



Partnership Forum 6th April 2006

A new deal for welfare: Empowering people to work

Workshop Feedback

Following a presentation on the Welfare Reform Green Paper, forum members were split into three workshop groups and asked to consider the following two questions –

The Green Paper, how will it help us in Edinburgh?

and

What more is needed?

The following feedback was collected and collated from the three workshop groups.

Group A

+ Points

- It brings Incapacity Benefit onto the agenda
- The focus is good in that there is a 'can do' emphasis, as opposed to a cannot do
- Employers may be encouraged to think more practically and positively in terms of their recruitment options

- Points

- Potential for polarisation – those deemed capable of work are hounded, those who aren't could be forgotten or marginalised even further

Opportunities

- To make workplaces more healthy

- To focus on suitable employment (a better match between jobseeker and job / employer) and to promote employment rights
- To raise awareness of employment issues and improve engagement with health services
- To promote the effectiveness of the supported employment model
- For better partnership working between the public and voluntary sectors
- To promote the effectiveness of the voluntary sector in delivering services and the need to invest further in this
- To shift the focus from quantity to quality
- To put a focus on real joined up working and thinking across different branches of government and within statutory and voluntary provision

Group B

+ Points

- It raises Incapacity Benefit up the agenda
- Taking up a case management approach – more specialised support delivered across different organisations – not everything delivered by one agency
- Changing the medical assessment to focus on capability as opposed to incapacity
- Raising awareness of the 'problem'
- Raise awareness of benefits of employing disabled people and older workers

- Points

- Increased volume of service users (those on IB) will need a corresponding real increase in resources – will this be possible given increasingly negative economic indicators
- Getting hung up on a target – are there one million jobs out there
- Short term target fix v. long term sustainable outcomes
- Competition in the labour market with migrant workers
- Employer attitudes to employing people on inactive benefits demonstrably poor

- Need more transition to employment support including financial

Opportunities

- To mainstream some approaches and practices which have been piloted successfully at a regional or local area level
- For smaller agencies to join together in operational consortia – bringing different strengths and expertise to a service delivery partnership
- To engage with and involve employers – how best to do this is still the hurdle
- Develop better workplace flexibility – reducing early retrial onto IB and increasing retention rates
- For more proactive partnership working between academies and intermediaries – client centred can mix with demand led

Group C

+ Points

- A focus on capability and capacity
- A focus on job retention activity and good practice
- NHS / GP involvement – employment as a health issue
- Potential for enhanced working with OTs
- Proposed changes to make medical assessment process fairer
- Edinburgh well placed to rollout pilot models – still relatively healthy labour market
- Take forward a case management approach

- Points

- Green paper proposals need significant fleshing out
- Probable lack of resources
- Loss of positives from the pilots – coercion approach
- Lack of awareness of employment / employability activity and services within the NHS
- Lack of provision for those deemed unable to work
- Will support timescales be long enough to effect sustainable work outcomes
- Will prosperous Edinburgh miss out on resources

- Does Edinburgh exhibit the jobs right match with IB claimants
- Major funding uncertainties – reduction in ESF
- Other shortage of resources DWP/ LA's /S Exec / Vol. Sector
- Potential loss of specialist provision present in small agencies who may be excluded from contracting processes
- Will consortium bidding be rewarded or will it be purely down to price – the quality v. price dichotomy

Opportunities

- For improved dialogue with employers – need for government encouragement / pressure
- For consortium funding bids
- To build on what JU4J is already doing
- To make it easier for people on IB to consider work and maybe even afford to make the jump to work
- Edinburgh has the relevant provision and expertise to take this forward



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