



New Deal for Disabled People Successor Provision

**Response to Jobcentre Plus
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NDDP Successor Provision

WorkDirections UK is part of the Australian-owned Ingeus group of companies. We provide effective, accountable welfare-to-work services. We launched in the UK in 2002, and started delivering services to people on Incapacity Benefit through the New Deal for Disabled People (NDDP) in April 2004. Our Birmingham operation is the largest single NDDP programme in the UK, and is co-located with our new Employment Zone operation in the city centre. Our experience of complementing effective employment services with vocational rehabilitation techniques put us in a unique position to enable this client group to access meaningful employment outcomes.

What services should providers offer to participants?

We would like to frame our answer to this question by underlining the fundamental importance of both a clear work focus and flexibility in delivery. Currently providers have the flexibility to deliver the services they perceive to be most appropriate for the individuals on their caseload - there is no fixed programme, or list of modules that all must complete. We also advocate a continuing focus on outcomes over process for the successor provision that is currently being developed.

We believe provision should comprise professionally-informed, holistic services centring on an intensive 1-1 relationship between advisor and client. This should be mapped and measured through a dynamic action planning process. This will encompass work-focused interventions as required and as relevant to the individual. These will range from supported job-search to benefits calculations to career advice. WorkDirections NDDP clients also have access to specialist advisors - these are psychologists and physiotherapists who are embedded within the advisory team. They deliver group training sessions, 1-1 support and case-conferencing expertise. These include, but are not limited to, Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT), anxiety management and walking groups to improve fitness and social interaction.

We have recently commissioned Cambridge Policy Consultants to undertake a research project which has two key objectives:

- to identify whether there are benefits delivering NDDP alongside an Employment Zone, including capturing the impact of any crossover learning
- to identify the benefits of embedding specialists within a team of employment advisors in terms of sharpening the focus of the specialist interventions, enhancing the skills of the advisors and speeding up the transition to sustainable work

We look forward to sharing the results of this research in order to contribute to the continuing development of a successor programme for NDDP.

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What do you consider the key minimum requirements we should seek from providers of an advice and support service?

Arguably the most important lesson to be learnt from the success of the Employment Zones is that job outcomes are maximised when all interventions are explicitly linked to work.

Activity is essential, but if the procurer prescribes the level or type of activity required it is counter-productive. There is more benefit in setting a level of expectation in terms of job placements, and enabling the provider to determine how they can best meet that goal.

The key minimum requirement needs to be the level of success in terms of both engagement and job placement. Expectations for levels of engagement in the current programme have always been modest. For example, in Birmingham the contracted through-flow for all five providers has a combined total of considerably less than 10% of all IB claimants in the city. In order to be more effective, the minimum requirements in terms of numbers accessing both the programme and, subsequently, sustainable work needs to be more ambitious.

We believe that a quarter of those currently claiming IB could move into sustainable employment through the NDDP successor provision. However, in order for this to occur there needs to be a significant increase in the numbers of people accessing provision. This in turn has implications both in terms of the current levels of access to client data, and a reassessment of the levels of mandatory interventions. The importance of the latter is underlined by the Pathways to Work experience, which has seen a five-fold increase in engagement with NDDP programmes in pilot areas. This has been as a consequence of a more intensive Work Focused Interview process and heightened awareness amongst both staff and customers of the presence and capacity of Job Broker organisations.

Effective procurement could drive this agenda. However, sufficient thought also needs to be given to the consequences of over-achievement in both registrations and sustainable job placements. Programme over-achievement should be measured against wider departmental goals - for example the aspiration of an 80% employment rate. This should result in the encouragement of positive outcomes above those initially contracted for. The cost-benefits of such over-achievement is currently difficult to quantify, it requires aggregating current levels of financial, social, emotional and opportunity costs and analysing success in a wider context.

Language is important - it is important that clients retain employment; however, this may not mean a single job with an individual employer. Clients may sustain work through linking a number of different opportunities. Key to sustainability is a good match at job placement. Outcomes are, however, also improved through the provision of effective aftercare services. More than monitoring, this includes providing assistance with the transition to work, financially, in terms of benefit advice and support, as well as facilitating opportunities to learn and progress for those clients for whom such activity is appropriate.

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There are also significant issues around tracking, and we would advocate the involvement of the Inland Revenue to simplify the process - making it both more efficient and more effective.

What services should providers offer to employers?

Quite simply - a good match for their vacancies. Successful relationships are those built between individual clients and individual employers. While we broker these relationships in a variety of ways, often the jobs with the highest chance of sustainability are those which clients find for themselves, albeit with help and support.

We also provide expert advice to employers on both reasonable adjustments and Health and Safety issues. This is not a service standard, instead it is a tailored service customised around specific employer and client needs. This type of intervention can increase access to opportunities as employers become more aware of how flexibility in the workplace offers more scope to retain and employ skilled, committed workers.

What do you consider the value of including part time work (8-16 hours)?

There is considerable value in part-time work in terms of engaging clients and promoting inclusivity in the labour market. However, these benefits are far more likely to hold true if the part-time opportunity is a stepping stone that, with support and assistance, can become sustainable full-time work.

It is important that the acknowledgement of the role part-time work can play does not become a distraction from the overall goal of the programme - sustainable employment. Whilst it is possible for some clients to achieve a sustainable livelihood through part-time work, in general it will be necessary for clients to work full-time in order to achieve this goal.

The role of part-time work needs to be derived from individual needs. It does need to be borne in mind that it is possible for part-time work to become a limiting comfort trap for clients in the same way that no work becomes for some. Perhaps a solution might be to encourage those working part-time to continue to access support and services in order to support a later transition to full-time work.

How can we best achieve local partnership working between providers and Jobcentre Plus?

Partnership underpins the delivery of all WorkDirections UK programmes. Our achievements are only possible due to the strength of these partnerships. With Jobcentre Plus we work together to achieve the best outcomes for our shared clients.

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Partnership with Jobcentre Plus

Positive partnership working is enhanced by a clear understanding of each organisation's different targets and drivers and a creative approach to the way in which these are shared and made comprehensible. This necessitates sharing knowledge, systems and information.

There is a requirement for greater transparency, for example, information on performance should be published and easily accessible. This includes celebrating success, both in terms of meeting soft results and broader targets. This will, of course, work far more effectively if targets are shared.

Other simple activities can also improve partnership working - including regular contact and visiting each others premises. Indeed, we share premises for initial interviews on some occasions and this can be a very effective method of increasing engagement.

In the longer term partnership working could be improved through procurement. This could mean the creation of a lead partner in each District who delivers outcomes to Jobcentre Plus and who is able to subcontract to specialists as appropriate. It is, however, important to consider operational differences that exist between delivering in urban conurbations with transport links, and more rural areas in which clients may have considerable difficulty accessing provision.

Is there anything else you would like to suggest which would help in the development of effective provision?

It is fundamental that the underlying principals for the programme remain the provision of flexible, individually-focused and professionally-informed support to help participants move into sustainable employment. However, there are a number of other practical features which could enhance the performance of the programme in future manifestations.

These include features such as genuinely discretionary client spend, free public transport passes for all job-seekers engaging with a programme and those in their first year of low-paid work (under £15,000 pa). There could also be formally recognised provision for continued support once in work. This could tie in to the strategies for advancement outlined in the 2005 Skills Strategy, enabling clients to work with organisations and advisors with whom they are familiar to look for their next job.

On a larger scale the programme could be expanded using both Department of Health and Department of Work and Pensions funding to create a genuinely holistic and creative response to client needs. Amongst other things, an increase in access to condition management programmes should increase the capacity of the programme to successfully work with those furthest from the labour market.

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What do you think of the current funding regime?

We think the current regime underlines the importance of outcomes to the programme. This passes the risk to providers and commensurate reward needs to be dependent on meeting a clear target. The simplicity of current NDDP funding is a real strength, as financial reward for the contractor is explicitly linked to achieving the goal of sustainable employment.

We would like to see further encouragement given, through the funding structure, to those organisations that exceed targets. We advocate a funding gradient where financial rewards increase incrementally as the proportion of registrations placed into work increases. This acknowledges the diversity of needs of people claiming IB, and is more sophisticated than those basing varying payment levels on an initial needs or capability assessment.

We also advocate longer contracting periods, ideally of five years, which would encourage greater opportunity for investment in infrastructure.

We do have considerable concern about the weighting used for bid assessment in the contracting round undertaken in January 2005. The heavy emphasis on cost over quality is not one we would like to see repeated in future procurement. The results this programme should be aiming for should be governed by quality - both in terms of the numbers of outcomes, and of the sustainable quality of them.

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

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