

# Review of the evidence on 'What Works' to support the development of the Employment Support Framework within the West Midlands Combined Authority

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West Midlands Combined Authority

**Review of the evidence on ‘What Works’  
to support the development of the  
Employment Support Framework within  
the West Midlands Combined Authority**

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March 2019

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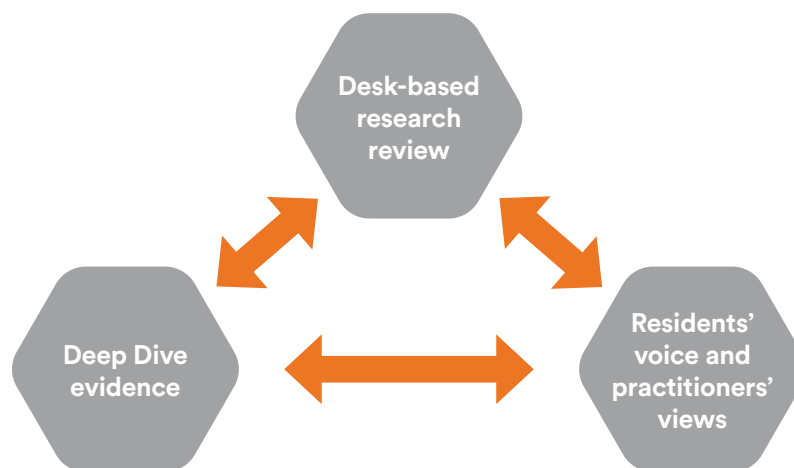
# Introduction

## Scope of the review

This review presents a summary of key (recent) evidence on ‘what works’ at various stages of the job seeking journey. For the most part it draws on a desk-based review of international, national and selected local reviews from the academic and policy literature. Given the wide range of material on the subjects covered it is by no means comprehensive;<sup>1</sup> rather it seeks to highlight findings on ‘what works’ (there is less evidence on ‘what does not work’) from key studies.

The desk-based review was undertaken as a platform to inform primary research undertaken in the West Midlands Combined Authority area (as illustrated diagrammatically below) to support the work of the Employment Support Taskforce.<sup>2</sup> This primary research comprised ‘deep dives’ in three wards (one from each of the three Local Enterprise Partnership areas making up the Combined Authority area). The areas for the deep dives were selected based on analyses of indices of deprivation, supplemented by other

demographic and socio-economic data. The three areas selected provide demographic variation and some differences in barriers to employment, including in terms of public transport provision and whether there are major centres of employment close by. In each deep dive area interviews were undertaken with residents and practitioners (from statutory and a range of other organisations) to capture their ‘voice’ and to capture insights into their ‘lived experience’ of the context within which employment support operates and the issues it deals with. Across the three wards approximately 130 people were interviewed in over 30 separate sessions. Interviewees included unemployed residents; local authority officers (working in housing, family, money advice, etc.); commissioners of local employment support initiatives; providers delivering local employment support initiatives; local charities/ community organisations involved in employment support/ training/ welfare support/ enterprise support roles; ward councillors; and work coaches.



Note on presentation of the evidence: As noted above, the main focus of the body of this report is the desk-based evidence. Selected ‘case studies’ (mainly presenting experiences and views of residents) are provided in boxes (to distinguish them as being from primary evidence collected in the deep dives). In the case studies residents are given pseudonyms. A summary of the key issues arising from the deep dives, including discussions with practitioners, is presented in headline form in Appendix 1.

<sup>1</sup> Issues concerning governance, commissioning approaches, management and implementation of interventions are extremely important in terms of the success of interventions, but these issues are beyond the scope of this review.

<sup>2</sup> The authors would like to thank Rachel Egan, Angela McKeever, Emily Hackett, Matt Poole and all the members of the Employment Support Taskforce, along with Tony Wilson, for their assistance in facilitating and commenting on this report. We also thank the residents and stakeholders who assisted us in ‘deep dive’ case study areas for their help.

## Organisation of the report

This review is organised in accordance with seven stages of a job seeking journey (see the diagram on the next page):

1. Stabilisation/ resilience development
2. Referral, engagement and assessment
3. Needs assessment and barrier removal
4. Vocational activity
5. Employer engagement and job matching
6. In-work support and aftercare/ retention service (with either the same or another employer)
7. Progression (in the internal or external labour market)

To some extent these stages are artificial: they represent a continuum rather than discrete stages without overlaps. (Indeed, the evidence presented in the main body of the report highlights the merits of a longer pathway approach.) Within each of the stages the material presented is organised under four generic headings:

- Information, advice and guidance (IAG); training and skills
- Employer engagement
- Financial incentives
- Support services/enablers

Again these categories are to some extent arbitrary and although some information does not fit easily within a single cell of the resulting '7x4' matrix to some extent this organising schema does help in organising the material covered in the review. (see the following table for a summary of issues addressed in each cell of this matrix).

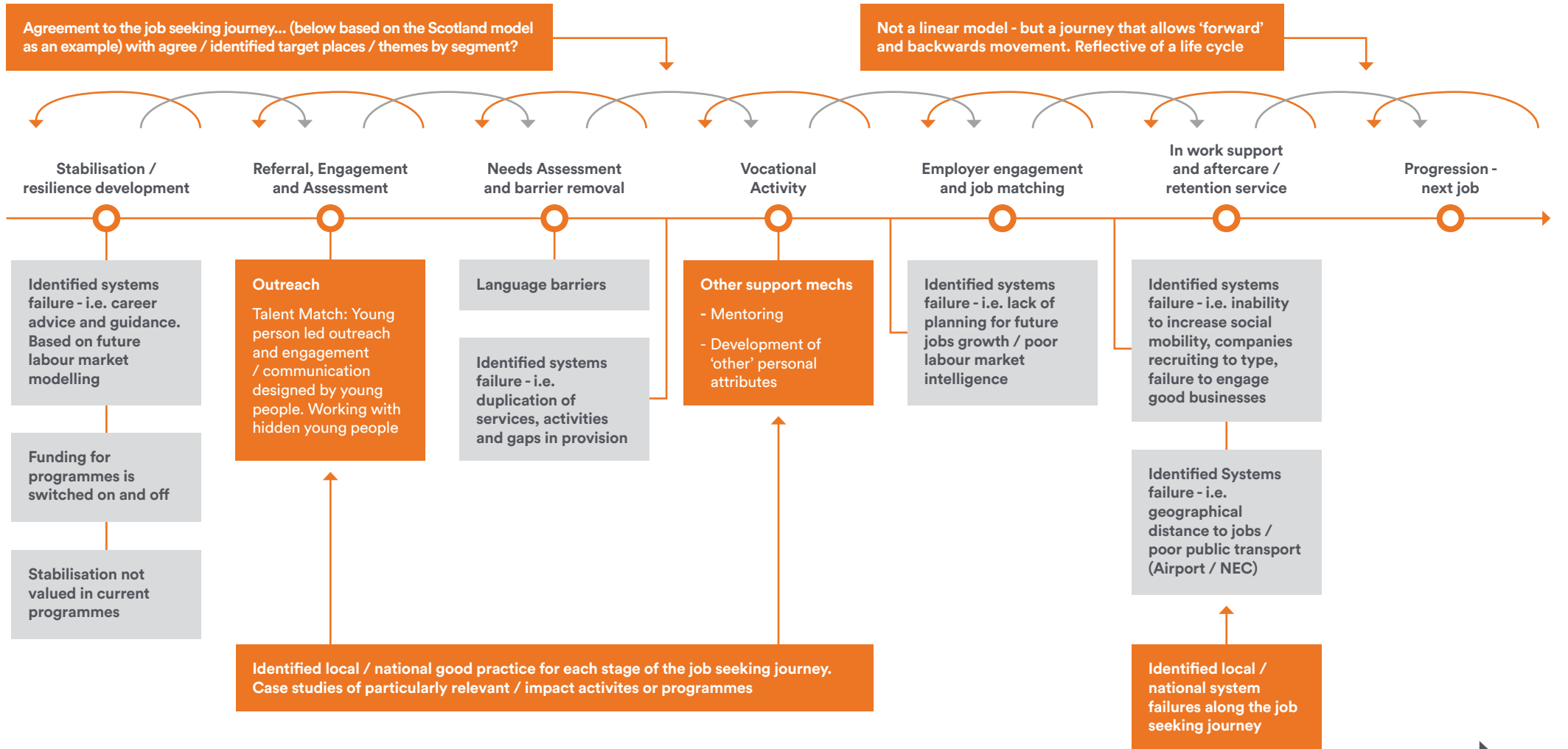
## Influential factors shaping the job seeking journey

A wide range of factors impact on/ help shape the job seeking journey, including:

- Individual factors – encompassing employability skills and attributes, confidence, motivation, labour market and job seeking knowledge, work history, health and well-being;
- Individual circumstances - household characteristics, caring responsibilities and access to resources, etc.
- Employer practices - business model and organisational culture/ ethos which shape the employment opportunities and progression pathways available;
- Local contextual factors - features of the local labour market; and
- Macro level factors - macroeconomic conditions and welfare policy regime

Labour market intermediaries – including education and training providers, local government, trade unions, employer organisations, sectoral organisations, voluntary organisations, etc. – may be thought of as enabling support factors within this broad context. (For further details of this framework see Green et al. [2013].)

# WM Employment Framework



Common measurement of job seeking journey framework - previous example JET pack (could it be made available / useful to employers?)

Suggestion: Segmentation of key groups of people and identified good practice 'what works' - rather than separate job seeking journeys for each segmented group

- Recommendations to policy makers of systematic failures for (opportunities / collaborations) short / medium and long term:
- Employer Kite marks / awards
  - Charter
  - Online portal / database of provision (navigational)
  - Joined up commissioning

# Information, advice and guidance (IAG); Training and skills

Stabilisation/resilience development	Referral, Engagement and Assessment	Needs Assessment and barrier removal	Vocational Activity (moving towards being job ready)	Employer engagement and job matching (when individuals are job-ready and move into employment)	In work support and aftercare (with either the same employer or another employer)	Progression (in the internal labour market or external labour market)
<p>Addressing multiple and complex needs</p> <hr/> <p>Personalised employment support within treatment services for people with drug and alcohol issues Identification of addiction and storage of health information in the benefits system</p> <hr/> <p>Pre-employment training and advice as part of broader, longer-term support with clear progression routes Involvement of health professionals in discussions with claimants regarding entering work</p> <hr/> <p>Peer Mentoring</p> <hr/> <p>A holistic approach integrating social and employment-related support</p> <hr/> <p>Volunteering and supporting transitions</p> <hr/> <p>Volunteering providing personal benefits</p> <hr/> <p>The role of key workers – at the stabilisation stage and at subsequent stages</p> <hr/> <p>English Language employment support provision</p>	<p>Understanding of needs of and targeted support for long-term unemployed to overcome lack of access to labour market information</p> <hr/> <p>Importance of information sharing to support multi-agency working</p> <hr/> <p>The value of less traditional interventions to engage individuals out of work and build their confidence</p> <hr/> <p>Local place-based delivery of support with 'warm handovers' between referral agencies and programmes/projects Quality pre-employment training Quality careers advice in schools Role of schools in brokering volunteering opportunities Quality personal development support for individuals struggling in/ outside the school system</p> <hr/> <p>Use of sports to engage young people at risk of exclusion from the labour market in pre-employment training</p> <hr/> <p>Information and advice on broadening spatial horizons can help facilitate employment entry</p> <hr/> <p>Community Champions/ Connectors</p>	<p>Tailored employment support</p> <hr/> <p>Investment in modified Individual Placement and Support models for unemployed individuals with health conditions and disabilities</p> <hr/> <p>Sector-based training and/or occupational certification</p>	<p>Classroom-based learning</p> <hr/> <p>Less formal training is most effective when programmes are short</p> <hr/> <p>Sector-focused training</p> <hr/> <p>A 'dual customer' approach</p> <hr/> <p>Use of sports to make job seekers job ready</p> <hr/> <p>Volunteering as an effective bridge towards employment for various groups</p> <hr/> <p>Ongoing, participatory employment assessment</p>	<p>In-firm/on the job training</p> <hr/> <p>Skill-intensive training is most effective when programmes are longer</p> <hr/> <p>Investment in support organisations to develop bridging and linking networks</p> <hr/> <p>The 'digital divide' and resources to address it</p> <hr/> <p>ALMPs complemented by additional demand-side measures in areas of high unemployment</p> <hr/> <p>Provision of apprenticeships</p>	<p>Types of employment entry and in-work support and aftercare needs</p> <hr/> <p>In-work support through intermediaries to improve retention</p> <hr/> <p>Crisis support (e.g. family illness, bereavement, legal case, etc.) which may mean people miss work</p> <hr/> <p>The Employment, Retention and Advancement pilot</p> <hr/> <p>Vocational and non-vocational skills development (lifelong learning and community-based learning)</p> <hr/> <p>Link between volunteering and learning</p>	<p>What is progression?</p> <hr/> <p>A limited but growing evidence base on progression</p> <hr/> <p>Recent UK evidence on 'what works' in in-work progression: 'proofs of concept' studies</p> <hr/> <p>Recent UK evidence on 'what works' in in-work progression: evidence from Universal Credit research</p> <hr/> <p>IAG and progression</p> <hr/> <p>Careers information and/or advice</p> <hr/> <p>Vocational and non-vocational skills development (lifelong learning, sector-based training)</p> <hr/> <p>Career Ladders and Pathway Models</p>

# Employer engagement

Stabilisation/resilience development	Referral, Engagement and Assessment	Needs Assessment and barrier removal	Vocational Activity (moving towards being job ready)	Employer engagement and job matching (when individuals are job-ready and move into employment)	In work support and aftercare (with either the same employer or another employer)	Progression (in the internal labour market or external labour market)
<p>Work trials and meaningful activity (including volunteering) alongside successful treatment completion for unemployed people with drug and alcohol addictions</p>	<p>Linking employers and young people to overcome employers' concerns that young people are not work-ready</p> <hr/> <p>Awareness of training and skills development and support services needed for individuals in the local area to access jobs created when new businesses/developments are planned</p> <hr/> <p>Holistic and inclusive employer engagement from pre-employment phase to maximise the job opportunities open to disadvantaged groups</p>	<p>Need to make recruitment practices accessible to disadvantaged people</p> <hr/> <p>Need to bridge gap between employers' expectations of young people and young people's understanding of what is expected of them</p> <hr/> <p>Sectoral focus in training and employment policies</p>	<p>Work tasters/ work experience providing a range of skills</p> <hr/> <p>Employer engagement in sector-based training (e.g. Sector Based Work Academies)</p> <hr/> <p>Brokerage between local employers, HR managers, educational establishments and job seekers</p> <hr/> <p>Informal contact with employers</p>	<p>Use of sports-based employability programmes to offer work experience</p> <hr/> <p>More flexible and proactive approach from employers to recruiting older workers</p> <hr/> <p>Joined-up offer</p> <hr/> <p>Ring-fencing of jobs for local people</p>	<p>Changing expectations about the role of employers and their HRM activities</p> <hr/> <p>Strong commitment from employers to training addressing local employers' needs</p> <hr/> <p>The role of employer engagement staff in street level organisations</p> <hr/> <p>Distinguishing employer engagement and employer involvement – and the benefits of both</p> <hr/> <p>Instrumental and relational engagement of employers</p> <hr/> <p>'Fit' between recruits and employers</p> <hr/> <p>Mechanisms compelling employers to recruit locally</p> <hr/> <p>Promoting employer awareness of national employment programmes</p> <hr/> <p>Importance of collaboration between learning and development, HR, and corporate and social responsibility professionals</p>	<p>Business models and 'hooking' in employers to progression initiatives</p> <hr/> <p>Imperative of creating quality local jobs</p> <hr/> <p>Programmes to develop career paths</p>



# Financial incentives

Stabilisation/resilience development	Referral, Engagement and Assessment	Needs Assessment and barrier removal	Vocational Activity (moving towards being job ready)	Employer engagement and job matching (when individuals are job-ready and move into employment)	In work support and aftercare (with either the same employer or another employer)	Progression (in the internal labour market or external labour market)
<p>Financial incentives to study</p> <hr/> <p>Personal motivation and quality of working relationships more effective than financial incentives among individuals with a drug/ alcohol dependency</p>	<p>Better-off calculations</p> <hr/> <p>Awareness of financial initiatives and perceived ease of application</p>	<p>Adult social care personal budgets</p>	<p>Impact of free public transport in reducing barriers to employment</p> <hr/> <p>Individual Learner Accounts</p>	<p>Increased earnings - wage top ups, living wages, tax breaks</p> <hr/> <p>Employer subsidies</p>	<p>A role for financial incentives in retention – alongside other factors</p> <hr/> <p>Increased earnings – tax credits</p>	<p>Increased earnings</p> <hr/> <p>Provider targets for progression</p>

# Support services/enablers

Stabilisation/resilience development	Referral, Engagement and Assessment	Needs Assessment and barrier removal	Vocational Activity (moving towards being job ready)	Employer engagement and job matching (when individuals are job-ready and move into employment)	In work support and aftercare (with either the same employer or another employer)	Progression (in the internal labour market or external labour market)
<p>Supporting homeless people into sustainable employment as a priority to tackle homelessness</p> <hr/> <p>Integrating skills development and training within programmes considering the wider needs of the long-term unemployed and of specific populations furthest away from the labour market</p> <hr/> <p>Supported employment programmes for people with mental health problems leaving prison</p> <hr/> <p>Voluntary local health and support programmes for people with disabilities and long-term conditions</p> <hr/> <p>Co-production</p>	<p>Targeted pre-employment support for specific groups</p> <hr/> <p>Multiple partners working together</p> <hr/> <p>Early personalised intervention</p> <hr/> <p>Work placements in conjunction with provider-led job-search support</p>	<p>Wrap around services</p> <hr/> <p>Trained and supported staff</p>	<p>Apprentices and traineeships</p> <hr/> <p>Youth Guarantees</p> <hr/> <p>Skills for mentoring and volunteering</p>	<p>Transport-related interventions</p> <hr/> <p>Childcare</p> <hr/> <p>Health services</p>	<p>Job search and job matching</p> <hr/> <p>Holistic support interventions</p> <hr/> <p>Evidence from Talent Match on 'good practice' relating to in-work support</p> <hr/> <p>Proactive support from employers and local services to prevent people aged over 50 from falling out of work (also all groups)</p> <hr/> <p>Mentoring</p>	<p>Support with childcare and access to transport</p> <hr/> <p>Wraparound services</p>

## What works?

Policy initiatives/ employability programmes may be targeted at one point or at several points along the job seeking journey. As noted by Adam et al. (2017: 1165) the reality of policies to enhance employability “is not one of simple, clearly ring-fenced policies with single goals. Rather it is one of a heterogeneous plethora of programmes and interventions. The foci of policies may be multiple rather than single, they may be targeted at several sub-groups and geographical areas, eligibility rules may be enforced unevenly and how a policy is implemented may vary within and between organisations.” An individual may be subject to several policy interventions to improve their job seeking journey. This means that ‘what works’ might be more about getting the mix of policy interventions right in a particular context, rather than any particular ‘silver bullet’ (Hasluck and Green, 2007: 15).

## Cross-cutting themes and broad principles

Synthesising across the desk-based evidence presented subsequently across the entire job seeking journey several generic principles emerge regarding ‘what works’. Some of these are related to projects (and a short explanatory example is provided), while others are wider ranging. These principles include:

### A. For individuals

- 1. The value of personalised support** – especially on a one-to-one basis. The income support benefit system in France, where inactive individuals are allocated an advisor at Mairie (City Council level) who offers broader, more personalised advice than advisors at the Employment Support Service is an example of personalised support being used effectively to engage hard-to-reach clients.
- 2. Peer support and mentoring** (encompassing both work-related and non-work-related issues) is helpful. The Orbit Approach run by the Dundee Association for Mental Health reveals how peer support and mentoring were highly valued by participants. The Department for Work and Pensions’ (DWP) three small-scale ‘proofs of concept’ on in-work progression (Timewise Foundation’s Universal Credit intervention, the GOALS UK: Step Up model, and the UK Future Programme led by Timewise) over the period 2014-2016 underline the importance of peer support, among other factors, in enabling employees to progress in work.
- 3. Holistic intensive support** (i.e. wraparound services) is needed for the most disadvantaged. One example is the Working for Families Initiative in Scotland which linked childcare and employment support through a key worker – childcare support was needed to enable individuals to participate in employment support. Other programmes show the importance of issues such as access to transport to enable participation in pre-employment training and enabling access to employment.
- 4. Long-term support** is beneficial – especially for the most disadvantaged – but it is important that individuals do not become overly dependent on ‘key worker’ support. The Talent Match programme provided extended support for individuals as they moved along their employment journey, helping to de-risk transitions between stages.
- 5. Training and skills acquisition** facilitates employment entry and in-work progression. There is a positive association between possession of formal qualifications and being in employment. Short duration sector-specific training combined with employability skills can help individuals to secure jobs. On-the-job, vocational and sectoral-/ occupational-specific training can assist in-work progression.
- 6. Work placements** can be helpful in providing insights into different working environments. Evidence from the evaluation of sector-based work academies indicates that work placements are particularly valuable in facilitating employment entry for unemployed individuals when combined with pre-employment training and guaranteed job interviews. A successful placement sends a valuable ‘signal’ to employers about a candidate’s employability.

## B. Programme design and operation

7. **Co-design** can yield better policy while improving the well-being and employability of those involved. Evidence from the Talent Match programme indicates that involving users in programme design helps shape interventions to better fit user needs while also providing beneficiaries with new experiences and helping build their confidence.
8. Several different employability programmes indicate that the **quality of key worker support** matters – in terms of knowledge of local support services and employment opportunities, staff turnover and continuity of support, and building trusting relationships with individual programme beneficiaries. The type of key worker support required (for example, youth work/ community development/ information advice and guidance) varies according to the individual's position on the job seeking journey.
9. The job seeking journey encroaches on a range of policy domains and so there are benefits from **co-ordination of local provision** and from **local partnership working**. The evidence across a range of programmes indicates that **close collaboration** between providers of employability support and other types of support matters. The experience of the integrated employment and skills MyGo service for young people in Ipswich shows that that co-location of partners was effective in improving access to services, encouraging effective working relationships and supporting a shared understanding of roles.
10. There are positive benefits for in-work progression from **policies that support the objectives of both employers and (prospective) employees (i.e. a 'dual customer' approach)**. An example of such a model is the WorkAdvance programme in the USA. It creates a progression pathway, in partnership with training providers, that serves the employer (addressing skills gaps and increasing productivity) and workforce needs (meeting individuals' training needs and providing progression opportunities) concurrently.

## C. The key role of employers

11. **Links with employers** are fundamental to success in a job seeking journey – employers are the gatekeepers to jobs so it is important to understand their recruitment and selection procedures.
12. **Employer engagement can take the form of an 'agency' approach or an 'individual approach'** with the former offering wider recruitment solutions for (usually) larger employers with good links with providers and the latter focuses on individual brokerage – often for individuals facing greatest challenges in the labour market.
13. **Brokerage between employers, HR managers, education and training providers and job seekers** is important in smoothing the journey to employment. Evidence from several programmes indicates that there is value in having specialist dedicated staff in employer engagement and involvement roles. In the West Midlands the example of Wolves at Work demonstrates how a job brokerage service can successfully engage with businesses to identify employment opportunities and then develop provision and support tailored to those roles.
14. Relatedly, **employers** (and programme beneficiaries) **can benefit from active involvement and engagement with employability programmes**. One example is provided by the Learning Hub at University Hospitals Birmingham where local people are provided with pre-employment training and support when they initially take up a job. In a rather different approach in Scotland employers led the development of a Certificate of Work Readiness, enabling them to see young people in a work setting over an extended period and helping to overcome concerns that young people were not work ready.

## D. Linking local and national policies

15. Ideally **local policy and national policy** will operate in the same direction and there is scope to tailor national policies to meet local needs. This highlights the importance of not focusing solely on local initiatives but also looking for opportunities to modify national policies to better serve local requirements.

# 1. Stabilisation/Resilience Development

## Information, advice and guidance (IAG); Training and skills

### Addressing multiple and complex needs

Unless individuals are meeting their basic physiological and safety needs it is difficult for them to develop their employability. This highlights the importance of stabilisation in order for individuals to reach a position where they can begin to gain a broader perspective of their options to develop their employability and build confidence to recognise their existing skills and tackle barriers (Young and Successful, 2018).

### Personalised employment support within treatment services for people with drug and alcohol issues

Black (2016) in her review of the challenges faced by individuals who are addicted to alcohol or drugs, or are obese, when they seek to enter, return to and/or remain in work, argues for the introduction of high-quality employment support within treatment services accompanied by improved performance metrics for providers e.g. Jobcentres and treatment services in order to “target, deliver and benchmark their efforts to find work for these groups” (p.9). Black advocates the introduction on a trial basis of Individual Placement and Support (IPS) approaches and the co-location of Jobcentre staff in treatment centres, maintaining that this would enable unemployed people in treatment to access individual advice and support with regards to finding a job, as well as ongoing support once in work. Black notes the success of the IPS approach in relation to patients with severe mental health patients, including addictions, who have complex support requirements and a lack of work experience. This recommendation fits with Bond et al.’s (2012) finding, based on analysis of 15 randomised controlled trials of IPS programs, nine in the US and six outside the US, that “consistently positive competitive employment outcomes strongly favouring IPS over a range of comparison programs in a group of international studies suggest that IPS is an evidence-based practice that may transport well into new settings as long as programs achieve high fidelity to the IPS model” (p.9). Adams et al (2017) evaluated two Work Programme proof of concepts

intended to better support individuals with drug/alcohol dependency into employment, arguing that close collaboration between providers in employment support services and dependency support services can be beneficial for individuals through helping to ensure that their preparation for employment does not negatively impact on their addiction treatment/recovery and vice versa. Barriers to positive outcomes include challenges in building up constructive working relationships due to staff turnover, dispersion of clients across Work Coaches and Work Programme Provider Teams, and a lack of trust towards employment support services. Hansen et al (2015) found in a study of employment support for individuals with alcohol issues in Denmark, that adviser’s personal attitudes towards alcohol (in general, not considering a high alcohol intake to be a barrier to employment, or that alcohol problems were just symptoms of more profound issues) and their understanding of their own roles and responsibilities in relation to welfare participants hindered implementation of the schemes.

### Pre-employment training and advice as part of broader, longer-term support with clear progression routes

Taylor (2016, 2015) analysed pre-employment support in France and the UK. She argued that Community Forums in the UK were good at engaging hard to reach participants e.g. mothers of young children with low skills levels in pre-entry training (e.g. IT). Participants valued the friendly environment in classes and the employment of ‘local’ staff created a sense of trust. However, she questioned the value of the courses in the long-term as courses were short in duration and did not appear to be clearly linked to subsequent training or employment opportunities. By contrast, Taylor (2017) underlined the strength of the French system in offering longer-term training courses run in associations e.g. Culture et Liberté which represented the first step on a clearly identified path to future employment.

### Identification of addiction and storage of health information in the benefits system

Black (2016) identifies a number of failings in the UK benefits system with regard to alcohol and drug dependence. First, Black suggests the system is failing to identify people suffering from

addictions, further noting that the system can only record a single health condition “usually originating in the General Practitioner’s Fit Note, which is rarely reviewed or updated and seldom includes addiction”. Black suggests this is exacerbated by how due to a lack of trust between claimants and Jobcentre Plus as well as a lack of a clear, high-quality offer of support on offer, individuals rarely disclose addictions.

### **Involvement of health professionals in discussions with claimants regarding entering work**

Black (2016) argues that a programme should be trialled where shortly after applying for benefits, claimants attend a structured discussion with a healthcare professional in order to discuss the impact their health condition will have on their ability to work and provide insight for the work coach. Support from health care professionals and staff concerned with rehabilitation is also important for people who suffer an episode of ill-health and then wish to return to the labour market (see Case Study 1). Public Health England’s (2014) report on increasing employment opportunities and retention for people with a long-term health condition or disability stresses the benefit of personalised, tailored support with this group and suggests that there is evidence that ‘health-first’ approaches which seek to improve health to increase the employability of incapacity benefit claimants are showing early promise. It also notes the benefit of individual placement and support programmes for people with mental health problems. The Centre for Mental Health (2013) calls for health and wellbeing boards to support commissioners to develop pilot schemes in primary care to enable investigation of how employment outcomes for people with common mental health can be achieved. In particular, they recommend individual placement and support services.

### **Case study 1: Older resident with substantial work experience in receipt of rehabilitation support following ill-health and currently seeking support to become self-employed**

Susan is in her early sixties and is currently out of work. A long-term Birmingham resident, she worked for nearly 25 years in a kitchen but when the ownership changed matters deteriorated and the stress of the situation in which she felt marginalised precipitated further health problems. A subsequent return to work was unsuccessful and she resigned from her post.

She considered that her treatment at the Jobcentre and at a capability assessment was “harsh”: “they treat you like crap – I felt like I had leprosy”. She was struggling on Universal Credit and regarded it as “horrible” – “by the time you get your money you’re in arrears and they take it out of your money”. She feels front line staff need to be kinder. However, she has received rehabilitation support which has helped her mentally and emotionally and she has been on a basic computer course.

Her “brain is not ready to sit at home”; rather “I get bored and I like to be productive”. However, given her most recent experience as an employee she says: “I will never work for any living person ever again. I want my own business.” She has been referred to an enterprise course by Jobcentre Plus and when her business becomes successful has an aspiration “to provide a training opportunity for a youngster in the community”. She regards this as particularly important given the challenges people face in the area regarding the rundown of local services and the prohibitive cost of transport and associated negative social consequences.

This example shows how a negative work experience can impact on health but how individuals can still aspire to continue working and have ambitions to set up their own business. It also shows how individuals’ perceptions of their treatment by service providers have an impact on their self-worth.



## Peer mentoring

Black (2016) stresses the potential role that peer mentors could play with regard to encouraging drug and alcohol addicts to successfully transition into employment through acting as advocates and visible symbols of recovery, encouraging claimants to trust and disclose information to support services and engage with appropriate support. McEnhill et al (2016) conducted a literature review of peer support for employment. They found that all of the academic studies which they reviewed indicated some level of positive outcomes, but underlined how peer support models should be designed based on the condition(s) in question and the desired outcomes (e.g. job retention, reducing sick leave, or supporting unemployed service users to return to work). They underlined how the programmes they reviewed demonstrated benefits of peer support in terms of 'direct outcomes' (e.g. improved job retention; reduced time on sick leave; entering a new job or moving into education) as well as broader benefits e.g. improved self-confidence, self-esteem and social skills. The Employability in Scotland website includes case studies of a variety of peer support and mentoring initiatives in Scotland: for example, The Orbit Approach run by the Dundee Association for Mental Health and funded by Big Lottery Fund for three years (Scottish Government, no date given). The voluntary service supports people with various mental health needs and provides different ways for them to become involved through sharing their interests and hobbies. In return, participants earn "Galaxies" in a Local Exchange and Trading Scheme which can be exchanged for complementary therapies that increase their sense of wellbeing. The project enables participants to move from patient to contributor and earning galaxies, offers participants work experience as well as hope. Whilst developing new skills and experience, participants, begin interacting with others and the wider community, helping them to in turn reflect on their future plans. Focus group evaluation of the approach with participants underlined benefits of peer support and mentoring in terms of friendship, one-to-one mentoring in a befriending context, and the opportunity to learn from mentors who share their experiences in a group setting.

## A holistic approach integrating social and employment-related support

Talent Match (TM) - a £106 million programme funded by the Big Lottery Fund to address unemployment amongst 18-24 year olds who often faced multiple barriers in securing

employment by supporting them with voluntary personalised flexible provision delivered using National Lottery funding between 2014 and 2018 through partnerships in 21 Local Enterprise Partnership areas in England – provides evidence at a number of staging posts along the employability journey. It emphasised the importance of broader outcomes beyond employment as integral to success. As such TM partnerships adopted a person-centred approach recognising that confidence, self-belief and well-being are key to progressing along the journey to, and within employment. A local evaluation of one of the local partnership's activities (Young and Successful, 2018) concluded that the evidence suggested that a mentor-based approach, underpinned by a holistic person-centred ethos (as opposed to an advisor-based model mandating specific courses of action based on the generic needs of all young people), was of particular benefit to those young people furthest from the labour market. The service model in this particular local TM partnership was underpinned by six core elements (many of which were evident in other TM partnerships): (1) a trusted mentor for each individual; (2) a person-centred approach recognising individual needs; (3) a specialist employment team to help broker relationships with potential employers; (4) involving young people in project decision making; (5) service delivery via local trusted organisations; and (6) a personal budget facility providing flexible support for progression (Young and Successful, 2018). More generally across local TM partnerships, key worker support played an important role in supporting young people into work and this support continued once young people had entered employment. Interviews with young people revealed that some saw improving their wellbeing – rather than employment - as their main priority (Crisp et al., 2018). This highlights the importance of the integrated nature of TM in providing non-work support, which included personal development, social and peer activities and counselling alongside employment-related support. More generally – and of relevance across the entire employability pathway – support may be in various forms: (1) in terms of addressing often very practical barriers including transport, childcare and for some housing; (2) in terms of improving wellbeing and confidence (for instance through counselling or peer support – as emphasised here); and (3) in the provision of high quality employment information, advice and guidance. Evidence points to the positive impacts of an integrated package of support centred on the needs and capabilities of the young person (Crisp et al., 2018).

### **Case study 2: Out-of-work young person with mental health issues about to start a training programme who feels 'failed by the system'**

Anna is from the Black Country. She is in her late teens and was “in and out of the school system” before being kicked out of college. She has had a very challenging home life, missing school to look after her father who has long-term substance misuse issues. She feels that she has never received the support she needed with her mental health issues and this has negatively affected her future. She “gave college a try but anxiety got in the way; it made my anxiety worse.” She has a Connexions Advisor and is very positive about the 1:1 service: “she gives me helpful advice about getting on the right path rather than the wrong path.” Now receiving further support, she is more positive about her future and says she “can’t wait to start” her new course. Her family is in financial difficulties and Anna is happy that “now I will be in full-time education my mum can get an extra benefit; I will get paid for going to the course so I’m getting there slowly.” Past experiences have left Anna nervous about whether she will be able to stay on the course, and she views it as her last resort: “The course is my only hope; it’s the last thing to help my family. If this doesn’t work, I don’t know what will.”

This case illustrates the need for improved mental health support for young people, earlier identification of those who need provision, definitive prevention strategies and increased support in learning environments. It highlights the benefits of 1:1 support for individuals such as Anna with multiple complex issues. It also shows that it is important to understand individuals’ perceived choices and decision-making in a broader household context.

Case Study 2 provides an example of the types of complex challenges that young people may face and of an individual who has benefited from intensive personalised support of the type promoted by Talent Match. It also emphasises that where there are multiple barriers to employment it is important to combine a holistic policy approach with targeted initiatives that are tailored to the needs of different groups and households – both when they are out of work and when they are in employment (Luchinskaya and Green, 2016). It also chimes with evidence pointing to an interaction between parental worklessness and disadvantage and ‘fragile employment’ (i.e. where individuals cycle in and out of insecure, low-paid jobs) outcomes for children, especially in areas of deprivation (Macmillan, 2014). Indeed, disadvantage concentrated in specific geographic areas can have an impact on life opportunities across generations, so leading to persistent poverty (Shildrick et al., 2012).

### **The role of key workers – at the stabilisation stage and at subsequent stages**

This support may be best delivered through a key worker (providing one-to-one support and advice to beneficiaries) throughout the employability journey as individuals prepare for, enter, sustain and progress in work. The type of support required varies at different stages of the journey. Evidence from Talent Match revealed that key workers needed to draw upon the tools of a youth worker and a careers guidance worker. The former approach creates an open and safe environment for a young person to start their journey to employment. Then drawing upon the practices of a careers guidance worker approach, a young person can be supported in developing their knowledge and understanding of the labour market and the opportunities available to them (Barnes et al., 2017).

### **Volunteering can support transitions into employment**

The promotion of volunteering within government policy to at least, in part enhance individual’s employability and increase the likelihood that they will secure paid work has a long history in England (Finnegan, 2013). The National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) defines volunteering as “any activity that involves spending time, unpaid, doing something that aims to benefit the environment or someone (individuals or groups) other than, or in addition to, close relatives” (NCVO, 2018). Volunteering

is an active choice by individuals. Volunteering involves a range of activities from formal activity undertaken in public, private and voluntary organisation to informal community participation and social action. In a review of the existing academic and grey literature on the value of involving young people in volunteering Williams (2017) contends that volunteering is an “effective” means of supporting transitions into employment for young people. In particular, it can play an important role in terms of skills development (personal development and employability skills) and career readiness. In line with the literature contending that volunteering supports improved employability, analysis of seven waves of British Household Panel Survey by Ellis Paine et al (2013) revealed that, volunteering was associated with a significant but weak effect on employability (entry to work). Newton et al (2011) are particularly positive about the role of volunteering in supporting transitions into employment for young people. Their report investigated how volunteering contributes to young people’s employability skills and attributes, networks and contacts, qualifications and accreditation, as well as to reducing the negative effects of unemployment and inactivity. It concludes that volunteering ‘exceeded young people’s expectations’ in terms of the: hard outcomes (e.g. improved qualifications and CVs), soft skills (e.g. communication and teamwork) and personal attributes (e.g. confidence and volunteering) that they developed. Many surveys (e.g. Low et al, 2007) have suggested that employability gains are only a motivation for volunteering for a small minority of volunteers. Indeed, volunteering may be better conceived of as an alternative or addition to employment. Adams et al (2011) evaluated the Six Month Offer, a DWP scheme which provided claimants who had been unemployed for six months with additional advisory help from Jobcentre Plus as well as the opportunity to take part in one of four strands of voluntary activity: volunteering opportunities to improve employability; access to work-focused training; a recruitment subsidy for employers; and help to become self-employed. A survey of a random sample of Jobseeker’s Allowance (JSA) claimants in 2010 found that one year after initially claiming, the Volunteering Strand had been taken up by 5% of claimants, compared to 11% who had taken up the Training Strand, 6% had accessed the recruitment subsidy to enter paid-work and 5% had accessed support to become self-employed. One year after participating in the Volunteering Strand, just over a third of participants were in paid employment. Over two-thirds of those who had entered paid

work suggested that the volunteering placement was important in them subsequently securing employment.

### **Volunteering can provide personal benefits but depends on individual circumstances and attitudes**

Nichols and Ralston (2013) consider volunteering in relation to the latent functions of paid work identified by social psychologists (e.g. Jahoda, 1981). Based on analysis of in-depth interviews with volunteers in Manchester, they show that volunteering can be rewarding in terms of social status and identity. The volunteers interviewed reported rewards which correspond to Jahoda’s categories: structured time; regularly shared experience outside of the family; a link to goals and purposes which transcend those of the individual; personal status and identity; and enforcement of regular activity. Nichols and Ralston contend that considering individual experiences of volunteering in relation to Jahoda’s psychological functions of employment shows systematically that volunteering can provide ‘considerable’ rewards for individuals. Nonetheless, they contend that experiences of volunteering are context specific and benefits from volunteering are influenced by individuals’ circumstances and attitudes towards volunteering opportunities available.

### **English Language employment support provision**

Foster and Lane (2012) underline the importance of improving English language provision within JSA and ESA WRAG recipients into employment. They recommend that ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) providers, JCP and WP providers should work together on referrals for ESOL training, the design of ESOL provision for jobseekers and the measurement of job outcomes.

## **Employer engagement**

### **Work trials and meaningful activity (including volunteering) alongside successful treatment completion for unemployed people with drug and alcohol addictions**

Black (2016) conducted an independent review of the challenges faced by individuals who are addicted to alcohol or drugs, or are obese, when they seek to enter, return to and/or remain in work. Alcohol dependence causes harms to individuals, their children and families,



and society as a whole. Approximately, one million adults in the UK suffer from some form of alcohol dependence, with alcohol overall costing society £21 billion to year, of which an estimated £3.5 billion is spent by the NHS. Likewise, drug abuse is having a negative impact on society with the cost of drug use and supply to society estimated to be around £10.7 billion per year, of which £6 billion is attributed to drug related crime. Black found that although the UK government's 2010 Drug Strategy includes a series of recovery-focused aims, among which is sustained employment, this aim has yet to be achieved. Black argues that "work and other meaningful activity are essential elements in recovery" from drugs and alcohol addiction (p.9), suggesting any IPS trial in the UK should include work-trials so that employers can observe candidates in action over a period of time prior to committing to offering a contract. Black suggests this would be a way of overcoming reluctance among employers to recruit candidates in recovery from addiction, arguing that the government should also consider creating a discretionary fund to support smaller employers with expenses incurred employing candidates in recovery.

## Financial incentives

### Financial incentives to study

Bivand et al (2011) argue that in order to tackle youth unemployment, it is necessary that education is "financially viable" and incentives exist to complete study (p.5). Evidence from the Education Maintenance Allowance Scheme (EMA) in England which was rolled out from 2004/5 and stopped at the end of academic year 2010/11 provided (at the end of the programme) up to £30 per week for students from low income households to encourage them to stay in education beyond the end of compulsory education. There was higher overall EMA receipt and average weekly amounts among minority ethnic groups (particularly Bangladeshi and Pakistani), 'lower' socio-economic groups, those who received free school meals while at school (almost 90% of students who received free meals at school received EMA and almost all of them at the top rate), those whose parents were less well educated, and those students living with only one parent. Research with participants indicated that the EMA had a 'deadweight' (i.e. participants said receipt did not affect participation) of 88% and the government concluded that this was too high. However, analyses by the Institute of Fiscal Studies suggested that that the benefits of EMA

in terms of higher wages 'completely offset' the costs (Bolton, 2011). Relatedly, there have been concerns that the challenges of surviving on an apprenticeship wage are off-putting for young people who wish/need to live independently (Kingstone, 2017).

### Personal motivation and quality of working relationships are more effective than financial incentives among individuals with a drug/alcohol dependency

Findings from two Work Programme proof of concepts designed to better support individuals with a drug/alcohol dependency into employment indicate at this stage personal motivation and quality of working relationships was more effective than financial motivations to enter employment. This client group felt achieving job outcomes was too remote for enhanced payments to be motivating (Adams et al, 2017).

### Intermediate labour markets and transitional jobs

There is some evidence that creating transitional jobs can be important in moving those far from the labour market closer to being able to enter employment. Evidence from the USA is particularly strong here. Bivand et al (2011) argue that evaluations of participation in transitional job programmes in the US indicates that they can provide "substantial" long-term benefit in terms of supporting those furthest from the labour market and reducing unemployment in the short-term (Bivand et al, 2011). Klawitter et al (2001) evaluated a programme in Washington State, finding that it increased employment probability by 33 percentage points for participants compared to that of non-participants. Participants in a programme in Chicago were found to be "38% more likely to be in work" after having been enrolled in the programme for six months than non-participants. Their earnings were also 32% higher (Transitional Community Jobs, 2002). Comparatively less evidence exists from the UK. Nonetheless, one evaluation of a comparable approach is the StepUP pilots conducted between 2002 and 2004. The evaluation of StepUP found it had a large positive impact on participants with low-objective employability in terms of education, qualifications and work history but a negative impact for individuals closer to employment (Bivand et al, 2006). Results from the Future Jobs Fund (cited below) were positive, highlighting that relatively long-term programmes can have longer-term benefits (Wilson and Bivand, 2014).

## Support services/enablers

### **Supporting homeless people into sustainable employment as a priority to tackle homelessness**

The Transitional Spaces project in the UK demonstrates how long-term unemployed people can be best prepared for employment. Set up in 2006 as a response to hostels increasingly being used on a long-term basis by single people and aimed to offer support into both sustainable employment and housing, it sought to move people into employment first as it was felt that hostel residents with a job, are more likely to be accepted as tenants by private landlords. Evaluation demonstrated it was very successful in moving the target group into employment. As Green et al (2015) argue it “compared very well with Jobcentre Plus programmes aimed at the general population of unemployed individuals, rather than with those programmes aimed at the most deprived” (p.20).

### **Integrating skills development and training within programmes considering the wider needs of the long-term unemployed and of specific populations furthest away from the labour market**

An example of such a project is the Employment Boot Camp, launched by Family Mosaic (a housing provider in London and the south east). An intensive pre-employment course designed to challenge unemployed participants to rethink their lifestyle, identify and address personal barriers, change their attitude and feel positive about the future, it emphasised a personal approach supporting individual development. Participants benefit from individual coaching and group sessions which are designed to facilitate peer-to-peer learning and prepare participants for world of work. As part of a six-week programme, participants attend sessions focusing on interview and interpersonal skills, creating and maintaining self-confidence, fitness and health, nutrition and well-being and financial management. Green et al (2015) note how 850 participants entered employment between April 2012 and June 2014 following the programme. The average salary of participants who gained employment between October 2012 and February 2014 was above the London Living Wage (£18,000 compared £16,450.6).

### **Supported employment programmes for people with mental health problems leaving prison**

Durcan et al (2018) examine the use of Individual Placement and Support, a supported employment

programme designed to help people with mental health problems leaving prison. The programme supported prison leavers in the West Midlands. They underline how nationally although employment is central to integration with reoffending likely without support, there is a gap in support services for people leaving prison with only 6% of people leaving prison receiving support (p.3). Participants on the programme were supported by an Employment Specialist trained in Individual Placement and Support who aimed to understand their goals for employment, to find them a paid role and then provide support to help them maintain the role. IPS schemes also involve employment support being embedded within a mental health team. However, Durcan et al stress how most of their participants did not receive any community mental health support even though they had accessed mental health in-reach services whilst in prison. They argue that “having a standalone supported employment service, rather than one integrated within community mental health treatment detrimentally affected the project’s success”. The report concludes that the cost of the project was slightly lower than the cost of providing a “similar-sized community service” but that “in light of the multiple and complex needs of people leaving prison with a mental health problem, and the costs incurred by criminal justice and health care as a result, there is a strong case for more research to investigate the cost benefits of this type of programme”. They recommended that HM Prison and Probation Service together with other stakeholders commission a larger-scale pilot of the programme.

### **Voluntary, local health and employment support programmes for people with disabilities and long-term conditions**

The Work Foundation (2016) reviewed national and local programmes supporting people with long term health conditions to return to work. They note local initiatives often have more freedom to introduce innovative policies. One example of good practice they identify is the Bromley-by-Bow Centre. It is argued that the voluntary nature of the programmes contribute to their success. Individuals often self-refer to take part and so may be more motivated to moving into work and accessing employment support.

### **Importance of programme design for volunteering**

Williams’ (2017) review of good practice in relation to volunteering and young people reveals that programme design is critical to ensure

volunteers benefit as much as possible from volunteering. They stress the importance of adequate training for voluntary roles; accurate advice and guidance on implications for welfare benefits; linking volunteering programmes to the obtaining qualifications and certificates; establishing brokerage support from different sources (such as schools, host organisations, volunteer centres, other public sector bodies); and clear demarcation of the start and end of voluntary roles. They link progression into education or employment to the provision of appropriate support for young people in recognising the skills and experiences they have gained through volunteering and in understanding how they can utilise these skills to progress in education or employment. Overall, six lessons for practice in effective volunteering programmes are identified by the review: attracting young people; recruitment and brokering the volunteer placement; resourcing and quality; support and supervision; closure; and reflection. Crisp et al (2012) argue that structured volunteering opportunities can provide a secure and supportive environment for more marginalised young people in preparing them for work. However, they stress that volunteering is not suitable for engaging all young people. In order to help to lower unemployment through providing jobseekers with the skills employers need, Kamerade et al (2015) suggest completing the following steps when designing volunteering and employability programmes nationally and locally, in conjunction with employers and voluntary sector organisations: 1. identify knowledge, skills and attitudes (KSA) in short supply in the labour market that can be gained through volunteering; 2. using a development needs analysis identify the gap in KSA between the demands of employers in the labour market and a particular group of unemployed individuals; 3. analyse where volunteering can address particular KSA gaps by providing jobseekers with the skills to fill actual shortages in the labour market. Consider at this stage where other human resource development activities – such as training, coaching or mentoring, CV-writing support or other back-to-work support would be important or more effective; 4. Design bespoke volunteering and employability programmes to equip jobseekers with the KSAs in short supply in the labour market; 5. Ensure that certain volunteering activities are actually effective in reducing the gap between the KSAs that employers demand and the KSAs that particular jobseekers have.

## Co-production

Lindsay et al (2018) argue that co-production in employment support programmes will be more successful in helping disadvantaged individuals to move out of poverty and progress in the labour market than traditional approaches. Through analysis of local services targeting lone parents led by partnerships between third sector organisations and the public sector in five Scottish localities, they maintain that co-production between stakeholders and service users resulted in several beneficial social outcomes which were “facilitated by processes of co-governance and co-management”. Co-production was shown to empower and build on the talents of disadvantaged individuals such as lone parents. Lindsay et al stress the importance of up-front stable funding to the success of the project. Similar positive benefits from co-production were evident from the experience of involvement of young people in Talent Match. Bashir et al. (2018) highlight that approaches to involvement included: (1) youth-led governance and consultation groups which have a representative function on or influence on wider governance structures such as partnership boards, steering groups and commissioning panels; (2) individuals or groups of young people engaging young people in Talent Match and delivering peer support and training (often termed as Talent Match ‘Champions’ or ‘Ambassadors’); (3) helping to develop and/or deliver services which respond to the needs of young people, either through advising service development or direct delivery; and (4) influencing policy and practice locally, giving feedback to employers, local authorities and Jobcentre Plus. Involving young people helped improve service quality. It also was an important mechanism for supporting young people facing some of the most challenging barriers to labour market participation and helped bring them closer to the labour market – in part through building their skills and confidence. However, involvement needs to be seen as a complement to, but not a replacement for, a range of other activities to support young people to overcome barriers to labour market participation.

## 2. Referral, Engagement and Assessment

### Information, advice and guidance (IAG); Training and skills

#### **Understanding of needs of, and targeted support for, long-term unemployed to overcome lack of access to labour market information**

Advice and guidance provide useful assistance to individuals who are not yet employment ready. Campbell et al. (1998) stress a lack of access to job market information, including employer recruitment channels, prevent long-term unemployed people in the UK from securing employment in improving/buoyant labour markets. Green et al (2015) argue “addressing this particular barrier requires a strong commitment and understanding of the needs and situation of long-term unemployed individuals. Information, advice and guidance can then be provided as a source of support leading to employment entry at a later stage” (p.16). Green et al (2015) stress HR professionals have an important role to play in providing information, advice and guidance designed to lead to employment entry at a later stage. They note the success of the Steps Ahead Mentoring Scheme, run by the Chartered Institute of Personnel Development (CIPD) with support from NESTA and the Cabinet Office via the Centre for Social Action Innovation Fund. As part of the programme, Jobcentre Plus advisers are able to refer young people aged 18–24 who are struggling to get jobs to a CIPD mentor who will give them 1 hour of one-to-one mentoring per week over a six-week period designed to build their confidence and help them find work. 73% of people who had completed the programme had gone to enter work or further training.

#### **Importance of information sharing to support multi-agency working**

Research for the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) (2011) emphasised the importance of “effective and appropriate shar[ing] of local data” to support multi-agency working and improve outcomes as a result of better targeted provision. The research reports the results of an evaluation conducted in 2009 for DCLG and DWP of a project piloting new ways of sharing data to improve how worklessness is tackled at local level. It is based on analysis of pilots in Leeds City, Thanet in Kent, and the Liverpool City Region area. In each pilot area,

following a business case submitted to DWP, the DWP shares data with the site. The data made available was found to be important in enabling the sites to make direct, personalised contact with the group the programme was targeting. This in turn, supported the sites in accessing individuals who were previously unknown to local public services. The evaluation stressed the importance of several factors in the sites progressing their data sharing. These include: achieving good levels of buy-in from senior leaders at local and national level, willingness of central government to work flexibly to address issues encountered, pre-existing multi-agency forums focused on worklessness, informal dialogue, and good practice sharing between stakeholders, support, having high quality and accurate data.

#### **The value of less traditional interventions to engage individuals out of work and build their confidence**

The Black Country Working Together Project which targeted unemployed and economically inactive residents living in rented accommodation in selected deprived areas included some less traditional interventions – such as using arts, crafts and drama - to engage residents and build their confidence, alongside ‘recognised’ employment support interventions, combined with education and skills based interventions. The participants valued these interventions and considered that they played an important role in building their confidence to move on to educational and vocational courses (Brown, 2016).

#### **Local place-based delivery of support**

Evaluation evidence from the Black Country Working Together Project also highlighted that residents welcomed provision of services from local hubs. They liked the physical proximity to their homes, and that the venues offered a friendly and welcoming environment. Brown (2016) notes that a single hub may be insufficient to reach residents who live further away, so suggesting that strong outreach strategies or multiple locations may be required. However, space for such hubs is limited and staffing and other resource considerations also need to be taken into account. This emphasises the importance of local place-based support at a community resources centre in facilitating residents’ engagement with a range of services (see Case Study 3).



Case Study 4 provides an example of how a local library can provide a range of services relevant to employment support in a neutral space for local residents from all population sub-groups. Conversely a lack of local support from a local library/ community centre is one of the factors that can pose challenges and frustration for individuals (see Case Study 5).

**Case study 3: Out-of-work resident with young children who finds comfort in attending a local community centre**

Anousheh is in her late thirties and is currently out of work. She moved to the UK fifteen years ago and speaks limited English. She is currently living in the Black Country. She has been looking for work for a while and would like a job in sales or retail. Anousheh was previously in work but became unwell and so stopped working. She then had a baby.

She chooses not to sign on as she “doesn’t like the treatment at the Jobcentre”. She says she has signed on previously and found the experience “average at best” although was sometimes given helpful advice. Anousheh was told by the Jobcentre to look for volunteering experience as it would give her the skills she needed to find employment. She says that this hasn’t helped her at all and she has now volunteered at seven places: “All jobs need experience, but even my voluntary experience has not helped me find a job.” In comparison, she spoke highly of the services at the local community centre which “provides

good local support for the community”. The advice given is very helpful and residents “can just turn up and don’t need to wait for an appointment”. Anousheh was supported by the centre to create a CV but still finds it difficult to find employment and completes around twenty-five applications per week. She says that some phone her back to tell her she is unsuitable for the role but “I don’t hear back from many of the applications and I don’t know why”. She finds this disheartening but finds comfort and motivation in coming to the centre where volunteers help her with applications, IT skills and other advice (often in her own language and at times that work around her childcare responsibilities). Anousheh said that the local community centre has “provided valuable support when I most needed it.”

This example illustrates the importance of local support in providing advice and guidance for individuals who may feel intimidated or let down by mainstream services. It also highlights that volunteering experience does not necessarily lead to a job outcome, especially for residents with limited English.

**Case study 4: The importance of a local library as a ‘neutral space’, providing an array of services for different communities in the area – the perspective of the Library Services Coordinator**

The local library in a neighbourhood in Coventry provides an array of services for residents of the area and is very busy. It has “high visibility as a space that can be used as a neutral environment - not associated with religion.” For this reason, it is used for lots of different events. It maintains good partnership working with organisations such as Adult Education, a city-wide Women’s Partnership and an inter-city migration partnership project. The library is viewed as a friendly relaxed environment as “people aren’t kicked

off computers” and “staff are very caring and will always help individuals with applications, benefits, etc.”

The library offers innovative services such as “Gen to Gen’ computer classes for old and young. This offers intergenerational computer help where the older generation who might have IT queries are taught by the younger generation who benefit from volunteering experience”.

This case illustrates the significance of the ‘neutral space’ at the heart of the community provided by the library and how it has promoted partnership working and is used by residents from different age groups and community backgrounds.

**Case study 5: Out of work older resident on low income with health condition struggling on a low income and angry at the system and a lack of local service provision**

Paul is in his late fifties and is currently unemployed. He used to be a labourer but due to a health condition now wants a part-time job. He was on “sick pay” for over four years but a year ago was reassessed as fit to work and is currently on Universal Credit, which he deems “is the worst thing they’ve brought out”. He describes his money as being “up and down like a yo-yo” but “the dole doesn’t care, the government doesn’t care”. He has resorted once to going to a food bank, which he regards as “shameful” and was “surprised at how many working people were there”. But the “absolute killer” is that he cannot afford to go and see his school-age child.

He goes to the job centre every week for eight minutes and the bus fare “is a big part of my money”. He has no choice but to spend this money on travel because “if you don’t do what they tell you to do, they take your money away”.

He has been on an “unbelievable” number of courses in different parts of Birmingham but reckons he has “never done any helpful training”. He has been “in and out of courses for computers, I’m just not into them, I just can’t do it – there’s not enough staff, I can’t pick it up easily”. He feels he needs one-to-one tuition.

He bemoans the deterioration in housing conditions, the lack of places for children to play and the rise of a drug culture in his immediate neighbourhood. Increasingly he says that he does not “mix” and does not “leave the house”.

This case emphasises how health issues, a lack of individual agency, a shortfall in easily accessible local services and neighbourhood poverty can fuel of vicious cycle of anger and despair.

**Quality pre-employment training**

Washington State’s Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training Programme (I-BEST) programme comprises occupational courses which include basis skills content, with students receiving college-level credits for their ‘occupational coursework’. It aims to improve progression into and through a ‘high demand field’ of employment including health services, computer technology, and automotive technology. Ziedenberg et al (2010) found the programme impacted positively on all education measures (except rate of drop-out). But these differences on employment variables were not statistically significant. This may be the result of the impact of the recession on employment probabilities. This is discussed in more detail in Green et al (2015).

**Quality careers advice in schools**

Green et al (2015) argue that career guidance in schools is important in enabling young people to make education and training choices that will positively impact on their future awareness of, and decisions about education, training and employment, and pathways to desired outcomes. Evidence from case study work with young people from the Midlands from a range of educational and socio-economic backgrounds (Purcell et al., 2017) reveals that a lack of adequate advice and guidance as school students was a theme that ran through many of the graduate and virtually all of the non-graduate respondents’ accounts of their experience of pathways to employment. Those who had had access to excellent careers guidance and came from families who were able to help and advise them, and sometimes open doors to opportunities, were at an enormous advantage. The evidence indicates that achievement and attitudes are related to earlier social and educational advantages and disadvantages; the family and community support and the quality of education; and careers guidance to which they had access.

**Role of schools in brokering volunteering opportunities**

Williams (2017) emphasises the crucial role that schools play in organising volunteering roles for young people. 69% of young people in the 2017 National Youth Social Action Survey had become involved through their school, college or university. According to Dean (2016), the likelihood of schools acting as a broker with regard to volunteering opportunities differs according to the type of school; grammar schools

are more likely than comprehensives to take on this role. By contrast for young people from less affluent backgrounds volunteering is often more gradual, arising from progressive contact in their environment e.g. community sports programmes (Bradford et al, 2016). Building trust between young people and adults is crucial to successfully engaging young people in volunteering (Bradford et al, 2016).

### **Quality personal development support for individuals struggling in/ outside the school system**

There are examples of training and skills development programmes aimed at supporting young people at risk of underachieving or becoming early school leavers. These include the Building the Future Together project in Wales, a £15 million project partly funded by the European Social Fund (Priority 1) and delivered by Rhondda Cynon Taff (RCT) Council in partnership with Coleg Morgannwg. The project was launched in 2009 to improve the education, employment and life outcomes of young people aged 11–19 and at risk of underachieving. The programme's central management team was seen as successful in co-ordinating recruits and the support they received from a range of actors including youth coaches, keyworkers and other providers. An evaluation of this project indicated that the project overachieved in four out of its five performance indicators: number of participants recruited; number of participants gaining qualifications; number of participants entering further learning and number of participants entering employment. There was a reported positive impact on soft skills and confidence, and families and teaching staff reported having benefitted from a family member or student taking part in the programme. The evaluation also showed a positive impact beyond its performance indicators and participating students (Green et al, 2015, pp. 17-18).

Evidence from career academies in the US which aim to reduce young people's risk of social exclusion by keeping them in high school and encouraging successful transitions to post-second education or employment, showed a strong positive impact on earnings but little impact on educational outcomes. The analysis focused on the career paths of young people over the eight years following when young people were scheduled to graduate from high school. The evaluation focused on nine sites, in or near a large urban school district that had above national average rates of Hispanic and African-American students, higher drop-out, higher local unemployment and higher proportion of low-income families (Green et al, 2015).

The 'Learning to be job ready' (L2BJR) pilot scheme in a department responsible for social care of an unidentified city council in northern England was designed to provide support to long-term unemployed individuals. Participants were provided with six months of quality training and work experience aimed to equip them with the skills, knowledge and confidence to improve their likelihood of being employed at the end of the period as they were considered unlikely to apply for jobs due a lack of confidence in understanding and navigating the (public sector) labour market. Half of participants on the scheme gained a job with the council department following the end of the programme and all but one joined the registry for temporary workers to cover care roles across the council (see Green, 2015 for more information).

### **Use of sports to engage young people at risk of exclusion from the labour market in pre-employment training**

Skinner and Zakus (2008) analyse the example of Street League in London and Glasgow, a sport for employment charity which aims to end youth unemployment in the UK. The scheme went on to exist in 14 regions across the UK, operating sport for employment programmes running in 38 local communities. It offers 10-12 week long programmes supporting unemployed 16-24 year olds to learn key skills, and gain qualifications and work experience to move into a sustainable job or further training (Street League, 2017). Target groups include: the homeless, drug and alcohol dependent individuals in rehabilitation, ex-offenders, long-term unemployed, people with identified learning disabilities, refugees and asylum seekers, people with mental health issues and individuals at risk. More broadly, Palmner and Micallef (no date given but 2013 at earliest) argue that football-based employment programmes are transformative. The initial attraction of football leads to participants subsequently gaining new skills either directly or indirectly e.g. teamwork, communication and confidence, apparent within the game and adopting values e.g. respect, punctuality and behavioural change.

### **Information and advice on broadening spatial horizons can help facilitate employment entry**

Green and White (2007) and White and Green (2011) underline how the outlook of some jobseekers is localised which in turn leads them to restrict themselves to a smaller set of local job opportunities than exist in reality (i.e. 'subjective' employment opportunities are more restricted than 'objective' ones). This highlights the importance of taking people outside of

their 'comfort zone' and exposing them to new experiences/people. Travel training and other initiatives (discussed below) are also of relevance here.

### **Community Champions/Connectors**

Evidence from the New Deal for Communities programme indicates that using community activists/champions and 'Learning Champions' to attract residents to use the opportunities on offer has worked well (for example see Kirton and Lall, 2004). Many residents in disadvantaged areas have not been successful in the educational system and a smaller proportion than the national average stay on post-16. Simply providing lifelong learning facilities will not guarantee take up in practice. It is crucial, therefore, that opportunities for lifelong learning are linked to the needs and interests of local residents and community champions/learning champions can help in providing routes to engagement and role models. The experience of the Black Country Working Together project, which sought to employ unemployed or economically inactive individuals who had lived/ worked in the local area and who had good local area knowledge, along with a commitment to the principles of the project, was that it was challenging to find individuals for this role. Individuals without previous experience of community engagement found the role particularly challenging and required lots of additional support following their customised pre-employment training programme with work experience (Brown, 2016). Evidence from Connecting Communities (Department for Communities and Local Government, 2012) also points to an important role for local people in encouraging their neighbours take steps towards positive change for themselves and their communities.

## **Employer engagement**

### **Linking employers and young people to overcome employers' concerns that young people are not work-ready**

Green et al (2015) describe an initiative in Scotland which involves the employer-led development of a Certificate of Work Readiness. This enables employers to see young people in a work setting over a longer period, while young people gain valuable experience of the workplace and the opportunity to be provided with an employer reference important for future job search. This highlights the importance of developing work experience and also certifying it so that job seekers have a formal record of what they have done.

### **Awareness of training and skills development and support services needed for individuals in the local area to access jobs created when new businesses/ developments are planned**

Better identification of the training and skills development and support services that are needed can improve the employment prospects of local jobseekers. McKinstry (2003) analyses how the £12 million Days Inn Hotel development in Sandy Row (a deprived area in south Belfast, Northern Ireland) resulted in uptake of programmes aimed at helping jobseekers prepare for interviews and employment as well 21 members of the community being employed by the hotel, thirteen of which were still employed five months later. He outlines how a local employability working group was established to act as a single contact point with the employer. Recommendations from the report for the pre-employment phase include scheduling potential recruitment exercises jointly with the local community; collaborate with between employers and the local community to develop capacity-building programmes; reduce barriers to participation by encouraging employers to review their recruitment requirements and methods; and encouraging employers to visit local communities to promote job opportunities and demonstrate commitment.

### **Holistic and inclusive employer engagement from pre-employment phase to maximise the job opportunities open to disadvantaged groups**

McGregor et al. (1999), underline how area regeneration initiatives represent an ideal opportunity to work with employers to maximise local job gains from local schemes. They give the example of Glasgow where Drumchapel Opportunities worked in conjunction with businesses in the new Great Western Retail & Leisure Park to maximise the employment of locals. Green et al (2015) argue this initiative illustrates "how local regeneration partnerships can facilitate more effective employer involvement by reducing the number of organisations involved, simplifying the process of approaching employers for help, building up the capacity of smaller businesses to participate, and facilitating staff exchanges between initiatives and employers" (p.19). Eurofound (2012a) found "Successful policies offer good quality career advice and comprehensive holistic guidance" (p.2). They also argue that policy which aims to increase the employability of young people should focus on the buy-in of employers and their representatives.



## Financial incentives

### Better-off calculations

As Green et al (2015) argue, although ‘better-off’ calculations for people in work as opposed to on out-of-work benefits have been included in various programmes, robust evidence of the value of such calculations compared to broader policy initiatives is not available. Nonetheless, it is widely accepted that one of the factors motivating individuals at the pre-employment stage to undertake training is “clearly the prospect of financial gains” (Green et al, 2015, p.20). The OECD (2005) suggested that policies involving raising financial incentives to work are one method of increasing the labour supply but that their analysis requires further scrutiny using refined empirical techniques. Their analysis suggests there are moderate labour market effects of marginal effective tax rates. Indeed, a reduction of marginal effective tax rates by 20% (which is what some of the most ambitious reforms have tried to achieve) implies a rise in the probability of moving from unemployment to employment by nearly 10%, i.e. from 45% to 49%. The strongest effects are found for the unemployed with a working partner, whose re-employment probability would increase by seven percentage points, from 51% to nearly 58%. The evidence on transitions from inactivity to work is more mixed. Significant effects are found for single women only: for this group, the probability to move from inactivity to work would increase by almost 13%. Finally, the reduction in marginal effective tax rates is also found to encourage transitions from part-time to full-time work or promote moves to higher-paid jobs, especially for second earners in couples without children.

### Awareness of financial initiatives and perceived ease of application

Financial incentives are more effective if they are widely known among their target group and the administrative process to receive them is not overly bureaucratic. The ability of the system to respond to changes in family needs is also important (OECD, 2005). The OECD (2005) suggests that “integration with the tax system and payment through the wage package could be an improvement for recipients and a cost-saving solution for governments” (p.128). Conversely, work on the impact of sanctions from a qualitative longitudinal study suggests that welfare conditionality within the social security system is largely ineffective in facilitating people’s entry into or progression within the paid labour market over time. The Welfare Conditionality Project

(2018) concluded that benefit sanctions do little to enhance people’s motivation to prepare for, seek, enter or increase paid work. Rather, the evidence suggested that they routinely trigger profoundly negative personal, financial, health and behavioural outcomes and push some people away from collectivised welfare provisions.

## Support services/enablers

### Targeted pre-employment support for specific groups

As Green et al (2015, p.20) argue targeted support is needed not just for young people (as implied in some of the literature) but for a wider range of groups e.g. the homeless, the long-term unemployed, those with caring responsibilities or the low-skilled in order to help them to develop the skills, attitudes and resources required to enter the labour market. The OECD notes “when working with those some distance from the labour market, the importance of personal support from coaches and mentors cannot be over-emphasised” (p.66).

Older people: The Centre for Local Economic Strategies (2017) reports on the experiences of people aged over 50 who are out of work or in insecure work across Greater Manchester. They underline how the economic inactivity rate of people aged 50-64 is twice as high as that for people aged 35-49 (p.3). Whilst they acknowledge that for some people this is a choice, for many people it is not. According to Franklin et al (2014) of those people aged 50-64 in the UK who report themselves as economically inactive, it is estimated that one million left work involuntarily (Franklin et al, 2014). The Learning and Work Institute (2016) found that the Work Programme is not providing effective employment support for people aged over fifty. The Centre for Local Economic Strategies (2017) aimed to provide deeper insight into the issues faced by jobseekers in this group. They found jobseekers over fifty face “multiple and interrelated barriers”, many of which are specific to their age group e.g. health and care issues, suitability of work, employability, suitability of services such as employment support services, institutional ageism, internalised ageism (p.4). The report concludes that to address the challenges faced by older people in entering and remaining in employment, proactive change is needed at national and local level. They argue that “employability and employment support should be better tailored to older jobseekers, building on their skills and experience, and better meeting their needs” and that “increased flexibility is

needed in the benefits systems and employment support service provision needs to recognise the particular challenges that people over 50 face in returning to work” (p.5).

Mothers – including lone parents and women with partners: The Young Women’s Trust (2017) (YWT) examined the views of mothers aged over 25 years regarding work, children and employment support, through a literature review, focus groups and a survey. They found that mothers who worked or planned to work struggled with balancing work and family considering formal childcare to be expensive and inflexible. The report underlines how Jobcentre Plus (JCP) had a “poor reputation” among this group and suggests that this is “partly down to its habit of implementing policies rigidly and causing harm in the process” (p.2). It recommends that future JCP policy seeks to address this negative perception, involving the target group more in policy design. The need for policy to be more flexible and personalised is underlined. It is suggested that policy adopts some of the principles of YWT’s Work It Out employability service: flexibility, remote provision, and support for young women as individuals with distinct aspirations and strengths. Taylor (2016, 2017) found that the income support benefit system in France, where inactive individuals were provided with an advisor at Mairie (City Council level) who offered broader, more personalised advice than advisors at the Employment Support Service was effective in engaging hard-to-reach clients (e.g. some mothers). Glasgow Centre for Population Health (2014) argue that lone parents face multiple barriers regarding employment and that policymakers should better consider responses “across a range of areas that include childcare, employment support, in-work poverty, transport, future welfare reform and partnership work” (p.1). In their study, they found that although most lone parents are looking for employment, they have to balance their employment goals with their childcare responsibilities and ideals. Research on women in London and the South East (Tunstall et al., 2015) also highlighted a similar range of constraints to work entry and progression, including: accessibility and affordability of formal childcare, difficulties organising informal childcare with friends and family, accessibility and availability of local work compatible with responsibilities for children (allowing travel time to reach child care and with enough flexibility to allow cover for child illness and school holidays), availability of better paid jobs that could compensate for costs of childcare, travel and lost benefits and made work pay, and

availability of and access to jobs that enabled progression. In addition, many were affected by one or more additional constraints, such as marginal or out-of-date work experience, lack of education and qualifications, for those educated abroad difficulties getting recognition for foreign qualifications or carrying out necessary requalification, lack of confidence, lack of information on training and job opportunities, availability of funding for training, their own or a family member’s mental or physical ill health or care needs. While a single constraint might be enough to markedly reduce options for work and the likelihood of work, multiple constraints could have cumulative effects. Botfield et al (2014) identify areas of good practice in terms of employability services for women. They analyse the Women Onto Work employment support project in Scotland that aims to provide a safe and motivating coaching environment where women can set and meet employment goals and deliver integrated employment services. They stress the value of personalised employment support and clear progression routes. Key to personalised support provided by the project is the lack of stringent job outcome targets for coaches enabling them to concentrate on developing the skills and confidence of individual clients and addressing complex and multi-dimensional barriers to employment.

Ethnic minorities: The Joseph Rowntree Foundation with the Black Training & Enterprise Group (BTEG) has been focusing on promoting employment entry and in-work progression routes as part of a ‘Poverty and Ethnicity Demonstration Programme’. Emerging results (presented at a seminar in late October 2018 [Weekes-Bernard, 2018]) suggest that a targeted approach is needed rather than ethnicity-blind approaches (i.e. running programmes which are open to all ethnic groups without targeting any specific groups) which may or may not result in people from ethnic groups at highest risk of poverty taking up the support services on offer. Targeted approaches can understand and respond to the barriers and needs which are specific to ethnic groups with high poverty rates. Echoing points made elsewhere in this review, using trusted intermediaries works in take-up of support services. People from ethnic groups at highest risk of poverty lack knowledge of and confidence to use existing support services, including services provided by Job Centres and other public, private and voluntary sector agencies. They need the encouragement and reassurance of trusted intermediaries. The intermediaries can be individuals or agencies but must be locally

based, committed to and trusted by the target communities. Trusted intermediaries are critical for encouraging people from ethnic groups at highest risk of poverty to take up mainstream and other support services. Finally, long-term support is needed to make a difference to employment outcomes.

Refugees: Shutes (2011) examines the impact of a job-orientated performance system on the responsiveness of providers to the requirements of unemployed refugees, arguing that the existence of a focus on short-term needs can be a source of tension when seeking to move refugees who face complex barriers to employment, particularly those with English language needs. The opportunities promoted by providers may also not be appropriate for refugees with providers concentrating on easy-access, low-skilled and low-paid jobs (see Case Study 6). A review of the literature suggests there is a gap in more recent evaluations of refugee support programmes. The Refugees into Sustainable Employment Evaluation (RISE) programme is currently being evaluated by the Institute for Employment Studies. Eurofound in their review of European policy (2012a) argue for personalised support for young people, focused on the client, not the provider. Examples of good practice given include one-stop-shops for young people or tailored, personalised advice by mentors.

#### **Case study 6: A refugee frustrated by his skills not being utilised**

Amir arrived in Coventry as a refugee. Prior to coming to the UK, he worked in a managerial position as owner of several warehouses. He reported that the Jobcentre found it difficult to deal appropriately with somebody with his experience. Currently he is on a training manager programme with a retailer but is finding having to take basic health and safety courses degrading. Being told to arrive on time and clock in “are big pills to swallow” for someone who used to be a professional in his own country.

This case emphasises the need for appropriate training provision for people with different starting points, so as to ensure individuals’ skills do not atrophy but are used for the benefit of themselves and for the local economy.

#### **Multiple partners working together**

“Key success factors in servicing the needs of disadvantaged communities involves developing, engaging and retaining multiple partners that can support the delivery of programs and outcomes through a range of different mechanisms including funding, delivery, expert advice and referrals” (Skinner and Zakus, 2008, p.265). Street League, a UK-wide charity aiming to end youth unemployment through football-based employability programmes has over 80 different partners, including 20 funding partners. In addition to providing office space, partners provide financial support and the provision of office space, and CSR activities e.g. volunteering to support program delivery. “Other partnership models used by Street League include: twinning businesses to Street League teams, buddying a Street League player to provide mentoring and coaching support in a professional and sometimes emotional capacity, work experience and employment, sponsorships and in-kind resource provision” (p.265). Whitworth (2018) argues that City-regions “are uniquely positioned in the English context to create the type of positively networked integrated employment support ‘ecosystem’ that ‘harder-to-help’ individuals in particular require” (p.274). One stop shops integrating various different services and service providers are a common feature of models to support people into work internationally. An example of such a ‘one stop’ model in England is the integrated employment and skills MyGo service in Ipswich (established as part of the Greater Ipswich City Deal) which integrated Jobcentre Plus support with a locally led employment, skills, apprenticeship and employment services for young people involving both public employment service and voluntary sector providers (Wilson et al., 2017; Bennett et al., 2018). The evaluation of MyGo revealed that co-location of partners was effective in improving access to services, encouraging effective working relationships and supporting a shared understanding of roles. Learning points on partnership delivery from MyGo of relevance for future employment support initiatives included that partnerships can only be effective with simple referral processes, good quality data systems and sharing processes, regular communication and a shared understanding of the aims and objectives of the service in question (Bennett et al., 2018, 9). The OECD (2013) underlines the importance of understanding the area and context when designing interventions and monitoring, supporting linkages with other schemes.

### **Early personalised intervention**

The Moving On Up Learning Report (2016) evaluates the Moving On Up Initiative which aimed to increase the employment rate among young black men in London. They argue that “young black men face more challenges than most jobseekers” and that early intervention with long-term personalised support is needed to help them move into employment (p.2). They suggest that young black men engage most with specialist support services e.g. Moving On Up most when they first claim JSA and that early intervention is therefore vital. They underline advisers listening to clients, advisers having a positive attitude and building a rapport with clients and offering 1:1 long-term support are important factors in successfully moving clients into work. Barnow et al (2013) in their study of educational and employment outcomes for children and alumni of foster care services conclude that length of stay in employment programmes is central to unemployed young people entering employment. They argue that this suggests young people who have been in foster care need not only need “additional services as they transition into adulthood but they need those services over a period of time”. Public Health England (2014) argues local authorities may be able to influence the provision of local employment services by inviting employment service providers to be members of health and wellbeing boards. The Centre for Mental Health (2013) briefing on barriers to employment for people with mental health problems argues that improving access to employment for this group needs to involve health and wellbeing boards, GPs, mental health services, local authorities, employment services and Work Programme providers.

### **Work placements in conjunction with provider-led job-search support**

Analysis of a DWP trailblazer scheme suggested the potential of a Community Action Programme (CAP) involving a six-month work placement together with provider-led supported job search for long-term jobseekers whose main barriers to employment were: recent work experience, motivation or work ethic.



# 3. Needs Assessment and Barrier Removal

## Information, advice and guidance (IAG); Training and skills

### Tailored employment support

Green et al (2015) underline how “case study evidence suggests that intermediate labour market initiatives, providing training alongside work experience at the pre-employment stage, can be useful in facilitating successful entry to employment” (p.24). They suggest, based on expert interviews, that engaging employers and understanding employers’ need is crucial for such schemes to be successful. Meager et al (2014) stress the key role of tailored support from personal advisors but note that the quality of support provided on the programme can be affected by large caseloads and staff turnover. Eurofound (2012a) list as the first learning point of their report investigating how policy can improve the employment rate of young people, “Successful policy measures specify their target group and find innovative ways to reach them, for example by establishing a good reputation or creating a positive ‘brand’ for the measure or working with relevant community groups for hard-to-reach groups” (p.2). In relation to claimants’ experiences on the Work Programme, Meager et al (2014) note that the programme adopts a ‘work-first’ approach designed to enable people to move into work quickly, and places less emphasis on human-capital based approaches such as training programmes. Although they note that the majority of participants who described experiencing difficulties finding work, described the support they received from the Work Programme as “helpful in overcoming their barriers and moving closer to work”, older, disabled and better-qualified participants reported the interventions as “helpful” less frequently (p.20). They suggest this was because participants with health conditions and disabilities often did not feel they were in a position to move towards work and were looking most often for support related to medical or disability matters. Taylor (2016) underlined how out-of-work partnered parents with health conditions in both France and the UK reported a lack of tailored support in overcoming their health needs and finding suitable employment.

### Investment in modified Individual Placement and Support models for unemployed individuals

### with health conditions and disabilities

This can deliver financial savings whilst moving participants into employment. Whitworth (2018) found that “Modified IPS services offer a viable route to delivering enhanced employment outcomes for individuals with health conditions and disabilities and financial savings for governments” (p.568).

### Sector-based training and/or occupational certification

In a review of employment entry in growth sectors (Green et al., 2017) highlight how policy has traditionally focused on population sub-groups. There is a longer history of sector-focused initiatives in the USA than in the UK and robust US evaluation evidence points to potential benefits of a sector-focused approach to employment entry policy. Holzer and Martinson (2005) underline how education and job training for actual/potential low earners is most likely to be effective when it enables workers to gain a certification which employers value, and when the content of the training corresponds to private sector demand. (Sector-based training initiatives are discussed in more detail in the ‘Vocational Activity’ section.)

## Employer engagement

### Need to make recruitment practices accessible to disadvantaged people

Businesses, particularly smaller ones, may not have the resources or expertise to assess applications based on meritocracy, rigour and objectivity (Millar, 2012), instead they may recruit candidates according to convenience, stereotyping applicants employing workers who fit “culturally” with their organisational culture and brand/image (Warhurst et al, 2015). Candidates from different backgrounds may therefore be disadvantaged. The use of social and informal criteria is likely to particularly disadvantage long-term unemployed people and those who have limited work-experience (Green et al, 2015). Local intermediaries and organisations (e.g. CIPD) are important in encouraging employers to adapt their practices to recruit ‘non-standard’ applicants. Rudiger (2013) highlights how Nestle have adjusted their recruitment and selection criteria introducing a competency-based approach where young

people can demonstrate their potential in scenario-based situations.

### **Need to bridge gap between employers' expectations of young people and young people's understanding of what is expected of them**

Rudiger (2013) underlines the existence of a mismatch between employers' expectations of young people and young people's understanding of what is expected of them. Mentoring, work placements and awareness raising activities of opportunities available can play a role here.

### **Sectoral focus in training and employment policies**

Evidence from Australia on the development of sector and local skills strategies (Martinez-Fernandes, 2009) and the UK with the Employer Ownership of Skills (UK Commission for Employment and Skills, 2011) agenda suggests input from employers can drive up the quality and use of skills. Employer engagement was also tested in the UK Futures Programme (UKFP) which offered small scale public co-investment to employers and industry in order to design and test their own solutions to emerging or long-standing skills and productivity challenges. The approach adopted supported collaborative approaches to workforce development issues amongst employers and, where applicable, wider social partners, and also encouraged innovative approaches to addressing workforce development issues on a sectoral basis. An initial evaluation of UKFP (Thom et al., 2016) showed that small firms face significant information and resource barriers to engagement. Hence employer engagement with such firms can work better when there is a product or solution that is tangible, rather than an idea. Not all employers are sure of their needs or the benefits to be gained from training. The experience of UKFP showed that senior managers within employer organisations need to be engaged to ensure organisational buy-in and commitment to change, and middle managers need to be on board for effective implementation. Evidence from two sector workforce centres in Chicago suggests that sectoral variations are likely to occur in how sector-led workforce development schemes operate and how well they move people into sustainable employment (Schrock, 2013).

## **Financial incentives**

### **Adult social care personal budgets**

Watts et al (2014) examine how adult social

care personal budgets are used to purchase employment support by disabled people. They conclude only limited evidence exists that personal budgets are used to support disabled people into employment, particularly provider-led rather individualised employment support. They demonstrate how personal budgets can enable employment outcomes for people but note problems with implementation. They recommend supported employment provision should be universally available and accessible for everyone in a local area, funded through core funding and the addition of personal budgets. They also contend Local Authorities should "Focus on young people coming through transition from children's services to adult services, as part of the 'Local Offer', such that the presumption of employment should be introduced as early as possible. Options for encouraging this can include work-based learning (WBL), traineeships and internships" (p.36).

## **Support services/enablers**

### **Wrap around services**

Hamilton (2012) in a review of local and state level employment and workforce development initiatives in the USA, examined career pathway models and cluster skill development model, showing the importance of 'wrap around' services (e.g. transport, childcare, housing assistance, coaching, counselling and subsidies for books and equipment) in supporting low-income adults to complete education and/or attain employment. This highlights the importance of joined-up working across different policy domains.

### **Trained and supported staff**

Eurofound (2012a) list the need for trained and supportive staff as a necessity for effective delivery of policy across the EU supporting out-of-work young people into employment. As employability programmes change, the range of knowledge required by support staff can increase; for example, with the advent of Universal Credit work coaches have a greater range of individuals to deal with. Adams et al (2017) show high staff turnover prevents staff on the Work Programme from building strong relationships with clients.

## 4. Vocational Activity (moving towards being job ready)

### Information, advice and guidance (IAG); Training and skills

#### Classroom-based learning

Fitzenberger et al (2008) evaluated three types of vocational training in Germany for unemployed people. They analysed the impact of the training on the chance of employment for unemployed individuals using data from individuals who became unemployed in 1986/87 and 1993/94 in (the former) West Germany. Participants were on one of three German further vocational training programmes before entering employment from a period of unemployment, and were aged 25 to 55. The programmes evaluated were: (1) Practice firms (PF): 5–6 month work placements in a company; (2) Provision of specific professional skills and techniques (SPST): the median duration of these programmes was 4-6 months - they involved classroom training and/or practical work experience to prepare individuals for a job and successful completion of the programme led to a certificate recognising skills acquired; and (3) Retraining (RT): these programmes involved the provision of 'new and comprehensive vocational training' with a median duration was 12–16 months (p. 329) leading to widely accepted certificates in occupations with high demand in the labour market. "The evaluation showed that for a short period after starting on a programme there was a negative lock-in effect (i.e. because participants were training they were not moving into employment); however, in the medium- and long-term the effect on the employment rate was significantly positive. They also found that SPST and PF outperformed RT (in comparisons of the three treatments) and based on this proposed that the best initiatives are not necessarily those focusing on offering more formal qualifications. Overall, SPST (by far the largest programme) showed the best results, consistently during the two periods" (Green et al, 2015). Classroom training appears beneficial for basic skills (What Works Centre for Local Economic Growth, 2016).

#### Less formal training is most effective when programmes are short

"Short programmes (below six months and probably below four months) are more effective

for less formal training activity" (What Works Centre for Local Economic Growth, 2016, p.30). After reviewing programmes varying in length from ten days up to three years, the What Works Centre for Local Economic Growth (2016) found short programmes generally have positive or mixed impacts on employment and wages and that they tended to focus on upskilling and were either partially or entirely classroom-based. The What Works Centre for Local Economic Growth noted an evaluation of training programmes in Mexico found negative coefficients but "questioned the reliability of the sample selection methods utilised and thus the reliability of the results in general" (p.24).

#### Sector-focused training

As indicated above, over recent years one element of provision to support individuals to enter employment in the UK has been the development of a sector-focus, most obviously through the development of sector-based work academies (SBWAs). SBWAs are designed to help unemployed benefit claimants gain the relevant skills and work experience to gain employment in a specific sector and allow employers to fill vacancies with suitable applicants. Introduced in August 2011 in England and in January 2012 in Scotland, the SBWA programme has three elements which together should not exceed six weeks in duration (i.e. this is a short-term focused programme): (1) Sector-specific pre-employment training of up to 30 hours per week; (2) A work experience placement with an employer; and (3) A guaranteed job interview linked to a genuine vacancy. SBWAs are run by Jobcentres and are developed in partnership with (predominantly large private sector) employers in sectors with high volumes of current local vacancies – notably, retail, hospitality, transport and logistics, food, care, manufacturing and engineering, and administration, with elementary occupations accounting for the single largest proportion (around a third) of work experience placements. The results from an impact evaluation show that SBWAs have a positive impact on moving participants off benefits and into work, with most positive results for those participants who participated in all three elements of the SBWA programme (Ward et al., 2016). This latter point reiterates the issue above about the importance of programme implementation and

of participants being exposed to all elements of a programme. A similar sector-focused scheme – Get into – is run by the Prince's Trust. Get into is a short vocational course that develops young people's skills in a specific sector for 16 to 25-year-olds. As in the case of SBWAs, courses are run in sectors where it is known that jobs are likely to be available, such as retail, logistics and hospitality. The focus of SBWAs and 'Get into' is on short-term programmes, but there is evidence that where the focus of sector-based programmes extends beyond employment entry to progression, screening job seekers for interest in, and attributes/ skills required in, the sector is likely to enhance the success of policies. It is possible that sector-focused policy may be more important for employment progression than for employment entry (Green et al., 2017). Indeed, US sector-focused programmes tend to target a pathway approach to employment entry, retention and progression. Evaluation evidence from these programmes – which sometimes are open to those wanting to move from existing jobs as well as the unemployed - is positive (Maguire et al., 2010; Gasper and Henderson, 2014; Hendra et al., 2016).

### **A 'dual customer' approach**

Following on from the discussion above, several US programmes adopt a 'dual customer' approach involving: (1) an employer need or driver of engagement (such as retention problems); and, (2) a participant benefit (see Conway, 2014). Sector-focused interventions are also of value in opening up opportunities for labour market intermediaries to forge closer relationships with employers and to tailor labour market interventions to employer requirements. They are also of particular value in encouraging employment of under-represented groups in particular sectors.

### **Use of sports to make job seekers job ready**

There is some positive evidence of using sports to make jobseekers job ready. Spaaj et al (2013) analyse the Sport Steward programme in Rotterdam which mixes educational work with sport activities to help workless young people to develop new skills. It was funded through the ERDF and consisted of a four-month programme designed to create an educational platform where workless people gained knowledge and experience of the profession of sport steward, as well as communication, computer and job search skills. No direct analysis of outcomes for participants exists but Spaaj et al (2013, p.1616) argue "the use of sports activities in helping

young people to improve their skills can enable them to compete for jobs more effectively". This underlines the importance of local economic context. Spaaj et al. (2013) also analyse NEET Stoke Challenge (NSC) which is funded through contributions from partner agencies and the Football Foundation. It "provides sports-based activities and personal development education workshops over two days a week for ten weeks to participants aged between 16 and 24". The education sessions focus on CV writing, team work, problem-based learning, interview techniques and developing social skills. The programme also seeks to equip participants with a range of predominantly sports-based qualifications including coaching awards. Palmner and Micallef (no date given but 2013 at earliest) found sports-based employment programmes help participants to move towards being job-ready through gaining qualifications, receiving advice on employment (CV writing, interview and job searching techniques) and improving their transferrable life skills.

### **Volunteering can be an effective bridge towards employment for various groups**

Devlin (2001) argues that volunteering can improve the employment prospects of women seeking to re-enter the labour market after a childcare-related gap in the labour market. Zózimo et al (2016: 89) stress that volunteering represents "an enabling environment for informal learning and accordingly enhances employability". Nonetheless, they contend that a "bridge" between volunteering and the labour market is essential for successful labour market transitions. Based on the results of an empirical study in Portugal, they build a soft skills matrix that facilitates the recognition of skills developed through volunteering. The matrix consists of nine personal and relational skills and includes indicators for the development of each skill. The personal skills included are: personal development (developing as an individual through interaction); learning to learn (adopting an attitude of lifelong learning); spirit of innovation (participating in and promoting change), sense of initiative (being able to start and organise activities); interpersonal sensitivity (interacting effectively); networking (creating new social ties); negotiation (being able to foster compromise between conflicting interests); teamwork (capacity to establish activity with others to benefit the wider group); communication (oral communication skills) (Zózimo et al, 2016, pp.93-95). The matrix offers a framework that can be used to design volunteer programmes. The voluntary sector could also use the matrix to



support the recruitment of volunteers. Various reports have suggested that volunteering can play an important role in helping immigrants and refugees to move towards employment. A 2016 report by the Institute for the Study of Labor examines how governments across Western Europe promote volunteering among migrants as a means of integrating the labour market as well as the benefits of the policy. The report suggests that volunteering can reduce labour market discrimination. In a field experiment where fictitious job applications using randomly assigned ethnic origin and volunteer activities were sent in response to real job vacancies, volunteering positively influenced job interviews for migrants. Whereas non-volunteering native candidates were more than twice as likely as non-volunteering migrants to receive invitations to job interviews, no unequal treatment was observed between natives and migrants when they disclosed their volunteer activities.

### **Ongoing, participatory employment assessment**

Crosby et al (2014) analyse new approaches to how jobseekers' needs and abilities can be assessed. They argue that properly understanding job seekers' needs and abilities is crucial to employment support services successfully helping individuals into long-term, sustainable jobs. They suggest that ongoing assessment and taking into account jobseekers' own perspectives are key. (This also links with the ethos of programmes such as Talent Match which focus on individual action planning and seek to improve individuals' well-being [Crisp et al., 2018]).

## **Employer engagement**

### **Work tasters/ work experience providing a range of skills**

Hamilton (2012) stresses how a balance must be found between individual and employer needs. She suggests that whereas employers often adopt a relatively narrow view of the skills individuals require, individuals have longer-term needs to develop a broader range of occupational options and transferable skills. This highlights employers' focus on firm-specific skills, whereas individuals' longer-term employability also rests on portable generic skills.

### **Brokerage between local employers, HR managers, educational establishments and job seekers**

Green et al (2015) argue that "a key issue at local level is which players are best placed to work on the employer engagement agenda"

(p.26). Fitzgerald (2004) outline how community colleges in the USA play an important role in engaging city employers in a co-ordinated way, thus preventing them from being approached by a range of different suppliers of training and associated services. Green et al (2015) point out that although many further education colleges in the UK are "active in this agenda, they tend not to be as respected and established in playing such a key role as community colleges in the US" (p.26). Better links between these organisations would enable employers to be better engaged in local hiring and for job seekers specific skills needs to be better conveyed. Evidence from evaluations of Talent Match (Green et al (2015) and MyGo (Bennett et al, 2018) highlighted that there is value in having specialist dedicated staff in employer engagement and involvement roles since the skills set required is different from that used in provision of employment support. At local level Wolves at Work provides an example of how a job brokerage service can operate at city level. It operates a demand led model in Wolverhampton predicated on the premise that quality employer engagement works in delivering more and better quality employment and training opportunities. It focuses on business engagement to identify such opportunities then develops provision and support tailored to those roles. Work coach support is provided to individuals to help them to become job ready and also to support them in their early stages of employment. Performance data for November 2018 indicates that job starts and sustainment rates have exceeded targets (City of Wolverhampton Council, 2018).

### **Types of employer engagement**

Employer engagement can take the form of an 'agency' approach or an 'individual approach'. The former offers wider recruitment solutions and the latter focuses on individual brokerage. The evaluation of the Work Choice programme which offered specialist disability support and was introduced by DWP in 2010 offers insight into the two approaches (Department for Work and Pensions, 2013). It found that the 'employment agency' approach appeared to be most successful in areas where the relationships were established between providers and large employers at the national level and then consolidated at local level. Employers involved in recruitment via the 'employment agency approach' value how the provider pre-screened specially selected applicants in line with their vacancies. A drawback of such an approach is that the evaluation found it relies upon the presence of large employers who are willing to engage and have the willingness and capacity

to develop strong relationships. (The SBWAs referred to above are an example of such an approach which tends to involve engagement of large employers.) The research also suggested it was less suitable than the ‘individual approach’ in finding employment for participant groups with particular needs. Some smaller specialist providers involved in the research emphasised the need for more tailored employer engagement for groups such as those with autism spectrum disorders or those recovering from a brain injury. Such participants were described as requiring employers who particularly understood their needs or particular roles. Findings from the national evaluation of Talent Match focusing on young people endorse these points, highlighting the importance of ‘fit’ to an employer for those young people facing particular challenges (Green et al, 2015; 2017).

### **Informal contact with employers**

Evaluation of the Moving On Up project (2016) in London found informal contact with employers was important for young black men in entering employment as it can lead to job offers, removing the pressures of formal recruitment processes where they can often do badly. Informal contact is important in helping young black men in developing social capital which many lack. This highlights the importance of opportunities to engage with employers in a range of different settings – whether at school, college or elsewhere.

## **Financial incentives**

### **Impact of free public transport in reducing barriers to employment**

Taylor (2017) compared the experiences of out-of-work partnered parents in the UK and France by conducting interviews with out-of-work couples in Sheffield and Lille (northern France), noting the importance of free public transport for job seekers in Lille. Whereas parents in France stressed the benefit of the public transport subsidies in terms of increasing the radius in which they could look for work and underlined how this helped them to move towards their ideal work-care scenarios, parents interviewed in Sheffield revealed how the limited nature of help with transport costs in the UK was and that this was an important obstacle in terms of travelling to different neighbourhoods to look for work and attend interviews. Taylor (2016) explored the impact of free public transport in more depth highlighting how although jobseekers in the UK were able to be reimbursed by Jobcentre Plus for

travel costs, this still required them to have the money up front to pay for costs which was often not possible. These findings are echoed by the conclusions of several other reports which stress the value of free public transport with regard to transport and poverty. For example, Titheridge et al (2014) demonstrate the strong link between poverty and travel behaviour for different social groups in the UK, with unemployed people, elderly people and women tending to be more restricted in their travel behaviour. This suggests a need for sustained increased support for job seekers including a combination of concessionary fare schemes, wheels to work schemes, bicycle loan schemes and season ticket loans. Although Lucas et al (2008) is now slightly dated, the report analyses the social and monetary value of public transport initiatives in four deprived areas of England and concludes that “public transport for services are a vital component in the social inclusion of individuals and for maintaining the vitality and vibrancy of low-income neighbourhoods” (p.xiv). With regard to employment, the report noted that at local level more needs to be done to systematically evaluate and communicate the social benefit of new transport projects and articulate these in terms of wider social policy objectives. More recently, Raikes (2015) has maintained that the devolution of transport powers in England to city-regions has the potential to impact positively on the lives of citizens as well as save money for central government in the form of higher taxes and lower departmental spending. He notes that “the lack of transport connectivity can often be a barrier to employment, and so there is the potential to fund, for example, bus passes for jobseekers based on the welfare savings and increased taxes that result from their employment” (p.497). In turn, he suggests that city-regions may be able to be rewarded for reducing dependency on benefits. Cats (2017) assesses the impact in Tallinn of the introduction of free public transport for all residents, demonstrating that the scheme has led increased public transport usage and increased mobility among low-income residents; (however, it did not find that employment opportunities increased due to the policy). This suggests that transport availability, accessibility and cost issues are important in facilitating access to work, but are insufficient on their own to guarantee entry to, and progression in, employment.

### **Individual Learner Accounts**

Some evidence exists that individual learner accounts can be important in widening participation in learning through reducing financial barriers to participation. Individual

Learner Accounts were established in England in 2000 but were withdrawn by the Secretary of State in 2001 following higher than expected demand for the scheme, allegations that a large number of account numbers had been extracted from the system and offered for sale and evidence that some learning providers were abusing the scheme leading to low value, poor quality provision. Nonetheless, a report for the Controller and Auditor General found that Individual Learner Accounts were an example of innovative policy-making. The report stated that the policy was successful in attracting considerable new interest in learning, placing an important emphasis on IT. It argued that the scheme was forced to be withdrawn as result of pressure to implement it quickly and inadequate planning, risks in how it was designed and implemented which were ineffectively managed, the relationship with the public-private partner and inadequate monitoring. France introduced personal training accounts (Comptes Personnels de Formation) in 2015 to promote uptake of lifelong learning. They were designed to address the shortcomings of their predecessor, 'The Individual Right to Retrain' which was rarely used (Eurofound, 2019). According to their work history, individuals are entitled to vocational training credits. Following a 2016 reform, the scheme now extends to the self-employed and freelance professionals (Cedefop, 2018). The programme increased uptake of training but has been criticised for increasing the complexity of finances for the training of job seekers. In an effort to make the system easier to access in 2019 the system was changed so credits are measured in Euros rather than hours. This emphasises the importance of ensuring that systems are clear to use.

## Support services/enablers

### Apprenticeships and traineeships

Bivand (2011) stresses the value of apprenticeships to long-term unemployed people; (this implies that traineeships are important too in preparing people without the necessary qualifications for apprenticeships). O'Reilly et al (2015) in their evaluation of policy targeting unemployed young people in the EU underline the need for apprenticeships to provide trainees with high-quality work experience under safe and fair conditions to increase their chances of finding a good quality job. The European Commission (2013) note it is widely acknowledged in the existing literature that apprenticeships positively ease the school-to-work transition. Quintini and Manfredi (2009) demonstrate that the school-to-work transitions are best in countries with

widespread existence of apprenticeships; (albeit different national institutional structures are important here). Bonnal et al (2002) analysed the expansion of apprenticeships in France as a means of tackling youth unemployment. They argue that apprentices "have a distinct advantage" over people leaving vocational school in securing employment (p.426) as the period before finding their first job is shorter. Cahuc et al. (2014) underline the importance of ensuring apprenticeship systems are easy to navigate. Ryan (1998, 2001) concludes that the effectiveness of apprenticeships varies according to gender, arguing that the positive impact of apprenticeships on transitions and pay are not true for women in all countries. They suggest this is primarily because of occupational and sectoral segregation (Ryan, 1998 and 2001).

### Youth guarantees

O'Reilly et al (2015) assess five characteristics of youth unemployment across Europe: flexibility, education, migration, family legacies and EU Policy. In terms of EU policy, they underline the potential of youth guarantees - schemes providing guaranteed entitlement to a job, training, or education for a defined group of young people together with an obligation for a Public Employment Service or another public authority to provide the services and/or implement the programs within a given period of time - in helping young people into work. They cite the examples of Finland and Sweden where youth guarantees have resulted in lower unemployment. In Finland the Youth Guarantee has led to a significant reduction in youth unemployment with young people on the scheme entering either direct employment assistance or further training leading to a job (European Commission, 2014). A 2011 evaluation of unemployed young people aged 24 who participated in the Swedish Youth Guarantee in 2008 concluded participants found a job faster than participants in a control group in other Public Employment Service (PES) measures (Eurofound, 2012a, 2012b). Eurofound (2012b) argues that strengths of youth guarantees include: enabling young people to make more informed decisions about their transition to work (in terms of their personal development plan and needs assessment); and improving the quality and speed of services provided to young people. Youth Guarantees work best with young people who are already work ready rather than 'hard-to-help' unemployed groups (Eurofound, 2012b). Nonetheless, O'Reilly et al (2015) argue that in spite of the positive impact of youth guarantees in these Nordic countries, only limited evidence exists concerning their long-term effectiveness.

They call for improved monitoring and impact evaluation of the schemes. Existing studies indicate that youth guarantees are more effective with new labour market entrants than for long-term unemployed young people (Eurofound, 2012a, 2012c). O'Reilly et al argue that "given the significant share of young people who fall out of the reach of employment services in many countries, it would seem important to extend participation of these young people, including through flexible design and outreach strategies" (p.11). They also underline the need for sufficient public or private sector investment in youth guarantees. Although they acknowledge that Youth Guarantees are "resource intensive" and require "substantial" public or private sector investment, they underline that the costs should be seen against the much higher cost overall of NEETs in EU budgets (p.11). They also stress the importance of Public Employment Services providing individual young people with "appropriate advice on job, education, and training opportunities most relevant to their own needs" (p.11). O'Reilly et al (2015) also consider the difficulties of comparing programmes cross-nationally. As Kluve et al (2006) point out, this can be problematic in view of different programme designs, national frameworks, conditions, and target groups. Based on a review of the evidence (Card, Kluve, & Weber, 2010; Martin & Grubb, 2001), they stress positive medium run effects of publicly sponsored training. They stress the need for employers and local communities to be mobilised in order to ensure training is high quality and tailored to the labour market needs of firms' skill demands, which is critical for young people entering sustainable employment.

### **Skills for mentoring and volunteering**

Crisp et al (2012) conducted a study on worklessness and employability among young people for the Big Lottery Fund in order to inform discussions on areas of potential intervention. The study is based on a literature review and interviews with stakeholders. In relation to the relationship between volunteering and employment, a section of the literature review considers volunteering as a route into employment. It highlights several work-related benefits of volunteering. Of particular interest is the discussion on mentoring and volunteering. The report states some "limited" evidence exists of using mentoring in conjunction with volunteering to tackle worklessness. A stakeholder organisation interviewed as part of the study had recently established a pilot programme involving ex-offenders volunteering to mentor young people (aged 16-30) from prison

to community. It aimed to engage ex-prisoners, supporting them to live crime free and move into education, training or employment. An internal evaluation of the pilot noted that mentors were effective in engaging the young people and supporting them to live crime free but that they did not always have the skills or experience necessary to provide the support required with accessing employment opportunities. As a result, the programme design was altered with mentors focusing on supporting young people to live crime-free and trained volunteers and staff being recruited to provide support with moving into education, training or employment.



## 5. Employer Engagement and Job Matching (when individuals are job-ready and move into employment)

### Information, advice and guidance (IAG); Training and skills

#### In-firm/on-the-job training

In-firm / on-the-job training programmes tend to have a more positive impact on supporting job seekers into employment than classroom-based training programmes with employer co-design and activities that closely mirror actual jobs being crucial to this (What Works Centre for Local Economic Growth, 2016, p.30). In their review of evidence on different programmes, the What Works Centre for Economic Growth (2016) notes that workplace-focused training may be more effective due to a range of factors. First, “when employers engage directly with developing course content and with delivery, that content may be more relevant and useful in the marketplace” (p.27). Secondly, as underlined by Schiller (1978) in-firm training provides trainees with firm-specific skills and knowledge that, in turn, increases the likelihood they will be employed by the firm following completion of the programme. This mirrored the finding of The What Works Centre for Local Economic Growth (2014) that on-the-job training mirroring actual jobs outperformed classroom-based learning (see also Green et al [2015]). Polidano and Tabasso (2013) stress the importance of workplace-based training and experience in successful employment entry and that vocational education and training (VET) courses which include a short-term structured workplace learning element lead to better transitions from education to work than those which are solely classroom based. In Australia, Polidano and Tabasso found classroom-based VET courses with workplace learning were associated with individuals earning an extra \$AU 25–33 per week, in turn reducing the risk of poverty. Green et al (2015) stress that at city level it would therefore be beneficial if local employers offer more opportunities for short-term workplace learning. They underline that this is likely to lead to increased costs for employers and suggest financial inducements (or other incentives) are likely to be necessary to engage employers.

#### Skill-intensive training is most effective when programmes are longer

The What Works Centre for Local Economic Growth (2016) argue after reviewing programmes varying in length from ten days up to three years that although a lock-in effect can occur where participants reduce their job-searching activity while completing training, longer-term studies tend to result in longer employment periods but that benefits typically play out over a longer time frame. Based on a French comparative evaluation of public training programmes by Crepon et al (2007), the What Works Centre for Local Economic Growth (2016) argues that the reason longer employment periods appear more successful is due to increased job-matching. A longer study in Germany by Fitzenberger et al (2010) suggests that after the initial locking in period, long-term programmes deliver more persistent, longer term effects on employment levels than shorter programmes (see What Works Centre for Local Economic Growth [2016] for details of more studies on this topic).

The Prince’s Initiative for Mature Enterprise (2015) argues that improved job search and job matching support is necessary for older workers as at present older workers people often carry out job search on their own and where they do find employment, they are more likely than other groups of jobseekers to take types of employment that may not be the best fit for their needs and desires, impacting on their job sustainability.

#### Investment in support organisations to develop bridging and linking networks

The channels employers use when recruiting staff influence the variety, quality and size of the pool of people they have to select from, and are important in ensuring equality among job seekers in terms of the range of opportunities available to them. Social networks have historically been an important source of information for jobseekers on employment opportunities and informal methods remain important for job search. Evidence from the Employer Perspectives Survey (2016) indicates that employers were more likely to make use of internal resources, such as word of mouth or personal recommendations (79%), placing adverts on their website (54%) and through social media

(46%), as opposed to external resources (Shury et al., 2017). Disadvantaged job seekers have long been considered to be disproportionately negatively impacted in accessing information due to how it circulates on social networks with a socio-economic and geographical bias towards network members with similar experiences (Granovetter, 1974; Niles and Hanson, 2003). Green et al (2013) argue that this problem becomes more acute when the labour market is weaker and employers are consequently likely to use informal recruitment methods more frequently, particularly for low-skilled jobs. Green et al (2015) contend there is a need for services to expand jobseekers' knowledge of different recruitment channels, and where they should look for different types of jobs. Afridi (2011, pp. 13) argues on the basis of a review of the evidence that poverty cannot be addressed by participation in existing social networks.

### The 'digital divide' and resources to address it

Access to and the ability to use the internet is increasingly important in finding Labour Market Information (LMI), job search, recruitment and screening. However, concern has been expressed by researchers (e.g. Green et al, 2015; Green et al, 2012; Green et al, 2011; Tremblay and Boyle, 2016) that a 'digital divide' has appeared between jobseekers with access to the internet and information and communications technologies to look for job opportunities and to pursue them, and those who have little or no access. Access to publicly available computers is therefore important to facilitate job search (see Case Study 7). As Green et al (2012) argue the digital divide is multifaceted, influenced by socio-economic and educational inequalities and by choice (i.e. people who have internet access but decide not to use it). Green et al (2011) identified disparities in internet access according to ethnicity and occupation. Their analysis of the Labour Force Survey revealed use of the internet is higher than average among Indian jobseekers but lower than average among than average among Pakistani and Bangladeshi jobseekers. Adam et al (2011) in their review of digital access among Jobcentre Plus claimants, underlined how different interventions are required over the short, medium and longer-term for the 'unaware', the 'unready', the 'uninterested' and the 'unable' to facilitate using the internet in order to access LMI, to search and apply for jobs, and to engage with other services. Examples of services that have been set up to address this issue include: the 'My World of Work' from Skills Development Scotland, the national careers service website for Scotland which provides online information and resources

for individuals in Scotland who are seeking work and/or to develop their careers. Applications enable individuals' to assess their strengths, write CVs, and gain advice on interview techniques and search for jobs. Similar information is provided by The National Careers Service website (National Careers Service). At the regional level, Liverpool City Region Labour Market Information Service established by the Employment and Skills Board and funded by the Skills Funding Agency's City Skills Fund links research, data and analysis with sector based consultations with local businesses and skills providers to help articulate the needs of the demand-side of the economy to help inform education and training providers. Nonetheless, as Green et al (2015) argue, although it is possible to collect statistics on the use of such services, assessing their direct impact on job entry is complex.

### Case study 7: A jobseeker using the Coventry Job Shop for access to computers and other services

Following ten years in employment Leroy has been unemployed on JSA for nearly 6 months since he was made redundant when his previous employer lost a major contract. He has previous experience of unemployment – which was “not too bad” – but he continues to search for jobs as a forklift driver, making around ten applications per week. He has had a few interviews but has been unsuccessful to date. He definitely wants to work locally – as transport is a “hassle” and other places are “too far”. Nevertheless, he remains motivated and feels it is “just a waiting game” to get back into employment. He prefers the Job Shop (see Case Study 8 for further details) rather than Jobcentre Plus as he likes the more relaxed atmosphere where there is “more time to apply properly”. He found the staff helpful and is able to pop in every day to use the computers: “The help at Job Shop is very good; staff come and show you how to use the computers. You can stay for an hour but even if you stay over no on kicks you off a computer.”

This case emphasises how individuals value working at their own pace with access to computers and with friendly staff available to provide guidance.

### Case study 8: The Coventry Job Shop

Coventry City Council set up the Job Shop in 2012 with core funding, topped up with European grant money. The aim was to close the gap between local and national unemployment rates.

Occupying prominent premises in the city centre, it is a universal service for all Coventry residents, whether they are in or out of work. It provides dedicated 1 to 1 support, a money advice service, barrier breaking support (including support with travel costs, vouchers for interview clothes, etc.), free computers (with advisors able to provide support), tailored support for people with disabilities and health conditions and an employer hub which focuses on engaging businesses to generate direct employment opportunities for Job Shop customers – including via hosting recruitment events at the Job Shop for large employers, and which also plays a key role in increasing wages. Customers can engage with Job Shop services as much or as little as they want and there is no mandate to attend or to apply for jobs. The Job Shop was set up to be a hub with a range of providers complementing the work of staff in the Job Shop. Between April 2012 and August 2018 the total footfall for the Job Shop was 195,688 and 7,674 people into jobs. Key success factors are end to end support for individuals, holistic support and partnership working.

(From Coventry City Council Evaluation of Employment Support, 2012-2018)

### ALMPs complemented by additional demand-side measures in areas of high unemployment

Active labour market programmes (ALMPs) generally include at least one supply-side measure such as job search and training and/or work placements, sometimes in conjunction with benefits sanctions for non-compliance. However, as McVicar and Podivinsky (2010) underline analysis of ALMPs reveals that irrespective of support services the local labour demand context is an important factor in whether a programme will be successful.

### Provision of apprenticeships

Greene et al. (2015, pp.25-26) provide a review of the national and international literature on apprenticeships. The Richard Review of Apprenticeships (2012) concluded that apprenticeships are most suitable for people not having had a job (generally, young people) and who need substantial training. Green et al (2015) argue apprenticeships are most successful when they are based on strong partnerships and include a strong commitment from employers. Fuller and Rizvi (2012) evaluate an example of such a scheme - an apprenticeship scheme developed by the Southampton Skills Development Zone which sought to address local skills and employment needs through four public sector employers working with partners to create new training and employment opportunities for local unemployed 18 to 25-year-olds. It involved a partnership between Jobcentre Plus (JCP), employers, a training provider and a college. JCP advisors selected the participants who were then given access to pre-employment training, taster days with employers, careers events, and support throughout the recruitment process. The apprentices, who had been out-of-work for at least six months, were very positive about the scheme. They argued that the scheme had significantly improved their CV and their chances in the labour market, provided them with increased self-confidence and self-esteem expanded their inter-personal skills. The scheme had a high success rate with over three quarters of participants subsequently gaining employment, mostly with the apprentice employer. Whilst Fuller and Ritvi (2012) note these outcomes could not be assessed against a comparator group, the high success rate suggests locally designed apprenticeship schemes can have a positive impact (Green et al, 2015).

### Employer engagement

#### Use of sports-based employability programmes to offer work experience

Palmer and Micallef (no date given) in their review of football-based employability programmes in the UK praised the inclusion of the opportunity for participants to undertake pertinent work experience through either volunteering or part-/fulltime work following completion of the programme. They compared the employment and crime re-offending rates of participants completing the programme against national statistics so as to create a Social Return on Investment (SROI) ratio, in which an overall social value was formed for each organisation. “Across

all programmes a positive ratio was found ranging from 1:1.27 to 1:9.07” (p.3).

### **A more flexible and proactive approach from employers to recruiting older workers**

The Centre for Local Economic Strategies (2017) in their review of the experiences of people aged over fifty who are out of work or in insecure employment conclude that employers offering more flexible open opportunities and taking a more proactive approach in which they promote positive messages about employing older workers is central to addressing the challenges faced by older workers.

### **Joined-up offer**

The OECD (2013) underlines how employers can be confused by the array of employer programmes and possible projects and programmes. Drawing the programmes together under a common identity can facilitate employer involvement.

### **Ring-fencing of jobs for local people**

Green et al (2015) argue ring-fencing of jobs for local people is an important way of ensuring job seekers are connected to jobs at the local level and supported to move into employment (see also the later discussion on ‘Mechanisms requiring employers to recruit locally’). They note ring-fencing of jobs is easier with new developments by major employers that involve the creation of relatively large numbers of jobs. McQuaid et al. (2005) analyse an example of such a project - the Alloa Initiative: a local, partnership-based employability training and job guarantee scheme developed in partnership with Tesco, prior to the opening of a new store. The initiative funded by the New Deal and Training for Work, involved Tesco (as the employer), Jobcentre Plus, the local authority, the local enterprise company and a private sector organisation which co-ordinated the initiative’s activities. Features of the scheme included an eight-week pre-employment Employability Training Course (ETC), work placements at other stores, and childcare support and public transport subsidies to facilitate take-up. Importantly, McQuaid et al. (2005), note there was also a ‘job guarantee’: all trainees who completed the eight week training programme were guaranteed jobs at the store, with positions, pay and working hours agreed between the company and trainees before the course started. The job guarantee acted as an incentive to programme participants to attend and complete the training course. McQuaid et al. (2005) also underlined how access to jobs

was aided by the standard selection procedures being changed, with supportive interviews and a flexible discussion-based approach adopted rather than competency-based assessment. Green et al (2015) discuss the results of several other similar training initiatives. They also point out that it is standard practice to use Planning Obligations and Agreements to formally link new developments and the provision of employment opportunities for local residents. For example, they underline how 306 jobs were created for local residents (54% of which were taken up by priority area residents in the new Library of Birmingham with jobs and skills requirements being stipulated in the contract). They note how a mandatory procurement policy for jobs and skills now exists at Birmingham City Council for procurements above thresholds. The Birmingham Employment Access Team supports this process. MacFarlane in conjunction with Community Development Consultants (2000) evidences the strong financial contribution this has made to the budget for training and recruitment activity in Greenwich. Shared Intelligence (2011) cites the strong customer focus of Greenwich Local Labour and Business working in conjunction with contractors as a key factor in its success.

## **Financial incentives**

### **Increased earnings - top ups, living wages, tax breaks**

In the UK, under the New Labour government in-work support through the use of tax credits grew in importance compared to wages as an income source for families on low incomes (Hirsch and Valadez, 2014). Conversely, the growth in zero-hours contracts has increased income instability (CIPD, 2013; Pennycook et al, 2013). Gardiner (1997) assessed 42 welfare-to-work programmes in the UK, finding that the two most effective schemes (Jobmatch and Jobfinder’s Grant) in terms of value for money, participation and the number of participants who found work, both provided financial incentives to individuals when they entered employment. Green et al (2015) note a gap exists in terms of robust evidence of how a living wage impacts on employment entry. Nonetheless, Fairris (2005) indicates that in Los Angeles living wage companies increase starting wages for the lowest wage occupations first. However, other evidence from Los Angeles (Fairris and Fernandes Bujanda, 2008) suggests that employers may change their hiring patterns following the introduction of the living wage, employing workers with somewhat different characteristics and greater productivity. Overall evidence from cities in the USA, suggests



that living wages generally result in reduced employment among the lowest skilled workers and higher wages for employees remaining in employment Newmark et al, 2012).

### Employer subsidies

Subsidies to employers can help to mitigate employers' risk in employing workers who they would not normally have shortlisted due to a lack of experience. A 1990s review of wage subsidy schemes in the UK, as well as evidence from Australia (Gardiner, 1997), suggests many employers do not take-up wage subsidy schemes. Similarly in the UK, in a review of the evidence Wilson and Bivand (2014) conclude that successive employer subsidy programmes have been dogged by low take up or high levels of deadweight. However, their conclusion across several programmes is that employer subsidies tend to have positive impacts upon those who benefit and can play an important role in hiring disadvantaged groups (as the Future Jobs Fund [FJF] experience shows), but they need to be tightly targeted on those who have been out of work for some time, have low employment prospects and are actively seeking work. In the case of the FJF, Fishwick et al (2011) contend, based on their independent evaluation of the FJF programme, that even short subsidised jobs can enable participants to subsequently gain employment in the open labour market. They underline how it was important for participants that FJF was considered to differ from work experience and unpaid placements, resulting in more positive attitudes among participants towards the job and other employees. DWP (2012) analysis underlined the substantial and positive impact of FJF on the chances of participants being employed and/or off benefit. "At 104 weeks following the start of their FJF job, participants were less likely to be in receipt of welfare support by 7 percentage points (or 16% less likely) and more likely to be in unsubsidised employment by 11 percentage points (or 27% more likely) per participant than they would have been had they not participated" (p.67).

## Support services/enablers

### Transport-related interventions

Green et al (2015) note that "although support services and enablers operate across a range of policy domains, transport-related interventions, addressing issues of transport availability and cost, are especially important at employment entry stage" (p.31). Mackie et al (2012) underline the importance of effective and affordable bus

provision for lower socio-economic groups. Inadequate public transport may cause jobseekers not to take-up employment (Mackie et al, 2012, Green et al, 2015). People transitioning into employment are primarily concerned about transport affordability with knowledge of public transport services representing a secondary concern (Green et al, 2015). "At local level Neighbourhood Travel Teams (NTTs) with a local knowledge of neighbourhoods and the location of jobs, can play an important role in helping address these problems through information provision on transport services, personal travel advice, personal journey plans (including how to get from A to B and when, where and how to access services), provision of free travel passes where necessary, travel buddying (the travel officer accompanies the client on their first journey to give them extra confidence and support), feedback to transport operators on transport gaps, service demands, etc." (Green et al, 2015, p.31). Lucas (2011) evaluated NTTs established in five Merseyside local authorities in 2006, showing how travel passes were requested by jobseekers more frequently than journey plans. The scheme can be considered to have led to financial savings compared to the individual cost of basic Jobseeker's Allowance although not all of the savings can be attributed to the transport scheme due to the impact of other aspects of the NTT programme e.g. training. Lucas (2011) underlines the need for long-term commitment and large-scale funding for such schemes to succeed. MVA (2014) report on the Workwise Initiative in the West Midlands which aimed to increase usage of public transport in order to help unemployed people to find, enter and remain in work, encouraging them to adopt sustainable travel habits, ensure access to employment sites and better integrate the transport system with Jobcentre Plus requirements. They particularly considered the Connecting Communities initiative operating from the Chelmsley Wood Jobcentre. Supporting Workwise through a monthly travel pass compared to savings in JSA over the same period resulted in net cost savings of £180-£230 per client (excluding impact of other policy supporting jobseekers into employment). It demonstrated the importance of local partnership approaches.

### Childcare

Green et al (2015) underline the importance of childcare support at all stages of the employment pathway but particularly when people are moving into employment. Lack of capacity and gaps in provision commonly impact on parents' ability to take up work (McQuaid et al, 2009), especially in

the case of lone parents (see Case Study 9). Reviewing the Working for Families Initiative in Scotland, McQuaid et al underlined the importance of a holistic approach linking childcare and employment support through a keyworker. Green et al (2015) argue this demonstrates “the importance of support services working together and the value of a personalised caseworker approach to help achieve this”. Yeandle et al (2002) underlined the importance of care provided by family in Sheffield and Canterbury. Taylor (2017) underlined how a lack of available family support was a key factor in why out-of-work partnered mothers in Sheffield were reluctant to enter employment, due to a lack of trust of formal childcare services. Yeandle et al’s (2002) argument for investment in employer-community initiatives and improved communication between employers and care providers still appears valid.

### **Case study 9: Lone parent desperate to work but for whom childcare is a key barrier**

Lauren is thirty and has two children (aged four and two). She has a strong work history having worked in retail while studying at college. Then she worked in the care sector for seven years before having her first child. A second child followed nearly three years later. On returning to work after maternity leave her employer required her to do two weeks training. However, the training course was from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Lauren could not attend because she had no partner or other family members to help with childcare and she could not access any suitable formal childcare. As a result, the employer asked her to leave. Since then she has since been unemployed.

By far the biggest challenge for Lauren getting back into employment is finding suitable childcare. She gets 15 hours per week free childcare for her two-year old but then would need to source care for the rest of the time and for her older child. She feels there is very little part-time work available. She would like to work at a major hospital in Birmingham but cannot do so at the moment because the limited times when she could access the onsite nursery there do not match the hours of posts she could apply for.

Her experience of the Jobcentre has been positive as she feels that her predicament of being very motivated to work but being compromised by childcare issues is understood. She hates being reliant on benefits: “Some people have always been unemployed and don’t know any different, it’s just free money, isn’t it. From my personal view I hate being on benefits because I have always worked.”

Being reliant on benefits Lauren’s income is limited. She says: “Most of my money goes on trying to keep the kids warm. The draught from the windows is awful.” With anti-social behaviour rife and a drug culture on the estate she feels increasingly “terrified ... it has given me anxiety and depression” and she is concerned that her children can see this.

This example shows how childcare issues can be a major barrier to employment, particularly for lone parents. It illustrates how an individual with previous employment experience and a strong motivation to work can find it extremely difficult to find suitable employment that temporally and spatially fits with their childcare commitments. It also shows how despite support and understanding from the Jobcentre a low income from benefits, poor housing and anti-social behaviour can take a toll on individual well-being, that is transmitted from a parent to children.

### **Health services**

Green et al (2015) argue people with disabilities/health problems need additional support throughout the employment pathway. Evaluation of the People into Employment Project in Sunderland which was established in 2000 to support people with disabilities and former carers into employment through mobilising, matching, mediating and supporting clients and employers, indicated the cost of supporting participants into employment was favourably comparable with the cost of the New Deal for Disabled People (Arksey, 2003). Success factors underlined include: tailored job-search actions, accompaniment of clients to job interviews, good job matching and ongoing practical/emotional support for employers and clients. In a Canadian study, Freeze et al (1999) stressed the importance of individualised support as well as a commitment from employers to successfully place people with disabilities in employment. Green et al (2015) note that cross-national differences between benefit regime and health services as well as differences between older and current systems in the UK are likely to impact on the transferability of findings.

## 6. In-work Support and Aftercare (with either the same employer or another employer)

### Information, advice and guidance (IAG); Training and skills

#### Types of employment entry and in-work support and aftercare needs

In-work support aims to increase the length of time and individual spends in employment and is likely to be concerned also with wage progression (What Works Centre for Local Economic Growth, 2019). In-work support for sustaining (and progressing) in employment is likely to vary by the character of initial job entry. Where prospects for retaining employment and prospects for progression are limited more in-work support is likely to be needed to avoid a 'lock in' to low wages. Conversely, where there are clear progression pathways within an internal labour market the intensity of in-work support required is likely to be less *ceteris paribus* because a supporting infrastructure is generally 'built in' (Sissons et al., 2016).

#### In-work support through intermediaries to improve retention

Green et al (2015) note IAG is predominantly associated with helping people into work but can be important in relation to in-work support. Reviewing the literature, they suggest it can be important in remaining in employment for disadvantaged groups, e.g. disabled people/carers (Arksey, 2003); ethnic minorities, lone parents and people experiencing substance misuse (Metsch et al, 1999). Arksey (2003) conducted a qualitative study of factors influencing unemployment and employment retention for disabled people and their carers. Based on analysis of the People into Employment programme in Sunderland, they found that appropriate and timely IAG from intermediaries could be considered to be successful in addressing internal (work-based) and external issues (circumstance-based) that threatened the capacity of vulnerable employees to remain in employment. Access to enabling support services (as discussed further below) was crucial. Lee and Cassell (2008) suggest the value of IAG within community-based learning with regard to in-work support but as Green et al (2015) point out they do not quantify the impact of IAG and further

research is needed. Meadows (2008) argues that entering and remaining in work are strongly impacted by local factors as workers seek employment in a limited geographic area. This is restricted further the lower the wage and socio-economic status of the job. Meadows argues that IAG policies and interventions are therefore required which acknowledge the importance of local factors but seek to encourage jobseekers to expand the geographical remit of their job search. Evaluation of the 'Moving On Up' Project with young black men in London (2016) underlined the importance of in-work support in moving this group into sustained employment.

#### The Employment, Retention and Advancement pilot

A major intervention to assess developing employment services aimed at sustainability of employment entries was the Employment, Retention and Advancement (ERA) pilot. The UK ERA drew heavily on delivery models developed in the US. In the UK ERA targeted two groups: the long-term unemployed and lone parents. The programme provided a range of support for individuals including access to job coaching, services and guidance, and a financial incentive (Hendra et al, 2011). As noted by Sissons et al (2016), ERA was extensively evaluated, with the evaluation demonstrating positive outcomes (Hendra et al, 2011). The What Works Centre for Local Economic Growth (2019) conclude that the effects of in-work support programmes vary across and within groups. In the ERA pilot gains faded over-time for the lone parents group (Hendra et al, 2011). The training element of the ERA programme appeared less successful than other elements, but there is no consistent evidence on which elements of in-work support are more effective. Although the programme increased training take-up, those that undertook training did not experience earnings gains. This may be because training was not well-aligned to local labour market opportunities or because there was insufficient complementary support to help individuals make a switch to a better paying role following training completion (Ray et al, 2014). There is no consistent evidence on which elements of in-work support are more effective (What Works Centre for Local Economic Growth, 2019).

### **Vocational and non-vocational skills development (lifelong learning and community-based learning)**

Green et al (2015) note the crucial role of training and development in facilitating the retention of employees, research into the role of training in retention is limited. "Training once in the workplace does not tend to be a major element of public policy approaches towards retention (though there are a number which are associated with progression, [...], which would also support retention). At this stage training is more likely to be employer-funded and there is very little evidence on these internal processes or their results" P.37). Nonetheless, several training and skills development initiatives using lifelong learning or community-based learning can be identified. Sharma and Monteiro (2010) examine the potential of a lifelong learning model in New Zealand as a holistic means of equipping individuals longer-term for employment in knowledge-based or tertiary sectors. They outline four types of lifelong learning which might improve employment retention but Green et al (2015) point out weaknesses with the strength of the research and question the extent to which the wider skills could be used by employers adopting a short-term approach. McTier and McGregor (2011) suggest a role for community-based learning to improve retention, but robust performance measurement mechanisms need to be adopted to demonstrate its value. Holzer and Martinson (2005) analysed the skills development strategies implemented via community colleges in the US, showing certification valued by employers was the most effective type of training and education.

### **Link between volunteering and learning**

In 2014 the CIPD published a report considering how employees develop through participating in volunteering schemes. It was based on focus groups and interviews with employee volunteers and charities in thirteen case study organisations of various sizes in a range of societies and industries. It outlines the main characteristics of employee volunteering activities in a series of case study organisations in the UK. Employers decided to offer employee volunteering schemes to: enable employees to give something back to the community; enhance employee development; drive employee engagement; build reputation and brand; supporting future workforce recruitment; link to the organisation's core values (p.12). The ten most frequently mentioned volunteering activities were: one-to-one mentoring, skills workshops, schools career talks, community

youth projects, mentoring charity leaders, school governor/trustee position, supporting charity infrastructure, pro bono work, offering work experience, and volunteer days. The report identified a clear link between volunteering and learning, suggesting that "volunteering provides a viable alternative to traditional forms of employee development" (p.28). In particular, it underlines how volunteering can enable employees to develop the skills needed by individuals and organisations in the changing workplace and society. The report shows a strong link between volunteering and developing a wider perspective of the world and their community. The potential gains from volunteering apply to people throughout the career ladder. Volunteering also offers employees the opportunity to unlock their potential through participating in projects that are not on offer in their existing role due to a lack of opportunities or a perceived lack of experience. The report stresses that whilst volunteering is clearly beneficial to employees these benefits may not be obvious to people who are not used to volunteering or do not consider volunteering to be an important learning opportunity. As a result, the authors stress the importance of communicating the link between volunteering and learning in a clear manner, particularly to managers. Whilst the report acknowledges that individuals may have personal motivations for volunteering that are not linked to career development, it stresses that "organisations should not shy away from explicitly outlining the development benefits of volunteering" as if employees are provided with more information about how volunteering could support them to develop key skills recognised in the workplace, this could help them to better choose volunteering activities which correspond to their personal and career goals (p.29).

## **Employer engagement**

### **Changing expectations about the role of employers and their Human Resource Management activities**

The growing emphasis on sustainability of employment creates different expectations around the role of employers and their human resource management (HRM) activities. In-work support beyond immediate initial job entry suggests the need for employers to consider not only short-term needs of workers, but also a longer-term commitment and job redesign (Sissons and Green, 2017).



### **Strong commitment from employers to training addressing local employers' needs**

Green et al (2015) identify weaknesses in the quantity and quality of research on this topic. They note that the available literature indicates employer engagement is central to the success of employment retention initiatives. Lee and Cassell (2008) in their comparison of Learning Representative initiatives in the UK and New Zealand argue that committed employer engagement is crucial to the effectiveness of workplace-based training and their subsequent impact on retention. However, they underline that employers may be reluctant to engage in such training if they do not feel that it will be beneficial for them. This fits with Meadows' (2008) finding that support/provision is most successful when it is based on and engaged with the needs of local employers. Meadows suggests training is most effective when involving employer-engagement and part of a well-established partnership.

### **The role of employer engagement staff in street level organisations**

Wright (2012) has identified employers as the most significant 'upstream' actors in recruitment of disadvantaged groups. Ingold (2018) highlights the importance of, but relative lack of knowledge about, the boundary spanning role of staff with an employer engagement remit. Based on interviews with staff involved in the Work Programme she found that their activities involved three key activities: first, business-to-business type 'sales' approaches to employers; secondly, matching clients to employers' requirements through intra-organisational interactions; and thirdly, building and maintenance of intra-organisational trust relationships with employers. She concluded that successfully striking the balance between the interests of unemployed individuals and employers is the greatest challenge for further development of 'demand-oriented' active labour market policies (ALMPs).

### **Distinguishing employer engagement and employer involvement – and the benefits of both**

In the National Evaluation of the Talent Match (TM) programme Green et al. (2015) made a distinction between employer involvement and employer engagement. Employer involvement entailed the strategic involvement of employers, employers' organisations, business-led organisations and recruitment agencies in guiding the activities of Talent Match partnerships. They identified four main ways employers may be involved in strategic activities of TM (some of which can be quite time consuming): direct

involvement on the core partnership; through membership of a TM employer forum or sub-group; through providing strategic or operational advice to a delivery organisation; and finally through more arms-length involvement in guiding specific TM activities, for example, how to engage with employers. Learning from employer perspectives brings a kind of 'business realism' to the partnerships. It gives them an insight into what employers want and reminds them that while TM is focused on the needs and aspirations of beneficiaries, these needs and aspirations do not exist in a vacuum, and employers play a key role in fulfilling these aspirations. For employers, involvement can give them a new perspective on the lived-experiences of often marginalised young people, who, with some support, can become part of their workforce of the future. As emphasised by Orton et al. (2018) the TM experience demonstrates that it is perfectly feasible for employers to be involved in ALMP not merely as passive recipients of job-ready candidates but as proactive strategic partners, with benefits for employers, jobseekers and programme providers. In contrast, employer engagement focused on the practical issues of making contact with employers to raise awareness of TM and to encourage them to offer jobs, work placements and other employment-related opportunities to TM beneficiaries. Employer engagement can be pro-active and demand-side led, comprising identification of vacancies and awareness-raising in sectors or occupations where there is likely to be future demand for workers and 'directing' beneficiaries to such opportunities. It can also be reactive and supply-side led, focusing on the identification of the employment preferences of beneficiaries and then finding an employer match that 'fits' those preferences. The case study TM partnerships investigated for the thematic study used a mix of these two approaches. Key learning points from TM are that reputation and trust are very important in relationships with employers and can take time to build. They can be destroyed easily and so it was important that TM partnerships are open and honest in their dealings with employers.

### **Instrumental and relational engagement of employers**

In a study of employer engagement in active labour market programmes in the UK and Denmark based on 103 in-depth semi-structured qualitative interviews with employers and organisations delivering active labour market programmes (ALMPs) Ingold et al (2017) make a distinction between 'instrumental' and 'relational' engagement of employers.



Instrumental engagement is ad hoc in nature whereas relational engagement is in-depth and sustained, based on trust, strong interpersonal relations, providers' involvement in employers' workforce planning and increased opportunities for disadvantaged groups. A key reason for not engaging in ALMPs in both the UK and Denmark was that employers' perceived them as inappropriate to their needs. They were also dissatisfied about receiving large volumes of applications from individuals applying to meet benefit conditionality and entitlement requirements, as opposed to have an interest in vacancies. Other reasons for employers not engaging with ALMPs were the large number of programmes and providers, a lack of knowledge about the specific value of different programmes and how to access them. In particular, employers in the UK complained about being contacted by too many different organisations. On the basis of their findings Ingold et al (2017) conclude that less complex, fragmented programmes would make it easier for employers to engage, as would greater continuity and stability of programmes. At the current time the study suggests that ALMPs are not working very effectively for employers. The evidence indicates that a simpler system with relationships built on mutual trust would be an appropriate way forward.

### **'Fit' between recruits and employers**

The evidence from the TM case study on Employer Involvement and Engagement (Green et al., 2015) highlights that entry to employment is more likely to be sustained if there is a good 'fit' with the role and the employer. Employers particularly praised TM's 'pre-screening' approach of taking time to match a suitable young person to a suitable job, which reduced the burden on employers. This is in contrast to a more 'numbers-driven' approach which can result in employers seeing large numbers of unsuitable candidates for jobs that they were not particularly interested in or qualified for (see also Green [2017]). (It is important to note here that TM is a voluntary programme, whereas in mandatory programmes job seekers may be required to apply for a certain number of jobs over a fixed period and this can lead to employers receiving unsuitable applicants.)

### **Mechanisms requiring employers to recruit locally**

There is a body of research on mechanisms such as Planning Agreements (UK) and Development Agreements (US) in contributing to the retention of local workers (MacFarlane with

local community consultants, 2000; Fitzgerald, 2004). Fitzgerald underlines the importance of 'workforce intermediaries' in ensuring agreement benefit the local workforce. While et al. (2016) highlight that major development projects can be an important source of local employment and training opportunities because of relatively long lead-in times and opportunities to develop required employment and skills support and powers to lever benefits through procurement and Section 106 agreements, but that these opportunities to not come about automatically. They recommend that local authorities should make full use of policy levers in procurement and planning to maximise those opportunities and note that city-regional co-ordination can help overcome barriers to local intervention. They also highlight that explicit targeting of priority groups is often needed to support people with more complex needs. They also suggest that in a context of greater devolution to city-region level proactive local intervention could be incentivised and rewarded by allowing local authorities to receive directly some of the welfare savings when people move into work.

### **Promoting employer awareness of national employment programmes**

Public Health England's (2014) report into how employment opportunities and retention can be improved for people with a long-term health condition or disability argues it is important that local authorities promote local employer awareness of national employment programmes, such as Access to Work which can provide financial support to businesses to support employees with a disability or long term physical or mental health condition to stay in work.

### **Importance of collaboration between learning and development, human resources and corporate and social responsibility professionals**

The 2014 CIPD report on the benefits of employee volunteering activities emphasises the crucial nature of strong collaboration and an understanding of the true value of volunteering activities by learning and development, human resources and corporate and social responsibility professionals for organisations to realise the full benefit of volunteering. Through working together to coordinate activities, teams can strengthen the strategic value of volunteering within their organisation, addressing the risk that volunteering activities will be isolated and labelled community or learning activities.

## Financial incentives

### A role for financial incentives in retention – alongside other features

As noted in an international evidence review on progression by Sissons et al (2016), there is some robust evidence relating to retention from the Employment, Retention and Advancement (ERA) pilot. ERA targeted two groups – lone parents and the long-term unemployed and provided a range of support. The financial incentive included in ERA was a work retention bonus payment of £400 every 17 weeks for working 30 hours a week or more (reaching a maximum of £2,400). Financial support for training was also available (up to £1,000) and a training bonus payment was made on course completion. The experience of ERA suggests that some combination of services and financial incentives can generate positive impacts (Ray et al, 2014).

### Increased earnings - tax credits

Generally implemented nationally, policies aiming to improve job retention through financial incentives are generally administered through the benefits system and target low-income households. They can generally be considered to have a positive impact on employment retention (Green et al, 2015). Eissa and Liebman, 1996 and Meyer and Rosenbaum, 2001 indicate that the Earned Income Federal Tax Credit (which provides a 40% earnings subsidy to low-income working parents up to \$10,000 dollars has raised employment levels among low-income mothers. Zabel et al (2010) evaluated the Self-Sufficiency project - a voluntary project in Canada addressing lone parents in two provinces where participants were given twelve months from entering the project to find full-time employment and benefit from a subsidy roughly doubling their pre-tax earnings over the subsequent three-year period. They found financial incentive was strongly associated with a positive impact on work entry and retention. Holzer and Martinson (2005) analysed local and regional initiatives in the USA aiming to improve job retention for low-income workers, underlining the need for permanent/ongoing income subsidies arguing that otherwise the positive impact of subsidies on people who had been long-term unemployed weakens over time.

## Support services/enablers

### Job search and job matching

Green et al (2015) argue that job search and job

matching are likely to be highly important in regard to patterns of retention as not all jobs/work placement are equally valuable. Analysis of Detroit's Work First programme which provides short-term intensive job placement services in which jobseekers were offered either 'direct job hire' or a 'temporary' help job (similar to agency work in the UK) revealed that candidates placed in direct-hire jobs had significantly higher subsequent earnings and improved job outcomes whereas temporary-help placements did not improve, and sometimes hindered subsequent employment and earnings (Autor and Houseman, 2010). Green et al (2015) argue that is not clear whether such findings would be replicated in the UK but maintain they show the importance of quality job entry for future employment progression prospects.

### Holistic support interventions

Meadows (2008) underlines the effectiveness of holistic support interventions addressing a variety of barriers (e.g. housing, health, childcare, transport, substance abuse issues). Meadows found that initiatives only addressing work issues were less effective. Mackereth (2007) underlines the importance of specific support interventions for lone parents, arguing that mental health and self-esteem building and accessible and low-cost childcare can help lone parents to remain in employment. Childcare issues can be considered an important barrier to remaining in employment for parents more broadly (Gardiner, 1997). Arksey (2013) found extended in-work support in the People into Employment Initiative was necessary for disabled people and their carers to remain in employment. The key form of support was a project development officer. Although Metch et al (1999) suggest many factors enabling substance abusers to remain in employment are within their reach (e.g. a supportive family, not using drugs after leaving a programme, a high school education), they underline how it is important

### Evidence from Talent Match on 'good practice' relating to in-work support

Staying in work can be hard and although potentially any individual can benefit from in-work support those individuals who face labour market disadvantage often need in-work support if they are to sustain employment. In practical terms in-work support encompasses a range of different types of support. A thematic case study of in-work support for Talent Match (Green et al., 2017) highlighted in-work support as involving one or more of the following elements (although the wider literature suggests that integrated support

is particularly beneficial): (1) practical measures to assist TM beneficiaries to sustain employment – e.g. help with transport to work, assistance with organising caring responsibilities, help with training relevant to the job, etc.; (2) guidance on work-related matters – including how to deal with workplace matters; (3) supporting beneficiaries with non-work related issues that impinge on their ability to hold down a job from an adviser/mentor on a formal or informal basis; and (4) assistance provided to an employer to support a beneficiary’s job retention. The evidence from Talent Match case studies of support for in-work progression also revealed that there are two main times when in-work support is particularly important: first, in the early days of employment; and secondly, at times of crisis in a beneficiary’s home and work life. Employment retention (and progression) is eased by individuals being in a job they like and which suits their skills and preferred hours of working, and that is relatively easily accessible geographically; and also by employer commitment to sustaining employment of the individual employee.

### **Proactive support from employers and local services to prevent people aged over 50 from falling out of work**

The Centre for Local Economic Strategies (2017) in their review of the experiences of people aged over fifty who are out of work or in insecure employment argue that employers need to be more proactive in preventing people aged over 50 from falling out of work. Examples include: “developing new approaches to managing health in the workplace, providing more flexible working to accommodate the changing needs of employees as they age and offering continued opportunities for learning, development and re-skilling” (p.30).

### **Mentoring**

Logiktree (2010) evaluated a mentoring programme for staff who had previously been workless established at the Learning Hub, University Hospitals Birmingham. The Learning Hub is a purpose built training centre funded by University Hospitals Birmingham, Advantage West Midlands and European Regional Development Funds. Based next to the new Queen Elizabeth Hospital Birmingham their aim is to assist unemployed people within the local community back into work, by providing pre-employment training, advice and guidance. The specific programme evaluated by Logiktree involved job mentor/ coaches supporting new members of staff who were previously workless.

Some mentors had previously been out of work and benefited from mentors themselves. Best practice in mentoring identified by Logiktree in the programme included: the structured approach to the mentoring relationship, how the structure of the mentee’s development around the four Employability Building Blocks (a bespoke element of the programme) has actively enhanced self-esteem and confidence; how each mentoring relationship is observed against National Occupational Standards (NOS) for Mentoring and Coaching; how the staff development aspects of the project are evaluated from both the mentor and the mentee perspective. Logiktree underlined that the benefit of the programme both to the mentee and the mentor in terms of career development. The focus on career development led both to develop good personnel practices contributing to increased retention. Logiktree argued the results in the first six months of the programme were “outstanding” (p.4), with a 100% retention rate after six months. Mentees on the programme reported greater self-confidence, feeling happier, more motivated and better able to ask questions as a result of the programme. The employer described benefits of the programme to the organisation: “Mentors benefit in terms of their own personal development, communication skills and valuing difference. This will be reflected in an improved ability to manage teams. Mentees will hopefully feel valued, listened to and see an improvement in their own communication skills. Issues will be jointly tackled rather than allowed to fester, removing barriers to knowledge and skill development. By helping us to become an employer of choice and developing a culture that promotes equality and values difference and diversity” (p.15). The programme provides a model, which as Logiktree underline, could be easily replicated elsewhere.

## 7. Progression (in the internal labour market or external labour market)

### Information, advice and guidance (IAG); Training and skills

#### What is progression?

The term 'progression' can be defined in various ways (Sissons et al., 2016). It is mostly associated with attaining monetary increases from either a higher hourly rate or from more hours. Broader definitions also include some non-monetary measures such as increased job stability, which can also increase earnings over the longer-term (Wilson et al., 2013). Some forms of progression may also be horizontal (as opposed to vertical) and involve a shift to a different employer, sector or occupation which may (or may not) offer better prospects over the long-term.

#### A limited but growing evidence base on progression

A sizeable proportion of low-paid workers experience limited pay progression, even over extended periods of time. Yet progression has not been a focus for employment policy until recently. Policy is beginning to shift in the UK, and recent changes suggest some greater role for a focus on progression. Examples include the introduction of Universal Credit, which will have a progression dimension; the UK Futures Programme which was run by the UK Commission for Employment and Skills (UKCES); and progression initiatives which have been agreed as part of 'City Deals'. There is also some emerging evidence on in-work progression from Universal Credit. Overall, there is relatively little evidence relating to initiatives targeting progression that might be classified as 'proven' (i.e. robustly assessed). This is an important finding in itself. The most robust studies come largely from the USA. The US evidence is primarily from localised targeted initiatives which target entry into good quality employment opportunities, which are more likely to offer chances for career advancement. These studies provide demonstrate that initiatives can be designed to support worker progression (Sissons et al., 2016).

#### Recent UK evidence on 'what works' in in-work progression: 'proofs of concept' studies

The DWP commissioned three small-scale 'proofs

of concept' (PoC) on in-work progression over the period 2014-2016. The first was a Timewise Foundation's Universal Credit intervention which aimed to support and increase 102 low-income parents' incomes beyond proposed Universal Credit income thresholds while maintaining flexible working. The model provided one-to-one tailored support for parents and employer facing support. The second was the GOALS UK: Step Up model, which aimed to motivate and support 80 low-income, part-time workers towards progression in work and greater financial independence. The model was based on a motivational coaching programme. Thirdly, the UK Futures Programme, run by Timewise in partnership with a national retailer, aimed to tackle progression barriers and increase part-time, entry level, female workers' earnings. The model examined and implemented job redesign to include part-time and flexible working access for first step promotion to managerial roles. Positive progression outcomes were achieved by all three interventions. Aspects rated as most useful by participants in achieving positive outcomes included peer support (in group sessions); one-to-one sessions (in particular); advice on training, interview and pay negotiation and emotional support. It was also noted that effectiveness was enhanced when both pre-progression and employer-facing teams worked closely together – so highlighting the importance of employer involvement in in-work progression initiatives. Barriers to progression identified across two or more of the interventions included caring responsibilities, confidence issues, motivation, part-time or irregular shifts, finances, soft skills, and a lack of relevant skills (including English language issues in some cases), experience and qualifications.

#### Recent UK evidence on 'what works' in in-work progression: evidence from Universal Credit research

Evidence from a Universal Credit in-work progression randomised control trial (DWP, 2018) tested two progression measures: (1) the earnings impact 52 weeks after the trial start date; and (2) the percentage of claimants who had seen earnings progression of at least 10% since their start date. Claimants were divided into three treatment groups (frequent, moderate and minimal) based on the frequency of support



for Universal Credit claimants. For both the 'frequent' and 'moderate' support groups the results indicated significantly significant (albeit relatively small) differences in progression when compared to the 'minimal' support group. These findings indicate that in-work support can increase wages (What Works Centre for Local Economic Growth, 2019). Other factors emerging from a related evaluation revealed statistically significant differences in progression outcomes between those participants that undertook job-related training and those that did not, with the former group seeing a greater increase in earnings on average than the latter. Qualitative research also highlighted that progression outcomes were associated with participants' personal motivation and their relationship with their Work Coach. For claimants with lower levels of motivation and greater barriers to progression, success was far more closely linked to the type of support offered and the motivational aspects of the Work Coach role were crucial. Qualitative research with employers showed that employees valued employees who demonstrated a desire to progress; employers recognised motivation as the most important personal driver of progression. Employers also noted the existence of structural barriers to progression, including 'flat' organisational structures limiting opportunities for vertical progression (as highlighted also by Lindsay et al. [2013]), low staff turnover limiting replacement demand opportunities, and employees not possessing the skills required for progression.

### **IAG and progression**

In slightly older research, Green et al (2015) identify a gap in understanding of the role of local IAG services in regard to in-work progression. They suggest that "the impact of the availability and access to information on progression outcomes is difficult to measure, and the evaluation of advice and guidance services has typically focused on its role in supporting individuals into work, rather than on progression once in employment. This reflects the greater intensity of individual support which is targeted at those seeking to enter the labour market, and the larger public subsidy directed towards this (and hence the need to evaluate)" (p.41).

### **Careers information and/or advice**

Green et al (2015) note how UK policy is increasingly orientated around online careers information and self-service. Whereas they stressed the lack of access to the internet among jobseekers, they were unable to find information

regarding access to the internet among people in work. They nonetheless identify the existence of promising website with regard to careers advice but state they are unable to comment on the profile of the users. They suggest that more in-depth advice and guidance is associated in the UK with a greater likelihood of workers changing employers. Pollard et al (2007) found those accessing in-depth services were more likely to change the type of work they do as well as work in higher occupations sectors. Bimrose et al (2011) in a qualitative study of 'career adaptability' among workers in the UK and Norway, argued that workers in disadvantaged position in the labour market including those employed in low-skilled employment, are helped if they receive quality careers advice. The study did not provide clear conclusions regarding the relative merits of face-to-face versus online support. Several studies in the US (e.g. Fitzgerald, 2004; Holzer and Martinson, 2005), suggest the importance of advice and guidance in supporting workers but do not assess the individual impact of advice and guidance within the overall programmes.

### **Vocational and non-vocational skills development (lifelong learning, sector-based training)**

With regard to training and skills development, Green et al (2015) note the lack of city or local-level studies examining the role of training in facilitating individuals to remain in employment, arguing this is likely to be linked to how public subsidies for training focus on supporting individuals into employment. Furthermore, as King and Heinrich (2011) point out initiatives are often not assessed over a long enough period to analyse their impact on job retention. Government can seek to increase employer investment in employee skills through compelling business as a result of regional/local levies and/or industry licencing and occupational certification, or encouraging businesses through co-funding (Billett and Smith, 2003). Several national studies in the UK have considered the association between learning/training and progression in work. Dorsett et al (2010) estimated the association between lifelong learning and earnings for men, arguing it is associated with higher earnings. Nonetheless, they point out that the qualification type and labour market value are important as returns are larger for individuals upgrading qualifications. Stuart et al (2010) suggest training provided through UnionLearn has been successful in engaging under-represented groups. Maguire et al (2010) and Martinson (2007) have analysed programmes integrating training and skills development



with the needs of local employers/ sectors, and in-turn provide opportunities for in-work advancement. Green et al (2015) and Sissons et al (2016) underline how the success of the training programmes is reliant on the initial quality of the match to a suitable employer. Specifically Maguire's (2010) evaluation focused on three US programmes: The Wisconsin Regional Training Partnership (WRTP), the Jewish Vocational Service – Boston (JVS Boston); and Per Scholas). These industry-specific training programmes were designed to prepare unemployed and under-skilled workers for skilled positions and connect them with employers, with a focus on labour market entry to 'good jobs' which offered prospects for decent initial wages, as well as retention and progression opportunities. The programmes were characterised by strong links with employers an importantly the delivery partners demonstrated 'adaptive capacity' (i.e. the ability to ask, listen, reflect and adapt), and this was identified as a crucial factor underlying success, alongside individualised support during training and employment (e.g. childcare and transport) during training and employment. The What Works Centre for Local Economic Growth (2019) concluded that sector-specific training elements and the timing of programme elements may matter for in-work progression. The overall findings from the evaluation were positive in terms of employment retention and increased pay (for an assessment of this and related programmes see Sissons et al [2016]).

### **Career Ladders and Pathway Models**

A lack of knowledge and/ or transparency about routes to progression is often an issue facing workers seeking to progress. 'Road maps' which describe jobs in key industries and indicate the connection between education and training programmes at a range of levels - were one of the areas of good practice identified in the Martinson's (2007) review of local and regional employer-focused strategies towards training. In a more recent synthesis of job progression models, Webb et al. (2018, page 22) identify five principles supporting 'pathway models' that focus on supporting workers both into work and then as they progress in work: (1) collaboration between employers, employees and training providers in designing progression pathways; (2) being objective oriented – ideally with a sector focus; (3) demonstrate an identifiable path of progression for employees from entry to progression; (4) provide appropriate skills that are relevant to organisations and sectors; and (5) employers have a long-term vision, supported by a commitment to providing more work and

flexible job-design through adequately resourced training and development programmes. Webb et al. (2018) also note that procurement initiatives are potentially an effective policy tool for encouraging progression models.

## **Employer engagement**

### **Business models and 'hooking' in employers to progression initiatives**

Green et al (2015) argue there is a gap in evidence regarding how employers can be engaged to support those on low incomes already in work. They argue it is nonetheless clear that variations in sector skills structures and in the business models adopted by organisations provide different opportunities for progression according to the sector and company. Interventions may be needed to support employers to reshape working practices and design jobs in such a way as to support a more effective utilisation of skills, perhaps through a move to a higher value-added business model (Atkinson et al, 2019). As highlighted by Sissons et al (2016), in terms of engaging employers into thinking about progression and designing pathways/ initiatives to facilitate it, it has been noted above that a 'dual customer' approach - where providers seek to help both employers and jobseekers/low-wage workers through the same programme, appears to have promise. Addressing skills shortages and/ or tackling high turnover are the sorts of business issues that may be required to effectively engage employers. A dual customer approach requires identification of a 'promising' sector/sub-sector which has the potential to offer opportunities for those on low incomes, and then developing a strategy to improve access to or outcomes in that sector (Conway, 2014). An example of such a model is the WorkAdvance programme in the USA which create a progression pathway that serves the employer (addressing skills gaps and increasing productivity) and workforce needs (meeting training needs and providing progression opportunities) concurrently (see Webb et al. [2018] for further details. Local partnership working is important (Conway and Giloth, 2014).

### **Imperative of creating quality local jobs**

The length of time people can remain in work and their prospects for progression once in work is influenced by the types of jobs available locally for participants in ALMPs to move into underlining the need to create good quality jobs locally. Evans (2007) examined Ontario Works, one of the most developed workfare systems in

Canada which obligated lone mothers of young children to participate in work-related activities in order to be eligible for social assistance, finding that lone mothers typically only moved into jobs with low pay and a high turnover. Evans (2007) argues that increasing the number of jobs in the social economy/enterprise sector is vital in supporting lone mothers to achieve sustainable employment.

### **Programmes to develop career paths**

Several programmes in the UK have responded to skills shortages and the high turnover of employees to seek to develop individuals' career paths (Morgan and Konrad, 2008); Duke et al, 2006). As Green et al (2015) point out several of these have not been officially evaluated. Nonetheless, some evidence has been evaluated more substantially. Maguire et al (2010) conclude the programmes benefit participants in terms of employment outcomes, wages and accessing jobs with benefits. Important success factors include effective engagement with employers and employers' detailed sectoral knowledge.

## **Financial incentives**

### **Increased earnings**

Public financial incentives are less important here than earlier in the pathway as progress is realised through higher pay. Nonetheless, programmes including financial incentives earlier in the pathway may pay out in the longer term. Hendra et al (2011) found for the New Deal 25 Plus, the Employment, Retention and Advancement (ERA) pilot had a longer-term impact on earnings for long-term unemployed individuals which persisted for the five years studied. Overall, though evidence on the impact of financial incentives over the longer-term is mixed (see Ray et al, 2014).

### **Provider targets for progression**

Green et al (2015) note service provider targets and financial incentives can be linked to progression. For example, whereas the Work Programme only includes financial incentives on providers to support people into work, this could be extended to supporting individuals to remain in work. They suggest although this would be a "relatively straightforward change", it "could open up greater innovation in service delivery around supporting progression" (p.45). MacFarlane (2000) argues planning agreements could be used more often to force employers to provide more opportunities for local residents. This could be extended to progression activities (Green et al, 2015).

## **Support services/enablers**

### **Support with childcare and access to transport**

Many of the issues which apply to retention also apply to progression. Issues more specific to progression including factors affecting the ability to work additional hours (e.g. transport access and childcare) and factors affecting the ability to find and access employment at other locations.

### **Wraparound services**

Hamilton (2012) in a review of 'career pathways' and 'clusters' in relations to skills development in the US, suggest the importance of employer engagement, effective local/ state-wide partnership working and wraparound services such as childcare, transport availability and career counselling. These findings are transferable to the UK.

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# Appendix 1: Summary of key issues arising from the ‘deep dives’

Key issues arising from a review of the ‘deep dive’ evidence from primary research with residents, stakeholders and service providers are presented here under four themes: Individuals; Employers; Systems; and Context. These issues are presented in note form under headline statements and chime with many of the findings from the desk-based evidence review.

## Individuals

**Locality matters** – for attendance at training schemes; for getting local information on services; and for jobs.

**Local services matter** – there is a strong desire for local community services but it was considered by most interviewees that there had been a decline of locality-based community provision (including community learning). It was felt that a community employment support office would provide a neutral space that all groups could access conveniently.

**Limits of ‘Do It Yourself’** (i.e. self-service approach to job search and finding support) and the need for **‘hand-holding’ to navigate the system** (i.e. to access payments to which residents are entitled). It is also the case that some people lack IT skills to access online services.

**Importance of individualised and culturally-sensitive support, including for groups with particular needs (e.g. refugees, highly qualified with non UK qualifications)** – including encouraging/ getting people into work where they can progress and will feel fulfilled. Individualised support can provide ‘time to talk’ for vulnerable people and enable them to advance at their own pace. However, this can be very resource intensive and there is an issue of ‘when to ease off’ and encourage people to do more for themselves.

**Holistic and face-to-face support** – early holistic support delivered by a trusted person is crucial for some individuals. Many people want face-to-face support rather than being moved to access services online.

**Need for basic literacy, numeracy and IT classes** – the deep dives revealed that there is a pressing need to boost basic skills of some residents.

**Budgeting support** – is needed, particularly for people on Universal Credit. Here single monthly payments were felt to exacerbate the issue of debt.

**Volunteering** – is a possible pathway to a job, but it was felt that this was not necessarily recognised by Jobcentre Plus. Volunteering can provide people with a confidence boost to get started on (actively) seeking employment, but volunteering experience does not always translate into receiving job offers.

**Progression** – supporting people in under-employment (either in terms of hours or the nature of the match between a job and an individual’s qualifications) may be about more than in-work progression; it is also about building confidence. Progression cannot be measured in one or two years – it is a ‘state of mind’.

**Lack of confidence and aspiration** – were mentioned across all case study areas as a barrier to seeking employment – more confidence comes from new experiences and new skills leading to increased expectations. This can start with bringing in people gently to a set of new expectations, including with a variety of skills training. One interviewee asserted: “keeping someone positive can be harder than getting a qualification”. People facing multiple barriers need constant reassurance.

**Fear** – emerged as a theme for several of the residents interviewed. This might mean fear of leaving the house or of travelling to certain areas. It links to anxiety and fear of crime. There are also cultural norms for some groups to stay at home. This is part of the reason that there is a need for local (and culturally-sensitive) services, so that people do not become isolated.

**(Un)willingness to travel** – centres of job growth may be outside the immediate local area but some people are not willing to travel due to costs and psychological barrier of travelling beyond the neighbourhood where they live.

**Strong desire to work** – was clear in interviews with several residents. In some instances there were major barriers of poor English language or insufficient skills. In other instances health problems limited the types and amount of work individuals wished to do. For some individuals the



key issue was finding and funding suitable care provision to enable them to take up employment.

**Lack of awareness of available support** – in some instances support was available locally that would have helped people access training/employment but individuals were not always aware of its existence.

**When in an individual's journey to focus on employment** – some individuals have non employment-related issues (such as housing) that they want to resolve first and then move on to consider employment. This means that not all individuals are ready to consider employment when first engaged.

**In-work support** – is important, especially (but not exclusively) in the first few weeks in job when individuals may benefit from a 'sounding board' for work-related and non-work-related issues. Since many entry level jobs are insecure it is important to demonstrate to individuals the benefits of moving into employment.

**Lack of knowledge about workers' rights** – there is a labour market enforcement issue that some people are not aware if they are being exploited in employment – especially (but not only) with regard to pay rates.

## Employers

**'Fitting people to jobs'** – some individuals (including those with some kinds of disabilities or facing other challenges) may need a staggered approach to entering the workplace. Employers need to be 'on board' for this.

**Screening candidates for employers by employment support service providers** – in order for continued positive engagement with employers it is important that employers are sent suitable candidates only, in order to ease the burden of time taken up by 'no shows' at interview or candidates who are not interested in vacancies concerned.

**Sector-based work academies** – were viewed relatively positively, with job-specific training and work experience deemed helpful. However, providers noted that there is a need to be 'fussy' about who takes part in specific programmes, in order to meet employers' preferences/requirements.

**Employers need to simplify applications procedures and also recruitment and selection processes** – application processes were reported to be overly long and cumbersome,

with requirements set too high for specific types of job; standardised application forms can be an issue here. Employment support providers reported that people may be prepared to work but the application process is overly long, with interviews having too many stages (e.g. a phone call, a face-to-face interview, 'making people jump through hoops'). This puts up barriers for applicants (particularly for those for whom English is a second language). As one interviewee noted: "Is asking for GCSEs relevant for cleaning jobs?"

**Employers and recruitment of refugees** – it was reported that employers are often reluctant to take on refugees and need encouragement to do so. There is a related issue of conversion of overseas qualifications into qualification levels that employers are able to understand. (A consequence can be under-utilisation of refugees' skills [and the same issue can apply to other groups].)

**Multiple organisations involved in employer engagement** – if different organisations are contacting the same employer 'they switch off'. There was general confusion about where/with whom employer engagement should sit. Jobcentre Plus, local authorities, etc. – and employment support providers and voluntary and community organisations may also have contacts with employers. One suggestion forwarded was that local authorities should contact employers because they are fairly neutral. There is a further issue that there are different employer engagement models in different local areas.

## Systems

**Support for staff** – staff delivering employment support need support themselves (in terms of training, peer support, etc.). They need to be paid appropriately or they will move on elsewhere to gain higher pay, so leading to a lack of continuity of support for individuals.

**Tension regarding 'over-professionalisation' of IAG staff** – some interviewees felt that 'what is needed from staff is trust with the individual to come up with a practical solution' rather than IAG skills. However, it is the case that IAG skills are very valuable too, especially at some stages on the journey to employment. This is particularly important given the lack of a careers service in some local areas.

**Some duplication of services and lack of knowledge stifling 'joining up'** – a recurring theme emerging from the deep dives was that

services could be more joined up/ holistic. For instance, it was reported that the referral process from Jobcentre Plus to other organisations was not always systematic. In one deep dive area it was reported that trying to get stakeholders to work together is difficult – rather there were lots of groups working separately but doing the same thing. There is a need for a single document/ website from which residents can find out exactly what is available in the area; however, this would need to be dynamic given ongoing change.

**Libraries as highly visible services that can be used as a neutral welcoming environment** – they are not associated with a particular faith group, etc., and so can be valuable locations for ‘coming together’ and ‘joining up’. Types of support/ services delivered from local libraries include developing English language skills (Conversation Cafes); reading support; IT support (including inter-generational transfer of skills between younger and older people); and help with applications/ benefit claims.

**Partnership working** – was identified as the way forward for service delivery. There is a need for organisations to network, yet it was felt that current funding arrangements encourage competition. There is a need to understand how funding streams can work together to support outcomes. There was a view that partnership working does exist between voluntary organisations but links are not that strong and may exist at managerial level rather than for frontline staff (who don’t have time to investigate what others are doing). Organising meetings of frontline staff is difficult because of other pressures, but would be beneficial for knowledge sharing and peer support.

**Relationships and staff turnover** – personal relationships matter in service provision and when people move positions/ organisations relationships may be lost. When there is staff turnover conversations have to be repeated and trust and individuals’ confidence may be lost (after being built up carefully over time). There are variations in relationships between partners in different local areas – relationships which are difficult in one local area may work smoothly in another.

**Payment by Results** – some service providers felt that payment by results does not work for them: it depletes their reserves and it takes time to be paid.

**Targets for providers** – there was a general feeling that there was too heavy a focus on targets. Focusing on targets can mean that

providers miss out on opportunities to improve working practices.

**Funding rules** – rules concerning eligibility for funding can cause difficulties in terms of accessing provision, particularly if an individual has already received/ is receiving funding from elsewhere. There is also the issue that the same outcome cannot be counted/ claimed twice on the same programme.

**More flexible and longer-term funding is needed** - structural issues associated with short-term funding and also bureaucracy associated with funding are costly. The ideal is larger pots with more flexibility, rather than lots of different (smaller) funding pots.

**Social value** – some interviewees suggested that there needs to be a social value clause in the Employment Support framework.

## Context

**Importance of local community infrastructure** – the need for neutral places to meet has been highlighted above, but austerity has led to some reduction in provision. Residents link a lack of community infrastructure and local services with a breakdown of community spirit and a rise in crime, with negative consequences for individuals.

**Growing issue around mental health** – much of this was considered to be attributable to the situation in which individuals (and households) find themselves. This is linked to multiple barriers to accessing employment and demise in local community infrastructure does not help.

**Poor quality housing** – in some cases this dominates people’s lives to the extent that they cannot think about employment.

**Funding cuts** – have implications for services and for staff (including retention and turnover issues). It was considered that this has already had a negative impact on quality and breadth of services delivered

**Strains on partnership working** – a common theme was that connectivity (including between statutory and voluntary organisations) has been reduced due to funding cuts, increased competition and reduced capacity. Competition can prevent referrals and this means ‘the ones with the most issues’ are likely to lose out most.

**Changing demography** – in some local areas there are new communities (including “Asian people, Eastern European people, people from

London coming to areas of cheaper housing”, etc.) In some local neighbourhoods that serve as ‘gateway’/ ‘transit’ areas there is a continuing demand for local employment support and community services, while ‘people get jobs and move out’.

**ESOL** – more provision is needed, including more flexible provision (in terms of hours and content). ESOL with Maths and ESOL with childcare work well for providing new skills, and so these types of provision should be encouraged.

**Features of employment** – it was reported that employment in some of the deep dive areas is dominated by insecure work and agencies: in the words of one interviewee there are “no real jobs, just warehouse or factory jobs”. An agency job may involve an individual working on a zero hours contract for three 3 months and then having their contract terminated so that they are struggling for money.

**The informal economy** – is strong in some local areas. This can present labour market enforcement issues, including payment below the minimum wage. Some people with poor English language skills are trapped here. This suggests that young people (and the population more generally) need to be taught about pay and tax, and have a better awareness of employment rights.

**Cost of transport** – was a recurring theme in accessing employability services and jobs. While some local areas are well-served by public transport, travel is expensive and some people are unwilling to leave their local area/ travel to unfamiliar places. Provision of travel training and free travel (for a specific set period) were potential solutions suggested here.

**Cost and availability of childcare** – hinders the ability of some parents (especially mothers) to look for work (even though free childcare might be available for some children and some providers provide crèche facilities for people attending courses), since they need to take into account the geographical location and timing of care provision when looking for jobs. Issues are particularly pronounced for lone parents.



**West Midlands**  
Combined Authority