

Demand-led, Client-centred, and Joined-up

Capital City Partnership, for the Joined Up For Jobs partners



JOINED UP
FOR JOBS

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The intention of 'Joined Up For Jobs', Edinburgh's Employability Agreement, is that employment-related services in the city, across the spectrum from exclusion to work, should be **demand-led, client-centred and joined-up**, so that they work well for both job-seekers and employers. This document explains what this means.

Demand-led

... means that all activities and programmes should aim to help fill the jobs which are known to be available in the local labour market and be built around knowledge of employer needs and their actual vacancies. This helps employers recruit and ensures that individuals are guided towards real opportunities for work. This needs to happen not just at the job-entry end of the spectrum but also to permeate right back to the start of the pathway.

Providers have to understand the needs of employers in order to be clear about what standards jobseekers have to reach to be recruited. As well as sourcing specific vacancies it is best if there is continuing dialogue with employers, not just at the point of job-matching and recruitment but in the design of the whole route to work.

The **Employment Academies** are the feature of Joined Up For Jobs which best shows this approach, and they have shown that the best way of getting this relationship with employers is on a sectoral basis. They are led by employers in a particular sector and match employers' entry-level vacancies with people seeking work by establishing agreement on the minimum employability requirements in their sector, and for specific jobs.

This approach guides their programmes, which give sector-specific experience and skills. Ideally these are based on agreements or contracts to recruit all candidates reaching the agreed standards. It also guides the relationships they have with other intermediaries, through which they draw on the pool of jobseekers in the city and promote the opportunities which their sectors offer. See www.employmentacademies.co.uk

The sectors in which there are academies are:

- Retail
- Hospitality and Tourism
- Construction
- Public Administration
- Healthcare
- Childcare
- Creative Industries

Working at the job-ready end of the spectrum, Employment Academies mostly offer fairly short job-specific preparation; and therefore rely on referrals from Jobcentres and intermediaries of people who have reached the appropriate level of employability. Good mutual understanding about standards needed for referral, often backed up by formal agreements, is vital here too.

Some of the clients referred will have already travelled a long way from chaotic lifestyles and the academies can provide the last part of their journey to work, so the academies have to be aware of their needs; and also to help employers remove any unnecessary barriers to their employment. Intermediaries who work for specific target

groups can work with academies to open up opportunities in this way. Employment academies also work with employers to assist with progression after recruitment, both for their own clients and on wider workforce development.

The demand-led approach is not restricted to the employment academies, which work with only a fraction of the city's employers. In fact it is equally important in all parts of the spectrum. Many intermediaries have long-standing demand-led relationships with employers and have used this approach in, for example, the care and financial services sector; while Jobcentre Plus offers a wide range of services which respond to the recruitment needs of employers. The best results often come when the two work together, as is being done in the Waterfront Recruitment Centre for example.

This demand-led approach is also crucial at the first time at which employment and employability are introduced as a practical option. Generally this should be at the earliest practicable point, for example as part of the assessment of individuals' needs carried out in homeless hostels, or in prison. The message from the entire array of providers has to be that there are employers in the city who want you to fill their vacancies, provided you offer minimum standards of employability and irrespective of where you are at the moment. This can be used to inspire and motivate progression; and is a central part of the approach being taken to increase referrals from organisations dealing with the most excluded groups like recovering addicts or prison-leavers.

Client-centred

.... means that people must be offered a complete package in which all of the barriers to work facing individuals need to be addressed in an holistic way. This in turn means making sure that real pathways from exclusion to sustainable employment are mapped out.

Obviously this must include the vocational skills, basic skills (literacy and numeracy) and core skills which are appropriate to the individual and the work they are seeking; but also it requires that a wide range of other issues should be addressed holistically – seeing the needs of the whole person, which may require tackling negative attitudes to learning or to themselves. Problems of self-confidence or self esteem, sometimes linked to depression or related mental health conditions, are frequent barriers to progress.

Employability services therefore need to build on aspirations, relate them to labour market, offer guidance and build the motivation which is necessary to overcome these problems. Capacity for appropriate referrals to specialist support is often vital.

To deal with all the barriers which can be faced in getting into work, the client-centred, holistic approach also needs to deal with the issues which arise from individual's practical circumstances. These include childcare, other care responsibilities; debt and money problems, including financial literacy and the costs of starting work; and the management of health conditions.

In order to ensure that the needs of all excluded groups are being addressed it is necessary to identify these groups and to examine their specific needs. Joined Up For Jobs has the following **Target Groups**:

- Physically Disabled,
- Learning Disabilities
- Mental ill health
- Ex-prisoners
- Homeless
- Recovering addicts
- Care leavers
- Lone Parents
- Ethnic minorities and refugees
- NEET group (school leavers not in employment education or training)

For each of these groups an assessment been completed of their size and position in the local labour market, the main barriers to work and the main services for them, has . These are being used as a starting point for convening meetings of the main agencies concerned with each group, to plan development of employability services for them.

This focused attention to these groups helps ensure that it is not only those closest to work who are getting help. It looks at the links with the specialist agencies which work most closely with them, and referrals from them to employment programmes. The construction of clear pathways from there into employment is the best way of checking that the services available are client-centred; and holistic. Clearly many people fall into a number of target groups – for example the prison-leaver who is homeless and has an addiction problem – and while there need to be pathways to work constructed around the needs of specific groups, they must also be holistic themselves.

The transition from inactive benefits to work and a wage requires special support especially where the individual has or has recovered from an illness or disability. Preparation for the work environment is vital, and this should include financial literacy and a reliable better-off assessment with impartial advice. Support should be available both to the employer and the client in the period after recruitment. Where possible this should involve progression from the entry-level job: for some people this prospect may be necessary for them to be convinced of the desirability of starting work.

Joined-up

... means that all of the employment-related services in the city should work together to provide the best possible service to employers, jobseekers and the city. This may sound obvious but in fact there are many factors which mitigate against it and encourage fragmentation in which each provider organisation has to seek to meet its own targets without reference to their contribution to the overall goals. These include: organisational competition, ambitions or need to survive; Tendering processes which break the continuity of provision; Procurement and funding regimes which incentivise client retention; or outcomes targets which discourage referrals; Multiple and unco-ordinated sources of funding often with short-term horizons; Fragmented and unco-ordinated policy; Training and skills of management and staff; Lack of information and intelligence.

These issues can only be addressed at the system-wide or city level so the first step is to bring together the public agencies with the relevant policy remits and funding in a strategic partnership. The Joined Up For Jobs Strategy Group includes the City of Edinburgh Council, Scottish Enterprise Edinburgh and Lothian, Jobcentre Plus, Careers Scotland and the Capital City Partnership, which funds the area-based intermediaries and provides the partnership structure. The Edinburgh Chamber of Commerce is also represented and actively involved.

The second step is to develop a shared overview, overall objectives and targets, and a vision of what the provider network should look like. For Joined Up For Jobs that has been summarised as 'demand-led, client-centred and joined-up' but it also includes a view of the appropriate roles of specialist, city-wide and geographical intermediaries, based in the city's most deprived wards; and of the relation between this intermediary infrastructure and mainstream services of Careers Scotland and Jobcentreplus.

The best results will be achieved when these work in partnership and this approach has led to JCP secondments of Personal Advisers into the teams of Employment Action South Edinburgh and Worktrack in Craigmillar. A multi-agency approach is also essential in constructing pathways from exclusion to work for the target groups, which have to involve frontline agencies (e.g. in health, addiction, homelessness, or disability fields intermediaries and academies alongside JCP and Careers Scotland).

The third step is to work out and then implement the measures needed to move the provider infrastructure to fit this pattern. It is up to the funding agencies to create a coherent pattern of funding which articulates city-wide

objectives in terms of targets and incentives for individual providers; and to gather intelligence which enables them to respond to evidence of need, changing outcomes and circumstances in the local labour market. A number of steps have been taken in this direction.

The core partners have established an **Infrastructure Development Programme** which supports strategic projects rather than beneficiary delivery. Examples include the study of employability support for prison-leavers; research into the scale and needs of the target groups; and many of the other initiatives described here.

The Employment Academies have been funded by all of the core partners in different ways and an overview of their activities and development is reported regularly to the Strategy Group.

The funding of the area-based intermediaries has been transferred to the Capital City Partnership, giving a common framework which still respects their diversity and local accountability. Features which are being developed through this are the operational relationship to JCP; and monitoring and evaluation.

While the employment academies can offer a joined-up approach to the needs of employers in their sectors, the Joined Up For Jobs partnership also creates the framework for a joined-up approach to the needs of the target groups. For almost all of these a number of organisations aim to provide support into employment and there is a need for an agreed framework to ensure that the individual can get the best service from the network of providers, using the best of what each can offer, rather than be restricted to the services available from the one they first contact.

Wise Move, working with homelessness organisations, and now in the addictions field, has pioneered a **Coordinating Employment Agency** model, described by its evaluator as 'the most innovative project I have evaluated'. It maps the capacity in the sector, identifies strengths and weakness, gaps and duplications; shares them with the providers; and agrees common procedures

for assessment and referrals. On the basis of this joined-up approach they can do outreach to frontline agencies, like homeless hostels, to mainstream employability into their practices and increase referrals. For more information see <http://www.wisemove.org.uk/>

Capital City Partnership has supported a pilot of a common client database for use by intermediaries and through this the development of the Employment Pathways software tool by Outcomes Partnership Ltd. Learning from this pilot an **ICT specification** has been drafted. One of its objectives is to create a set of templates and tools which can facilitate joint working – the means to greater integration through tracing clients between organisations and sharing outcomes.

The other main objective of this specification is to generate intelligence and management information from a central beneficiary database. This in turn will support the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework – Joined Up For Jobs aims to be an intelligence-based strategy but there is a need to develop systems of data gathering and analysis before this can be the case. The overall purpose is to use the information to drive up quality of provision and outcomes; and foster the development of quality in the 'employability supply chain'.

Evaluation of pilots and programmes is integral to the strategy. The strategy as a whole has been evaluated and reviewed through the Working Together project – see the **Working Together Baseline Study** on the website.

It is also crucial that the Strategy Group learns from, and communicates with, providers. The Partnership Forum, open to all provider organisations, is one of the main channels. This and other meetings consolidate the feeling of collective purpose and a number of joint provider initiatives have arisen from them.

Communication is also the purpose of **Working Capital**, the Joined Up For Jobs magazine; and the Website, which incorporates a **Directory of Employability Providers**, in response to suggestions made by providers.

An evolving strategy - Joined Up For Jobs aims to be: **joined-up, client-centred, demand-led.** For more information, see www.joinedupforjobs.org.uk To contact us: info@joinedupforjobs.org.uk



CAPITAL CITY PARTNERSHIP

Social Justice in Edinburgh

