

IES trials update

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Introduction

The objective of the overall IES project is to improve the integration of customer-facing employment and skills services to offer a seamless journey from worklessness to sustainable employment and further progression. There are five regions involved in the trials: West Midlands, Eastern, North West, London, and South East. The project will trial a number of core components including:

- Enhanced skills screening by Jobcentre Plus (JCP), including basic skills and employability skills programme (ESP);
- Enhanced referral processes to basic skills provision including ESP;
- Referral of individuals to Skills Health Checks, including the mandating of some JCP customers in co-located areas;
- The availability of a skills account for JCP customers including ESP participants;
- Co-location of adult advancement and careers service (aacs) / nextstep services in JCP premises;
- Complementarity between front end referral processes and benefit changes Including the introduction of Flexible New Deal and the Employment Support Allowance that replaces Incapacity Benefit from September 2008;
- Ensuring flexible and responsive provision, in particular basic skills and ESP, is in place and available to meet customer needs, especially in areas where mandating trials are expected to take place in Phase 1;
- Improved data and MI collection and systems for LSC-funded providers, in respect of ILR and ILR non-collectable data to help understand and further develop the customer journey and experience.
- Evaluation of information flow processes between JCP and other partners and vice versa (aacs and LSC providers)
- Inclusion of regional and local components to be trialled in addition to the core components listed above. The South East region has identified the following components:
 - Links with the new National Apprenticeship Vacancy Matching Service and field force
 - Increased focus on priority customers
 - Development of a recruit and train model

LSC South East Region

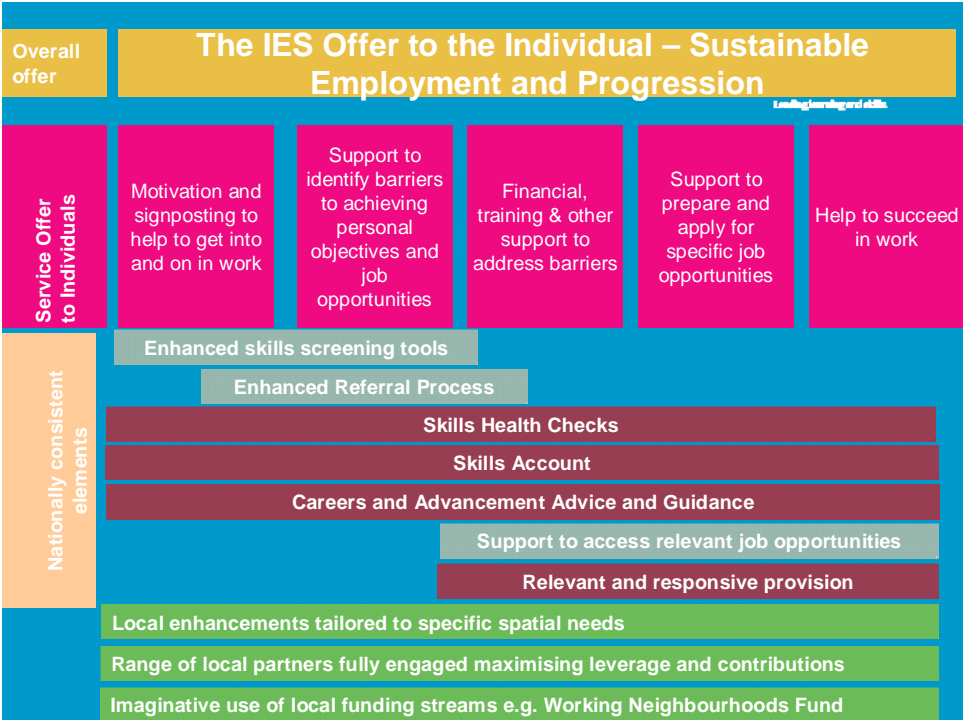
Thames Valley Area (Reading)

Pacific House Imperial Way Reading Berkshire RG2 0TF

T 0845 019 4147 F 0118 908 2109 www.lsc.gov.uk

The South East is scheduled to commence the trial from November 2008.

The IES offer to the individual



Management Arrangements

In each trial region a regional Board or Strategic Group has been established. These Regional Boards will report in to the LSC’s Integrated Employment and Skills Trials Group and Jobcentre Plus’ Integrated Employment and Skills Project Board, which will, in turn, report to the DIUS/ DWP-led Integrated Employment and Skills Trials Implementation Board.

In each trial area within the region the trial will be managed by a local group representing the relevant partners, and will report to the Regional Board.

Hampshire context

Urban South Hampshire contains a number of districts and the two cities (Portsmouth and Southampton) where adult skill levels are well below regional and national averages. Policy in the area is being co-ordinated through the Partnership for South Hampshire, and the sub-region is recognised as growth area in the regional economic strategy and the regional spatial strategy.

The LSC is supporting the PUSH (Portsmouth and Urban South Hampshire) through the development of a skills strategy for the sub-region as part of the Multi Area Agreement (MAA). There are two broad themes:

- Integrating the provision of employment and skills services
- Making the provision more demand led

The IES trial therefore fits very well with these themes and will be a fundamental part of the 'Promoting Economic Success' strand of the agreement. Part of the agreement is to establish an Employment and Skills Board which will ultimately oversee the IES trial.

A joint project team, with staffing resources from the partners including JCP and LSC, will be established to develop the components of the trial. It is expected that this group will co-locate at the LSC Hampshire office in Fareham.

Locally work has begun on mapping the interactions between JCP and LSC programmes and steps are being taken to encourage progression from pre-employment training into vacancies through LEPs and onto Train to Gain.

Slough Context

The key features of a tightening Slough labour market are:

- Significant recruitment problems, with many more Slough businesses experiencing recruitment difficulties (25% of businesses with vacancies) when compared with the South East (18%) and England (17%). There are also higher levels of hard-to-fill vacancies (13% compared with 8% and 7% respectively).
- Greater skills gaps in the Slough employed workforce: 32% of businesses have staff who are not fully proficient, compared with 18% (SE) and 16% (England).
- Qualifications of the working age population are significantly lower than regional and Great Britain averages *at all levels*.

A range of recent surveys, a Slough Skills summit event with employers and analysis to prepare for the Local Area Agreement Skill Indicators suggests eight key issues to be considered to improve skill levels, supply and community well being in Slough:

1. Slough residents' skills are out of step with local employment opportunities.
2. Skills are holding back the local economy and business performance.
3. Employer skills priorities appear to reflect growth of high added value services.
4. Acquisition of English language skills is a major challenge.
5. Tackling recruitment difficulties could benefit from a joint approach, with employers sharing best practice.
6. Closer links between employers and local learning and skills providers would be beneficial.
7. Slough employers should be encouraged to be more active in developing the workforce.
8. Slough residents should be encouraged to take greater ownership of their own learning and career.

Together with support from the LSC, Slough Borough Council, Employers and Learning Providers have committed to improve the Skills of Slough residents and a campaign to position Slough as a "learning town", making the supply of learning and skills services more coherent and better coordinated, and activities to engage employers in learning and skills and local people more in the opportunities available. The steering group leading the skills campaign is led by the local MP and there is an action planning process which will support Local Area Agreements, the IES trial and other responses to the eight issues.

Both the Slough Skills Steering Group and the Slough Hub and Spoke operations group have recently been briefed. This has ensured that a cross section of LA, FE and other stakeholders in the area are informed, including the VCO.

Next steps

A regional implementation plan will be developed which will include the regional and local management arrangements, and a project plan for the achievement of the core and local components.

Paper creators	Penny Askew/Sue Ormiston
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