

Employability Skills Programme (ESP)

1. Service Requirement

- 1.1 The requirement is to deliver ESP provision from 1 April 2010 to 31 July 2010¹ as described below. ESP is the primary programme for the delivery of basic skills to Jobcentre Plus customers.
- 1.2 ESP is at the heart of a fast moving policy agenda to support those who are furthest away from the labour market and/or are affected by the economic downturn. As such, service requirements may change and providers will be expected to respond to new requirements.

2 Provision type and duration

- 2.1 Full-time or part-time provision should be offered as follows:
 - Full-time for at least 20 hours a week², according to learner need and ability, to cover all learning aims undertaken. Full-time learners may be eligible for a Jobcentre Plus Training Allowance for up to 15 weeks. The Allowance (benefit plus a training premium) gives the full-time learner access to help with travel and childcare costs whilst undertaking training.
 - Part-time for less than 16 hours a week to cover all learning aims undertaken, including Literacy at Level 2 and/or numeracy at levels 1 and 2. These Learners will remain on benefit (or credits) and must continue to attend the Jobcentre as instructed by Jobcentre Plus.
- 2.2 THE CONTRACTOR and Learner must together agree the most appropriate provision to meet learner needs and circumstances. Some Learners will not be able to undertake full-time provision immediately or might need to progressively build up the number of learning hours to 20 or more hours a week. Similarly, some Learners who start learning programme of at least 20 hours a week may not be able to sustain this, or might progress to a stage where the number of learning hours might be reduced to less than 16 hours a week.
- 2.3 Provision should be offered continuously throughout the year on a roll-on-roll-off basis so that referred customers can start at any time. If THE

¹ Discussions about contracting arrangements from August 2010 are ongoing while the impact of the Skills Investment Strategy announcement of a single purse for Programmes for the Unemployed is considered.

² Jobcentre Plus customers undertaking training for at least 16 hours a week are eligible for a Training Allowance. In order to be consistent with these regulations and to preserve the right to define full-time provision for a specific Programme, the Skills Funding Agency full-time definition for ESP participants is 20 hours and above the minimum for the receipt of a Training Allowance. Consequently, ESP provision cannot be delivered for 16, 17, 18 or 19 hours a week.

CONTRACTOR needs to close for a holiday period, the period of closure will need to be added to the duration of a Learner's Programme in order to ensure continuation of a Training Allowance for full-time learners.

- 2.4 For full-time ESP Learners the duration of a learning Programme is dependent on the number of weeks that Jobcentre Plus will offer a Training Allowance, currently 15 weeks. This can be extended for some Learners in specific circumstances but, where Jobcentre Plus cannot approve an extension to the learning Programme, the Learner can continue on a part-time basis.
- 2.5 To enable Jobcentre Plus to make accurate payment of training allowances for full-time Learners undertaking at least 20 hours per week, THE CONTRACTOR must confirm promptly (within 48 hours of the referral interview) to Jobcentre Plus the actual dates the Jobcentre Plus customer starts and finishes training, and the indicative qualification levels³ by completing and returning a Jobcentre Plus SL2 form.
- 2.6 The CONTRACTOR should offer a mix of delivery that embeds basic literacy/language and numeracy into the employability curriculum and provides opportunities for the Learner to use and improve ICT and digital technology use where appropriate. The CONTRACTOR should also make the opening of a Skills Account an integral part of the provision offer and programme delivery.

3 Basic skills provision

- 3.1 All adult basic skills courses funded under this provision, in any subject, must lead to approved adult basic skills qualifications; that is, Adult Certificates in Basic Literacy and/or Numeracy and ESOL Skills for Life⁴. Approved qualifications:
- For those **Under 19** can be found at <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/section96/>
 - For those **19 and over** can be found at <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/section97/>
- 3.2 THE AGENCY expects successful providers to offer all basic skills subjects (literacy, ESOL and numeracy) at all levels i.e. Entry Level 1, Entry Level 2, Entry Level 3, Level 1 and Level 2. Referred customers with no or very little spoken and/or written English language skills may not be suitable for the Programme as they could find it difficult to engage with the employability aspects of the Programme. Where a referred customer would need to be enrolled onto an Entry level 1 ESOL learning aim, we recommend that the customer is referred to other-funded and more suitable provision (see also Section 6 below.)

³ Actual qualification levels must be entered on the ILR in line with SKILLS FUNDING AGENCY processes and as a result of a more detailed level of assessment.

⁴ ESOL for Work qualifications are not currently within the scope of the ESP offer.

- 3.3 Programmes should typically comprise at least one basic skills subject learning aim, according to need. Contractors must not assume that all learners can automatically be enrolled onto three learning aims ie literacy, numeracy and employability. Learners should be enrolled onto Literacy or ESOL but not both as they are designed to meet the same needs for different Learners. In line with the national Skills for Life Strategy focus on numeracy and its added premium in terms of a Learner's employability, all Learners should have numeracy needs assessed and, where appropriate, met. This can be at any time during the learning programme with the timing and rationale included on the Individual Learning Plan (ILP). Learning aims delivered can be at different levels in order to reflect learner needs and spiky profiles.
- 3.4 THE CONTRACTOR should assess potential Learner ability and needs through appropriate tools. THE CONTRACTOR must manage appropriate Learner assessment in the same way as for most other learning provision, through existing pre-course guidance, enrolment and on-course induction processes, and to incorporate diagnostic assessment into longer learning programmes leading to qualifications. THE CONTRACTOR will be paid a flat rate of £50 in respect of Initial Assessment and guidance that is undertaken for a Learner who does not enrol onto the Programme, for example because they are referred to other more suitable provision or fail to attend the Programme. Only one referral payment of £50 can be claimed against each individual.
- 3.5 Improvement within the *Skills for Life* Strategy is defined by and measured as a learner moving up a level of attainment from, for example, Entry 3 to Level 1. The learning aim(s) should therefore be at the appropriate level to ensure that all learners move up at least one level of attainment. For example, a Learner assessed as having literacy skills at Entry level 3 should be enrolled onto a Level 1 Literacy Qualification.

4 Employability provision

- 4.1 All ESP participants should undertake suitable provision that will help them to find, apply for, keep and progress in a job. In line with research evidence from the NRDC on delivery that achieves the best results, THE CONTRACTOR must offer basic skills through embedded delivery within employability. All basic skills provision for Learners at all levels of ability, should be delivered in the context of job-search, interview, presentation, time-management, communication at work, team working and the generic skills, attitudes and behaviours that employers want to see in new recruits.
- 4.2 THE CONTRACTOR should offer suitably able Learners the opportunity to take an approved Employability qualification at an appropriate level. There are now a number of different qualifications offered by Awarding Bodies at Entry Level 2, Entry Level 3, Level 1 and level 2. THE AGENCY does not recommend any Awarding Body

specific awards/qualifications for employability but seeks to ensure that all that are supported are consistent in coverage of appropriate units and do not duplicate basic skills elements covered and funded via other approved qualifications.

- 4.3 THE CONTRACTOR should use their judgement of a Learner's ability to achieve an employability qualification at a specific level before registering them with an awarding body. Learners who may not be able to achieve a full qualification are not precluded from being enrolled onto specific units with an awarding body. Achievement of a unit will boost a Learner's confidence and encourage progress.
- 4.4 Where THE CONTRACTOR uses an ASDAN Employability award (developed under pathfinder trials for the Qualification and Credit Framework) (QCF), for the purpose of delivering the Employability Skills Programme, Unit 5, Applying for a Job, is mandatory.
- 4.5 As provision is aiming to lead to a job outcome for most ESP Learners, THE CONTRACTOR must have arrangements in place, through links with local employers and other organisations, to offer work experience/trials/tasters and placements for a part of the Programme duration, where it is considered appropriate, and where Learners can remain supported by a Training Allowance.
- 4.6 Evidence of employment to support a claim for a job outcome payment should be collected and retained as in Appendix 1 to this requirement. THE CONTRACTOR must retain such evidence for inspection on demand.

5 Learner referral

- 5.1 THE CONTRACTOR will be required to adhere to the following referral processes. THE CONTRACTOR should supply the name, telephone number and office address for one of their staff to act as a working contact for Jobcentre Plus to work with in the areas outlined below. The name of the local working contact within Jobcentre Plus will be supplied to THE CONTRACTOR by THE AGENCY. THE CONTRACTOR will need to put in place a strategy to raise awareness of the provision they are offering with Jobcentre Plus personal advisers and, where applicable, nextstep advisers. As agreed with Jobcentre Plus, Appendix 2 outlines the Common Service Standards that should be adhered to in relation to working in partnership with Jobcentre Plus.
- 5.2 Jobcentre Plus advisers will identify Learners who are eligible to be referred to the CONTRACTOR for an initial assessment of training needs. Jobcentre Plus advisers will identify Learners aged 18 years old or over who have a potential literacy, language or numeracy need at Level 1 or below via informal light touch screening or more formal Fast

Track screening. Advisers will refer **all** eligible Learners to a CONTRACTOR but will not refer on the basis of a specific level of provision or recommend a particular Programme offer.

- 5.3 Jobcentre Plus will contact THE CONTRACTOR to arrange a date for an interview for the Learner and will complete a referral form (REF2) with the Learner details. Where a lack of basic skills is seen as the Learner's **main** barrier to employment, the REF2 will indicate that a Jobcentre Plus Training Allowance is available to support the Learner in training of at least 20 hours a week (see paragraph 2.1 above.) The REF2 will also indicate that a training allowance is not payable in some circumstances.

6 Learner suitability

- 6.1 It is the responsibility of THE CONTRACTOR to determine Learner suitability for the Employability Skills Programme. Where Learners are considered unsuitable (see below) THE CONTRACTOR must refer Learners to alternative, more appropriate provision either funded by THE AGENCY, funded by Jobcentre Plus or other-funded, nationally approved, adult basic skills provision that is available in their organisation or by arrangement with a nearby provider. THE CONTRACTOR must have an understanding of all the provision available to the Learner group in a given geographical location. Where Learners are referred elsewhere the REF2 should be returned to Jobcentre Plus giving a reason for Learner unsuitability.
- 6.2 Learners with no or very poor English language /literacy skills (significantly below Entry level 1 and considered unlikely to achieve a qualification) must have these needs addressed **before** being considered for entry to this provision, as they may not be able to benefit from the employability elements of the programmes until these needs have been addressed. ESP is not suitable for these referred customers. Alternatively, some Learners may have poor English language skills but a high level of other skills and no other obvious employability needs. THE CONTRACTOR must refer these Learners to other-funded, nationally approved, adult basic skills provision that is available in their organisation or by arrangement with a nearby provider.
- 6.3 Some Learners may not be suitable because they have complex problems over and above basic skills and employability needs that should to be addressed before any learning can be undertaken, such as homelessness, addiction or other health problems. THE CONTRACTOR must refer these Learners to other sources of help that, wherever possible, should be provided alongside the ESP learning provision.

7 Individual Learning Plan

- 7.1 THE CONTRACTOR must produce a written or electronic Individual Learning Plan (ILP) for each Learner.
- 7.2 The Individual Learning Plan must include:
- The Learner's personal achievement goals in particular for work generally and/ or for a specific job, including references to specific sectors where applicable;
 - Programme offer and details of all learning aim qualifications for which the Learner will be enrolled;
 - The skills, knowledge and competence required and the timescale over which they have to be achieved;
 - The duration of the Programme the Learner is to receive, where it is delivered and how it is scheduled, who is delivering it and what support is being provided;
 - The methods that will be used to deliver training;
 - Learning assessment and review arrangements.
- 7.3 The ILP should be reviewed every 3 weeks, and is an integral document to the Learner's formal reviews, to reflect the growing capability of the learner, progress and achievements and any new targets and support needs that are being met.
- 7.4 Where changes are made, these should be documented on review documentation or on the ILP itself. Changes should be agreed with the Learner and they should sign their agreement to the change on the review document that records that change.

8 Action at the start of a programme

- 8.1 The CONTRACTOR will agree with the Learner an appropriate Programme of learning and draw up an Individual Learning Plan (ILP as in clause 7 above). The Programme details, learning aims at appropriate levels and the length of the programme (hours and weeks) must be recorded on the REF2 which must be returned to Jobcentre Plus. The duration of the learning Programme should include any period when the provider is closed in order to safeguard a Learner's Training Allowance, where appropriate.
- 8.2 To enable Jobcentre Plus to make accurate payment of training allowances for full-time learners undertaking at least 20 glh per week, the CONTRACTOR must confirm promptly (within 48 hours of the initial assessment interview) to Jobcentre Plus the actual dates the Jobcentre Plus Learner starts and finishes training. This will be done on a

Jobcentre Plus SL2 form. Further details will be provided through provider guidance issued by THE AGENCY.

9 Learners in receipt of a Jobcentre Plus Training Allowance

- 9.1 Where learners are in receipt of a Training Allowance (see paragraph 2.1 above) Jobcentre Plus will pay the Training Allowance direct to the learner. Travel and childcare costs can be paid by Jobcentre Plus or THE CONTRACTOR and reclaimed from Jobcentre Plus, according to local arrangements.

10 Learner progress and review

- 10.1 An Individual Learning Plan (ILP) must be completed for, and agreed with, each learner to include details listed at paragraph 7.2 above. Learner progress must be reviewed every 3 weeks and recorded, including any changes in programme content, on the ILP.
- 10.2 ESP aims to ensure that all Learners can continue in learning and/or complete qualifications with support from THE CONTRACTOR once they have started a job. This in-work provision and support can still be provided under ESP, with the learners remaining enrolled on the programme but Learners will have to continue on a part-time basis as they will no longer be able to undertake full-time provision, nor receive a Training Allowance, once they have started work.
- 10.3 THE CONTRACTOR should ensure wherever possible that employers who take on ESP participants are able to continue to help them to progress through further learning, and the achievement of higher levels of qualifications, with the support of Train to Gain funding or an Apprenticeship, whichever is the most appropriate.
- 10.4 Where a Learner is coming to the end of a period on the Programme with no identified programme route and is therefore likely to remain unemployed, the CONTRACTOR should signpost or refer a customer to **nextstep** to discuss progression routes and any further skills training requirements. Arrangements should be made with **nextstep** on an individual or group basis as appropriate.

11 Links with other provision/programmes

- 11.1 THE CONTRACTOR will need to understand the extent of provision available for this Learner group in order to ensure that they can be referred to the most suitable provision, either before undertaking ESP, during or after a period on the programme. Similarly, referral to ESP from other Council or Jobcentre Plus funded provision/programmes is likely in the context of delivering a more integrated employment and skills service. THE CONTRACTOR will need to develop links with the provision and delivery of the following:

- **Response to redundancy:** Skills Funding Agency-funded and contracted provision for those under notice of redundancy, newly redundant (in the last 3 months) or the unemployed who could be job-ready after a short period of training.
- **Training offer for those unemployed for 6 months:** Skills Funding Agency-funded skills training for the longer term unemployed leading to the achievement of Level 2 or Level 3 qualifications through a job with training. Basic Skills Provision can be included alongside or embedded into vocational skills training.
- **Young Person's Guarantee:** support for young people aged 18 to 24 who have been unemployed for 12 months. This includes two training elements: Routes into Work building on Sector Employability Toolkits for specific vacancy related training; Work Focused Training for a period of three to six months leading to a Level 2 or 3 qualifications through a job with training. Basic Skills provision can be included alongside or embedded into vocational skills training.
- **Skills for Jobs:** A range of Region-led primarily European Social Fund (ESF) co-financed activities available to the economically inactive, including Jobcentre Plus customers and ESP Learners in all regions. These activities primarily include short inputs focused on improving an aspect of employability and do not need to lead to formal qualifications. It is anticipated that ESP Learners are likely to progress from ESP to a Skills for Jobs provision offer, at an appropriate time, in particular to **Local Employment Partnership (LEP) generated pre-employment provision**. ESP Learners can be considered for short, pre-employment training for Jobcentre Plus customers, leading to actual vacancies. This training is likely to last for 2 to 8 weeks and can include specific provision developed by Sector Skills Councils known as Sector Employability Toolkits.
- **Flexible New Deal (FND)⁵.** Jobcentre Plus advisers will be able to refer long-term unemployed customers eligible for FND to ESP where this is considered the most appropriate provision. FND training participants cannot be referred to ESP by the FND provider.
- **The Employment Support Allowance⁶.** ESA recipients will be able to be referred to ESP in the same way that incapacity benefits recipients (i.e. IB, SDA and IS on the grounds of incapacity) were referred .
- **Other JOBCENTRE PLUS-funded provision.** Jobcentre Plus is procuring ESF co-financed and other-funded provision for its

⁵ Flexible New Deal, whereby those who have been unemployed for 12 months are referred to a Jobcentre Plus-funded primary provider to support achievement of a job, will be introduced in some regions from October 2009.

⁶ The Employment and Support Allowance has replace incapacity benefits (i.e. IB, SDA and IS on the grounds of incapacity) from October 2008.

customers, which include ESP eligible customers. This could be suitable for customers before or after a period supported by ESP.

- 11.2 THE CONTRACTOR must work in partnership to ensure that Jobcentre Plus customers get the most appropriate provision and suitable support to move most effectively from welfare to work, without duplication or double funding of activities/outcomes.

12 Exclusions/Ineligible Activity

- 12.1 The following are not in scope for ESP delivery:
- Non-approved qualifications
 - ESOL for Work qualifications
 - Employability qualifications that have not been requested by a provider for funding and agreed as appropriate by THE AGENCY.