

THE COMMUNITY AND ENVIRONMENTAL EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMME: DELIVERING A LOCAL INTERMEDIATE LABOUR MARKET PROJECT

By Angie Libman

"Some people are so removed from the mainstream labour market that they do not participate in and have little influence on it. Employers tend to recruit those who have been out of work for a short time or who are new to the labour market".

(Improving the New Deal,
Community and Environmental Employment across City Pride –
Manchester, Salford, Tameside and Trafford,
Centre for Social Inclusion 2000)

The importance of work is often taken for granted. However, despite government employment interventions of recent years, there are still significant numbers of excluded groups and individuals who remain unable to access employment in the regular labour market.

During the late 1980's and early part of the 1990's, successive government programmes attempted to raise the skills and employability of unemployed people through schemes such as the Community Programme and Training for Work (TFW). However, these programmes were often perceived by many unemployed

people as a form of cheap labour, offering little or no long term employment or training benefits.

In Glasgow, a new type of employability initiative was piloted during the 1980s known as the Intermediate Labour Market (ILM). This provided paid temporary work often in socially/environmentally useful activities, together with training and personal development. In 1997, the Manchester Training and Enterprise Council (TEC), in partnership with a number of local authorities in the Manchester sub-region and the Employment Service, established Work Options, a

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pilot Intermediate Labour Market (ILM) initiative.

The results of the Work Options pilot were so encouraging that in April 1998, the ILM model was incorporated into the local New Deal programme. The new ILM initiative, locally branded as the Community Environmental and Employment Programme (CEE), was established by combining the Voluntary Sector and Environmental Task Force options of the New Deal programme to create a waged employment programme which operates across the local authority districts of Manchester, Salford, Tameside and Trafford.

What is an ILM?

The Intermediate Labour Market (ILM) model originated in Glasgow through the work of both Glasgow Works and Glasgow Wise. The main aim is to provide a bridge back to the world of work by improving an individual's general employability. The core feature is paid work on a temporary contract (often up to 12 months), combined with training, personal development and job search activities. In order to reduce the risk of replacing "real" jobs, the work is in additional economic activities which should ideally be of community or environmental benefit.

Individuals receive a regular wage (minimum wage or above). ILMs therefore produce a wider economic benefit by providing economic outputs to the local communities that they serve, in addition to increasing work-based learning.

One of the fundamental principles of the ILM model is the holistic approach to addressing many of the social factors that continue to be a barrier to certain groups and individuals accessing employment.

There are two main ILM "models":-

- A single organisation accesses the funding, employs the management, administrative and supervisory staff, employs the ILM workers and undertakes the work (the Glasgow Wise approach);

- A central organisation develops the programme, accesses the funding, employs some core staff and then contracts out the delivery and employment of the ILM workers to a range of "Sponsoring Employers" (the Glasgow Works approach).

The Employment and Regeneration Partnership and the Community Environmental and Employment Programme

The Employment and Regeneration Partnership (ERP) is one of the main operating companies in the Manchester Enterprises Group (ME) and is a not-for-profit organisation. ERP was established in April 2000 from the former Manchester Training and Enterprise Council (TEC); the latter had originally piloted the Work Options ILM pilot in 1997 (based upon the Glasgow Works model), in partnership with the local authorities in the Manchester sub-region and Jobcentre Plus (formerly the Employment Service). Work Options was funded from a number of sources, including the Single Regeneration Budget, (SRB), European Social Fund (ESF) and local authority contributions.

Individuals had to be unemployed for a minimum of 18 months although entry to the programme was via self-referral, which meant that, initially it was only well motivated people who applied for the employment positions on offer. This resulted in a high rate of onward employment at the end of the programme of between 60- 70%.

There were, however, certain restrictions governing the entry criteria for the Work Options ILM, which meant that only people living within the SRB funded areas could access the programme.

The introduction of the New Deal programme in April 1998 presented an opportunity for the partnership to further develop and expand the ILM model locally by providing mainstream funding resources. Agreement was reached with Jobcentre Plus within the then City Pride area of Manchester, Salford, Tameside and Trafford to amalgamate Options 3 (the Environmental Task Force) and 4 (Voluntary Sector Option) of the New Deal Programme to create a waged ILM model, locally branded as the Community and Environmental Employment Programme (CEE). Additional funding was also secured from SRB, ESF and local authority contributions.

"The aim of ERP and the City Pride Partners was to design the best possible quality offer for those young people being referred to the Voluntary Sector Option and the Environmental Task Force. They were helped in this by the ability to use the available New Deal funds to pay towards a wage instead of an allowance on top of their benefit payments".

(Improving the New Deal).

The incorporation of CEE into the mainstream New Deal programme played a pivotal role in securing a period of stability for the ILM. Another important change to the national New Deal model was the fact that an individual's period of paid employment was extended from 6 months to 12 months; this in turn provided a longer package of support for those most at risk of permanent exclusion from the labour market.

Funding

Sponsoring Employers

There are currently some 30 Sponsoring Employers (SEs) involved in the delivery of CEE, mostly in the voluntary and community sectors. Their role cannot be understated and is paramount to the overall success of CEE. Initially, however, some organisations were sceptical about becoming involved in what some perceived to be yet another “government sponsored employment scheme”. Whether this was due to previous experience or just a general apprehension on the part of some employers to employ long term unemployed people with little or no formal qualifications or work experience, is not clear.

However, what is apparent is that the complexity of the funding, administration and audit requirements did deter some organisations wishing to participate. One other important factor was the fact that SEs tended to be charities, community organisations and environmental groups and so often lacked the necessary infrastructure required to deal with the complexity of the CEE programme.

What Makes a Successful ILM? - Package on Offer

Referrals to CEE are made by Jobcentre Plus New Deal Personal Advisers. Individuals receive:

- Up to 12 months employment at the minimum wage (although some SEs enhance wage levels from their own resources)
- Access to on and off-the-job training leading to a vocational qualification
- Ongoing personal advice and support
- Access to an allowance to cover

care of dependants (eg. childcare)

- Help with travel costs (in exceptional circumstances)
- Job-search

The monitoring and review process of both the CEE employees and the SEs is undertaken in a number of ways. It is a requirement of the CEE programme that every employee has a line manager within their work place organisation who is responsible for quarterly reviews to monitor the progress of the individual and set further objectives.

To ensure that the CEE process works efficiently both for the individual, the SE and the partners, ERP has also implemented its own monitoring and review process. Rather than focusing on the productivity of the individual, this process concentrates on the client experience and how the process is working for them. Both of these monitoring systems compliment each other, therefore ensuring a more effective and efficient delivery of the CEE programme for all involved.

Clearly, an important criteria for measuring the success of the CEE programme is the number of people obtaining employment in the regular labour market, either during or at the end of the programme. However, anecdotal evidence shows that a significant proportion of CEE employees who complete the programme and leave without further employment, do eventually find employment within a two to three month period. CEE continues to compare well with other national employment programmes.

Performance

City Works programme

The true extent of social exclusion can be evidenced by the fact that for a number of New Deal participants, the CEE programme still remained inaccessible. This client group were typically “Gateway overstayers” who had failed to secure a place on a New

Deal option and so became mandatory referrals.

In order to address the needs of this particular client group, in 1999, a pre-CEE programme was developed in partnership with Manchester City Council's City Works (DLO) Department. The approach was subsequently extended to Salford and Trafford local authorities' Direct Works departments.

Individuals who were referred to this provision were de-motivated, poor attenders, had few or no qualifications, poor communication and social skills and little or no work experience. They were allocated to small teams within the City Works department who were responsible for dealing with void properties. Induction training was followed by a two month probationary period during which employees received a wide range of intensive support whilst they were working.

The first eight weeks of employment focus on a way of addressing such things as:

- Motivational issues
- Conflict at work including anger management
- Health and Healthy Eating
- Drug and alcohol abuse
- Financial issues
- Offending issues
- Basic skills

All employees are placed individually with existing City Works staff. Areas of work include:

- Construction
- Administration

The support and training on offer is a critical factor in determining how positive or negative an employee's experiences are. The staff and management of City Works, together with the trade unions, play a critical role in developing and challenging the individuals in the workplace. As the clients work alongside these members of staff for the majority of the time,

they are able to see the commitment, attitude and enthusiasm of the City Works staff. Some of the City Works team had a similar background to some of the clients accessing the programme and therefore provided a positive role of how hard work and commitment can provide a career path and opportunities.

The City Works programme has now been incorporated into ERP's Ambition Construction Programme.

Conclusion

“CEE would not have been possible if New Deal was not sufficiently flexible to be tailored to meet the needs of local labour markets and the specific problems of young unemployed people”.

(Improving the New Deal)

The evaluation of the CEE programme (which was undertaken by the Centre for Social Inclusion in November 2000) found that CEE more than doubled the chances of young people getting into a job in comparison with other high unemployment inner city areas. The extension of the programme beyond the 18-25 year old age group has presented more difficult challenges for the CEE partnership, not least of all, the issue of wage levels and the benefit trap for those individuals with childcare and other dependent care responsibilities.

The other major challenge is to increase the rate of job outcomes. The impact of four years of the New Deal programme and the resulting decrease in unemployment nationally has meant that, in areas such as Manchester, it is now the hardest to help client group who remain in need

of employment and training assistance. As previously stated, the CEE programme provides a bridge back into the labour market through a holistic approach to tackling the barriers to work. However, it is widely acknowledged, that those who suffer the greatest economic disadvantage and social exclusion require intensive support if they are to make the successful transition from welfare into (sustainable) work. As CEE moves into its next phase of development, the task is to harness the creativity and energy of the wider partnership to secure sustainable employment for those who have never had it before.

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Bob Marshall and Richard Macfarlane.

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