

Towards Skills for Jobs: 'What Works' in Tackling Worklessness?

Rapid Review of Evidence

May 2007

Of interest to those wanting information on 'what works' for disadvantaged groups

Contents

Paragraph number

1: Introduction and Background	1
Aim of the Report	5
2: People with Disabilities and Health Problems	6
Context	6
Interventions	10
What Works?	12
3: Lone Parents	15
Context	15
Interventions	18
What Works?	24
4: Ethnic Minority Groups	29
Context	29
Interventions	33
What Works?	37
5: People Over 50	42
Context	42
Interventions	44
What Works?	50
6: People with No or Low Qualifications	51
Context	51
Interventions	54
What Works	55
7: Some Implications for the Skills for Jobs Programme	60
Personalised, Holistic Intervention	62
Learning Pathways	66
Employers	69
Geographical Variation	71
Overview	72
Annex	
References	

1 Introduction and Background

- 1 The Policy Research Institute was commissioned by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) to carry out a rapid review of research evidence on 'what works' to inform the development and activities of the Skills for Jobs programme.
- 2 The LSC is in the process of integrating services to support employment and skills. The Skills for Jobs programme will consist of a range of services and programmes to increase skills interventions in the form of new services developed to tackle specific gaps or extend existing good practice by geographical location or by client group. The key aim of Skills for Jobs will be to reduce the number of individuals not in employment through more effective engagement and to move individuals into sustainable jobs through support, learning and achievement of qualifications.
- 3 In the last decade, unemployment levels have fallen significantly in terms of both the claimant count and broader definitions of unemployment¹, although recent months have witnessed rising rates of unemployment. At the same time, the number of people in work has increased. Thus, at November 2006, the UK's unemployment rate² stood at 5.5 per cent and the employment rate at 74.6 per cent. However, these general levels mask significant differences in the labour market activity of different groups. Inequality of employment opportunity is manifested among certain groups and areas. Those most at risk of exclusion from active participation in the labour market often face multiple and significant barriers to employment.
- 4 Groups who continue to face difficulty in entering and staying in employment include disabled people and those with health conditions, lone parents, ethnic minorities, people over 50, and people with no or low qualifications.

Aim of the Report

- 5 Focusing on the five groups identified above, the aim of this rapid review is to provide a **summary** of existing research evidence to inform the development of the Skills for Jobs programme. Specifically, the review aims to provide:
 - a summary of the key findings from systematic reviews of evidence by Hasluck and Green (2007) and Sanderson (2006), and our research undertaken as part of the worklessness strand of New Deal for Communities
 - a summary of literature and reports published in the last 12 months.

¹ This includes 'worklessness' which, whilst open to multiple definition, includes both those who are unemployed and those who are inactive.

² This description uses the definition developed by the International Labour Organization (ILO).

2 People with Disabilities and Health Problems

Context

- 6 Disabled people and people with health problems form a complex and diverse group with wide-ranging demographic and personal characteristics. Research evidence suggests that those with a disability experience lower employment rates and earnings, and are three times more likely to exit work than are people without disabilities or health problems (Rigg, 2005). There is also a spatial element to consider in some local authority areas, particularly in the north of England, characterised by relatively high proportions of people on sickness and disability benefits (Sanderson, 2006).
- 7 Employment opportunities for disabled people are influenced by many of the same trends as for the rest of the population, but often disabled people are more severely affected. The attitudes of employers or work colleagues and physical access to buildings and transport often present further obstacles for people with a disability or health problem to overcome.
- 8 For some people with disabilities or health problems, an underlying deterioration in health may be the key change leading to a premature exit from the labour market, whereas an improvement in health can be a major element in moving towards work and staying in work. There is often a sharp increase in labour market disadvantage associated with the severity of the disability or health problem. Those with long-term mental ill-health have the lowest rate of employment of any of the main groups of disabled people. Relatively low levels of qualification among this group have been identified as a further major barrier to their employment (Ritchie, Casebourne & Rick, 2005). There is, however, a group of learners with severe health or disability issues for whom employment is not an option (Hood, 2006).
- 9 There has been a shift from voluntary to mandatory participation for new claimants of health-related benefits in interventions that are intended to re-focus customers on the prospects of returning to work through the combination of a series of work-focused interviews and various associated services

and incentives, including easier access to existing programmes, a work-focused condition-management programme and a return to work credit.

Interventions

- 10 The content and mix of interventions designed to assist this group into employment reflect its complexity and has led to the combination of a range of services. Examples of specific programmes include:
 - New Deal for Disabled People, which aims to help those moving on to Incapacity Benefit, and disabled people wanting to move into employment
 - specialist disability programmes mainly helping people in work such as Access to Work, WORKSTEP and the activities of Remploy
 - the Pathways to Work programme, which aims to improve the provision of advice and support to help people on Incapacity Benefit and to tackle high concentrations of worklessness at the local level.
- 11 The evidence suggests that most delivery is through collaborations between a range of public, private and voluntary sector organisations. Job brokerage has become an integral element of programmes such as New Deal for Disabled People (NDDP) and Pathways to Work. The job brokerage service differs between job brokers, but typically includes general careers guidance and direction, provision of access to voluntary work or work placements, soft-skills training, jobsearch support, help with applying for jobs, financial help and support and confidence-building. Training is often viewed as an important element of the job brokerage service for individuals requiring longer term support. For example, about one in three NDDP participants started some form of education or training, most commonly associated with vocational or work skills development courses (Corden & Nice, 2006). However, there is evidence to suggest that training has not formed a significant part of provision for this group more generally (Newton et al, 2005).

What Works?

- 12 In common with other groups most at risk of labour market exclusion, no single model of delivery is associated with effective intervention. Strong management, use of management information, close team working and an outward-facing approach characterised by proactive marketing, good links with and awareness of other services are identified as important features of an effective job brokerage service (Sanderson, 2006).
- 13 The range of measures, increasingly in a multi-element package, together with differences between interventions in the range of services provided, mean that it is difficult to ascertain which elements work most effectively for whom. However, research suggests that intervention does make a difference, increasing both the numbers leaving benefit as well as numbers going into and staying in work (Blyth, 2006).
- 14 Overall, the evidence suggests that:
 - a people with a disability or health problem appreciate a highly individualised approach that helps them to set goals and make progress towards them
 - b strong relationships with a core intermediary and maintenance of contact by that intermediary are particularly important in achieving longer term progress towards employment
 - c placement in the world of work is a key element in successful intervention; critical success factors include:
 - establishing a smooth and comprehensive pathway from an individual's entry to the scheme to employment
 - targeting job opportunities in the labour market where there are skills gaps or labour shortages
 - giving employers a suitable candidate for a job (rather than 'labelling' the client as a person with a disability or health problem). Practical assistance including pre-selection is an important element of successful intervention
 - providing individuals with access to post-recruitment support can be an important element in easing the transition to work
 - d training is an element of the job brokerage service; however it is difficult to separate the impact of interventions using training from those concerned with, for example, advice and guidance and work placements
 - e speedier access to treatment services can, in some cases (for example injury) enable a quicker return to work thus heading off longer term absence through health-related problems
 - f providing support at an appropriate pace and intensity is an important aspect of intervention in the support of disabled people. In-work support can be an essential element of an intervention.

3 Lone Parents

Context

- 15 The number of lone-parent households has increased in recent years, with lone parents caring for almost one in four of all children in the UK. Evidence indicates that the risk of non-employment among lone parents is related to the age of the youngest child, with non-employment reducing as the child grows older. Lone-parent families have substantially higher poverty rates than other households. Interestingly, since the Government introduced the New Deal for Lone Parents (NDLP) and the Working Tax Credit, employment levels among lone parents have increased, suggesting that financial incentives to engage in formal employment, along with increased childcare provision, have been successful in reducing worklessness among this group (Ritchie, Casebourne, & Rick, 2005).
- 16 There is strong research evidence to suggest that lack of available and affordable childcare is a significant barrier to employment for lone parents. Sanderson (2006) refers to research carried out by Woodland et al, (2002), which found that 23 per cent of all non-working mothers cited lack of free or cheap childcare as a reason for not working, with 63 per cent saying that they would prefer to go out to work if they had access to good-quality, convenient, reliable and affordable childcare. The corresponding figures for lone parents were 30 per cent and 78 per cent.
- 17 Evans et al (2003) found that lack of childcare was a specific barrier limiting lone-parent participation in intermediate labour market (ILM) provision and also report some evidence (though based upon small samples) of childcare problems contributing to a lack of sustainability of job outcomes. They conclude (p.101) that '...childcare provision is a major structural external constraint on performance of employment programmes' (Sanderson, 2006).
- 18 A range of policies and initiatives have been implemented to address the barriers lone parents face to entering or re-entering the labour market. Two significant reforms have been introduced to help improve levels of employment among lone parents. First, the Working Families Tax Credit was created to improve the financial incentives that might encourage lone parents to enter the labour force, and second, the New Deal for Lone Parents (NDLP) was introduced in order to encourage and support single parents to move back to work (Adams, 2005).
- 19 NDLP has been particularly successful in encouraging this group to enter work. NDLP is a voluntary programme, with all lone parents on Income Support whose youngest child is under 16 eligible to join. After an initial work-focused interview, lone parents who participate in NDLP then begin to work with their personal advisor to develop an individual action plan. Interviews with a personal advisor are the key delivery mechanism for NDLP. The personal advisor develops an individually tailored package of advice and support designed to facilitate a move into employment. The package offered by New Deal appears to work due to the fact that advisors provide an integrated service covering jobsearch, help finding childcare, advice on benefits and help with claiming benefits. The personal advisor on NDLP performs a wide range of functions, including:
- supporting the jobsearch of customers who are job ready
 - helping lone parents identify their skills and develop confidence
 - identifying and providing access to education and training opportunities
 - improving awareness of benefits
 - providing practical support and information on finding childcare
 - providing 'better-off' calculations and assisting with benefit claims
 - liaising with employers and other agencies offering in-work support.
- 20 The most useful aspect of the work-focused interview is that the advice and guidance offered to customers acts as a key source of encouragement, and facilitates access to additional forms of support. Indeed, a principal aim of the interview is to encourage participation in NDLP through which such additional support may become available (Hasluck & Green, 2007).

Interventions

- 18 A range of policies and initiatives have been implemented to address the barriers lone parents face to entering or re-entering the labour market. Two significant reforms have been introduced to help improve levels of employment among lone parents. First, the Working Families Tax Credit was created to improve the financial incentives that might

- 21 Support for lone parents on NDLP also extends beyond the benefit claim period into the early weeks of employment. Personal advisors are able to use the Advisor Discretionary Fund (ADF) to provide funding that helps overcome barriers arising at the transition from benefit to work as well as providing continuing in-work support after the lone parent has started work.
- 22 The mix and type of provision within NDLP has also been continually changed as the programme has developed. These changes include:
- the introduction of basic-skills screening at the initial NDLP interview
 - the introduction of a self-employment option
 - an increase in the training allowance for lone parents undertaking work-related training on NDLP from £10 to £15 a week
 - financial help for parents entering part-time work of fewer than 16 hours a week after NDLP participation in the form of childcare for the first 12 months of work (childcare subsidy) and an increase in the earnings disregard from £15 to £20 a week.
- 23 In addition to NDLP, the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) also introduced New Deal plus for lone parents in April 2005. This pilot brings together a range of support to help lone parents overcome barriers to work. This includes ongoing support from a personal advisor, financial support, childcare help and training opportunities.
- advisors with a high level of flexibility and autonomy to tailor services to clients' needs and good case management skills.
- 26 Evidence generally suggests that improving basic skills among lone parents is important for sustainable employment. Workplace flexibility policies have also been found to be important since lone parents of school-age children continue to face the considerable challenge of making work and childcare hours 'fit'.
- 27 Provision for lone parents relies heavily upon interventions that provide support in the form of advice and guidance. Such guidance has predominantly been directed at encouraging entry (or re-entry) to work by bolstering confidence and demonstrating that 'work pays'.
- 28 Research evidence suggest that the most effective interventions for lone parents include help with jobsearch and job-matching as well as getting 'back to work' help, such as confidence-building, updating or obtaining new skills, and help and information about childcare.

What Works?

- 24 There is now a substantial body of evidence on the effectiveness of NDLP and it is estimated that employment chances for those who take part in the programme are significantly increased. NDLP also dramatically increases the rate at which lone parents leave benefit. Participation in NDLP increased exits from benefit to work by 24 percentage points, measured over a period of 9 months. In other words, employment chances were roughly doubled for those who took part in the programme (Evans et al, 2003). Evaluation studies suggest that NDLP is a successful and cost-effective programme that significantly increases the chances of participants entering work (Millar & Evans, 2003 cited in Adams, 2005).
- 25 Key factors identified in the effectiveness of NDLP include highly motivated and committed personal

4 Ethnic Minority Groups

Context

- 29 Some 70 per cent of people from ethnic minority groups live in the 88 most-deprived local authority districts, compared with 40 per cent of the general population (Social Exclusion Unit (SEU), 2004).
- 30 The labour market experience of ethnic minorities is shaped by a number of factors, reflecting multiple identities and barriers to paid work. There are higher rates of worklessness among many black and minority ethnic groups compared with the general population. Though the attainment of the minority-ethnic population remains poor in comparison with the white population, there are also significant differences between minority ethnic groups. For example, Indians have higher rates of employment, economic activity and occupational achievement than Pakistanis and Bangladeshis, and black Caribbean's are significantly more disadvantaged in many respects, compared with black Africans.
- 31 Research evidence suggests that 'supply-side' issues such as education and skills are one of the causes of differential labour market performance. Such differences in educational attainment rates across ethnic groups at compulsory education levels may be seen to contribute to skills differentials and, subsequently, early different labour market outcomes. Research into unemployment propensities and occupational attainment has shown that the 'ethnic penalties' experienced by minority workers cannot be fully explained by differences in 'human capital' and personal characteristics; at least some disadvantage in the British labour market is attributed to discriminatory recruitment practices by employers (see for example Carmichael & Woods, 2000 and Heath et al, 1999, cited in Ritchie, Casebourne & Rick, 2005).
- 32 There is now a substantial amount of research evidence about the severity of labour market disadvantage suffered by members of certain ethnic minority groups (see for example, Strategy Unit, 2002, Pathak, 2000; Bhattacharyya et al, 2003). Sanderson (2006) notes the review of research evidence by Pathak (2000) which found a pattern of continuous underachievement for certain ethnic groups, starting in early education, and continuing through further and higher education: this persists in the labour market. People in ethnic minority groups are significantly more likely than white people to be economically inactive and unemployed, and after controlling for personal characteristics (such as language and educational achievement) a significant 'ethnic penalty' remains (Sanderson, 2006).

Interventions

- 33 Some individuals from ethnic minority groups face a multitude and complexity of barriers to work, ranging from personal characteristics, households (exemplified by large numbers of children to care for in the case of many Pakistani and Bangladeshi women), human capital, area-based factors and employer attitudes.
- 34 In recognition of the need to close the employment gap, the Government has established a DWP-chaired ministerial task force to implement a cross-government strategy. The strategy is based on:
- developing the 'human capital' of those ethnic minority groups experiencing the greatest disadvantage
 - tackling discrimination by employers
 - helping make a better connection to those ethnic minority groups furthest from the labour market (DWP, 2004).
- 35 A range of initiatives have been introduced by Jobcentre Plus including:
- an Ethnic Minority Flexible Fund for district managers, introduced in areas of high ethnic minority population. The fund will allow district managers to enhance their ability to help specific groups into work
 - specialist employment advisors in key Jobcentre Plus districts to help employers take advantage of the skills of local ethnic minority people.
- 36 One programme that research evidence (Hasluck & Green, 2007) suggests has been particularly successful in engaging ethnic minorities is the Jobcentre Plus Ethnic Minority Outreach (EMO) programme. The EMO programme was implemented using a community-level, multi-stakeholder

approach, involving projects and providers working with participants and employers, local jobcentres and other agencies. A combination of three main approaches were used:

- outreach-based provision
- employer-focused provision, sometimes involving subsidised work placements
- positive action training.

What Works?

- 37 In general, research evidence shows that disadvantages – faced especially by black African, black Caribbean, Pakistani and Bangladeshi people – still remain after controlling for individual characteristics such as age, education and foreign birth. The fact that unemployment propensities and educational attainment can not be explained fully by differences in human capital points to the existence of ethnic penalties, which have been persistent over three decades. For the ethnic groups most severely affected (that is, Pakistanis and Bangladeshis), these ethnic penalties are apparent over and above structural and individual disadvantages in the labour market (Hasluck & Green, 2007).
- 38 Important new evidence on 'what works' has emerged from the evaluation of the EMO programme. The evaluation of the schemes concluded that these initiatives were effective at reaching those who had not previously made use of Jobcentre Plus services, although not all EMO clients wanted to register with Jobcentre Plus. Overall, the evaluation concluded that EMO was judged to have had a major impact in increasing minority ethnic awareness of employment and training opportunities, especially among Indian and Pakistani women (Hasluck & Green, 2007).
- 39 Evidence from the evaluation of the EMO programme suggests that customers feel that such projects are more supportive of their needs; indeed, they are designed to be so. EMO has had a positive impact on engaging and increasing awareness of employment and training opportunities and take-up of mainstream services by under-represented groups, and on helping customers from ethnic minorities to move closer to the labour market.
- 40 Language is an important issue in the delivery of services and has been identified as an area in which improvements need to be made (that is, the language skills of staff delivering programmes).
- 41 Research evidence points to the use of outreach and flexible approaches to engage with ethnic minority communities and to increase the take-up of services for which they are eligible. Evidence also shows that, in general, ethnic minority customers place particular importance on aspects of human interaction and the friendliness of staff with whom they come into contact.

5 People Over 50

Context

- 42 The ageing of the population, increasing longevity and declining fertility is leading to an increase in the number of older people in the workforce. These demographic changes which, when combined with the increase in the state pension age (SPA) and attitudes towards earlier retirement (among some sub-groups) pose significant challenges to increasing the employment rate of people aged over 50 years.
- 43 A mix of financial (dis)incentives, employer barriers and socio-economic characteristics influence older people's decisions about whether to remain in work. Older people face many barriers to work which may be age related (for example, outdated skills, poor health, caring responsibilities) and/or independent of age (such as financial barriers, lack of suitable jobs in the area, employer practices). Some older people face multiple disadvantages and there are important overlaps between health conditions (more likely among men), lack of qualifications and caring responsibilities (more prevalent among women). There are also important variations associated with age with those at the younger age of the spectrum (in their 50s) often having a stronger expectation of work than those in their 60s who are becoming more attuned to retirement. Higher levels of unemployment and inactivity have become entrenched in certain geographical areas, notably parts of the larger cities in northern Britain and in inner London and among certain groups, with older men in Pakistani and Bangladeshi ethnic groups among the most highly disadvantaged.
- 44 Older people are the target of both specific and general programmes aiming to improve employment rates. Examples include:
- New Deal 50 Plus, which combines advice and help with jobsearch and financial support to assist non-employed over 50s back to work
 - a variety of general programmes at local, regional and national level.
- 45 The evidence associated with interventions supporting older workers is limited and often qualitative in nature; however the desire to work on the part of the individual, and the attitudes of employers towards older people are of key importance.
- 46 A key feature of interventions is often the services of a personal advisor. The relationship between the advisor and the customer is seen as crucial by both advisors and customers; however, there is little statistical evidence of the impact of advisor input on job outcomes.
- 47 Interventions provide information and back-to-work assistance as well as promoting local job and volunteering opportunities to help improve the prospects of older, jobless people. New Deal 50 Plus (ND50+) utilises a training grant of £1,500 over two years to support job-related skills development. However, take-up has been low despite high levels of awareness. Reasons for this include a lack of experience in buying training, little knowledge of what training is needed and of what the money might buy, or where would be a good place to get appropriate training (Hasluck & Green, 2007).
- 48 Evidence from an evaluation of work-based learning for adults (Hasluck & Green, 2007) indicates that the majority of older trainees are pleased with provision. Work-based learning (WBL) for adults had a positive impact on soft skills (especially confidence-building and motivation), work-related skills (for example, team-working and communication) and hard skills (such as jobsearch skills and IT). Both short job-focused training (SJFT) and longer occupational training (LOT) have a positive impact on job outcomes. In general, SJFT accelerated entry into work and while for most customers it was short lived, for those aged 50 and over, the effect appeared to be more sustained. LOT also had a significant impact although it did not necessarily encourage older people to work for longer. Further evidence from the Employer Training Pilots (ETPs) suggests that older people were more likely than younger ones to complete courses of study.
- 49 However, research suggests that few older people use an intervention as a springboard for progression in work. The absence of demand-side support in terms of movement between jobs within existing or potential employers may be a factor in this.

Interventions

- 44 Older people are the target of both specific and general programmes aiming to improve employment rates. Examples include:
- New Deal 50 Plus, which combines advice and help with jobsearch and financial support to assist non-employed over 50s back to work
 - a variety of general programmes at local, regional and national level.
- 45 The evidence associated with interventions supporting older workers is limited and often

What Works?

50 In common with other groups most at risk of labour market exclusion, no single model of delivery is associated with effective intervention. A recent review of the literature suggests that an understanding of 'what works' in terms of training older people is generally lacking (Phillipson & Smith, 2005). Nevertheless, in terms of getting older people into work the evidence generally suggests that:

- early advice and guidance can help to offset the loss of self-confidence older people may experience, reorient them in the labour market and help them overcome employer age discrimination
- an advisor who is personally committed to the customer, understands the problems that they face and is personally committed to them is highly valued
- training interventions need to be designed that seek to allay concerns associated with, for example, the reluctance of some older people to become involved in learning because they are too old and/or they do not need skills because they already have extensive experience. Interventions also need to reflect the skills required in the local labour market and be affordable
- interventions need to enable older people to make informed choices associated with skills acquisition – what they need, where they might get it, what they may expect to gain
- training provided through ND50+ (combined with in-work support) was of value to the self-employed and some small firms, and may be particularly relevant to older people who may be better equipped than younger people to pursue an entrepreneurial path
- there is evidence that trial periods in work are particularly important for older people (particularly if they are moving into different occupations or sectors) because they offer an opportunity to those who might not be considered by employers using conventional recruitment methods. The quality of employment is an important (and often overlooked) factor.

6 People with No or Low Qualifications

Context

- 51 There are 4.6 million people of working age without qualifications, of which 2.2 million are ILO inactive and 280,000 are ILO³ unemployed (DfES & DWP, 2007).
- 52 The Leitch report on skills (Leitch, 2006) highlighted how, despite recent progress, the UK's skills base remains mediocre in comparison with international standards. In his report, Lord Leitch found that:

Around 50 per cent of those with no qualifications are out of work. As the global economy changes, the employment opportunities of those lacking a platform of skills will fall still further. The millions of adults lacking functional literacy and numeracy skills risk becoming a lost generation increasingly cut off from labour market opportunity. Equipping disadvantaged groups with a platform of skills, including literacy and numeracy will be increasingly essential to improving their employment opportunities.

Leitch, 2006:118 para 7.3

- 53 There is strong evidence to suggest that low literacy and numeracy skills increase the risk of non-employment. The PAT 2 report (SEU, 1999) refers to a range of evidence on this link; Machin et al (2001) summarise strong evidence from previous research and report from their analysis the significant effect of reading and numeracy skills after controlling for attitudes and soft skills. Parsons and Bynner (2002) find that poor reading achievement in teenage years is strongly associated with unemployment and social exclusion in later life. More

generally, poor educational achievement and qualifications are strongly associated with unemployment. Berthoud (2003) finds that those with no educational qualifications are almost five times as likely to be in a non-earning family as those with degrees, holding all other factors constant. Dex and McCulloch (1997) found the influence of poor qualifications to be stronger for men than for women; indeed, after 1980 they found that low educational qualifications decreased the probability of unemployment for women.

Interventions

- 54 Engaging with individuals with no or low qualifications, like other groups, is a difficult process. Many interventions aimed at those with no or low qualifications aim to promote 'life skills'. Such programmes offer a starting point for engaging with this group. A range of interventions has been implemented to address barriers to employment faced by this group, including:
- Training for Work, aimed at individuals aged 25 and over who have been unemployed for at least six months, providing on-the-job training support for unemployed people and those actively looking for work. Participants are paid a training allowance
 - Employment Training, where participants are offered a work placement with an employer
 - WBL for adults, aimed at individuals aged 25 and over who have been unemployed for at least six months. This is a voluntary, full-time training programme
 - New Deal for Young People, aimed at individuals aged 18–24 who have been unemployed for six months or more to help them find and keep a job. Participants receive help and support from a personal advisor.

³ The International Labour Organization defines unemployment as those out of work, available for work and seeking work.

What Works

- 55 Some research evidence suggests that the combination of labour market contact, work experience and in-work training has been found to be most effective for people with low skills. The desirability of an integrated approach for pre-work and early work experience underlines the key role for employers in the design and delivery of support for disadvantaged groups (Dench, Hillage & Coare, 2006).
- 56 Several programmes have had a positive effect on tackling worklessness among those with low or no qualifications.
- 57 An evaluation of Training for Work found that participants are more likely than non-participants to move into employment by as much as 10–15 percentage points. It found that, over a 17-month period after leaving the programme, participants spent an average of 1 month in 7 extra in work in comparison with what would have been expected if they had not gone on the programme (DfES & DWP, 2007).
- 58 After leaving the programme, individuals who had participated in Employment Training (ET) spent around 5 per cent more of their time in employment in a 15-month period than a comparison group who did not participate in the programme (DfES & DWP, 2007).
- 59 An evaluation of New Deal for Young People (NDYP) found that just over 50 per cent of leavers from the employment option of the programme enter employment compared with a figure of 33 per cent from education and training (DfES & DWP, 2007).

7 Some Implications for the Skills for Jobs Programme

- 60 The LSC is pursuing a framework for managing the balance and mix of provision, and several of the groups discussed in this review feature in its actions to support equality and diversity (LSC, 2007). Clearly, it is important that funding provision does not discriminate against people in these disadvantaged groups and that LSC objectives and targets reflect the interests of those most at risk of labour market disadvantage.
- 61 This rapid review has focused on five groups at most risk of disadvantage in the labour market. They are likely to be potential beneficiaries of the proposed Skills for Jobs programme. There are other groups – for example ex-offenders – that are not covered by this review. The review suggests that each group has specific needs and interests but, arguably more importantly, it highlights the move towards more personalised intervention, driven at least to some extent by the needs of the individual within the group or sub-group.

Personalised, Holistic Intervention

- 62 It is increasingly recognised that interventions work in combination rather than as separate and discrete elements of support and it is important for the Skills for Jobs programme to fit within this wider context. Within disadvantaged groups, evidence suggests that there are sub-groups more at risk of exclusion, for example, those with severe health or disability problems, lone parents with young children, Pakistanis, Bangladeshis, black Caribbeans and people over 60. Those most at risk of disadvantage often suffer from multiple disadvantage and it is increasingly important that interventions recognise this and have the flexibility to be able to deliver different services at different times.
- 63 The systematic reviews of the evidence point to the need to move away from set programmes with rigid designs towards a more modular approach with support for any individual client designed as a package, assembled from a range or menu of different types of help and shifting the authority for deciding what will work for a particular client from central specification to those working directly with him or her. The conclusion that emerges from a review of the evidence is that there is no 'one-size-fits-all' approach to intervention seeking to help disadvantaged groups; however interventions that employ community-based outreach work, use non-standard locations and operate in a client-centred, flexible way, drawing together a range of services at a time that suits the individual, are most likely to be effective.
- 64 The evidence underpinning this review also suggests that employers have a key role to play in the effectiveness of interventions for disadvantaged groups. It is important that training interventions reflect the skills required in the local labour market so that there is a match between the needs of employers and the skills set of the individual. Ongoing, in-work support can be an essential element of intervention, particularly for groups such as disabled people or those with health problems or those who have been out of work for some time.
- 65 The importance of a personal advisor is increasingly recognised, as evidenced in the New Deals, and there is a clear need for the Skills for Jobs programme to contribute a significant element of support within this delivery model. Training is an important element of the service provided by the personal advisor; however, as the review suggests, the evidence of its impact is generally lacking and in some cases it appears that training is not a significant part of provision for some groups (noticeably those with disabilities and health problems). The Skills for Jobs programme will clearly have to find ways in which to meet the challenges of engaging learners who may be reluctant to pursue opportunities to develop their skills. It is also interesting to note in the light of the proposed implementation of learning accounts that some groups, most notably older people, find that the challenges in becoming an informed consumer of training or learning services can be a significant barrier to the take-up of services.

Learning Pathways

- 66 The important role that qualifications play in labour market progression is generally well recognised; however, these disadvantaged groups (and sub-groups within them) are often less qualified than the population more generally. Specific sub-groups such as people with learning difficulties or mental ill-health and ethnic minority groups with English language needs provide significant challenges in terms of accredited learning.
- 67 The evidence underpinning this review suggests that training provided to support employability through interventions to develop motivation and attitudes towards work often forms part of wider intervention, and therefore measures of 'distance travelled' become important in assessing value and progress. However, systematic reviews suggest that such measures currently play little role in policy implementation at this time.
- 68 The availability of appropriate learning pathways may be an important aspect of provision through the Skills for Job programme if provision is to have an impact on the most disadvantaged. Furthermore, interventions need to be long enough and provide sufficient in-depth support to make a difference to individuals at risk of multiple disadvantage. Flexible partnerships and collaborations that break down the walls between different providers and funding streams will be an important aspect of the Skills for Jobs programme. Establishing and maintaining good relationships with core intermediaries (including, for example, health providers, childcare providers and community outreach groups) and in particular, personal advisors, will be an essential element in the success of the programme.

Employers

- 69 Work with employers is increasingly recognised as an important aspect of intervention. However, the demand side is often neglected and this review highlights the crucial role that employers have to play in providing job opportunities for disadvantaged groups. This has implications for the National Employer Service and employers more generally in terms of attitudes towards and support for these groups in the workplace.
- 70 The evidence suggests that significant improvements in employment for some groups, most noticeably older people, depends largely on improvements in labour market retention rather than re-entry. This

requires employers and employees to negotiate new relationships with one another in terms of, for example retraining, employment conditions or support in terms of caring or improved occupational health. There may be an opportunity for the Skills for Jobs programme to incorporate a preventative approach to intervention based on supporting employers and employees and enabling retention as opposed to release.

Geographical Variation

- 71 The evidence draws attention to the spatial element associated with some disadvantaged groups. For example, the evidence suggests that local authorities in northern England tend to be characterised by relatively high proportions of people on sickness and disability benefits, while ethnic minorities are more likely to live in the most deprived local authority districts in England. This may have implications for the development and implementation of skills for jobs at the local level.

Overview

- 72 This report presents a broad overview of a vast body of evidence regarding 'what works' in terms of helping people from disadvantaged groups to move out of worklessness and into employment. Clearly, training and skills development has been an important feature of many interventions and Skills for Jobs will need to build on the experiences of such programmes by identifying 'what works' and incorporating these lessons into programme design and delivery. It is clear from this review that there exist no 'magic bullets', simply an accumulation of experience and research evidence that indicates a number of key lessons in relation to the different groups. It follows from this that 'one-size-fits-all' approaches are unlikely to be successful and that training and skills interventions will need to be delivered in close partnership with other interventions and alongside appropriate agencies. Finally, the role of employers is likely to be crucial in helping people into sustained employment with prospects for progression.

Annex:

References

- Adams, J. (2005) *Towards Full Employment: Tackling economic activity*, London: Institute for Public Policy Research.
- Berthoud, R. (2003) *Multiple Disadvantages in Employment: A Quantitative Analysis*, York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation.
- Bhattacharyya, G., Ison, L. and Blair, M. (2003) *Minority Ethnic Attainment and Participation in Education and Training: The Evidence*, Research Topic Paper 01-03, Sheffield: Department for Education and Skills.
- Blyth, B. (2006) *Incapacity Reforms: Pathways to Work Pilots: Performance and Analysis*, Department for Work and Pensions Working Paper No 26, London: DWP.
- Corden, A. & Nice, K. (2006) *Incapacity Benefit Reforms Pilot: Findings from the Second Cohort in a Longitudinal Panel of Clients*, Department for Work and Pensions Research Report 259, London: DWP.
- Dench, S., Hillage, J. & Coare, P. (2006) *The Impact of Learning on Unemployed, Low Qualified Adults: A systematic review*, Department for Work and Pensions Research Report 375, London: DWP.
- Dex, S. and McCulloch, A. (1997) *Characteristics of the Unemployed: Secondary Analysis of the Family and Working Lives Survey*, Research Report 32, London: Department for Education and Employment.
- DfES & DWP (2007) *A Shared Evidence Base: The role of skills in the labour market*, London: DfES and DWP.
- DWP (2004) *Building on New Deal: Local solutions meeting individual needs*, London: DWP.
- Evans, M., Eyre, J., Millar, J. and Sarre, S. (2003) *New Deal for Lone Parents: Second Synthesis Report of the National Evaluation*, Department for Work and Pensions Research Report W163, Sheffield: DWP.
- Hasluck, C. & Green, A. (2007) *What Works for Whom? A review of evidence and meta-analysis for the Department for Work and Pensions*, Department for Work and Pensions Research Report 407, London: DWP.
- Hirsch, D. (2003) *Crossroads after 50: Improving choices in work and retirement*, York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation.
- Hood, P. (2006) *Where Are We Now? Adults Learning*, Vol 17, No 10, June 2006, p14-15.
- Leitch, S. (2006) *Prosperity for All in the Global Economy: World-class skills*, London: HM Treasury.
- LSC (2007) *Framework for Managing the Balance and Mix of Provision 2007/08*, Coventry: LSC.
- LSC (2006) *Learning for Living and Work: Improving education and training opportunities for people with learning disabilities and/or disabilities*, Coventry: LSC.
- Machin, S., McIntosh, S., Vignoles, A. and Vitanen, T. (2001) *Basic Skills, Soft Skills and Labour Market Outcomes: Secondary Analysis of the National Child Development Study*, Research Report 250, London: Department for Education and Employment
- Newton, B., Hurstfield, J., Miller, L., Akroyd, K. & Gifford, J. (2005) *Training Participation by Age among Unemployed and Inactive People*, Department for Work and Pensions Research Report No 291, London: DWP.
- Parsons, S. and Bynner, H. (2002) *Basic Skills and Social Exclusion*, London: The Basic Skills Agency
- Pathak, S. (2000) *Race Research for the Future: Ethnicity in Education, Training and the Labour Market*, Research Topic Paper 1, London: Department for Education and Employment
- Phillipson, C. & Smith A. (2005) *Extending Working Life: A review of the literature*, Department for Work and Pensions Research Report 174, London: DWP.
- Rigg, J. (2005) *Labour Market Disadvantage among Disabled People: A longitudinal perspective*, London: Centre for Analysis of Social Exclusion, London School of Economics.
- Ritchie, H., Casebourne, J. & Rick, J. (2005) *Understanding Workless People and Communities: A literature review*, Department for Work and Pensions Research Report No 255, London: DWP.
- Sanderson, I. (2006) *Worklessness in Deprived Neighbourhoods: A review of evidence: report for the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit*, London: Department for Communities and Local Government.
- Social Exclusion Unit (1999) *Policy Action Team 2: Skills for Neighbourhood Renewal: Local Solutions, Final Report of the Policy Action Team on Skills*, London: Office of the Deputy Prime Minister
- Social Exclusion Unit (2004) *Tackling Social Exclusion: Taking stock and looking to the future: Emerging Findings*, London: Office of the Deputy Prime Minister.
- Strategy Unit (2002) *Ethnic Minorities and the Labour Market*, London: Strategy Unit.

