

changing Lives

Addressing inequality, social exclusion
and worklessness in Lancaster and
Morecambe



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Executive Summary

The purpose of the Changing Lives project has been:

- To identify barriers to work for various disadvantaged and excluded groups/individuals.
- To map and produce a directory of all those statutory, private and voluntary sector providers involved in providing employability and related support services.
- To produce a portal/gateway through which individuals can be navigated to the most appropriate provider.
- To engage with local employers and identify ways of working with them to encourage them to invest in employability.
- To work strategically to forward the employability agenda locally.

The original impetus for the Changing Lives project came from the Vision Board in partnership with the Employability and Skills Development sub-group of the Lifelong Learning Building block of the Local Strategic Partnership, in partnership with Lancaster & Morecambe College.

Economic baseline and forecasting work, commissioned by the Vision Board in 2005, indicated that our district has the potential to create 8,300 net new jobs by 2015. Yet, unemployment within the district had reduced in the preceding few years to such a level that the employment market is now fairly tight except, of course, for those percentages of the population on benefit with little expectation of ever being able to work. Rather than simply assume that every new job created would equal two new residents, the economic Vision sets itself the challenge of making inroads into pockets of unemployment within the district and tackling social exclusion.

The Vision Board funded Phase 1 of Changing Lives with £8,000. The work was sub-contracted to Lancaster & Morecambe College, whose remit was to work with a pilot group of unemployed people, i.e. lone parents on income support, people on incapacity benefit, other longer term unemployed people and other disabled people

The second stage of the funding came through the Local Strategic Partnership's Second Home Fund (£25,000) and with this the evidence gathering, research and model design has continued; existing providers of employability support have been mapped and interviewed, a directory of agencies is being completed and the IT portal designed.

Recommendations in Brief

- The creation of an employability portal/gateway linked to all stakeholder organisations that will be made accessible to both organisations and the public through access points. The portal will be supported by an information worker, who will update the partnership, the portal/gateway, receive and respond to enquiries, make referrals and collect data and monitor effectiveness.
- A Project Manager to be the link between the strategic partnership and an operational scheme; developing and maintaining a partnership, supervise and manage paid staff and volunteers.
- An Employment Link worker who will build on employer/business relationships, encourage employer opportunities, market the employability gateway as a free recruitment tool and support individuals on a placement.
- A Mentoring Scheme that offers a bridge between disengagement and meaningful activity as a route to improve employability for those that are not job ready and struggling.
- Volunteer mentoring scheme through the recruitment and training of Lancaster & Morecambe volunteers through local business and the community

The Employability Gateway

This needs to be both a website portal, which is constantly maintained and updated and a staffed telephone service. This is the vehicle through which employment support services, volunteering opportunities and other support and help services can be accessed. There is no such point of entry at the present time and no source of central information that enables people to find appropriate services and/or help them to navigate. Since the funding environment is highly competitive, referrals do not take place to the degree that they should and there is a certain amount of protectionism, over clients and relationships with employers.

Mentoring Scheme

Some service users seeking support will need additional non-employment related support as they navigate their way through the service provision available to them. Since much of the funding and, therefore, service provision in this field is target driven, individualised support is limited, so the ability to offer a more hands on approach has to be an important feature of the Changing Lives gateway.

Changing Lives does not want to become another provider of front-line employability support and will not duplicate existing provision. This is a necessary complimentary service to enable better access to services and programmes provided by other agencies.

The scheme will work in partnership with the voluntary and community sectors, health and social care providers, youth and community, children's centres, employment support agencies and Jobcentre Plus and other key players likely to make referrals and/or receive referrals.

If the network of employability providers and Changing Lives is to make a difference to significant numbers of 'hard to reach' individuals, the inevitable capacity of employed mentors will be insufficient. It is, therefore, proposed that the scheme will recruit and train volunteer mentors/buddies from within the local community and business.

Employers Network and Vacancies

A key role of the Changing Lives gateway will be to fully engage employers in the district in its objectives – to embrace flexible recruitment policies and other initiatives to contribute to district wide aims.

Employers in the public, private and third sector

need cajoling to get involved, examples of good practice need to be disseminated and a Community Mark developed to recognise good practice. Employers will be encouraged to promote their vacancies via Changing Lives, supported to make work placements available, encourage mentoring amongst their existing workforce and implement other initiatives to make opportunities available to unemployed people.

Volunteering Opportunities

Mentoring and volunteering have been mentioned in relation to support provided to potential users of the project. However, volunteering is also a key way for someone who has been out of work for sometime to engage again with his or her community. Volunteering may or may not ultimately lead to paid employment but it serves the inclusion needs of an individual, builds up confidence and self-esteem and enables the individual to develop and try out new skills which can lead to a good reference.

The Volunteer Centre in Lancaster was closed due to lack of funding; employability support agencies highlighted its closure as having a detrimental effect on its capacity to find meaningful voluntary placements.

We see Changing Lives as providing a gateway through which individuals, and organisations working them, interested in volunteering could source an appropriate placement. Organisations wishing to promote volunteering opportunities to the general public can do so.

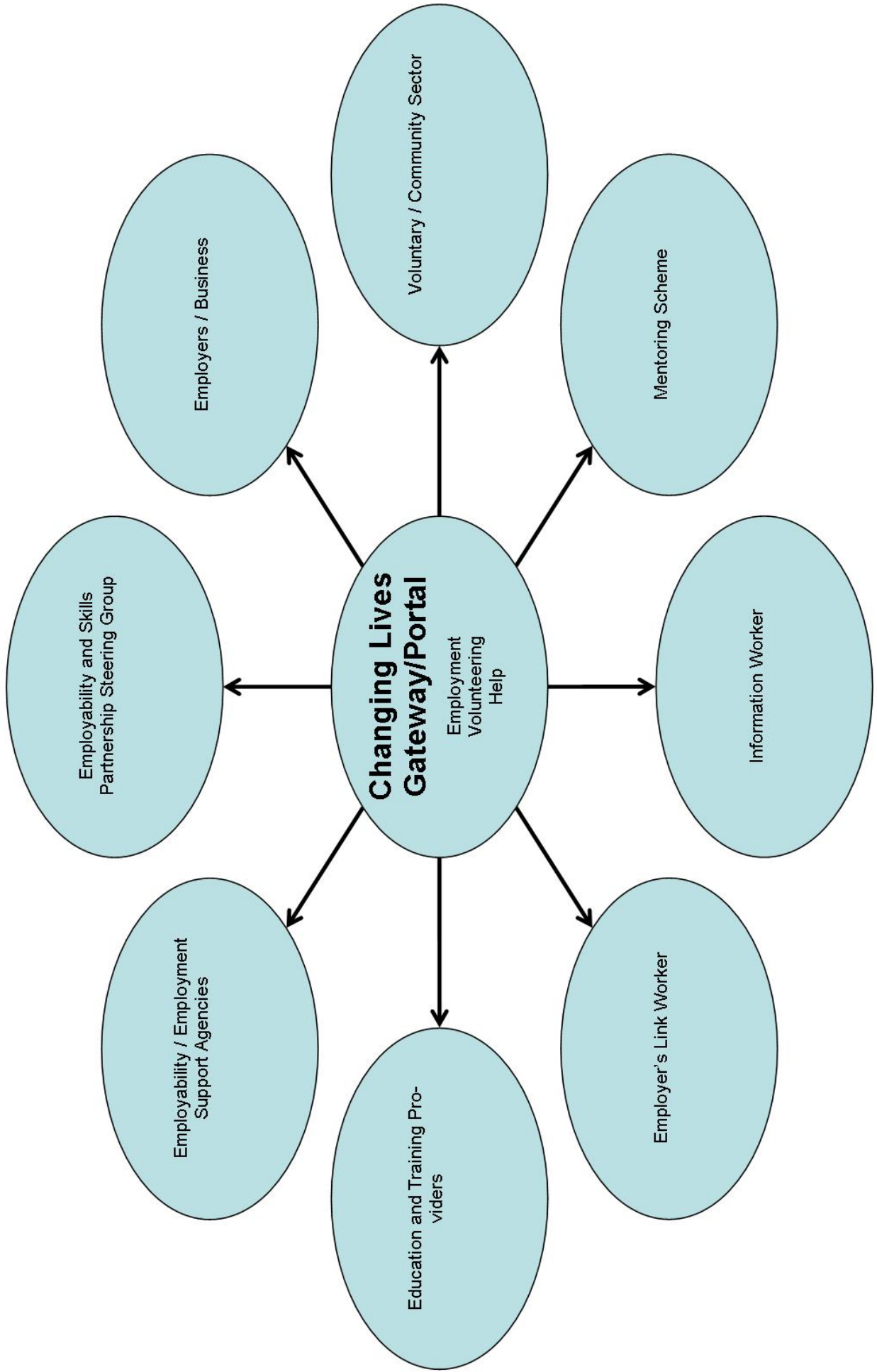
50 Forward have started to develop volunteering services themselves and they have expressed an interest in aligning some of the joint interest and aims.

Public and Employer Awareness

Whilst the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 has made inroads and improved the labour environment for disabled people, employability providers continue to report of the negative stereotyping that face many people on incapacity benefit, sometimes leading to discrimination.

Stigma is also a prevailing theme for those people who have mental health problems or disclose that they have had mental health problems.

Changing Lives would work in partnership with appropriate groups in the voluntary and community sector alongside the business sector to develop a very public awareness and anti-stigma campaign within the local community.



A Changing Lives Strategy for the District

Improving engagement by:

- Exploring the development of a joined-up approach across the district that is intended to encourage disengaged people, where appropriate and given due support, to consider and actively move towards employment as part of a holistic package.
- The creation of a wider social inclusion network/partnership between the VCS, health and social care agencies and the existing employment support agencies should increase opportunities for disengaged people and referrals to employment support agencies.
- By formalising the links across the district between the currently separated client led bodies/networks to engender collaborations and partnership working.

Improve and enhance case management by:

- Building on and maintaining a partnership through a central employability portal/gateway, which will enable stakeholder organisations to improve the process and transition between being a client of a VCS, health and social care agency to an employment support provider whilst managing the process in an individualised way.

Enhance the work of existing employability services by:

- Offering one to one holistic support to those individuals that are unemployed, stuck and struggling, that are not necessarily using an existing provider and that are not job ready. The service would act as a bridge between disengagement and meaningful activity and be linked to all providers across the district.

Ensure clearer information is made available in the district to all by:

- Creating and maintaining a central employability portal/gateway that will be made accessible to all stakeholder organisations and the public to improve the provision and transparency of information whilst maintaining contact with involved partners.
- Create an environment/structure where sharing and action planning between partners in an alliance in the district can directly influence services on offer locally.

Promote employability services to the district by:

- Ensuring the mapping of provision and the existence of the information is widely promoted and disseminated to all potential partner/stakeholder organisations on behalf of their clients.
- Ensuring that the information is made widely available to the public through an employability portal/gateway and publicised and promoted through the local media.

Generate employer/business opportunities by:

- The creation of an employers/business partnership to support the aims of the district by investing in employability.
- Work with involved employers to gain recognition for their involvement with a Changing Lives employability scheme.

A Profile of Lancaster and Morecambe District

People

Lancaster's largest age group is 25-44, which accounts for 23% of the population whilst 23% of the population are 45-64 with 17% aged 65 and over.

The black and minority ethnic population in North Lancashire is 2.9% lower than the national average of 11.7% and is 3.8% in Lancaster. The influx of Polish nationals coming and working in the district is rising.

Population projection estimates indicate the population will increase by 10% by 2028. This growing population is largely attributable to an ageing population and local authority projections for new housing developments in the area.

Life expectancy has continued to increase in both men and women in all three districts within North Lancashire over the last 14 years, in line with national trends. As the population ages, it is increasingly important to maintain older people in employment and increase opportunities and initiatives to enable equal access to the workplace to people aged 50 and above.

23% of young people are not pursuing post-16 education and existing local employers complain that we do not have the skills locally to match their need.

Benefit claimants

There are presently over 12,000 people claiming some form of benefits. 6,635 are claiming Incapacity Benefit, 2,035 are claiming Job Seekers Allowance and 1,450 are lone parents on Income Support.

Wards that have the higher figures for those on Incapacity Benefit, Job Seekers Allowance and a higher number of lone parents on Income Support in the district are Bulk, Castle, Harbour, Heysham North and South, Poulton, Skerton East, Skerton North and Westgate.

Lancaster and Morecambe Vision Board aspirations

“In the economic regeneration plans of other cities in the UK, there is a certain resignation to the likelihood that certain groups within society will be left behind. This is not a tolerable outcome within the Vision for Lancaster and Morecambe. The Vision Board wishes to see those areas of wards which presently are considered to be amongst the most deprived in the county to participate in our economic revolution and to enjoy its benefits alongside the rest of the community. This means that job creation aspirations must focus not only on the high end, high tech and professional employment markets but also on entry and mid level jobs as well as opportunities for skills development and career progression. Clearly, these are fine words but we intend to seek out and implement here exemplars from around the world of successful programmes to turn around the super-tanker that is multigenerational poverty, with initiatives that specifically address people and communities with little in the way of qualifications and suffering from social and economic deprivation.” (The Vision for Lancaster & Morecambe)

In order to fill an estimated 8,300 job increase in the district, the Vision Board aspires to bring 2000 economically inactive people into or back into work by 2015. This would mean supporting between 200 to 300 people per year on the route into paid employment.

Winning back the West End (WBWE)

Unemployment and deprivation in the West End in Morecambe remains within the top 1% countrywide. Winning Back the West End has established an outcome target of reducing those 13.5% permanently sick or disabled residing in the area to the Lancaster average of 6%.

WBWE has formed a working group on worklessness and employability to specifically improve the life chances of residents. There is a cross over group, which includes Changing Lives steering group members.

A National Overview

The Government goal is to raise the employment rate to 80%, to reduce the numbers of working age people who are dependent on benefit and to continue to close the employment gaps between different groups. To achieve this, they are making changes in the support offered to those who are most disadvantaged in the labour market. They set out a series of measures which include more mandatory programmes but, they say, with additional support.

Employment Partnerships and Jobs Pledges

Employment Partnerships are a key measure announced by Government in the 2007 budget statement. At the heart of these Employment Partnerships will be a ‘Jobs Pledge’ under which the Government are aiming or major employers, in both the private and public sectors, to offer a quarter of a million job opportunities. These opportunities will be intended for those who are at a disadvantage in the labour market, such as lone parents on income support and those on incapacity benefit, so long as they engage with the support available to them and are ready, willing and able to work.

A more personalised approach to employment support

Recent policy shifts indicate moves towards a more personalised approach, which recognises that differing individuals require different packages of support to move them into work, depending on their individual circumstances. They are proposing to raise the expectations of what a job seeker should contribute and match this with increased support the longer someone is on benefit.

The intend to move away from the rigid distinctions of the current New Deal programmes between age groups and introduce a new flexible approach to more disadvantaged people.

Rolling out Pathways to Work to those on Incapacity Benefit

The Department of Work and Pensions is now rolling out Pathways to Work as a nationwide programme, which is intended to lead to a significant increase in the number of people leaving incapacity benefit for work. People on Incapacity Benefit are expected to attend the Condition Management Programme, which enables the individual to manage his/her health condition whilst building confidence and self esteem.

Lone parents on Income Support transferring to Job Seekers Allowance

The Department of Work and Pensions also proposes that from October 2008, lone parents with a youngest child over the age of 11 will no longer be entitled to Income Support on the grounds of being a lone parent and may be eligible to transfer to Job Seekers Allowance.

The Employment and Support Allowance

The Employment and Support Allowance, which is a new modernised benefit, will be introduced this year, 2008. It is intended to provide new opportunities for people with a health condition or disability. It is supposed to enable individuals to meet their aspirations to return to employment, whilst still providing financial and other support where this is not possible.

David Freud's Independent Report to the Department of Work and Pensions on contracting and the delivery of employment support services

Freud, in his independent report to the Department of Work and Pensions, recommends that it should take contracting with the private and voluntary sector further in the delivery of welfare to work.

He claims that outcome focused contracts, which are properly managed, mean the Government can pay by results by sharing the burden of risk or failure of contractors.

The review recognised the importance of the need for each individual to receive a personally tailored package of support. Segmenting people according to their benefit status or prejudging what an individual needs does not encourage flexibility in assistance.

This form of contracting is already underway with large prime contractors negotiating delivery with smaller locally based sub-contractors in the private and voluntary sector aspiring to deliver services to unemployed people.

Skills and Employment in the North West

'The Sand Timer' report into Skills and Employment in the North West, commissioned by the North West Regional Development Agency, states that the North West regions faces worse skills shortages than in most parts of the country.

Within the region, the disparities in employment rates for unskilled people are far greater than the disparities for people of higher skill levels in the North West.

The over 50s have a low level of economic activity in the North West compared to the UK average for other age groups and that large numbers of people not in work and aged over 50 are in receipt of sickness and disability benefits.

The report highlights that young people currently have a greater training entitlement than older people of working age and yet employment rates among the over 50s in the North West are particularly low. It recommends that entitlement to training should be based on need rather than age.

The report acknowledges that courses relating to social inclusion, outreach and 'soft skills' are being squeezed out. As a result, the Government's 'skills for employment' agenda, which risks undermining moving some of the most disadvantaged towards the labour market.

This gap in services to the most disadvantaged has been further substantiated by these local findings.

The report recommends that greater devolution and local flexibility, enabling an approach more tailored to local labour market conditions and the requirement of the individuals in need of training, is likely to prove effective.

Current Welfare to Work programmes

The rights and responsibilities within the current system of supporting unemployed people into work currently vary for different groups of people depending on the benefits they claim.

Job Seekers Allowance

Those on Job Seekers Allowance are required to be available for and be actively seeking work.

Incapacity Benefit

People on Incapacity Benefit must attend work focused interviews at specific points during their claim but now may be expected to attend the Condition Management Programme.

Lone Parents on Income Support

Lone parents must also attend interviews during their claim.

New Deal for Young People

New Deal for Young People is a mandatory programme for people aged 18-24 who have been on Job Seekers Allowance for six months. It is composed of a gateway period of intensive personal advisor support, which lasts up to four months and followed by mandatory activity on one of four 'options': subsidised employment, further education and training, voluntary work or the environmental task force.

New Deal 25 Plus

This programme is for people who have been on a main benefit for more than six months. It is based on personal advisor support with looking for and preparing for work, including measures such as training and voluntary work to improve employability. In work, financial support can be provided through a top up working tax credit and access to a training grant.

New Deal for Disabled People

New Deal for Disabled People is currently a voluntary programme, including Workstep and Job Broking. Job brokers are outside the Jobcentre Plus network and located through the public, private and voluntary sector. It offer intensive support covering all aspects of moving towards and taking up work, which can include in work support for up to six months.

New Deal 50 Plus

This is a voluntary programme for people aged 50 and above, who have been on a main benefit for more than six months. It is based on personal advisor support with looking and preparing for work, including measures such as training and voluntary work. In work financial support can be provided through a top up to working tax credit and access to a training grant.

Pathways to Work

This is a mandatory programme for new claimants of Incapacity Benefit and voluntary for existing claimants. This will involve work focused interviews delivered by Jobcentre Plus or the private and voluntary sector, alongside the Condition Management Programme to help claimants understand and manage their own health condition. A tax free payment of £40 per week 'return to work credit', paid direct to the individual on top of wages for 52 weeks if the person works for 16 hours or more a week, is also available.

Progress2Work Linkup

This is a programme for people overcoming drink problems, people who are homeless and ex-offenders.

Progress2Work

This is a programme for people who have used drugs.

The work of the project

Changing Lives wanted to gain a clearer picture of the issues underlining the aims of the project and focused on:

- The initial recruitment and engagement of unemployed people in the district.
- The range and type of employability support services on offer in the district.
- Identifying gaps in the service provision.
- Engaging with employers in the public and private sector to ascertain with willingness to become involved in a Changing Lives partnership.
- Identifying ways of involving employers to address the aims of the project.

- Identifying methods of supporting unemployed people who had been previously disengaged.
- Liaising and updating a wider partnership of VCS, education and training providers and potential commissioners.

Mapping the employability sector

In order to obtain a clearer picture of the range and type of employability services on offer to people in Lancaster and Morecambe not in paid employment, a series of searches and semi-structured interviews were undertaken.

The first part of the interview was just intended to gather information about each provider and the range and type of services and/or training programmes they offer. The second part of the interview collected more subtle information and identified gaps as perceived by the sector itself when trying to enhance the employability and find paid work for its clients.

The interviews explored:

- The organisation's provision and its client group.
- How clients access its services and how it promotes its services.
- What, if any, financial assistance is made available to its clients.
- How, and if, it makes referrals, formal and informal, to other providers.
- How it collaborates to the benefit of the client.
- Constraints and opportunities of funding streams.
- Its relationships with Jobcentre Plus.
- How it perceives the sector itself.
- If, and how, it works with employers and manages employer relationships.
- What the sector perceives as gaps in services to its client group.
- Its willingness and goodwill towards the strategic Changing Lives initiative.
- How Changing Lives could enhance the work of its service.
- Any other additional information useful to the Changing lives project.

Summary of Findings

A relatively varied market of employability and employment support has developed across Lancaster and Morecambe. Provision is divided amongst public, private and voluntary sector and then is further broken down, by loose definition, between those that have, in the main, previously offered training services but added one to one support to their portfolio, to those that offer more intensive, long term support to particular client groups, such as disabled people.

The ultimate aim of each provider is to find a paid job for their client.

The culture of the sector

We have to be mindful of our perceptions of the sector. All providers have the aim of getting their client a paid job but the culture of the various organisations involved in employability is diverse. The sector in Lancaster and Morecambe spans the private, public and voluntary sector.

The provision of support to unemployed people, regardless of the 'client group', is big business and with the Freud report recommending expansion to the welfare to work business it is likely to become more competitive than ever. Each individual accessing a provider equals an amount of funding. The business of getting someone a job is truly target driven and with new rewards based on achievements, we will see true competition.

The target driven nature of contracts, therefore, means that providers are sometimes forced to 'cherry pick' clients that may have less difficulty in finding and maintaining paid work, often leaving those that are struggling facing multiple barriers, internal and external, to go around in circles between agencies.

Social inclusion, engagement and employability

During the interviews, employability providers highlighted a multitude of issues that they find difficult to address, which are in the wider health, social and housing arena.

The work with the pilot group demonstrated that those presenting with multiple problems need a multi-faceted response to issues that are not directly related to employability/employment but are crucial to that individual's well being. Getting a paid job does not automatically lift you out of poverty and solve your debt or housing situation. However, without the support to address or resolve these issues, it is clearly even more difficult to consider or focus on finding paid work.

The pressure encountered by employability providers receiving Department of Work and Pensions funding to take more 'job ready' people in order to meet contractual targets is actually creating a gap in the district to those that are really struggling.

Too few formal links exist between employability providers and a wider Lancaster and Morecambe social inclusion network. If a voluntary sector agency is offering support to an individual who is also unemployed, there should be a natural route/transition to enable that individual to find an appropriate employability provider and begin to consider the goal of finding paid work.

Social empowerment work with individuals is not generally funded or recognised as an important 'soft outcome' as part of an employment support programme. The 'Sand Timer' report, commissioned by the North West Development Agency, also acknowledges that courses related to social inclusion and 'soft skills' are being squeezed out. As a result, the Government's 'skills for employment' agenda risks undermining moving some of the most disadvantaged individuals towards the labour market.

A creation of a local scheme linked to all existing providers is likely to prove effective but may have to source alternative funding to enable a longer term approach that addresses this gap.

A joined-up approach

The interviews with employability support agencies demonstrated that a combination of factors,

- lack of a local co-ordination between providers to enhance the sharing of knowledge and expertise
- no one central source of information of appropriate providers that is made available to other organisations, let alone the general public and
- tenuous links between employability providers and the VCS who may be working with those who are unemployed and not job ready

could all be hindering engagement.

All providers highlighted the need for central information resource, which would ensure clearer and transparent information, improve local knowledge to organisations not formally involved in employability and, indeed, promote employment support agencies.

All providers remarked that they would benefit from being able to meet and communicate with other providers regularly but highlighted that there was no one agency/organisation that is funded to facilitate this function.

Improving choice

UK and local evidence suggests that those individuals not on mandatory programmes but requiring employability support are not always aware of the range and type of support services that could be made available to them.

There is no comprehensive source of information listing providers of employability support that is available to the public, or even to other providers and organisations. Benefit claimants will rely on Jobcentre Plus to give them the appropriate information at the moment of need. However, this information is not always given out as each Jobcentre Plus advisor has a discreet and specialised area, i.e. New Deal for Lone Parents, New Deal 50 Plus and there appears to be very little overlap.

In a qualitative assessment of Jobcentre Plus delivery of Job Seekers Allowance and New Deal across 3 districts, evidence demonstrated that the best performing district had set up an advisor search portal, which enables staff to search all appropriate provision.

Partnership working

The client group, the focus of Changing Lives, generally face barriers and present with multiple problems requiring a multi-faceted response.

An effective Lancaster and Morecambe employability/social inclusion partnership could lead to innovation whilst decreasing the isolation of those that are working with disenfranchised people.

It is, therefore, necessary to maintain those recently established communications between all of those organisations that despite cultural and competitive differences could benefit from a partnership on behalf of their clients.

Funding should be sought to resource the post of an Information Worker, whose role it will be to answer public and organisational enquiries whilst, at the same time, servicing a district wide partnership through the production and dissemination of information on local intelligence useful to all stakeholder organisations.

Negative stereotyping and discrimination

Employability support agencies working with disabled people and/or people who have or have had mental health problems highlighted, not surprisingly, the negative stereotyping that still prevails amongst employers that may lead to discrimination.

A few agencies anecdotally reported that they often 'forget' to mention that their client is disabled or has had mental health problems until they have secured an interview. This may well be a pragmatic approach but may not always be to the benefit of that individual.

A Changing Lives employers' survey was distributed to gather employer perceptions about employing disabled people who are at a disadvantage when trying to find work. Whilst some goodwill and improved knowledge was demonstrated around disability issues, the survey showed that there was still a perception that only certain jobs were appropriate to a disabled person depending on their particular impairment or health condition.

Even those disabled people who are in paid work report that employers are treating disability related absences under 'sickness related absences' rather than using the provisions of the Disability Discrimination Act.

Fit for purpose

The very commendable national Government policies which are intended to encourage and promote the independence and choice for disabled people, particularly those labelled as learning disabled, are pushing towards the use of 'mainstream' services.

Providers working with learning disabled people report the lack of a common/shared understanding of language used around disability when working with other providers.

They report of a general reticence of Disability Employment Advisers to work with learning disabled people.

The threatened health and social care restriction of criteria for accessing services to those with only high to critical needs would mean that disabled people accessing statutory employability provision would be expected to use mainstream provision. Anecdotal evidence suggests that currently mainstream provision may not, as yet, be 'fit for purpose'.

The demise of the Volunteer Centre in Lancaster

For an individual that may have become disconnected from everyday life, volunteering can enhance a person's quality of life by increasing their social networks whilst also developing a work ethic and improving skills.

Employability providers complained that the demise of the Volunteer Centre had impeded their capacity to find appropriate volunteering opportunities for their clients as part of an employment programme or individual employment strategy.

Whilst some employment support agencies have established links with voluntary sector agencies such as Furniture Matters, the range and type of opportunities has been adversely affected by the closure of the Volunteer Centre.

The Department of Work and Pensions funded Age Linkage Plus pilot, 50 Forward has partially fulfilled the activities of the Volunteer Centre, it is restricted with only one worker and funding comes to an end in June 2008. The work needs to be built on and maintained to the benefit of all agencies and individuals in the district.

Volunteering as a route to employment

Volunteering, in itself, should not be sold to an individual as a direct route into employment but as a way of becoming actively involved in the community whilst improving the ability to gain, maintain and improve skills for employability.

The impact between volunteering and employability is more likely to be successful where ongoing formal and informal training and discussion/review of the activity undertaken during a placement regularly takes place.

Evidence demonstrates that the nature of the volunteering experience makes a difference if the activity has one or more of the following features:

- Volunteering for a greater number of hours.
- Working with public.
- Being motivated by and individual employment strategy.
- Receiving ongoing formal and informal training.
- Having one's contribution and personal development reviewed.

- Working as part of a team.
- Being informed about employment and/or educational and training opportunities as part of a placement.

Local shaping to meet need

A local scheme can be shaped to enhance and build on existing provision, take a co-ordinated and strategic approach across the district and encourage a partnership between public, private, VCS and employers/business.

An employability portal/gateway will be a virtual partnership linked to all key stakeholders that can take a role in investing in local employability; employment support agencies, education and training providers, the wider voluntary sector for support and also volunteer placements and employers with work experience placements, work trials, in house mentoring and vacancies.

The gateway will match an individual's profile with appropriate help, support and opportunities and will have the capacity to update subscribed individuals and organisations through new text generating technology.

The portal/gateway will also be made accessible and promoted through public access points as well as serving stakeholder organisations.

An information worker will be ideally employed to service a partnership whilst answering public and organisational enquiries, updating the information whilst monitoring use.

Participating employers will promote their involvement through advertising their opportunities directly to employment support agencies and the portal could eventually become a free recruitment tool for the area.

One to one mentoring support can be offered to those that are disengaged and need additional hand holding support and be linked and accessed through the partnership.

Recurring themes and identified gaps

Access to Work

It can take up to 12 weeks before Access to Work provides a disabled person, who has found paid work, with the required funded adjustments, i.e. equipment, ITC, personal assistance. This means

that the new employee cannot fully fulfil their duties of their job during that time, which leaves them feeling vulnerable and at a disadvantage within the workplace.

Autistic spectrum

Lack of knowledge and expertise amongst employment support agencies about this on autistic spectrum, including Aspergers, was highlighted. Older people are also less likely to have received a diagnosis and more likely to be labelled as having a lack of 'soft/social skills'.

Closure of the Volunteer Centre

The closure of the Volunteer Centre in Lancaster was reported as having a detrimental effect on those employability support agencies that seek volunteer placements for their clients as part of a personal employment strategy and/or a New Deal placement.

Comprehensive and clear information

All providers reported the lack of a comprehensive source of information on available and new services that are available and accessible to all.

They reported of inappropriate referrals because information is not available at the moment of need.

Co-ordination and networking

Nobody in the district has the remit and/or the resources to facilitate or co-ordinate regular meetings between providers operating in the district.

All interview providers welcomed an initiative that could take a strategic approach to developing a served network of employability/employment support agencies. They stated that a formal network would help the flow of information, improve knowledge and ensure that referrals amongst providers were appropriate and timely.

Falling between the gaps

Providers reported the problem of those individuals that are not job ready and falling between the gaps in service provision that is targeted at 'job ready' individuals. Such individuals are tending to go around in circles between providers.

Funding for those claiming Incapacity Benefit

People on Incapacity Benefit who have been skilled but because of acquired impairment or health condition need to re-train in order to re-skill or change direction are finding it difficult, if not impossible, to access the necessary education and training courses. Changes to funding regimes within further education mean that Incapacity Benefit claimants are often unable to access free training.

Hearing impaired and deaf people

Providers working with disabled people in the district say that they have difficulties in accessing British Sign Language interpreters, making it difficult to support people for whom BSL is a first language.

Those working with hearing impaired or deaf people do not receive funding to deliver services in the district.

Harder to reach

The provider working with homeless people remarked that with no formal shelter in the area it is doubly difficult to help homeless people in their route to employment.

Those working with the hardest to reach (homeless people, those overcoming drink problems, ex-offenders) report of working in isolation, rarely meeting with other providers.

Services working with those that have a history of substance misuse report that aftercare services are only offered during the working day, making it harder for clients who have gained a job to maintain a drug free lifestyle.

Inappropriate referrals

Providers complained about referrals for those individuals who have already accessed a number of programmes and that are clearly not job ready. They highlighted that these individuals face many barriers and need extensive one to one support that is currently unavailable to enable them to move on.

Lone parents

Providers that have been offering short motivational and confidence building courses to lone parents highlighted the success and popularity of the courses. However, once a lone parent has attended and completed a course that has boosted confidence and enthusiasm, he/she is

then left without the ongoing structured support to enable and maintain momentum.

New Deal Rules

Rules for New Deal clients stipulate that a client can only sign up with one contractor at a time, which means that he/she is tied into a contract even if he/she feels that the service is not suited to need. The client will have to continue within using the service until the contract has come to an end before being able to access another provider/service.

Transport and Travel

Increasingly, employers are insisting that being able to drive and owning a car is a necessary requirement, even for low paid or minimum wage jobs.

Often, just accessing the funds to travel to large recruitment events and/or interviews is prohibitive for clients who have been unemployed for long periods of time.

Waiting Times

The expectation of waiting 13 weeks before being able to access help or support was highlighted as being detrimental to the unemployed person. The longer a person is unemployed, the more difficult it becomes to find future employment.

Work experience placements

Employability support agencies reported of the lack of meaningful work experience placements for their clients in the district.

Young people

Providers working with young people reported of the lack of apprenticeships available to them, particularly within the public sector organisations in Lancaster district.

The Changing Lives Pilot Group

As part of a practice phase, the project worked with a discreet pilot group of individuals who had not been using employability provision except for Jobcentre Plus. Participation in the pilot group was voluntary.

The individuals were recruited in Phase 1 through Youth and Community centres, Jobcentre Plus work fairs and through the Voluntary and Community sector. Two contacted the project after reading a press release in the local newspaper.

The support offered through Changing Lives was not prescriptive or limited to type or time. The aim was to move people on in their employability route.

Support included:

- Home visits
 - Meetings in cafes, libraries, youth and community, children's centres
 - Meeting with family of young person
 - Identifying existing skills and future aspirations
 - Organising referrals and brokering services
 - Identifying education and training opportunities
 - Organising visits
 - Informal counselling
 - Brokering volunteering placements
 - Advocacy and accompanying to Jobcentre Plus
 - Informal childcare during telephone interviews
 - Use of telephone
 - Support with resolving debt issues
 - Transport
 - Accompanying to Citizens Advice Bureau
 - Access to stationery and postage
 - Use of e-mail facility
 - Support/informal counselling on work issues
 - Job search on internet
-
- 4 of the pilot group found paid work, including 2 lone parents
 - 1 man on Incapacity Benefit entered into full time education and training
 - 1 woman on Incapacity Benefit and other disability related benefits entered part time education and training and part time volunteering
 - 1 man on Job Seekers Allowance transferred to Incapacity Benefit is now volunteering whilst continuing his studies
 - 1 man on Income Support and disability related benefits into volunteering
 - 1 young disabled man into full time education, training and volunteering
 - 1 disabled young woman no longer wished to pursue support through the project
 - 3 picked up at the end of Phase 1 of the project made no further contact, despite letters and phone calls

Engaging with Employers

Employer engagement is essential for economic growth, strengthening the local labour force and social inclusion by enabling individuals currently unable to find paid work to exploit employer opportunities.

In most cases, the employability support organisations are able to find appropriate training, when funded, for their clients to equip them with the skills to try to match the kind of jobs available with local business.

As part of the project brief, Changing Lives explored the methods and strategies used by interviewed employability support agencies to engage with local employers.

Practice varies across the district from an ad hoc approach from trawling the telephone directory for suitable and appropriate businesses to searching through job vacancies available through Jobcentre Plus and in the local newspapers. Others have user friendly employers and relationships built up over years and others hold service level agreements with large national employers with local branches.

Building relationships

Many employment support agencies in the district have built up ongoing relationships with certain local employers. They claim that they try to supply employers with a credible workforce.

Cold calling

Other local providers make contact with potential employers on behalf of a client simply by searching job vacancies or by trawling through the phone book to identify a suitable work environment.

Information for employers

Providers that work with disabled people state that as well as offering support to the individual who has found paid work they also offer information and advice to employers, which can include mediation services for those experiencing problems at work.

In Work Support

Action for Blind People state that 60% of their work entails supporting someone with an acquired visual impairment to retain and maintain their employment by providing information to and negotiating with his/her employer.

Raising Awareness

50 Forward attempts to raise employer awareness to the benefits of employing mature and experienced people. The team aim to market the individual to a potential employer.

Service Level Agreements

The Shaw Trust, a national provider and giant of the industry, offers support to disabled people on incapacity benefit and/or other disability related benefits. It employs 'key account consultants' that build a relationship with an employer to then establish a service level agreement. The information on employers with an Service Level Agreement is then disseminated to local job advisers working on behalf of an individual client whose skills will then be matched up to a potential vacancy.

Sharing information about employers

Providers suggest that those that do work with employers are unlikely to share information about their individual employer network as they have worked extremely hard to build and maintain employer relationships.

Each provider is operating within a competitive environment and with increased targets leading to rewards, it is likely to become even more protective about its information.

The exception to this unwritten rule was demonstrated by Lancashire Employment Vocational Support Team who freely offered information about user friendly employers but they are operate within a statutory environment.

An Employers Network

All providers, without exception, welcomed the potential strategic initiative of trying to establish a district wide Employers Forum/Alliance on Changing Lives that could be useful to their work. Some, however were sceptical about its potential for success.

Interviews with local Employers

In response to the information gained through the employability sector, the project interviewed a cross section of local employers across the public and private sector.

The interviews were aimed at:

- Identifying good practice/methods of working acceptable to employers
- Introduce the concept of a Changing Lives Employers network/alliance
- Identify the kind of employers/businesses likely to become involved in a future initiative
- Identify possible future opportunities that could be made available through employer involvement
- Identify how employers would want to be supported to enable their involvement with Changing Lives or any future project

Some of Lancaster and Morecambe district's major players operate within the public sector, meaning that in order to begin to address the aspirations and aims of Changing Lives they too should be party to proactive joined up solutions proportionate to the links made with the private sector. Lancaster City Council was, therefore, interviewed as to how it could become involved with this initiative. The majority of interviews were undertaken with Human Resources Managers and/or Managers who also held an HR brief.

Employers interviewed:

- Lancaster City Council
- Northern Hi Tec
- Lara Nicholls Ltd
- Morrison's PLC
- British Energy
- Mitchell's of Lancaster
- Biju Care
- Sainsbury's
- Marks and Spencer
- Tesco
- Booths
- Flexible Medical
- Lloyds TSB
- Flowers Direct.

Lack of local autonomy has been a factor involving employers; in one instance a local bank manager demonstrated an enthusiastic interest in becoming involved in a local scheme but was refused permission from Head Office to become involved locally. In other cases, local branches of leading supermarkets that had committed to the Government's Jobs Pledge scheme appeared unaware of their employer's involvement in Employment Partnerships.

Summary of findings from interviews with employers

- All but one employer said that they would certainly consider advertising vacancies directly to employment support agencies through the use of an employability portal/gateway
- 8 employers said that they would consider a guaranteed interview scheme to disabled applicants
- 3 employers said they would recruit from employability providers, 2 already do and 4 would consider
- 6 employers would consider an interview scheme for disadvantaged people
- 5 employers would consider work experience placements as part of a supported scheme, 2 already do
- 5 employers would consider work trials, 1 already does

For those that demonstrated some good will towards the work of the project, a number of points were identified as a way of aiding employer involvement.

Support to Employers

Employers suggested that there should be a communication and facilitation worker that could support and enable employers and their existing staff to become involved with the scheme. They insisted that any potential scheme should be easy and that administration and paper work should be kept to a minimum

They highlighted that their existing staff would need help to become involved in supporting a work experience placement or work trial.

Large employers suggested that they would need help to market a potential initiative to existing employees to create 'buy in' from each of their departments.

Marketing and Public Relations

Employers asked that a scheme publicise and promote their involvement when any potential scheme is up, running and proven to work successfully.

Undertaking a Human Resource Function

Local employers suggested that any future scheme should take responsibility for and undertake an initial screening process to assess an individual's suitability for a work experience placement and/or a vacancy.

Employers asked for help to enable them to position a scheme appropriately within their workplace to gain support from existing staff and unions.

Recruitment and Vacancies

All interviewed employers, with one exception, would be willing to show an initial commitment to a potential scheme by promoting vacancies directly to employment support agencies and unemployed people. Some of these employers do not regularly advertise vacancies through Jobcentre Plus.

Support to individuals

Employers requested a comprehensive package of support to individuals on a work experience placement or work trial with regular reviews of the scheme.

Networking

As a strategic project, Changing Lives could act as ambassador for a local network with sometimes limited resources to promote and make links with local business and employers. Partnership working using the tool of an Information portal/gateway at the centre would make each organisation aware of each others' services utilising availability to bring about positive results.

An e-newsletter linked to all stakeholder agencies would update, build on and maintain relationships between partners.

Networking costs very little financially but takes up a lot of time and effort. The partnership could be supported through effective networking where information can be disseminated through to all stakeholder organisations through the portal/gateway; information about places, people, meetings and forums can be made available alongside the generation of electronic business cards useful to the partnership.

Marketing

In order to engage successfully with local employers/business a marketing approach needed to be explored.

Employers that were first approached by the project and interviewed were those employing over 500 people and would be large enough in staff numbers to have volume vacancies but also be able to absorb potential work placements.

When approaching employers it was essential to present information about the initiative and find out what the benefits of employing and/or offering

opportunities to disadvantaged people in the district would be to employers.

The potential of using an employability gateway as a free recruitment tool was suggested to interviewed employer and this appeared to be a very popular option. Other benefits highlighted to business were the public relations opportunities that could be afforded locally through ongoing promotional campaigns as to employer involvement.

Any future work would have to review marketing tactics as part of a realistic district wide initiative.

An information pack should be available to participating employers and should include:

- An introduction to Changing Lives as a district wide partnership, its remit and services
- The business benefits involved by taking part (Community Mark, PR opportunities, Recognition for promoting vacancies on employability portal etc)
- A clear concise summary of the process
- Testimonials from employers with positive experiences
- Employer contracts
- Client contracts
- A form to capture positive experiences

Local publicity and promotion

The work of the research/practice phase was promoted through press releases in the local media. A number of individuals and organisations made contact as a result of this. Any further implementation and strategy should be publicised on a regular basis to ensure that PR opportunities are exploited to the benefit of participating employers/business.

Learning From Experience Exemplars

Corporate Social Responsibility

The active involvement of business and local employers is key to success in securing opportunities and paid work for unemployed people in the district.

Successful community strategies including employability require a sense of ownership on the part of all potential partners that live, work and run businesses in the area.

Interest in the concept of 'corporate social responsibility' has grown amongst larger employers who understand that investing in the local community can bring benefits. The Department of Trade and Industry treats corporate social responsibility as a priority.

The sources of difficulties in engaging local employers/business which have been highlighted by employability support agencies in the locality and through UK wide experience could include and may stem from:

- The lack of a co-ordinated approach with employers becoming confused as to whom is contacting them
- Scepticism about any potential benefits to their business
- Negative attitudes towards disadvantaged people or areas
- Lack of incentive to become involved occurring in branches where local managers have little autonomy
- Local partnerships can deter employer involvement by being seen as a talking shops

A potential Changing Lives partnership could choose 'employability' as the focus of a local business/employer scheme and make the portal/gateway the initial tool of attraction and promotion of employer good will towards the aims of the project.

The Community Mark, Business in the Community

Business in the Community is a national organisation whose members are committed to improve their positive impact on society and the communities in which they operate.

It promotes a variety of initiatives to promote the mutual benefits that businesses can achieve through social responsibility, including employee volunteering and project sponsorship.

In recognition of this, Business in the Community has developed the Community Mark as a new kitemark for businesses. It is a new national standard and a mark of recognition for organisations that are good investors in the local community through setting the 'standard' regardless of the size of the business.

It is anticipated that the Community Mark will become a highly desirable kite mark for business, similar to 'Positive About Disabled People' and 'Investors in People'. If a business/employer is currently doing some community activity it could be engaged to explore how it can contribute towards investing in the employability of the local community. Employer engagement is a key entry point for the standard.

The Community Mark will be achieved by companies that can demonstrate that they are effective and responsible investors in the community through

- Appropriate investment, that is sustainable and beneficial for both society and business
- Responsible approach, that is strategic, managed and integrated, ensuring that companies and organisations are addressing relevant social and business need and working in partnership with community stakeholders and the VCS

Changing Lives and the Employability and Skills Group could establish and promote an Employers network/alliance for those employers that wish to achieve the Community Mark through contributing to the employability of the local community through the strategic project.

Membership to Business in the Community is presently about £100. The Community Mark is also suited and achievable by small to medium size enterprises.

Business benefits through achieving the Community Mark may include:

- Greater local visibility and PR opportunities in the community
- Extra staff support at no cost through a scheme
- Low risk recruitment solutions
- Improved staff morale and motivation
- A workforce that reflects the local community

Social Accounting and Auditing for a Local Partnership

Social auditing is a way for an organisation to prove its added contribute that it makes to the local community. It is ideally suited to the third sector but could also be adapted to other organisations.

By using social accounting each organisation within a partnership will be able to benchmark its effect on employability in the district whilst being able to prove its value and performance, particularly useful to potential funders and investors.

A partnership could choose 'employability' as the focus of a local social audit. It would establish a local independent panel, seen to be objective and impartial that commits to assisting participant organisations to measure their impact.

Focusing Effort on A Target Group

A local employer as part of a partnership may want t lead the way by increasing its employment to a particular group of people who may be at a disadvantage in the labour market.

It could make a statement recognising that certain groups are under represented in the workforce and concentrate on benchmarking its recruitment procedures to see how to dismantle unnecessary barriers to its jobs.

A local organisation through creating this kind of employability exercise could single-handedly lead and inspire others by working with employment support agencies and/or a local appropriate charitable organisation that have the remit of supporting that particular target group.

The Marks and Start Experience

The Marks and Start programme as part of the Marks and Spencer's corporate social responsibility policy, targets a range of individuals excluded from the labour market and include:

- Ready for Work—targeting homeless people
- The Young Unemployed and People with Disabilities
- Parents Returning to Work

An evaluation undertaken by the Work Foundation of two of the initiatives, Ready for Work and The Young Unemployed, demonstrated that they were performing well. 325 of participants found sustained employment either with Marks and Spencer's or elsewhere comparing well with New Deal where 38% of leavers found sustained work. 100% of participants said that placements had improved their confidence and got a reference.

HBOS-Return to Work Programme

This programme promotes job opportunities within HBOS for individuals from local communities which have high levels of unemployment.

The company formed partnerships with local community groups to design a pre-induction training programme that suits the pace of learning requirements for potential candidates. It led to candidates joining HSBOS on a three month short-term contract, giving them a chance to work in a team focused environment and gather useful examples in preparation for an interview for a permanent contract at the end of their time.

The Return to Work initiative is also helping unemployed people to overcome the barriers and fears of re-entering the workplace and providing new found confidence whilst helping to lower levels of unemployment in their local area.

The programme has introduced 50 new colleagues to the workforce at the Belfast contact centre since January 2005.

Unum Provident and RADAR

Unum Provident, the insurance company approached RADAR looking for a substantive project to further the employment prospects of young disabled people. The mentoring scheme matched career orientated young people with senior management within large organisations.

RADAR had already established schemes with British Energy, The Post Office, Centrica and Zurich.

Unum Provident established 51 mentoring partnerships. Overall 84% of mentees were satisfied with the way the scheme was run and for 725 of participants it met their expectations.

Barclays Bank and Leonard Cheshire—Ready to Start

Ready to Start is a programme that provides the right training, sign-posting and support to enable disabled people to start their own business.

The programme is being provided by Leonard Cheshire Disability in partnership with Barclays and in this way combines an understanding of disability and enterprise which is ideal for disabled people who are thinking about going into self-employment.

Barclays is committed to an extensive community investment programme. The bank is working with

Leonard Cheshire Disability as an active example of its inclusive approach. It is providing over £3 million funding for the programme. Barclays' employees are on hand to be 'buddies' for disabled people who undertake the Ready to Start programme.

Social Enterprise

A Social Enterprise is a business that trades for social purpose and can be defined more by its nature than its legal status. Social enterprises can include community enterprises, social firms and mutual organisations such as co-operatives. There is no single model for social enterprise and can include companies limited by guarantee, some are incorporated and others are registered charities.

There may be a compelling argument to focus on developing new Social enterprises in the district whilst working alongside existing and potential social enterprises as a vehicle for delivering innovative and flexible ways of supporting unemployed people as well as generating and creating new jobs in the district.

The Vision Board sees the continued drive within the public sector towards contracting out as an opportunity to develop high quality public sector spin-outs which could be social enterprises.

A further benefit to Lancaster & Morecambe of investing in the social enterprise sector, is its emphasis on inclusivity in employment through providing opportunities for long-term unemployed people facing barriers to enter the workforce.

Lancaster & Morecambe Social Enterprise Hub

The Hub consists of partners in the Voluntary and Community sector who are either already operating a social enterprise or are exploring the development of social enterprise.

The members currently consist of:

- Carpe Diem Ltd, design of sustainable garden and landscapes
- Food for Thought, provision of healthy food and run by Signposts multi-agency resource
- Furniture Matters, recycle, reuse and training
- Global Link, development and education
- Family Support, work with young people
- Travelling Tots Mobile Creche, Signposts
- Thumbprint

- Lancaster District YMCA, Community radio, the development of accommodation and community café
- One Voice, Disability services are looking to the provision of a community café and catering service

A Local feasibility study

A feasibility study undertaken into the potential of social enterprise development in the district identified a number of areas of unmet need in comparison to social enterprise activity in other areas of the country. These could be delivered through the development of social enterprises working together to address the employability of the local community.

- Design and Print
- Catering
- Childcare
- Cleaning
- Construction
- Tourism
- Direct Care and Domiciliary Services

Lancaster District YMCA

YMCA supports the local community focusing on young people in crisis. As well as offering a number of services to young people including some ad hoc employment support, YMCA has initiated a number of development projects/social enterprises.

Diversity FM, a community radio station has been created as a social enterprise that offers opportunities to local people to have a voice and learn new skills.

The YMCA is looking towards developing a housing project available to young people in crisis. A community café will be opened that will utilise the skills of young people who would receive training in catering, food hygiene and customer service. The training will be targeted at the young people using the accommodation and give them an opportunity to use and develop their skills and initiative.

Thumbprint

Thumbprint is a registered charity operating within the district and now forms part of One Voice. It does not operate a social enterprise at present in its own right but as an agency which acts to develop employability activities with its service users, leaning disabled people.

Piccadilly Gardens

Piccadilly Gardens limited is a charity registered as an industrial and provident society for community benefit. It was established in the late 80s with the closure of the adjacent long-stay hospital for people with learning disabilities.

It provides day care services for people with learning disabilities including offering training and work experience for users with recycling, gardening and horticulture.

One Voice

One Voice is an alliance of organisations that deliver services to disabled people and carers. One Voice based at Cornerstone in Lancaster is developing a community café and catering enterprise available to the general public which will be able to offer training in the future.

Furniture Matters

Furniture Matters is a registered charity and limited company. The organisation can be defined as a social enterprise as it was set up from inception along income generating and trading models, however it also relies on grants.

It is involved in networks around basic skills training within a social enterprise setting and is part of SELNET, a consortium of social enterprises that are trying become sub-contractors for delivering employability work in the county.

The organisation is unique in the district as it offers voluntary work experience, placements to a variety of individuals including offenders on Community Punishment Orders, learning disabled people, people on New Deal programmes and people who have used drugs or alcohol.

It endeavours to accommodate choice to individuals and provides transport between sites.

Many volunteers arrive at FM in a state of demotivation, lacking in confidence and self-esteem but find that the volunteering and training delivered through the project can aid and empower them. However, characteristic to the voluntary sector, staff report that the training project is under threat due to shortfalls in funding.

FM training includes:

- Van driving
- Collection and delivery
- Electrical appliance repair
- Furniture repair

- Cycle repair
- Computer repairing/building

Signposts

Travelling Tots, Mobile Crèche

The project links to collaborative working and development of sustainable childcare that involves local people and social and community enterprise.

It provides a high quality mobile crèche facility to support Children's Centres Activities.

Food for Thought

Food for Thought runs a healthy eating café in Morecambe as well as offering outside catering services.

Signposts offers support to potential social enterprises in the Lancaster & Morecambe area.

Winning Back the West End

WBWE has identified the need to create social enterprises in the West End of Morecambe to serve the needs of local residents focusing on the delivery of odd job services. Unemployed residents would then be enabled to develop basic skills that may lead to access further training in construction

The Community Learning Partnership

The local Community Learning Partnership is exploring the potential of creating a social enterprise that offers Painting and Decorating services to the local community whilst delivering painting and decorating courses to local unemployed residents in the District.

Social enterprise as an employability route

The Trades Hall in Workington

The Trades Hall works with ex-offenders, substance misusers and people in receipt of incapacity benefit.

The objective is to increase basic skills, provide information on training opportunities and employment and provide funding for individual training in some cases. Help is also given to people who are employed on low pay to upgrade their skills. Referrals come from local agencies such as NACRO, CAB and Turning Point.

However, notwithstanding success, no help is received from local agencies and a perennial problem is that none of the funders will pay 'up front', thus cashflow management is a constant challenge.

The Bee's Knees

The Bee's Knees in Burnley is a social enterprise made up of three partners, Burnley Enterprises, The Hive, a vocational rehabilitation centre for people who have or have had mental health problems and Green Space, a voluntary sector community gardening initiative.

This SE supports people with mental ill health to start up in businesses that directly benefit other users of mental health services.

The Hive runs a wood working business for garden furniture, Green Space offers gardening services to schools

Roots N' Boots

The Roots N' Boots Café sells fresh food in Ellesmere Port town centre and provides training and employment for young people not achieving through mainstream education.

Social Enterprise in Health and Social Care

Primary Care Trusts are being encouraged through Primary Care Development Teams 'Engaging Communities' programme to identify and support potential social enterprise ventures in the local community.

The Social Enterprise Coalition highlights that the ageing nature of UK society will have the most impact on the social care sector. Demand for services mean that supply services are coming under pressure meaning the potential for receiving support to develop social enterprises in the Health and Social Care field.

Social enterprises for their very nature are able to plough back all their profits directly into service provision as well as being able to offer staff better training. Co-operative style social enterprises would also give improved motivation to staff in a sector which has a large annual turnover of staff due to low salaries.

Sunderland Home Care Associates

A women-led social enterprise in Sunderland, caring for people is successfully providing social and financial returns.

The business is owned by 160 employees, shares in some of the profit and participate in the decision making processes.

The business is a major service operator for Sunderland City Council's social services department and provides personal care and domestic services to hundreds of people.

Construction

Whilst there are a number of social enterprises working in the construction industry, it is an area that is predicted to carry major growth opportunities. There are also huge skills shortages in the industry.

Social enterprises working in the construction industry have a core aim to train and employ staff who would otherwise find it difficult to get jobs. Others pledge to recruit from deprived areas and give additional support to trainees with learning difficulties, or who have criminal records.

There is a large opportunity for social enterprises to develop work in construction alone or with private sector partners whilst benefiting and training unemployed people.

Sources of potential funding and investment loans

The Adventure Capital Fund
Business development grants/loans to social enterprises
www.adventurecapitalfund.org.uk

The Local Investment Fund
www.lif.org.uk

Awards For All
www.awardsforall.org.uk

Unltd
www.unltd.org.uk

Venturesome Loans
Charity Aid Foundation
www.cafonline.org

Enterprise 4 Inclusion
Grants for rural social enterprises
www.enterprise4inclusion

Scarman Trust
www.thescarmantrust.org

BIGinvest
Large loan fund set up by the Big Issue
www.biginvest.co.uk

Future Builders
To increase public service delivery through long-term investment in the VCS/SE
www.futurebuilders-england.org.uk

Just Credit
www.charitybank.org

Esmee Fairbairn
Social Change, Enterprise and Development programme
www.esmeefairbairn.org.uk

Lone Parents

Barriers to work for lone parents are formidable. They include the attitudes of employers; how work is organised; scarcity of jobs; lack of skills and qualifications; very little access to independent transport; current hardships such as debt and poverty; lack of access to childcare whilst seeking work, formal and informal; low confidence and lack of work experience; insecure and low paid jobs; concerns on how to meet housing costs when working and the complexity of the benefits system.

Changes to welfare benefits

The UK government has set a target that 70% of lone parents should be in employment by 2010 and to have halved child poverty by the same date. Work focused interviews for lone parents are designed to contribute towards the national strategy target. The premise is that the majority of lone parents will be better off in paid employment than on benefits and will have a greater disposal income as a result.

However, many of the jobs that lone parents are applying for in the district are within the minimum wage market and thus working does not exactly lift lone parents and their children out of poverty.

Lone Parents in Lancaster & Morecambe

There are 1450 lone parents across Lancaster & Morecambe claiming income support. Whilst lone parents live across the district the wards housing the highest number of lone parents are Skerton West and East, Poulton, Heysham North, Harbour, Bulk and Castle.

New Deal for Lone Parents

The New Deal for Lone Parents concentrates on immediate entry into employment rather than education and training in preparation for work. This means that with low level qualifications they have poor earning prospects.

In 'Work Works' areas funding for NVQ level 3 training has been provided to address skills gaps, however Lancaster and Morecambe is not, unfortunately one of those areas.

Issues and barriers facing lone parents in pilot study

- Financial insecurity with relative moderate to high levels of debt and limited access if no access to mainstream credit facilities
- Costs of childcare notwithstanding moderate contributions available
- Barriers to training and education, including costs, accessibility and low confidence
- Child maintenance problems
- Inappropriate accommodation and lack of social housing
- Worries during transition period between claiming Income Support and Working
- Lack of family networks or support

Lone Parents should have access to a scheme that can offer one to one individualised support whilst also developing a buddy system where lone parents can partner each other. This would involve the many lone parents who are keen to share their experience and skills as they move on in their lives. A mentoring scheme could be extended to support participants into training, education and paid work. This kind of help is beyond the current scope of New Deal for lone parents, yet may prove to be a prerequisite in enabling lone parents to move on in their lives.

Disabled People and Employment

Whilst disability as defined by the 'social model of disability' as opposed to the 'medical/individual' model by disabled people embraces all those people who have an impairment, physical and/or sensory, learning disability, long term health conditions and or have or have had mental health problems this document has had to identify individuals by particular 'client group' and/or the benefit which they receive.

The Social Model of Disability

In the broadest sense the social model of disability is about nothing more complicated than a clear focus on the economic, environmental and cultural barriers encountered by people who are viewed by others as having some form of impairment—whether physical, sensory or intellectual. The barriers disabled people encounter include inaccessible education systems, and inaccessible

labour market, inaccessible transport, houses and

public buildings and amenities and the devaluing of disabled people through negative imagery in the media—television, films and newspapers.

The DDA Act 1995

The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and its measures for employees has improved the environment for disabled people, however disabled people are still dependent on the good will of employers as to whether they can access employment and/or sometimes even an interview.

People are often classified as 'disabled' for one purpose but not for another. The definition of disability or 'incapacity' in terms of access to benefits is different.

Employer perceptions

It is unlawful for any employer to discriminate against a disabled person when choosing someone for a job, however it is extremely difficult for a disabled person to prove that he/she was not chosen for reason Services in Lancaster & Morecambe report that it is still very difficult to encourage employers to employ a disabled person.

Learning Disabled People

Employment levels for learning disabled people have increased slightly but remain very low with different surveys giving figures of between 5% to 17% of people being in work.

Employer-led campaigns

The DWP is working with disabled people and employer organisations to build an employer-led campaign with the purpose of increasing job opportunities for disabled people.

DWP changes to employability services to disabled people

In a current consultation exercise, January 2008, the DWP wishes to make changes to programmes helping disabled people into work. Evidence tells them that there is scope to improve:

- Clearer to understand—with better information for disabled people and employers about the services on offer;
- More flexible—so that services can be more personalised to meet the needs of individual disabled people and employers;
- More joined up and cohesive—easier to use and move through the range of support

offered by other public sector bodies (e.g education, training, social services)

- Better at addressing the issues that employers identify as barriers to employing disabled people
- Better at helping individuals progress off the provision and retain their employment independently
- Better at helping people develop their skills whilst on provision, particularly those who require long-term support; and
- More consistent, by introducing service-support all customers to achieve their full employment potential regardless of the area in which the customer lives.

Mental Health and Employment

The term 'mental health problems' covers a huge scope an a range of issues covering the more generally commonly understood problems such as depression and anxiety to those that affect a small proportion of the population such as bi-polar and the diverse psychosis.

It is recognised that mental health and employability/employment is a significant issue both locally and nationally. The Mental health and Social Exclusion report identifies that being in employment and maintaining social contacts/networks improves mental health outcomes, prevents suicide and reduces reliance on health services.

According to MIND, one in four of us will experience some form of mental ill health during our lives and yet many people across the UK struggle against prejudice, stereotyping and discrimination to be given a chance of a job.

Incapacity benefit and mental ill health

One third of all new claimants are citing mental ill health as the primary cause of their incapacity.

Employers and Mental Health

In a Shaw Trust research project, a daunting one in five employers admitted to believing that employees who have been off work with stress, depression or some form of mental ill health for more than a few weeks are unlikely ever to fully recover. One in three employers thought that people with any form of mental ill health would be less reliable than other employees.

offered, including better links to services

A similar number said that negative attitudes from workplace colleagues would be a major barrier to employing people with any form of mental ill health and round one in half thought that organisations took significant risks when employing someone in a client facing role.

Rates of Employment

Individuals with mental health problems have lower employment rates and higher non employment rates than the population as a whole. Rates of employment amongst individuals who identify as having mental health problems are the lowest of any group covered by the Disability Discrimination Act and nationally make up a large percentage of those people claiming Incapacity Benefit.

The Choosing Health White Paper

The Choosing Health White Paper states that healthcare is about returning people to good health, and that includes getting people back into employment. A common view, is that people with a physical or mental health problem should not try to go back to paid work until they are fully recovered. However, in many cases, inactivity and unemployment compounds bad health and leads to depression.

Return to work should be seen as the norm and, where appropriate should be included in 'care plans'.

Disabled by stigma

People are however not disabled just by their mental health condition but rather by the stigma and discrimination they face when they try to find paid work.

Lancaster & Morecambe

There are 6,635 people claiming Incapacity Benefit, many of those will be claiming due to mental ill health.

Those that have received a formal diagnosis as having 'long and enduring mental illness' may receive support and a referral to an appropriate employment support provider through a Community Mental health team.

Interviews with providers of services to people on incapacity benefit because of mental ill health, state that they see many people stuck on incapacity benefit that could benefit from ongoing

one to one support to move them onto appropriate education and training, volunteering and paid work.

Older People

Over nine tenths of older people who were out of work were economically inactive rather than unemployed. Sickness, injury or disability was more commonly given as a reason for not seeking work than retirement.

In 2005 out of 1.2 million Incapacity Benefit claimants in the UK, almost half the total, were aged between 50 and statutory pension age.

The government has adopted an aspiration of an eighty percent employment rate in order to offset the rise in the dependency ratio between now and 2050 and the major strategy for hitting this target is an increase by one million in the number of older workers.

It is therefore, inevitable that employment support for over 50's is going to become more important. Future active labour market programmes will increasingly concentrate on this age group for the simple reason that there will be more older people, and fewer younger people—by 2016 the number of people under 50 will fall by 2%, while the number aged 50 to 60 will rise by 17%

Skills and qualifications

A key characteristic of older workers is that they are more likely than other workers to have no qualifications. This may be due, in large part, to changes in the education system, and should not be taken as indicating that older workers are less skilled. Nonetheless this is a serious barrier to employment for older people who want to keep or return to employment.

Perceptions of Older Workers

A review of UK research papers found that "employers often hold stereotypical views about older workers and that these influence recruitment, training and promotion practices. The stereotypes found to have the closest relationship with actual employment practices are:

Older workers are hard to train; do not want to train; lack creativity; are too cautious; cannot do heavy physical work; have fewer accidents and; dislike taking orders from younger workers".

Equal Opportunities and Age Discrimination

covering age, and 49% carried out monitoring covering age, but only 5% had taken action as a result. Significant minorities had recruitment practices which were either discriminatory or risked indirect discrimination.

50 Forward (Age Linkage Plus pilot)

The District has been fortunate in hosting a Department of Work and Pensions Age Linkage Plus pilot.

50 Forward services consist of:

- A Care Navigator scheme which is delivered through Signposts Multi-Agency Resource Centre which links older people with low level needs into wider social and support networks.
- An employment agency which offers individualised support to people 50 and above by marketing them to potential employers
- A volunteer scheme which promotes volunteering activities to older people, establishes Time Banks and organises volunteering events for local VCS

The funding for the current work draws to an end in June 2008, however the Age Linkage Plus committee is exploring ways of maintaining and sustaining the excellent work that has been undertaken by 50 Forward.

Mentoring

Mentoring is a very natural process within our work and often happens informally whenever people get together to learn and to develop their skills.

A mentor should help the mentee to believe in her/himself and boost her/his confidence. A mentor should ask questions and challenge, while providing guidance and encouragement. Mentoring allows the mentee to explore new ideas in confidence. It is a chance to look more closely at yourself, your issues, opportunities and what you want in life. Mentoring is about becoming more self aware, taking responsibility for your life and directing your life in the direction you decide, rather than leaving it to chance.

Sometimes a mentor will be directing a person in how they think a job should be done, or supporting

suitable employment.

A mentoring meeting encourages the development, guidance and information and support that a mentee may need to achieve their own goals in life with the assistance and direction of someone else.

A mentor assists a person wanting to move on their lives by aiding them to identify their aspirations, use their ability and develop and improve their skills.

Mentoring is not 'therapy' as it does not seek to resolve deeper underlying issues that are a cause of serious problems like poor motivation and low self-esteem.

Mentoring is concerned with the practical issues of setting goals and supporting the individual to achieve results.

Definitions

"One person supporting another to acquire new skills and understanding to develop their potential"

Three stages to mentoring

Exploration

Establishing ground-rules, setting aims, listening and answering questions.

Understanding

Sharing experience, i.e. how things could be different for mentee.

Identifying aspirations and interests, existing skills

Constructive feedback.

Reviewing and dealing with issues

Action Planning

Deciding on what action needs to be taken and after exploring the issues and negotiating action plans.

Information and advice, sourcing opportunities.

Monitoring progress and evaluating outcomes

a mentee with information sharing or perhaps assisting them to come to a decision about an opportunity, achieve a qualification or gaining

The things that mentors do whether paid or unpaid

- Facilitate the exploration of a client's needs, motivations, desires, skills and thought processes to assist them to make lasting change.
- Observe, listen and ask questions to understand the client's situation
- Use questioning to facilitate the client's own thought processes to identify solutions and actions
- Encourage a commitment to action and development of personal growth and change
- Maintain unconditional personal regard for the client, which means that the mentor is at all times supportive and non-judgemental of the client—aspirations, views and lifestyle.
- Ensure that clients develop personal competencies and not unhealthy dependences on the mentoring support
- Evaluate the outcomes of the progress against an agreed action plan for the client to ensure that the mentoring relationship is successful and the client is moving towards achieving their goals
- Encourage clients to continually improve their competencies and support them to access development opportunities that are necessary to achieve their goals

Health and Safety

To enable a successful placement of a vulnerable person in a business or voluntary setting an organisation must be able to competently to identify potential risks and hazards.

Work/voluntary placements check list:

- The employer has a Health and Safety Policy
- The employer has assessed risks and put in place control measures to prevent or reduce risks
- There are adequate arrangements for dealing with accidents and incidents including First Aid provision
- The employer provides/maintains suitable and appropriate equipment and machinery which is safe and without risks for health
- The employer has made arrangements for the provision and use of protective equipment and clothing
- The employer provides effective supervision, information, training and instruction The employer provides a safe and healthy working environment
- The employer manages candidates' health, welfare and safety

Basic health and Safety requirements

1.1 Insurance

The employer should have a current employers' liability insurance policy in place and the certificate of insurance should be on display.

Work placement candidates will normally be covered by an employer's liability insurance policy, but the insurer must be informed of the activities of an individual on work experience/voluntary placement.

Other insurance cover should be adequate as required by the nature of the business/organisation e.g. public liability and vehicle insurance.

1.2 Advice

1.3 Health and Safety signs and notices

Appropriate health and safety signs should be on display in order to communicate information., i.e. Health and Safety Law poster with boxes for local details filled in.

Employees/volunteers can be provided with and instructed on Health and Safety leaflets

Health and Safety Policy

The policy should include a clear commitment to health and safety.

Responsibilities and arrangements for health and safety should be stated and should be in writing where there are five or more employees.

There should be arrangements for reviewing health and safety performance.

Young people

Where relevant, there should be adequate arrangements in place for safeguarding children, young people and vulnerable adults.

If there is no reference to specific health and safety requirements relating to young people, suggest it could be considered at the next review.

4. Risk assessment and control

4.1 General requirements

Risk assessments of the activities and premises/location should have been carried out to identify the significant potential risks and Introduce risk control measures

The assessments should take into account the specific requirements relating to you persons, giving consideration to their age, inexperience and lack of awareness of risks

Any other groups identified as being especially at risk should also be considered during a risk assessment.

During the risk assessment process, the need for

The employer should have an appointed person or access to an appointed person to advise and assist with compliance of Health and Safety requirements.

equipment, manual handling, hazardous substances.

The employer should have measures in place to control the risks relating to employees' work when they are working off site.

The significant findings of risk assessments should be recorded.

Risk assessment should be reviewed periodically.

Accidents and First-Aid

5.1 First Aid equipment

Employers are required to provide adequate First Aid equipment and facilities. What is adequate will depend on the circumstances in the workplace.

5.2 First Aid personnel

The number of first aiders and/or appointed persons will be dependant on the circumstances of the workplace and after an assessment of First Aid needs.

6. General Guide

Lower Risk, e.g. shops, offices and libraries.

Fewer than 50 people should have at least one appointed person.

50 –100 people should have at least one first aider

100+ people should have one additional first aider for every 100 people employed

Medium risk, e.g. light engineering, assembly work, food processing, warehousing.

Fewer than 20 people should have at least one appointed person

20-100 people should have at least one first aider for every 50 employed

100 + people should have one additional first aider for every 100 employed

Higher Risk, e.g. most construction, slaughter-houses, chemical manufacture, Extensive work with dangerous machinery or sharp instrument

more detailed assessments, required under health and safety regulations, may be identified—noise and vibration, display screen equipment, work

5-50 people should have at least one first aider

More than 50 people should have one additional first aider for every 50 employed

Record keeping

The facility to record accidents and any first aid treatment given should be in place. An Accident book which complies with Data Protection Act 1998 must be used. All details put in the accident book must remain confidential and stored in a secure location.

7.1 Reporting requirements and investigating accidents

All accidents should be investigated and employers should be aware of the types of accidents, ill health and incidents that need to be reported to the enforcing authority.

It is important, for young people, that employers report any relevant injuries or work related ill health to the learner's school and/or work placement organiser.

All accidents and incidents should be appropriately investigated with suitable actions identified and implement to minimise the chances of it happening again by applying the lessons learned.

Supervision, information, instruction and training.

8.1 Supervision

Adequate arrangements should be in place to provide employees/work placements with competent supervision.

8.2 Information, instruction and training

Appropriate training on health and safety should be provided to employees on recruitment. A list of topics that could be covered during induction include:

Key aspects of health and safety policy including employer's and employees'/work placement candidates' responsibilities

Health and Safety leaflet "what you should know"

Relevant health and safety literature given to employee/work placement

Fewer than 5 should have at least one appointed person

Supervision arrangements and procedures for reporting faulty or hazardous conditions or equipment.

Arrangements for reporting accidents and incidents and for obtaining first aid.

Details of controls in place for the safe use of work equipment and machinery.

The importance of keeping the work area tidy and the correct storage of materials and documentation.

Precautions and instructions for the safe use of substances.

Arrangements for welfare and personal hygiene requirements.

Details of any prohibited or restricted tasks.

Measures in place for preventing or reducing potential risks associated with manual handling and lifting.

Who the key people are, e.g. first aider, fire warden, supervisor etc.

Arrangements for a walk round of the premises to learn fire safety arrangements and other.

Where a child below minimum school leaving age is at work, or an a work placement, there is an extra requirement on the employer to provide the parents or guardians with information on the key findings of the risk assessment and control measures.

Methods in place to establish whether any training provided has been understood and monitor its effectiveness in the workplace.

Employers should record health and safety information, instruction and training provided to employees, work placement individuals.

Where necessary, pre-employment medical/health screening should be carried out.

9. Work equipment and machinery

Machinery and other work equipment should be suitable for the work, to the appropriate standard and where relevant, provided with appropriate guards and other adequate control measures.

Fire safety precautions and procedures to be followed in the event of an emergency evacuation.

Electrical equipment

Electrical systems and equipment, including portable appliances should be fit for purpose and inspected, tested and maintained in a safe working condition.

Personal protective equipment and clothing

As determined by risk assessment, protective equipment and clothing needs to be provided for use at work whenever there are risks to health and safety that cannot be controlled in other ways.

Employers are also required to assess PPE before it is used to ensure it is suitable for the task.

In addition to the individual responsibility that employees have to use PPE correctly, the employer should have adequate measures in place to monitor staff to ensure it is being properly used.

Fire and emergencies

10.1 Fire risk assessment

All businesses are required to carry out a suitable and sufficient fire risk assessment to identify the measures necessary to prevent and control the risks from fire.

An adequate assessment should normally result in the following list of measures—reduction of ignition sources and combustible materials; adequate fire detection and warning/alarm systems; effective means of escape including escape routes and unobstructed exists; appropriate fire fighting systems/equipment; and procedures for the maintenance and testing of all relevant fire safety measures and equipment. Keeping a fire log book containing this information.

10.2 Arrangements for emergencies

Risk assessments should also give consideration to the need to develop suitable arrangements and procedures for evacuation when fire or other foreseeable emergencies occur.

There should be a named person/s to take control and assist during emergencies, and a practise drill should be held on a regular basis to check that procedures work properly

11. Safe and health working environment

Premises

The premises where work takes place should be safe and healthy, i.e. should be suitable for the type of work, adequately maintained and kept in a clean and tidy condition. There should be adequate temperature, lighting, working spaces and seating, traffic routes and ventilation.

Exposure to hazards from physical, chemical and biological risks should also be adequately controlled.

11.2 Welfare facilities

Employees should be provided with adequate welfare facilities, including sufficient toilets and washing facilities which should be maintained, kept clean and be easy to access. An adequate supply of drinking water and accommodation for clothing and changing facilities; and facilities for rest and to eat meals.

11.3 Workplace transport

Adequate measures should be in place, as the result of risk assessment, to ensure that the risks presented by workplace transport are properly managed and controlled, e.g. adequate routes for vehicles and pedestrians, driver training, minimising reversing movements, vehicle maintenance, safe loading, speed restrictions, signage etc.

12. Managing candidate's health and safety

The employer has the prime responsibility for carrying out risk assessments, but in most cases, the work/voluntary placement assessor will provide some supporting information in relation to the specific assessments for candidates.

The form is laid out to provide a process led format for risk assessment details as required by health and safety standard. The first column focuses on the key tasks to be undertaken and gives space for more precise descriptions, where appropriate.

The second column allows the hazards associated with the tasks and any risks that may follow. Following an evaluation of risk, the third column provides space to enter the details of any control measures necessary to adequately control the

Having noted the main risk assessment information, the form then allows to record any identified prohibitions or limitations placed on the candidate, which will supplement the risk control measures already identified.

The next box on the form should be used to discuss and record any learning difficulties, disability or medical/health conditions that will need consideration if they could pose additional risks for learners performing the key tasks. This includes, but is not limited to, sight or hearing impairment, mobility, epilepsy, dyslexia, diabetes, vertigo, educational needs etc.

It is the responsibility of the organisation to ensure that employers are informed of adjustments that may need to be made and any additional risk.

12.1 Summary

In carrying out a review or risk assessment, an employer who is to 'employ' a young person is required to take particular account of:

- The age, experience, lack of awareness of risks and immaturity of young people.
- The fitting out and layout of the workplace and the workstation
- The nature, degree and duration of exposure to physical, biological and chemical agents.
- The form, range, and use of work equipment and the way in which it is handled.
- The organisation of Health and Safety procedures, processes and activities.
- The extent of the health and safety training provided, or to be provided, to young persons.

Employers also have to protect young persons from risks to their health and safety due to them having a lack of experience, an absence of awareness of existing or potential risks or the fact that they may not be fully mature.

Young people, as a consequence are not allowed to carry out the following work:

- That is beyond their physical or psychological capacity
- Involving harmful exposure to agents which are toxic that can cause genetic harm to the unborn child or which in any other way chronically affect human health.
- Involving exposure to radiation
- Involving the risks of accidents which it may be assumed cannot be recognised or avoided by young persons owing to their insufficient

risks to an individual/learner on a placement.

- In which there is a risk to health from extreme cold or heat, noise or vibration.

A person above the minimum school leaving age cannot do the above work unless:
It is necessary for their training; and they are being supervised by a competent person; and the risks will be reduced to the lowest level reasonably practicable

Child Protection

Measures necessary to protect and safeguard children also need to be discussed and agreed, in line with DfES guidance.

Employers should hold or adopt a suitable child protection policy, or statement of principle. If the employer does not have a suitable document in place, the work placement assessor can provide a policy statement and ask the employer to sign up to it.

Action Plan

In some cases the placement assessor will result in the need for further actions, agreed with the employer, to address identified shortfalls or further enhance the arrangement already in place. It will be down to an informed judgement by the work placement assessor as to the priority and importance afforded to the action points. For example, this could range from 'safety critical' actions that will be required before a work placement can begin to other less critical actions that can be checked at the next visit to the placement/employer.

It may also be necessary from time to time to make a decision not to use the placement as a result of an assessment.

Quality assurance

It is important that a responsible person designated by the work placement organisations, performs an independent assurance check of the completed work placement assessment form.

attention to safety or lack of experience/training.

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