



Skills and Employment in London

**Proposals for the London Skills and
Employment Board's strategy**

**A response from WorkDirections -
a member of the Ingeus Group of Companies**

Background

The Ingeus Group, of which WorkDirections is a subsidiary, has over 18 years' experience of delivering welfare-to-work programmes in the UK, France, Germany and Australia. Since commencing UK operations, we have assisted over 21,000 individuals into employment through our Private Sector Led New Deal, Employment Zone, New Deal for Disabled People (NDDP) and Pathways to Work programmes. We have 20 offices across London, Nottinghamshire, Birmingham and Edinburgh. This diverse delivery background has provided us with first-hand experience of best practice in the field of welfare provision, as well as the opportunity to understand better how and where effectiveness of both process and performance could be improved.

WorkDirections recognises the potential of every individual and seeks to empower each one so that they can build a better future through suitable, long-lasting employment. Whether the clients we support have low skill levels, are single parents, people with health-related concerns, or a combination of these, we treat everyone as an individual, each with a unique set of circumstances, skills and potential. In partnership with every person who joins one of our programmes, we discover their best route to a suitable, lasting job, and support them to move towards an independent, sustainable future.

Our approach to this consultation

WorkDirections is engaged in policy development as part of our commitment to continue to improve services delivered to all stakeholders - individuals, government, employers and staff. We are delighted to have the opportunity to submit this response to the London Skills and Employment Board. Our response is predominantly concerned with the employment prospects of those claiming out-of-work benefits; particularly those who are generally perceived to be furthest from the labour market. These are often the people with the lowest skills.

Our response is informed by both our experience on the ground and our previous policy responses including [Skills and sustainable welfare-to-work](#).

The current trend towards more joined-up employment and skills delivery is welcomed by WorkDirections. We believe this will both contribute to the Government's 80% employment aspiration and further emphasise the value of job retention and progression as being vitally important in tackling poverty in the wider context of social inclusion in London. We see this aim as crucial to London's prosperous future, and it points to a commitment to safeguard the opportunity of every individual to achieve their goals.

Within this response we explain why, in order for the Board to achieve its aim, these key concepts must sit at the heart of the development and delivery of London's skills and employment agenda:

- Integration
- Utilisation
- Information
- Personalisation
- In-work development

The Board's challenges for action and ambition

The challenges and targets laid out by the Board comprehensively reflect its remit; to improve the operation of and linkage between the fields of employment and skills, and recognise the role that employers have to play in this. One of the Board's main implementation challenges is to find a balance in its recommendations between the application of national initiatives such as Train to Gain, Local Employment Partnerships (LEPs) and the Adult Advancement and Careers Service, and generating London-centric employment and skills support services. As the Treasury's report on worklessness in London¹ demonstrates, London is different; unique 'people' and 'place' effects mean that London develops more slowly in terms of employment rates and skill levels. The question is to what extent this requires London-specific solutions. The Board's final strategy will need to combine national changes (such as benefit and tax credit rules) with local changes (such as the way programmes are funded and managed in London). How the national and regional integrate will dictate how successful the Board is in achieving its ambition.

The initial and primary focus should be an evaluation of currently available employment and skills support to establish how existing infrastructure can be better resourced and supported. Following the recent proposals for an Adult Advancement and Careers Service to tackle skills and Flexible New Deal provision aimed at increasing employment, alongside the implementation of Pathways to Work, premature creation of further new infrastructure could add unnecessary complexity rather than directly address the Board's priorities. There are examples of existing high performing employment and skills initiatives in London, and these should be capitalised on. Comprehensive evaluation of successful initiatives would ensure that this success could be maintained, built upon, and better integrated.

It is also worth premising recommendations on an evaluation of the relationship between employment and skills. Certainly there is a special relationship here. A higher proportion of unemployed people have lower skill levels than among the population as a whole. In fact, the employment rate has improved in recent years for all disadvantaged groups except those with no qualifications. In order to meet the Government's 80% employment aspiration this needs to be addressed. Employers value skills, and those with low and no skills generally have a poor labour market experience, finding it hard to secure employment and hard to sustain in employment once found. The 'revolving door' can be compounded for those at the lower level of the skills spectrum.

However, not all people with low skill levels are unemployed or vice versa; the relationship between employment and skills is not simple or complete.

¹ HM Treasury *Employment opportunity for all: tackling worklessness in London*, 2007

Simply improving skill levels will not guarantee increased employment rates unless initiatives are joined together with an effective welfare system and the *right* opportunities are accessed at the *right* time. The Learning and Skills Council's (LSC) 'skills for jobs' programme is a positive step towards closer integration of the skills and jobs agendas. WorkDirections advocates a 'work first plus' approach within the welfare system. The focus is on our clients finding work now and using this as a stepping stone on their way towards career retention and progression, accessing training and skills development where appropriate. It is valuable that the Board has both employment and skills targets, as well as other qualitative indicators.

Our 'work first plus' approach is designed to support people with multiple disadvantages, of which there are a higher proportion in London than elsewhere in the UK. It is not uncommon for WorkDirections clients to face multiple constraints to work: long term unemployment, low skills, living in social housing, belonging to a BME community or being a lone parent, for example. We take a personalised approach where the package of support provided is tailored to each individual's need. Employment Zone programmes are more successful than other employment programmes in terms of job outcomes because funding is open enough to foster innovative solutions and utilise the discretion of personal advisors. The more stipulations on a programme contract, the less capable it becomes of developing reactive and innovative solutions that can support people with multiple disadvantages.

In developing programmes to support the skills and employment agendas in London, 'place' as well as 'people' factors cannot be ignored. London attracts migration from elsewhere in the UK and abroad. It is a culturally rich area of the country and an exciting place to live. However, additional competition for services drives up the price of housing, transport and childcare, and the extra competition within the labour market drives down the availability of 'desirable' local jobs. According to estimates, for every job in London there are on average four people competing for it². This competition shows no sign of abating. If Londoners want to live and work in London they must prove themselves on an internationally competitive stage, and often this means 'upskilling' on both 'hard' and 'soft' skills, including proficient literacy and numeracy. It is also crucial in London that there is sufficient provision of English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) that is targeted at increasing success in the labour market. WorkDirections offers a job-focused ESOL course for its New Deal participants, which teaches employment-related language and writing skills alongside job-brokerage support. If the Board is to achieve its ambition it must integrate regional variation successfully with national policy, recognising the special relationship between employment and skills, and simplifying access to services from the user's perspective wherever possible.

² Speech by Jim Murphy MP <http://www.dwp.gov.uk/aboutus/2007/28-02-07b.asp>

Do you agree with the priorities and actions? What further priorities and actions would you suggest?

Supporting London's people

The focus of a skills and employment strategy in London is based on the fact that a better strategy will result in better employment and skills outcomes for London's people. This is a justified, if complex, ambition. As noted by the Board, London's people are diverse in a number of ways, and a system set up to support them all is in danger of becoming un-navigable. The aim must be to create a system that provides universal support tailored to meet individual needs, of which everyone has full knowledge.

Our employment programmes are flexible and personalised. Every single client is offered a consistently high level of service from their personal advisor, who provides one-to-one support and can signpost to group sessions and specialist support if required. Group sessions take the form of workshops on employment-related skills such as interview techniques and in-work etiquette, as well as CBT sessions such as confidence-building and fear of failure. Everyone we work with has constraints on their ability to secure employment. We do not label people in terms of their disadvantage(s). Our service instead tailors support to individual need. This is particularly important in London which has a high percentage of people with multiple disadvantages. It is not helpful to group people by disadvantage in cases where people are dealing with multiple disadvantages. The most effective employment and skills support begins with the individual.

At WorkDirections we use the term 'constraints' rather than 'barriers' to work. This is because barriers are often talked about as if once overcome, the individual can transition easily into work. This is rarely the case. For most people, the issues they faced whilst out of work still exist when they have a job. We find it more productive to work with people to develop strategies for managing these constraints throughout the transition to work, and once work starts. An appropriate example for lone parents is childcare. A 'barrier' approach would suggest that once suitable childcare has been sourced the problem has been overcome. However, for that solution to be sustainable, thought needs to be given to how issues that might arise once the individual is in work are dealt with (for example, if either the child or the carer is sick). Unless contingency plans are in place, a lone parent may have to leave their employment for such events.

A great deal of support is currently available to individuals through statutory bodies as well as the private, voluntary and community sectors. An engagement campaign to ensure people are aware of this support, and to encourage them to participate, may go a long way. Information sharing is vital, and to achieve this all frontline staff must have the capacity and capability to inform their service users. For example, it is key that

Jobcentre Plus advisors know what courses their local FE colleges deliver, and how to refer their customers. Advisors should also have the capacity to discover suitable learning opportunities available elsewhere, through the private and voluntary sectors. FE colleges offer one of a host of learning opportunities in London and the most suitable for the individual and the employer must be identified in each case. In particular, advisors must look beyond those courses limited to unemployed people, towards those recognised and respected by employers, as the example below demonstrates.

Security Industry Authority Training

For those wanting to get into the security industry, obtaining an SIA licence can be the final hurdle to employment. WorkDirections, in partnership with Response Security Training, can offer individuals on our New Deal programmes the chance to study and gain their licence through four days of intensive training followed by an exam and the necessary background checks. Without this service many clients would find themselves unable to move into the industry of their choice. Eight out of ten clients who are referred to this SIA training subsequently leave the New Deal programme for employment.

Learning is a matter of choice, but the provision of information to support making that choice must be universal. The proposed Skills Health Check needs to support this aim.

In terms of developing 'an effective London careers advice service' WorkDirections argues that resources would be better used to improve and promote what already exists. The recent announcement of a new Adult Advancement and Careers Service should be capitalised upon in London. There is scope for a pan-London approach, and certainly more joined-up working will move London towards Sir David Varney's vision of a citizen-based, personalised and single-stop service³. In order to achieve this, the new Adult Advancement and Careers Service will need to be fully integrated with Jobcentre Plus programmes (particularly the Gateway), as well as Flexible New Deal and Pathways to Work providers, who can develop and deliver pre-employment training, and signpost to external skills support where appropriate.

It must be noted that pre-employment training is not a catch-all solution. For many, in-work training and development can be far more valuable, be it to progress within their current industry, or for a career change into a new industry. For those who are currently excluded from employment, delaying job-seeking in order to study increases the unemployment gap on a CV which can reflect negatively in the eyes of employers. Train to Gain offers a great opportunity for many to progress their skills in work. However, it is currently limited to developing skills within an individual's current work

³ Varney *Service Transformation: A better service for citizens and businesses, a better deal for the taxpayer*, 2006

industry. This limits the opportunity for people to use one job as a stepping stone to another job in a different field. Learning while in work should be less industry-limited to allow more occupational mobility. At WorkDirections people are encouraged, where appropriate, to take work while they train for their preferred area. This means that when they come to apply for their preferred job they have the necessary qualifications and recent work experience, as well as the soft skills developed through work.

There is a real opportunity to develop a programme which complements Train to Gain but does not require individuals to find work in the field they wish to train in. Such an initiative would enable those moving from benefits into work to access free skills training in an area of their choosing. Ongoing funding for the training should be dependent on the individual continuing to work, and meeting the requirements of the employer (in terms of timekeeping, commitment etc). Such an approach equips participants with current work experience and skills training, making them more attractive to potential employers.

In-work support offered by employment programmes offers people a known advisor to consult with on learning opportunities once in work. WorkDirections is currently funded to support people for between 13 and 26 weeks in work (depending on the programme); although in reality some continue to access support for considerably longer. We argue that this should be increased to a minimum of 12 months. David Freud's report and the recent Department for Work and Pensions' (DWP) commissioning strategy reflect this, with proposals to track a client in work for up to six, 12 and 18 months. This will allow more focus on retention and progression and skills development. The programme providers must make an important transition in this case from merely supporting clients to get a job to guiding them through the next stages of their career. Client perception here is crucial; if a client perceives their advisor to be simply a job-broker there is no role beyond the job start, and willing contact in most cases ceases at this point.

The role of employers

There are clear benefits to furthering the involvement of employers in tackling London's employment and skills challenges. As the Board notes, employers must be sold on a business case as to why this should be a priority for them. Most important is that there remains a good level of fit between the job vacancy and the applicant; an increased role for employers can serve to enhance and should not serve to dilute this.

A new London employer programme may overlap with existing local and national initiatives such as Local Employment Partnerships, and arguably the work of job-brokerage services and City Strategy Pathfinders. Rather than introducing something new, WorkDirections promotes the enhanced support for and communication between what already exists, and effective use of

the LEP initiative across London. This is not to say that the structure should not change at all. Increased engagement with employers will necessitate some level of service transformation.

The value of Local Employment Partnerships does not lie in an increased number of job vacancies, but rather in the *type* of jobs offered by employers. In order for employer engagement to impact positively on the employment rate in London it will need to target disadvantaged groups including lone parents and people with mental health conditions and/or disabilities, who may require special arrangements on hours or place of work. The LEPs represent a great opportunity to work with employers to develop strategies that enable people from these vulnerable groups to get and keep a job with hours that meet their needs. The latest Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform (BERR) work-life balance survey⁴ shows that 95% of employers offer some form of flexible hours. This must be 100% for jobs offered through LEPs and the flexible hours offered need to match the requirements of those most disadvantaged within the labour market. Although many employers may purport to offer flexible hours, in reality the choice may be limited or unsuitable for those most disadvantaged in the labour market. A recent Equal Opportunities Commission report⁵ unveiled the lack of flexibility in the UK's employment market, and the loss of talent and global competitiveness that this represents. It is beneficial for employers, as well as individuals, to have a more 'third generation' flexible market.

"I specified that I don't really want to work five days a week because my daughter is still really young. She's really important to me. I don't want to be only spending time with her at the weekends. I said to [the employer], ideally, I'd work three days, but four days at a push. So we agreed that I work 25 hours per week, or three-and-a-half days per week... I signed the contract and that was it."

Sarah Edwards, WorkDirections lone parent client, Brent Employment Zone⁶

As well as pledging jobs, the Board's strategy aims to involve employers more closely with training for their staff and potential employees. If pre-employment and post-employment training is to be valuable and relevant to the current labour market, employers must lead the way in its design. It would also be valuable, where appropriate, for employers to be involved in its delivery. Pre-employment training needs to focus on those skills required by employers, so that it moves an individual closer to their job goal. Post-employment training shows great success where it is delivered by the employer in-house. In this case it can both increase the individual's value to their current employer, as well as their competitiveness in the labour market as a whole. Support for employers who want to become involved in

⁴ BERR *Third Work-Life Balance Employer Survey, 2007*

⁵ EOC *Enter the timelords: Transforming work to meet the future, 2007*

⁶ Listen to Sarah, and other WorkDirections clients tell their own stories in full at www.workdirections.co.uk/podcasts

the design and delivery of training should be offered through local Jobcentres, as well as LSC-funded organisations. Employers should also know how to signpost to training, and make full use of Train to Gain.

It is often unclear what 'types' of skills employers value; they often don't practice what they preach in this area. Employer surveys show the importance employers place on 'soft' skills such as customer service and caring skills⁷. Despite this, application forms generally focus on certified skills, thus denying the applicant sufficient opportunity to demonstrate their non-certified skills. This is furthered at the interview stage, where one-to-one and panel interviews can serve to intimidate rather than enlighten. The recruitment process, from job advert to application to interview, should take into account the qualities required from a potential employee, and facilitate the successful recruitment of people who possess those qualities. Group interview sessions, for example, can be far more demonstrative to an employer recruiting for a customer service position. Local authority recruitment is a case in point of overtly rigid recruitment processes. Members of the London Skills and Employment Board should commit their organisations to review their recruitment processes, ensuring that no questions inadvertently exclude people. For example, the skills required for certain positions may be better identified on an application form through asking for an example of each skill, rather than requesting information on formal qualifications. WorkDirections would welcome the opportunity to advise members of the Board on this process of revision.

There is great value to employers of a trained and developing workforce. Employers should be educated to recognise the value of investing in their staff. This does not merely increase the kudos of the company, but actually facilitates performance and potential for growth. This is the case no matter what size the business is, and employer engagement should not be confined to large national companies.

An education and skills system for the future

WorkDirections believes it is absolutely essential that any progression in further and higher level provision is based around a focus on employability and progression. This notion is in line with recent Government developments and the increased partnership between the DWP and the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS)⁸. It has long been argued that the employment and skills agendas should be more closely linked and we support movement in this direction.

It is also important that colleges and private learning providers form closer links with employers to ensure that the design and implementation of training is closely matched with the needs of both the labour market and

⁷ DWP *What Employers look for when recruiting the unemployed and inactive*, 2005

⁸ In particular, the ideas posed in the *Opportunity, Employment and Progression: making skills work* paper.

individuals. In addition to this, there are lessons to be learnt from recent trials with large employers such as Tesco, where existing successful in-house training schemes have been mapped across the NVQ system. This has meant that employers have been able to continue to deliver training which they trust and value, whilst individuals are now able to receive recognised national qualifications for engaging in such provision. Progress in this area could lead to greater consistency between the skills held by individuals, and the level of skills they are perceived to have.

As proposed by the Board, individuals are increasingly being asked to take responsibility for their own learning by the Government through initiatives such as Skills Accounts and involvement with the new Adult Advancement and Careers Service. It is essential that any movement in this direction is aided by high quality provision of advice and guidance services. For individuals to be able to make informed decisions regarding their learning, they must first understand clearly the demands and requirements of employers, how to match skills acquisition with employment goals, and how to contextualise individual courses within a larger 'career map'.

We perceive that there are potential pitfalls which the Board should avoid. The proposals outlined are focused on working with employers to progress their staff into higher levels of achievement, and seem to criticise the current focus on pre-employment training. Whilst we still advocate the 'work first plus' approach, and there is clearly room for improvement in the provision of work-based training, it must not be done at the cost of existing, successful, pre-employment training. We recognise that different individuals have different needs and routes to employment. The provision of pre-employment training in colleges is essential in helping many individuals take their first steps onto a 'skills escalator' providing a skills base from which progression can be made, both in learning and employment.

Ability to access training is vital, and whilst college specialisation can arguably lead to higher quality provision, large FE colleges and private sector learning providers often provide a broad range of subject areas in order to support the needs of their local learning community. We believe steps need to be taken to ensure that greater specialisation in provision does not inadvertently lead to reduced availability of sector-specific training. Equally, increased e-learning must be accompanied by ensuring learners have adequate access to the necessary facilities and a means of 'hands-on' support to ensure it is not an exclusive form of development.

The cost of learning has traditionally been a barrier to those wishing to partake in further skills development. This is particularly the case for those in low-paid employment. Whilst unemployed, individuals are able to access a variety of skills development opportunities free of charge; once they enter work this entitlement can vanish. Our experience has highlighted many cases where people have chosen to remain on benefits so that they, or their partner, can complete training without incurring costs. If this issue is

addressed, many people may feel more empowered to support themselves financially whilst continuing learning. We therefore encourage the Board in their desire to look at new ways in which training can be financed, including the use of existing government, private sector, and employer funding. This should serve to remove the financial burden of progression from the individual, and ensure appropriate development is available to all.

We support the intention to widen participation in higher education across all sectors as a vital way of improving retention and progression in work. In addition to this, individuals progressing through promotion can provide openings in entry-level jobs for new and returning employees seeking to join the workforce.

Integrating employment and skills delivery

As stated earlier in our response, WorkDirections believes that there is a clear and important link between the skills and employment agendas and that, in the future, we will need to see further integration in the delivery of skills and employment services. These ideas are underpinned by the inherent need for more joined-up working between services at both a national and regional level, and a more integrated employment and skills delivery system.

In the DWP and DIUS joint publication 'Opportunity, Employment and Progression: making skills work', the Government states the desire to create a 'seamless' experience of both employability and skills services for individuals to access; it is clear that the Board shares this aim. Further to this, the Board recognises the need to increase joined-up working at a local level to tackle issues such as health services, childcare, housing and transport issues. WorkDirections has often raised the issue of disjointed services and how the bureaucracy and complexity of services can act as yet another constraint restricting those disadvantaged within the labour market from obtaining employment and remaining employed. WorkDirections advisors work with their clients to find real solutions to a variety of issues such as those mentioned above. However, we firmly advocate that all regions continue to explore and pilot how the public, private and third sectors can work more closely together, across all service delivery, with the aim of creating 'one-stop-shops' where all relevant services can be accessed alongside quality advice and guidance. The Board needs to ensure that any aspirations for joined-up targets in London reflect, and are sensitive to, the national targets which must be achieved by those involved. This is merely a reflection on the fact that behaviour follows funding, and all stakeholders necessarily act in a way that meets their funding criteria, regardless of whether the Board introduces further additional targets. City Strategy Pathfinders provide a platform for piloting more integrated services within London, which could offer the opportunity to develop solutions within existing infrastructures, rather than applying further levels of complexity to existing systems.

WorkDirections is interested to hear further details regarding the establishment of a London Skills Observatory. The debate over whether skills and employability should be supply or demand-led has strong arguments on each side. WorkDirections has a supply-led approach to increasing employability amongst the most disadvantaged, focussing on the individual, and helping them to compete in an open job market. However, it is also important to recognise the demands of employers, and make considered skills investments on the basis of creating real employment solutions. It is important that the Board considers how such a Skills Observatory would work in practice, and whether it is realistic to attempt accurately to predict the future skills needs of London's employers and facilitate training programmes in order to meet those requirements. We are concerned about the risk many individuals may take in investing time and effort in sector-specific training with the intention of gaining employment only to find that, once qualified, they are then competing in a skills-saturated industry that cannot be accessed. If skills acquisition is to be specifically aimed at meeting the needs of employers, the Board will need to ensure that employers are 'buying-in' to the schemes in place, and rewarding the efforts of all parties involved with the guarantee of opportunities for employment. The Board should also take care to ensure that any new initiatives, including the proposed Skills Observatory, are meeting a specific need that either is not, or cannot, be met by existing bodies, in order to guarantee 'added-value' and minimise complexity in the system.

Making the public sector system work for London

The public sector's impact on employment and skills can be viewed from a number of angles. First and foremost, the role of the public sector as employer should not be underestimated. The public sector is one of the largest employers in London and therefore fair, inclusive and progressive recruitment and training standards have a direct impact on the labour market. Given this, the public sector should also stand as a role model for best employer practice in terms of recruitment and in-work development opportunities, with the aim of other organisations and businesses following suit.

The public sector sits at the heart of London's employment and skills systems, not only as an employer but also in terms of their provision and outsourcing of services. Funding and targets define the way these systems interact and develop. It is therefore vital that the funding and target structure rewards stakeholders adequately and effectively for achieving a shared goal. Joined-up targets may allow employment and skills agendas to work together in a more coherent way. Nationally, Flexible New Deal must develop not only in parallel but in sync with skills developments such as the Skills Health Check and the new Adult Advancement and Careers Service. How this is implemented in London is the responsibility of the public sector and other stakeholders.

WorkDirections has actively lobbied for enhanced contracting procedures that incentivise employment programmes in this way. Contracts that weight payment towards an outcome of sustained employment reduce wastage for DWP by transferring the risk from the public purse to providers. These ideas appear in the recent DWP Interim Commissioning Strategy released in November 2007, and are likely to be in place for Flexible New Deal. Whilst we support these proposals, WorkDirections has independently proposed a 'target accelerator' model whereby as the number of sustained outcomes increases, the fee paid to the provider increases, in recognition of the higher costs they will incur by reaching 'deeper' into the stock, i.e. those with a higher level of need.

"Getting a job is only a success if it is a long-term job. Gaining a skill is only worthwhile if it is economically useful or helps progress in learning or work."

London Skills and Employment Board draft strategy

This statement from the Board's draft strategy does not fully capture the benefits to the individual of both employment and skills acquisition, and is not supported by our 'work first plus' approach. A job that is not long term can still be a valuable step on the journey between long-term unemployment and long-term employment. Indeed, successful employment can be made up of a combination of short-term jobs as people build skills and experience and navigate their way round the labour market. Equally, a skill that is not currently relevant to the industry someone works in may be valuable for their personal development and lead to increased future employment prospects. The opportunity to network and develop, build social capital and have exposure to different groups of people can be as beneficial an outcome from learning as the developed skill/qualification itself.

These may appear to be subtleties but they are fundamentally important to the design of quality, sustainable employment and skills services. We would challenge the Board's statement with one of our own:

Getting a job is the first step of a long-term employment strategy. Gaining skills can help individuals achieve their work goals by aiding progression, building networks and driving aspiration. These ambitions need to be underpinned by quality delivery, the flexibility to tailor services to the individual, and an infrastructure that delivers a holistic, seamless, easy-to-access experience.

Conclusion

We welcome the debate that the Board's strategy has opened up, and are delighted to have the opportunity to submit this response. We hope to be involved in further consultation as the debate continues.

In conclusion these key concepts must sit at the heart of the development and delivery of London's skills and employment agenda:

- *Integration:* more joined-up working between employment and skills strategies, national and regional initiatives and across the public, private and third sectors
- *Utilisation:* comprehensive evaluation of current practice in order to build on successful initiatives and develop solutions within existing infrastructure; open funding structures that utilise the innovation of personal advisors
- *Information:* frontline staff must have the capacity and capability fully to inform their service users; employers must understand their employees in order to recruit the right people and provide the necessary flexibility and skills development
- *Personalisation:* tackling multiple disadvantage requires a flexible, personalised solution with support tailored to meet individual needs
- *In-work development:* employment and skills support must exist beyond the point of initial job entry, creating a joined-up system of personal career development.

WorkDirections and the Ingeus Group

WorkDirections is a member of the international Ingeus Group of Companies which provides highly effective welfare-to-work services. The Group, which has been operating since 1989, runs employment programmes in the UK, France and Germany.

WorkDirections produces original research, responses to government consultations and business development activity in the countries in which we operate.

- Launched in the UK in November 2002, WorkDirections supports socially excluded and disadvantaged individuals to find suitable and sustainable employment.
- Our welfare-to-work operations assist people who have become long-term unemployed, as well as single parents, and those who are not working as a result of health issues.
- WorkDirections UK is delivering six three-year **Pathways to Work** programmes from December 2007 which will allow us to support over 98,000 Incapacity Benefit claimants in the London, Birmingham, Nottinghamshire and Edinburgh areas. In Birmingham, the Pathways to Work programme replaced our **New Deal for Disabled People** programme which we ran for over three years.
- We also deliver **Private Sector Led New Deal** programmes in Central and West London, and **Employment Zones** in Nottingham, Birmingham, Brent, Haringey and Southwark.

For more information about any of the issues raised in this response please contact:

Annie Finnis
Policy and Research Analyst
Ingeus Europe Ltd
afinnis@ingeus.co.uk
07920 862 251

Hannah Jordan
Policy and Research Analyst
Ingeus Europe Ltd
hjordan@ingeus.co.uk
07920 791 913

The Registry
3 Royal Mint Court
London
EC3N 4QN
Tel: 020 7265 3000

www.workdirections.co.uk