

# Withdrawn

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## **‘Good practice’ review of referral mechanisms in selected Local Authorities.**

### **The European Social Fund (ESF)**

The European Social Fund (ESF) was set up to improve employment opportunities in the European Union (EU). It supports Member States’ employment and skills policies and contributes to the Europe 2020 strategy for jobs and smart, sustainable and inclusive growth.

ESF helps people who are unemployed or at a disadvantage in the labour market to develop their skills and enter sustainable employment. By focusing on those who need support the most, ESF is helping to tackle poverty and promote social justice.

The 2007-2013 England ESF programme is investing around £2.5 billion in jobs and skills, split into two phases – 2007-2010 and 2011-2013

### **ESF Families provision**

The programme’s 2011-2013 phase includes the ESF Families With Multiple Problems Provision, a programme specifically designed to support people who are members of families experiencing multiple disadvantages and barriers to move closer to finding work. Local Authorities (LAs) are the primary source for the identification and referral of people who can be helped by the provision.

The contracts for this provision started in December 2011.

### **Good practice review**

This review began in July 2012 with the objective of identifying illustrative examples of good practice in ESF Families referrals processes within Local Authorities and disseminating them more widely.

We worked with London Councils and the DWP Performance Management network in the two London Contract Package Areas (Contract Package Areas) to identify a representative sample of Local Authorities where examples of good practice are evident.

Initial interviews with key contacts in the children’s and families’ services teams of the selected Authorities’ were conducted over the summer of 2012. A further series of interviews with contacts in Local Authorities from across England is planned for autumn 2012, and the results from those will be added to this document.

# European Social Fund (ESF) Support for Families with Multiple problems

## Summary

Local Authority interviewees outlined a 'baseline' of general good practice points they felt had been instrumental in driving effective engagement with ESF Families provision.

They also described a number of more specific initiatives that had succeeded in raising awareness of the ESF Families provision and increasing referral levels.

## General points

- ☐ Securing senior level buy-in within each Local Authority is a key factor in ensuring that important Local Authority stakeholders are fully committed to the success of the ESF Families provision.
- ☐ It is vital that Local Authority staff who are in the position to refer candidates to ESF Families have a good understanding of the range of support available through the provision, as well as an appreciation of how it fits into the wider agenda of support for Troubled Families.
- ☐ Internal LA newsletters and leaflets may be useful channels for LA staff to disseminate such information.
- ☐ The provision can be 'sold' to internal Local Authority teams as an externally funded opportunity to move their more disadvantaged customers closer to the employment market.
- ☐ ESF Families providers can support this marketing by supplying their key LA contacts with 'good news' stories to demonstrate how the provision adds value to existing Local Authority services
- ☐ Regular liaison meetings between Local Authority staff, the appropriate representative from the ESF Families provider and any other key stakeholders can be crucial for feeding back on case-working progress, sharing 'good news' stories and identifying both instances of good practice and areas for improvement.
- ☐ Before Local Authority staff refer candidates to the provider, they secure each individual's consent in accordance with their internal consent frameworks, which can differ between authorities. The process might be streamlined if the consent paperwork could be made easier to complete. Some interviewees suggested that it might be beneficial for a standardised format for consent forms to be agreed between LAs within each CPA.

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### Specific good practice initiatives

- Brent LA suggested that ESF Providers could engage with Work Programme providers to identify customers whose family members might benefit from ESF Families provision. The individual on the Work Programme would not be able to participate in ESF Families provision, but they could fill the role of Qualifying Person, passporting other members of their family.
- Greenwich LA highlighted the role that Local Authorities' Housing Teams could play in the identification of candidates for referral. For example, if customers have missed rent payments there may be other underlying family issues, including debt problems.
- Greenwich LA endorsed the idea of LA advisers working 'holistically' with families rather than focusing on customers on a one-to-one basis.
- Brent LA negotiated a Service Level Agreement with the provider. This clarifies and records roles, responsibilities and deliverables within the referral process.
- Brent LA and Tower Hamlets LA are both holding regular meetings with the provider. These are usually at least monthly, and have significantly improved both day-to-day working relationships and common understanding of the range and objectives of the ESF Families provision.
- Tower Hamlets LA shares background information about referred candidates with the provider. This helps to ensure that the people working with each individual have a better understanding of the cultural issues or language barriers they may have to deal with.
- Islington LA worked with the provider to develop and agree a detailed process for managing the ESF Families provision in the area. The agreed process formally clarifies roles, responsibilities and deliverables in the customer journey, from the point of a family's identification and referral by Islington Council through their attachment to the provision, and includes formal reviews of their progress.

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- Brent LA has adopted a phased approach to promoting the provision internally, using success stories and case studies to engage individual departments and teams.
- Tower Hamlets LA has worked with the provider to develop monthly ESF Families referrals 'benchmarks' for appropriate teams within the organisation.
- Greenwich LA is advertising the provision in [Royal Greenwich Time](#), the council's weekly newspaper, and distributes leaflets to children's centres and voluntary groups to raise awareness among both service users and staff.
- Tower Hamlets LA is introducing visits between LA family advisers and provider advisers to enhance communication channels, build better working relationships and improve the collective understanding of their respective roles, responsibilities and practices.
- Greenwich LA's Employment and Skills Department has developed a database of customers who it has helped into work and is using this to identify other family members who might qualify for ESF Families provision.

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### Next steps

- The next phase in this review is currently underway. Interviews with selected Local Authority contacts across the rest of England are taking place throughout autumn, with a view to identifying further good practices or confirming those already identified.
- The good practice identified in this exercise will be disseminated across the national network of Local Authorities and ESF Families providers through a variety of channels.