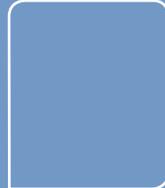


tackling worklessness

a series of 'how to' guides
for councils and their partners

developing a strategy
to tackle worklessness



1. why is a strategy necessary?

Tackling worklessness involves delivering a wide range of services to address individual barriers to employment and to meet the needs of employers. It requires effective partnership working across a range of public, private, and third sector agencies, and across different geographies. However, the breadth of this partnership too often is typified by competing priorities and targets and in the fragmentation of services. Both duplications and gaps in provision arise as a result.

Strategies to tackle worklessness need to examine how provision can be better integrated to meet the needs of both people and employers. The focus for individuals needs to be on creating a seamless customer journey into sustainable employment. For employers there is a need to both improve the interface with welfare to work provision and ensure that their workforce requirements are reflected in the training and skills opportunities, and in-work support services, that are offered.

Councils and their partners can draw on the experience of the following to support the development of their strategy:

- councils and their local strategic partnerships (LSPs) – which include Jobcentre Plus and the Learning and Skills Council – that have signed up to employment and skills targets in their local area agreements (LAAs)
- Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) City Strategy Pathfinders
- multi-area agreement (MAA) which are prioritising employment and skills issues.

While this guide is focused on developing a strategy to address worklessness, links also need to be made with strategies to generate demand for jobs, including Regional Employment Strategies and Spatial Strategies, and this guide should therefore be read alongside the diagnostic tool recently developed by IDEa which focuses on the wider economic development agenda (available at www.idea.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pagelid=9325114)

2. five steps to developing a worklessness strategy

The task of strategy development can be broken down into a number of phases. The basic phases involved in developing a worklessness strategy are:

- getting the partnership right
- assessing the problem and the limitations of current provision
- the customer journey
- developing strategic priorities and an action plan to deliver against these
- implementing the plan, monitoring progress and evaluating and refreshing the strategy.



3. getting the partnership right

Tackling worklessness involves supporting individuals (the supply side) and meeting the needs of employers (the demand side). Partnerships therefore need to be developed which bring these two aspects together. The logical starting point for councils will be with their LSP, which will already have the involvement of Jobcentre Plus and the Learning and Skills Council, as well as from local third sector partners and providers of other forms of personal support including health agencies. The LSP will also provide a link to the Regional Development Agency and to government offices. Many councils have therefore drawn from the wider LSP to form a sub-group responsible for employment and skills issues.

However, other key stakeholders may not already be involved in the LSP. In particular, it is important to engage with employers and providers of welfare to work services, including DWP contractors and learning providers, and to make

links to a wide range of 'wraparound support' services including childcare and benefits and debt advice .

This partnership will be required to undertake much of the detailed work to inform the development of the strategy (see phase 2) and will need to inform any formal target setting that takes place within the wider LSP for inclusion within LAAs.

However, because labour markets expand beyond council boundaries there is also a need to consider the role for sub-regional partnership working. Government is also encouraging this by offering, through the MAA process, an opportunity for sub-regions to take on the overall responsibility for skills strategy in their areas as well as to progress over time to co-commissioning arrangements with DWP. In order to take up these opportunities, sub-regional partnerships must be able to demonstrate that they have established strong employer led bodies as part of their governance arrangements. A number of areas have established Employment and Skills Boards (ESBs) for this purpose and are developing mechanisms to give them greater influence over resources and clear democratic accountability.

case study 1

London Skills and Employment Board

London faces particular challenges, including high levels of worklessness. It has the lowest employment rate of any region in the UK. The London Skills and Employment Board has statutory powers to set the LSC's strategy for adult skills in London and the Board is accountable to the Mayor of London. Other ESBs have stated that they wish to apply for more powers in shaping the skills agenda (e.g. The Partnership for Urban South Hampshire and Tyne & Wear) within their MAAs .The London Skills and Employment Board, led by key London employers, works with local partners to ensure that recruitment and skills support meets the specific needs of the capital.

www.london.gov.uk/lseb/about

4. assessing the problem and the limitations of current provision

Strategies that can drive forward the integration of service provision for individuals and employers rely on the development of a joint understanding and knowledge of the labour market in their area and how existing services are provided across the partnership.

Councils will soon have a duty to carry out a local economic assessment, and recommendations have been made in the Houghton Review (see further resources) for this to include a 'worklessness assessment'. Basic guidance on the duty and the case studies of Knowsley and Tees Valley are already available <http://www.idea.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pagelId=8712709> and full sector-led guidance will be available from the IDeA in the summer.

case study 2

Manchester Independent Economic Review

In June 2008 the Manchester Independent Economic Review was launched. It is a commission of prominent economists and business leaders, supported by a policy advisory group and secretariat, with responsibility for commissioning high-quality, evidence-based research to inform decision makers in Manchester. This will provide a shared and accessible evidence base that can be used to underpin policy choices regarding future shared priorities and improve understanding of causal factors.

www.manchester-review.org.uk/

www.idea.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pagelId=9196446&aspect=full



On the demand side it is important to understand the likely flow of job opportunities and the skills required to access these jobs. This involves understanding trends that will be identified by the Regional Development Agency (RDA) and business groups and working with these to map career paths and develop entry points for workless people.

On the supply side, information is needed on:

- the skills of those without a job
- where there are particular concentrations of worklessness
- barriers that people face in getting into work
- how existing provision is organised and how it is accessed.

This will help target the appropriate interventions (see **guide 5** in this series) and develop ward and neighbourhood level plans.

case study 3

Sandwell

Sandwell Council has led work on developing 'neighbourhood plans' for each of the 13 priority wards in the borough. Each plan provides detailed evidence of the needs of the most disadvantaged. Each town in the authority area has an Employment and Skills Panel or equivalent which monitors and reviews the Neighbourhood Employment and Skills Plans (NESP's) relevant to their area, ensuring that interventions are targeted and focused on the issues identified within the NESP.

This approach has provided a baseline on which to measure performance. It emphasises Sandwell's approach to local delivery.

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Having access to the right data is critical to making an assessment of the labour market position and where to concentrate effort and resources. DWP offers access to a range of anonymised statistics (see www.dwp.gov.uk/asd/data_guide.asp). Communities and Local Government and DWP are also working to improve the provision of data through a number of pilots in Kent, Liverpool, and Leeds (See Tackling Worklessness 2009, p40 in further resources). Sharing data and performance management information across a range of partners can also facilitate the targeting of activity and enable the evaluation of different interventions. For example, sharing data such as on/off flows enables partners to analyse develop interventions to improve employment retention. There are several different approaches to sharing data, including the use of software that anonymises data, or asking clients to give their informed consent to information being held on joint tracking systems (see Waltham Forest Worknet partnership www.idea.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pagelid=8941094).

In all cases appropriate data security, frameworks, working arrangements and practices need to be agreed and implemented.

5. the customer journey

A strategy to address worklessness needs to analyse the existing local customer journey, identify barriers to employment and gaps (or duplications) in provision, and identify which agencies should commission, decommission, or deliver services to address these. There are five core stages in the journey:

- engagement
- assessment
- employability support
- placement into work or work experience
- in-work support and retention.

Although responsibility for services in each of these stages may be split across a number of agencies many strategies have identified the benefits of unity, and taken steps to unify services under a single brand (for example, Workplace

in Newham, and Road 2 Work in Huyton, Knowsley). Some have focused on co-locating services while others have prioritised improvement in referrals procedures to ensure front-line staff can refer clients to the appropriate service. Developing common initial assessment processes and sharing information across agencies is particularly important. High quality information, advice, and guidance services integrated within each stage of the journey, is essential.

It should be noted that customer journeys sometimes need to be related to specific client groups.

The approach is particularly useful when aimed at those furthest from the labour market.



case study 4

Coventry City Council's Client Support Unit: Making Progress

The aim of Making Progress is to help both ex-offenders who are returning to Coventry after having served a custodial sentence, and those that are on a community order, to find employment. As well as support to find employment, these clients receive support with housing, financial and emotional issues. The multi-agency service is characterised by strong service co-ordination and by delivering activities which meet the individual needs of each client.

www.idea.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pagelId=9440072



case study 5

Dealing with worklessness in Knowsley

In 2005, Knowsley Council, the Learning and Skills Council and Jobcentre Plus jointly commissioned the development of an Employment and Skills Strategy for Knowsley. This recognised the multi-partnership approach required to address worklessness. The employment and social inclusion team is the lead department responsible for delivering the council's proportion of employment outcomes. It has developed innovative outreach and support activities to engage those furthest from the labour market. From providing support to just 60 clients a year in 1997, the employment and social inclusion team served 6,700 in 2007, and moved 2,550 into employment. Between 2003-2008, Knowsley reduced the worklessness gap between the borough and England by 2.5 percentage points.

www.idea.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pagelid=9277652&aspect=full

www.idea.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pagelid=8423319

Equally, it is important to examine the customer journey from the perspective of employers and to work with existing strategies that join up provision, including regional strategies to develop integrated offers of business support through the Business Link brand, and Jobcentre Plus led Local Employment Partnerships (LEPs).

6. developing Strategic Priorities and an Action Plan

Following the worklessness assessment, partners need to identify the strategic priorities for action and identify the contribution that each will make towards achieving these. At this stage targets for improving outcomes need to be agreed and, where appropriate, reflected in LAA and MAA targets as well as within the partnership's worklessness strategy.



The priorities that will be identified can usually be grouped into:

- supply side priorities, including action to improve engagement with workless people and joining up the customer journey
- demand side priorities, including LEPs, Skills Pledge and improving links with wider business support services
- partnership priorities, including the development of robust governance arrangements, partnership capacity, and joint commissioning approaches.

Although a series of separate strategic priorities will be identified at this stage it is important to look at how these can be taken forwards in an integrated manner. Agreeing a joint approach to contract management, performance, quality monitoring and evaluation will help to ensure that the partnership delivers its targets, and manages risks effectively.

case study 6

Liverpool City Region

Prior to the City Strategy Pathfinder, there was little cross-boundary communication or activity. Two years on, there is an increase in understanding and awareness of the sub-regional challenge to address worklessness and skills deprivation across the six council areas, which make up the city region. City Strategy has driven movement toward a single investment strategy, where partners pool resources (£80 million between 2007 to 2008 and 2010 to 2011). The single investment framework complements the activities of Jobcentre Plus and LSC programmes and is focused on supporting workless residents along a continuum of activity designed to improve employability and move them from welfare into work.

www.idea.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pageId=9439058&aspect=full

www.idea.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pageId=9439022&aspect=full

For further information, contact Carol.Perry@liverpool.gov.uk

7. joining up supply and demand

Effective strategies link the demand for jobs to the supply of people looking for work. This involves linking planning and regeneration strategies with employer recruitment needs to estimate future demand. This will also ensure that agreements are reached on pre-recruitment training through Section 106 agreements and procurement policies (see Wakefield example in the Tackling Workless Review 2009 p47) and through LEPs. Councils and other public sector employers have a critical role to play in leading by example on this agenda - using their direct role as employers and procurers of goods and services to expand opportunities for workless people. Birmingham is attempting to bring together its regeneration and investment plans with its strategy to tackle worklessness (see www.idea.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pagelid=9454512)

Several councils are now linking enterprise into their employment and skills policy (see for example Waltham Forest's Enterprise, Employment and Skills Strategy 2008-12 www.idea.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pagelid=8941094). This joins up the demand and supply

side and ensures that local economic benefits flow from regeneration and development opportunities and supports self employment and entrepreneurship.

Regardless of the specific priorities that are identified, it is critical that these are translated into a clear set of SMARTactions (see glossary), for which there are clear lines of accountability and responsibility so that effective monitoring of progress can take place.

8. monitoring and evaluation

Your strategy will need to be monitored and evaluated with performance reported and objectives and action plans revised over time. It is important that any targets set within your strategy are therefore capable of being monitored. To do this you need to allocate responsibility for targets and know where, when, and how this information will be provided to you.

Where the required level of information does not exist, you may wish to include actions in your plan to obtain this for the future. Establishing effective monitoring systems is often a critical first priority. Monitoring performance against targets and assessing whether or not

these have delivered the actions that you set out within your strategy, and reporting this performance regularly, is important throughout the lifetime of your strategy. To keep partners up to date between meetings, you may choose to develop an email update or a worklessness 'stats and targets' bulletin for circulation.

High level indicators, such as those included in any LAA or MAA will also tell you whether your actions and the performance you are witnessing against your targets is feeding through into an overall improvement in the level of worklessness in your area.

However, making sense of the information sometimes requires a greater degree of evaluation. In particular, there is a need to consider whether or not the actions you have taken have resulted in the achievement or otherwise of your objectives and how these have contributed to progress towards meeting your aim.

While individual targets may have been met you may not find that this has had a sufficiently impact on levels of worklessness. This would indicate that there may be a need to change the actions you are taking, to re-prioritise, or to change your objectives. Alternatively, the failure could be due to external factors. This effectively takes you back to the start of the strategic planning process and requires the strategy to be refreshed.



top tips

learn from the experience of others – research the approaches being taken in City Strategy and MAA areas, look at the IDeA website, www.idea.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pagelId=8492965 and play a part in your Regional Improvement and Efficiency Partnership (RIEP)

get your own partnership right at the local level – making sure Jobcentre Plus is fully involved – and consider where a sub-regional partnership is also required

undertake an assessment of worklessness – again draw on the methods used in other areas and on the available guidance to help you www.idea.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pagelId=8712709

as part of the assessment, map out the customer journey and how this is funded and delivered by the partnership. Where are the gaps or duplications? Does provision meet the needs identified in your assessment?

develop your strategic priorities and your action plan together. Where do you need to take joint action? Don't neglect the need to invest in the partnership and in improving shared systems as part of this

link up demand and supply sides. Think about how the worklessness strategy fits in with wider economic development strategies and what direct actions can be taken by partners to boost demand for jobs, work experience and apprenticeships

monitor performance – consider setting up a regular bulletin to inform the partnership and wider stakeholders of the progress that you are making

evaluate and refresh your strategy. Regardless of performance against your targets, things change. Take the time to review your strategic priorities to ensure you remain focused on the overall aim: to help more people into work.

9. further resources

- Driving Economic Prosperity: Benchmark and Diagnostic for Councils, IDeA, 2009. Provides a self assessment tool and information on strategy development.
- Tackling Worklessness: a review of the contribution and role of councils and partnerships – Final Report ,CLG (2009). This is also known as the Houghton Review.

[www.communities.gov.uk/
publications/communities/
tacklingworklessnessfinal](http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/communities/tacklingworklessnessfinal)

- Croden, M and Simmonds L. 2008. Employment and Skills Boards: Current and Potential Role

[www.cfe.org.uk/
uploaded/files/CFE_
Employment%20and%20
Skills%20Boards.pdf](http://www.cfe.org.uk/uploaded/files/CFE_Employment%20and%20Skills%20Boards.pdf)

- “Social housing and worklessness” - DWP Research Report No. 482, 2008
- “Worklessness in deprived neighbourhoods: a review of evidence”, Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) 2006

The other guides in this series will assist with strategy development.



10. glossary

- DWP's City Strategy Pathfinder Programme aims to tackle worklessness in the most disadvantaged communities across the UK – many of which are in major cities and other urban areas. It initially focused on 15 pathfinder areas (www.dwp.gov.uk/welfarereform/pathfinders.asp) that were originally due to finish in March 2009. Ministers have agreed to extend DWP's support for all pathfinders for a further two years. www.dwp.gov.uk/welfarereform/cities_strategy.asp
- SMART stands for:
 - Specific:** not 'wish lists' or vague statements
 - Measurable:** how do you know you are doing it, and is it effective?
 - Affordable:** do you have the resources to do it?
 - Realistic:** is it feasible? Can you deliver this?
 - Timely:** when is it going to be done exactly?



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Local Government Association

The Local Government Association is the national voice for more than 450 local authorities in England and Wales. The LGA group comprises the LGA and five partner organisations which work together to support, promote and improve local government.

