey

We designed a short survey for JCP staff to use with their employers during a week in July 2010. This involved 235 employers from across Edinburgh. The findings are presented graphically below.



Other: 1 Youthlink, 1 Posters, others not specified.



Yes: 3 Gumtree, 3 Monster, 1 Your Job.

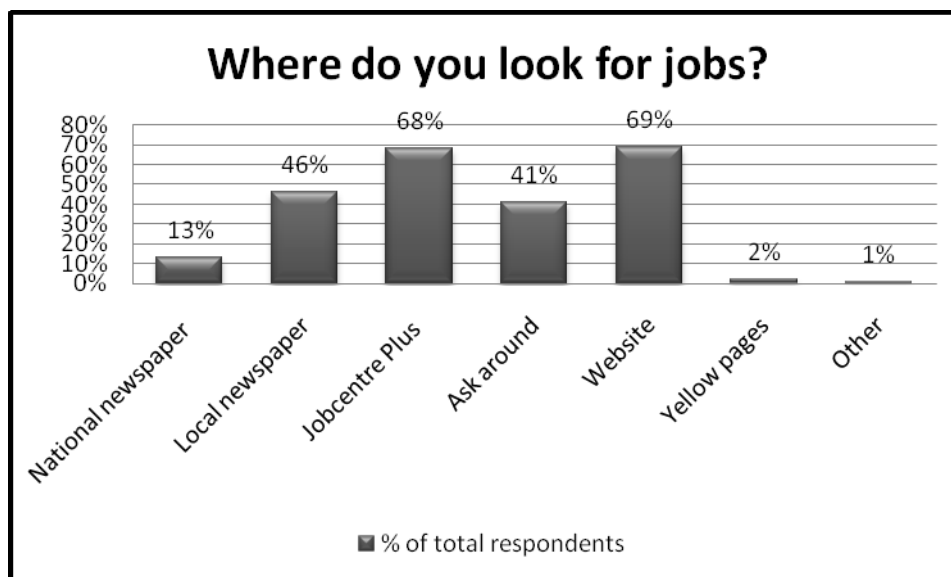
Because this was a survey carried out by JCP staff with employers they work with the 100% figure for Jobcentre Plus on the 'How do you recruit' diagram is expected. However the rest of the pattern shows some distinctive changes from the recent past – notably the limited use of newspapers and the significant use of the web (with over 75 employers using the web to post their vacancies). The website question confirmed what we were picking up in interviews – the growing significance of the free Gumtree site. The use of employers own websites is clearly demanding on those seeking a job as they need regularly to search employers sites if they are to come across appropriate vacancies.

The final chart suggests that for unemployed people the posting of CVs on websites is not worthwhile.

3.2 Individual client survey

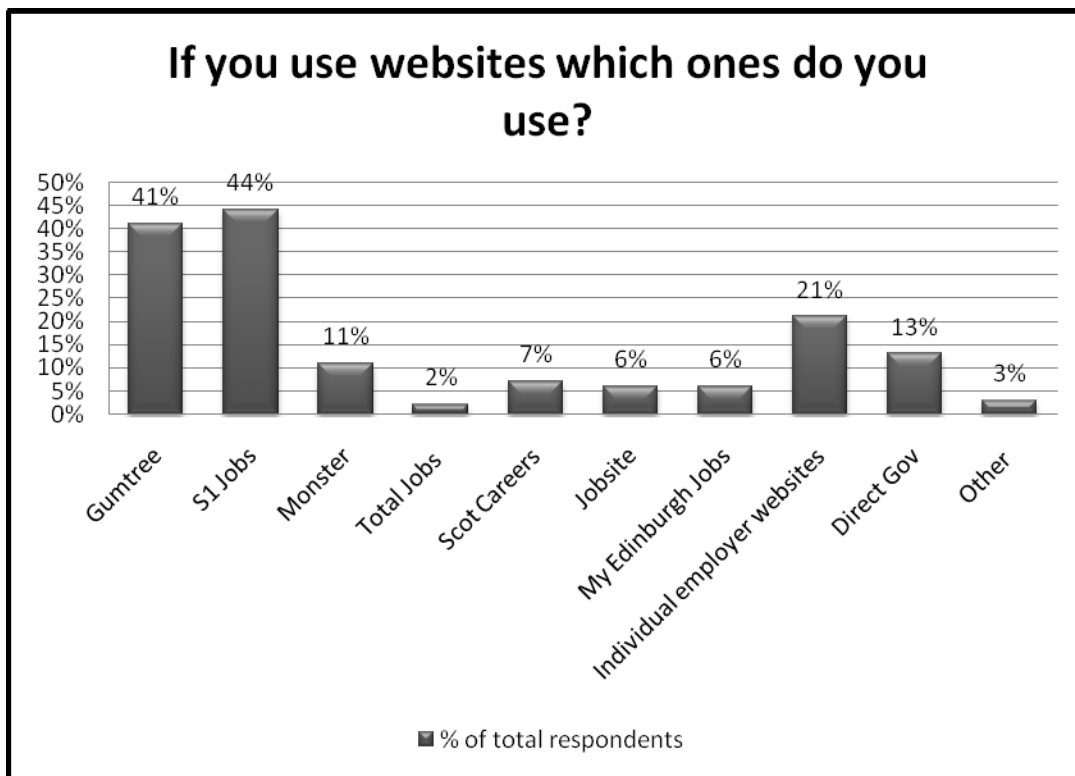
To complement the JCP survey of employers we also designed a very short survey for their individual clients and they completed this for 241 individual clients over a week in July 2010.

The findings are presented in the charts below:



Other: 1 speculative, 1 A4E

The pattern shows that informal job search ('asking around') remains strong. The use of local newspapers probably exaggerates their significance when compared with employer responses. Website use is clearly significant and the diagram overleaf shows the dominance of two sites – Gumtree and S1Jobs – as well as active use of employer's own sites – which again matches the growing use of these by employers.



Other: 1 Fish4Jobs, 1 Scotsman, 1 Goodmoves, 1 My Jobs Scotland, 1 Xerox, 1 Reed, 1 CW Computers



Other: 1 Careers Scotland

This registration of details seems to reflect the relatively lack of significance placed by employers on this source – and the declining use of recruitment agencies.

3.3 Stakeholder interviews

We interviewed 22 stakeholders who included the main partners and providers. The following points emerged:

Most stakeholders felt that ***the Employer Offer was a step in the right direction*** and felt optimistic about its future development. There was general agreement that it had helped to improve networking between providers and that this had improved mutual understanding of roles and skills and identified new opportunities for appropriate signposting. Several of the stakeholders commented that partnership working was as close as it had been – partly because of the need to work closely together in response to the recession.

Prior to the development of the employer offer there was no cohesive strategic offer. There was a crowded market place which was fragmented and there was little awareness of what different providers did, how they fitted together, and how they could work together for the benefit of clients.

The ‘no wrong door’ approach’ was seen as strong (with the any organisation approached by an employer becoming the gateway for the services of all). But there was a general agreement that this had not happened in practice yet.

The Employer offer doesn't differ from what was offered before...However, anything that raises awareness of the support that is available is beneficial.

The networking opportunities have been beneficial...It has increased awareness of other providers and therefore improves our capacity to signpost.

However, it was either too soon or there was ***no evidence that it had yet made any difference to the experience of employers.***

I don't think employers are particularly aware of JU4J or the Employer Offer therefore I don't see that it has made a huge difference to the way employers recruit or retain staff.

So far, the Offer has made more of a difference to agencies/providers than employers, by providing clarity about what each partner does. I don't think it's feeding through to active promotion of offers yet.

There was at least a ***lack of clarity about the need and purpose of the Employer Offer,*** among both stakeholders' staff and employers:

We're a bit confused about the Employer Offer, and not sure how the Employer Offer is any different to what we were already doing.

Having asked my team, some are slightly confused about what the Employer Offer is. This does need some clarity from partners.

At the end of the Caledonian Hotel launch of the Employer Offer employers were still coming up and asking what exactly it was – a recruitment agency?

The Offer is all over the place: go here for pre-employment training, go there for something else.

The various purposes of the Employer Offer as stated by the stakeholders included the following:

- *'Raising awareness of our services'*
- *'Filling vacancies quicker – so, if an employer had a vacancy and advertised it with one provider (who was unable to fill it) it could be filled by another provider.'*
- *'To offer a more consistent "product" to employers with vacancies to fill.'*
- *'To offer co-ordinated, streamlined support to employers, resulting in employers knowing who to go to'*
- *'Ensuring employers have access to a range of services and enabling them to consider more disadvantaged individuals.'*

So the confusion about what the Employer Offer raised a number of questions for stakeholders: Is it a simple rebranding of existing provision? Does it offer something new? Is it about shared values and standards? There was mention of it being used to get provider compliance with a consistent set of standards (use the minimum standard as a selling point for providers) – so the approach could become a model for provider accreditation.

A couple of stakeholders questioned the underlying rationale of the Offer and the extent to which its design was led by employer demand:

Employers had no involvement in creating this product and there is no evidence that there was even an identified gap.

There was mixed feeling about the **brand** – some felt it lack visibility, others felt it was unclear, other felt that there was simply not enough investment in the hard sell of the Employer Offer.

The current context is significant – the **slow haul out of recession means that employers are either not recruiting or are recruiting at much lower volumes**. Many employers looking for financial incentives to recruit which the JU4J partnership can't offer. Some stakeholder felt there was a need to redefine the employer offer to be in light of the recession – highlighting that this has had big implications, meaning tighter spend, fewer job vacancies, and more competition to secure those vacancies by different providers.

Some stakeholders emphasised the need to link the employability agenda represented by the Employer Offer to the wider economic development offer and they saw opportunities to link the offer to both indigenous business growth work and to the inward investment offer.

The recession had clearly had a major impact on all the **Employment Hubs** which had been based on three major regeneration/construction projects. This had affected the creation of construction training and job opportunities but also the afteruse (eg retail and maintenance).

The Academies were seen as mixed in terms of their performance and wider impact. But the consensus was that the original aspiration of becoming employer led sources of usable sector intelligence and the design of bespoke pipelines to fill forward planning requirements had not really happened – partly because they had never gained the funding needed to play this role. Instead most of them had become training providers operating in a particular sector and in current straightened times this sector focus was beginning to be diluted as some looked to other sectors for opportunities.

Some stakeholders felt that the Hubs and Academies “cherrypicked” their clients to meet their targets at the expense of those extremely disadvantaged or distanced from the labour market.

Most of the stakeholders raised the tension between the Employer Offer and the wider JU4J approach – which encouraged and supported partnership working around the needs of individuals and employers – and the current funding structures which drove **competitive behaviour**, and this competition (for vacancies) had become particularly fierce in the current labour market.

There are still too many agencies knocking on the same employers' doors.

The 'no wrong door' approach is challenged by funding/target-driven environment; many intermediaries have employer account managers, i.e. established employer relations and want to protect their credibility – why would they pass an established employer contact to another provider?

Everyone is quite possessive about 'their' employers as we've all got outcomes/targets to hit.

JU4J and the recession are pulling partners together, but new contracting approaches are pulling them apart.

However, there was a clear understanding that the **principle is sound** (of focusing on employer need not organisational requirements) – the issue was implementation and trying to reconcile with funding demands:

'Nobody owns an employer and nobody owns a client'

Views on improvements or different kinds of solution were mixed and varied from improving awareness of the Employer Offer to some more fundamental changes:

The focus needs to be on going to employers – there needs to be a personal relationship.

We need to be much more proactive in terms of engaging employers... especially new businesses.

The Employer Offer needs “one controlling factor” to avoid everyone going for the one (same) thing that comes up.

The Employer Offer needs a dedicated staff team (core staff team seconded from key Strategy partners) with responsibility for promoting the offer on a one-to-one basis (particularly to SMEs, i.e. the small employers who are missing out on the benefits of the Offer).

The **significance of SMEs** was a recurring one and several stakeholders felt there was a need to enhance the focus on this group of employers:

The offer needs to be different for SMEs, particularly in the light of recession. This is going to be very different from the offer for a large business. They don't have the capacity to take someone out of employment to train them.

Summary of main findings

- The Joined up for Jobs approach and the Employer Offer within it represents an ambitious attempt to organise the support services in Edinburgh in ways that make more sense for employers and individual clients.
- The principles underpinning its design remain sound:
 - Demand driven but client centred
 - An engagement effort focused around employer groupings with significant job opportunities
 - A job broking effort focused on three key construction and service sector opportunities.
 - Built on a partnership of the key agencies and funders.
- There is quite a lot of confusion among stakeholders and employers about what the Employer Offer is.
- The recession has strengthened the partnership and its effective joint working, but it has also driven apart providers who find themselves competing for limited funding and few vacancies. There are significant risks here for the partners and the creation of an effective employer offer.

- The Employer Offer approach appears to have improved networking and awareness among providers, with some providers saying that this has improved referrals and a more appropriate use of specialist knowledge and experience.
- There are some good examples of effective employer engagement and the building of close working relationships that bring benefits to both employers and individual clients.
- However, the approach remains essentially supply driven. Employers display little or no awareness of a clear and coherent offer or its benefits. There is employer engagement but it appears to be patchy and uncoordinated. Many of the academies have found it difficult to live up to the aspiration of becoming an integral part of forward recruitment planning within key sectors and are now simply providers working with employers in particular sectors.
- Most employers recognise Jobcentre Plus as the key (only?) agency for recruitment support. Their experiences of JCP services are on the whole positive, and, when asked about possible improvements, find it difficult to go beyond further strengthening of the JCP offer.
- There are some clear employer preferences for a highly accessible, coherent and professional offer and for dealing with one individual who joins up public services around employment and skills. This is related to a preference for a longer term working relationship.

In the next section we draw on these insights from employers and stakeholder to draw out the key issues and develop some options for the way forward.

4. Issues and discussion

We have identified 5 questions that have been raised by our work so far:

What is the problem that employers have that the Employer Offer is designed to respond to?

Our interviews suggest that employers have a low awareness of the range and variety of the free support available to help them with their recruitment and skills needs, and they find it difficult to find information and advice on this full array of support. They regularly stated their need for a rounded recruitment and skills support service.

However, they are clear about where to go for recruitment support (Jobcentre Plus) – particularly if they are filling entry level jobs and think it likely that they will be able to recruit an unemployed person to carry out the job.

So the issue is not really about access to recruitment support – it is about the need to join up the much wider array of support around this and help them find their way through a crowded landscape of services and organisations.

It is notable that the current JU4J website does not respond to this need – rather it fully and accurately describes this complexity. The Employer Offer was designed to ensure that any door that employers decided to enter through (or chose on the basis of pot luck) became their gateway to all other services. However, there is a consensus among stakeholders that this is not happening in practice.

What is the Employer Offer and what does it need to be like to be more appealing to employers?

The Employer Offer has been designed as a joined up recruitment service – but its structure and membership contradict this. The reason for this paradox is that the Employer Offer only offers employers a particular kind of client – people who are currently unemployed. However, the previous status of clients – particularly after a significant recession when a wide range of people are registered as unemployed – is not necessarily important to employers. More important is that they get someone who can do the job with the right attitude from the first day. This has three implications:

- The priority task for the partners is to find ways to provide high quality candidates. The feedback we have had from employers suggests that this assured quality is missing. At a time of recession this means that providers need to raise their game (and that of their clients) to ensure that they are providing candidates who are able successfully to compete for vacancies.

- Employers regularly stressed the significance of a strong and continuing working relationship but this is currently rare. Taken together with the need for a more rounded offer this suggests that there needs to be a stronger focus in the employer offer on the time, skills and experience to develop these relationships in a coordinated way across the city. Only these kinds of relationship allow the matching of employers with known needs with people with known skills and experience. And this in turn maximises the identification of latent vacancies – ie those vacancies which employers have given up on filling, or may not know they have.
- From an employer perspective it is hard to see why an employer offer excludes private sector recruitment companies who form a significant part of the recruitment service. If these companies provide a route for candidates to work, what role can they play in the offer?

If Jobcentre Plus is the main recognised brand for recruitment (and its reputation is on the whole positive), how can the Employer Offer build on this?

The success of the PACE service provides important insights for the JU4J partners about the key design features of a service for employers. The partners in PACE were able to line up their services behind a high profile single point of contact hosted by JCP. Our employer interviews provide evidence of the dominance of the JCP brand in the market and it is hard to avoid the conclusion that it does not make sense for the partners to promote an alternative brand.

However, it is also clear that it would be helpful to send a strong signal to employers that the range of public agencies are working together to ensure they get a coherent service around recruitment and skills. The JU4J brand is already recognised by some employers (by 30% in our sample – which was probably more likely to recognise this brand than a random sample) and it would make sense to build on JU4J as an ‘umbrella’ brand, with the line up of agencies behind this being clearly signalled. However, the JU4J is a brand developed to describe the approach to services for individual clients rather than the service that is being offered to employers - and it is not a good description of the service offered to employers. So the partners may wish to consider the production of a new brand which conveys simply and accurately the nature and value of their employer offer.

Do we need to disaggregate the market and, if so, what is the most effective way of doing this?

The Academy approach was built on the appeal of building working relationship with employers across a sector who shared similar requirements and whose aggregated scale of need would allow both the production of usable intelligence the development of viable bespoke ‘pipelines’ of recruits for the sector (cf individual employers within it). Even at a time of recession and retrenchment the significance of replacement demand means that this concept has its strengths.

However, in practice, Academies are no longer paid to produce intelligence but to deliver training and many have reverted to meeting the needs of individual employers within their sector – albeit using effective models based on work placements and account management.

Partners in similar approaches elsewhere (eg in North East England where they are reviewing the Regional Employability Framework) are beginning to question the limits of this approach – for example in recognising that for many sectors the entry level jobs have very similar requirements.

And stakeholders regularly raised with us the issue of the different needs of large employers, SMEs and microbusinesses and the way that business and skill development models can be integrated with recruitment approaches in different ways.

All these approaches have their strengths. The issue seems to be how to organise around them to produce the biggest impact.

What are the implications of welfare reform for the Employer Offer?

It is difficult to exaggerate the significance and implications of the single Work Programme. From July 2011 there are likely to be two SWP Prime Contractors working in and around Edinburgh. They may or may not be the current FND1 Primes. What we do know is that they will have more significant contracts and that more of their money will be paid on the basis of sustainable jobs gained and kept by their clients. It is imaginable that an aggressive Prime could unilaterally drive their marketing approach to employers to maximise the number of vacancies they can draw upon for their clients (through their own delivery or that of their subcontractors). The challenge to the JU4J partners is to have developed a strong, high profile employer offer that Primes will want to be part of.

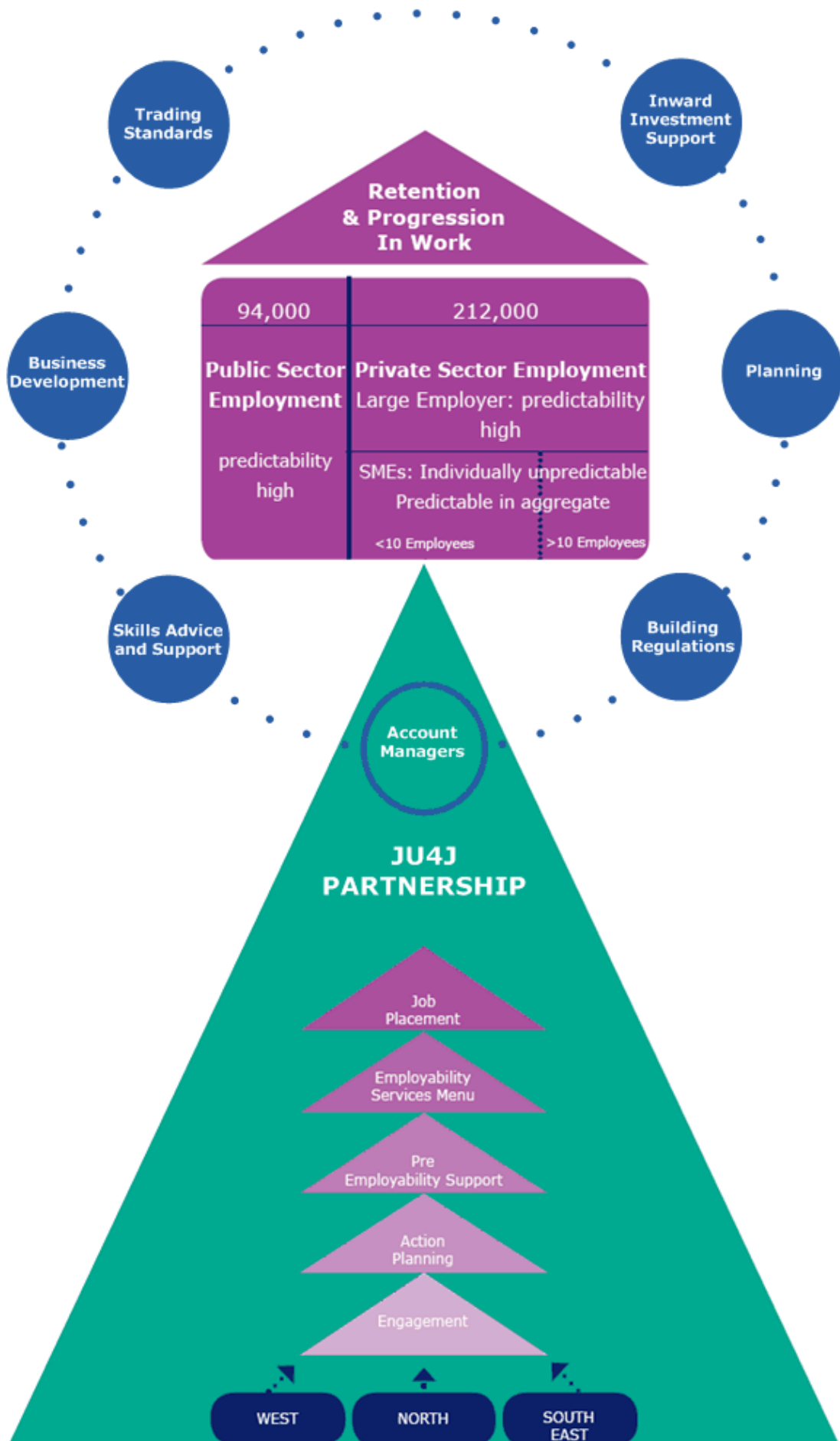
The welfare reform process raises the critical issue of the influence that the partners in JU4J are able to exert: upon DWP in the design of the SWP and the selection of Primes; upon Primes in terms of attracting the best, and helping them understand the lie of the land and how they can contribute to the alignment of services to maximise impact.

In the light of these issues and our discussions with partners we have developed a model with eight characteristics:

- 1 A clear definition of the Employer Offer as a free, high quality recruitment service for employers which connects them to the full range of employment and skills support from the public sector.
- 2 A recognition that employers are not a homogenous group and there is therefore a need to distinguish between the different needs of small businesses, larger businesses and multi-national businesses – as well as between private and public sector employers.

- 3 A focus on developing long term working relationships with target employers (ie those who have opportunities which are realistic for those currently unemployed) – rather than on the blanket promotion of an Employer Offer.
- 4 The development of a larger group of skilled and credible ‘account managers’ who become the point of contact between an employer and the complete range of public support on recruitment and skills development.
- 5 A focus on delivering a quality service both in terms of the match between employer requirements and candidates, the level of work-readiness of candidates, and the provision of a rounded offer which continues after placement.
- 6 The creation of a central development and management resource which supports the offer and manages information and intelligence around two areas:
 - A regularly updated source of information about current public support for employment and skills development.
 - A source of insight and intelligence into current and emerging employer requirements which draws on the experience of account managers.
- 7 A regular and rigorous feedback system for employers across Edinburgh so that the partners can understand how their experience is changing and can take action on both strengths and weaknesses.
- 8 Drawing in all those staff among the partners who engage with employers to ensure that they can recognise the significance of their role in spotting ‘cues’ around recruitment and skill needs and refer these accurately.

The proposed model is set out overleaf.



5. Conclusions and recommendations

In the light of our findings we have identified 8 areas of action for the partners:

- 1 Being clear about what the employer offer is – for both partners and employers.
- 2 Widening active engagement with employers who have realistic jobs for currently unemployed people and extending the routes to the employer market.
- 3 Deepening employer engagement by extending the current account management system for employers.
- 4 Driving up the quality of the response by the more active management of performance and behaviours.
- 5 Promoting added value services for employers such as the use of short list selection as a free specialist service, the benefits of the PACE service, and the provision of bespoke skill development.
- 6 Sending a strong signal to employers – through the careful design and use of branding - that there is a commitment from partners to work together to meet their needs.
- 7 Working closely with Work Programme Prime Contractors both before and after final selection to ensure that employers continue to experience a coherent, high quality service focused on their needs.
- 8 Creating a central development and management resource to support the offer, including the creation of a central source of information, insight and intelligence.

In the rest of this chapter we describe each of these in more detail including specific action points for the partners.

1 What is the Employer Offer?

The Joined up for Jobs (JU4J) approach has two customers or clients: employers and unemployed people¹. The customers for the Employer Offer are employers and this single minded focus can support the individual client offer. In other words, the partners can best help their individual clients by focusing on identifying and meeting the needs of employers. The Employer Offer is therefore half of the JU4J story - with the other half being provided by the outreach, engagement, support, training and job placement service offered to individuals. It is the connection between these two services that is the reason for the partners' actions in this area - in other words helping unemployed people to develop the skills, attitudes and confidence to make them appealing recruits to employers.

There is confusion currently among both employers and partners about what the offer is. Following discussion with the partners we have defined the offer as:

A service for employers which provides them with the recruits they need when they need them plus related public sector support to help them recruit, retain and develop their staff.

There are three key qualifications to this simple definition:

- Because the partners have a commitment to helping unemployed people and particularly those furthest from work, the underlying objectives of the service for the partners is to help those further from work compete for available work on an equal footing with others in the labour market - including those entering the labour market, newly redundant people (most of whom find work relatively quickly) and people wishing to change jobs. Our interviews have confirmed that most employers are disinterested in the employment status of candidates for vacancies (and may underestimate what an unemployed person is capable of) - they are more interested in knowing that they will prove to be reliable and conscientious employees. While employers may not be interested in the unemployed status of candidates this is of fundamental importance to the partners.
- The service does not aim to meet all the recruitment needs of all employers. Because of its focus on unemployed clients (particularly on those furthest from work) the partners focus particularly on those employers and those vacancies which are realistic destinations for longer term unemployed people.
- Finally, the service is not seen by the partners as merely reactive – it is seen as a service which actively markets the skills and contribution of individual clients and engages with employers to uncover needs – some of which may be 'latent'.

¹ The JU4J partners do not place equal emphasis on all unemployed people and have focused on helping those furthest from work to find and make progress in work.

The definition makes clear that:

- It is a recruitment service
- The service comes as part of a more rounded offer around recruitment and skill development from the public sector.

The partners include all the public agencies involved in employment and skills support. They are therefore well placed to ensure that the employers with whom they engage gain a 'complete' service around employment and skills. In particular this needs to cover:

- The development of skills that are pre-requisites for recruitments.
- The development of skills in work to ensure both that the individual can enhance the contribution they make to the employer and also that the individual can earn more and become embedded in the world of work. An additional point about this is that 'after placement' support will be important to the financial modelling of most Work Programme providers as payment starts at placement and continues for up to 52 weeks in work. The service is being offered in a loose labour market and against competition from other recruitment services so it needs to be highly accessible, high quality and offer more than competitors. The fact that it is free is also part of its competitive edge.

It is clear from our interviews that the offer needs to be different to different kinds of employers, so there is some need to differentiate it in terms of an active approach to employers.

This assessment of what the Employer Offer is has two important practical implications for the partners:

- There are some employers who are keen to employ unemployed people (particularly young people) through social concern or a more formal CSR policy but in general the disinterest of employers in the unemployment status of candidates means that the service needs to market individual clients on the basis of their **work readiness**.
- The level at which this work readiness becomes appealing is now higher as a result of the recession, so there is a responsibility on the partners to consider how to help their clients '**raise their game**' so that they can compete for vacancies in a labour market where there are fewer vacancies and more candidates.

2 Widening employer engagement and routes to market

In order to help their clients succeed, the JU4J partners need to be more active in engaging with employers, developing long term working relationships, and uncovering 'latent vacancies'. This will require both an energetic marketing strategy and an account management approach. This approach needs to recognise that the offer needs to be different for different kinds of employers – both in terms of size, type and sector.

We therefore recommend the creation and implementation of an active marketing strategy which will have four components:

- Active engagement with employers with realistic opportunities for currently unemployed people, differentiated primarily by size. We would expect this to distinguish between:
 - Local SMEs: we would expect local intermediaries to be responsible for developing and building on these relationships, and on the whole for their needs to be met by local residents.
 - Major employers: we would expect the partners to agree on appropriate arrangements for each of these depending on their other needs and current relationships.
 - National/International employers: we would expect national partners to agree on appropriate arrangements with the lead being determined by other needs and current relationships.
- Ensuring that the partners are equipping all public sector staff engaging with employers to identify 'cues' for support with recruitment and/or skills training support. These contacts would include current employers in the area or employers wishing to move to the area.
- Developing relationships with recruitment agencies to ensure that the partners are fully realising the potential of this channel to the market. Because JCP already works with a number of recruitment agencies this practice may already be in place and the partners could draw on this experience to enhance their understanding of how to maximize the potential of this approach.
- Finally, it is clear from the evidence presented in this report that the use of websites is now significant – by both employers and individuals. But there seems to be a gap between the two – in other words there may be scope to scan websites of opportunities and ensure that appropriate individual clients are presented to these employers.

3 Deepening employer engagement: Strengthening 'account management'

Employers consistently mentioned a preference for 'dealing with one person'. This 'account management' role is familiar to employers through a range of commercial relationships and we recommend a significant expansion of the account management approach. This expansion needs to be underpinned in two specific ways:

- Account managers need to have the skills and experience to be credible to employers. There are credible account managers among the partners and there is scope for significant learning across the partnership about what the characteristics of successful account management are. ***This would provide the basis for a long term development programme for staff who are – or who aspire to be – account managers.***

- Identifying appropriate account managers. The account management role (and the skills and experience required for success) vary significantly between small local businesses and large international businesses and we would expect the partners to differentiate between them:
 - Local SMEs: This is where local provider staff would be likely to be account managers. They need to understand what it is like to own and/or manage a small business and the risks and barriers faced by an employer when recruiting staff. They also need to be able to reflect with the employer about what they need and what the implications may be for other staff. At the extreme of a sole trader, the implications can be significant, with, for example, the business owner being freed up for more business development and marketing tasks (do they have the skills to do this?).
 - Major employers: Local providers may be able to offer staff with the skills and experience to be comfortably in this role. On the whole, these organisations will have an HR capacity which will be able to deal with most of the issues around recruitment. This means that the account manager role is more about understanding and checking their requirements and ensuring that the match with candidates is good.
 - National/International employers: It is unlikely that local providers would be able to offer credibly account managers to these employers, who may be already present in the area or planning to invest. Account managers are more likely to come from the national players like SDS, Scottish Enterprise or Jobcentre Plus.

We do not envisage the appointment of a new central team of account managers: rather we would recommend the training up of individuals employed by different partners and providers who carry out the employer engagement task across the partners and current providers. An important implication is that they become a 'virtual team' providing intelligence and insight which is drawn on by all, and going together through the same long term development programme (to which some or all may contribute).

4 Improving the quality of the response

If the service is to be competitive it needs to be highly professional and there is evidence that, while there is general satisfaction, it is not as good or consistent as it needs to be. We recommend action on five specific areas:

Building on the Customer Charter.

The Customer Charter is a powerful tool and is now being implemented across partner organisations. This is seen as a foundation on which to build and there is significant scope to strengthen the standards set in the current documentation (Joined up for Jobs: Assessment Guide 2009/10²).

This could be done relatively easily by:

- Expanding parts of Section 2 (We will provide a professional and responsible service to employers), specifically in terms of the active development of working relationships, the existence of account management skills among staff, evidence of repeat business and word of mouth recommendations.
- Adding to Section 6 to make cover the existence of a systematic feedback system for employers and evidence of action on findings.

These enhanced demands will only apply to those providers who engage directly with employers. In the light of this it may make sense to split the development of the Customer Charter with an enhanced Charter being developed for those organisations directly engaging with employers.

Enhancing candidate quality and matching

The most widespread comment on service quality by employers was to about the suitability of candidates. In an ever more competitive market, there is a need for partners to ensure that individual clients are able to compete with others in terms of work readiness.

Not only is the general quality of candidates for vacancies rising at a time of rising unemployment, but there is a growing need for the match between the specific skills and experience of candidates to match closely with the needs of employers. This requires close order engagement with employers and, ideally, tailoring the final training and support for individual clients around the specific requirements of an employer. As providers' insights into the situation and requirement of employers are strengthened, so they will be in a better position actively to market their clients to employers. This goes beyond ensuring a match – it can actually create a match – for example, by helping an employer to appreciate how a client can make a difference to their business.

² <http://www.joinedupforjobs.org.uk/customer-charter-documents.html>

Instigating and responding to a regular employer survey

The single most important component of the quality approach would be the establishment of a regular, systematic survey of employer experience. This would complement more localised surveys by local providers and its purpose would be different. The aim of the partnership is to create a coherent Edinburgh wide recruitment service for employers. Unless the partners get regular feedback from employers about this service (ie as opposed to the specific service they have had from a particular provider) the partnership will be 'flying blind' in its efforts to drive up quality.

We would expect this survey to be carried out annually with a significant sample of employers and to cover at least the following:

- Their perception of the service: is it obvious, accessible, joined up?
- Does it understand and respond effectively to the needs of employers?
- Does it provide them with candidates who meet their needs?
- Does it provide a rounded service drawing on the employment and skills services of the public partners to meet their specific needs?
- Does it have a high reputation?
- Would they recommend it to other employers?
- Recommendations for improvement?

There are two other aspects to a high quality service:

- ***Creating a high quality account manager approach***
- ***Providing a complete service which draws on the full range of support available from the different public agencies***

These are covered elsewhere in this chapter.

5 Promoting 'added value' services

The JU4J partnership is well placed to provide free 'added value' services to employers in a way that few other competitors are. Key among these is the shortlisting service. This service is becoming more valued by employers as the number of possible candidates multiplies and the time taken to deal with them rises significantly. We therefore recommend that the partners specifically promote this service and develop approaches which ensure that the process is systematic, rigorous and presents employers with genuine choice. Other services are the PACE service – which is valuable both to employers who need to make posts redundant and to others who can recruit these people – and the provision of bespoke skill development, which will enhance the likelihood of new recruits becoming embedded in work and making progress.

6 Presenting a coherent offer through branding

We have recommended the development of a marketing strategy but this focuses on one to one connections with employers rather than blanket promotion of a service. This may be complemented by events and some shared marketing materials.

In presenting its employer offer, the partners should not compete with the identity of individual organisations, especially JCP who already have a high profile in the market place, but should present a coherent identity which conveys the message that all the partners are part of a wider partnership to help employers. The JU4J Brand was recognized by 30% of employers but it is based on the partner's approach to meeting the needs of clients and employers and does not convey to employers the nature or value of the offer to them. In other words the JU4J brand does not convey the fact that the service is a free, quality assured recruitment service for employers. The partners should therefore consider the development of a new identity for use in presenting and promoting their employer offer, and there is substantial scope to raise the profile of the partnership identity. This could be done by ensuring that:

- All partnership staff working with employers in Edinburgh carry a partnership branded business card – which we would also expect to present their employer and their usual contact details.
- All partnership materials were strongly branded with the partnership brand – while making clear who the partners are.
- All events are presented as partnership branded events – again ensuring that all the partners are clearly presented.
- The regular employer feedback surveys are presented as partnership branded surveys.

Should the partners develop a new 'employer facing' brand, there is a risk of confusion if the JU4J 'brand' remains in circulation for internal partnership use. If a new employer facing brand is developed it could be adopted to describe all aspect of the partnership task. This would have the advantage of sending a strong signal that the partners recognise that they can only meet the needs of their individual clients by understanding and responding to the needs of employers.

7 Building working relationships with Prime Contractors for the Work Programme

Because the Work Programme combines a number of previously separate DWP programmes it becomes a much more substantial part of the landscape. As other funding sources fall away involvement in the Work Programme is going to become more important. The JU4 J partnership will need to work closely with Work Programme Prime Contractors to ensure that the carefully crafted local approach is built upon. And JU4J providers are likely to become sub-contractors to these Primes in some capacity.

There is clearly a risk that a Prime Contractor will want to drive its own employer engagement approach – or drive its sub-contractors to develop their own unique links rather than sharing them. To ensure that employers experience a clear and coherent service from publicly funded sources the JU4J partners need to develop a close working relationship with the selected Work Programme Prime Contractors.

In the shorter term the partners need to ensure that the best Primes are attracted to bid for the Lot that includes Edinburgh and that bidding Primes are aware of the local infrastructure and commitment to partnership working.

8 Managing and developing the service

The recommendations we have made mean that the current capacity to manage and develop the service for employers needs to be further strengthened. The key management and development tasks are:

- To develop and manage the implementation of the Marketing Strategy
- To develop and manage the account management approach
- To organise/commission the long term account management development programme for front line staff
- To develop the employer facing aspects of the Customer Charter (or to develop an enhanced Charter for employer facing organisations).
- The design and management of the regular employer feedback survey together with its analysis and the implementation of responsive action.
- Acting as key contact point for Prime Contractor relationships and managing these relationships
- Managing the new employer offer branding and the implementation of clear guidelines and protocols around its use.
- Managing the process which identifies and raises awareness of all front line staff who engage with employers – in effect recruiting them to the effort and ensuring that they are confident about spotting cues and referring them.

The final task is the creation and maintenance of a central intelligence resource and identifying appropriate action on the basis of intelligence on trends in employer requirements. The partners need a central source of intelligence in two areas:

- Current information on services around employment and skills. This resource is for account managers and others working with employers. It will ensure that they have ready access to accurate and up to date information on support and services available and can provide employers with this.
- Usable intelligence which draws on the insights gained by account managers. Account managers are a vital resource to their employers, and this privileged access should also make them a vital resource for the partnership. The partners need to establish a simple intranet system that will allow their engagements with employers to be recorded and the insights gained to be analysed for trends and patterns which will allow the partners to enhance the focus and impact of their services. This system would complement Caselink (and it may be possible to extend Caselink to include it): it would not be about clients and their tracking and referral but about employer needs and the aggregation and analysis of these.

We have produced a rough estimate of the demands that these tasks may place on a development and management resource:

Task	Development days	Approximate support days per year
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To develop and manage the implementation of the Marketing Strategy 	10	24
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To develop and manage the account management approach 	5	12
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To organise/commission the long term account management development programme for front line staff 	2	10
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To develop the employer facing aspects of the Customer Charter (or to develop an enhanced Charter for employer facing organisations). 	4	6
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The design and management of the regular employer feedback survey together with its analysis and the implementation of responsive action. 	5*	10
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Acting as key contact point for Prime Contractor relationships and managing these relationships 	10 (2010/11)	12
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Managing the JU4J Branding and the implementation of clear guidelines around its use. 	2	10
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creating and maintaining the central intelligence resource and identifying appropriate action on the basis of intelligence on trends in employer requirements. 	15*	24
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Managing the process which identifies and raises awareness of all front line staff who engage with employers – in effect recruiting them to the effort and ensuring that they are confident about spotting cues and referring them. 	5	12
Total estimate of days required	58	120

**These tasks are likely to require additional external assistance*

This total requirement of approximately 180 days (cf a working year of c.220 days) in 2010/11 suggests that this is a full time position at quite a senior level. However, there are a range of alternative models around this – for example the allocation of certain tasks to members of the partnership, or the appointment of a less senior member of staff with significant hands-on support from a senior member of staff with a wider portfolio of responsibilities.

The brief asked for advice on whether it would be appropriate to establish an employer reference group to support the Employer Offer. We have focused our recommendations on a significantly enhanced effort to build a range of long term working relationships with target employers. It is our view that if, as proposed, the account managers involved are able to contribute regular insights in terms of recruitment needs and service requirements this would provide a superior source of employer insights than those that could be offered by a small standing group of employers.

Appendix 1 Employer Aide memoire

1. How many people do you employ? What sector are you in? [Don't ask if obvious. *If it is not easy for them to identify sector ask them what they do and we will work out sector*]
2. Are you aware of the Edinburgh Jobs Strategy, Joined up for Jobs or *insert name of service as per green leaflets*)
3. Have you recruited staff using a public sector agency? *(you may have to prompt employers if they don't understand "public sector" so use phrases such as Jobcentre Plus, Edinburgh Jobs Strategy, Academies (use the one relevant to the sector), etc)*

If yes, proceed with rest of questions. If no, ask:

Is there any particular reason why you haven't used any of these services? How do you recruit staff? What would encourage you to use public sector services in the future?

4. How were you aware of this support *(e.g. attended a Joined up for Jobs event, received marketing material – we're talking about the marketing leaflets - via the JU4J website, directed via a contact (if so, who, etc)*
5. What sort of help did you get?
6. What was the process like? *(with this question we are trying to understand if it was a single point of access, seamless process)*
7. Did it meet your needs, i.e. did you find a recruit, did they have the skills and attitudes you needed from the first day, are they still in post, etc?
8. Would you recommend the service to another employer? And reason for yes or no.
9. Has this support made a difference to the way in which you recruit and retain staff? In what ways?
10. How could the service be improved?
11. Have you had any contact with the Sectoral Academies or Employment Hubs *(please prompt using examples if required. If yes, explore further – for what purpose, what did they receive, how do they perceive the support, etc)*
12. Would you be willing to participate in an Employer Reference Group to inform the delivery of this support and ensure it meets your needs? If so, what would ERG need to be like?
13. Would you be willing to participate in a more in-depth interview during which we would seek to understand your experience in more detail so the providers can provide a better service *(we need 10 employers for this)*
14. Could we come back to you to discuss our recommendations and see if they make sense to you? *(we need 20 employers)*

Appendix 2 Stakeholder Aide Memoire

Background/general information

- What is your role/fit within the Edinburgh Jobs Strategy (e.g. Academy, intermediary, broker, etc)?
- In what ways and for what purpose do you currently engage with employers? Is this done on a geographic or sectoral basis (both/neither)?
- How would you describe the intended purpose of the Employer Offer?
- In what ways was the Offer intended to contribute to your organisation's strategies and plans?
- In what ways was the Offer intended to simplify the service available to employers and join up partners' efforts?

The Employer Offer

- Describe the way in which the Offer works in practice.
- Can you describe a typical employer "journey" through the Offer?
- How has it been promoted to employers (i.e. do they know they are engaging with a co-ordinated, partnership approach known as the Employer Offer" or simply accessing public sector support?)
- From your experience, how have employers engaged with the Offer (e.g. via the JU4J website, direct contact with you, etc)?
- In your experience, what has been its actual role, e.g. co-ordinating, ...
- In what ways has the Employer Offer made a difference to the support offered to employers to recruit and retain staff?
- How would you describe the particular achievements and successes of the Employer Offer to date and is there evidence of this?
- Have there been particular barriers or challenges to the success of the Employer Offer so far and how have/should these be addressed? (e.g. lack of partnership working, effect of recession, etc)
- Are there aspects of the Employer Offer that could better be achieved in other ways? If so, which aspects and in what ways?
- Do you know of any other approaches to this type of co-ordinated employer support and, if so, how does the Employer Offer compare?

Role of academies and Hubs in delivering the Offer

- Is the Job Broker role being fulfilled by the Employment Hubs?
- In what ways do the Academies and Hubs support the Employer Offer?
- In what ways could this be enhanced or need to change to ensure they fulfil this support role?

The Future

- Is the single point of access the best approach? (if so, why; if not, why?) or would a local geographical routeway or central job broker function with a lead organisation be more effective – why?)
- Should there be a different approach to employer engagement, e.g. local rather than sectoral, and what would be the benefits of this?
- For the Employer Offer to have optimum effectiveness, what does it need to be like? Does it need to change in any way and, if so, in what ways?
- Is there a role for an Employer Reference Group to support or inform the delivery of the Employer Offer? If so, how would this work in practice?