

## **Making it work:**

Analysing different ways of  
tackling worklessness





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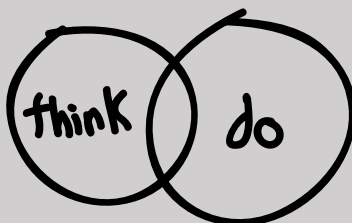
Analysing different ways of  
tackling worklessness

Centre for Local Economic Strategies

March 2009

## About CLES

The Centre for Local Economic Strategies (CLES) is an independent national think-do organisation involved in regeneration, local economic development and local governance. CLES brings together a network of subscribing organisations, which includes regeneration partnerships, local authorities, regional bodies, community groups and voluntary organisations. CLES offers a range of services, including: events and training; an information and publications service; policy research; policy advice and a consultancy trading arm.



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# Contents

<b>Foreword: Neil McInroy, Chief Executive, CLES</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Executive Summary</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>The scale and drivers of worklessness</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>The complexity of worklessness</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>Tackling worklessness: A policy framework for delivery</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>Future considerations for successful delivery</b>	<b>57</b>
<b>Challenges for the future development and delivery of worklessness policy and projects</b>	<b>67</b>
<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>85</b>
<b>References</b>	<b>91</b>
<b>Appendix: Worklessness and welfare reform policy</b>	<b>93</b>
<b>CLES membership services</b>	<b>94</b>

## List of figures

Figure 1:	Percentage of working age population claiming JSA, IB and IS. August 2000 – May 2008	20
Figure 2:	Number of JSA claims in the UK. October 2000 – October 2008	20
Figure 3:	Worklessness and welfare reform policy	25
Figure 4:	A framework of approaches for delivery	41
Figure 5:	Support required for different client groups and a typology of approaches	63

## List of tables

Table 1:	Levels of worklessness by local authority	30
Table 2:	Services offered as part of employment and worklessness programmes and projects	39
Table 3:	The cost per output of mainstream employment programmes	70

# Reward



# Foreword

The labour market is a vital part of the economy, whose vibrancy is indicative of how effective the economy is operating. It is through work, and the skills, knowledge and abilities gained through being in work, that a productive economy is based. Furthermore through work and the fruits of work, there are vital and associated benefits in terms of social life and relationships, self esteem and of course a spending power which ripples through the economy in terms of consumer spend.

For us at CLES, one of the greatest economic failings and social tragedies of the last 15 years has been the inability of us to deal with problems within the Labour Market and in particular - worklessness. Despite, 15-20 years of economic success, and falling unemployment, we have seen a rise in the number of people on incapacity benefit and other forms of economic inactivity. This problem within the labour market, in an era of economic effervescence is a voracious and wicked issue, coming at huge social, community and individual cost as well as being a significant drag on the economy and a drag on public expenditure. This is recognised and as a result the Government has dedicated and continues to deploy significant policy and resources to the problem.

However, as we now move into less economically certain times, we believe we are faced with more labour market issues. We are now seeing new and deeper problems within the labour market, including growing unemployment and an entrenchment of worklessness. Therefore CLES believes that at this time we need to develop a deeper understanding of the worklessness problem and renew our effort to tackle it.

This publication is timely as it is time to take stock as regards this problem of worklessness. There has been no shortage of endeavour and there has been a busyness of activity. However for us at CLES, the problem of worklessness is bound up with a wider problem in relation to the nature of work and lifestyles, but more prosaically an inability to apply bespoke and tailored policy to particular instances of worklessness.

Thus in this publication we unpick existing approaches, to provide a typology of approaches to worklessness. This serves to create a path through the range of policy and intervention options open to national and local agencies who are grappling with this issue. Informed by our work on the ground, and our 22 years of experience in this field, this

publication, sets the policy scene, explores the complex nature of worklessness and introduces a framework for delivery. Finally, we outline the challenges ahead, and provide pointers as to where policy will need to change in this harsh economic climate, thus seeking to add value to the Houghton Review which examines how the Government can better support local partnerships to deliver more effective worklessness interventions.

As in all of CLES's work, we seek to add to ongoing debates and contribute to existing policy and practice. For CLES, the issue of worklessness, is one whereby the doubling of our efforts is required. This renewed effort is of course required for economic success. However it is also imperative in terms of creating a broad resilience of local places and communities and for the well-being of the individual citizens.

*Neil McInroy, Chief Executive, Centre for Local Economic Strategies (CLES).*



# Executive summary

## About the research

Over the last two years, through its consultancy activities, the Centre for Local Economic Strategies (CLES) has undertaken a series of evaluations of worklessness projects in a range of localities and targeted at a diverse client group. CLES, through its policy activities, has additionally been keen followers of the welfare reform and employment policy agendas, particularly changes to the benefits system around incapacity.

This research, undertaken between August and December 2008, seeks to bring these two strands of research activity together, demonstrating the economic and social value of localised and personalised approaches, and projects, to tackling worklessness, together with an assessment of the challenges contemporary policy presents for the development and delivery of effective worklessness projects in the future. This report introduces a framework of approaches to tackling worklessness, a set of principles for the future delivery of worklessness projects, and an assessment of key challenges for future worklessness policy development and project delivery.

The research has been undertaken in the context of economic recession, reflecting upon the fact that worklessness policy, programmes and project interventions will need to not only continue to support their current client group, but also have consideration of new claimants in the shape of the recently unemployed. The research is particularly topical given the position of unemployment and worklessness at the very top of the Government's policy agenda, as evidenced by the wealth of policy documentation and primary legislation developed over the last four years.

## The problem

Tackling worklessness has been one of the core policy priorities of the current government since 1997; however the number of people claiming Incapacity Benefit and Income Support has remained relatively stagnant at around 2.9 million. This stagnation of worklessness is despite significant policy, investment, project, research and evaluation activity, particularly in recent years.

The Government has responded to the challenge of worklessness with a twin policy approach of seeking to reform the welfare system and

supporting workless individuals into training, skills development and ultimately employment. One of the key critiques of Government policy to tackling worklessness is that, despite rhetoric, it has failed to sufficiently balance welfare with work, nor has it really provided a mainstream approach which is effective for all client groups and localities. This is in part due to the fact that worklessness as an issue is highly nuanced, complex and heterogenic: it has different resonance in different geographical locations and for different communities of interest, particularly with regard to disability and ethnicity.

This report argues that approaches to tackling worklessness need to recognise the complexity of the issue and respond with approaches which are tailored to the needs of specific clients and localities (e.g. those which have been workless for a significant period of time are going to require a much more intensive and personalised approach to brokering employment opportunity than a new claimant). This complexity, diversity of approach and the need for personalised and individualised strategy is something the Government has not necessarily recognised or can provide through mainstream governmental agency led services.

### **Introducing a typology of approaches to worklessness**

Despite this criticism, there are a significant number of examples from the evaluation activities of CLES Consulting and elsewhere of where localised approaches and projects to tackling worklessness have been effective. In this research, we have sought to identify a framework of approaches for delivering worklessness projects which have been developed and delivered by a range of local partners, including local authorities, primary care trusts, housing associations and the voluntary and community sector, which are targeted at a diverse range of clients.

We examine a range of approaches to tackling worklessness with critiques of the effectiveness of these approaches backed up by project examples. We look at the following framework of approaches and project examples:

**Approach 1** Outreach (Positive Steps into Work, Blackpool)

**Approach 2** Brokerage (At Work, Heywood and Trellis Project, Birmingham)

**Approach 3** Training (Kingsway Training for Jobs, Rochdale)

- Approach 4** Health and well-being (Greenwich Local Labour and Business)
- Approach 5** Employer engagement (Building Futures East, Newcastle-upon-Tyne)
- Approach 6** Retention and progression (Groundwork Stoke-on-Trent)
- Approach 7** Social marketing (Fairyland Housing Estate, Neath)

### **Characteristics of a successful approach**

Assessment of the different approaches has demonstrated a number of relative merits and values to using each approach and that approaches need to be tailored by both locality and client group. However, all worklessness projects, whether locally developed and delivered or as part of mainstream provision, must adopt a number of common principles. From our research, we argue that worklessness projects should:

- Have a strategic fit with local, regional and national policy, including the strategic priorities of Regional Economic Strategies and Local Area Agreements
- Work in partnership with other service providers and local partners to provide an individualised approach
- Have effective personal advisers as they are key to determining the distance travelled towards employment of individual worklessness claimants and the success of a project as a whole
- Remain neutral from Jobcentre Plus, ensuring the employment support offered to individuals does not become embroiled in benefit issues
- Ensure linkages with the wider local economy, particularly employers, to ensure there is sufficient demand for workless individuals to re-enter the labour market
- Offer personalised and individualised approaches that are tailored to specific client groups and localities

## **The challenges**

The projects outlined in the research demonstrate (best) practice in localised and personalised approaches to tackling worklessness, which are having impacts in a small number of localities. Levels of worklessness however remain stubbornly high and if the Government are to achieve their 80% full employment target, a series of further institutional reforms to welfare and employment policy will be required. In order to achieve this institutional reform, the Government will need to address a number of key challenges and questions. Each of these challenges are discussed in further detail throughout the report.

- |                         |   |
|-------------------------|---|
| <b>Key Challenge 1</b>  | To what extent can mainstream services deliver an individualised approach?                              |
| <b>Key Challenge 2</b>  | How can individualised approaches achieve value for money?  |
| <b>Key Challenge 3</b>  | How can employment support be delivered from the first day of claiming benefits?                        |
| <b>Key Challenge 4</b>  | How can we break the cycle of sanction penalties equalling delayed support?                             |
| <b>Key Challenge 5</b>  | How can the dual role of Jobcentre Plus be more transparent and effective?                              |
| <b>Key Challenge 6</b>  | How can we ensure effective procurement of worklessness services to both the private and third sectors? |
| <b>Key Challenge 7</b>  | How can we capture the effectiveness of worklessness projects?  |
| <b>Key Challenge 8</b>  | Are locally led personalised worklessness initiatives effective in the longer term?                     |
| <b>Key Challenge 9</b>  | Can worklessness projects achieve a long-term cultural change in deprived areas?                        |
| <b>Key Challenge 10</b> | How can the workless be supported in a period of recession?   |
| <b>Key Challenge 11</b> | How can intensive and long-term health related services for workless residents be funded?               |

The research concludes by responding to the key challenges outlined above with five key reforms which CLES feels are required to the process of tackling worklessness to enable it to be more effective in the future.

### **Reform Jobcentre Plus**

The largest blockage to more effective policy and delivery solutions to tackling worklessness appears to be the governmental public body with responsibility for the area, namely Jobcentre Plus. Jobcentre Plus can no longer continue to be both an administrator of benefit and a broker of employment. CLES believes the function of the body needs to be reformed creating a national benefits administrator AND a separate sub-regional employment broker.

### **Develop locally focused approaches to worklessness**

A significant proportion of the positive work undertaken to tackle and alleviate worklessness, both identified in this research and in wider research is undertaken by local partnerships, voluntary and community sector organisations and social enterprises. There must therefore be in policy terms a reality of devolution and an enhanced role for local government and other associated local organisations in the delivery process.

### **Adopt individualised and personalised approaches**

The issue of returning to training and employment is a complex one, particularly for those furthest away from the labour market, meaning that one approach to tackling worklessness will not fit all claimants. Instead project deliverers need to select and apply a menu of options dependent upon the needs of the claimant, thus utilising more individualised, personalised and ultimately localised delivery, incorporating approaches relating to outreach, brokerage and training, amongst others.

### **Provide individualised support from day 1**

One of the core barriers to supporting the workless and unemployed into employment is the process of benefit and support entitlement. At present individualised support will only become a significant element

of the process of return to work after six months of claiming Jobseekers Allowance. This is too long, especially in the current economic climate, and enables claimants to become disengaged from the process. Individualised support needs to be offered to claimants from day 1 of signing onto benefit.

### **Use qualitative monitoring and evaluation**

Tackling worklessness is not just about brokering an individual into employment and counting that output as a success. Along the process of being engaged in an intervention, an individual passes many milestones relating to confidence, training and changes in lifestyle amongst others. Worklessness interventions and wider welfare reform in the future must enable these qualitative, focused, softer outcomes and the distance travelled of individuals to be measured and monitored.



outreach





# Introduction

## Understanding unemployment and worklessness

One of the key policy priorities of the current government since 1997 has been ensuring more people have the opportunity and skills to participate in the labour market. The Government's first challenge upon coming to power in 1997 was to tackle the legacy of the market recessions of the 1980's and 1990's and the associated high levels of unemployment, which in May 1997 stood at 1.6 million<sup>1</sup>. In subsequent years, as a result of policy interventions on both the supply and demand sides of employment such as the New Deal, there has been a decline in what we understand as 'traditional unemployment' (i.e. people wanting to work but unable to access employment). There has however been the emergence and stagnation of a new employment policy related issue in the form of worklessness.

The term 'worklessness' appears to have been first coined by academic Mike Davis in a book in the early 1990's, which described the City of Los Angeles and was used in relation to 'structural unemployment and ghettoization'<sup>2</sup>. In contemporary UK policy, it has become a general term to describe those who experience significant barriers whether it be ill-health, low skills or low motivation, which prevent them from participating within the labour market.

Worklessness has been formally defined by the Department for Work and Pensions as<sup>3</sup>:

'Detachment from the formal labour market in particular areas, and among particular groups. Workless individuals include individuals who are unemployed and claiming unemployment benefits, individuals who are economically inactive and eligible for inactive benefits (who may or may not be claiming them), and individuals who are working exclusively in the informal economy (who may or may not be also claiming benefits). Worklessness is therefore made up of very diverse groups.'

The term 'worklessness' is a much more benefit related term and has often been used to describe claimants of incapacity and other sickness benefits. Just over 2.9 million people<sup>4</sup> in the UK currently claim a sickness related benefit, a figure which has remained relatively stable over the last decade.

Tackling worklessness and supporting these groups of people into employment, certainly over the last five years, has been a key driver of the Government's economic and welfare policy agendas, which has been twinned with a series of interventions, most recently Pathways to Work, Cities Strategy and Working Neighbourhoods Fund.

Government welfare policy and employment programmes have had to adapt to the emerging challenge of worklessness, and a variety of national led and locally delivered initiatives and projects have been developed in order to try and tackle worklessness. A number of significant outcomes and lessons learnt have been derived from these initiatives and, in this report, the Centre for Local Economic Strategies (CLES) are interested in understanding the degree to which these approaches have worked, the successful elements of approaches, and what the experience of these programmes tells us about the future direction of government policy to tackle worklessness.

In a new period of recession, it is also important to transfer the lessons learnt from the projects examined in this research to both future worklessness and unemployment related interventions. The recession is already seeing a return to increases in unemployment, which will have implications for those that are workless in re-entering the labour market. Policy needs to be receptive to both unemployment and worklessness and many of the lessons derived in this research, and the recommendations we proffer, can be utilised in both unemployment and worklessness related interventions.

### **Research focus and methodology**

In recent years, there has been a significant amount of policy, programme and project activity undertaken in an attempt to reduce worklessness, utilising a variety and combination of approaches. This delivery activity has been twinned with numerous evaluations and research projects. Indeed, CLES through its trading arm CLES Consulting has undertaken a number of evaluations of worklessness projects in localities across the UK and have maintained a strong interest in the welfare reform and worklessness agendas through policy activities.

However, despite years of policy, interventions, evaluation and research in the field of worklessness, there remains a lack of coherent information and guidance which has sought to develop a framework of the key delivery approaches to worklessness and analyses how different delivery approaches operate for different client groups in a variety of contexts. This research aims to build on the evaluation work undertaken by CLES Consulting in a variety of contexts, to reflect upon how different approaches to tackling the issue of worklessness operate in a variety of contexts for a variety of

client groups. The conclusions based upon project evidence thus seek to better inform decision making about delivery mechanisms at a local level and the development of policy to tackle worklessness and new unemployment in the long-term at a national level.

The objectives of the research were as follows:

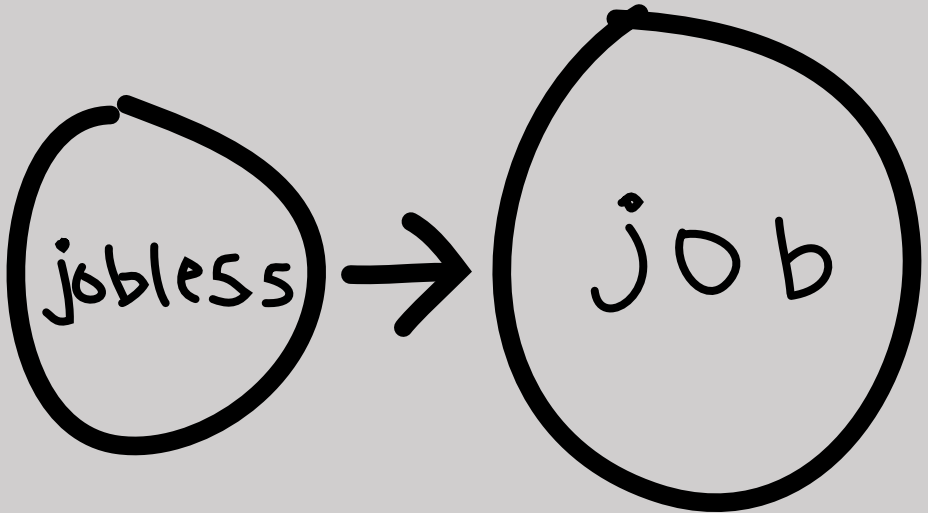
- to assess the scale and complexity of worklessness across the United Kingdom;
- to introduce the CLES framework for explaining and analysing the different approaches to tackling worklessness;
- to understand the characteristics and values of different delivery approaches to tackling worklessness and examples of where these approaches operate effectively;
- to outline the CLES typology of worklessness which provides guidance to local practitioners who are designing and implementing new projects to tackle worklessness and reforming existing interventions;
- to explore some of the future challenges of delivering worklessness policy and interventions for policy makers at a national government level;
- to conclude and provide options as to how the worklessness policy agenda might be taken forward in the future, particularly in the context of the current economic recession.

This report has been written in the context of important changes in welfare and employment policy at a national level and of the UK entering a significant period of economic recession. In methodological terms it: examines and analyses CLES Consulting's evaluation of worklessness projects across the UK; examines national and local data sources around worklessness; and reviews current literature and research on worklessness.

The report consists of the following sections:

- the scale and drivers of worklessness;
- the complexity of worklessness;
- tackling worklessness, a policy framework for delivery;
- future considerations for successful delivery;
- challenges for the future development and delivery of worklessness policy and projects;
- conclusion.

# brokerage



# The scale and drivers of worklessness

## Scale of worklessness

Around 8 million people of working age in the United Kingdom do not currently participate in the labour market. This is for a variety of reasons including: early retirement; being in full time, further or higher education; or as a result of being a full time carer of a family member. Unemployed and workless individuals also make up a significant proportion of those absent from the labour market. July 2008 figures<sup>5</sup> suggest that 4.1 million people of working age (11.1%) are currently claiming an out of work benefit (Jobseekers Allowance, Incapacity Benefit\* and/or Income Support) in the UK, with these figures detailing that 2.9 million of these claim some form of incapacity or sickness related benefit.

These figures have declined slightly or stagnated in recent years, as demonstrated in Figure 1, but remain stubbornly high with pockets of much higher levels of worklessness concentrated in certain geographical locations that are characterised by industrial decline (e.g. in May 2008, the highest claimant rates (over 23% of the working age population) were recorded in the local authority areas of Merthyr Tydfil and Blaenau Gwent in South Wales, followed by Knowsley and Liverpool in Merseyside). Pockets of high levels of worklessness also exist in the North East (Easington, Hartlepool and Middlesbrough) and the central belt of Scotland (Glasgow and Inverclyde).

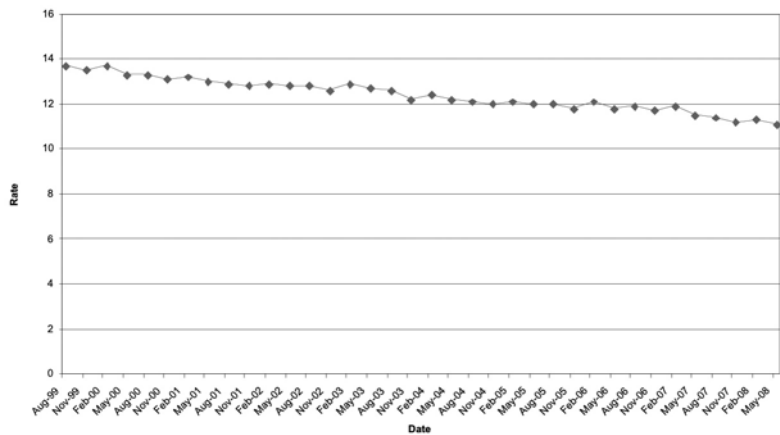
As a result, worklessness has become one of the Government's key priorities, as addressing worklessness within communities is viewed as central to tackling child poverty, generating economic growth and addressing other issues, such as health inequalities and low levels of skills and qualifications.

As a result of these identified high rates of worklessness at both national and local geographies, the issue has become one of the Government's key policy priorities. They also recognise the cross-cutting nature of worklessness with it strategically linked to other policy agendas relating to amongst others: child poverty; generating economic growth; health inequalities; and low levels of skills and qualifications. In effect, tackling worklessness has become a key policy priority as a result of the ambitiousness of the Government's targets to have 80% full employment and to eradicate child poverty by 2020.

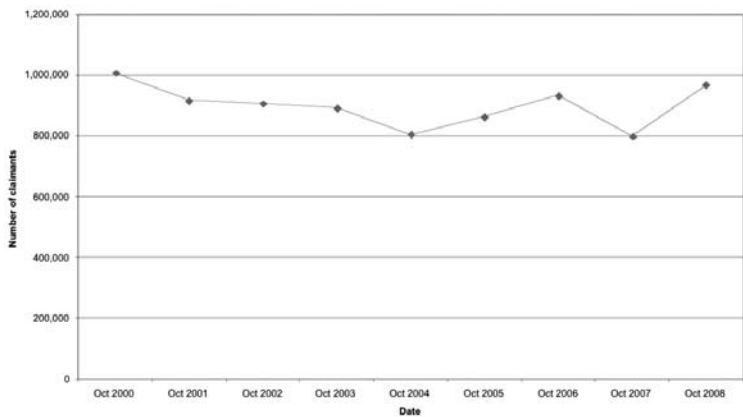
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<sup>5</sup>Incapacity Benefit has since been reformed by Government and replaced by the Employment and Support Allowance.

**Figure 1: % of working age population claiming JSA, IB and IS (August 2000-May 2008)<sup>6</sup>**



**Figure 2: Number of JSA claims in the UK (October 2000-2008)<sup>7</sup>**



Indeed, if the Government’s target of 80% full employment<sup>8</sup> is to be achieved, coupled with a range of other factors including lone parents and the long-term unemployed, 37% of the people currently claiming incapacity related benefit will have to move into employment – a

significant shift<sup>9</sup>. This shift is all the more challenging in the context of the current economic recession, which has already seen significant increases in unemployment across the country. Claims for Jobseekers Allowance have increased by 21% during the past year (October 2007-October 2008) approaching unemployment levels last seen in October 2000, as demonstrated in Figure 2. Some analysts are predicting that levels of unemployment will rise to around 3 million by 2010, a figure approaching that of the recessions of the 1980's and 1990's<sup>10</sup>.

### **Drivers of worklessness**

Worklessness is a contemporary characteristic of the UK economy and society, and indeed many Western economies which have experienced economic growth in recent years. There are a range of factors which are driving the current stagnant levels of worklessness which can be crudely split into supply and demand side factors. Supply relates primarily to the availability of labour and skills to deliver employment, goods and services, with demand relating to the provision of employment in a locality and the ability of a locality to respond to economic change. Supply and demand of employment are driven by a number of drivers in the UK, including:

**structural economic change** – as a result of global economic restructuring, the demise of economies based on heavy industry, including: steel manufacture; coal mining; shipbuilding; and large-scale manufacturing has resulted in large scale unemployment and worklessness in many former industrial areas. This structural shift has meant that many communities have seen high levels of unemployment and worklessness due to a lack of alternative employment and an inability to adapt to the changing economic conditions. The legacy of heavy industry has also left some sectors of the population unable to work as a result of heavy industry related illnesses;

**skills shift** – the economic restructuring changes described above have meant that skills requirements in countries like the UK have changed, with a move towards more financial and knowledge based jobs which place greater importance on higher level qualifications and skills training. Subsequently, where educational attainment is low with high numbers of young

people leaving school without formal qualifications, particularly if education is undervalued within the local culture, there is a greater propensity for these young people to be unable to enter the labour market and in the long-term, a greater risk they may become unemployed or workless. Similarly, in localities previously reliant upon heavy industry, indigenous populations may not have the required skills to access new employment opportunities;

**poverty and disadvantage** – as economic growth has increased, the gap between rich and poor in the UK has continued to widen, especially in the most deprived localities. Although much progress has been made towards tackling neighbourhood deprivation and poverty through a variety of holistic regeneration programmes during the last ten years (e.g. Neighbourhood Renewal Fund), there are still high levels of poverty and disadvantage within our communities. Poverty and disadvantage has contributed towards health inequalities and low life aspirations, which has in turn meant that some people remain outside of the labour market;

**generational and cultural** – anecdotal evidence suggests that a rise in worklessness can be influenced by the educational and employment experiences of previous generations and a culture of unemployment and worklessness in their community. In communities which experienced high levels of unemployment in the past, there is evidence that the impacts of unemployment in one generation can lead to a loss of motivation and aspiration in the next generation. This can set up a cycle of welfare dependency where children grow up in an environment where few family or community members work;

**sustained periods of economic recession** – in a period of recession, the number of available jobs in an area decreases making it more difficult for people to find work. They may find that their particular skills are not required in the economy because demand has declined or that new technology has replaced labour needs. The longer someone is without work, the more likely they are to become workless in the long-term, which is evident in the current period of economic recession. This is



often because they become used to being dependent on welfare payments and may suffer loss of self-esteem and depression because of their inability to gain a job. Research undertaken by the Sheffield Hallam University and the University of Dundee<sup>11</sup> suggests that the longer someone goes without a job, the more unlikely it is they will gain employment in the future;

**impact of illness or poor health** – in some cases, the catalyst for becoming workless can be poor mental health, long-term illness or disability. If treatment and/or support are unavailable or unsuccessful this can mean that someone is more likely to remain on Incapacity Benefit in the long-term and therefore more unlikely to work in the future. The research from Blackpool undertaken by the Sheffield Hallam University and the University of Dundee found that poor mental and physical health was one of the major obstacles to people returning to work. This driver also explains why the Government has become so focused on reforming the system of Incapacity Benefit in order to target help towards getting people who experience poor health or disability back into employment if they want to. There is a degree of drive upon employers to change practice to enable employment for workless individuals.

These drivers of worklessness identified above shape much of the Government's policy efforts to tackle worklessness and have provided a strong steer towards much of the delivery approaches seen at a local level throughout the UK. Although all of these drivers will characterise worklessness to a lesser or greater extent in many parts of the UK, it is important for local areas to identify the types of local driver which lie behind high levels of worklessness, or which have acted as a catalyst to increasing levels of worklessness in recent years. These local drivers might include for example:

- the closure of a major employer;
- a lack of local employment opportunities;
- the predominance of low skills, low wage employment opportunities;
- a cultural lack of entrepreneurship and new business start ups;
- a level of transience in the community, linked to low cost housing and migration.

Identification of these local drivers is extremely important, not only for developing and designing interventions but to help pre-empt future changes and policy responses in the form of interventions at the local area level.

### **Contemporary worklessness policy**

The Government, to its credit, has recognised the role of worklessness in failing local places having important social and economic consequences and have responded with a flurry of policy interventions. Tackling worklessness is important for the Government primarily because of social impacts (e.g. poor mental health and low aspirations that high levels of worklessness can have on families and communities) but also because of the impact worklessness can have upon hindering economic growth. Worklessness also represents a major failure of society to help people fulfil their potential, thus making it a local economic issue in that it restricts the extent to which local economies operate effectively and sustainably. Local employers cannot fill vacancies, local businesses cannot sustain demand for services and products due to low income, and potential employers have not got access to enough skilled and job ready individuals.

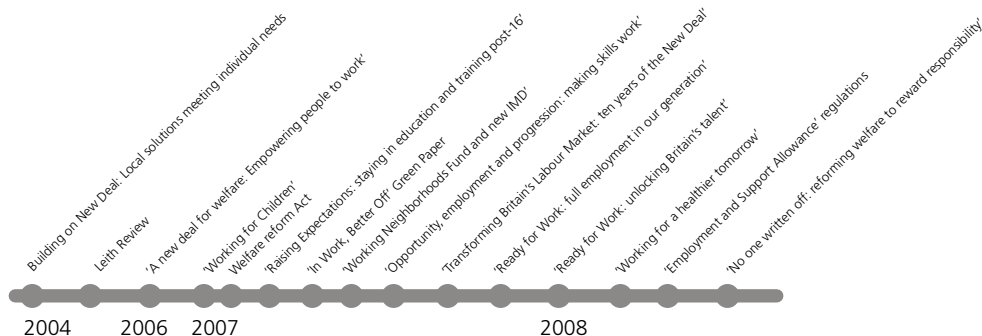
In recent years, the Government has sought to tackle worklessness through a dual approach, tackling both employment policy and attempting to reform the system of welfare benefits. This approach recognises the fact that the rise of economic inactivity is inherently linked with a complex system of welfare benefits which act as an incentive to keep people out of the labour market. This policy agenda has become known as the Welfare to Work agenda and was, to a degree, kick-started in 1997 by the Government's flagship New Deal programme targeted at specific client groups.

In the following decade, welfare to work activity has been varied, ranging from partnership approaches and the encouragement of cross-agency and sub-regional approaches, to tackling worklessness through the Cities Strategy pilots, to the tightening up of the benefits process in the welfare reforms in order to 'support' rather than 'push' workless people into not only employment but training, to a greater focus on employer involvement in tackling worklessness through structures such as Local Employment Partnerships (LEPs).

A range and variety of initiatives and projects have been launched and delivered through these overarching policies and programmes together with others in communities across the country, complementing national level and agency led welfare interventions. These projects and initiatives have developed alongside the activity of statutory agencies, including Jobcentre Plus and the Connexions Service, and have utilised a variety of different delivery mechanisms and approaches to tackle worklessness. This diversity of delivery has been necessary to respond to how worklessness is manifested differently among different groups of people in a variety of geographical contexts.

The latter years of 2000 has seen a more concerted focus on tackling worklessness and a growing awareness that there was a need to tackle the issue, not simply by refining and improving employment programmes but by attempting to integrate this process with the skills agenda, following the Leitch Review<sup>12</sup>. The Government recognised that there was a need to try and tackle these issues together, as welfare reform played an important role in providing either the carrot or the stick to help people back into employment. A myriad of legislative processes, policy papers and initiatives have followed, with Figure 3 demonstrating this voracity of policy activity, particularly in the last four years. Each of these documents and their core policy messages are further described in Appendix 1.

**Figure 3: Worklessness and welfare reform policy**



As highlighted in Figure 3, 2007/08 has seen a considerable amount of activity within the welfare to work agenda with a range of reports produced by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and others across government. The December 2007 'Ready for work – full employment in our generation'<sup>13</sup> publication from the DWP reiterated the Government's desire to have an 80% full employment rate in the UK.

With the current employment rate (November 2008) being 74.4%<sup>14</sup>, down 0.4% on the previous quarter, the aspiration to grow this to 80% may be difficult, or near on impossible, with the UK economy in a period of economic recession. This policy paper also sought to set out a framework of means as to how this target could potentially be met through the introduction of the Government's five core principles of reform, which they believe should flow through all local delivery approaches to worklessness:

- 1.** a strong framework of rights and responsibilities;
- 2.** not just jobs, but jobs that pay and offer retention and progress;
- 3.** a personalised, responsive and more effective approach;
- 4.** partnership – the private, public and third sectors working together;
- 5.** targeting areas of high worklessness by devolving and empowering communities.

The Government has also become much more focused on a more rigorous, some might say punitive, system of employment support and welfare payments which reflects many of the characteristics of the workfare system seen in the United States and other parts of the world. This move towards workfare can be seen in the 2008 Green Paper for Welfare Reform<sup>15</sup> where they stressed the importance of individual responsibility and a new system of sanctions and penalties for those failing to gain employment. The Welfare Reform Green Paper set out a series of proposals to reform the welfare system with three core further principles as drivers:

- 1.** people should be in control of their own lives and take personal responsibility for making the most of the opportunities available;
- 2.** people should be supported by an active and enabling welfare state to support their capability;
- 3.** people should be aware of the contribution expected from them in return for help and support through the welfare system.

The above identified policies and initiatives have their roots in a series of investments made in the employment agenda and other joined up and cross cutting activities over the last 10 years, which have an emphasis upon using a variety of approaches to delivery. These investments include: Employment Zones; New Deal; New Deal for Communities; Deprived Areas Funding; and European Social Funding.

Worklessness, as an issue for local places, has also come to dominate a number of other current policy areas and agendas, particularly with regard to regeneration and local economic development. The Government argue that the most effective way of tackling issues around poverty and deprivation is through full employment and enhanced skills development. Indeed, tackling worklessness is often one of the core objectives of Local Area Agreements. Worklessness also forms a key plank of the various economically strategic proposals of the Sub National Review of Economic Development and Regeneration<sup>16</sup>, in particular the Multi Area Agreement and Economic Assessment Duty elements. Tackling worklessness is also a key outcome of investment in the skills agenda, as shaped by the Leitch Review, meaning that new employment and investment in local economies must be reflective of local skills bases. There is also recognition in national level policy of the linkages between worklessness and other thematic agendas relating to ill health, poor housing and low educational attainment. Tackling worklessness is also intrinsic to physical, economic, social and environmental regeneration as outlined in the 2008 Framework for Regeneration Consultation document<sup>17</sup>.

Additionally, in an era of economic recession and associated public spending restraints, worklessness and associated spend upon welfare support has a significant impact upon the wider UK economy in public

expenditure terms. The Department for Work and Pensions spends over £30 billion per annum on out-of work benefits and a further £1 billion on 'buying' employment provision services<sup>18</sup>.

### **Summary**

Despite all the policy rhetoric identified above, the variety of factors and drivers influencing worklessness means there is no silver bullet towards tackling worklessness in an area – no single approach which will be applicable to all client groups. Indeed, there is a degree of complexity to worklessness which means that central government policy needs to be tailored to specific localities, geographies and client groups. The following section seeks to examine this complexity of worklessness in more detail.

# The complexity of worklessness

Worklessness is a generic term for what is a complex and highly individualised problem, affecting different people and places in a variety of ways. This is one of the key challenges of tackling the issue as it makes designing interventions difficult and highly reliant on good intelligence about the nature of the issue in an area and sensitivity among those delivering support. Interventions need to be both sensitive to the particular challenges and barriers being faced by those unable to enter the labour market in an area and innovative and flexible in its approach. This complexity of worklessness manifests itself in a number of different ways.

## **Geographical complexity**

Worklessness varies according to the geography and economic base of a place. This is the reason why being workless in Manchester is a result of a different set of factors and reasons than being workless in County Durham. Across the UK, geography and industrial development has played an important role in the pattern of worklessness that we see today. Since the industrial revolution, different parts of the country have enjoyed both the benefits of natural resources and the negative impacts, as markets for these resources have dwindled or become less competitive. Different types of heavy industry formed the basis of many economies, particularly in the North and West of the UK. As these industries declined, this caused major structural impacts on local economies to the extent to which the impacts are still being felt.

This means that the geographic distribution of high levels of worklessness, as demonstrated in Table 1, to a large extent mirrors the decline of these industries across the UK and the subsequent decline in local economic growth which has resulted from this decline. In these areas, economic decline has led to the breakdown of community identity and pride, and a decrease of local services (often originally provided through the indigenous industry). Associated with the decline of heavy industry has also been poor health and poor environments. This combination of issues has led to the development of other problems within communities struggling to adapt to the changing circumstances, including a rise in drugs, anti social behaviour, criminal activity and disassociation with education and skills. This domino affect of industrial decline and other thematic issues has in part contributed signifi-

cantly to the rise in worklessness. Unable to gain alternative employment, because of poor health, lack of skills or simply because there were few other employment opportunities, many people were simply unable to re-engage with the labour market and became dependent on the welfare system to survive.

**Table 1: Levels of worklessness by local authority<sup>19</sup>**

Local authority	JSA, IB and IS claimants in the UK (May 2008)	
	Number ('000s)	Rate
Merthyr Tydfil	7.98	23.6%
Blaenau Gwent	9.66	23.1%
Knowsley	20.20	21.7%
Liverpool	61.44	21.6%
Easington	12.29	21.6%
Glasgow City	79.52	20.7%
Neath Port Talbot	16.57	20.1%
Hartlepool	11.05	20.0%
Rhondda Cynon Taff	28.25	19.7%
Inverclyde	9.84	19.6%
Middlesbrough	16.75	19.4%
Caerphilly	20.32	19.3%
Blackpool	16.27	19.2%
Hackney	26.06	18.6%
Stoke-on-Trent	26.97	18.1%
West Dunbartonshire	10.40	18.1%
Manchester	55.69	18.0%
Dundee City	15.92	17.8%
Wear Valley	6.62	17.6%
Wolverhampton	25.21	17.5%



There are other specific geographies of worklessness which have become evident in the UK in recent years. Seaside towns, such as Hastings and Blackpool, have levels of worklessness significantly above the national average. This is often a result of the decline of a different type of industry such as tourism or localities being a magnet to benefit claimants.

### **Deprivational complexity**

Linked to geographical complexity is the deprivational complexity of worklessness. Many deprived communities, when compared side by side with other areas, have very high levels of deprivation, including: low levels of household income; poor health; poor access to transport; low levels of educational attainment; and little or no formal qualifications. There is a clear correlation and link between levels of worklessness and these indicators of deprivation in many of the most deprived localities. Another important factor is around family or community culture which, as suggested earlier, can mean there is little collective support for people to re-enter the labour market. The system of welfare benefits has an important influence on these decisions as entering employment, particularly for lone parents, can mean that potentially their overall household income will fall and that they will, perhaps for the first time, be responsible for ensuring their salary pays all of their bills on a regular basis, rather than being covered by the benefits system in place.

### **Community of interest complexity**

Specific communities of interest can find that their ability to access employment is further compounded by additional barriers that are particular to their demographics. Lone parents may have specific needs in terms of childcare and levels of household income, and lone parents in particular have been recognised by central government as being vulnerable to worklessness.

Disability also has a strong relationship with issues around worklessness. Until October 2008, people unable to work because of disability claimed Incapacity Benefit. However, over recent years, there has been a lot of concern at a national and regional level about the correlation between those on Incapacity Benefit and worklessness. This was in part

due to the fact that historically those people claiming Incapacity Benefit were not obliged, by condition of their benefit, to look for work, unlike Jobseekers Allowance (JSA) claimants. The Government, through several pieces of research, became concerned that potentially many people on Incapacity Benefit, if given the right support and help, could work. Subsequently, current policy is focused on reducing numbers on Incapacity Benefit, with growing awareness among policy makers that the longer an individual is on this benefit, the less likely they are to ever enter the labour market. Part of the move to do this has been the creation of the new Employment and Support Allowance whereby active help is provided to claimants to try and ensure they do not remain on benefits indefinitely without any follow up support or help, should they want or need it, with training or skills assistance.

There have also been concerns about the specific needs of people from minority ethnic backgrounds. They may face barriers to employment around language and racial discrimination together with cultural issues. Asylum seekers and refugees face significant barriers to employment and the labour market. Although asylum seekers cannot legally work until their case has been granted, there is labour market support required both pre and post the granting of asylum. Although unable to work whilst their application for asylum is being processed, support may be required in terms of basic skills, language and work experience. This specialist support needs to be delivered on a case by case basis according to individual needs and should be seen as the basis of asylum seekers entering the labour market once their application has been processed.

## **Summary**

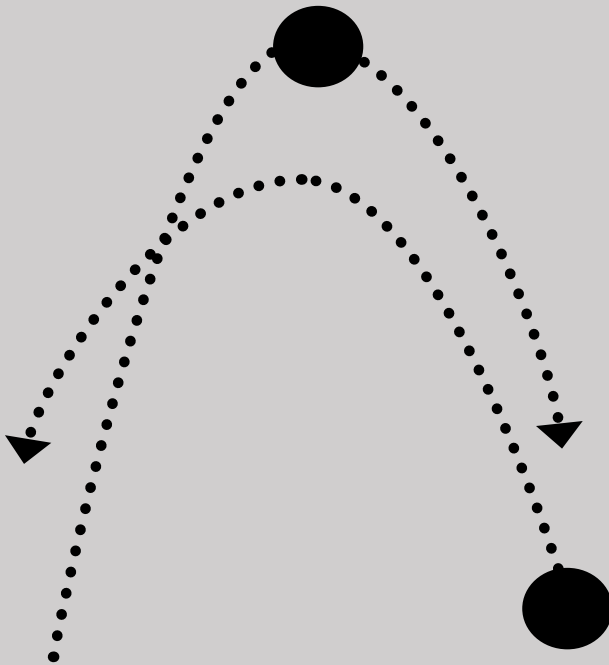
Interventions and approaches to tackling worklessness therefore require recognition of the diversity of needs of different groups and that worklessness is linked to a range of accompanying spatial and social factors. Therefore, when it comes to deciding on the best approach to implement in an area to tackle worklessness, there are important questions and considerations to be answered in relation to:

- the type of beneficiaries that an area wants to target;
- the geographical shape and the economical history of the area;

- the range of deprivation and disadvantage barriers facing people in the area.

The following section seeks to build upon some of the theoretical and policy messages portrayed in the first three sections by introducing a delivery framework for examining different types of approach to tackling worklessness and supplementing this framework with specific examples from CLES Consulting's evaluations of worklessness projects.

# Build skills



# Tackling worklessness: A policy framework for delivery

## **Introducing a framework of worklessness approaches**

Over the last ten years, there has been a whole gamut of programmes, interventions and projects designed to tackle worklessness across the UK. The policy drive for these initiatives has primarily come from the emphasis placed on the issue of worklessness by central government, in particular a number of nationally designed programmes (e.g. New Deal and Pathways to Work). However, a great deal of implementation and project design and delivery has also taken place at the sub-regional, local and neighbourhood levels by stakeholders such as local authorities, health agencies, housing organisations and third sector organisations. All of these programmes, both national and local, have had the overall objective of reducing worklessness and providing people with the skills to enable them to access sustainable employment.

In recent years, these projects have often been implemented to respond to local priorities as set in Sustainable Community Strategies and targets in Local Area Agreements, which have subsequently fed into national Public Service Agreement (PSA) targets at government departmental level. As discussed in the previous sections, there is a degree of complexity in worklessness meaning that interventions require different approaches and methods for different localities and client groups. This section seeks to introduce a framework for assessing different approaches to worklessness and utilises project examples to demonstrate the relative methods of different delivery approaches.

## **The roles of different organisations and stakeholders in tackling worklessness**

When considering different delivery approaches, it is clear there are a range of organisations involved from a national to local level in the development, implementation and monitoring of interventions to reduce worklessness in the UK.

### ***National level***

At a national level, the Government has developed a complex set of machinery aimed to respond to the issue of worklessness and work towards full employment. This is managed by and is the direct responsibility of Public Service Agreement targets of the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). However, in recognition of the cross cutting

nature of worklessness, on paper at least, there are key policy links with other central departments, including: Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform (BERR); Communities and Local Government (CLG); and Department of Health (DH).

Perhaps the most recognisable delivery actor in tackling worklessness and wider unemployment is Jobcentre Plus, traditionally the first agency people approach when seeking to claim out of work related benefit and seeking new employment opportunities. Jobcentre Plus is a non-executive departmental body managed through DWP with a network of regional, sub-regional and local offices. The role of Jobcentre Plus has changed significantly over the last decade and has seen their activity shift from frontline delivery to a greater emphasis on benefit administration, benefit decision-making and a promoter of local employment opportunities. In close co-ordination with the DWP, Jobcentre Plus's model is based upon the use of job advisers who are assigned to those seeking employment. These job advisers assess a person's needs and refer claimants onto other organisations in the private and third sector to receive specialist support and advice, in order to help them into sustainable long-term employment. Jobcentre Plus, as a government agency, deliver against a specific set of output focused Public Service Agreement employment targets and are viewed as key local stakeholders in the process of Local Area Agreements and also as a gateway for up to date labour market data.

The Connexions Service is another important government led agency in tackling not only worklessness but wider skills, training and educational issues. Connexions was established as a successor to the Careers Advisory Service and specifically targets 14-19 year olds to assist them in accessing employment, education and/or training. Like Jobcentre Plus, they have a set of national employment and training related targets which, as a government agency, they are expected to fulfil. Like Jobcentre Plus, the Connexions Service is a national organisation, but with a network of offices on a regional, sub-regional and local basis. They have particular responsibility for dealing with the NEET agenda – young people Not in Education Employment or Training. This is a particularly important target group for the Government as NEETs are potentially the next generation of workless individuals in a community.

### ***Regional level***

Regionally, the Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) view tackling worklessness as a core driver of developing regional economies, particularly increasing productivity and narrowing the regional employment and wider economic inequality gap. Indeed, tackling worklessness is often a key priority of the Regional Economic Strategy (RES). In the North West, for example, one of the six core priorities of the RES is<sup>20</sup> *'growing the size and capability of the workforce'*. Regional Development Agencies work with Jobcentre Plus, sub regional partnerships and local authorities on a region by region basis, providing funding to deliver interventions to reduce worklessness.

### ***Local level***

At a local level, local authorities and employment and economic development departments have been key deliverers of worklessness projects, seeking to draw upon local knowledge and experience. Interventions have been delivered directly in-house in response to local need using locally available funding, or through national funding programmes such as the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund, Working Neighbourhoods Fund and Local Area Agreements. Areas with a significant proportion of its population workless have also been involved in delivering the centrally driven Cities Strategy programme, which has been specifically targeted at ensuring areas have the right governance arrangements, blend of activities and stakeholders to reduce numbers of worklessness. Worklessness projects have been delivered directly and commissioned to other local partners and third sector organisations. Indeed, third sector organisations, as a result of their neighbourhood focus and personalised approach, have been seen as key deliverers of worklessness projects, particularly those which have utilised brokerage and training as approaches. The flexibility introduced as part of new Local Area Agreements to select locally reflective indicators and outcomes has upped the ante of worklessness in political, policy and strategic terms at the local level. Local authorities understand the key links between worklessness and other thematic issues, such as housing and health, as the basis of shaping and improving places and have, in many places, chosen to tackle worklessness as a key element of their Local Area Agreement.

An important element of Government led approaches to tackling worklessness has been recognition that the complexity and heterogeneity

of worklessness requires a multi agency approach. At a local level, this has been achieved through closer partnership working through Local Strategic Partnerships and in the delivery of worklessness projects on the ground, where often, partners from the third sector, Primary Care Trusts, Housing Associations, Jobcentre Plus and local authorities work together to tackle the complexity and heterogeneity of worklessness in their area. This enables projects to deliver a more individualised type of programme which recognises the multiple barriers that workless individuals will face in brokering employment opportunity (e.g. health, housing and childcare require the intervention of numerous agencies and organisations).

### **The variance between unemployment and worklessness programmes and projects**

Delivering solutions to support people back into employment need to focus on both demand and supply side. The local skills mix is important, as even where there are good levels of demand for local labour, if all the jobs are low skilled with little opportunity for progression, this may not be adequate to tackle high levels of worklessness as there will be little incentive to participate. In order to have a successful employment programme, it is necessary to have both a good supply of labour and a steady demand among employers for the type of skills and qualities offered by potential employees.

The provision of employment programmes to help people back into the labour market has been a traditional role for the Government. However, with reducing levels of unemployment during the last decade, but a rise in and stagnation of worklessness, traditional employment programmes have had to evolve and adapt to cater for the needs of those who are not active and have no desire or inclination to rejoin the labour market. This has required agencies and local stakeholders to rethink their approach to employment projects and offer a much greater variety of services to clients than previously provided in traditional forms of employment programmes, with a particular focus upon the supply side. The types of support now offered to workless clients include a continuation of many of the services which would have traditionally been offered to help people back into employment along with a variety of additional services. Table 2 demonstrates this variance between the



services offered as part of employment and worklessness programmes and projects.

**Table 2: Services offered as part of employment and worklessness programmes and projects**

<b>Traditional employment support activities</b>	<b>Additional support activities offered specifically to tackle worklessness</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One-to-one support with a personal adviser to assist with job hunting only</li> <li>• Training in basic skills (e.g. maths and English)</li> <li>• Further education – NVQ, GCSE, A Level</li> <li>• In work training towards recognised qualification, including NVQ or apprenticeship</li> <li>• Help with CV writing and job applications</li> <li>• Engagement with employers to identify local vacancies and requirements</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One-to-one support with a personal adviser to explore job opportunities, training needs, skills needs and any other personal needs</li> <li>• Personal skills development and confidence building</li> <li>• Work taster sessions – building awareness of employment opportunities</li> <li>• Help with understanding benefit entitlements</li> <li>• Counselling services</li> <li>• Assistance with substance misuse (alcohol, smoking, drugs)</li> <li>• Budgeting/financial management support</li> <li>• Job brokerage services – similar to those provided by employment agencies but targeted specifically at economically inactive</li> <li>• Provision of volunteering opportunities to provide introduction into world of work</li> <li>• Community project work to encourage team work and confidence building</li> <li>• Housing support</li> <li>• Health advice and support (e.g. dentist/GP services)</li> <li>• Mentoring support</li> <li>• Help with transport provision and transport costs</li> <li>• Access to support and counselling</li> <li>• English language support</li> <li>• Specialist support for ex-offenders to help them back into work</li> <li>• Childcare support for lone parents and carers</li> </ul>

## **A framework of approaches for delivery**

Employment activities are delivered through a range of different approaches to tackling worklessness, including training, outreach and brokerage models. Each of these models has their relative merits but it is important to recognise that different approaches will hold greater value with specific client groups and in different geographies. Utilising our past experience of evaluating worklessness projects and our wider policy knowledge, CLES has designed a framework detailing different approaches to tackling worklessness and the types of partners involved in the process.

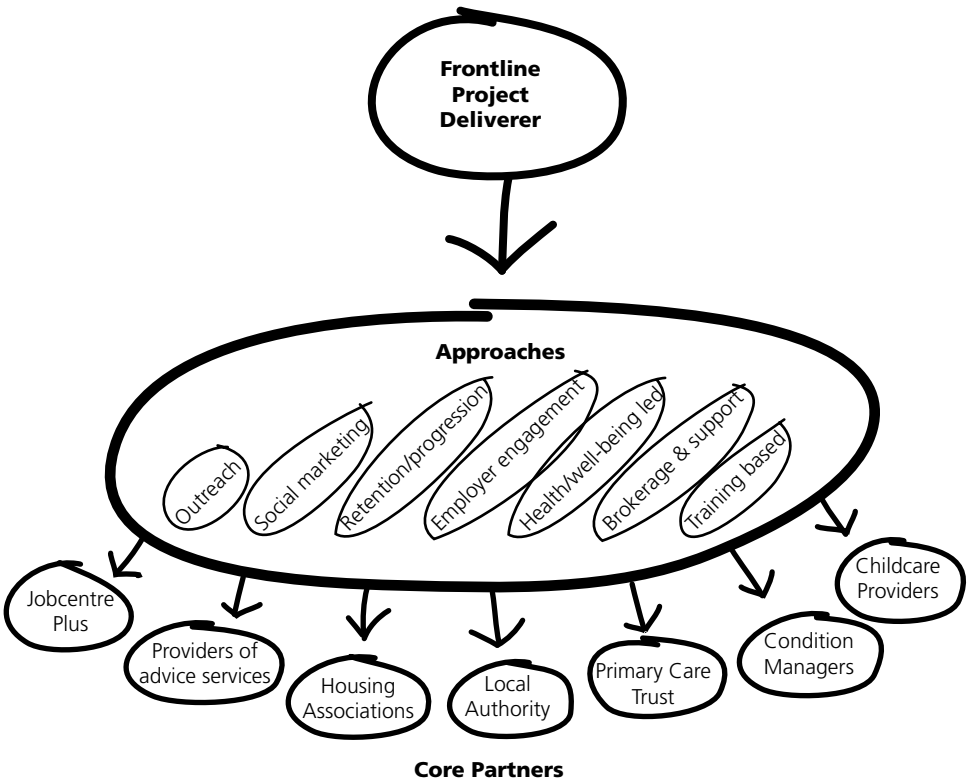
Figure 4 introduces the CLES framework for explaining the different approaches to tackling worklessness, with subsequent analysis providing critique of the implementation of these types of approaches through project examples. Frontline project delivery to tackling worklessness tends to take one or a combination of seven main approaches, which is implemented with partners that can include one or more of the organisations listed at the bottom of the diagram. For example, an adviser working for a jobs company on the local high street has a menu of approaches they can adopt to support a client based upon the need of the client. They can then work with the client and a range of the core partners identified at the bottom of the diagram to offer a programme of support. The seven approaches described are not intended to be absolute and there will be overlap between different approaches depending on the types of activities delivered. However, the framework does provide an opportunity to understand what the approaches are, how they operate, and for practitioners, which blend would be best suited to tackle the drivers of worklessness in their area and with their client group.

In the following section, we describe each of these approaches and provide examples of projects from our evaluation and other research activities. This is twinned with a critique of the relative merits of each approach.

### **Approach 1 – Outreach**

Outreach approaches to worklessness are about taking a project out of its usual delivery location into a community venue or directly to the workless person's home. Outreach should aim to overcome the some-

**Figure 4: A framework of approaches for delivery**



times formal, office based, delivery approach of traditional employment services which can often be threatening to people who perhaps lack confidence and have low self-esteem. Outreach models have had demonstrable success in supporting lone parents and longer term Incapacity Benefit claimants into skills programmes and employment. These are also the client groups which may be less able or less willing to attend meetings in a formal office environment as they may have additional barriers, such as childcare commitments or accessibility issues.

With a government drive towards individualised and personalised approaches to worklessness in recent policy documentation, such as the Welfare Reform Green Paper, outreach approaches have become more important for engaging with those harder to reach claimants, particularly those historically on Incapacity Benefit who may have had little or no contact with formal employment agencies for a long period of time. An example of an outreach focused approach to worklessness which has added significant value is the Positive Steps into Work project in Blackpool<sup>21</sup>.

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### Case Study 1: Positive Steps into Work, Blackpool

Positive Steps into Work is a project developed in Blackpool which seeks to engage with and support long-term Incapacity Benefit claimants into employment. It is an initiative of the Pan-Regional Northern Way Growth Strategy with the focus upon seeking to address the high proportion of working age population in the locality on Incapacity Benefit. Blackpool has some of the highest levels of incapacity claimants in the UK with many of these long-term claimants facing serious barriers to re-employment. Subsequently, the Positive Steps into Work project was designed to deliver a model of support focused on outreach, with a team of outreach employment advisers or opportunity brokers, proactively in contact with local claimants offering bespoke support and one-to-one advice to assist them back into employment. This project has involved working with claimants in their own home or in a local community centre to develop an assessment of the individual's skills and abilities and, from there, a bespoke action plan, including referrals to specialist organisations to help build confidence, basic skills and supported work experience or training.

The original aim of Positive Steps into Work was to provide bespoke employment support to Blackpool residents claiming Incapacity Benefit for over six months who were between the ages of 18-21 and 50-60. However, once project delivery began, it became apparent that beneficiary boundaries would need to be extended to 16-65 as regards output and impact terms. The project provides quality referral into learning, employment and personal development opportunities to address the engagement of harder to reach individuals. The project has developed strong links with other agencies, including Jobcentre Plus, Connexions and third sector organisations.

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There are a number of key reasons as to why outreach can be viewed as an effective approach to tackling worklessness:

**outreach offers a long-term, individualised and personalised approach** – the ability of outreach projects to engage with claimants has been key to their success in creating positive outputs and outcomes. The ability of outreach advisers to reach those furthest from the labour market has been crucial in helping them to start moving back towards employment. An outreach model of working also tends to work with participants on a long-term basis, providing them with consistent and secure support, which acknowledges the reality that the transition back into work may take a long period of time;

**outreach has a reputation as being independent of mainstream delivery** – outreach models of delivery are often seen as not the main focus of mainstream delivery agencies such as Jobcentre Plus, which appears to be a core strength as claimants tend to have greater trust and faith in the outreach advisers to support them than they do in Jobcentre Plus personal advisers, who are normally confined to an office base and limited in the amount of time they can spend with individual claimants;

**outreach offers opportunities for personal development and capacity building** – for those individuals which are farthest from the labour market, outreach models provide a personal approach, helping to ease people into the idea of re-entering the labour market. This is directly engendered by the development of a trusting relationship between the advisers and the claimant. Often for beneficiaries one of the key impacts of the outreach approach is an increase in levels of self-confidence and self-belief to find employment and improve their livelihoods. The approach of offering support to participants from advisers once they found employment was also of benefit and added value;

**outreach recognises the value of partnership and links to policy priorities** – outreach models work well when local partners work closely together so that information about individuals and their options are clear and consistent. Partners in Jobcentre Plus, social services, Connexions and health agencies all need to share information and data so that individual claimants can be supported effectively.

## **Approach 2 – Brokerage**

Jobs brokerage has become an important feature in the work to help people back into employment. Brokerage models aim to link potential employees with local job opportunities by working closely with individual claimants and dually employers, partners and local organisations. Often, brokerage projects are undertaken by specialist organisations that operate in a similar way to commercial employment agencies but are targeted specifically at those who are not active within the labour market. They often provide in-house training and signposting to other sources of support and help. Many brokerage projects provide individuals and groups with the skills required to access employment (e.g. CV compilation, interview technique and acting as a broker to help match individuals with available opportunities in the local labour market). This twinning of support and brokerage provides workless individuals real opportunity to access employment, provided there are sufficient local employment opportunities. This type of support is particularly useful to young people and those who may not have been away from the labour market for too long. Two examples of a brokerage approach to tackling worklessness is At Work, a New Deal for Communities project based in the Heywood area of Rochdale<sup>22</sup>, and the Trellis project in Birmingham.

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### **Case Study 2: At Work, Rochdale**

At Work is a private regeneration based recruitment company that delivers government funded recruitment services across the country. At Work portray an employment agency image, which is both a strength and weakness of their delivery approach.

At Work is focused on assisting workless individuals back into work by offering local residents assistance with job search activities and developing employability skills, such as interview training and developing a CV. The project is based in the Heywood area of Rochdale and operates specifically within the defined New Deal for Communities area.

At Work's delivery is heavily focused on a job brokerage approach which has been successful for assisting Jobseekers Allowance claimants, whilst additionally bringing limited success with Incapacity Benefit and Income Support claimants. The majority of At Work's registrations have been through referrals from Jobcentre Plus and residents approaching the service themselves. As well as developing a relationship with potential employees, a

key role of At Work has been to broker engagement with employers. This twin approach has been one of the reasons for the project's success.

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### Case Study 3: Trellis Project, Birmingham

The Trellis Project worked with key partners and other agencies and organisations to ensure that employment support services in Birmingham were more user-friendly to refugee jobseekers. They aimed to streamline the provision of employment support services to refugees and build bridges between mainstream service providers and Birmingham's refugee community. The Trellis Project also supported the Refugee Employment and Training Advocacy Forum (RETAF), which worked to strengthen the capacity of refugee communities, ensuring they participated in the development of employment support services in Birmingham.

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There are a number of reasons as to why brokerage can be viewed as an effective approach to tackling worklessness:

**brokerage offers a strong relationship with local employers**

– a brokerage model can develop strong links and trustworthy relationships with local employers which can be a key strength of this approach. Local companies may actually choose to recruit through these types of agencies rather than Jobcentre Plus because they have a track record in providing suitably qualified candidates;

**brokerage offers a personalised advice and support approach** – in a similar way to the outreach approach, the role of the personal adviser is an important part of the brokerage model. Evaluation feedback from a number of projects undertaken by CLES Consulting shows that advisers provide time and space to listen to the individual needs of candidates, in some cases often like friends. Support to develop a suitable CV or successfully negotiate an interview is also extremely useful and although beneficiaries tend not to learn any particular new skills or gain qualifications they do learn how to present themselves for interview, to understand how the recruitment process works, and what an employer requires in a prospective employee;

**brokerage often offers a distinct identity from mainstream welfare services** – often, the model of jobs brokerage is presented as a distinct offer from Jobcentre Plus and delivered by a host of other public, private and third sector organisations. This is an important factor in engaging with local people, given the negative image many local claimants hold of Jobcentre Plus, perceiving it to be intimidating and feeling like the Jobcentre did not have time to effectively deal with them on an individual basis;

**brokerage offers a culturally aware approach** – the nature of brokerage approaches to worklessness mean that activities and support can be tailored to specific needs and communities of interest. Utilising the Trellis Project as an example, it is distinct as a result of the cultural sensitivity of the Link Officers who are all former refugees and, as such, have an insider's knowledge of the refugee experience to employment and can speak a variety of languages.

### **Approach 3: Training**

The Leitch Review of 2006 identified the basic skills deficit in the UK, particularly issues with regard to re-skilling and up-skilling. Workless individuals simply do not have the correct skills base to access new employment opportunities in industry, such as financial services and the wider knowledge economy. Some approaches to tackling worklessness have focused upon training, where individuals are provided with the skills to access new employment opportunities such as the construction and information technology industries. An example of this approach, which has also used employer engagement as an emphasis, is Kingsway Training for Jobs in Rochdale<sup>23</sup>.

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#### **Case Study 4: Kingsway Training for Jobs, Rochdale**

The Kingsway Business Park will be a major new business park located at Junction 21 of the M62 close to Rochdale. The business park will span 170 hectares and accommodate a wide range of commercial, industrial and logistics uses, which will be supported by retail and leisure. The requirement for the Kingsway Training for Jobs project is based on the need to enable local people to access the employment opportunities which are available on the business park. The project was originally funded through the Neighbourhood



Renewal Fund and designed to provide specific training opportunities for unemployed and workless people to enable them to access jobs on the Kingsway Business Park in Rochdale. Kingsway Training for Jobs has adopted a primarily partnership based approach to delivering a training project. Kingsway was able to play on the strengths of partner companies, such as At Work, supplying a stream of referrals to training courses linked to opportunities on the Kingsway Business Park. Training was commissioned with local providers who had a good reputation with representatives from Kingsway.

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There are number of key reasons as to why training can be viewed as an effective approach to tackling worklessness:

**training offers a variety of provision** – training approaches to tackling worklessness offer a variety of training activities relevant to the needs of clients, their existing skills bases and the skills requirement of employers. Training also presents different outcomes to other approaches to tackling worklessness, with beneficiaries suggesting that training approaches changed their aspirations, with a feeling that both confidence and the chances of finding work had improved. Beneficiaries also reported an increase in their motivation to find work, while some beneficiaries suggested they had already found work related to the training provided;

**training offers key opportunity for partnership formulation** – training approaches offer a twin approach to tackling worklessness which involves working in partnership with claimants to improve skills and working in partnership with employers to find out about the types of skills required locally to enable people to obtain employment. The training and skills partnership link with employers has been particularly effective in a number of training focused projects CLES Consulting has evaluated, particularly where there is a demonstrable need for local people to fill newly formed employment and have the required skills to deliver that employment.

**training offers a tangible outcome for the individual** - training based approaches to tackling worklessness are not necessarily about ensuring that workless individuals gain employment as a result of being engaged in the intervention or project. Instead,

there are other tangible benefits to the individual including skills development which provide a reason for taking part in the intervention.

### **Approach 4: Health and well-being led**

Approaches to worklessness, which are led by health and well-being priorities, aim to help individuals tackle poor health and low self esteem. These models are less focused on employment outcomes and more on helping individuals to overcome what may be significant health barriers to taking up training and/or future employment opportunities. They are particularly important for people who have been long-term claimants of Incapacity Benefit and who are now on Employment and Support Allowance, as many of these claimants will require expert support to enable them to overcome poor health barriers to employment. An example of a health and well-being focused approach to worklessness is the Greenwich Local Labour and Business project<sup>24</sup>. This project also targets specific groups of people, providing both brokerage and outreach support to participants.

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### **Case Study 5: Greenwich Local Labour and Business (GLLaB)**

GLLaB is a local labour initiative aiming to challenge the trend of growing numbers of the London Borough of Greenwich's population claiming Incapacity Benefit and a growing cohort of people who had not had formal employment for a long period of time. GLLaB involves three projects: Work for Health; Work for Families; and Work@Greenwich. Work for Families and Work for Health are both targeted at specific beneficiaries. Work for Families aims to engage with parents/carers, with a focus on lone parents, to overcome barriers to employment. The project offers integrated and enhanced support to clients through a specialist advisory team made up of advisers from the Children's Information Service (CIS), Jobcentre Plus and GLLaB. Work for Health provides advice and support for workless people who were claiming health related benefits and had a mental health condition. All three projects aim to provide support to specific target groups (lone parents and people with mental illness) who are facing a number of barriers that are preventing them from securing sustained employment.

The principal behind the projects is that addressing the complex range of barriers that beneficiaries are facing requires a bespoke approach tailored to the needs of individuals. The success of the Greenwich Local Labour and Business (GLLaB) project lies in the

process of the health led approach and the services and activities offered, such as case conferencing and cognitive behavioural therapy.

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There are a number of key reasons as to why health and well-being led approaches can be viewed as effective in tackling worklessness:

**health and well-being offers an integrated and thematic approach to tackling worklessness** – health and well-being led approaches to tackling worklessness can utilise a range of innovative techniques to broker the relationship between the workless individual and adviser and workless individual and employment. Innovation is key to tackling worklessness, particularly where claimants face multiple barriers to employment. One such example of innovation in health and well-being led approaches is case conferencing. Case conferencing is a useful technique for enabling advisers and other project staff and stakeholders to share experiences and knowledge. The case conference format, with its emphasis on sharing live experiences and discussing real cases, enabled people to learn very quickly from the work that other people did. Case conferencing is a useful format for enabling advisers to raise issues related to difficult clients and share them with other colleagues in order to identify possible solutions.

The use of methods such as Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) is also a key element of health and well-being led approaches to tackling worklessness. Advisers interviewed as part of CLES Consulting evaluations have stated that CBT has had a positive impact for beneficiaries. It has proved key in being able to address some of the problems related to health conditions such as anxiety, agoraphobia and vertigo which have proved barriers in the past to securing and sustaining employment. This approach has enabled the advisers to move onto the next steps which were generally more directly related to employment, such as interview technique, training and CV development;

**health and well-being recognises multiple barriers and value added services** – there is a recognition that for certain workless client groups, particularly lone parents, there are a range of multiple barriers to employment. Health and well-

being focused approaches to tackling worklessness have thus responded through offering services aside from jobs brokerage, including childcare and volunteering opportunities. Availability of childcare is identified as a significant barrier to people entering work. The importance of the availability of childcare should not be underestimated and the extent to which projects address this barrier is crucial to effectiveness. Projects can overcome these barriers by: providing financial assistance; signposting to childcare providers; providing advice about childcare; and providing a link between support services. Supported volunteering has also been found to have a positive impact for beneficiaries. Even if it had limited impact in terms of moving people from volunteering into employment in the long-term, it was likely that some individuals may move into paid employment;

**health and well-being offers joined up service provision**

– health and well-being approaches to tackling worklessness effectively link health and employment considerations and linkage between stakeholders working in these themes. Joined up service provision is also important in enabling beneficiaries to access services from a range of different providers. Again, the role of the personal adviser is key in joined up provision, providing a good understanding of what other agencies are delivering and opportunity to refer/signpost beneficiaries onto a wider range of services.

**Approach 5: Employer engagement**

Approaches to worklessness need to be about both demand and supply side considerations: supply side in terms of the skills and motivation of workless individuals; and demand side in terms of employers willing to offer opportunities to workless individuals. Employer engagement approaches to tackling worklessness aim to engage directly with local employers to understand their skills requirements, and then to broker suitable claimants with job opportunities. Engagement with employers requires strong communication skills from the project and a detailing of the benefits involvement will provide for the employer. The use of employer engagement models is particularly effective in areas where there is strong public sector employment in for example local govern-

ment services and health. Many projects work closely with employers, but one example of this approach in practice is the Building Future East Training Centre in Newcastle-upon-Tyne<sup>25</sup>.

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#### Case Study 6: Building Futures East, Newcastle-upon-Tyne

Building Futures East (BFE) is focused upon providing construction related training and helping people into jobs through an innovative approach which involves partnership between regeneration agencies, employers and other local organisations. BFE is based within and primarily targets the East Neighbourhood Renewal Area of Newcastle. BFE is targeted at a range of individuals in the East End of Newcastle. Its focus upon tackling low skills and providing employment opportunities in the construction industry means that it is largely targeted at those aged between 16 and 24. The delivery of training is based upon the direct involvement of local employers, with the aim to raise their awareness about the local skills base and tailor course provision to required needs, thus linking local employment opportunities to local residents.

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There are a number of key reasons as to why employer engagement can be viewed as an effective approach to tackling worklessness:

**employer engagement offers a locally reflective approach**

– the success of employer engagement approaches to tackling worklessness often lies in the model utilised to deliver the project. Firstly, there is a requirement for capacity to link local skills needs to the requirements of local employers. Secondly, employers bring understanding of what is required and the courses and other activities provided by the deliverer enable local people to gain the skills required to access local jobs. Thirdly, employer engagement models are often rooted in the local community and thus have links to wider regeneration initiatives, bringing together a variety of partners from the local community, private sector and public sector bodies;

**employer engagement offers participant reflective activities**

– the success of employer engagement approaches to tackling worklessness also lie in the activities it provides to participants and its ability to respond to change and the further non-work related needs of participants. The success of a core offer of Building Futures East for example, with regard

to training and its links to local employers, has enabled it to develop new project activities which are more focused and more targeted. Employer engagement projects also provide activities and support to participants that go beyond developing skills and brokering employment opportunities, such as the provision of supported housing for young people;

**employer engagement links to local and national policy** – employer engagement approaches to tackling worklessness have strong links not only to local employers but also to local policy and strategy. It is important that employer led approaches to worklessness are aware of local employment and skills targets and demonstrate the ability of their project to contribute towards those targets. The location of projects in relation to new industry and employment is also important in employer engagement approaches, particularly where participants can be directed to employers. Partnership with employers and the public sector is one of the core drivers of the success of employment engagement approaches to tackling worklessness. Having a ready supply of employment opportunities twinned to skills and training development programmes is important to sustaining employer engagement projects, as is networks with organisations such as urban regeneration companies, colleges and wider regeneration agencies;

**employer engagement offers a range of positive outcomes** – employer engagement focused worklessness projects which CLES Consulting has evaluated have delivered a range of outcomes relating to individuals developing new skills and accessing employment opportunities. Employer engagement projects have also had a variety of participants from a wide age range, highlighting the importance of a training and employer based approach to tackling worklessness being open and not directly targeted at specific groups as an initial basis. Compared to other types of worklessness approach, employer engagement as a result of its focused nature is often relatively inexpensive. Prevention of worklessness and unemployment by training and engagement with employers saves costs in the longer term.

## Approach 6: Retention and progression

Brokering workless people into work is only part of the remit of a successful and effective worklessness project. Retention and progression in employment remains a key drive in Department for Work and Pensions policy and there is a key concern that there is a rolling cycle of workless individuals being brokered into employment and then returning to out of work benefits within a relatively short period of time. Approaches of delivery which focus on retention and progression aim to work with individuals who have moved back into employment or work experience and help them to retain employment and progress within their employment to greater responsibility or greater diversity of activities through training support and qualifications. Until recently, few worklessness projects have had retention and progression as their objective. However, to avoid the cycle of benefits, greater attention needs to be paid to retention and progression in worklessness projects in order to ensure real positive local outcomes. An example of a retention and progression approach to tackling worklessness is Flexible Individual Routes to Employment (FIRE).

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### Case Study 7: Flexible Individual Routes to Employment (FIRE), Groundwork Stoke-on-Trent

Groundwork Stoke-on-Trent began its Intermediate Labour Market (ILM) programme in 2000 to help provide employment opportunities to the unemployed young people of Stoke-on-Trent (18-24). Groundwork set up its ILM scheme with Groundwork Stoke-on-Trent and aims to guide participants by promoting good working practice and encouraging skills such as teamwork, good timekeeping, initiative and the ability to follow instructions – qualities which improve the chances of finding regular and worthwhile employment. Young people who have been unemployed for over six months often face particular difficulties returning to work, in terms of their own readiness for the workplace and any potential employer perceptions of them. As such, the overall aim of the project was to reduce the numbers of young unemployed people across Stoke-on-Trent by improving their skills and employability.

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There are a number of key reasons as to why retention and progression can be viewed as an effective approach to tackling worklessness:

**retention and progression provides sustainable skills and placements** – one of the key values of retention and progression approaches to tackling worklessness is that schemes such as Intermediate Labour Market projects enable skills learnt

on placements to be transferred and enhanced in full time permanent work. Groundwork, the environmental regeneration organisation, has delivered a number of ILM schemes which have enabled the long-term unemployed and workless to work for a period of twelve months. Retention and progression approaches also give participants the opportunity to undertake training while being paid a wage, gaining the certificates that will enable them to get jobs at the end of a placement. Participants also have the opportunity to develop core work skills, such as team working and communication skills, which put them in good stead for future employment opportunities;

**retention and progression addresses wider social needs**

– retention and progression approaches to tackling worklessness offer much wider outcomes than enhanced skills and employment. In particular, they help develop the confidence and self-esteem of participants, as well as addressing the wider social needs of the client group. ILM programmes offer more than just a package of employment and training, offering social support where required and signposting towards services such as citizens advice and social services where applicable.

## **Approach 7: Social marketing**

Social marketing is '*the systematic application of marketing, alongside other concepts and techniques, to achieve specific behaviour goals, for a common good*'<sup>26</sup>. As such, its fundamental purpose is to help improve people's lives. This contrasts with commercial marketing, which has a primarily financial purpose in terms of profits or shareholder value. The defining features of social marketing are:

- customer or consumer orientation;
- behaviour and behavioural goals;
- 'intervention mix' and 'marketing mix';
- audience segmentation and a clarity of audience focus;
- use and application of the 'exchange' concept – understanding what is being expected of the customer and the real cost to them;
- competition, that is to say understanding factors that impact on the customer and those that compete for their attention and time.



With its focus on promoting well-being, social marketing is most commonly associated with public health (e.g. anti-smoking campaigns). However, whilst much social marketing to date has been concerned with improving health, there is an emerging recognition that social marketing as a technique has a potentially important role to play in tackling other social issues, such as worklessness.

Social marketing has the potential to improve employability and engage with some of the long-term issues which affect workless communities, including entrenched negative attitudes towards employment, low levels of confidence and life aspirations, and high levels of health inequalities. The Government has already taken steps towards integrating social marketing approaches into their national policy (e.g. the Government is currently focused on reforming employment services so that they offer personalised support to those seeking work). The Government has also commissioned research into the psychological and social influences on workless people living in deprived areas. This national focus has meant that, in addition, projects designed to tackle worklessness and disaffection within communities are increasingly utilising elements of social marketing in their work, although general awareness of social marketing as a useful tool in delivery tends to be low and does not appear to be used explicitly. Nevertheless, the following case study from the Fairyland Housing Estate in Neath, Wales, provides an insight into how social marketing as a technique has been used to tackle worklessness.

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#### Case Study 8: Fairyland Housing Estate, Wales<sup>27</sup>

This project aimed to address the quality of life, reputation and image of a community through tackling social, economic and environmental factors. The Fairyland housing estate in Neath is located in an area that ranks among the fifth most disadvantaged in Wales. It is characterised by: a culture of benefit dependency; high proportion of lone parents; high levels of long-term sickness and disability; low levels of employment; drug and alcohol abuse; fear of personal safety; low educational attainment; and poor estate design and management. Following community consultation and profiling activities, a combination of social marketing techniques were used to identify and help tackle the key barriers preventing residents from entering the labour market.

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There are a number of reasons as to why social marketing can be viewed as an effective approach to tackling worklessness:

**social marketing enables an understanding of the community** – social marketing enables authorities and projects to gain greater understanding of the communities within which they operate and the needs of those communities. In worklessness terms, it can be particularly effective at the small geographical level in identifying the scale of worklessness and in discussing project and employment needs. Social marketing can use a range of innovative approaches to engaging communities, including: fun days; youth events, planning for real meetings; and household surveys;

**social marketing enables targeted action** – as the example from the Fairyland Housing Estate demonstrated, social marketing can be used to deliver locally devised and developed initiatives. Example initiative projects included: increased access to employment opportunities for the whole community with specialist support and focus on young people, lone parents, long-term sickness and disability; sustainable local employment and social enterprise; and local childcare provision. Social marketing also has the ability to identify and respond directly to barriers to employment, such as lone parents and those with drug/ alcohol dependency.

## **Summary**

This section of the research has detailed a range of approaches towards tackling worklessness which are tailored to meet the client and geographical requirements of a particular context. The approaches set out above provide a starting point for local practitioners who want to develop or reform existing models for reducing worklessness. It must be remembered however that these approaches cannot operate directly in isolation and practitioners must consider and utilise each of the identified approaches in developing and delivering a worklessness intervention. The next section of this research moves beyond describing and analysing worklessness approaches to develop a series of delivery principles which we believe should be considered when developing a worklessness project regardless of the primary delivery approach utilised.

# Future considerations for successful delivery

## Summary of the current project values to reducing worklessness

The case studies highlighted in this study and in previous research shows that a client based individualised approach is central to successfully reducing worklessness in localities.

Indeed, they provide a number of common, underlying principles which are important considerations in the development of future worklessness initiatives operating at a local level. Many of these projects have assisted clients that have struggled to find stable employment or progress towards work through the dual benefit and employment services offered by Jobcentre Plus. This is not to say that all Jobcentre Plus schemes do not work or are not appropriate for the needs of workless residents. Rather, the projects assessed in this research provide services that fill gaps in mainstream provision, responding to needs which have been identified locally and providing help to residents whose benefit entitlement provides no incentive to look for work. The projects aim to tackle these gaps in mainstream provision by offering services that involve more intensive and tailored support than can be offered by Jobcentre Plus.

## Common principles for future delivery

From the approaches and project examples described and analysed earlier, a number of common principles emerge that should be used to inform future worklessness development and delivery interventions at the local level.

### **Common Principle 1:** *Ensure the project provides a strategic fit with local, regional and national policy*

Having a strong link to local, regional and national policy has been seen as an important element of the Building Futures East and Positive Steps into Work projects. For instance, Building Futures East provides a fit with the local authority worklessness strategy and the regeneration of Newcastle's East End. Ensuring a strong strategic link benefits the project in terms of helping to achieve buy in from local partners and secure funding. This buy in can be used to provide links to other projects

which provide complimentary services and help to ensure that local stakeholders are involved in the design and delivery of activities.

Ensuring a local strategic fit also helps to secure match funding and influence the allocation of other funds as the project is more likely to compliment the priorities of local partners. A strong strategic fit can also be advantageous in terms of ensuring that the lessons learnt from a project are sustained and applied to future worklessness initiatives or even ensure the project is sustained via mainstream funding once short term discretionary funding comes to an end.

**Common Principle 2: *Work in partnership with other service providers to provide an individualised approach to tackling worklessness***

All of the projects reviewed as part of this research work in partnership with other service providers. Residents who are farthest from the labour market often experience multiple barriers to entering work, such as:

- poor physical and mental health;
- childcare responsibilities;
- poor and unstable housing situation;
- drug and alcohol addiction;
- lack of personal transport;
- lack of awareness regarding in-work benefits;
- lack of formal identification;
- lack of employability skills.

No single organisation is an expert in all of these areas and partnership working can add value in terms of providing referrals to organisations who can offer support to overcome personal barriers to work. Similar conclusions have been drawn by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation<sup>28</sup>, suggesting that partnership working is essential. The Institute of Employment Studies<sup>29</sup> also identified the important role partnership working plays in tackling worklessness as:

*‘The state of the labour market is important in determining the success of the labour market intervention, as is the strength of local partnerships between public, voluntary and private sector organisations.’*

The research also highlights a series of important contextual factors, such as the project’s management.

Partnership working requires strong management arrangements, such as the case conferencing approach adopted by GLLaB to ensure residents are appropriately referred to partners, that knowledge is shared and partners do not provide services which are confusing or overlap. Although the specific partnership arrangements vary between each project, it appears that a strong relationship with mainstream providers such as Jobcentre Plus is also vital. Jobcentre Plus is often the service provider which has the most contact with workless residents and can play a vital role in terms of referring their clients to a scheme, being able to utilise management information that can guide outreach activities to the areas of greatest need, and provide in-work calculations for benefit claimants. Jobcentre Plus can also be important in terms of providing personal advisers to local worklessness initiatives. This approach has been adopted by Kingsway and GLLaB. Here, Jobcentre Plus can offer its expertise in dealing with workless residents which works well when combined with a more personalised delivery of services.

**Common Principle 3: *The personal adviser plays a key role in determining the success of worklessness projects***

Personal advisers are the interface between the worklessness project and the beneficiaries. The projects reviewed in this study suggest they are vital in engaging and developing a relationship with residents who often lack confidence, have poor experiences of dealing with mainstream service providers and are easily disengaged, if the support offered is not appropriate. This finding has also been supported by previous studies by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation which noted that '*emphatic staff particularly personal advisers with good communication skills*' are a key characteristic of successful worklessness initiatives. Findings from the Institute of Employment Studies also found '*the role of the Personal Advisers, or PA's, is critical to the success or otherwise of an intervention to tackle worklessness*'.

The project reviews of GLLaB, At Work and Positive Steps into Work all support these research findings as they identify the importance of the personal adviser's role in the project's success. Beneficiaries valued the relationship developed with the personal adviser, often believing they were like a friend and valuing the opportunity to build a trusting relationship with one adviser. This trusting relationship was often developed through the principles of delivery adopted by the personal

advisers. Many projects effectively mentor the beneficiary to overcome barriers and progress towards work. Personal advisers were praised for listening to the needs of the individual, spending considerable time with the beneficiary and working to develop a relationship based on mutual trust which progressed at a pace with which the beneficiary is comfortable. In the case of Positive Steps into Work, this meant having very regular contact with the beneficiary which could involve telephone calls to ensure the beneficiary is able to attend appointments. The mentoring relationship between the personal adviser and the beneficiary can sometimes include assisting with other issues, or signposting to services that are not directly related to work but act as barriers to employment.

All of these factors are key differences in delivery approach of individualised focused projects compared to mainstream services. Mainstream delivery through Jobcentre Plus has struggled to develop this trusting relationship because of the joint role of job seeking support and the ability to stop a claimant's only source of income – their benefits. Mainstream service providers also operate a booking system which provides very short contact periods between the claimants and the personal adviser. These meetings are too short for a trusting relationship to be developed and often just focus on finding employment when claimants often face multiple and interlinking challenges in their life. It appears that building a relationship which breaks down is often an inbuilt distrust of service providers and the first step in assisting workless residents to progress toward work. However, developing this relationship often takes time and may involve overcoming a range of barriers which do not necessarily directly involve work and skills.

**Common Principle 4: *Develop a separate identity from Jobcentre Plus***

Although a close working relationship with Jobcentre Plus is needed to ensure success, it is important that worklessness projects develop their own branding, ensuring a neutral approach to tackling worklessness that is entirely separate from Jobcentre Plus. Beneficiary consultation often identifies negative opinions regarding Jobcentre Plus, particularly in relation to the time they can spend assisting a workless resident, a lack of personalised advice and support and a perception that they have an interest in stopping a claimant's benefits. The above factors mean that developing a delivery approach that is separate from Jobcentre

Plus and provides neutrality in terms of eligibility and qualification for benefit payments is critical. Projects such as At Work have taken this approach by developing a distinct branding through advertising in local newspapers, conducting outreach, writing to workless residents to promote services, delivering services from a location which is highly visible and adopting a corporate image. All of these activities help to increase the awareness of the services on offer, boost the number of self referrals and raise the profile of tackling worklessness as a local priority.

**Common Principle 5: *Ensure linkages with the local economy***

The projects reviewed in the research show that worklessness initiatives should not solely focus on the provision of employment. Indeed worklessness interventions should be entwined with wider local economic development activity around stimulating new business, investing in regeneration and stimulating demand. Many have found that workless residents are initially not ready to enter employment because of poor basic skills, a lack of life skills and low level of confidence and self-esteem. Offering training, either through a formal classroom based format or just coaching between the personal adviser and the client, acts as a hook through which projects can engage with workless residents, developing a trusting relationship that builds self-confidence and self-esteem while also helping to up-skill residents and prepare them for work.

Most worklessness initiatives offer support and training with basic and employability skills. The projects reviewed in this study and the findings of research by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation and the London Development Agency<sup>30</sup> suggests this is an important aspect of delivery to workless residents nearer to the labour market. Feedback from Kingsway and At Work suggests that a more recreational approach to learning is beneficial for those who have been away from the labour market for a considerable amount of time. A recreational approach to learning involves offering introductory courses which may not lead to formal qualifications and do not have a direct link to finding work. Their purpose is to act as a hook to re-engage workless residents in positive activity, begin to develop soft skills such as working with others, and lead into other courses which have more of a focus on developing softer skills, gaining qualifications and eventually progressing towards work.

Additionally, involving local employers in the design and provision of training is vital to ensuring the supply and demand side of the labour market are matched. Previous research by the New Local Government Network<sup>31</sup> also highlights the role of employer engagement to ensure that worklessness approaches are both effective and responsive to the local context. This means recognising that *'labour market patterns vary by region and locality'*. Projects that do not have a training budget can benefit from forging linkages with local employers as shown by the At Work project. Here, the successful relationship is centred on supplying suitable job ready candidates who have received assistance with compiling a CV and basic employability skills. Ensuring all the recommended candidates are suitably matched to available vacancies has allowed At Work to effectively become a recruitment partner for many local companies who no longer use Jobcentre Plus to recruit.

Local employers can also play a significant role in identifying the types of skills and qualifications required by local employers. This approach has been adopted by projects such as Building Futures East and has shown that offering training directly linked to local vacancies is also particularly successful, especially for those who are more 'job ready'. Kingsway also took a similar approach but developed a relationship with employers that involved companies informing the delivery of training opportunities. Local residents who completed some of the courses were offered a job interview with the employer who had influenced the course design. This provides an incentive for workless residents to attend and complete the training course.

**Common Principle 6: Tailor approaches and project intensity to client groups**

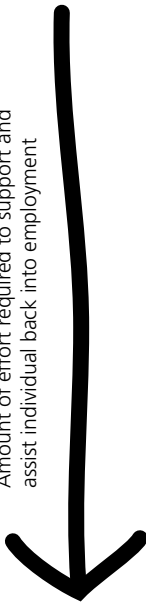
Figure 5 summarises the approaches described and analysed with project examples detailed earlier in this research. It also presents a typology of approaches, describing where different approaches could be used for different types of client group and the degree of effort required to engage with and support these claimants back into employment. It is clear that the further an individual is away from the labour market the greater the effort is to engage that individual, thus an outreach approach might be most effective. When designing and developing worklessness projects, policy makers should examine the types of claimants their project is targeted at, the type of approach which might



be applicable, and the intensity of the project to be delivered to ensure effective outcomes.

Flexibility and the ability to change according to circumstances is an important element of tackling worklessness. Interventions need to be able to adopt a range of different approaches to supporting people into employment. Dependent upon the client group, the type of delivery model can then be tailored upon local circumstances. It is important to remember that employment should not be the only or even the short-term target outcome of a worklessness project, but that much preparatory work may be required with claimants who have significant barriers to re-engaging with the labour market. However, there are a great deal of approaches to reducing worklessness, and the framework and typology overleaf provides a selection of models and ideas from which to assess need and plan interventions in an area.

**Figure 5: Support required for different client groups and a typology of approaches**



Amount of effort required to support and assist individual back into employment

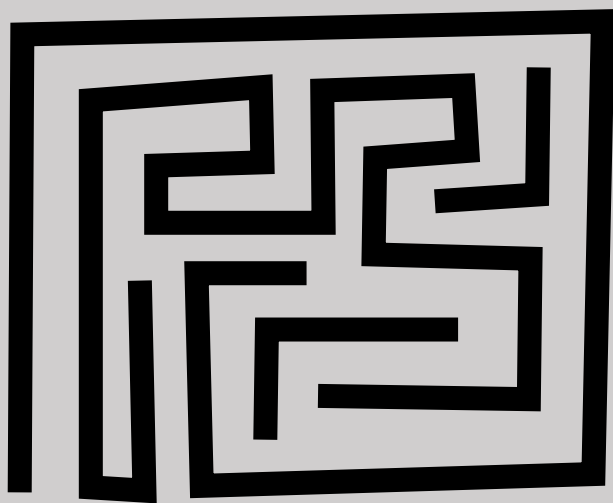
Situation	The main focus of service delivery
Temporarily out of work but will be able to gain work quickly because of skills, motivation and experience	Limited support from a national agency (JCP) is required. Individuals may find work without intensive formal support.
Out of work but keen to (re) engage with the labour market. Needs some assistance with skills/application process	Job brokerage support is required with assistance targeted at finding vacancies and soft skills related to the job application process (e.g. At Work)
Not working but potentially keen to re-engage. Faces significant barriers, including childcare, language, etc.	A bespoke approach tailored to the individual, including a partnership of local service providers is required (e.g. Greenwich Local Labour and Business)
Out of work and lacking motivation and requires support on skills, personal skills, training and also help to overcome lifestyle barriers	Training and demand led approach. Engagement takes place through the offer of training (e.g. Building Futures East)
Has been out of work for some time, may have health difficulties and will require substantial support	A partnership of agencies offering a range of services under an umbrella brand (e.g. Greenwich Local Labour and Business)
Out of work with no history of employment and low levels of motivation. Needs substantial support and assistance but may be welfare dependent	Outreach approach to tackling worklessness with links to other services, such as condition management and volunteering (e.g. Positive Steps to Work)

## **Summary**

The finer details of the projects reviewed in this research are all unique as the local context within which they operate, the delivery approach and the key target groups are all slightly different. However, this section has drawn out some of the key messages from the projects which are seen to be key elements in assisting residents towards work and suggested a series of principles which we believe should drive the development of all future worklessness projects. In the following section, we seek to assess some of the undoubted challenges that emerge from the principled approach suggested, particularly with regard to the contradictions that are present in contemporary welfare reform and worklessness policy.



# Challenges



## Challenges for the future development and delivery of worklessness projects

In achieving the Government's ambition to achieve full employment and take people out of poverty through employment, there are a number of significant challenges for policy makers in the future. These challenges will affect the extent to which some of the lessons learnt from projects examined in the research can be rolled forward for other client groups and localities, and the extent to which the common principles identified in our research can be implemented. In this section of the research we examine some of the common debating points which emerge from current government welfare reform and worklessness policy, and that hinder the delivery of more effective approaches to tackling worklessness.

### **Key Challenge 1: To what extent can mainstream services deliver an individualised approach?**

Mainstream worklessness provision has traditionally not required any level of engagement with Jobcentre Plus in return for sickness related benefit payments. However, the recent policy changes, particularly the introduction of the five key principles for reforming employment policy and welfare benefits, signal an important shift in central government. There are numerous delivery elements which flow from these principles, including the replacement of Incapacity Benefit with Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) and reforming Income Support for those with older children. Changes to Income Support and Incapacity Benefit are needed if worklessness is going to be reduced, as 66% of all working age benefit claimants are in receipt of either Income Support or Incapacity Benefit.

Historically, Income Support and Incapacity Benefit provide no requirement for the claimant to actually look for work. Both of these benefits have been reformed, which has tightened up the eligibility criteria and requirements for claiming benefits. The reforms to Employment and Support Allowance are particularly important and require some claimants to engage in a personalised programme of back to work support while those with the most severe disabilities will be able to volunteer for the programme. It is welcoming that benefit reform is seeking to overcome health conditions, which are acting as a barrier to employment, although it is difficult to comment on whether this approach will prove to be sufficiently individualised to succeed. A critical factor is how many and the type of claimants that are required to engage in a personalised programme. For instance, anecdotal evidence suggests large numbers of Inca-

capacity Benefit claimants are drug and alcohol dependent and it remains to be seen whether these claimants will be required to attend a personalised programme and whether this type of medical support will be provided.

Changes to Income Support are also proposed which mainly focus on restricting the entitlement of Income Support to those lone parents whose youngest child is 12 or over. Reforms are also aiming to encourage more lone parents with younger children into employment so that preparation for work becomes a natural progression, rather than a sudden step-up, by introducing a skills check when the youngest child is 5, a requirement to attend relevant skills training where this addresses skills gaps that have been identified by the Skills Health Check as a barrier to starting work, and pilots to encourage lone parents with children under 5 to develop the skills they need to find work before they may be mandated to a Skills Health Check.

These changes to Incapacity Benefit and Income Support will increase the number of Jobseekers Allowance claimants. The principles of welfare reform aim to provide Jobseekers Allowance claimants with a personalised approach that includes assessing the skills of new claimants and entering a single gateway after six months, which will involve the claimant and personal adviser agreeing an action plan. In addition to some common basics (e.g. updating CVs), a Jobcentre Plus adviser will assess the claimant's needs and identify specific activity that they must do to improve employability and find work. Advisers may also direct claimants to a Skills Health Check at the new adult advancement and careers service. Individuals that have claimed for more than a year will be transferred to an external provider for specialist help through a Flexible New Deal.

Changes to mainstream services for workless residents have begun to recognise the benefits that a more supportive and personalised approach to worklessness can bring, supporting the findings of this research. Increasing the conditionality attached to Incapacity Benefit and Income Support for those that can work is vital if worklessness is going to be addressed. However, moving workless residents onto Jobseekers Allowance means a much greater emphasis needs to be placed on providing additional capacity within services, such as condition management programmes for residents with health barriers and affordable and accessible childcare for lone parents. Without the provision of these support services, it is likely that residents who are moved onto Jobseekers Allowance will just become

long-term unemployed, adding to the number of disgruntled Jobseekers Allowance claimants who feel the system is designed to assist them in finding work while offering a limited amount of support to overcome critical barriers.

The changes to the Incapacity Benefit and Income Support system increase the conditionality on the bulk of claimants and provide longer term support and assistance to those who cannot work. These changes will increase Jobseekers Allowance registers, which raises questions about whether the changes to the system provide a truly personalised approach to service delivery in increasing the availability of services, such as affordable and accessible childcare. Without such services the reduction in worklessness may be limited.

### **Key Challenge 2: How can individualised approaches achieve value for money?**

Evaluations of worklessness projects usually involve an assessment of cost effectiveness. This typically consists of calculating the amount of money spent by the project divided by the number of outputs to calculate an average cost per output. This approach is obviously needed and provides a degree of accountability for the project's funders. It also provides a method for comparing projects from different areas, particularly compared to mainstream worklessness initiatives commissioned by Jobcentre Plus.

However, the case study projects highlighted in this research demonstrate a cost per job entry that ranges from £34,000 to £6,199. Taken as a headline figure and in isolation of local circumstances, these costs can appear expensive and perhaps difficult to justify, particularly given that these costs are much higher than the cost of mainstream employment programmes run by Jobcentre Plus. Figures produced by the National Audit Office in Table 3 show the cost per job of some mainstream initiatives for comparison.

### **Key Challenge 3: How can employment support be delivered from the first day of claiming benefits?**

Reforms to the Jobseekers Allowance system mean that claimants will receive services such as a skills screen at the point of entry to the Jobseekers Allowance system. This is a welcome development as an assessment of

**Table 3: The cost per output of mainstream employment programmes<sup>32</sup>**

Programme	When did it start?	Who is it for?	How many participants? <sup>1</sup>	How many job outcomes? <sup>2</sup>	How much has it cost? <sup>3</sup>	Cost per job in 2005-06 <sup>4</sup>
New Deal for Young People	1998	18-24 year olds unemployed for six months	1,175,000	732,000	£2,596m	£2,620
New Deal 50 plus	2000	Over 50s unemployed for six months	81,000 <sup>5</sup>	72,000	£278m	£435
New Deal for Disabled People	2001	Unemployed people with a disability	242,000	134,000	£312m	£2,370
Pathways to Work	2003	IB claimants	100,000	32,000 <sup>6</sup>	£304m	£2,970
Employment Zones	2000	Unemployed people who live in a zone	163,000	78,000	£530m	£4,770

<sup>1</sup> Number of programme participants up to January or February 2007

<sup>2</sup> Number of job outcomes up to November 2006. This figure does not reflect the time that individuals stay in work

<sup>3</sup> Total cost of the programme to the end of March 2007. The total cost for each New Deal does not include administration expenditure after 2002-03

<sup>4</sup> Cost per job is the total cost of the

programme, divided by the number of job outcomes

<sup>5</sup> Participation and outcome data starts in January 2004

<sup>6</sup> Job outcomes to March 2006

Jobseekers Allowance claimants in St Helens conducted by CLES Consulting suggested that many Jobseekers Allowance claimants were unaware of the skills they possess or their skills needs, making an independent skills assessment and signposting to appropriate support an important step in ensuring claimants do not get stuck on the Jobseekers Allowance register.

However, it appears that the level of individualised support will only become a significant element of delivery upon entering the gateway after six months of claiming. The case studies highlighted in this research suggest a six month wait for individualised support is too long, a particularly important lesson for those newly unemployed as a result of the current recession. By this time, many claimants have developed negative perceptions of the Jobseekers Allowance system and become disengaged from the labour market. This means they may be less receptive to receiving the support on offer upon entering the gateway. Project and theoretical evidence from this research suggests a more individualised approach is



required from day one of the claim to ensure that all Jobseekers Allowance claimants receive personalised workless services.

#### **Key Challenge 4: How can we break the cycle of sanction penalties equalling delayed support?**

In July 2008, 27% of Jobseekers Allowance claims had been in place for more than six months. The vast majority of claims do not last for six months because the claimant finds work or temporarily leave the Jobseekers Allowance register due to the way in which it is administered. The short-term nature of many claims is also caused by the way the Jobseekers Allowance system is administered, in particular the 'failed to sign' and sanctioning process. Both of these processes will significantly reduce the number of claimants who are eligible for individualised support after six months and support the adoption of an individualised approach from day one of a claim, as outlined above. These processes of failed to sign and sanctions are explained below.

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##### **Failed to sign**

If a claimant fails to attend the Jobcentre at the scheduled time to sign for their benefit payment, without giving prior notice and unless they contact the Jobcentre within five working days, their benefits will be stopped. If they do not contact the Jobcentre they may or may not be sanctioned depending on the individual claimant and their claiming history. If they do not come back, they will be recorded as 'failed to sign'. This will result in their Jobseekers Allowance claim ending. If the same claimant attends the Jobcentre at a later date, a new claim will be opened.

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34.4% of Jobseekers Allowance claims that ended in July 2008 were a result of claimants failing to sign. This is the single largest reason for a Jobseekers Allowance claim ending, as only 32.4% of claims end due to the claimant finding a job. Feedback from Jobcentre Plus frontline advisers from our consultancy work suggests that claimants fail to sign due to forgetting about their appointment and often reclaim Jobseekers Allowance a short time after their previous claim ends.

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## Sanction

This is the term used by Jobcentre Plus to describe the process of penalising a claimant who they feel is not making sufficient effort to look for work or to make themselves available for interviews and job searches. Sanctions also occur because claimants are not available for work or they have refused employment. If an adviser feels this might be the case then it is referred to a Decision Making Advisor (DMA) who will either sanction the claimant or not. If the claimant is sanctioned then they may lose their benefit for a period of time that the Decision Making Advisor feels they have not been looking for work. The current claim is then stopped and a new claim is started after the sanction period ends.

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Sanctioning a claimant means that the original claim is ended and a new claim begins. Again, this will mean that a claimant can be workless for a year but due to a sanction will not be eligible for intensive individualised support due to a break in their claim, which will often last a matter of days. The recent DWP consultation document 'No-one written off: reforming welfare to reward responsibility' outlines a new ethos of a stronger sanctions system to increase the obligation on claimants to take up the support on offer. While this is welcome in terms of penalising the significant minority that regularly fail to attend appointments or do not look for work, it is clear that this approach needs to be carefully managed as increasing the number of claimants sanctioned could also reduce the numbers eligible for personalised support or delay its onset. This intensifies the cycle of worklessness and further delays the return of an individual to the labour market.

Both of these instances mean that although an individual has been workless for more than six months they will not be eligible for the intensive individualised support which is available after claiming Jobseekers Allowance for six months without a break. This raised questions about the effectiveness of the new individualised approach as very few claimants will actually qualify for this type of support.

To overcome this, Jobcentre Plus could adopt an individualised approach to service delivery from day one of the claim. This would prevent claimants from not receiving individualised support because they have broken their claim. However, it may be financially unrealistic to offer this support for all and instead Jobcentre Plus could offer it to all claimants who have been workless for six months as opposed to claiming a workless ben-

efit. This will require changes to management information processes in Jobcentre Plus by requiring longitudinal tracking of Jobseekers Allowance claimants. This would ensure that claimants who fail to sign are sanctioned or stop claiming for a very short period of time due to temporary employment and would be eligible for support. This is different from the current system because these claimants would have to wait another six months before specialised support would be provided.

### **Key Challenge 5: How can the dual role of Jobcentre Plus be more transparent and effective?**

An important question emerging from the Department for Work and Pensions proposals for the more individualised system is whether Jobcentre Plus is the correct organisation to lead this new regime, particularly with regard to its current twin role as benefits administrator and employment broker.

Private and third sector providers have increasingly been commissioned to deliver mainstream services such as Pathways to Work for new Incapacity Benefit claimants. The involvement of private and third sector providers is a welcome addition, as previous evaluations conducted by CLES Consulting suggest that workless residents are more receptive to receiving help from these organisations than Jobcentre Plus. However, the mainstream Jobseekers Allowance system is still delivered by Jobcentre Plus despite consultation with workless residents from across the country and a wider perception identifying common and largely negative opinions of Jobcentre Plus services, suggesting they do not listen to the needs of the individual and encourage claimants to apply for posts they are not interested in. Feedback from claimants in our consultancy work also suggests that Jobcentre Plus do not offer assistance with job search skills, such as interview technique, CV writing and personal presentation skills.

An additional and perhaps critical issue is the dual role that Jobcentre Plus play which involves having the ability to stop a claimants benefits whilst also trying to encourage the same claimants to move towards work. The projects highlighted in this research suggest the development of a trusting relationship between the claimant and the delivery organisation is key to assisting and encouraging a resident to find work. It is difficult to see how Jobcentre Plus can ever develop a trusting relationship when a Jobseekers Allowance claimant typically only has a five minute appoint-

ment with an adviser between the point of initially claiming and the thirteenth week of a claim, while also having the ability to stop an individual's only source of income. Claimants of other benefits, such as Incapacity Benefit and Income Support, have less contact with Jobcentre Plus advisers as they are often not deemed available for work.

The services offered by Jobcentre Plus are poorly perceived by both workless individuals and employers. Again, previous research and evaluations conducted by CLES Consulting from across the country have found that many employers are reluctant to recruit via Jobcentre Plus. Many feel advertising through Jobcentre Plus can actually add to the burden of recruitment, complaining about the sheer number of poor quality applications received through Jobcentre Plus and believing claimants are put forward for jobs for which they are not suitable. This has led to a situation where employers recruit through other routes, leaving Jobcentre Plus to advertise jobs which are often temporary and of poor quality. Such claims were not made towards the Kingsway and At Work projects, which actively built relationships with local employers to understand their recruitment needs. Through this approach, both projects gained access to predominantly permanent vacancies which were often not advertised through Jobcentre Plus and, as such, were not available to the jobseekers.

To overcome this dual role played by Jobcentre Plus would require a shift in welfare reform policy that could go further than the recent policy documents. Jobcentre Plus could be responsible solely for the administration of the benefits system, utilising the knowledge of the benefits system possessed by personal and financial advisers. Engagement with claimants in terms of developing work ready claimants and building relationships with employers should be contracted out to specialist advisers in private and third sector bodies who could offer a more flexible and personalised approach that is locally adapted to the local economy and local employment opportunities.

### **Key Challenge 6: How can we ensure effective procurement of worklessness services to both the private and third sectors?**

The recent shift in worklessness policy towards the commissioning of private and third sector providers to deliver services is a welcome move and follows on from their delivery of the Pathways to Work service. It

is envisaged that private and third sector providers will bring a greater degree of flexibility to worklessness services and be rewarded for the level of success they achieve in assisting residents to find sustainable employment. Although the introduction of this policy provides an opportunity to offer more local and flexible solutions to worklessness, careful consideration needs to be given to the commissioning process for awarding these contracts.

The adoption of a national commissioning programme for delivering services to workless residents could favour large scale private sector providers who can offer significant economies of scale. However, economies of scale need to be carefully considered alongside an approach which may be more grounded in local conditions which smaller third sector organisations may be able to offer. This may mean there are advantages in commissioning a programme at a smaller geographical scale, such as regional or sub-regional level. Challenges also exist in terms of balancing an individualised approach that spends enough time assisting those who are hardest to help while also paying providers on a results basis. This could potentially create a conflict of interest, potentially offering providers an incentive to push residents into any job rather than a job they are interested in and are more likely to be committed to. There is thus need for more of a 'whole-sale approach' to commissioning that involves consideration of both cost and added value in social and economic terms.

Payment by outputs also provides an incentive to support those who are easiest to move back into employment. This factor may be particularly relevant during the current economic recession when rises in traditional unemployment and redundancy will provide a larger supply of job ready claimants seeking work. At the same time, the number of job opportunities shrinks and employers can be more selective about who they recruit. This provides a challenge of incentivising support programmes to assist those who are furthest away from the labour market and have less chance of securing employment. To combat this, providers should be encouraged to help those furthest away from the labour market by receiving payments related to soft outcomes and assisting beneficiaries towards work as well as those that enter work.

All of the worklessness projects assessed in this research at an initial glance are more expensive in monetary terms than the mainstream services highlighted in Table 3. This raises questions about the value for

money provided by these projects and could raise doubts about their future viability if worklessness falls down the policy agenda or regeneration funding is cut. However, this research suggests local, individualised approaches are more effective in social and economic regeneration terms. The reasons why these projects are more expensive needs to be understood by the Government, mainstream service providers and commissioners. Key reasons include:

- a national initiative ran by Jobcentre Plus can achieve greater economies of scale compared to local projects;
- the support provided by Jobcentre Plus initiatives does not have the level of intensiveness provided by these projects;
- some of the Jobcentre Plus initiatives are aimed at those considered to be easier to help within their client group (e.g. Pathways to Work targets new Incapacity Benefit claimants which are much easier to return to work than 'stock' claimants);
- local projects take a more tailored and individualised approach, assisting residents back to work which may be more time consuming and costly;
- these individualised projects provide slow paced, long-term support where required;
- many of the residents assisted into work by one of the case study projects would have been eligible for, or participated in, a mainstream Jobcentre Plus initiative. The fact that they were still seeking work suggests a different, and more individualised approach, was required.

In addition to the above factors and crude value for money calculations, there is a need to consider factors such as achieving softer social and economic outcomes to ensure the value of moving residents toward employment is also captured. In addition to capturing the soft outcomes in value for money calculations, there is also a need to assess the long-term cost benefits of assisting workless residents to enter employment. For instance, the National Audit Office reports that:

'The total cost of workless households in benefits is difficult to calculate with precision, as the benefits data does not record the household status of claimants; however, we estimate the cost to be £12.7 billion a year, including £3.4 billion on benefits for lone parents. This figure does not include the cost of Housing Benefit or Council Tax Benefit.'

This figure is based on the 4.5 million people who were claiming benefits in August 2006 and is equivalent to an average of £2,822 per claimant per year. The cost per year is less than the cost per job entry recorded by many of the projects in this research. However, it should be noted that the cost per job entry is a fixed price while the cost of supporting a worklessness resident on benefits obviously increases every year. As the National Audit Office suggest, this cost is likely to be underestimated particularly if the wider costs of worklessness, such as an entitlement to Council Tax Benefit, Housing Benefit, free school meals and the associated costs of treating poor health which is prevalent amongst workless households, are taken into account.

These factors act to make worklessness initiatives more economical although their true value cannot be assessed through a crude cost per jobs calculation. This is because worklessness initiatives help to achieve soft outcomes and reduce long-term benefit payments. The importance of capturing soft outcomes is discussed in more depth below.

### **Key Challenge 7: Capturing the effectiveness of worklessness projects**

An emerging theme from this research is that placing a beneficiary into employment should not always be the sole focus and priority of worklessness projects. Often, beneficiaries experience multiple barriers to employment and have been out of the labour market for many years. In this instance, particularly where poor health and chaotic lifestyles are involved, the true measurement of the effectiveness of a worklessness project needs to assess soft outcomes as well as hard outputs. Soft outcomes allow a project to demonstrate a more rounded picture of the difference being made, even if hard outcomes have not yet been achieved. Best practice documentation produced by the Department for Work and Pensions and the Welsh Assembly Government<sup>33</sup> defines soft outcomes as:

‘Those outcomes that represent intermediary stages on the way to achieving a hard outcome. They could include thinking skills such as improved problem-solving abilities, personal attributes such as improved self-confidence, or practical work-focused skills, such as a better appreciation of the importance of timekeeping in the workplace.’

Soft outcomes are usually assessed qualitatively but in order to truly understand the impact of a worklessness programme, a quantitative measure can be introduced to assess the distance travelled of claimants

towards employability. Distance travelled refers to the progress beneficiaries make in terms of achieving soft outcomes that lead towards sustained employment. Worklessness projects usually assess the distance travelled by asking the beneficiary to rate their skills or attitudes upon registering with the programme and then at key stages during the support they receive. Questions can be asked which relate to life skills (literacy, numeracy, ability to get to work by public transport), work skills (perceptions of ability to work in a team), attitudinal skills (level of motivation to work and confidence), and wider lifestyle circumstances (stability of accommodation). These are all areas which worklessness projects can impact upon and improvements in which would not be captured by a purely cost per output calculation.

Beneficiary feedback collected in the projects assessed in this research highlight the value of measuring soft outcomes. Perceptions of increased confidence and feelings that the barriers to employment have begun to be overcome were common. The importance of these factors should not be overlooked, particularly as many projects operate in areas where residents often feel written off, disengaged by mainstream society and let down by the system. Soft outcomes are also important as many low level vacancies require individuals to possess skills that can be measured, such as punctuality, a good work ethic and being presentable. Measuring soft outcomes as well as hard outputs is also necessary to truly measure the value of a worklessness project. However, this approach provides a number of challenges which need to be considered, such as:

- measuring soft outcomes is not an exact science; there is no set methodology to measure distance travelled;
- a financial value cannot be placed on improving soft outcomes;
- the subjectivity of a self assessment system needs to be considered;
- beneficiaries may be reluctant to discuss these personal issues.

Despite the need to consider these aspects, it is important that soft outcomes are measured by local worklessness projects to truly demonstrate their value. A local and personalised approach to tackling worklessness is always going to be more expensive than a mainstream programme and assessing performance in cost per output terms does not truly reflect their added value. It is therefore important that local projects adopt processes for measuring the distance travelled to accurately demonstrate their impact.



### **Key Challenge 8: Are locally led personalised worklessness initiatives effective in the longer term?**

The costs of assisting a workless resident to find work are reduced the longer they stay in employment. As argued earlier, the saving to the economy in reducing worklessness is much wider than just the payment of a workless benefit, with work often having a positive impact on health and the aspirations of future generations. It is important therefore that worklessness initiatives, particularly those focused on residents nearest the labour market, focus their outputs on sustained employment rather than just entering employment. This approach was adopted by the At Work project which can only claim outputs for residents who are still in employment after six months. Greenwich Local Labour and Business took a similar approach, recording outputs for beneficiaries still in work after thirteen weeks. This approach has multiple additional benefits, including:

- ensuring residents are not placed in short-term temporary employment which is often unattractive to workless residents;
- provides project funders with greater value for money;
- encourages worklessness projects to provide residents with in-work support to overcome problems which are encountered during the early stages of returning to work.

A significant factor in the long-term effectiveness of worklessness projects is whether residents stay in work long-term or do the projects experience a degree of churn, assisting a small pool of residents at regular intervals. Evidence from the worklessness projects examined as part of this research suggest a degree of repeat custom is inevitable as people enter work and realise the job is unsuitable, or seek an improved job after entering work. However, this is not unique to local worklessness projects and, if designed correctly, they can experience a much smaller degree of churn than that experienced by Jobcentre Plus.

Repeat claims to Jobseekers Allowance are a significant problem for Jobcentre Plus and one major cause of this is the temporary nature of many job opportunities available in Jobcentre Plus. Temporary posts inevitably lead to a large number of residents re-claiming and searching for jobs through Jobcentre Plus. Local worklessness initiatives can be designed to overcome this by focusing their outputs on sustained employment. The delivery approach adopted is also a key aspect of reducing churn, with

initiatives that focus on building relationships with local employers being more likely to reduce churn. Combining both of these aspects has been successful for At Work and Kingsway, where a successful relationship with local employers has resulted in local employers advertising permanent vacancies with At Work as opposed to Jobcentre Plus.

It is also important to consider whether a degree of churn is necessarily a negative aspect of delivering worklessness projects. Evaluation of At Work found that some beneficiaries were returning to find another job after initially being placed in employment and believing they were ready to progress in employment. This is an important consideration in the design of worklessness initiatives, as preventing a project from assisting repeat claimants is sometimes designed into projects to ensure they do not just deal with a small number of repeat customers.

### **Key Challenge 9: Can worklessness projects achieve a long-term cultural change in deprived areas?**

Many local worklessness initiatives and projects, including some of those highlighted in this research, are operating in areas that have experienced long-term economic decline and high levels of deprivation. The decline in traditional, often entry level employment base, in these areas resulted in the onset of significant concentrations of worklessness. A lack of employment opportunities, coupled with a benefits system that did not place any conditionality on the claimant, has led to areas such as Blackpool, Heywood and Greenwich now experiencing a deeply engrained culture of worklessness (particularly a culture of claiming Incapacity Benefit). This culture needs to be overcome if these areas are to grow and become more economically competitive (e.g. in May 2008, Blackpool had a total of 11,190 Incapacity Benefit claimants, 52% of which had been claiming the benefit for more than five years)<sup>34</sup>. This is particularly concerning given the Government's finding that once an individual has been claiming Incapacity Benefit for more than two years they are more likely to die or retire than leave the benefit to find work.

High levels of worklessness impact on residents that are claiming an out of work benefit but also the wider family. Indeed, many workless communities are characterised by a lack of aspiration, low levels of confidence and self-esteem, poor health outcomes, including high levels of drug and alcohol dependency, low levels of educational attainment,

and the increasing emergence of a second or third generation of workless residents. Making inroads into communities which lack a working culture is a significant challenge. The challenge becomes even greater when you consider that most local worklessness initiatives are funded by short term pots of money, meaning they are often tackling a problem which has developed over decades in a limited number of years. As a result, it is often the case that such worklessness projects can begin to achieve a long-term cultural change, but it is rare that they alone will change the culture of an area.

Worklessness initiatives and projects additionally need to be strategically linked to local policy in the form of Sustainable Community Strategies, Local Area Agreements, and Local Development Frameworks. This enables cross-cutting departmental strategic and delivery support to tackling the issue of worklessness at the local level.

### **Key Challenge 10: What happens to the workless in a period of economic recession?**

The contents of this publication are based upon project examples for tackling worklessness which have been undertaken in a period of economic stability and, to a degree, growth. The growth and stagnation of worklessness and the enhanced emphasis upon it in policy and project terms has been twinned with decreasing levels of unemployment and claims of benefit such as Jobseekers Allowance. This has meant policy makers and project developers and deliverers have had the flexibility to hone their approaches to those which are workless and claiming benefit, such as Incapacity Benefit and Income Support. Indeed, the projects examined in this research have detailed a degree of success in tackling worklessness, particularly as a result of the approaches utilised.

However, the validity of these approaches and emphasis placed upon worklessness in welfare and employment policy faces a new challenge as a result of the economic recession. The economic recession has already seen significant increases in unemployment across the United Kingdom across a number of industrial sectors and this has been twinned with key increases in the number of people claiming Jobseekers Allowance. The economic recession has implications for workless individuals and worklessness projects on two counts:

**in workless individual terms**, there will be increasing competition for both the services of Jobcentre Plus, as a result of increasing numbers of claimants, and also for potential employment opportunities. Those which have recently left employment are going to be much more employable than someone who has been claiming Incapacity Benefit for five years but who are actively seeking employment. There is also however the danger that those individuals being made unemployed now after working for a number of years will become workless in the longer term as a result of factors such as a lack of confidence;

**in worklessness project terms**, there will potentially be increasing demand for projects, leaving capacity and funding issues alongside the need for an increasingly personalised and tailored service.

Worklessness projects, such as those identified in this research, need to continue to demonstrate the effectiveness of their approach to tackling worklessness and potentially tailor services to new clients. They must however retain a principled approach to delivery and ensure their existing client base is not substituted by the demands of new claimants.

### **Challenge 11: How can intensive and long-term health related services for workless residents be funded?**

The move from Incapacity Benefit to Employment and Support Allowance places a greater emphasis upon providing support for most claimants in return for their benefit payments.

A central element of the new Employment and Support Allowance is the new medical assessment which examines what people can do, rather than what they can't, and identifies what personal support they might need. Following the medical assessment, those residents who are deemed capable of taking steps towards work will be placed in a 'Work-Related Activity Group of Employment and Support Allowance' meaning they will have to participate in up to five, monthly, work-focused interviews with their Personal Adviser, focused on helping them back into work. These interviews will be informed by the work-focused health-related assessment where Personal Advisers will discuss the type of work that might be most suitable with the claimant and can refer them for employment, training or condition management support, to help them manage and cope with their illness or disability in a work context.

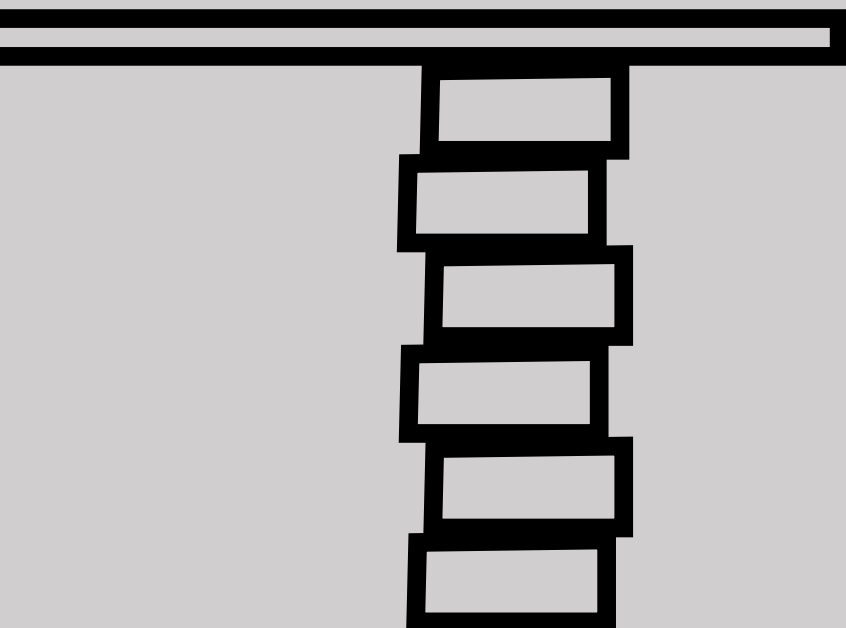
Referral to condition management programmes will be vital at this stage and they need to ensure intensive and long-term support is available. Intensive and long-term support is likely to be required by many if they are to return to work. For instance, Employment and Support Allowance claimants suffering from alcohol and drug addiction will require long-term support and potentially, a significant investment in health support services. Support from condition management services is also likely to be required once the former claimant enters work to ensure that work and the health condition do not negatively affect each other.

Investment in health care is also particularly timely given the current economic recession meaning the UK economy is currently characterised by increases in redundancy and a reduction in employment opportunities. These circumstances are particularly challenging for residents who are furthest away from the labour market such as claimants of Employment and Support Allowance that face health barriers to returning to work as well as competition with other residents that have recently worked and have been made redundant. To combat, spending should be prioritised on funding intensive, and long-term, health support so Employment and Support Allowance claimants who face the largest health barriers to work are able to re-enter the labour market when the recession ends and the number of job vacancies increase again.

## **Summary**

The complexity of the welfare reform and employment agendas is evident in the scale of the challenges discussed in this section of the research. There is a clear need for a step change in the way in which worklessness as an issue is viewed at the central government level. The Welfare Reform Green Paper and associated reforms is a positive start to this process, yet there remain a number of significant issues, particularly with regard to the functionality of Jobcentre Plus, and the need for a move to more individualised approaches, which need to be ironed out to enable more workless individuals to access skills development, training and ultimately employment opportunities. The next section of this research thus summarises the findings of this research, together with proffering a number of recommendations for the future development and delivery of worklessness policy and project interventions.

support



## Conclusion

As we enter a period of economic recession, both globally and in the United Kingdom, the issues of unemployment and worklessness will remain high up the policy agenda. Unemployment is increasing, evidenced by sharp rises in the number of Jobseekers Allowance claims in recent months. Similarly levels of worklessness, characterised by claims of Incapacity Benefit and Income Support (now known as Employment and Support Allowance), despite significant investment and project innovation, remain startlingly high. Labour market inequality is not an issue which will go away in the UK and it is important that central government and policy makers continue to strive towards a benefits system which more effectively balances benefit administration and the range of approaches to tackling the issue. In this, it is important that the Government recognises the innovative practice that is already occurring in localities across the United Kingdom with regard to worklessness and tailor policy and interventions accordingly.

This research undertaken by the Centre for Local Economic Strategies (CLES) is borne out of a significant frustration that there is significant evidence in existing project activity of the economic and social value of localised, personalised and tailored responses to the issue of tackling worklessness. Indeed, a number of project examples examined as part of this research have demonstrated the validity of a personalised policy, adopting different approaches for different client groups and different localities. Yet Government policy with regard to worklessness, despite rhetoric suggesting otherwise remains to be highly centralised and in our eyes, through the auspices of the activities of Jobcentre Plus, fails to achieve the correct balance between benefit administration and support into employment. Perhaps this balance is not achievable by any organisation, but there does need to be a greater recognition of the subtleties existing between welfare administration and employment support.

This is not to say that all Government policy around welfare reform is ill thought out or poorly contrived. Indeed, the changes from Incapacity Benefit to the Employment and Support Allowance and the principled approach of the Welfare Reform White Paper are a step in the right direction. However in delivery terms, the output focused, central agency led approach to worklessness is not achieving as many positive outcomes as it should be, particularly for the workless individuals

themselves. The current set up of the welfare system presents policy makers and project developers with significant challenges when it comes to implementing worklessness projects and more importantly presents claimants with significant challenges when seeking to move from benefit to employment.

The challenges section outlined prior to this conclusion has demonstrated that there are an increasing number of policy and delivery questions about how we go about reinvigorating the labour market and subsequently a recognition that significant reform is required in terms of how we go about tackling worklessness. We see these required reforms being across five core conclusive themes.

### **Reform Jobcentre Plus**

The largest blockage to more effective policy and delivery solutions to tackling worklessness is the governmental public body with responsibility for the area, namely Jobcentre Plus. Jobcentre Plus can no longer continue to be both an administrator of benefit and a broker of employment. Jobcentre Plus's current role provides a contradiction between support to find a job and punishment for those who do not conform to the system. This dual role is likely to limit the effectiveness of any policy changes in the Welfare Reform White Paper as it makes claimants wary of support from Jobcentre Plus. CLES believes the function of the body needs to be reformed creating a national benefits administrator AND a separate sub-regional employment broker for all benefit claimants. Additionally Jobcentre Plus does not necessarily have the capacity nor does it have the required skills in support and brokerage terms to deal with the challenge of recession and in particular a new wave of unemployed and workless individuals.

### **Develop locally focused approaches to worklessness**

A significant proportion of the positive work undertaken to tackle and alleviate worklessness, both identified in this research and in wider research is undertaken by local partnerships, voluntary and community sector organisations and social enterprises. There must therefore be a reality in policy terms of devolution and an enhanced role for local government and other associated local organisations in the delivery process. In addition, the local public sector, including local government



are major local employers and skills developers, meaning that employment brokerage should be effectively tied in with the offer of the public sector itself. The role of the locality in economic development and particularly worklessness has taken on added significance with the formalisation of the Economic Assessment Duty and the move in area based funding terms to the Working Neighbourhoods Fund. The Houghton Review reports further upon devolved responsibility and local flexibility when it comes to tackling worklessness.

### **Adopt individualised and personalised approaches**

Throughout this research we have highlighted projects that add value in social and economic terms by adopting individualised and personalised approaches to tackling worklessness. The issue of returning to training and employment is a complex one, particularly for those furthest away from the labour market meaning that one approach to tackling worklessness will not fit all claimants. Instead project deliverers need to select and apply a menu of options dependent upon the needs of the claimant making the role of the adviser crucial in any worklessness intervention. Again this calls into question the generic approaches adopted by Jobcentre Plus and thus accordingly requires more individualised, personalised and ultimately localised delivery incorporating approaches relating to outreach, brokerage and training amongst others.

### **Provide individualised support from day 1**

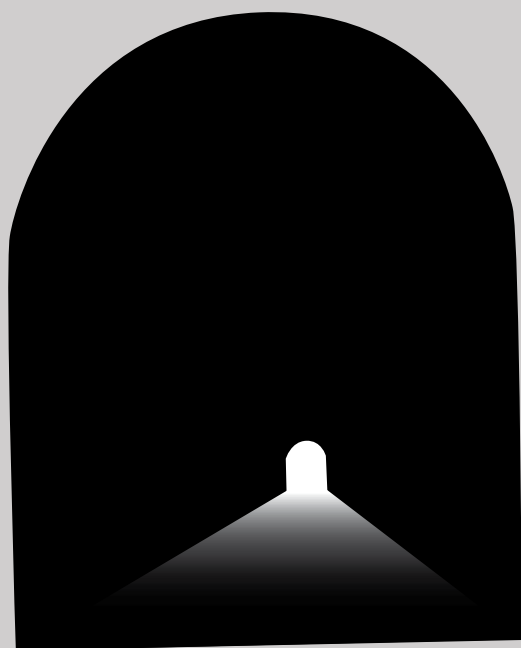
One of the core barriers to supporting the workless and unemployed into employment is the process of benefit and support entitlement. At present individualised support will only become a significant element of the process of the return to work after six months of claiming Jobseekers Allowance. This is too long, especially in the current economic climate, and enables claimants to become disengaged from the process. Individualised support needs to be offered to claimants from day 1 of signing onto benefit.

### **Use qualitative monitoring and evaluation methods**

Tackling worklessness is not just about brokering an individual into employment and counting that output as a success. Along the process of being engaged in an intervention, an individual passes many mile-

stones relating to confidence, training and changes in lifestyle amongst others. It needs to be remembered that worklessness is about people's lives and livelihoods and not just about a move into employment. Worklessness interventions and wider welfare reform in the future must enable these softer outcomes and the distance travelled of individuals to be measured and monitored. An output driven approach to delivering local worklessness services can limit the effectiveness of an intervention and prevent deep rooted worklessness from being tackled. As a result, services should be designed with a much greater emphasis on the distance that beneficiaries travel towards the labour market, undertaking qualitative evaluation involving associated 'soft' outcomes.





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# Appendix: Worklessness and welfare reform policy

Policy	Date	Key messages
No one written off: reforming welfare to reward responsibility	Aug 2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New expectations on benefit claimants</li> <li>• The replacement of Incapacity Benefit with the Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)</li> <li>• Getting more parents into work. Lone parents with older children will be required to actively look for and take up employment</li> <li>• The abolition of Income Support and its replacement with the dual benefit system of JSA and the new ESA</li> </ul>
Employment and support allowance regulations	March 2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) will replace Incapacity Benefit and Income Support</li> <li>• Incapacity Benefit and Income Support will continue to be paid to existing customers</li> </ul>
Working for a healthier tomorrow – Review by Dame C. Black	March 2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explores links between poor health and worklessness</li> <li>• The review advocates early interventions to prevent short-term sickness absence from progressing to long-term sickness absence</li> </ul>
Transforming Britain's labour market – ten years of the New Deal	Nov 2007	The report sets out the key achievements of the New Deal programme and considers the next steps for New Deal
Ready for work, skilled for work, unlocking Britain's talent	Jan 2008	Sets out a vision for how the UK economy can deal with global economic uncertainty
Ready for work, full employment in our generation	Dec 2007	Importance of integrating employment and skills; sustainable employment for jobseeker; sustainable employment for lone parents; and sustainable employment for disadvantaged groups
Working Neighbourhoods Fund and new IMD	Nov 2007	The WNF replaces the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund (NRF), and will seek to provide resources to tackle worklessness, increase enterprise and employment, as well as addressing low skill levels
Opportunity, employment and progression – making skills work	Nov 2007	The importance of an integrated employment and skills system, boosting employers' and individuals' commitment to learning and higher skills
In work better off – Green Paper	July 2007	Sets out proposals to deliver a step change in the support the Government offer to those who are most disadvantaged in the labour market
Welfare Reform Act	May 2007	Key measures include the introduction of a new Employment and Support Allowance (ESA), powers to improve the sharing of information between DWP and local authorities, and changes to the administration of Housing Benefit
Raising expectations: staying in education and training post- 16	March 2007	A new requirement to participate in education or training until the age of 18
Working for children	March 2007	Sets out how the DWP will help parents to lift themselves and their children out of poverty through employment
A new deal for welfare: Empowering people to work	2006	Proposals include: reforming Incapacity Benefits; a roll-out of Pathways to Work across the country; extending support to lone parents and older workers; reforming housing benefit; delivering support to meet the needs of everyone
Leitch Review	2004	Sets the argument that investment in knowledge and skills is essential in order for the UK to compete in the global economy
Building on New Deal: Local solutions meeting individual needs	2004	Recommendations include greater empowerment of local staff, a flexible menu of provision, balance between rights and responsibilities, and a more flexible approach for Jobcentre Plus personal advisers.

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