

Introduction and Guidance to Skills for Jobs (S4J) and the Sustainable Employment Programme (SEP)

January 2010

This document should be read by ALL applicants submitting applications and contracting under the North West Adult Tender Specifications including:

- Skills for Jobs
- Sustainable Employment Programme
- Information Advice and Guidance
- Offender Learning



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CONTENTS



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	Page No
1. Preface	3
2. Introduction to the Skills for Jobs Tenders	3
3. Policy and Strategy	5
4. North West Skills for Jobs Implementation	7
4.1 Principles	8
4.2 Objectives	9
4.3 Priorities	9
4.4 The Routeways	11
4.5 The Stages	12
4.6 Employer Engagement	16
4.7 Participant Engagement	17
4.8 Capability to Deliver	18
4.9 Outcomes	19
4.10 Cross Cutting Themes	20
4.11 Formative Evaluation	21
5. Conclusion	23
ANNEX 1 – Skills for Jobs Framework	24
ANNEX 2 – Examples of Sector Led Routeways	25
ANNEX 3- Skills for Jobs Case Studies	32
ANNEX 4 – Local Employment Partnerships and the Sector Employability Toolkit	34

1. Preface

The purpose of this document is to provide guidance to support the development of ESF applications to deliver activity within the Skills for Jobs framework in the North West region and as guidance for providers of Skills for Jobs activities.

This guidance forms part of the S4J, SEP, Offender and IAG contracts.

The purpose of the Skills for Jobs framework is to:

- Support local partnerships to further progress an integrated skills and employment service in their area.
- Ensure that LSC provision is deployed effectively to impact upon building skills for sustainable employment.
- Ensure coherent links between the client engagement activities procured by Department of Work and pensions (DWP) Co-financing plans and the Employability Skills development activities procured by LSC Co-financing plans.

This guidance refers to the Skills for Jobs suite of LSC ESF Co-finance Tender Specifications and also relates to the DWP ESF Co-finance Tender Specifications to be procured by Jobcentre Plus (JCP).

2. Introduction to the Skills for Jobs Tenders

The overall objective of the LSC ESF Co-financing Plan for the North West of England is to make a significant contribution to sustainable economic growth and social inclusion by increasing employment, reducing economic inactivity and developing a skilled and adaptable workforce. The LSC ESF Co-financing Plan for the North West of England has been substantially revised as a consequence of the outcomes of the consultation exercise and dialogue with other Co-Finance Organisations within the region.

The LSC recognises that the development of the Regional Skills Priorities for the North West and the development of the ESF Regional Framework for the North West involved wide ranging consultation with partners. Through the mechanism of the Co Finance Plan (CFP) we aim to significantly address the priorities identified in these documents.

Within the context of a single national ESF programme we have established three clear priorities which are to:

- Support individuals to secure sustained employment;
- Reduce the number of young people who are not in education, employment or training;
- Work with employers and individuals to meet skills gaps and shortages thereby improving competitiveness.

We believe that this is wholly in line with the core remit of the LSC which exists to make England better skilled and more competitive.

We are responsible for ensuring the availability of high-quality education and training for everyone. We have a single goal: to improve the skills of England's young people and adults to world class standards.

The LSC recognises the importance of working closely with local partners through the emerging employment and skills boards, Local Strategic Partnerships, Multi & Local Area Agreements and with City Employment Strategies to address sub-regional and local needs. We will strive to align ESF with other investment.

Resources will be targeted where they can most effectively enhance the impact of national, regional and local strategies and bring maximum added value to the LSC's mainstream budgets. We are working especially closely with Jobcentre Plus and alongside City Employment Strategies. We will work with Sector Skills Councils (SSCs), Sector Skills and Productivity Alliances (SSPAs) and Local Employment Partnerships to ensure that we address the needs of employers. In utilising ESF to raise workforce skill levels we will manage the programme in a manner which aligns with the objectives of the simplified business support agenda.

Our approach remains essentially local. Our interface with local partners and learning providers is led by our local offices and partnership teams. To minimise bureaucracy and to provide flexibility there is a single Co-Finance Plan (CFP) for the Northwest region in line with national guidance.

The ESF Regional Framework sets out how ESF spending can support regional employment and skills priorities in the context of a single national ESF Programme for England. Planning employment and skills activity in an integrated way is central to recommendations in the Leitch Review of Skills. With the amount of ESF available in England reducing by 50% it is essential that ESF is effectively targeted to add value to regional priorities. Our priorities are therefore to:

- Improve the qualifications and skills of the low qualified and low skilled;
- Increase employment rates;
- Reduce the rates of economic inactivity;
- Raise the skills levels of the workforce and in so doing raise the competitiveness of organisations.

In implementing the Co-Finance Plan the LSC intends to reflect the recommendations of the Leitch Review which reported in December 2006 on the UK's longer-term skill needs, and on how skills and employment services should complement each other. To reach the goal of the UK becoming a world leader in skills by 2020, the Review recommended a number of radical changes which included:

- Routing public funding of vocational skills through demand-led routes;
- Integrating public employment and skills services to deliver sustainable employment to more disadvantaged people can gain skills and jobs;
- Increasing employer investment in skills.

Central to our approach in developing a more coherent set of skills and employment services the LSC will continue to work alongside DWP (Jobcentre Plus), City Employment Strategy consortia and other local partnerships to ensure a more coherent set of interventions which will support people into work and support them to sustain employment. The aim is to develop a series of routeways from worklessness into sustained employment building on good practice identified within the current ESF programme and other initiatives.

Exercising a significant degree of control at the local level is a key requisite of developing successful and prosperous communities. The LSC will sustain an active role in City Employment Strategy consortia (or their equivalent) and with Local Strategic Partnerships

to ensure that the provision we procure meets local needs. By working closely with partners through our area offices we aim to:

- Align ESF Co-financing activity in order to provide effective pathways to sustainable employment within an overall Skills for Jobs framework;
- Work closely with other Co-Finance Organisations (CFOs), DWP (Jobcentre Plus) and City Employment Strategy consortia to achieve effective alignment and targeting of ESF and mainstream LSC resources;
- Focus investment on those groups facing disadvantage in the labour market and on unemployment hotspots with high levels of worklessness;
- Respond quickly to major industrial changes;
- Work through Local Strategic Partnerships in support of Local Area Agreements (LAAs) to reduce the number of workless households and contribute to reductions in child poverty;
- Demonstrate the impact of the activity we procure by producing regular reports which are shared with key partners including City Employment Strategy consortia, employment and skills boards and LSPs.

This agenda is part of a long term trend to link adult skills with employment more effectively, signalled in 2003 by the Skills Strategy, the 2004 Budget and the National Employment Panel's *From Welfare to Workforce Development* report (2004).

This document offers guidance in respect of a suite of interlinked tender specifications that will procure activity that will contribute to the Skills for Jobs framework comprising of:

1. Skills for Jobs – Routeways into Employment
2. Skills for Jobs - Information Advice and Guidance
3. Skills for Jobs for Offenders
4. The Sustainable Employment Programme

Applicants & Contractors should familiarise themselves with all these connected documents.

3. Policy and Strategy

The Employability Skills agenda has increased in importance in policy terms culminating in July 2007 with the publication of:

- **World Class Skills – Implementing the Leitch review in England** which calls for the integration of skills and employment initiatives to support workless individuals into sustainable employment.
http://www.dius.gov.uk/skills/skills_strategy/leitch_review_published
- **Sub National Review of Economic Development** which outlines the Government's plans to refocus both powers and responsibilities to support its objectives to encourage economic growth and tackle deprivation at every level
http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/sub-national_economic_development_regeneration_review.htm
- **In Work Better Off - next steps to full employment** reaffirms the target of an 80% employment rate and aims for reduction in economic inactivity across the board, and with particular target groups
<http://www.dwp.gov.uk/policy/welfare-reform/legislation-and-key-documents/in-work-better-off/>

Lord Leitch's review places skills at the centre of economic development. Across government, the employment and skills agenda is developing, including;

- Leitch's recommendations around integrating skills and employment more effectively, the development of a universal Adult Careers Service, and the provision of flexible training to address the needs of low skilled individuals not in work.
- The Government's welfare reforms aimed at raising the national employment rate and encouraging inactive benefit claimants to consider returning to work, including the city strategy pathfinders in which the LSC is a key partner.
- The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Bill, currently before Parliament, which strengthens the LSC's role with partners in local area agreements (including economic development).
- The National Audit Office's report 'Helping people from workless households into work' published 19 July 2007.
- Local Employment Partnerships, announced in the 2007 Budget with further expansion of the approach signalled in the DWP Green Paper: *In Work, Better Off* in July 2007

Previously, in its report, *Welfare to Workforce Development* (2004), the National Employment Panel had recommended ways to improve the productivity of British businesses and the prospects of Jobcentre Plus' participants as they move from welfare to workforce development. Current joint local delivery planning arrangements between the LSC and Jobcentre Plus were developed in response to the report and form a key element of joint working between the two organisations.

The Green Paper, *A new deal for welfare: Empowering people to work*, (January 2006) set out a more radical proposal for welfare reform aimed at an 80% employment rate for the working age population. As a result, City Strategies Pilots have been developed in Greater Manchester, Greater Merseyside, and Blackburn with Darwen in the North West. The North West currently has an employment rate of 73%, 2% below the England average.

Economic Development through a range of activities (e.g. Local Area Agreements and Local Enterprise Growth Initiatives) also targets reducing economic inactivity in deprived communities.

The next phase of the Offender Learning and Skills Service also has a strong focus on employer engagement and employability.

The Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) Review sets out a key recommendation for a new adult skills and careers service which provides labour market focussed skills advice.

The LSCs Annual Statement of Priorities counts tackling worklessness as a major priority, as does the NW Regional Statement of Skills Priorities.

Nationally the LSC is responding to Leitch and these other policy drivers by the development of a Skills for Jobs framework.

The main impact of Skills for Jobs in the North West will be to develop a more coherent, effective and efficient set of activities provided by a range of partners to tackle economic inactivity. Evidence of five recent reports informs this approach.

1. The LSC commissioned report **Towards Skills for jobs: "What Works" in Tackling Worklessness**
<http://readingroom.lsc.gov.uk/lsc/National/nat-towardsskillsforjobs-may07.pdf>

2. The **Institute for Public Policy Research report – “The Sand Timer: Skills and Employment in the North West”** states that *“an approach more tailored to local labour market conditions and the requirements of individuals in need of training is likely to prove effective”*.
<http://www.ippr.org.uk/publicationsandreports/publication.asp?id=527>
3. Similarly **In Work, Better Off: next steps to full employment** sets out proposals to deliver a step change in the support we offer to those who are most disadvantaged in the labour market.
<http://www.dwp.gov.uk/policy/welfare-reform/legislation-and-key-documents/in-work-better-off/>
4. **Able to Work** The report of the National Employment Panel's Employers' Working Group on Disability (January 2005)
<http://www.dwp.gov.uk/docs/abletowork.pdf>
5. **Reducing Re-Offending Through Skills and Employment: Next Steps** which outlines the government's emphasis on employability as a crucial element of offender rehabilitation.
<http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/offenderlearning/index.cfm?flash=1>

In achieving the aims of Skills for Jobs, IAG has a key role to play in ensuring that individuals make decisions about skills and employment based on their individual needs and aspirations and are able to access the training, work experience and support that they need to achieve their goals.

This approach is informed by the reports above and key policy developments and reports in relation to IAG as follows:

1. **The IAG Review** has agreed a number of recommendations including a key recommendation for a new adult skills and careers service.
<http://www.iagreview.org.uk/>
2. **World Class Skills – Implementing the Leitch review in England** has drawn upon the work of the IAG Review and sets out a recommendation for a new Adult Careers Service providing a universal source of labour market focused and accessible careers advice that should be directly responsible for raising participation in learning.
http://www.dius.gov.uk/skills/skills_strategy/leitch_review_published
3. **Skills Coaching Evaluation Report (2006)**
<http://research.dwp.gov.uk/asd/asd5/rports2005-2006/rrep391.pdf>. Skills Coaching aims to help individuals find the most effective and efficient route to improved employability. The report evaluates the impact of the Skills Coaching trials (coming to an end March 08).

Offenders are recognised as a priority group in LSC's Annual Statement of Priorities. Given that the majority of offenders are not qualified to level 2 and have skills for life needs, they are a key cohort for the achievement of LSC's PSA targets. Gaining a legitimate job is acknowledged as a key factor in reducing re-offending, an important Government priority given that re-offending is estimated to cost the UK economy £11.5 billion per year. The green paper, *Reducing Re-Offending Through Skills And Employment'* and its subsequent policy document makes recommendations for a new focus on helping offenders get work, with an ambition to *“develop new approaches to intensive, work-focused support for*

offenders, building on our existing strategy and aiming to engage employers in designing and delivering programmes so that offenders gain skills and experience to meet employers' needs."

Although the consultation showed broad support for that approach, it also identified some barriers. Many employers said they would consider employing offenders providing there was rigorous preparation for employment and good support mechanisms if things go wrong. Using the Skills for Jobs framework will provide the focus and overcome some of these barriers.

For the 125,000 children whose parents enter custody each year, the cycle is likely to be repeated. Breaking the cycle of deprivation and helping offenders to support their children through work will make an important contribution to the eradication of child poverty.

4. NW Skills for Jobs Implementation

Skills for Jobs is the LSC's response to the above policy imperatives. The aim of Skills for Jobs is to provide a framework for integrated activity to reduce the number of individuals not in employment through more effective engagement in learning and by moving them into sustainable jobs through IAG, skills brokerage, transitional support, skills development, learning progression, and the achievement of qualifications.

The framework will provide the development of an integrated skills and employment system responsive to the needs of economically inactive individuals and the needs of employers. The Skills for Jobs framework includes:

- IAG as a constant (see the IAG tender specification);
- Connectivity with the engagement activities that will be procured through the DWP Co-financing plan;
- Employability Skills development;
- Employer engagement as critical;
- Provider and partner capacity building;
- Formative evaluation.

Skills for Jobs is being developed by the LSC, and its partners, to enhance and maximise the contribution of learning and skills to tackling economic inactivity, and provide the skills people need for employability in the modern labour market. It is a demand led, but client centred approach, navigating eligible participants through the wide range of existing mainstream and discretionary skills training provision and support, as well as identifying and facilitating customised solutions for individual participants. Skills for Jobs will also depend on support and involvement from a range of partner organisations including particularly Jobcentre Plus, who will be procuring a client engagement case work approach through their Co-financing plan, as well as LSC Providers.

This framework of services and programmes, both new and existing, will increase skills interventions, and their coherence, in support of existing targets. These may be new services developed to tackle specific gaps or need, or may extend existing effective practice by geographical location or by client group. LSC Areas will be able to select and build upon activity relevant to employer demand, labour market forecasts and priority client groups. This activity will deliver on existing local partnership targets including those in local area agreements, joint delivery plans with Jobcentre Plus, growth areas, and City Strategies.

4.1 Principles

In the North West we would wish to support the development of Skills for Jobs through existing and emerging local partnerships. We will ensure that the concept of “Place” is combined with the acceptance that we need to move to a more individualised, client centred approach. The fundamental principles of the Skills for Jobs framework in the North West are:

- Employer engagement critical;
- Client centred - individualised and flexible;
- Progressive;
- With a sense of “Place”- delivering on local economic development partnership aims;
- Bringing cohesion, enhancement and greater efficiency to current investment of a range of organisations;
- Outcome focused – sustainable employment.

The main impact of Skills for Jobs in the North West will be to develop a more coherent, effective and efficient set of activities provided by a range of partners to tackle economic inactivity. A successful application will demonstrate the impact it will have on both organisational change as well as participant outcomes.

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4.2 Objectives

There are a number of key objectives underpinning Skills for Jobs:

1. Working with, and influencing, the reshaping/ development of “mainstream” and other learning provision *that is already being funded*. Skills for Jobs interventions are intended to be the “glue” that helps existing services to be more effective.
2. Developing routeways that respond to the skills needs of individuals as well as employer recruitment needs. Interventions must demonstrate an integrated approach that creates routeways into sustainable employment. Partnership working will be a critical part of the Skills for Jobs framework.
3. Incorporating independent Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) as an integral part of any Skills for Jobs routeway. Links with LSC ESF procured IAG provision must be evident and that IAG provision must link up effectively with the case worker engagement activities being procured by the DWP Co-financing plan.
4. Creating organisational and infrastructure change. Skills for Jobs is intended to be transformational. A key element is to create change in the way that individual organisations work, and in the way that they work together. This will be necessary if effective routeways to sustainable employment are to be created and to become the “standard” in all mainstream provision
5. Building on current pilots and initiatives. Interventions must draw on existing experience built through activities such as Skills Coaching, the Adult Learning Option, Employability Skills provision for Jobcentre Plus customers, and relevant discretionary funded projects.

6. Building the pre-employment phase of support. Interventions must show how routeways to employability include First Steps provision, Neighbourhood Learning in Deprived Communities (NLDC), and other sources – including non LSC funded provision – particularly DWP’s ESF engagement activity.
7. Creating access to in work skills development and qualifications. Skills for Jobs must show, where appropriate, how individuals will have the opportunity to progress through to Train to Gain funded provision or Apprenticeships/ Adult Apprenticeships. Where required it should provide pre-level 2 training and support in order to connect to Train to Gain.
8. Adopting a Multi-Agency approach. It is expected that Skills for Jobs interventions will not only be delivered through consortia that reflect the range of services required for routeways into employment, but also that initiatives and services funded by all the major agencies are taken into account in planning and delivery. This should include partnership working through the relevant mechanisms in any given area (e.g. Local area Agreements, City Strategy pilots).

4.3 Priorities

4.3.1 People

The target group for S4J and SEP is adults (18+) that are not currently in employment and who lack the skills and qualifications that are up-to-date and relevant to the job market. Within this broad category, groups facing specific barriers and experiencing significant disadvantages will be prioritised (**but not restricted to**), reflecting local and sub-regional needs, as detailed below:

- a. Lone Parents;
- b. Workless Households;
- c. Incapacity Benefit claimants;
- d. Income Support benefit claimants;
- e. Ex Offenders and Offenders under supervision in the community;
- f. People with Learning Difficulties and Disabilities – including those people with Mental Health conditions;
- g. People from BME Communities;
- h. People over 50 years of age;
- i. Homeless people;
- j. People with Skills for Life needs below level 2.

For Skills for Jobs contracts eligible participants are those who are unemployed or economically inactive, with a focus of particular priority groups – but contracts are not restricted to only work with these priority groups unless contracts explicitly state otherwise.

A condition of SEP contracts is that all participants must be referred from JCP. Providers may directly recruit participants from the eligible groups, but in this instance the provider must ensure that they have evidence confirming that the participant is aged 18+ and either live in, or be seeking to work for an organisation which is based in the geographic locations specified in their contract, and falls into the Target Group categories as identified in Annex 3 of the Invitation to Tender.

Providers must then provide JCP with regular updates (ie monthly) of any newly directly recruited participants, the first update to JCP should include details of those directly recruited participants who have been recruited to date. JCP should be advised that unless they indicate otherwise then it is assumed that these individuals are eligible for support.

In terms of evidence, providers should devise their own self-declaration form and ensure that they have received LSC approval for the use of the form. Providers should then ensure that they have a completed self-declaration form for each participant indicating that the participant is aged 18+ and either live in, or be seeking to work for an organisation which is based in the geographic locations specified in their contract, and falls into the Target Group categories as identified in Annex 3 of the Invitation to Tender.

The focus for Skills for Jobs and SEP must however remain on the hardest to help and long term unemployed.

4.3.2 Place

The Skills for Jobs framework will be available across the five sub regions of the North West (Greater Merseyside, Lancashire, Cumbria, Greater Manchester, and Cheshire & Warrington) specifically, but not exclusively, targeting:

- Clients living in the deprived wards identified for action in the three North West City Strategy pilot areas of:
 1. Blackburn with Darwen;
 2. Greater Manchester;
 3. Greater Merseyside.
- Clients located in other worklessness “hot spots” (identified throughout the North West in Local Area Agreements) where the alignment of funding and purpose model, of the City Strategy pilots, could be contextualised.

All of the priority areas identified in the North West Regional Economic Strategy are covered by the above.

4.3.3 Sectors

The primary target Sectors will be:

- a. Identified regional priority Sectors such as Logistics, Health and Social Care, Construction, the Public Sector, Retail, Travel, Tourism and Hospitality;
- b. Other Sectors with identified job growth potential such as Call Centres and Passenger Transport.

Certain contracts have been awarded on the basis of delivering to specific sectors, contractors should note the following flexibilities:

- Where a sector is defined as ‘logistics’ for example, this encompasses not only specific logistic sector companies, but also the logistical operations of any organisation, i.e. warehousing and distribution function of a retailer
- Where an individual fails to obtain employment in a specified sector, but supported is continued by the contractor and the participant secures employment in a different sector then this can count towards the employment and sustained employment contract targets. However the contractor must retain evidence for an audit trail of the initial employment opportunities in the relevant sector that were not secured
- Where a contractor is finding demand for vacancies in a sector outside that which they are contracted, the contractor should contact the LSC to discuss this in advance of any work being undertaken. Any new sectors in a contract must be supported by an appropriate contract variation.

4.4 The Routeways

Three Skills for Jobs Routeways have been developed and these are described below. The success of the Routeways demands the effective utilisation and co-ordination of existing provision and support (LSC funded and funded from other sources), and the sourcing of custom made provision and support necessary to enable a truly individualised approach. It is essential that effective “handover” procedures are put in place to ensure client progression from DWP engagement activities to LSC Employability Skills development. The offer to participants must align and enhance existing funded activity not replicate it.

The achievement of entering employment is not seen as the end of the Learner Journey, in work support should ensure the sustainability of employment and, where appropriate, also level 2 learning via Train 2 Gain.

1. The Employability Routeway

This Routeway will navigate eligible learners, already engaged in LSC programmes below level 2 from their current programme into sustained employment. To do this by linking with suitable sustainable employment opportunities with training, supporting the transition from worklessness to employment with training, and, ideally, further skills development to level 2 via Train to Gain.

This Routeway will enhance the outcomes from existing LSC provision.

Regional priorities will be to consolidate the value of existing activities and add value to existing outcomes e.g.

- The Employability Skills Programme – including “wrap around” ESOL support;
- The Adult Learning Option;
- Provision for Learners with Learning Difficulties and/ or Disabilities currently in the FE sector by developing:
 - Links between supported employment organisations and FE providers;
 - Further supported employment capacity for those learners not eligible for local authority or JC+ provision;
 - Models of supported employment that facilitate progression from learning to sustained employment.

2. The Individualised Routeway

This Routeway will develop engagement with those in the target group not engaged by the Employability and Sector Routeways. To enable a customer focussed progression route for participants out of worklessness and into sustainable employment, taking account of:

- Local labour market need;
- Client aspirations and aptitudes;
- The employability skills required by participants to compete in the local labour market;
- The transitional support needed to move people from welfare to workforce.

3. The Sector Routeway

This Routeway will develop demand-led sector Routeways. Sector Skills Councils are currently developing national employability sector Routeways. Applicants will need to ensure that the Routeways that they propose to deliver align with Sector Skills Councils’ models to ensure coherence and will need to ensure that they work with existing sector partnerships and specialist sector providers. All involve pre-employment training leading to jobs and will also need to be linked into the emerging Local Employment Partnerships offers in the relevant sectors. (These should also incorporate the Sector Employability Toolkit - see Annex 4 - which involves two weeks

pre-employment training and three weeks work trial before the individual enters paid employment and ideally moves into ongoing learning through Train to Gain or an apprenticeship if appropriate. This option allows access to a wide range of jobseekers that can benefit from five weeks of training and support to achieve agreed recruitment standards).

These Routeways will be designed by the sector, to direct and support eligible learners through pre-employment training into identified sustained employment, ideally with training to level 2 via Train to Gain. Sector Routeways should support the work of the emerging Local Employment Partnerships. Some sector Routeway examples are represented at Annex 2.

4.5 The Stages

The three Routeways outlined above will include the following 5 stages of activities and these need to be considered from the perspectives of both the employer and the individual. The stages would mainly comprise of activities and support drawn from the list below as deemed appropriate to meet the aim of Skills for Jobs. Other appropriate activities can be factored in as necessary to achieve the Skills for Jobs objective. Applications should demonstrate how their provision will link with other LSC or DWP ESF funded activity – in particular DWP ESF funded engagement activities procured by JCP. Case studies at Annex 3 describe, from the learner perspective, how all three Routeways can work. Additional detail around the role of IAG within the stages outlined below can be found in the IAG tender specification.

Stages 1 and 2 - Employer and Learner Engagement

Stages 1 and 2 are focused on engaging both the learner and employer and examples of the types of activities that could be supported are outlined below, as indicated above other appropriate activities may be included:

- Established handover procedures to link effectively with DWP ESF funded engagement activity procured by JCP.
- Individual job and skills diagnostic and assessment services.
- Development of a Skills for Jobs action plan with clearly identified progression Stages.
- Sector focussed direct learner recruitment via partners.
- Learner support.
- Job scoping/broking support.
- Responsive recruitment support.
- Engagement with employers including commitment to volume recruitment.

Stage 3 – The Pre Employment Phase

Stage 3 aims to equip the individual to enable them to access employment, examples of the types of activities that could be undertaken in this stage are detailed below, as indicated above other appropriate activities may be included:

- Employability skills training.
- Skills for Life – in particular numeracy.
- Financial Literacy.
- ESOL for Work.
- Learner support.

- Pre employment support for individuals e.g. CV writing, mock interviews, skills passports etc.
- Work placements.
- Pre recruitment bespoke training based to meet the needs of employers.
- Job Interview guarantee (pre employment support and bespoke training leading to guaranteed interviews).
- Employability and occupational training tailored to Individual and sectoral need.
- Mentoring and support services.
- Specialist provision .
- “Softer” skills development (assertiveness, anger management, motivation).
- Training and assessment services delivered on employers’ premises.
- Enterprise Skills – support for those wishing to set up their own business.
- Links to appropriate existing provision.

Stage 4 – The Entry to Employment Phase

At Stage 4 participants should now be in employment and examples of the types of activities that could be undertaken in this stage are detailed below, as indicated above other appropriate activities may be included:

- Job Interview Guarantee programmes (pre-employment support training leading to guaranteed job interviews).
- Local Employment Partnerships/ Work Trials/ The Sector Employability Toolkit.
- Supported employment for Learners with Learning Difficulties and/ or Disabilities including coaching.
- Mentoring and support services.
- Support to develop employer Equality and Diversity policy and practice.
- Transitional support from Welfare to Workforce.
- Coordination of learner support as a bridge between employment and training.
- Specialised provision.

The employment will preferably be on a permanent basis; however this may include temporary positions where they are substantial in nature, i.e. are likely to lead to a permanent job offer and be a minimum of several weeks not days.

The employment must include training to ensure a sustained job outcome and this training must be identified at the commencement of employment, i.e. what training is going to be undertaken during the initial 13 weeks of employment.

For the purposes of Skills for Jobs or Sustainable Employment Programme (SEP) contracts, the training would ideally be LSC funded, however it can also include Employer Training where this is supported by the Skills for Jobs or SEP provider either financially or with support such as IAG, mentoring etc.

Where the training is Employer Led, as well as being supported by the Skills for Jobs or SEP provider, the training needs to be substantial so it clearly assists the sustainability of employment, i.e. it will not be a one day IT course or employee induction. Employer led training would ideally be delivered by a third party training provider, rather than in house.

There is a requirement for the job to be for a minimum of 8 hours per week for those on incapacity benefits or otherwise 16 hours per week. The LSC recognises that in certain sectors (retail for example) it may be common practice to offer employees low

numbers of contracted hours per week, but that the actual hours being worked equates to more than the minimum required levels quoted above. In this instance the Contractor should liaise with the LSC to ensure that appropriate evidence is obtained and if necessary, the contract varied to reflect this. Appropriate evidence is deemed as a contract of employment or letter from employer and wage slip showing actuals hours worked (being in excess of 8 or 16 hours as required) in week one and week 13.

Stage 5 – The Post Employment Phase

Stage 5 will provide participants with the support required to enable them to sustain their employment. The types of activities that could be undertaken in this stage are detailed below, as indicated above other appropriate activities may be included:

- Development of the Skills for Jobs action plan exit strategy.
- Transitional support from Welfare to Workforce.
- Post recruitment bespoke training based to meet the needs of employers (leading to Train to Gain).
- Supported employment for Learners with Learning Difficulties and/ or Disabilities including coaching.
- Post employment mentoring and support for individuals.
- Post recruitment bespoke training based to meet the needs of employers.
- Progression through to Train to Gain/Adult Apprenticeships/ Further “in work” learning.

Please be aware that the LSC is **not** willing to consider applications that only seek to deliver particular stages, or actions within the stages detailed above, and therefore applicants should ensure that their application contains activities that will deliver all of the defined progression stages and dovetail effectively with DWP ESF funded engagement activities in Stages One and Two procured by JCP.

For the purposes of Skills for Jobs and SEP contracts, the sustained employment at 13 weeks must also be accompanied with appropriate evidence (detailed in the contract) that the employment has been sustained and also show what training (as defined above in terms of LSC funded or Employer Training) has been delivered during the 13 week period of employment.

If the participant leaves their employment before the 13 week census date then the sustained employment outcome cannot be claimed, however if the participant starts another job within 6 weeks of leaving employment and they stay within that job for 13 weeks then the sustained job outcome can be claimed at the 13 week point with the 2nd employer. For the avoidance of doubt, a 2nd job start cannot be claimed and the employment period must be continuous for 13 weeks with the new employer from their start date with that new employer.

Some of the Tender Specifications included a requirement to track learners 6 months after their employment start date. Skills for Jobs and SEP providers should note that this does not mean the employment offer must be for at least 6 months, it is just a monitoring requirement of the ESF programme.

The Sustainable Employment Programme

Local Employment Partnerships (LEPs) were announced in the March 2007 Budget. LEPs are a new ground breaking way of giving 250,000 of Jobcentre Plus (JCP) overlooked and priority customers the opportunity to acquire the skills needed to get into work and to develop those skills

to stay and further progress in work. They are a 'partnership deal' between Jobcentre Plus and employers, supported by DWP, DIUS and the LSC.

The LSC has undertaken to procure tailored pre-employment training where the training need arises from a LEP. This is the focus of the SEP tender specifications and contracts.

In addition to the pre-employment training, and in order to increase the sustainability of LEP employment, the LSC wishes to link the pre-employment training, funded by this Invitation to Tender, to post-employment training funded predominantly by Train to Gain. Together these elements configure the Sustainable Employment Programme. Annex 1 of the Tender Specifications describes the **Sustainable Employment Programme (SEP) Journey**.

- LEPs are the primary focus of the Sustainable Employment Programme but the programme may be extended to non LEP employment opportunities. Contractors should seek approval from the LSC before working with any non LEP employers as part of SEP contracts.
- Where a participant fails to take up a LEP employment offer, but the contractor continues to support the individual they can find a non LEP employment offer. This will count towards the employment and sustained employment target, however the contractor should retain evidence as an audit trail of the initial LEP employment offer that the participant was unsuccessful in securing.

The SEP must be a bespoke programme of pre and post-employment training which may incorporate or link with some or all components of existing LSC provision such as:

- The Employability Skills Programme
- Skills for Jobs
- ESF funded activity including pre employability and pre Train to Gain.
- Employer responsive provision i.e. Sector employability toolkits, Train to Gain and Apprenticeships.

In these circumstances, successful bidders will be expected to develop a sound knowledge of existing provision and to build a strong working relationship with the providers delivering it, so that they can make the necessary links for their clients.

A critical factor in the SEP is that it is employer led, with active employer involvement in the design of both the pre-employment phase and the subsequent progression into Train to Gain.

Providers will need to respond to the needs of employers at short notice in order to support their pre employment training needs. Providers must also be able to work with JCP and this client group.

The SEP encompasses provision of some or all of the elements identified in the SEP Tender Specifications. However, the LSC is specifically seeking to purchase pre-employment training.

Designated by Jobcentre Plus as part of a Local Employment Partnership (LEP) agreement and designed with the involvement of the employer, the pre-employment training will be a flexible training programme which will accommodate current benefit restrictions/rules incumbent upon participants (e.g. the 16 hour rule). The pre-employment phase can include all or elements of the following:

1. An initial assessment of individual needs and confirmation of suitability and eligibility for the SEP.
2. Employability Skills: - e.g. Skills for Life, CV writing, interview training, presentational skills
3. Employer demand-led, sector and job-specific training: - preferably the Sector Employability Toolkit where available (see SEP Tender Specifications) but still tailored to fit the employer/customer (who may not require all elements of a particular toolkit)
4. Information Advice and Guidance and learner support for successful applicants

5. Ongoing Information Advice and Guidance, signposting, jobsearch advice and support for those unsuccessful in this LEP recruitment.

4.6 Employer Engagement

The success of Skills for Jobs will depend on effective employer engagement. The involvement of employers and employer organisations is critical. Skills for Jobs contractors will need to ensure that:

- Employer commitment is fundamental.
- Best practice includes:
 - a. Involvement from the start;
 - b. Working within employers' interests and capacity;
 - c. Incorporating employer requirements at all stages (inc. design);
 - d. Utilising existing relationships;
 - e. Focussing on selected sectors, occupations and areas;
 - f. Creating employer confidence and trust in the processes;
 - g. Ensuring effective communication.
- Partnerships will deploy sector routeways developed by Sector Skills Councils – see sector routeway examples at Annex 2.
- They capitalise on existing employer engagement e.g. Local Employment Partnerships, New Standard, Train to Gain brokers, work based learning, Jobcentre Plus.
- They develop support mechanisms and/or capitalise on existing support systems for those employers involved in Skills for Jobs.
- Have a thorough understanding of where the appropriate employer demand is in terms of levels, sectors and locations.
- Link support for employers with commitment to Local Employment Partnerships and Train to Gain.
- Understand and communicate the business case for Skills for Jobs.

4.7 Participant Engagement

Effective client engagement is also clearly critical to Skills for Jobs success. Connectivity with DWP ESF engagement activities, and an effective client “handover” procedure, is essential. The client group involved has diverse needs however a set of common characteristics of effective interventions (Source: Worklessness – Effective interventions to tackle worklessness - September 2005):

1. One size doesn't fit all:
 - a. Flexibility & local autonomy critical
 - b. Holistic, client centred and including customised provision.
2. Local delivery but with strategic overview at travel to work or City region level.
3. Effective engagement of individuals:

- a. Connectivity and effective handover procedures with initial engagement activity (e.g. DWP ESF funded engagement activities in Stages One and Two procured by JCP).
 - b. Central or accessible premises
 - c. Local people as advisers
 - d. Outreach work
 - e. Networking and delivery through local organisations
 - f. Different methods suit different target groups/areas
 - g. Organisations less obviously connected with government can play a more effective role in initial engagement.
4. Employer engagement:
- a. Employer commitment is fundamental
 - b. Best practice includes:
 - i. Involvement from the start
 - ii. Working within employers' interests and capacity
 - iii. Incorporating employer requirements at all stages (inc. design)
 - iv. Utilising existing relationships
 - v. Focussing on selected sectors, occupations and areas
 - vi. Creating employer confidence and trust in the processes
 - vii. Ensuring effective communication.
5. Delivery & Process:
- a. Provider type is not critical
 - b. Sufficient level of autonomy
 - c. Flexibility around the need for formal training is an advantage
 - d. Some evidence supports "work first then train" approach
 - e. Effective partnership working is critical
 - f. Need to take local conditions and context into account.
6. Support:
- a. Financial support can help with some barriers but not others
 - b. Wage subsidy evidence mixed
 - c. Level and intensity of support can be high and should not be underestimated
 - d. Post placement support for hardest to help.
7. Success factors:
- a. Formal training not always essential
 - b. For job brokerage:
 - i. Must be embedded in the local area
 - ii. Requires a holistic approach
 - iii. Collaborate with other agencies
 - iv. Be employer focused
 - v. Project benefits need to be sustained
 - c. For outreach:
 - i. Seen to be community based:
 - 1. Establish a local base
 - 2. Outreach work
 - d. For Travel to Work issues:

- i. Funding travel costs:
 1. Better travel information
 - ii. Journey planning in JCP offices
 - iii. Concessions for target groups
 - iv. Express services from excluded/deprived neighbourhoods.
8. Recommendations/Issues:
- a. Alternative provision may be required where there is a lack of take-up of existing provision
 - b. Job brokerage/ linkage projects are effective when delivered efficiently and all success factors are included.

4.8 Capability to Deliver

Skills for Jobs aims to achieve greater impact on disadvantaged individuals, improved engagement and improved outcomes through Routeway progression.

We need to see demonstrated in applications:

- A track record of delivering the type of activity specified.
- That they have local knowledge of the both the client group and barriers they face and the local labour market.
- The capacity to deliver in very local areas, but they must also demonstrate their staff has the necessary skills to make the application successful i.e. their approach to Continuous Professional Development e.g. the LLUK framework. Where these resources are not in place they must demonstrate **how** and **when** they will be secured.
- Effective collaborative working.
- Experience of working on an outreach basis with a history of delivering in a multi-agency approach.
- Demonstrate how changes will be affected in their own organisation and in the way they work with other organisations and partners to effectively progress participants into successful sustained employment outcome.

Applicants must be able to demonstrate they have the capability to:

- Monitor this activity, to supply timely and accurate management information and the ability to work with partners to track each individual.
- To ensure quality of provision.
- Effectively recruit learners.
- Assess learner needs.
- Provide services tailored to learner's needs and progression.
- Deliver expected achievement rates.
- Deliver specific regional requirements.
- Contribute to the delivery of strategic targets such as those outlined in Local Area Agreements and City Strategy pilot areas..
- Demonstrate value for money.

4.9 Outcomes

Outcomes for **Skills for Jobs** must clearly be focussed on priority participants moving out of economic inactivity into sustainable employment with training through the development of learning and skills. This is the main purpose of **Skills for Jobs** and these outcomes must link with relevant City Strategy and/ or Local Area Agreement targets. Key outcomes will be: -

- Entering employment (with Skills for Jobs training and support).
- Sustained employment at 13 weeks with training (e.g. Train to Gain, ESF provision, Learndirect, or employer led training funded or supported through Skills for Jobs)
- Progression on to other LSC funded training, for example, Train to Gain or an Apprenticeship

The training must start during the first 13 weeks of employment, however the participant does not have to be 'in training' at either the job entry or 13 week trigger points.

Training can be employer led, however this is not peer training or a one day course, this is about training that will directly lead to sustained employment, so either a robust employer training programme or third party delivered training solution. If in doubt, consult the LSC – but make sure it is substantial training that will lead to sustained employment. And where it is employer led, the expectation is that the person will still look to enter Train to Gain etc after this in the future and links should be made for this

Sustainable employment is defined (on the basis of auditable evidence) as being in employment for at least 8 (for recipients of incapacity benefits) or 16 hours a week for a period of 13 weeks. Skills for Jobs Learning Plan Routeway Progression outcomes will also be monitored.

Organisational Development Outcomes (in addition to Learner Outcomes)

Organisational change and development are both critical to the **Skills for Jobs** specification. Key elements expected are:

- Changing mainstream behaviour and culture within partner organisations in the consortium including:
 - Demonstrating how the **Skills for Jobs** approach will be rolled out across the consortium.
 - Developing effective working relationships with Jobcentre Plus.
 - Joining up provision and support services.
 - Describing continuing support/training “in work”.
 - Developing sustainability – prioritising public funding and where possible stimulating employer contributions.
- Senior level commitment to change, including:
 - **Skills for Jobs** lead to be of sufficient seniority to affect culture change across the organisation.
 - Commitment and buy-in at the highest level within the consortium.
- Self governing:

- Identifying and addressing the blockages and barriers preventing clear routeways to, and beyond, job entry.
- Demonstrating that robust quality assurance systems are in place.
- Changing organisational culture, structure and process along with change to skills provision and curricula.
- Engaging and working with all relevant partners including learner and employer intermediaries and employers. This should reflect a multi-agency approach.

Outcomes should also be reflective of the local demography and provider outcomes therefore should mirror the make up of the local economically inactive community (e.g. the percentage of Lone Parents or BME residents, the length of time on benefit etc.). Work should go on with employers to ensure that recruitment is reflective of the local demography.

Softer outcomes are also expected in terms of the contractor articulating to accountable bodies, the structural or societal barriers (e.g. Childcare provision, transport links) impacting on the achievement of increased economic activity rates. This should be a feature of systematic performance monitoring and the framework's formative evaluation.

4.10 Cross Cutting Themes

1. Equality & Diversity

The LSC has published its Single Equality Scheme. This is the LSC's first Single Equality Scheme and it describes in a single document how the Council will fulfil its statutory duties to promote equality of opportunity and avoid discrimination. The Single Equality Scheme demonstrates the LSC's commitment to placing the promotion of equality and diversity at the centre of every aspect of its work. It is intended to meet the requirements for a Race Equality, Disability Equality and Gender Equality Scheme and to implement these in an inclusive way which takes account of Religion and/or Belief, Sexual Orientation and Age. The Scheme will be effective from 30 April 2007 - 29 April 2010. The Scheme can be viewed at <http://www.lsc.gov.uk/aboutus/quality/equality>

2. Sustainability

Skills for Jobs is a support framework that aims to utilise the many and varied existing programmes and support systems already available in the community and back this up by further supporting an individual's journey from economic inactivity to sustained employment – Welfare to Workforce. This will involve additional information, advice and guidance; it may also involve additional signposting to specialist support, or additional provision of customised activity to “plug the gaps”, “oil the wheels” and generally ensure that value is added to existing provision, in terms of progression through employability to employment.

The use of ESF to fund Skills for Jobs enables an initial longer term funding source (three years) which will help the framework get established, be evaluated and improved – including Partnership and organisational development.

Given the individualised nature of Skills for Jobs, the unit cost of helping an individual into employment will vary. It is essential that Skills for Jobs contractors can evidence the value for money impact of the framework in terms of how they will:

- Ensure that resources are managed and deployed to best value with lower cost outcomes used to balance higher cost support for the “harder to help”.
- Demonstrate that robust quality assurance systems are in place.

- Utilise proven engagement strategies and ways of working that have “delivered” outcomes.
- Demonstrate the ability (and willingness) to identify and use eligible existing funded provision (LSC or other) wherever appropriate – including accessing relevant learner support funding.
- Ensure and evidence that the client cohort reflects the need and make-up within the community (e.g. length of inactivity, level of workless households, ethnicity, lone parents, ex offenders and offenders in the community, level of Skills for Life need, people with learning difficulties and disabilities etc.) and develop employer recruitment practices to reflect this demography.
- Develop partnership working to maximise cost effectiveness – with referral agencies – particularly the DWP ESF funded client engagement activity, benefit agencies, other learning providers, the voluntary and community sector, other key factor drivers (e.g. Child care providers, transport planners) *and especially employers*.
- Effect organisational change and infrastructure development.
- Gather, analyse, interpret and respond to data; including developing multi-agency data sharing.
- Identify “what works”...and what doesn't

4.11 Formative Evaluation

Ongoing independent formative evaluation will be commissioned, separately, on a regional basis, to inform and improve the Skills for Jobs framework. The Skills for Jobs Tender specifications are not looking for the delivery of formative evaluation. The formative evaluation will identify and share good practice as well as blockages to success. This evaluation process will, by necessity, identify issues within the general landscape of provision, support and infrastructure as well as within the Skills for Jobs framework itself. This will involve:

- Being a critical friend
- Comparing across the region
- Gather and assess feedback from all groups – partnerships, deliverers, employers, learners
- Establish and agree baseline positions with local partnerships and help the development of capturing Skills for Jobs outcomes
- Sharing best practice/experience
- Analyse Management Information to monitor penetration and impact and make recommendations for action
- Informing the decision making of both the local partnerships and also the Regional Skills Partnership

The evaluation project will run concurrently with the main Skills for Jobs framework Routeways.

The evaluation will consider:

- Effective engagement of key target groups
- Individual progression and achievement
- Links/ complementarity with other LSC or DWP ESF funded activity
- Impact of capacity building activity
- Employer links and support for employment
- Successful identification and support to meet individual needs
- Individual customer journey
- Activity management system, including data sharing arrangements
- Partnership Development
- Value for Money [added value]
- Impact and added value of coaching and guidance services, including individual diagnostic and assessment
- Impact of in employment advice and ongoing support
- Quality of provision
- Links established to Train to Gain (including pre employment preparation)
- Effectiveness in supporting hard to reach groups
- Improved understanding of job market
- Additional specific regional requirements to be advised

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, the Skills for Jobs suite of tender specifications provides a framework, in partnership with DWP ESF funded client engagement activity procured by JCP, which strengthens current provision in delivering on existing targets, and producing:

- Better and integration of the learning and skills infrastructure
- Better targeting of support for those at a disadvantage in the labour market
- Better value for money
- Better learner progression
- Better meeting of employer demand

NW Learning and Skills Council: - Skills for Jobs Framework

Stage 1 Engagement of employers notifying vacancies →	Stage 2 Engagement with target customers →	Stage 3 Customer Assessment →	Stage 4 Pre-employment phase →	Stage 5 Entry to employment →
Lead partners: Skills for Business Network, Train to Gain brokers, LSC National Employer Service and Jobcentre Plus (JCP).	Lead partner: JCP	Lead Partner: LSC and Providers	Lead partners: JCP, LSC and providers	Lead partners: LSC, JCP and providers network
Existing Programmes e.g. JCP vacancies on Local Employment Partnerships Train to Gain Skills Brokers LSC Provider Employer Engagement JCP/LSC Sector Teams- with Sector Skills Councils (SSC) and Sector Skills Productivity Alliances (SSPA).	Existing Programmes e.g. Localised engagement projects funded through Deprived Area Fund/ESF Neighbourhood Learning in Deprived Communities Personal and Community Development Learning Voluntary & Community Sector Projects University for Industry (Ufi)	Existing Programmes: e.g. Jobcentre Plus Provider assessments Skills Coaching – Pilot Ufi	Existing Programmes e.g. Pathways to Work New Deal – Lone parents, 25+, 50+, for Disabled People, 18 - 24. Jobcentre Plus/LSC Adult Learning Pilot Sector Employability Toolkit Employability Skills Programme Phase 3 Skills for Life- L1-2 Voluntary & Community Projects	Existing Programmes e.g. Work Trials New Deal Employment Option FE Demand Led Activities Adult Learning Grant Train to Gain
Local Employment Partnerships. → Skills Pledge				
Capacity Building – providers, partners				
Formative Evaluation				
Joint Investment Planning - partners				
Key: JCP Funded Activities LSC Funded Activities Joint Funded Activities				

EXAMPLES OF SECTOR LED ROUTEWAYS

1. Sport & Active Leisure – Routeway Into Employment

There is a demand for occupations within the sector, in particular coaching (33% of growth) and teaching and instructing generally. The SALSPA 2006- 2012 plan (Regional Sector Skills Agreement) highlighted that 54% of “establishments report a vacancy and 45% of sector organisations with a vacancy found them hard-to-fill”. In addition to this, the growth and value of sport is additionally noted in the SALSPA plan.

Key to this routeway is effective partnerships between the LSC, the skills for jobs contractor, learning providers, employers, SkillsActive, County Sports Partnerships, Sport England and Jobcentre Plus.

Sport & Active Leisure Framework

Recruitment of beneficiaries could be effectively completed by marketing and branding, i.e. use of relevant National Governing Body (NGB) logos, for example, FA. Partners that will be involved with recruitment of individuals envisaged are Job Centre Plus, County Sport Partnerships and National Governing Bodies themselves.

Minimum Operating Standards recommended are CRB, Child Protection, and Appointed First Aid course. The NGB could provide access and support for these courses. For the CRB the beneficiary would be registered once recruited on the programme so not to delay any timescales with employment. The CRB pending would not inhibit the beneficiaries' work trial.

Level 2 Qualifications – For the Sport and Active Leisure Sector and this framework a level 2 qualification is not necessary a full-fat level 2 such as a NVQ level 2. On average the level 2 qualifications highlighted within the framework are 100 guided learning hours. **Full guidance will be provided by SkillsActive, the SSC on recommended qualifications for employment with the Sport and Active Leisure Learning Sector.**

Skills Assessment/ Training needs Analysis, Skills for Life assessment (SkillsActive) and Sport workbook – *SkillsActive, the SSC for Sport and Active Leisure Learning can provide support and required documents wherever necessary.*

Work Trial – See below for timescales. There would be a link with volunteering in this section.

Timescales – The work trial it is envisaged to be approximately 3 weeks. There will, however, be flexibility within the programme during the pre and post level two stage in terms of those on Job Seeker Allowance or Incapacity Benefit. The training schedule will therefore not necessarily be full-time but this will need to be reviewed once beneficiaries are recruited. An example of Routeway activities would be:

- Skills Assessment, Employability Skills and familiarisation of needs and career aims of beneficiaries. Start of Skills for Life Training.
- Employability Skills and Skills for life training and support.
- Commencing of level 2 course and continued support.
- Mentoring.
- Work Trial.
- Completion of Course and Assessments for level 2 course.
- Employability Checklist, Recruitment Checklist and interviews.
- Inductions and referrals.

- Employment/Self-Employment with continued support and training for Skills for Life, CPD modules and employability Skills. Mentor continued support.
- Review and evaluation.
- Full support would be provided by SkillsActive in designing the programme structure along with other partners such as Sport England NW and County Sport Partnerships.

2. Retail – Routeway Into Employment

This provides an overview of the national Skillsmart pilot.

Skillsmart Retail in association with the LSC's National Employer Service department and Job Centre Plus recognised the need for a national pre-employment model to be developed. This is aimed at individuals who haven't previously worked in retail and need to gain the necessary skills to successfully secure a job in retail. Initially devised in line with the Skills Pledge and the Jobs Pledge to address the Welfare to Work agenda, the programme has been developed with a flexible approach to be suitable to be delivered to any group of individuals who are looking to secure their first position working in retail.

A formal pilot is being conducted across the country and the aim is that the materials will be available nationally in November.

The Retail Sector Routeway model includes:

- An employability checklist
- A recruitment checklist
- The format for a selection event
- A two week training programme
- A three week work placement model (for employers to adopt once the beneficiaries have entered the work place)

Skillsmart Retail recognises that on a local and regional level a number of organisations already deliver pre-employment programmes for retail. Our aim is to create a national standard which delivers an assured quality and consistent output for retail employers across the country. Wherever their stores are located, the retailers will know that any individual who has successfully completed the Skillsmart Retail programme will have the appropriate and necessary skills to begin their career in retail. In this way Skillsmart Retail would like to reflect the knowledge and experience of providers already successfully delivering retail pre-employment programmes to incorporate best practice in to the national model.

The programme has been designed to be a modular programme and therefore very flexible and will be mapped to Level 2 so it will underpin any future learning i.e. through to Train to Gain.

Skillsmart have developed a two week training programme aimed at people who are level 2 capable. The programme has not been designed to address any other skills needs that an individual may have. If an individual is identified to have other skills needs such as literacy, numeracy, language or generic employability skills then the individual should be encouraged to complete the relevant training and qualifications to address these skills needs before they attend the two week programme. Therefore, as part of the recruitment process onto the pre-employment programme, the beneficiaries should have completed a skills assessment whether that is the Skillsmart Retail Stepping up to Retail toolkit or any other initial assessment skills diagnostic. For more information on the 'Stepping up to Retail toolkit' please visit www.skillsmartretail.com.

On completion of the two week programme there would be three potential routes to securing a job available to the beneficiaries:

- Guaranteed interview , work placement and a guaranteed interview or delivery partner's own application, this could include setting up interviews with retailers already engaged or signposting to further training or other appropriate recruitment organisations e.g. local adverts, Job Centre Plus etc.
- Individuals who successfully complete the programme will receive a certificate of achievement from Skillsmart Retail and a Retail Passport in recognition of their achievement and to validate their training with potential employers.
- Skillsmart Retail supports the development of learning/ training and development centres for retail – the working title for these centres is the 'Skills Shop', although centres may ultimately have a different name, probably related to location. In the North West there are current and planned Skills Shops.

3. Health & Social Care – Routeways Into Employment

Offering employment routeways into the Health and Social Care sectors using the 'Ambition: Health' model.

Health Sector

NHS

Based upon the known age profile for non medical staff it is possible to estimate the percentage of the workforce, by staff group, that will leave the NHS over forthcoming years.

Assuming that retirement profiles do not dramatically change over the period (2006 to 2016) and using a conservative 5% estimate for all other turnover it is estimated that by 2016, the NHS in the North West region will need to replace approximately:

- 58% of the professionally qualified clinical staff i.e. nurses, physiotherapists etc;
- 65% of clinical support staff; and
- 67% of NHS infrastructure staff (including Admin & Clerical, Managers).

Social Care sector

In the 2006 Department of Health publication – *Options for Excellence* – recruitment and retention were highlighted for the Social Care sector and recruitment is on-going in this growth sector;

The vision for 2020...

- creation of a more diverse sector by supporting workforce development in private and third sector providers;
- promoting the role of people who use services in shaping and delivering services;

Options for the longer term...

- Dedicated recruitment campaigns aimed at under-represented groups, including:
 - black and minority ethnic communities; and
 - users and informal carers who will already have gained expertise from their experiences of social care.
- Focus on recruiting career changers and returners – promoting flexible entry routes to social work and social care occupations.
- Develop career pathways, as part of the new Integrated Qualifications Framework for the children's workforce and also for adult services. These model and promote routes by which workers can progress their careers in social care across the full range of public, private and third sector employers.

Both sectors in the North West have active recruitment programmes and progression processes.

The Ambition Model

The Ambition:Health Model is a partnership programme in the North West that prepares people for vacancies identified by Healthcare Managers. Partners include Jobcentre Plus, the Learning and Skills Council and Primary Care Trusts. Colleges provide a 10-week course, which includes support for childcare and other learner needs, and the Trusts then offer a 12 week work placement, with an interview for a permanent job at the end of the placement.

Key elements of the programme that support sustainability include: Employer involvement in the design and delivery of the programme producing a demand/ needs led approach e.g. NHS Trusts providing dedicated staff to support people during placements; offering participants a potential career path, not just a job.

The programme offers an opportunity for a job which has career prospects and flexible hours; the programme helps to build confidence and work survival skills.

“Ambition Health and Social Care” is aimed at learners looking to enter the Health and Social Care sectors either for the first time or following a break in employment within the sectors. The programme should be designed to develop the skills, attitudes and behaviours as well as providing clients with the opportunity to reach the required levels of literacy and numeracy in order to sustain their participation in the Health and Social Care sectors.

Objectives of the programme

The key aims of the programme are to:

- Offer Ambition: Health and Social Care participants a wide range of health and social care placements in key job roles to help improve their skills, knowledge, confidence and employability.
- Address employer skills shortages by providing well-trained potential employees that meet the ‘job readiness test’, quickly contributing to employer productivity.
- Increase the number and diversity of participating employers to maximise the quality and variety of placements on offer.
- Offer participants the opportunity to progress to an NVQ Level 2 in Healthcare or Business Administration.
- Improve the career progression prospects of participants by providing continuing support once they are in work.

Benefits for employers are:

- Employer participation in developing the programme.
- Simplified recruitment processes, reduced cost and increased effectiveness through industry benchmark.
- Widening access to Health and Social Care employment through reaching non-typical recruits.
- New entrants starting their career with clear and managed expectations about the sector.

4. Contact Centres – Routeways into Employment

Offering employment routeways into the Contact Centre industries using the E-Skills ‘Go Forward’ programme.

The Contact Centre industry continues to experience growth within the North West region due to continued organic growth and inward investment. Attracting employees into the sector is proving more and more difficult for many employers. This recruitment challenge is seen as a major growth inhibitor for the industry in the region and employers are becoming increasingly open to new methods of recruiting and retaining their staff. They are increasingly conscious that in order to even continue with current business levels they must attract new sources of labour and have recruitment strategies that support wider engagement.

The sector offers wage rates higher than comparable entry-level positions in similar sized industries (retail, hospitality).

“Go Forward” is aimed at learners looking to enter the Contact Centre industry either for the first time or following a break in employment within the sector. The learning programme consists of 25 learning modules designed to develop Contact Centre skills, attitudes and behaviours as well as providing clients with the opportunity to reach the required levels of literacy and numeracy in order to sustain their participation in the Contact Centre industry.

The overall aim of the project is to increase the number of sustainable recruits into the contact centre industry from workless and unemployed groups through the roll out and high quality delivery of “Go Forward” across the region and through effective partnership working between all stakeholders.

‘Go Forward’ - Employability routeway into Call and Contact Centres

This project aims to deliver the “Go Forward” pre-employment programme into the Contact Centre industry.

Specifically, the qualification aims to give candidates:

- The vocational and behavioural competencies required to enter and remain in the Contact Centre industry.
- The appropriate Skills for Life and Key Skills to function effectively in the learning environment and workplace.
- The skills and confidence to engage in employer specific induction and product training programmes.

An opportunity for learners to identify the appropriateness and their suitability to the:

- Sector and individual organisations within the sector.
- A hook into learning together with raising aspirations.

Benefits for employers are:

- Simplified recruitment processes, reduced cost and increased effectiveness through industry benchmark.
- Widening access to Contact Centre employment through reaching non-typical recruits.
- New entrants starting their career with clear and managed expectations about the sector.

The learning journey has six elements:

1. Recruitment, eligibility and referral
2. Initial assessment and induction
3. Individual learning plan
4. Formative assessment

5. Programme learning modules
6. Summative assessment

Successful applicants must be prepared to undertake training to deliver Go Forward if not already accredited to do so. Training will be arranged and funded through this programme.

5. Logistics Sector – Routeways into Employment

Offering employment routeways into the logistics sector using the Skills for Logistics ‘Experience Booster’ programme.

The Skills for Logistics Sector Skills Agreement has identified six key issues to be addressed. This activity focuses on “Attracting New Entrants into the Logistics Sector”:

“The logistics industry does suffer from recruitment issues. In the North West, 20% of logistics employers have at least one vacancy. Organisations with vacancies have identified that 10% are hard to fill vacancies and 9% are skills shortage vacancies. This is mainly due to problems in the recruitment of LGV drivers, an issue that is prevalent across logistics in the UK.

Low numbers of applicants with the required skills and lack of work experience were cited as the biggest reasons for hard to fill vacancies for logistics employers, whilst a lack of customer handling skills and team working skills were the most common skills lacking from job applicants in skills shortage vacancies”.

The logistics sector has an ageing driver workforce. In 2004 an estimated 23% of LGV drivers were aged 55+. The number of younger people entering logistics is disproportionately low in comparison with other industries, with only 9% being under 25. Workers in the logistics sector are overwhelmingly male, white and have European ethnic origin”.

Skills for Logistics proposals

Employment Routeways that combine Skills for Life, Employability Skills and the ‘Logistics Experience Booster’ providing the platform for recruits from workless and unemployed groups to gain sustainable employment within the sector in driving, warehousing and traffic office occupations.

Employability Routeways into Logistics

An innovative and ground-breaking development, the ‘Logistics Stairway’ developed by Skills for Logistics allows employers and employees in the sector to begin to plan for Continuous Professional Development within an industry recognised framework for the very first time. This is a major step forward in support of workforce development within the logistics sector.

The purpose of this is to provide employability routeways that allow individuals to enter the sector in a range of occupations using the Experience Booster framework, with the necessary skills to then move onto the Logistics Stairway at step one.

The employability Routeways will comprise the following elements:

- 1. Skills for Life**
- 2. Employability Skills**

3. Logistics 'Experience Booster'

A comprehensive training programme that aims to deliver as many as possible of the skills required for a new entrant into the sector. The programme is designed to be delivered in a structured manner consisting of:

- Robust recruitment, selection and induction processes;
- A structured learning period of not less than 2 weeks.

Deliverers of the 'Experience Booster' should be accredited by Skills for Logistics.

Parts 1 and 2 can be delivered by providers contracted under the existing LSC 'Employability Skills Programme'. Successful applicants are expected to show clearly how they will work in partnership with these providers to deliver the third element, The Experience Booster, and to engage with employers and Jobcentre Plus in order to identify existing vacancies to be filled. Ideally, a commitment by employers to offer interviews to participating learners would be desirable at the outset.

Occupations to consider for Employability Routeways

The focus of delivery for this programme will be van driving (category C1 license), warehousing and traffic office occupations, although LGV driving (category C license) may also be considered. Applicants should also describe the process by which participants would be prepared for Assessment at NVQ level 2 once in employment.

SKILLS FOR JOBS CASE STUDIES

The Employability Routeway

The participant had been unemployed for four years. The learner completed the Employability Skills programme and with help from the Skills for Jobs provider obtained an interview for a job as a Warehouseman. The participant felt that:

- The programme helped build his confidence and skills, particularly in ICT and interviewing techniques.
- He has benefited from acquiring literacy and numeracy skills qualifications and that having these qualifications helped his job interview.
- He likes the idea of regular review during the course and demonstrating what he had achieved through his Individual Learning Plan.
- It was challenging to achieve all the outcomes within the programme's timescales but ultimately he achieved qualifications in both literacy and numeracy.

The Skills for Jobs provider was able to help by offering support to the participant by:

- Arranging the interview.
- Sourcing information and advice around the transition from benefits to wages.
- Arranging mentoring support to ease the participant's transition back into the workplace.
- Organising some bespoke in-work training (to the employer's specification) to suit the needs of participant and the job.
- Encouraging further learning by explaining the Train to Gain programme and agreeing a forward plan to reach entry to Train to Gain.

The Skills for Jobs provider was able to help the employer by:

- Arranging interviews
- Providing bespoke training
- Linking to Train to Gain

The Individualised Routeway

For over 30 years David, who has dyslexia and a history of severe depression, was a carer for his disabled parents. Following the death of his mother, he began job searching but soon found that many employers were discouraged by his disabilities, lack of qualifications and experience. Finally a referral by Jobcentre Plus to the Individualised Routeway turned David's prospects around. He attended a vocational development programme where he worked on interview techniques and confidence building. David also attended a store familiarisation visit to see at first hand the working environment and roles available at a local supermarket. Within two weeks of being referred he was offered a customer service role in the dairy department of the Supermarket near his home.

"I was very sceptical at first," said David. "I seemed to have been passed from pillar to post and not got very far, but I was provided with practical advice that I could actively use. I also met other people in the same position as me so I didn't feel so isolated and alone."

"I was worried that my dyslexia would be a problem but my Skills Adviser agreed with the supermarket that I could give my answers verbally and then helped by writing them down. No one made me feel stupid and I soon proved I was perfectly able to do the job."

David's journey has proved such a success that he will still be a regular attendee at future support sessions to ensure that any problems encountered in the workplace can be resolved to ensure that he is able to continue in his new career.

Demand Led Sector Routeways

After years on Incapacity Benefit, Samina is now enjoying her part-time job in a large contact centre in Manchester. She benefited from the Demand-Led Sector Routeway for Contact Centres - 'Go Forward' - recognised as the e-Skills UK sponsored route into employment in the contact centre industry and has been developed to form part of the e-skills UK suite of qualifications.

She wanted to get back to work, but she didn't know what jobs she could do and what skills she would need. The Jobcentre advised her of this routeway explaining that the aim was to find jobs in customer contact centres for people who want to get back to work after a spell of poor health. The company had worked with the provider to design a course to prepare people for work and for in-house training and support. The programme is mapped into various qualifications and is something of a "spiky profile", having different skills deliverable at different levels depending on the job destination and ability of applicant. It also incorporates contextualised Skills for Life elements. She trained part-time from April to June with a guaranteed job interview at the end of that time.

LOCAL EMPLOYMENT PARTNERSHIPS AND THE SECTOR EMPLOYABILITY TOOLKIT

Local Employment Partnerships

- These were announced in the 2007 Budget, involving a limited number of large retailers who would work in partnership with Jobcentre Plus to facilitate the recruitment of disadvantaged workless individuals into their companies.
- The ambitions around local employment partnerships increased considerably this summer with prime ministerial interest and strong DWP/ DIUS ministerial focus, with the publication of the DWP Green Paper, *In work, better off*.
- The Green Paper signalled a broadening of the focus of local employment partnerships, beyond retail to other sectors, and established an ambition to place 250,000 disadvantaged workless people into jobs through local employment partnerships by the end of 2010; the concept of a 'jobs pledge' for employers to signal their commitment to local employment partnerships was described.
- Jobcentre Plus is working at national level with large employers to gain their commitment to local employment partnerships and the 'jobs pledge' (this term now being avoided by DWP/ Jobcentre Plus as confusion with the skills pledge was apparent).
- The LSC National Employer Service is working closely with the Jobcentre Plus national employer team around joint engagement with large employers and coherence between local employment partnerships, the skills pledge and Train to Gain.
- The priority workless groups for local employment partnerships are lone parents, incapacity benefit claimants and long term unemployed – groups that typically face significant barriers in the labour market and are some distance from getting a job.
- The offer to employers will be negotiated and delivered at local level by Jobcentre Plus districts, with partners' support.
- Employers will be offered a menu of support, including funded work placements, tailored pre-employment training, advice on their recruitment processes, identified job candidates etc.
- DWP and Jobcentre Plus are looking to the LSC to provide the pre-employment training for local employment partnerships..

Sector Employability Toolkit

Background

The Skills Alliance Delivery Group – Employability involving LSC, Jobcentre Plus and SSDA has designed an employability toolkit which skills partners will be able to offer to employers to provide an integrated recruitment and training package which will support workless individuals from inactivity to work through vocationally related training.

The toolkit is flexible to accommodate a range of both recruitment requirements and Jobcentre Plus customers' circumstances. It has 6 key features:

- Employer engagement

- Recruitment sector gateway
- Short employment related course
- Work trials
- Job interview guarantee as a minimum for those completing the whole routeway.
- Post employment support and training for those hired with an emphasis on progression to Train to Gain and apprenticeships

Sector skills councils have been commissioned by SSSA to develop sector employability toolkits – setting out key aspects of preparation for a job in specific occupations.

Implementation

The toolkit will be piloted as part of “the offer” to a local employment partnership in the retail sector. As products to support the model become available from sector skills councils the following sectors will be covered:

- Asset Skills
- Go Skills
- Construction Skills
- People 1st
- Skillsfast UK
- SkillsActive
- Skills for Health
- Skillsmart Retail
- Skills for Security

Employer engagement and customer demand for the toolkit will be managed through joint local delivery planning by LSC and JCP and the existing relationships between LSC Area Partnership Teams and District External Relations teams.

In the absence of a national funding stream for the period of training this will be supported in a variety of ways including neighbourhood renewal funds, city strategy consortia, New Deal and skills for jobs.

The sector employability toolkits are likely to be a significant part of the Local Employment Partnership pre-employment training.