

# The Work Programme Partnership Forum

## Thursday 08 March 2012

Chair – Richard Aitken-Davies

### **Minister for Employment**

The Minister for Employment led a wide-ranging discussion covering a number of areas of policy and delivery that impact on Work Programme.

#### **ESA Volumes**

ERSA has produced a recommendation re ESA volumes which will be shared with DWP and the Minister.

#### **Conditionality**

The Minister noted concerns regarding the conditionality placed on ESA claimants if they volunteered for the Work Programme and agreed to look at this.

#### **Volunteer Group random allocation**

Providers again expressed concern regarding random allocation of volunteers. The Minister agreed to look at whether this was appropriate starting with the IB/IS group.

#### **Work Placements**

ERSA agreed to draw up guidelines to be agreed by the industry regarding Work Placements in the private sector.

#### **Good News stories**

The Minister asked that providers be proactive in getting successes and innovative approaches out in their local communities and local press.

### **Provider Forum**

Kirsty McHugh, Chief Executive of the Employment Related Services Association (ERSA), led this session. This was an opportunity to discuss a number of issues raised by providers. DWP is working with ERSA to prioritise and decide how these issues are taken forward.

### **National Employer Sales Team**

The National Employer Service Manager gave an overview of the role and work of the National Employer Sales Team (NEST).

NEST work with over 220 national employers and trade bodies across 22 sectors to help disadvantaged customers move into work.

The National Employer Sales Team sees many national employers in the course of their work. The views of the forum were sought on how they might channel employer interest shown in the Youth Contract Wage Incentive through to providers in the Contract Package Areas.

## **Contract Package Area (CPA) Level Engagement**

Denise Horsfall, Work Services Director for North East England, led a discussion on CPA Level Engagement.

The proposal agreed at the Forum in December looked to develop some guiding principles for CPA partnership meetings and a reporting process to provide effective input to the National Forum and support the success of the Work Programme nationally.

There are currently many different strategies for partnership working in place across the CPAs. Does a one-size-fits-all picture work?

Denise sought views from providers on the wider partnership picture.

Provider experience and ideas will inform future arrangements and these will be discussed at a workshop arranged for 20<sup>th</sup> March 2012.

Denise will come back to the next forum with a proposal for discussion by the Partnership.

## **Youth Contract and the Wage Incentive**

The Project Lead for the implementation of Youth Contract Wage Incentive gave an update on the latest position on this initiative which goes live on 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2012.

Draft Provider Guidance is now available and open for comment.

Provider representatives are invited to dial into a telekit on 12<sup>th</sup> March to participate in a final process walkthrough. The name of a Single Point of Contact to act as leads for employers interested in the Wage Incentive, one per provider per contract package area, will be published on the Youth Contract website.

Guidance and associated forms to support this initiative will be published w/c 19<sup>th</sup> March 2012.

## **Universal Credit**

The Secretariat gave a brief progress update on the Universal Credit provider engagement strategy.

Detailed development work is now underway.

A Working Group has been set up to consult with providers and work through the detail. The group met, via telekit, for the first time on 28<sup>th</sup> February 2012 to agree membership and Terms of Reference and will meet regularly from now on to discuss detailed design and operational issues.

The next meeting of the Universal Credit Working Group is on 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2012.

## **Additional discussion points**

### **Special Interest Groups / Task and Finish Groups**

It was agreed that current Task and Finish Groups / Special Interest Groups would be asked for an update or closure report as appropriate.

### **National Operations Forum**

The Terms of Reference and membership of the National Operations forum were agreed.

The next meeting of the Operations Forum will be convened as soon as practicable, to initially look at the ESA volumes and PRaP issues raised by Providers.

DWP policy and expert leads in these areas will be invited to the Operations Forum to inform discussions on the way forward.

## **Future Partnership Forum Meeting Dates for 2012**

Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> June 2012, 11.30 – 14.00, Room 1.25/1.26 Caxton House, London

Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> September 2012, 11.00 – 13.30, Room 1.25/1.26 Caxton House, London

Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> December 2012, 11.00 – 13.00, Room 1.25/1.26 Caxton House, London

## **Membership of the Work Programme National Partnership Forum**

A4E	Rehab Group
Avanta	Seetec
BEST Ltd	Serco
CDG	Working Links
EOS	Employment Related Services Association (ERSA)
ESG Group	DWP Contracted Customer Services Directorate (CCSD)
G4S	DWP Work Programmes Division
Ingeus UK Ltd	DWP Work Services Directorate
JHP Group Ltd	DWP Labour Market and Conditionality Directorate
MAXIMUS	DWP Work Programme Provision Group Management
Newcastle College (Intraining)	DWP Account Management
Work Programme Partnership Forum	

Pertemps People Development Group

DWP Provision Performance and Controls  
Division (PPCD)

Prospects Services Ltd

DWP Commercial Directorate

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**NB** names of some DWP and Provider representatives have been removed as disclosure would breach on of the data protection principles.