Tackling Worklessness in Birmingham: Learning from the Evaluation of the WNF Innovation Fund

A Good Practice Guide For Practitioners

February 2011

Introduction

The Working Neighbourhoods Fund (WNF) was set up by Government in 2007 to help people in the most deprived communities in England to get back into work. In Birmingham, a discrete Innovation Fund was established as part of the wider WNF programme to test new ways of assisting out of work individuals to progress into employment. Over the two years to March 2011, the Innovation Fund has supported 40 small-scale projects comprising a mix of pilot schemes aimed at specific client groups alongside research studies.

ekosgen, in conjunction with the Centre for Regional, Economic and Social Research (CRESR) at Sheffield Hallam University, were commissioned by Birmingham City Council to undertake a qualitative evaluation of the Innovation Fund. The primary objective of the evaluation was to identify good practice and lessons learned in order to inform future services for out-of-work people in the city.

The Good Practice Guide provides funders, commissioners and service providers with a series of steps to be followed in the design and delivery of projects and services. There is no single approach which can provide a universal template for progressing people into sustainable employment. Success comes from a number of approaches, and the factors which explain success are often linked to an individual or a community. By following the steps set out in this guide, providers of services can increase the likelihood that their interventions will be effective and the impact on clients will be maximised.

There are a set of principles that underpin good practice and these are:

◉ Make sure you know what services already exist and are clear there is a 'gap' that needs filling: **Research, knowledge and 'mapping' of existing provision should be at the heart of the project design** phase to ensure it meets a genuine need and avoids duplication.

◉ **Find ways of engaging clients using people or places of trust: Engagement will be most successful when based on 'trust'.** This includes using familiar and 'safe' environments e.g. providing services for parents at schools or using trusted intermediaries such as frontline workers in agencies that clients already have good relationships with.

◉ Work with other agencies to increase referrals, signpost clients to specialist help or to provide further opportunities to progress them into education, training or work: **Partnership is an essential part of effective delivery, with relationships working best when based on shared objectives yet complementary strengths**. Projects should never assume that a seemingly obvious partner will provide the level of support anticipated. Diversifying referral routes can mitigate this risk.

◉ Ensure you know your clients' needs and tailor services accordingly: **Services need to be designed around a thorough assessment of clients' needs and capabilities**. Whilst some client groups may be able to take up opportunities in the work place or to develop their own enterprise, others will need more support to become 'work-ready'. The position of projects in the full spectrum of 'back-to-work' support should be determined by the needs of their target group.

◉ Think early on about how the project could be sustained once the initial funding runs out: **Sustainability needs to be planned from the outset as part of the project design** e.g. capacity to generate income or ability to demonstrate success through self-evaluation will determine longer-term sustainability.

Case study examples of the steps taken by Innovation Fund projects are interspersed throughout the guide.

Table of Contents

1 Project Design

This section sets out some of the key factors to consider at the project design phase to ensure successful delivery. This includes:

- How to identify genuine 'unmet' needs

- Ways to avoid duplicating other services

1.1 What should you consider?

The initial phase of developing a project is vital for ensuring the service addresses a genuine need and complements other provision to tackle worklessness within the area. A failure to find out what services are already in place could mean that projects replicate existing provision. This increases competition and makes it harder to recruit clients.

Scoping work is also essential at this stage to gain a good understanding of what clients need. This knowledge ensures projects provide services that clients want, making it easier to engage and retain beneficiaries. The experience of Innovation Fund projects shows that spending more time at the scoping stage will pay dividends in terms of delivering to profile and maximising the outcomes achieved by beneficiaries. Where Innovation Fund projects under-invested in scoping work, the approach often had to be changed or didn't work as well.

Pathways to success at the design phase:

- Take time to collect information, evidence and advice ('scoping work') to establish that there is a genuine need for the service.

- Map out the scope and nature of existing services to avoid duplicating what is already out there.

- Think about testing the service on a small number of clients before rolling out the full service to identify problems and 'iron out' glitches before you commit all your resources.

- Make a clear and honest assessment of the risks involved in delivering the project and about how these could be managed. Does the project design include a 'Plan B' if elements of delivery (engagement, completion) do not go as well as planned?.

- Devote plenty of time to the scoping and design phase. Cutting corners at this stage could lead to more time-consuming problems during the delivery phase.

- Identify all potential partners the project could link up with to help recruit clients or deliver parts of the service.

1.2 How can you design successful projects?

Projects can take a number of steps at the design phase to increase the prospects of success. You should:

Identify the need for the proposed service through scoping work: Scoping activities undertaken before or immediately after funding applications can help identify unmet needs and how best to support clients.

Scoping Work

There are a number of ways to identify 'unmet' needs:

- Speak to existing service providers who already work with the proposed client group about gaps in provision and client needs.

- Do some research: there may be reports, surveys or evaluations that can help you develop your project proposal. 'Googling' your idea (e.g. tackling worklessness among NEETS) can be a good place to start.

- Talk to your target group: you might be able to arrange informal chats or discussion groups with your target group through other service providers. This can help understand their needs, what services they already access and where existing provision is lacking.

Fund example: The Future Melting Pot (TFMP) community interest company undertook focus groups to explore the needs of young people who were Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET) from black and minority ethnic communities. These revealed an unmet need for support for young people who were unemployed and wanted to become self-employed or start a social enterprise which led to the development of the Youth Employment and Enterprise Rehearsal (YEER) project proposal.

Avoid duplicating services by 'mapping' what already exists: 'There are several ways to map out service provision:

Contact service providers who work with the client group (e.g. Jobcentre Plus, schools, social landlords) to find out what services exist and where there is a lack of provision. The Smart Skills project run by Crisis Skylight liaised with other service providers working with homeless people in the city to understand the scope of existing provision. This avoided duplication when developing their service to help homeless people find a place to live/secure work.

Talk to strategic bodies e.g. Local Strategic Partnerships or key programmes e.g. the Working Neighbourhoods Fund team who have an overview of services across the area. They may also be able to suggest gaps in existing provision.

Look up contracts awarded locally through key Programmes to tackle worklessness e.g. the European Social Fund (ESF) and the forthcoming Work Programme (these are usually made publicly available on websites).

Review the City Council's Neighbourhood and Constituency Employment and Skills Plans (NESPs/CESPs). They provide useful summaries of specific needs and target groups across the city.

Talk to members of the WNF Provider Forums to explore what is going on at the neighbourhood level and how your project/service might fit in.

Track down existing research or evaluations that include summaries of provision in your area. Birmingham City Council and Be Birmingham are a good starting point as they have access to a range of evidence and studies on worklessness.

2 Engagement

This section sets out the key factors that affect whether services will be successful in reaching their target audience. It covers:

- Issues you should consider when developing your approach to beneficiary engagement.

- Potential engagement methods.

- Things you can do to maximise participation in your project.

2.1 What should you consider?

Engaging beneficiaries is one of the biggest challenges faced by projects that work with 'hard to reach' groups. Barriers such as disabilities, poor physical or mental health, low skill levels or a lack of self-esteem can all prevent clients from seeking work or accessing employment support services. Finding effective ways to reach out to vulnerable or socially isolated clients is often critical to project success.

Engagement usually occurs through one of two broad approaches: referrals from other agencies or outreach work where projects try to recruit clients directly. Referrals can provide a fast and cost-effective route for engaging clients as partner agencies can filter and refer suitable and eligible individuals. Few projects however are fortunate enough to meet engagement targets through referrals alone. Outreach work is often necessary to boost engagement although this can be more time-consuming and resource intensive as it involves approaching a number of potential clients, including many who may prove ineligible for support.

Pathways to success - client engagement

- Identify your target group and think about how and where they can best be engaged.

- Talk to all the different agencies that you think might be able to refer clients. Think about how you might 'sell' your service to them to convince them of the benefits of partnership.

- Make a realistic assessment of the number of referrals an agency might make – remember that some of the obvious candidates may have competing requests from other organisations also looking for referrals.

- Decide on what type of referral agreement you want to put in place with partner agencies – these could either be formal written agreements with organisations or informal verbal agreements with individual members of staff. Each has its 'pros' and 'cons'.

- Think about outreach methods that potential clients are most likely to respond to.

- Devote enough time and resources to recruiting clients and allow for some slippage as it often takes longer than you think.

Potential Pitfalls

- Recruiting clients from disadvantaged groups takes time and this needs to be factored into project timescales: Some Innovation Fund projects could have spent more time on this phase to boost overall levels of delivery.

- Avoid untargeted approaches: 'blanket' outreach work e.g. door knocking in areas of high worklessness is time-consuming and often ineffective as individuals can resent cold-calling.

2.2 How can you engage clients?

A number of methods can be used to engage clients as illustrated in the table below:

Approach	Methods	Pros	Cons
Referrals	Referral agreements can be formal e.g. a set of written procedures or informal e.g. a verbal agreement with a key member of staff to refer suitable clients.	Referral organisations can 'filter out' motivated and eligible clients to refer.	Partners do not always deliver the level of referrals expected. Informal agreements may fall through if key staff are absent or leave.
Outreach	Direct face-to-face approach in public places e.g. leafleting in shopping centre or high street.	Can increase visibility and awareness of project.\nLarge numbers of potential clients to approach.	Individuals may be suspicious if approached in a general public space. Can be time-consuming and resource intensive if many individuals approached are ineligible or unwilling to take part.
	Direct face-to-face approach through institutions that target client group attends e.g. leafleting in school or GP surgery.	Clients can be more receptive if approached in familiar or 'safe' places e.g. their child's school.\nWorks well if staff 'buy-in' into project and encourage clients to sign up.	Can take time to negotiate access to institutions. Some e.g.GP surgeries may refuse access if they believe it will compromise patient well-being or confidentiality.
	Posters or leaflets in appropriate venues e.g. community centres.	Cheap and quick way to disseminate information to large number of potential clients.	Success depends on clients reading information and taking the initiative to contact clients.
	Door knocking' at private homes.	Offers potential to access more socially isolated clients e.g. those with health conditions and disabilities.	Untargeted approach may yield few eligible clients and many will resent 'cold-calling'.
	Radio or newspaper adverts.	Quick and innovative way of reaching large numbers of potential clients. Radio adverts often work well with young people.	Radio adverts are expensive to make and place. Relies on clients using own initiative to contact projects.
	Events e.g. a stall at a community-based cultural event or a jobs fair.	Some type of events will attract those likely to be receptive to the service offered by projects e.g. job fairs. Fairly inexpensive.	Might be few eligible clients at some events e.g. cultural events. Message might be lost if participants attending event for social reasons.

Innovation Fund projects had positive and negative experiences in engaging beneficiaries. For instance, referrals worked well for the Citizens Advice Bureau's Working Age Dementia project in securing the target number of clients as the referral route was very clear. The referral route was less clear for Birmingham Adult Education Service's Migrant Professionals initiative where the sub-contractor model under-performed and eligibility requirements meant that too few clients were identified. Door knocking/leafleting also had mixed results - the Improving Chances project, for example, had to use a range of methods as initial leafleting was not effective.

These experiences reinforce the importance of considering engagement methods according to client group. Each approach has its pros and cons and you may need to change tack quickly if a specific method is not working. You need to look closely at what will work best for your target clients and potentially adopt a mix of approaches – where clients have different needs/ preferences, a diverse approach to client engagement will be required.

2.3 How do you maximise engagement and retention?

Referrals

Projects can take a number of steps to increase levels of referrals:

- Identify all referral opportunities at the outset: a mapping exercise can identify appropriate organisations that already work with the target client group or provide services that are likely to benefit them. Examples of agencies that have referred to Innovation Fund projects include:

    - Jobcentre Plus
    - the Citizens Advice Bureau
    - Voluntary and community organisations
    - Social housing providers
    - schools

Partnerships as a source of referrals – Fund Examples

Some projects such as Improving Chances and Building Successful Families that targeted vulnerable families, for instance, worked closely with schools to gain access to potential participants. This included promoting services through playground drops, parents evenings, extended schools activities, stay and play events as well as newsletters and school websites.

- **Choose the right partner(s)**: The most obvious partner e.g. Jobcentre Plus may not always provide most referrals, especially if it experiences competing demands. By contrast, private or third sector contractors delivering employment programmes (e.g. the Work Programme or European Social Fund) may welcome the opportunity to work with small projects with specialist expertise.

- **Work with a number of providers**: Establishing multiple referral routes could mitigate the difficulties experienced by some Innovation Projects when key partners proved unable or unwilling to provide the level of referrals anticipated.

- **Get formal agreements in place**: Written agreements help establish expectations on both sides and to ensure staff in partner agencies are aware of referral procedures. Whilst verbal agreements with particular staff may suffice, there is a risk these will fall through if staff leave or are absent.

- **Ensure staff in partner organisations are aware of referral agreements**: It is important that all relevant staff, especially frontline workers are committed to referral agreements. Projects should consider asking senior staff to hold a briefing meeting to build awareness.

- **Convince partners of the benefits of referring clients**: Partnership works best when referring organisations believe projects offer services that complement their own work.

Outreach Work

Projects can take a number of actions to increase the effectiveness of outreach work:

- **Identify 'places of trust' through which to approach potential clients**: Clients are more receptive when approached in places or services they already use and that are 'safe', comfortable or familiar e.g. a supported residence or a child's school. It is important to remember, however, that some places may be places of trust for some people but not others e.g. some people would be put off by a school or education environment. No one size fits all. The key characteristics of places of trust, based on the experience of Innovation Fund projects, include:
  - A place that they are familiar with, for example that they use for other services or activities or which is used already by people they know.
  - A place which is well established.
  - A place which is in their community or has a positive profile within the community if it is further away.
  - A place which can ensure client privacy and confidentiality, if that is important to them.
  - A place where they can meet like minded people or which is used by people they perceive to be like them

Engaging in places of trust – Fund examples

The **Smart Skills** project engages homeless adults in activities which will move them towards independence whilst gaining skills and confidence. The project has adopted an outreach approach that involves approaching clients directly in hostels. This recognises that homeless individuals sometimes lead chaotic lifestyles as a result, for example, of health issues or substance misuse, that prevent them from seeking out support. Beneficiaries and partner organisations have stated that these factors are not only innovative but also a key factor in the project's success

The **Building Successful Families** (BSF) project has successfully engaged Asian women by providing employment support within schools. It works because parents are familiar with the environment and have developed trust and rapport with staff who often encourage them to sign up. Women-only provision also addressed cultural concerns. The BSF project also discovered how powerful informal engagement (for example in school playgrounds) and word-of-mouth recommendation could be for engaging new clients. A further success factor is working with school Parent Support Advisers who have existing links with parents and access to registers of vulnerable families.

- **Work with staff in partner organisations who are trusted and able to motivate potential clients**:   Recruitment can be boosted by securing the 'buy-in' of key staff e.g. Parent Support Advisers who can identify potential clients and encourage them to sign up for services.
- **Encourage 'word-of-mouth' recommendations**: Recommendations from friends or family can overcome fears of returning to formal learning or doubts about the value of a service. Projects can boost recruitment therefore by encouraging existing clients to make recommendations. Incentives e.g. gift tokens can also motivate clients to 'bring a friend'.
- **Use innovative engagement methods to generate interest**: The Neighbourhood Enterprising Solutions project that supports the creation of social enterprises used a 'Dragons' Den' style event to raise awareness.

3 Meeting Beneficiary Needs

This section sets out some of the key factors that are important in meeting the needs of clients so they can engage with projects. It covers:

- Barriers that need to be addressed to enable individuals take part.

- The most effective approaches for motivating and supporting clients.

- Ways to ease client concerns or accommodate health conditions.

- Methods of communication that clients respond to best.

3.1 What should you consider?

Many beneficiaries face multiple barriers to work such as a lack of confidence, debt, disabilities or health conditions, and parenting or caring responsibilities. A failure to remove or address these barriers can stop some clients engaging with and benefitting from projects. This underlines **the importance of understanding clients' potential needs at the outset** of the project e.g. through 'scoping work' that can feed into project design and delivery. Not all needs can be anticipated upfront so projects also need to be able to respond flexibly to issues that emerge once clients sign up e.g. a deterioration in health.

Pathways to success – beneficiary needs

- Identify the potential barriers your clients face – 'scoping work' such as focus groups can provide a clear picture of need from the outset.
- Decide which barriers you could address directly e.g. free childcare or transport Can project funds cover this or will partner organisations carry some or all of the costs?
- Think about how you can address needs that go beyond the funding or expertise of the project e.g. health conditions or disabilities. Can other service providers meet these needs?
- Identify opportunities from the outset for tailoring delivery to meet client needs e.g. providing opportunities to learn, volunteer or work on ad-hoc basis to accommodate fluctuating health conditions.
- Continually re-assess how well projects are meeting client needs and revise delivery to accommodate emerging issues.
- Take time to think about what approach is likely to work best in motivating the target client group – 'classroom-style' delivery might not suit everyone.
- Consider the best way of keeping in touch with clients – texting and social networking sites may work well with some groups e.g. young people.
- Explore options for providing 'taster' activities e.g. work visits to build confidence, experience and motivation in a gradual and non-threatening way.
- Establish procedures for contacting clients who fail to attend – perseverance may pay off in preventing individuals from dropping out.

3.2 What can you do to address clients' needs?

There are several ways in which projects can support beneficiaries:

- Take time at the design phase to identify client barriers and needs through 'scoping' work.

- Remove barriers to participation: Projects can address needs that are not directly employment-related to successfully engage and retain clients. For example:

  - The Improving Chances project found providing free transport to training courses 'really helps to remove barriers'.
  - The Sprouting Hidden Talent project offered free childcare to encourage BME women to attend ESOL and vocational courses. Alternatively, the Building Successful Family project avoided childcare issues for school-age children by delivering courses in schools during school hours.

- Use informal or innovative approaches e.g. motivational mapping to boost confidence and motivation: Some clients find formal employment support e.g. job search or CV writing intimidating, irrelevant or ineffective. Interest and motivation can be sparked though by doing things differently.

Using innovative approaches – Fund examples

Several Innovation Fund projects use novel methods to interest and motivate clients. These include:

- Taking a 'fresh' approach that differs from conventional employment support: The Innovative Jobs Academy run by Focus Enterprises used 'motivational mapping' and 'visioning' to explore personal interests and strengths. It worked well for young people because it was perceived as creative, enlightening and refreshing in exploring how aspirations can be realised.

- Using creative activities such as art and drama to gain and sustain interest: The Creative Opportunity Prospects in Employment (COPE) project uses drama and singing to inspire and motivate clients. These activities also move clients closer to work by preparing them to deliver 'empowerment' training on a consultancy basis. The project also used innovative approaches to subject matter to hold the interest of participants e.g. taking clients fruit picking to promote healthy eating. Moving away from classroom-based delivery can work particularly well with younger people or those with limited or negative experiences of formal education such as individuals with no or low skills.

- Harnessing existing talents to boost confidence and increase work-readiness: The Sprouting Hidden Talents project seeks to nurture existing domestic skills among BME women through courses such as cooking and sewing. This builds confidence by developing self-awareness of strengths. The aim of the project is to harness 'hidden talents' to generate income through establishing social enterprises or cooperatives. Some clients are already engaged in a venture – 'Mama Tiffin' - that cooks and delivers meals to local schools and community venues.

- Provide flexible work or volunteering opportunities in a 'safe' environment to accommodate barriers: Flexible, 'in-house' activities can provide a supported but important first step on the route back to work for clients with fluctuating heath conditions or who lack confidence. Both the Work Snippets and Art Work Gallery and Café projects offer in-house volunteering opportunities to help clients develop skills, confidence and experience.

- Offer intensive personalised support: Tailored support from project staff can increase client motivation as well as boost retention and completion rates. The key ingredients of intense personalised support are:

  - High levels of one-to-one delivery: Clients need individual support alongside more structured training and learning opportunities.

  - Being accessible: Clients of the Building Successful Families project valued knowing they could access staff 'at any time'.

  - Motivating clients: Information and guidance is not enough – many clients need constant encouragement to progress.

- 'Hand-holding' more vulnerable clients: Beneficiaries clearly valued the intensive support and motivation provided in helping them find work or complete courses – it is rarely, if ever, perceived as intrusive or excessive.

- Never giving up on clients who fail to attend: The Innovative Jobs Academy project went to great lengths to keep in touch with clients who repeatedly failed to show up – this persuaded one individual to return after several months absence.

- Focusing on the individual first, not the job: Some Innovation Fund projects worked to help clients nurture and realise job aspirations rather than push them quickly towards employment which they may not be ready for. Other projects over-estimated the readiness of clients to participate in job placements and other work related activities. Given the introduction of the Work Programme and changes to the benefit system, the balance of focus between the individual and the job remains an area of considerable debate - proposals in the Welfare Reform Bill, for instance, include a new set of work-related requirements for benefit claimants. On the one hand, exposure to work can act as a strong driver for some clients, whereas for others it can be counter-productive if the client does not feel ready to embrace it, leading them to drop out. **As different approaches are valid depending on clients' need, you should consider carefully the appropriate timing for introducing job aspirations and job opportunities for the client group with which you are looking to work**.

- Use the client's preferred method of communication: This can sustain commitment to projects, particularly when working with younger client groups:

  - The Youth Employment & Enterprise Rehearsal (YEER) project providing employment support to BME young people who are NEET found that Facebook and other social networking sites are useful in engaging and retaining its younger client group (aged 18-25).

  - Smart Skills noted clients respond well to mobile phone texts.

- Explore options for providing 'taster' activities e.g. work visits to build confidence, experience and motivation in a gradual and non-threatening way. The Getting Ready for Work project combines workplace visits and work placements. It found this combination highly effective, with visits building momentum and commitment for later placements. Equally, care needs to be taken to ensure clients are ready for placements – any support needs must be addressed first before clients spend time in the workplace.

- Tailor activities for different abilities: Projects that have a course component should consider reviewing the progress of learners at an early phase to see if anyone is being left behind. This can be done by:

  - Asking for verbal or written feedback from tutors.

  - Getting learners to undertake self-assessments of personal progress and course 'pace'.

  - Observations of classes by project managers.

- Delivery can then be adapted if necessary to accommodate learners' needs. The YEER project realised early on that more advanced learners would benefit from a 'fast-track' approach to courses and set up additional sessions to accommodate this group

How to assess client progress

Most projects are required to submit data on 'hard' outputs e.g. recruitment, completions, work placements as part of funding requirements. There is often value in undertaking additional internal reviews to capture 'soft outcomes' to ensure that activities are meeting learner needs and to identify any emerging challenges that projects can respond to. Whilst this increases 'bureaucracy', it makes projects more accountable and responsive and can also provide valuable evidence to support future funding bids.

Techniques for assessing client progress include:

- Regular one-to-one discussions with beneficiaries to reflect on progress and needs.

- Periodic self-assessment exercises such as:

  - Setting and reflecting on progress towards personal goals (e.g. improving English or improving confidence and social skills). Innovative techniques such as Outcomes Stars (http://www.outcomesstar.org.uk/) can help engage clients in this task.

  - Small scale surveys including questions such as:

    ‣ How satisfied are you with the venue where the course is provided/ teaching staff/the pace of the course etc? (Often measured on a scale of 1-5 where 1 is very satisfied and 5 very dissatisfied).

    ‣ How could the service be improved? (An open question).

4 Delivery

This section outlines the factors that contribute to the successful delivery of services. It covers:

- What you should think about when choosing venues.

- The 'package' of services that projects need to offer.

- The importance and characteristics of good quality staff.

- How to set up effective partnerships.

4.1 What should you consider?

Having a good project idea that addresses a genuine need is not enough to ensure success. Effective delivery depends on ensuring that all the right 'ingredients' are in place including location, staff and partnerships with other providers. Projects that pick the wrong venue or recruit unsuitable staff, for example, may struggle to engage clients or meet targets. Whilst there is no blueprint that can be applied to every activity, as delivery needs to be tailored to client needs, all projects will benefit from thinking carefully about how they provide services.

Pathways to success - delivery

- Think carefully about the venue you use to deliver services: Are clients more likely to attend if sessions are held near where they live? Or would they be willing to travel to a city centre location with good transport links?.

- Consider whether you want to deliver one service well or offer a 'holistic' package of support.

- Review performance and client experiences continually - be ready to adapt delivery quickly if issues or challenges emerge.

- Identify the characteristics of good staff and think about how you can you recruit the right people.

- Decide whether your project would benefit from working with partners – map potential partners and consider what partnership arrangements you would want to put in place.

- Consider using a project steering group to draw in wider expertise and oversight.

Potential Pitfalls

- Build delivery around the availability of partners: e.g. school-based staff may not be accessible outside term-time.

- External factors beyond your control e.g. a reduction in vacancies during an economic downturn and period of spending cuts may make it harder to deliver. Build in flexibility.

4.2 What are the ingredients of successful delivery?

- **Choosing the right venue**: Beneficiaries are more likely to sign up to projects if activities are delivered in an appropriate location. Scoping work can help identify the distance your client group are willing to travel or factors that can affect willingness to attend e.g. a cultural preference for women-only sites. Experience of Innovation Fund projects shows clients value locations and venues that are:

    - **convenient and accessible**: The Building Successful Families project that supports parents, particularly Asian women, to access education, training or employment noted that holding courses in local schools maximised participation as clients did not have to travel far from home to access provision.
    - **a 'safe' and trusted environment**: The Sprouting Hidden Talents project attributed its ability to attract BME women some distance from the labour market to the fact it responds to cultural preferences by operating a centre run exclusively for women.
    - **consistent**: One project forced to use a series of unsuitable venues to see clients e.g. public libraries when a dedicated training facility it used initially closed felt this impacted negatively on service quality.

- **Offering a holistic package of support delivered at a single venue:** Clients value projects that can respond to multiple barriers or needs. The Sprouting Hidden Talents project proved attractive to learners because it provided a complete package of back-to-work support through its offer of ESOL tuition, vocational training, employment support and childcare in a single location.

- **Ensuring that the timing of specific interventions or support is client led rather than service or funding led**. The experience of Innovation Fund projects has shown that each client journey is different, so it is not possible to specify precise timings for activities at each stage of the journey. By adopting a client led approach, you will ensure that clients are not overwhelmed i.e. asked to do too much too soon or parked in a service or activity i.e. not challenged sufficiently by spending too long on similar activities. The risk in either case is that they disengage.

Approaches to client progression

The diversity of clients supported by Innovation Fund projects means that a wide range of approaches have been taken to progressing clients towards and into work. Some projects e.g. Sprouting Hidden Talents have adopted a nurturing approach to optimising client progression including helping clients to support and motivate each other. Other projects such as the Innovative Jobs Academy have focused more on client responsibility and challenge through their motivational tool and approach to mentoring.

The most effective balance of nurture/challenge will depend on the characteristics of the client group and the nature and extent of the barriers to work. The experience of the Innovation Fund is that there is no single approach or package of approaches which will work best. Timings of progression should be led by client need and should be developed in partnership with the individual.

Projects need to ensure that interventions are client-led and incorporate:

- **A regular review of client achievements**: You may need to enable clients to progress at different speeds as the Youth Employment and Enterprise Rehearsal project found, resulting in the client group splitting into two sub-groups.

- **Sufficient flexibility in delivery** to take account of changing client circumstances. Client lifestyles are often chaotic and changes in their circumstances will quickly have an impact on their ability to participate or progress. For clients facing multiple barriers to work, a high level of tailoring of the approach will be required.

- Projects need to recognise that different people will progress at different stages and the more complex the needs of the client or chaotic their lives, the more likely they are to step off the progression route and then, potentially, back on at a later date. Projects need to be able to respond flexibly and positively to these evolving timescales as one size will not fit all.

- **Reviewing performance and adapting to emerging challenges:** Regular internal monitoring allows projects to reflect on performance and revise activities accordingly. Examples of Innovation Fund projects adapting to emerging challenges include:

  - The Work Snippets programme switched emphasis from work placements to volunteering when it became clear that clients with health conditions were often far from work-ready.

  - The Improving Chances project renegotiated its objective of providing inter-generational employment support through schools when parents proved reluctant to involve children in activities. It refocused successfully on supporting individuals claiming out-of-work benefits for three months or more.

- **Ensuring frontline project staff have the necessary qualities to engage and motivate participants:** Innovation Fund projects and clients suggested key qualities include:

  - being **friendly and approachable**.

  - **a capacity to build trust and rapport** and to motivate clients with some projects adopting an explicit mentoring or coaching approach e.g. the Smart Skills project which worked with homeless clients. Key elements of achieving a good level of rapport include being non-judgemental, looking at issues from the client's perspective, keeping promises and ensuring that client confidentiality is protected. Clients should be made fully aware of how their personal information will be used and give consent to any data sharing arrangements. Building trust also means being clear about a client's responsibilities to other clients e.g. where group work is involved.

  - a concern to develop **a genuine understanding of clients' needs** and aspirations rather than a 'work-first' approach based on finding them 'any' job.

  - **cultural and language awareness** where needed.

  - **flexibility** in seeing clients: The Newly Arrived Spouses project, which works with migrants who come to the UK as spouses emphasised that **seeing clients flexibly** without prior appointments increases uptake.

Recruiting the right staff

All projects want good staff and there is always an element of uncertainty in recruitment. In addition to formal qualifications e.g. in IAG and other criteria, experience from the Innovation Fund indicates projects can increase their chances of finding the right person for the job by considering the following:

- **Soft skills are critical:** Projects with a strong mentoring or coaching element should look for staff who are charismatic, persuasive and able to inspire and enthuse clients.

- Innovation is often attractive to participants e.g. 'motivational mapping' or creative arts so **seek out staff with fresh ideas** and an ability to offer something different.

- The capacity to **promote self reliance** amongst clients. A number of projects successfully supported clients to work with their peers, enhancing the outcomes of the service.

Developing good partnerships based on complementary strengths and shared objectives: Partnerships can play an important role in delivery by:

- referring clients.

- providing projects with information and advice about client needs.

- offering education, training, volunteering or job opportunities that projects can signpost to.

- delivering other forms of support not directly related to employment such as benefits advice or healthcare.

- Providing free or subsidised venues for delivering services.

Factors to consider when identifying and developing links with partners include:

- **Think carefully first about whether you need partners**: Most Innovation Fund projects worked successfully with partners but some met targets without partnerships. Sometimes it may be better to work alone than have unreliable partners that frustrate delivery.

- **Identify potential partners and what they can offer at an early stage**: Listing or 'mapping' potential partners and the benefits they can offer is an important part of the project design phase.

- **Seek out partners that share objectives** as this can secure buy-in and commitment. The Building Successful Families project deliberately partnered with schools signed up to the Leading Parent Partnership Award (LPPA) as this required them to demonstrate investment in parents' education or employment which dovetailed neatly with BSF's aims.

- **Work with partners that have different but complementary strengths and expertise** to enhance your service and delivery capacity. Two Innovation Fund projects highlighted the value of teaming up with large housing associations to benefit from their strong local profile and extensive facilities.

- **Think about using potential partners beyond the 'usual suspects'**. The Migrant Workers Support Programme developed wholly new partnerships with organisations including the NHS and employers. This provided a useful opportunity to work outside established networks of learning, training and employment support providers in the city.

- **Consider bringing partners in to provide advice, guidance and oversight**. The Neighbourhood Enterprising Solutions project found using a steering group valuable in marshalling wider expertise to support project development. Steering groups can be created by inviting partners and other stakeholders e.g. Jobcentre plus, the NHS, staff from the City Council to meet on a regular basis to discuss progress, delivery issues and outcomes.

Partnerships based on complementary strengths - housing providers

Social housing providers can play a very powerful role in helping to address worklessness because they increasingly have broader regeneration priorities that include targeting worklessness – this can make them willing and committed partners. Engaging with RSLs has worked well in the Innovation Fund when housing and wider regeneration objectives have been combined e.g. support for young people which can help to improve neighbourhood management. RSLs have excellent links to other organisations, good local knowledge and often can can provide access to cheap or subsidised facilities in locations that are convenient, visible and accessible to target groups.

The **Art Work Gallery and Café** was established by Future Health and Social Care (FHSC) in partnership with Trident Housing Association (THA). FHSC were looking for premises to extend their existing art class provision for people with mental health problems or learning difficulties and were offered an empty shop unit owned by THA close to the Woodview estate. THA's motivation for getting involved was partly to boost service provision for this group but also to breathe life into this area and this (largely vacant) row of shops in particular. THA refurbished the shop and offered it to FHSC at a peppercorn rent. The investment from THA's perspective has paid off as the café complements neighbouring shops and the other units have become easier to let.

The **Neighbourhood Enterprising Solutions** project is delivered by Castle Vale Community Housing Association (CVCHA) by its neighbourhood management team in partnership with the Institute for Social Entrepreneurs (ISE). The involvement of CVCHA as an anchor organisation is frequently highlighted as a success factor in the project. It has a high profile locally and a good degree of credibility, understands local need and can see where opportunities for collaboration exist. It is also able to provide premises for project activity. This is enhanced by the partnership with ISE which provides specialist social enterprise support.

- **Use partners to meet client needs your project cannot address**: Partners can provide additional, external support that is critical for engaging and retaining clients. SIFA Fireside successfully provides pre-employment training to vulnerable groups such as substance misusers because partner agencies provide complementary support that stabilises conditions and enables them to participate.

- **Consider possibilities for formalising partnership structures**: embedding or seconding staff in partner organisations can help build stronger, more productive partnerships than mutual signposting or referrals allow as demonstrated by the Working Age Dementia Service.

The benefits of embedding partner staff in partner organisations

The Working Age Dementia Service (WADS) is delivered jointly by the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) and Birmingham and Solihull Mental Health Foundation Trust to provide people with early on-set dementia and their carers with employment advice, benefits advice, support in accessing care packages e.g. through Direct Payment applications, and volunteering opportunities.

Referring patients across to CAB to deal with social welfare needs frees up time for NHS staff to focus on healthcare interventions. It also benefits patients by providing access to specialist advice on non-clinical matters, particularly concerning benefits and finance.

As a team member observed, a 'hands on approach' to joint working enables a stronger, more productive partnership than mutual signposting or referrals. It also means the two organisations provide an integrated and co-ordinated package of support for clients.

Important factors in making this partnership work include:

- **Ensuring key project staff regularly attend relevant staff** meetings held by the partner organisation: This helped the CAB worker understand patients' clinical needs and enabled them to advocate the benefits of welfare advice to NHS staff.

- **Giving the relationship time to work**: Referrals from the NHS to CAB were slow at first but picked up as the NHS realised the benefits of the WADS service to clients.

- **Providing staff dedicated time to undertake partnership activities**: The CAB worker was seconded to the project for two and half days a week. This provided the time necessary to cement the partnership, establish referral procedures, see clients and to establish the service as an integral part of the support package for patients in the minds of NHS staff.

Finally, it is also important to remember that project delivery can be affected by factors over which they have little control including:

- **The negative effect of the economic downturn**: Some Innovation Fund projects suggested increased competition for jobs made it harder for projects to support beneficiaries into employment.

- Changes in **eligibility criteria for courses at local colleges**: The introduction of course fees and the increase in minimum English language requirements prevented the Sprouting Hidden Talents project from supporting participants to enrol on dress-making courses at local colleges.

5 Employer Engagement

This section sets out the key steps to engaging employers to provide work experience, apprenticeships or employment opportunities. It covers:

- Ways to incentivise employers to participate in projects

- How to make links with private-sector companies

- The benefits of working with a single sector

- How to communicate clearly and effectively with employers

5.1 What should you consider?

Employers can provide a valuable source of work placements, apprenticeships or employment opportunities. Engaging businesses can take time and effort, however, especially where projects have few existing links to the sector. Employers may feel they lack the time or resources to engage with worklessness projects. The benefits of recruiting 'hard-to-reach clients' may also not be obvious to them. To overcome this, projects need to work creatively to establish links with the sector and to convince them of the benefits of taking on beneficiaries.

The benefits of working directly with employers include:

- It can provide employment opportunities for 'hard-to-reach' individuals who would be disadvantaged by 'open' competition for jobs.

- A supportive, committed and well-briefed employer can work with project staff to increase the likelihood that placements are successful e.g. by recognising and accommodating client needs such as health conditions.

Pathways to success – employer engagement

- Consider the potential benefits of making links with employers – could they provide a route into work for clients who might otherwise struggle in 'open' competition for jobs?

- Think about ways of identifying and approaching employers. Contacting individual companies may be time-consuming and ineffective - it could be worth approaching representative bodies (e.g. the local Chamber of Commerce) that can act as a source of information or potential 'broker' to arrange access to employers.

- Identify the benefits you can 'sell' to employers e.g. filtering potential applicants, addressing skills shortages, contributing to Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) objectives.

- Weigh up the advantages of working with specific sectors e.g. to help fill skills gaps. Employers might also be willing to make a financial contribution e.g. to joint fund apprenticeships if it addresses their needs.

- Be realistic – not all employers will see the benefits of working with projects, especially if they have little trouble filling vacancies. There has to be a mutual advantage in working together.

5.2 What can you do to encourage employer engagement

- **Understand employer needs**

Understanding employer needs

Projects should take time at the outset to discuss the needs and concerns of employers with potential partners in the private sector and organisations that represent businesses such as the Chamber of Commerce. Key issues might include:

- Are there skills gaps that need filling e.g. vocational or language skills?

- What are the customer-facing or interpersonal skills employers look for in new recruits?

- What capacity is there to fund new appointments e.g. is there a need for subsidy?

- Are there reservations about employing hard-to-reach groups? How could these be overcome e.g. work trials?

- What support or advice would employers need to take on clients with disadvantages e.g. disabled clients or those with health conditions?

- Are there on-going training needs if projects successfully place beneficiaries? How could projects assist with these e.g. subsidy or signposting to providers?

- **Provide clear incentives** to participate: Employers are more likely to engage if projects consider ways to:

  - **Minimise costs and paperwork**: The Work Snippets project, which provides individuals with short-term work opportunities, set out to employ beneficiaries directly to spare participating companies the complexities of adding temporary, irregular workers to their payroll.
  - **Provide assistance with recruitment** as in the case of the Jewellery Quarter Apprenticeship Scheme.
  - **Reduce costs** e.g. through wage subsidies.
  - **Screen** candidates: The Getting Ready for Work project run by BITC undertakes basic CRB checks to maximise the client's fit with the employer's environment. Good links with referral agencies also provide an informal method of screening as staff at partner organisations including Connexions, Action for Children and Turning Point know clients and can advise BITC on suitability for placements.

- **Use organisations with existing links to businesses** to deliver projects: Business in the Community (BITC) has exceeded targets for its Getting Ready for Work project that provides work visits and placements to young people who are NEET, care leavers and ex-offenders. BITC has excellent links with the business community because of its role as a national business membership organisation which exists to coordinate the Corporate and Social Responsibility (CSR) activities of its members.

- **Work with a single sector** to tap into existing networks and secure buy-in by addressing strategic needs: The Jewellery Quarter Apprenticeship Scheme was developed by to provide an entry-level, industry-specific apprenticeship based on workplace training to address concerns about growing skills gaps in the jewellery industry. This focus on a single industry has proved attractive to local businesses with six businesses initially signing up to the scheme and contributing half of its running costs (approximately £50,000 in total).

- **Communicate clearly** and effectively with host employers at all stages of the placement process.

Effective communication with employers

- Engage employers by helping them to understand the needs of beneficiaries e.g. take them on a tour and show them the problems you want to address.

- Clearly explain (on paper as well as verbally) what will happen through the process and what is expected of them.

- Have project staff on hand at key points to make sure things run smoothly.

- Try and make sure that employers (and relevant staff within the organisation) are well briefed about client circumstances and needs.

- Respond quickly to any issues or concerns employers raise.

6 Achieving Sustainability

This section looks at how projects can sustain themselves beyond the lifetime of the Innovation Fund. It covers:

- How evaluation can be used to support future funding bids.

- Mainstreaming services.

- Ways to generate income.

- Developing sustainable 'products' that other projects can deliver.

6.1 What should you consider?

Projects that receive time-limited funding need to think about ways of sustaining activity when funding ends. Many will choose to apply for further discretionary funding or short-term contracts although these will become more competitive and harder to obtain as government funding cuts take hold. At present, the forthcoming Work Programme may provide one of the few remaining avenues for securing funding for projects to tackle worklessness. In this climate, projects may want to think about other ways of becoming sustainable such as generating income, mainstreaming or creating some form of legacy model.

Pathways to success – achieving sustainability

- Think about how sustainability can be factored into the design of projects e.g. by planning a service that generates income or by identifying ways in which costs can be reduced.

- Identify other potential sources of funding e.g. the Work Programme or the European Social Fund.

- Make sure you capture current success e.g. through on-going evaluation to strengthen future funding bids.

- Explore how mainstream providers can be encouraged to sit up and take notice of project activities to increase the potential for 'mainstreaming'.

- Consider ways of reducing dependency on short-term contracts - are there options for generating income e.g. by selling products or services?

- For small organisations, a consortium approach could be considered in order to improve the chance of accessing funding opportunities.

Potential pitfalls

- **Think about ways of achieving sustainability from the outset:** it may be possible to plan a service that generates income or develops a 'product' that can be widely adopted e.g. a new NVQ. Projects that leave thinking about sustainability until the end of current funding may find their future hangs precariously on the success of future bids.

6.2 How can you make projects more sustainable?

There are several approaches projects can take to ensure the long-term viability of at least some elements of projects:

- **Seek out new opportunities for securing funding** e.g. working as a subcontractor in the forthcoming Work Programme. Opportunities can be identified by regularly monitoring the contractor sections of key central and local government websites.

- **Build evaluation into projects** to generate data that can be used to support future funding bids: The Working Age Dementia Service (WADS) undertook its own research by interviewing service users. Findings were used to bolster two recent bids for further funding.

- **Secure on-going support from mainstream providers ('mainstreaming')** to assume responsibility for all or some elements of projects: The Future Melting Pot have been asked by Young Enterprise to roll out the YEER project across the West Midlands to include white males from its initial focus on young people from BME backgrounds.

Projects can increase their chances of being mainstreamed by:

- **Developing a sustainable 'product'** such as an NVQ that is more likely to attract future funding: the Jewellery Quarter Apprenticeship Scheme is developing a new workplace-based NVQ that could be delivered as part of any future apprenticeship or scheme within the industry.

- **Building income generating activities** into projects to ensure sustainability.

Generating income as a route to sustainability

Projects should consider the possibilities for generating income at the outset as a way of improving sustainability and reducing reliance on external funding. Options include:

- **Create a product or service that can be sold to an external client:** the UK Asian Women's Centre that runs the Sprouting Hidden Talents project successfully makes and sells lunches to local schools and community centres.

- **Provide a service to the public:** The Art Work Gallery and Café runs a café open to the public from premises provided at affordable rents from a social landlord.

- **Devise a 'legacy model'** where participants who are supported to develop enterprises return some of the profits to the project: The BEAT project that focuses on self-development, for instance, hoped to train participants to the point where they could sell and deliver empowerment courses to businesses. They ultimately found it difficult to engage and interest external clients, however, and reflected that more preparatory work could have been undertaken to identify business opportunities before using beneficiaries to sell the service.

- **Keep costs low** to increase future options for maintaining services 'on a shoestring' without securing significant additional funding.

Delivering effective services at low cost

The Getting Ready for Work project involves delivery of work placements at a much reduced cost to previous provision by omitting structured employability training. The placements have been successful at motivating beneficiaries and helping them to focus their employment plans - and have also led to a number of job outcomes.

The Jewellery Quarter Apprentice Scheme project involves development of an industry specific entry level NVQ which could operate at very low cost given training is mainly workplace-based. Using a wage subsidy as an incentive has cost implications but employers have indicated they may take part without (or with a considerably lower) subsidy, particularly as the market picks up.

7 Case Study Summaries

- The 16 case studies are based on a sample of the 40 Innovation Fund projects reviewed as part of the evaluation. They span a broad range of approaches and client groups, so much of the learning is very specific to the individual project.

- Contact details are provided for readers to make contact regarding projects' learning, future activity and to support linkages and partnerships.

Project Name and Description	**Sprouting Hidden Talents** provides ESOL, employment support and vocational training to workless BME women in a single facility.
Objective	To improve employability of women from BME backgrounds.
Innovation	Combines ESOL with vocational learning (cooking, sewing, beauty) and additional support to develop skills into cooperatives or social enterprises.
Key Areas of Good Practice	• Seeks to harness existing domestic skills and expertise as routes into work/ self-employment. • Provides free child care for learners. • Provides holistic range of ESOL, employment support and vocational learning services in single venue.
Success Factors and Transferability	The principle of harnessing existing talents would transfer well to other types of employability project but the specific target group – BME women – clearly value the opportunity to access the service at a local, women only facility i.e. it could not be replicated at any venue for this target group.
Contact Details	Ms Sudarshan Abrol · ukawc@hotmail.co.uk · 0121 5234910

Project Name and Description	**Improving Chances** provides IAG, training and employability support to help those out of work for over three months to prepare for work.		
Objective	To reduce the number of families facing multi-generational worklessness by raising the skills and aspirations of at-risk young people and their parents and guardians.		
Innovation	The project initially sought to innovate by taking a 'whole family' approach to inter-generational worklessness where families provide mutual support, encouragement and motivation to support learning, training and employment outcomes. This was revised to provide more individual level support in the wake of difficulties in engaging households.		
Key Areas of Good Practice	• Finding the right contact in partner organisations at an early stage and approaching multiple providers is critical in developing referral routes. • Ensuring individuals are supported to access training opportunities through, for example, providing free transport to training 'really helps to remove barriers'.		
Success Factors and Transferability	Lessons learnt regarding the difficulty in successfully engaging workless households suggest the need for caution in trying to replicate this in future delivery. It may be more efficient and cost-effective to tackle worklessness at an individual level.		
Contact Details	Marlene Vassell	marlene.vassell@bxlworks.org.uk	0121 423 8254

Project Name and Description	The **Innovative Jobs Academy** offers IAG and job search support for the long-term unemployed.		
Objective	To support the long-term unemployed with multiple barriers to work to return to employment.		
Innovation	IJA provides clients with an opportunity to assess skills, knowledge and motivations regarding work through: motivational mapping, visioning to identify clients' interests and aspirations as well a personal coach to support and motivate.		
Key Areas of Good Practice	• The project highlights the value of intensive, personalised coaching for clients facing multiple and complex barriers to work. • Motivational mapping, visioning and goal setting are effective tools to explore individual interests and motivations regarding work. • Persistence pays off in ensuring client retention.		
Success Factors and Transferability	The most innovative elements of the project such as motivational mapping and visioning could be adopted by other employment projects and would work well with a range of clients including individuals with health conditions or disabilities.		
Contact Details	Alexander Hicks	alex@focusbirmingham.org.uk	0121 478 5215.

Project Name and Description	The **Migrant Professionals Support Programme** supports learners to gain employment commensurate with skills by providing ESOL (up to Level Two), cultural awareness training, work placements and access to the NARIC service which determines the UK equivalent of qualifications gained in other countries
Objective	To help migrant workers overcome the language and cultural barriers they face in securing work in the UK to enable them to find work appropriate to skills and experience.
Innovation	Providing a complete package of support that includes ESOL, IAG and work placements to migrant professionals with a background in any sector (existing provision in the city tended to be sector specific e.g. courses for medical professionals).
Key Areas of Good Practice	• Developing new partnerships with organisations including the NHS and employers provided a useful opportunity to work outside established networks of learning, training and employment support providers in the city. • Additional support to enable beneficiary attendance: participants on the Programme are guaranteed free childcare and bus passes to attend placements. This provision is only intermittently available to other students on standard ESOL courses. • Strong partnership with employers and third sector agencies is important to provide referrals and provide work placements.
Success Factors and Transferability	The specific focus of this service means that it would not be appropriate for other workless groups that do not face the same language and cultural barriers and lack of recognition for high level skills and qualifications gained outside the UK. There is clearly is scope, however, for using it as a model for supporting migrant professionals in other areas outside Birmingham.
Contact Details	Hafsha Shaikh	hafsha.shaikh@birmingham.gov.uk	0121 675 6134

Project Name and Description	The **Understanding the success of employment initiatives** research project was devised to explore reasons why the longer-term unemployed (six months plus) find it difficult to sustain engagement in employability projects.
Objective	The primary objective is to help Birmingham City Council to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of employability initiatives in the city.
Innovation	The research used ethnographic 'day in the life studies' that provided insights into routines and daily practices that constrained or enabled the search for work, including, for example, the significance of informal social networks as a source of information about jobs.
Key Areas of Good Practice	• Using unconventional research methods such as ethnography can provide fresh insights that do not always emerge from standard evaluations. • Feeding back emerging findings on a regular basis helps to 'build momentum' and generate interest among potential beneficiaries. • Building a workshop for stakeholders into the research ensures that findings and their applicability for service design and delivery can be explored. • Mixing senior policy design staff with frontline workers in workshops generates creative tensions that stimulate genuinely innovative thinking.
Success Factors and Transferability	Whilst some of the research is place-specific, a number of the findings are likely to be applicable and relevant to agencies working to tackle worklessness in other urban areas.
Contact Details	Vicki Sellick vicki.sellick@youngfoundation.org 020 8821 2847

Project Name and Description	The **Working Age Dementia Service** (WADS) is delivered by the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) and NHS to provide people with early on-set dementia and their carers with employment and benefits advice. It was devised by the NHS (Birmingham and Solihull Mental Health Foundation Trust).
Objective	To reduce the time spent dealing with the social welfare needs of early onset dementia clients. Referring patients across to WADS frees up time for NHS staff to focus on healthcare interventions whilst providing patients with access to specialist advice on non-clinical matters.
Innovation	The project innovates through its unique collaboration between the NHS and CAB that ensures clients benefit from the respective expertise of each organisation. As one stakeholder observed, this represents an important departure from the tendency of the NHS to work in 'silos'. There is no other dedicated advice and advocacy service for early onset dementia in the city.
Key Areas of Good Practice	• Developing partnerships based on distinct but complimentary areas of expertise enables clients to benefit from co-ordinated specialist advice. • A 'hands on approach' to joint working ensures a stronger, more productive partnership than mutual signposting. Embedding the CAB advice worker in the NHS team through regular joint meetings has ensured they understand service user needs and can advocate the benefits of advice to NHS staff. • Building evaluation into the project from the outset provides a crucial evidence base on which to build the case for further funding in future bids or to advocate for incorporation into mainstream commissioning structures (the Regional Dementia Pathway).
Success Factors and Transferability	All research participants felt the project model could be replicated in other health authorities or, equally, could be developed in Birmingham or elsewhere to provide advocacy and advice to patients with other long-term health conditions.
Contact Details	Nicola Wheeler	Nicola.Wheeler@bsmhft.nhs.uk	0121 301 5455

Project Name and Description	The Future Melting Pot (TFMP) is a community interest company which set up the **Youth Employment and Enterprise Rehearsal** (YEER) project to provide business support to BME individuals who are NEET with the main original aim being that the participants set up their own enterprises.	
Objective	YEER was designed to provide business-specific training to beneficiaries and assist them from start to finish in developing an idea and commencing their own business. The project provides training, support and access to accredited advisors.	
Innovation	The project's approach is innovative in that it is offering hard-to-reach, excluded young people an alternative to worklessness or ad hoc paid employment. It provides them with the opportunity to explore the option of self employment in an environment which is "needs led rather than top down, where feedback is assimilated into the ongoing project".	
Key Areas of Good Practice	• Partnership development has been a large part of the success of YEER and has given participants the opportunity to network effectively from the beginning. • Innovative approaches to communication and retention (using Facebook and other social media groups) have shown an understanding of the target group. • The project was required to evolve in response to the different learning paces of individuals – multiple classes were developed in response to this need.	
Success Factors and Transferability	The project is very transferrable to other policies, target groups and areas and can be amended to consider a variety of different thematic directions. The project has been commissioned by Young Enterprise to target young white males in the wider West Midlands region, and so is already demonstrating transferability.	
Contact Details	Estella Edwards	estellaedwards@hotmail.co.uk · 0121 351 7373

Project Name and Description	**Micro Socient** is a research and project pilot run by Best Chances across multiple areas of Birmingham. The project aims to support residents in setting up their own businesses.		
Objective	It aims to provide a micro-social enterprise incubator for long-term workless individuals in order to provide working opportunities within the local communities. The research element of the pilot is set up to analyse the effects of social enterprise in the local areas.		
Innovation	The innovative aspect of this approach is based around offering a non-standard solution to long-term worklessness in the form of self-employment. Although the project has since evolved to include providing more general coaching on all progression options, the mentoring Micro Socient provides is fundamentally based on exploring the individual's interests and the ways in which these can be developed into an employment opportunity.		
Key Areas of Good Practice	• A personal approach to building relationships with partner organisations has been beneficial. • The outreach basis of the project and offering the opportunity for self-employment has been successful in engaging hard-to-reach individuals.		
Success Factors and Transferability	Due to the fact that the project is designed to evolve as the research element of the process develops, the project is not described as transferrable in its current form – this iteration of the project was never meant to continue. There are key areas which Best Chances would like to develop further which would make the project far more transferable in the future.		
Contact Details	Mr Will Evans	will.evans5@gmail.com	07737 364 035

Project Name and Description	The **Creative Opportunities in Employment (COPE)** project was run by BEAT. The project aimed to engage with young adults using creative means to empower them to make a difference in their lives.
Objective	Participants are given support in developing softer employment skills such as goal development, confidence building and raising aspirations. Alongside this, beneficiaries work to gain an NVQ and eventually go on to become an apprentice for the project, selling creative empowerment services.
Innovation	There were a number of approaches initially incorporated into the project which were innovative including the engagement through creative arts, offering a paid apprenticeship role and the development of a product which can then be sold, resulting in the potential for sustainable employment of those who participate.
Key Areas of Good Practice	• Innovative approaches to subject matter hold the interest of participants – i.e. fruit picking sessions used to promote healthy eating. • Using creative activities to empower and encourage confidence growth helps engage with younger people.
Success Factors and Transferability	Although the original aim was that the four beneficiaries would gain a job working in the project, the participants have gone on to find work, just not with the project. They have stated that the skills learned through the project have helped them, and so creative engagement and learning is a positive approach to helping young people find work. The project has the potential to be transferrable in the future, but with specific changes being made which ensure employment opportunities for the beneficiaries.
Contact Details	Ursella Walker ursella.walker@beatlimited.co.uk 0121 250 5152

Project Name and Description	The **Smart Skills** project has been run at various locations nationally as part of the suite of projects that Crisis UK offer.
Objective	The Smart Skills project aims to work with homeless adults in engaging them in sustainable activity which will move them towards independence whilst gaining skills and confidence.
Innovation	Smart Skills aims to engage with their members in an informal and unpressurised manner which, feedback suggests, is not only more effective, but also aids long-term retention. In addition, the project has adopted an outreach approach which involves going to the hostels where people live in order to engage with them, rather than wait for individuals to come to the project. Both beneficiaries and partner organisations have stated that these factors are not only innovative but also a key factor in the project's success.
Key Areas of Good Practice	• Outreach is the most effective way to engage with homeless individuals as it ensures they are approached in familiar environments where they feel comfortable and are more likely to want to become involved. • An informal approach to communication using a range of media including texting aids retention and increases the chance that beneficiaries return to the project should they leave due to personal circumstance. • Effective partnership working is essential in engaging with homeless individuals; an introduction through an established organisation encourages trust.
Success Factors and Transferability	Smart Skills is an accredited project which is established in a number of UK cities. This demonstrates the project's transferability in a geographical sense. There is uncertainty as to whether the project could be targeted at different groups successfully, mostly because it is currently tailored directly to the needs of homeless people. Due to its formal accreditation, the project format cannot be amended and so is only transferred as it is.
Contact Details	Matthew Green matthew.green@crisis.org.uk 0121 348 7950

Project Name and Description	The aim of the **Work Snippets** project was to provide an employment service which recruits members of the community for short-term work opportunities in the local area. Bloomsbury Cyber Junction (BCJ), are a charitable organisation based in Nechells which was established to provide education facilities.
Objective	Work Snippets was designed to address the employment issues that lone parents and people with disabilities face by offering participants ad hoc and flexible 'snippets' of work in the local community.
Innovation	At the conception stage of the project, unbeknownst to BCJ, there had previously been a project run in London similar to Work Snippets, although the focus was solely on single parents. So although the initial idea was not the first incarnation of the project, it was unique to Birmingham and also distinguished itself by including people with health issues.
Key Areas of Good Practice	• Using BCJ as the main payment point for all employers to alleviate employer concerns about ad hoc payroll additions. • Providing in-house volunteering opportunities as a starting point provides a safe learning environment and can reassure individuals who are insecure about the working environment. • Building genuine relationships with participants encourages retention. • Larger start-up costs were paid up front so the project will be inexpensive to maintain, this increases the prospects for sustainability.
Success Factors and Transferability	Work Snippets has experienced success in developing the soft employability skills of people who have faced barriers to work. The short-term work element of the project did not commence as clients were not sufficiently job-ready but the project is now being revised to provide flexible volunteering opportunities. There may be potential for transferring this model to other contexts.
Contact Details	Amanda Davies	amanda@bcjunction.org	0121 250 5533

Project Name and Description	The **Jewellery Quarter Apprentice Scheme** involves development of an apprenticeship scheme based on work place training as part of the Jewellery Industry Business Support Strategy.
Objective	To provide young people with training and employment opportunities in jewellery businesses, addressing skill needs to support survival of the industry.
Innovation	Use of pre-recruitment training to support SMEs in recruitment of young people from WNF target groups. The project is also trialling a set of new National Occupational Standards.
Key Areas of Good Practice	• An industry specific approach (based on Goldsmiths existing model) works well and supports increased strategic collaboration between participating businesses. • Pre-employment recruitment processes and training provide a very significant incentive, particularly for smaller employers without formal HR functions. This has worked well to support recruitment of people from target groups. • Clear presentation of what will happen at each stage of the process is helpful for both employers and candidates. • Candidates required a very substantial amount of one-to-one support and this was a positive part of the project.
Success Factors and Transferability	The use of pre-recruitment training has proved attractive to both beneficiaries and employers. It is an approach that could be used to support employment of people from target groups in other sectors / parts of the city. The apprenticeship model could be transferred to other industries to meet skills needs and may be useful in newer sectors such as environmental technologies.
Contact Details	Paul Tse paul.tse@birmingham.gov.uk 0121 464 1186

Project Name and Description	**Neighbourhood Enterprising Solutions** delivers social enterprise support in the Castle Vale area		
Objective	To develop local social enterprises that will create employment and volunteering opportunities to address worklessness as well as meeting local service needs.		
Innovation	Providing support specifically to develop social enterprises that meet local needs.		
Key Areas of Good Practice	• Delivery through a strong local anchor organisation and a specialist social enterprise support organisation works well. • Having a project steering group has marshalled wider expertise to support project development. • A high profile 'Dragon's Den' style event helps to generate interest, draw out new ideas and focus people's proposals for product development and business planning. • Having a local focus works very well in Castle Vale as residents identify strongly with the local area.		
Success Factors and Transferability	The approach would be transferable elsewhere and will work best if a strong anchor organisation with good local links is involved. In this case CVCHA operate the local neighbourhood management partnership as well as being the largest and most prominent housing provider and their existing partnerships and credibility have been an important success factor.		
Contact Details	Ruth Miller	ruth.miller@cvcha.org.uk	0121 748 8189

Project Name and Description	The **Getting Ready for Work** project combines 'Getting Ready for Work' workplace visits and work placements.
Objective	To improve employment aspirations and chances through exposure to a work environment.
Innovation	Provision of peer-to-peer support in a workplace context and tailoring previously successful approaches to specific client groups.
Key Areas of Good Practice	• Workplace visits and placements do work together effectively, with visits building momentum and commitment, but timing is difficult if clients need further support between the visit and placement stages. • Using client group specific agencies to gain referrals works well but can be limited if commitment to the project does not extend to adviser- level staff. • Briefing all relevant staff in the host organisations about clients' specific needs will help to ensure the visit or placement is effective. • An established business membership organisation is an effective way of securing employer engagement.
Success Factors and Transferability	A key success factor is delivery through Business in the Community which has a broad and long-established membership base and substantial experience in employer engagement. Delivery of similar activity by another organisation may not be as successful. The project demonstrates effective employer engagement; good communication and making the process clear and easy for employers to engage with. There is considerable potential for extension to different client groups.

Contact Details	Rina Guddu	Rina.Guddu@bitc.org.uk	0121 451 2227

Project Name and Description	**Building Successful Families** provides employment support in a school setting.
Objective	To support unemployed individuals from the Ladywood area to access employment training and learning.
Innovation	Delivery of employment support to parents in a school setting linked to parent engagement activity delivered through the Leading Parent Partnership Award (LPPA) implemented in the Benson Cluster of schools.
Key Areas of Good Practice	• School-based employment provision is a useful tool for engaging with parents, particularly where women experience cultural barriers to work. • One-to-one support and confidence building has generated significant impacts. • Attendance at courses in smaller informal setting supports progression to larger college settings • Word-of-mouth proved the most effective method but needed other methods to build momentum first. • Timing is important - it would have been better to avoid the school holidays.
Success Factors and Transferability	An important factor for beneficiaries is the approachability and personal style of the advisors. Ensuring the right people are in post is an important for success. The project was developed specifically to engage Asian women and it has done this successfully. It is also demonstrably successful in engaging other groups and family members including men and highlights the value of using schools as a base for employment support.
Contact Details	Ms Kalpana Patel	kalpana.patel@prospects.co.uk	0121 262 3960

Project Name and Description	The **Art Work Gallery and Café** is delivered by Future Health and Social Care. It provides art classes together with a café facility in a retail unit near the Woodview estate in Edgbaston.
Objective	Aims to improve the employment chances of people with mental health problems or learning difficulties using art as a medium for building skills and confidence. The café also provides volunteering opportunities.
Innovation	Provision of a service in a retail setting linked with in-house volunteering opportunities. The project has positive neighbourhood impacts.
Key Areas of Good Practice	• Partnership working with a local housing association (Trident) linking service provision to local needs and also generating physical neighbourhood improvements. • Service provision in a public café setting provides an opportunities for engagement. • Volunteering opportunities are deliberately flexible in recognition that a volunteer's ability to participate may not be constant. • There is a blurred distinction between staff and clients, facilitated by in-house volunteering, which helps to make beneficiaries feel comfortable. • In-house volunteering opportunities make the prospect of employment less daunting. • Combining service provision with income generating activity helps to develop long term sustainability. • The project's potential for sustainability is significantly boosted through its links to FHSC.
Success Factors and Transferability	The main success factor associated with this project is effective partnership working between Trident and Future Health and Social Care. Although it has transferability potential it would require significantly greater resources without Trident's support. The principle of partnership working with a housing provider to address worklessness is widely transferable to a range of other contexts.

Contact Details	Tessa Griffiths	tessa.griffiths@futurehsc.co.uk	0121 2652650

Contacts and Information Sources

Key Contacts

If you would like further information on the Innovation Fund, please contact Megan Haskell at Birmingham City Council:

megan.haskell@birmingham.gov.uk   0121 675 9277

For queries on the wider WNF programme in Birmingham, including the Provider Forums and the Neighbourhood and Constituency Skills Plans, please contact Andrew Barnes at Birmingham City Council:

Andrew.barnes@birmingham.gov.uk   0121 303 3740

You can also write to the WNF team at:

WNF Programme Team
Birmingham City Council
2nd Floor
1 Lancaster Circus
Queensway
Birmingham
B4 7DQ

Sources of Further Information

There is a wealth of information on the WNF programme on the Be Birmingham website, including other case studies and good practice examples – www.bebirmingham.org.uk

The Welfare Reform Bill and the new Work Programme provides the framework for support for out of work clients from April 2011 onwards. Further details can be found at - www.dwp.gov.uk/policy/welfare-reform/

For advice on measuring soft outcomes and distance travelled, refer to the Guidance Paper prepared by the Department for Work and Pensions - http://research.dwp.gov.uk/asd/asd5/report_abstracts/wp_abstracts/wpa_008.asp

Copyright and re-use policy