University of Glasgow | Training & Employment Research Unit

COMMON ASSESSMENT TRAINING IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

The Scottish Government

(July 2009)

Training and Employment Research Unit (TERU)
University of Glasgow

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INTRODUCTION

Employability results from a combination of factors which enable people to progress toward and into employment, to stay in employment and to move on in the workplace. There is a growing awareness of the importance of the contributions of a wide range of services to help enhance employability. In particular, people with multiple and complex needs can benefit from different kinds of support to address the multifaceted barriers to employment they might have. To be effective, easy access to these services is required. In many areas across Scotland, 'pipeline' approaches have been developed which provide pathways for clients to take them from being unemployed and not job ready to work. Such an approach ensures that the services are joined up and there is seamless progression for the client.

The effectiveness of such an approach depends on how successfully clients' needs and the right service for them are identified through a process of assessment. This process may involve the following.

- Identifying the starting point and distance travelled for the client.
- Developing an awareness of the client's individual strengths and needs.
- Isolating relevant and sustainable employability objectives.
- Identifying additional support needs to tackle any barriers identified.
- Establishing goals and strategies as part of a client action plan.
- Matching resources to individual needs.

It is clear that without effective assessment the basic purpose of employability intervention cannot be achieved. Assessment is also essential to ensuring that an employability pipeline works effectively.

Within employability partnerships, assessment processes can be enhanced by a shared approach through the implementation of a ***Common Assessment Framework***. Such a framework ensures partners have a ***common basis for assessment and work to the same principles.***

This Training Implementation Plan is designed to assist you to implement a training course that can contribute to the development of a common assessment framework in your area. It must be recognised that putting on training is only one aspect of developing a common assessment framework. In any locality, partners must also be committed to working to the same principles to taking the practical steps that will be required to implement a framework.

The Training Course

Templates for training sessions are included in this document. These allow your to put together a course of 7 sessions designed to allow participants to consider:

- the context for common assessment including employability policy, the labour market and approaches to employability;
- the business case for common assessment;
- factors affecting the quality of assessment processes;
- the needs led model of assessment, which provides an exemplar approach;
- the assessment processes used by employability partners;
- how common assessment can be developed locally.

The training has been piloted in two Workforce Plus areas. A brief overview of the training sessions is provided in the box below.

Session 1: Setting the Context

A successful starting point for the development of a common assessment framework in a locality is every actor understanding the context and their role in taking employability forward. This session aims to allow participants to consider this through covering the following.

- Employability in Scotland and the local context – what are the key issues?
- Overview of the policy framework in Scotland
- What is Common Assessment?
- How can a common assessment framework contribute to an effective employability process in the local area?

Session 2: Approaches to Employability

If employability interventions are to be effective then accessible services need to be provided to clients in a timely way. How can this be achieved? This session looks at the 'pipeline' approaches used in some areas of Scotland and how assessment plays into these arrangements.

Session 3: The Process of Common Assessment

The aim of a common assessment framework is to set out an assessment and intervention process that makes the most effective use of workers' time and eliminates assessment overload and duplication for clients. This session allows participants to reflect on their own processes and consider a model of assessment that draws this together.

Session 4: Homework Task for Day 2

In this last short session a 'homework task' to collect information about how participants' organisations assess is outlined.

Day 2

Session 5: Looking at the Assessment Methods Used

In this session the participants will briefly outline the assessment processes they use. The session allows people to increase their understanding of partners' methods and also see where there are commonalities and differences.

Session 6: Reflecting Further on the Assessment Methods Used

This session builds on the reflection on their assessment processes the participants started in day 1. The session will give participants a set of questions to evaluate their processes and methods.

Session 7: Implementing A Common Assessment Framework

The final session reiterates the benefits of having a common assessment framework. The session is designed to allow participants to consider some of the practical issues associated with implementing the approach locally. What are the factors that support implementation and what work against it? What are the next steps for implementing common assessment?

Preparing for the Training

Local employability partnerships can often involve partners that have considerably different backgrounds and approaches to assessment. Developing a common approach may not be straightforward. This means that there are a number of things to consider prior to beginning the process of planning common assessment training. You need to think about:

- barriers to implementing a common assessment framework;
- local factors which might support the implementation.

Considering Potential Barriers to Implementing Common Assessment

The two main barriers to implementing common assessment are the likely to be the following and there are different ways that you can deal with these.

- ***A weak local partnership*** – if the employability partnership is weak, with little working together or valuing and understanding of partners' contributions to employability then the development of common assessment may be problematic. If this is the case in your partnership, more work should be done to strengthen the partnership before embarking on common assessment training. Once the partnership is improving, common assessment training can help strengthen relationships among partners further.
- ***Lack of buy in to the advantages of common assessment*** - If there is little buy in to the potential advantages of common assessment then it will be difficult to get partners to release staff for the training or commit to actions to take it forward after the training. There is a strong business case for developing a common assessment framework, but some partners may need

more convincing. The training ***strengthens*** the case for common assessment among participants but does not ***make*** the case - this needs to have been done already by local partners before they embark on implementing common assessment. Initial meetings with representatives of partner organisations can determine interest in developing a common assessment framework. If there is no firm commitment to developing common assessment these meetings can try to get partners on board by:

- restating the business case;
- highlighting some of the positive outcomes that might be expected from the training including building stronger relationships among partners and increasing the quality of assessment;
- outlining the training plans and the commitment that might be expected from organisations to take this forward.

Considering Local Factors which Support Implementation

On the other hand it is important to identify local factors that might support implementation. If you already have a good employability partnership, characterised by good relationships among partners and perhaps sharing of information already, then the training is likely to be more successful. Additionally, if there is buy-in to the benefits of common assessment at senior level in the key organisations working locally it is likely to be more successful. This buy in needs to cover ***both*** commitment to release staff to attend the training ***and*** commitment to the follow through required. As pointed out above, the training is an important part of implementing a common assessment framework but it is not sufficient on its own. There must be commitment to taking it forward locally.

Other factors which can help to support implementation locally can include the acceptance of a particular approach by all local employability partners. In the training, the model used is the *Needs Led Staged Model* as it offers a simple and unifying approach to assessment.

It can also be helpful, although not essential, if there are some common elements of assessment across employability organisations in the locality already. This could include common assessment documentation or similar methods of assessment.

An agreed approach to sharing information about clients can also be helpful. Although there may be some barriers to this, discussions among partners around issues such as client sign off for sharing information, processes to protect confidentiality and data sharing protocols can help develop processes for sharing information.

Finally, supporting front line staff to implement this is important and partners should commit to awareness raising and training to help staff do this. These 'building blocks' are highlighted in the box below.

Common Assessment Framework: The Building Blocks

1. Signing up across key agencies, ideally through CPP, to a common business case for introducing a Common Assessment Framework.

2. Acceptance of a particular approach to assessment (e.g. the Needs-Led Staged Model).

3. Developing assessment and information gathering documentation which is common to specific sets of services (e.g. within the family of employability services).

4. Developing some core elements of assessment across different service deliverers.

5. Adopting a common approach to securing client sign off to share their information and assessments with other organisations.

6. Developing data sharing protocols between major players (e.g. colleges and SDS) where necessary.

7. Committing to release of front-line staff for training and awareness raising to promote the effective implementation of a Common Assessment Framework.

In addition to using the building blocks, the training will be most effective if it is supplemented by other actions that support the implementation of common assessment. Before embarking on the training it might be helpful to consider what else you can do alongside the training to support the development of common assessment. Suggestions include:

- producing local guidance;
- highlighting good assessment approaches already used locally and developing best practice case studies;
- giving organisations targets;
- piloting projects to show the benefits locally or evaluating the impact of common assessment on local organisations.

Planning the Training

There is scope for flexibility in the implementation of the training so that it best serves your needs. However, there are a number of issues that you need to consider when planning. We provide some guidance on these below.

The Format of the Training

Ideally all of the 7 sessions would be delivered over two days about 1 week apart. A full day allows plenty of time for discussion of local issues and reinforcing understanding. However, we do realise that this represents quite a lot of time commitment and this may not be possible in all areas. This means that you can pick and chose from the sessions to suit your starting point and the time you have available for training. There are options for this:

- Session 1 on the context could be reduced or omitted.
- Some of the large group discussion can be omitted to save time.

It is essential, however that there is a gap between days 1 and 2 as participants need time to reflect on their assessment processes and prepare to feed back on this.

Facilitators

The training course will require one or two facilitators. Ideally, these facilitators will have been engaged in any planning and preparation for the training that has taken place locally. The facilitator's role requires them to:

- welcome the participants and explain the purpose of the training;
- present the material as required;
- make sure that the training keeps to time and that there are sufficient breaks;
- create an informal atmosphere which encourages interaction among the participants;
- facilitate discussion around the key issues;
- encourage participants to draw on their experience, share their current assessment practice and compare this to 'best practice';
- challenge participants' existing assumptions to help them to develop new skills in line with the demands of the assessment framework;
- evaluate the delivery of the training; and
- feed back on any discussion to take common assessment forward.

The facilitators need to have:

- time for preparation;
- reasonable knowledge of the local employability context;

- good understanding of approaches to employability;
- good knowledge of assessment;
- strong understanding of the principles of common assessment and the needs led model of assessment;
- objectivity and capability to value different participants' contributions.

Participants

The training is most appropriate for people working in local employability providers who have ***direct*** experience of assessment (either in their current job or in the past). This can include:

- front line staff working with clients;
- managers who supervise front line staff. Although these may not do much direct assessment now, they should have some experience;
- managers who may not be supervising staff at the front line, but who have good knowledge of the assessment processes used in their organisations and experience of carrying out assessments.

The mix of participants is best decided when you have decided what you want from the training.

- You may want to train all of the front line staff in your area. In this case you can choose whether to restrict the training to purely front line workers or a mix of front line managers and front line workers.
- You may want to train front line managers to 'cascade' the training to their own organisations. In this case you can invite managers from a range of organisations. The training sessions can be cascaded this way, but it is important to ensure that all of the people doing the training in their own organisations feel confident about their ability to fulfil the facilitator's role outlined above.

In each of these cases all participants should commit to attending on ***both*** days.

Size of the Group

The ideal size of group for training is 10 to 20 people depending on the number of facilitators available.

Venue

Ideally the venue should be accessible and central. At this venue there should be:

- space for break out groups;
- facilities to show powerpoint presentations;

- flipcharts or boards to write out key points from group discussions;
- facilities for catering or shops nearby.

Evaluation

Evaluation can be used to assess the delivery of the training and identify issues which may affect taking common assessment forward in the area. A sample evaluation form is included in this documentation, but it this can be adapted to suit your own needs.

A Checklist

A checklist of ‘dos’ and ‘don’ts’ for planning the delivery of the training is provided in the box below.

DO ensure there is commitment from partner organisations.

DO consider the local factors which may help or hinder implementation before planning the training.

DO ensure facilitators have time to prepare to deliver the training.

DO highlight the purpose of the training among prospective participants and what they will be expected to contribute in terms of time and effort.

DO adapt the training to suit your circumstances.

DON’T embark on this if your partnership is not functioning well.

DON’T invite people who have little experience of assessment.

DON’T let people come if they can commit to attending only part of the training.

DON’T expect that this is all you will need to do to implement a common assessment framework in your area.

THE TRAINING MATERIALS

COMMON ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK TRAINING

Session 1: Setting the Context

Session 1: Setting the Context

Participants need to have a clear understanding of the policy and local contexts in which common assessment can be developed. The key big messages are the following.

- Although unemployment has been falling since the early 1990s, action to tackle worklessness has risen up the political agenda both in Westminster and Edinburgh in more recent times. The recession has brought this even more sharply into focus.
- In terms of policy on unemployment, big changes are being introduced making seeking work more of a requirement for all workless people. This will present both opportunities and challenges for employability service providers and will make working in partnership ever more important.

Learning Outcomes

- **Understand the policy context in which common assessment is to be developed**
- **Understand the key characteristics of the workless population**
- **Understand the key challenges for carrying out assessments on these groups and the main opportunities to be exploited.**

The suggested length of time for this session is 75 - 90 minutes

Rationale for Common Assessment Training

- Employability achieved as a result of a combination of factors which enable people to progress into employment
- A range of services therefore can make a contribution to enhancing employability
- People need
  - Easy access to these services
  - In a timely fashion
- Service providers need to work together to identify a client's starting point and the services that would best help
- Common assessment can contribute to this

1

Introductions

Ask all of the participants to introduce themselves, saying what their job is.

1. The reason everyone is here is because you have a desire to improve the effectiveness of the services you provide.
2. We know a bit more now about what is needed to achieve effective services.
3. As employability results from a combination of factors which enable people to progress towards employment, into employment and stay in employment then a range of services can make a contribution to enhancing employability.
4. If these services are to be effective people need easy access to these in a timely fashion.
5. Service providers need to work together to identify clients' starting points and the services that are most appropriate for their needs, when the person presents to the service.
6. Having a framework for common assessment can help to improve the effectiveness of employability services, because it can help more accurately identify the starting point and the services that could best help.

Worklessness Rising Up UK Policy Agenda

- **Worklessness now at highest point ever on UK policy agenda**
- **Before the recession, despite buoyant labour markets still over 4 million claiming DWP benefits in UK**
- **Persistent core of jobless**
- **Government wants to reduce this:**
  - **To cut public spend**
  - **To create a more effective supply of labour**
- **However, this will be more challenging due to the recession**

1

1. Tackling worklessness is a key policy goal for both the UK and the Scottish Governments. This has been brought into sharper focus by the recession, but even before this the concentration of worklessness in particular groups was a concern.
2. This was evident because despite a decade of growing employment - there were still over 4million claiming benefits in the UK before the recession.
3. The government wants to reduce worklessness to reduce public spend and create a more effective labour market – in particular a more effective supply of labour.
4. But changing economic conditions will make this a more challenging task. There have been increases in unemployment and there are fewer jobs.

Changes at DWP

- **Targets:**
  - **To reduce IB stock by 1 million by 2015**
  - **To reduce lone parents claiming benefits by 300,000**
- **Introduction of Employment Support Allowance (ESA) which will involve over time significant shift of IB and lone parents to JSA**
  - **Typical client will come increasingly from harder to help group**
- **More demanding 'regime' for JSA clients**
- **Down the line Flexible New Deal will involve big contracts of big organisations to work with JSA clients unemployed for 12+ months**

2

1. Within the DWP, here is now greater focus on the 'inactive' population. Government targets are to reduce the proportion of lone parents and people on IB claiming benefits. To date, efforts with this population have focused on reducing the flow onto IB, but there will be greater effort to reduce the number of existing claimants, or the stock of IB claimants, in the coming years.
2. The introduction of the ESA means greater requirements to participate in work focused activity will increase the numbers in the 'hard to help groups' in scope for our services. These groups have greater barriers to employment.
3. All clients, but particularly those on JSA, will face a more demanding regime with increasing requirements to look for work and increasing risk of sanctions.
4. The introduction of the Flexible New Deal means that Jobcentre Plus will focus on the JSA clients who have been unemployed for a shorter time, but will contract with providers to work with those who have been unemployed for more than 12 months.

Scottish Policy Context

- Scottish Government committed to Workforce Plus and MCMC agenda
- Supports 'whole government' approach to economic development and employment issues
  - Wide range of services need to play in - health, housing, education, community learning and development, etc
  - All levels of government and its agencies
- Funding issues down the line – but not far!
  - FSF and EU funding can't be relied upon beyond March 2010
  - Must start making case now for CPP to support employability

3

1. Although there has been a change in government, the Scottish Government is committed to the principles of Workforce Plus and the NEET (now MCMC) agenda established by the previous administration.
2. The Government's approach is to place the economy at the heart of government intervention. To tackle worklessness effectively a range of public sector agencies must play a part. These organisations have a role to play in terms of identifying clients who could benefit from support to help them to get back to work and also helping people to overcome any barriers to work they may have.
3. Funding for action on worklessness has usually come through funding streams such as the EU and Fairer Scotland Fund. In the future there will be more of an expectation that mainstream funding will be committed, most likely through Community Planning Partnerships (CPPs).
4. Given the emphasis on the whole government approach to economic issues and the emphasis on partnership within CPPs, working together will become increasingly important.

Increased Focus on Cost Effectiveness

- **Both UK and Scottish governments believe plenty of money for employability services – broadly defined**
- **Not enough value for money from the services**
- **Need to be much more joined up in terms of procuring services and measuring performance**
- **Also need to be more joined up at operational level**
  - **More sharing of good practice**
  - **Better working relationships between different organisations with same clients**
  - **Less duplication**

4

1. *Workforce Plus,* the Government's employability strategy identifies how a range of funding streams contribute to raising employability and tackling worklessness and that broadly there is enough money available.
2. But Government argues services could be improved – to be more cost effective and deliver better outcomes – and therefore better value for money.
3. At a strategic level, there could be better joining up to procure services to reduce competition and duplication and there could be better measurement of performance – the achievement of outcomes.
4. At an operational level, effectiveness might also be improved by improving joint working across organisations delivering worklessness services at a local level, through, for example, more sharing of good practice, better working together among organisations with clients with similar needs and less duplication of services.

Linking Employability and Skills

- **Better links between employability and skills services major policy driver in England – and going that way in Scotland**
- **Key arguments are that:**
  - **Employers need more skilled labour**
  - **Unemployed people need more skills to get better jobs and to sustain them**
- **Developments include:**
  - **Potentially more collaborative working relationship between JobCentre Plus and Skills Development Scotland**
  - **Skills Health Checks for people making claims for JSA**

5

1. Raising employability is no longer just about reducing economic exclusion. The latest policy documents are highlighting the need for the skills and inclusion agendas to be drawn closer together.
2. We need to raise overall skill levels in the UK to compete more effectively in the international economy. We also need to help people get the skills to help them get a better job eventually and progress in the labour market.
3. There is likely to be more emphasis on identifying skills gaps among clients and what they need to do to improve their skills. Jobcentre Plus and Skills Development Scotland are likely to be key agencies here. Clients' skills needs are likely to be identified earlier, at the point of claim and working together will be important to effectively address skills gaps.

Worklessness – Still a Big Problem

- **The numbers remain high – over half a million workless in Scotland**
- **There have been big declines in some groups such as lone parents and people on JSA – but much less so for IB claimants**
- **Over half of the total workless on inactive benefits**
- **Securing further declines difficult because of recession – good old days temporarily suspended**
- **If labour market slackens and employers find recruitment easier – it makes our jobs more difficult**

6

1. It is important to look at the problems in more detail.
2. In Scotland, the number of people worklessness remains high. At August, 2008 there were over half a million people on benefit.
3. Until the recession there are have been declines – particularly among lone parents and people on JSA.
4. But over half of the country's workless are on inactive benefits – the former IB population.
5. There is no doubt that securing further declines will be more difficult because of the recession. Previous reductions were against a background of growth and rising employment
6. **Large group discussion question: What are the implications of these trends for your work with clients?** The facilitators should try to draw from the discussion key points around the ***opportunities***:
    - Worklessness is high up the employability agenda and becoming more 'everybody's responsibility' so greater potential to reach new clients; but
    - greater demand on services.

And the ***threats***

- More challenging client group and operating environment;
- The need for services to work more efficiently and effectively which might involve more partnership working.

Characteristics of ESA Clients

- **We know a bit about characteristics of formerly IB clients and these are often challenging**
- **Health issues are a usually a major feature**
- **Many will be older people**
- **Many will have embedded multiple and complex needs**
- **Most will have been claiming IB for a significant time – some for 5 or more years**

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1. The majority of client group are not on JSA. We know from experience that these people are often the most difficult to help because of their personal characteristics and the barriers to employment they face like the benefits trap, low confidence or poor work history.
2. Poor health is a major characteristic – both physical and mental.
3. Many are older people and may face problems like discrimination.
4. Many will have complex needs.
5. Large numbers will have been out of work for a long time. This reflects the historical tendency to leave people on IB without employability intervention and also generally:
    - worsening health in unemployment which makes return to work harder;
    - increased detachment from the labour market with the duration of unemployment.
6. **Large group discussion question – How are these characteristics reflected in your locality – what is the nature of the client group here?**
7. The facilitator should note these characteristics down on a board or flipchart.

Issues for Assessment

- **A simple definition of assessment is that it is about identifying clients' needs and strengths**
- **What are the key challenges for staff carrying out assessments with clients with these characteristics?**

10

1. At its simplest definition, assessment is a way of identifying clients' needs and strengths. But this is not a simple process and can be challenging.
2. **Small group discussion** - For this discussion split the participants into small groups (3 to 5 people). Look at the characteristics you have identified. Now discuss the question on the slide (for up to 20 minutes). Get the groups to feed back.
3. During the feedback it is important to try to draw out the most important challenges. For example:
   - Clients who have a range of complex needs can be difficult to assess and this can take time.
   - It can be helpful to have some background information from referring agencies but this is not always available.
   - Not all staff feel confident about assessing clients with complex needs.
   - It can be difficult to identifying appropriate support.

COMMON ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK TRAINING

Session 2: Approaches to Employability

Session 2: Approaches to Employability

Session 1 briefly referred to the necessity to work together to ensure services are available to clients at the time that they need them. In a number of localities across Scotland a 'pipeline' approach to tackling worklessness has been developed. The purpose of the approach is to achieve the integration of the necessary services in a specific locality. Even if localities do not have a formalised pathway they are likely to have arrangements in place to ensure that there are services to help clients at all stages in their progression to employment, from when they are very distant from the labour market, right up to the time when they are employment ready.

Considering where assessment plays into these arrangements is an important aspect of developing an effective common assessment framework. This session will allow participants to consider this.

Learning Outcomes

- **Increase understanding of the purpose and nature of the employability 'pipeline' approaches.**
- **Consider how common assessment might improve the effectiveness of this approach.**

The suggested length of time for this session is 75 - 90 minutes

Service Delivery Challenges

- **Probably a large number of clients with serious issues**
- **Clients are nonetheless very varied (see chart 1)**
- **As a consequence, some clients needs many services and others only one**
- **The challenges are:**
  - **To ensure all relevant services available when needed**
  - **To allocate or signpost clients to services they need when they need them**
  - **To create a service delivery framework which makes it easy for clients to find the right service and move between them**
- **Need to create the required conditions that will take longer term unemployed clients into sustainable employment (see chart 2)**

1

1. We have seen from the previous session that an increasing proportion of the client group are people more distant from the labour market and who have been unemployed longer. It is likely that these clients will have serious issues including lack of basic skills, health, addictions etc. The chart overleaf based on some research of the IB population by Glasgow University shows that few clients have only 1 barrier and the majority have 4 or more.
2. The next chart shows, however, that clients are vary varied - there is no such thing as ‘the unemployed’.
3. This means clients need different services depending on their individual characteristics and barriers.
4. This brings up a number of issues or challenges for employability services.
5. To address these challenges a number of areas in Scotland have created service delivery pipelines or pathways to allow clients to ***engage*** in services, ***progress*** and ***sustain*** employment.

Chart 1: INCIDENCE OF MULTIPLE BARRIERS

Number of Significant Barriers	%
0	5
1	14
2	12
3	13
4	28
5 or more	28

2

1. There are few clients with zero barriers or only 1 barrier.
2. Over half have 4 or more.

Chart 2: CLIENT VARIABILITY

Barriers	Clients				
	1	2	3	4	5
Low skills	✓			✓	✓
No qualifications				✓	✓
Poor health				✓	✓
Criminal record				✓	
Addiction				✓	✓
Area stigma			✓		✓
Low esteem					✓
Carer		✓			✓

3

1. There is no thing as ‘the unemployed’.
2. Client barriers mean that clients will have complex needs. This raises issues about assessing these needs effectively and making sure these needs are met in the most appropriate way.

An Example Of A Pipeline Approach

- **A number of localities are adopting ‘pipeline’ approaches**
- **This can help**
  - **Joining up of services and plugging gaps**
  - **Cater for client diversity**
- ***North Lanarkshire’s Working* staged model designed to**
  - **Assist organisations to understand their role in the pipeline to work**
  - **Ensure key workers are clear when a referral should be made and that client gets appropriate services at the right time**
  - **Allow agencies to measure how they help people progress towards employment**
- **This builds on the 4 stages used to track clients developed by Workforce Plus (see next slide)**

4

1. The challenge is to move a client from a stage when they are not job ready to where they are employable and ready to be employed. In Scotland, a range of localities have developed a pipeline of services to show the role that each of the services plays in moving people along the pipeline.
2. This can help join services up and plug gaps and also cater for the diverse needs of clients.
3. An example of an approach used in Lanarkshire can be examined which builds on the 4 stages used to track clients in Workforce Plus.
4. The model is designed to ensure clients get the best support at the right time for them.

LANARKSHIRE'S STAGED MODEL

Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4
Not job ready, no routine or social connections	Not job ready – barrier removal	Job ready – work preparation	Employed
Not able to sustain employment and undertakes a series of activities to engender routine with others	*Not ready to get or sustain employment and undertakes one or more activities around job critical skills gaps: key work skills, attitudinal skills, personal skills or practical skills*	*Ready to get and sustain employment and undertakes one or more activities to access the right opportunity and may continue to undertake activities to address skills gaps*	*Enter employment and undertake one or more activities to support sustained employment*

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1. At the first stage, clients are viewed as not job ready and they may have no routine or social connections. Services at this stage recognise that the person is not ready for work and may not be considering work and therefore may offer support to get into a routine or develop their social contacts.
2. At stage 2, the person is still viewed as not job ready, but their barriers to employment may have been identified and they may be considering work. Services recognise that the person needs help and support to address these barriers. Different services will be more or less placed to address these barriers depending on the services they provide.
3. At stage 3, the person is job ready but may need some help to identify the right opportunities and continue to address skills gaps. Services at this stage will have good knowledge of the labour market and relationships with employers.
4. At stage 4, the person has entered employment, but may need some support to sustain that employment. Services may provide in work support.

Assessment and this Approach

Consider these questions for your local area

- **Is such a pipeline identifiable?**
- **At what parts of the pipeline does assessment take place?**
- **How might assessment change as the client progresses towards a job?**

10

1. **Small group discussion**. For this discussion split the participants into small groups (3-5 people) to consider these questions for 15 to 20 minutes. Then get them to feed back.
2. During the feedback it is important to try to facilitate the discussion around:
    - Assessment might be used to identify ***strengths*** and ***needs*** around clients' skills and knowledge and attitude as these relate to employment.
    - It should help make sure clients go to the service that is ***appropriate*** to their needs and right for them.
    - Assessment might be an ***ongoing*** process to identify progress and distance travelled.
    - Some clients will need ***more*** assessment and some ***less*** depending on the complexity of the issues they are facing. It is important it is ***needs led***.
    - ***In depth*** assessment will only be needed for people with specific issues that need more investigation.
    - Although all organisations will assess, some will have specific expertise around assessment of specific issues. Among the participants who is good at assessing what?

Developing Appropriate Referrals

Know what is appropriate for different clients depending on the ‘stage’ they are at

- **Stage 1 –** ***Not job ready no routine or social connections***
  - **Counselling, guidance, advice, personal development, health intervention**
- **Stage 2 –** ***Not job ready, barrier removal***
  - **Guidance and advice, personal development, childcare, debt, money advice, literacy and numeracy, health interventions**
- **Stage 3 –** ***Job ready, work preparation***
  - **Vocational programme, job search, work experience, childcare**
- **Stage 4 –** ***Employed***
  - **In work support, job coaching**

8

1. Once the stage that the client is at is identified they can be allocated to the right service for them.
2. In the Lanarkshire case certain types of service are seen as more or less appropriate at different stages.
3. For example at stage 1 as clients may need support to consider work they may take up counselling, guidance or advice.
4. At stage 2 there is greater emphasis on services that can overcome barriers to work.
5. At stage 3, there is support to develop more focused vocational skills or to look for work.
6. At stage 4, when in a job there are in work services that aim to sustain employment.

Looking at your Approach

Consider these questions for your local area

- **To what extent are your services working well together to move clients from being not ready for work to employed?**
  - **What are the strengths of your approach?**
  - **Where could there be improvements?**

10

1. A perfect example of an employability pipeline or pathway would deliver referrals of people not job ready into the pipeline and through good working together ensure people progressed through it and came out at the other end ready for work. All services would be joined up and there would be good sharing of information. Before going to look at assessment in more detail in the next sessions, it is helpful to consider the strengths and weaknesses of current approaches in your area.
2. Small group discussion. Split the participants into small groups (3-5 people) to consider these questions. Get them to feed back on the key points from their discussions.
3. During the feed back it will be important to facilitate discussion around:
   - What is working well
   - What could be improved
   - What are the challenges to getting these improvements
   - Which of the challenges would be easier to overcome?

COMMON ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK TRAINING

Session 3: The Process of Common Assessment

Session 3: The Process of Common Assessment

There may be fears among some participants that implementing a common assessment framework will mean the introduction of new assessment methods. This is not the case. A common assessment framework aims to ***build on*** the assessment processes already used by individual organisations, to develop an assessment and intervention process that makes the most effective use of staff time and eliminates assessment overload and duplication for clients. An important step towards having a common framework is having a common understanding of what a good assessment process is and being able to evaluate your own practice against this. This session helps participants to review their own processes and also introduces the needs led model of assessment.

Learning Outcomes

- **Increase understanding of the rationale for common assessment.**
- **Increase understanding of assessment as a process and the principles of effective assessment.**
- **Understand the Needs Led Model of Assessment**

The suggested time for this session is 75 - 90 minutes

The Bottom Line

POSITIVE CLIENT OUTCOMES INCREASED IF:

- **Employability strengths and needs are assessed correctly**
- **Individuals are referred to the right organisations**
- **These organisations address their needs in the most effective way**
- **Everyone signs up to this approach!**

1

1. It is important to reiterate the value of assessment. People will get more benefit from employability services and better outcomes might be achieved if their strengths and needs are assessed accurately and they are referred to the right organisation for them.
2. Across employability providers the process will work better if these organisations are aware of the assessment processes used by the other partners (this applies whether services are engaged in a formal 'pipeline' approach or not). This helps to ensure that effective referrals are made and clients get the service they need.
3. Everyone needs to buy into this way of working!
4. Before proceeding to look a bit more closely at assessment it is helpful to hear how participants define assessment.
5. **In a large group consider participants' definitions of assessment by asking *what does 'assessment' mean to you?*** Key aspects of the participants' definition can be written up on a flipchart or board.

DEFINITION OF ASSESSMENT

1. **PROCESS for gathering information and evidence to identify STRENGTHS and development needs of the individual client to ENABLE them to commit to ACHIEVABLE goals and successful sustainable outcomes**

2. **It should involve agreed LANGUAGE and procedures that are clear to both client and partner organisations. Building rapport and establishing a RELATIONSHIP are key to engagement and empowerment**

2

1. This is a useful definition of assessment (it comes from the Needs Led Model which will be looked at in more detail towards the end of the session).
2. Looking at this definition, this PROCESS is both ***within*** and ***with*** other partners; therefore assessment can be both parallel and sequential.
3. When we talk about identifying STRENGTHS and development NEEDS we could look at past and current barriers. It is important that this is done ***with*** the client and that the process is focused on identifying needs as they relate to employability.

    - ENABLING means that the client has ownership of the process of assessment and feels that it is part of their personal planning.
    - RELATIONSHIPS are characterised by trust, fairness, openness, realism and objectivity.
    - Clients feel ENGAGED and EMPOWERED by taking part.

4. **The points written up on the flip chart relating to the participants' definitions can be looked at again.** ***How did the participants' definition(s) fit with this definition? Where were the similarities or differences?***

Why Assess?

- **Identify starting point**
- **Develop an understanding of client needs and strengths**
- **Identify objectives**
- **Match resources to needs –allow the most effective use of professional time**
- **Measure progress – hard and soft outcomes and distance travelled**
- **Identify additional needs and barriers as the process continues**
- **Any others?**

3

1. We are now going to look at assessment in more detail.
2. It is important to reflect on ***why*** we assess in employability.

    - To identify the starting point on our work with clients.
    - To develop an understanding of client needs and strengths. This can take time – but it should be thought of as a shared process with the client.
    - To identify relevant objectives – to plan how the client can achieve personal goals.
    - To match resources to need to identify the most effective use of professional time. Assessment should identify which professional is best placed to meet this client's needs most effectively to maximise resources. This might require referral to another agency.
    - To measure the starting point from where to measure progress and distance travelled.
    - To identify additional needs and barriers. Assessment is, therefore, an ongoing process.

What Is Assessed

- **Assessment in employability to ascertain progress in relation to components of employability:**
  - **Skills**
  - **Attributes**
  - **Attitudes**
  - **Knowledge**
- **Workforce Plus suggests assessment of stage on pathway to sustainable employment**
  - **Not job ready, no routine or social connections**
  - **Not job ready, barrier removal**
  - **Job ready, work preparation**
  - **Employment**

5

1. We can think about ***what*** is assessed.
2. In relation to employability there is an interest in a client's skills, attributes, attitudes and knowledge.
3. It may also be about deciding whether the person is job ready or not.
4. Together, this can determine:
   - What support is needed.
   - Who is best placed to deliver this.

Who Carries Out The Assessment

	Pros	Cons
Client	Client best knowledge of his own issues Saves time	Getting 'truth'; can be affected by mood; needs self awareness
Joint (client and worker)	Overcomes language difficulties; increases objectivity	Needs openness, staff may be influence
Worker only	May be able to identify progress client misses	Potential for bias and misjudgement; time
Third Party	Increases objectivity	Potential for bias and misjudgement; time

9

1. It is also important to think about ***who*** does the assessment.
2. The involvement of different individuals has pros and cons.
3. These are issues participants need to be aware of when planning their own processes and assessing referrals from other agencies.

How Assessment Is Carried Out

- **Range of methods can be used including**
  - **Observation**
  - **Interviews**
  - **Questionnaires**
  - **Specific tools -e.g. Rickter Scale**
  - **Any others?**
- **All have pros and cons**
- **To assess employability effectively a range of methods will be needed to gain sufficient evidence of needs and strengths**
- **But principle of minimum intervention for maximum outcome should prevail**

6

1. It is important to look at ***how*** is assessment carried out. A range of different methods of assessment can be used including:
   - observation – how does a person act in different situations, for example interacting with the employability adviser, or employers?;
   - interviews;
   - questionnaires or forms;
   - or specific tools like vocational tools or Rickter Scale, for example.

2. All methods will have pros and cons for different clients and contexts. For example:
   - some clients might find it difficult to complete written assessment forms or questionnaires.
   - some might be reluctant to open up in interviews.
   - some might find it difficult to reflect on their own needs (or express these).

3. It is important to select a method most appropriate to a client's strengths and needs. In the employability context a ***range*** of methods may be needed to get an accurate picture.

4. It is important to do only as much assessment that is needed to identify needs for each client. Most clients feel they have been assessed enough!

Selection Of Specific Methods

- **Is the method you choose**
  - **Going to help you assess employability needs and strengths more accurately and effectively?**
  - **Reliable – works across different clients and assessors?**
  - **Valid - measures something that will change as a result of your intervention?**
  - **Going to fit with time and resources you have available to assess?**
  - **Appropriate for beneficiaries?**
    - **Asks the right questions appropriately?**
    - **Clear and client friendly?**

7

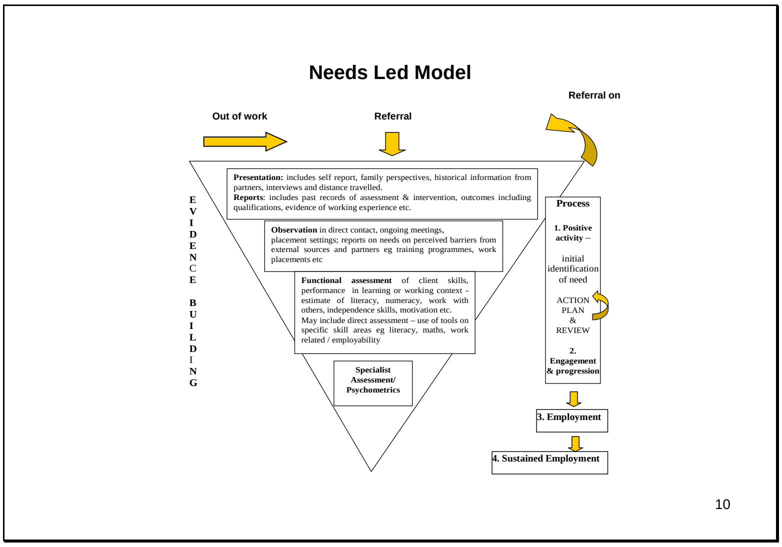
1. When choosing specific methods there are a number of issues to consider.
2. This in effect is a checklist for selecting a method. Is the method:
   - Going to help you assess employability more accurately and effectively?
   - Going to work across different assessors and with different clients?
   - Valid for employability?
   - Going to fit with the time you have to assess?
   - Asking the questions in an acceptable way for your clients?
3. **Think about the methods you use in your own organisation. Do they tick these boxes?**

When Assessment Takes Place

- **All projects need a baseline position and a review of progress – initial and ongoing assessment**
- **When review happens can vary depending on**
  - **The programme**
  - **The timescale**
  - **Client characteristics**
  - **Assessment method**
- ***Initial* assessment to determine**
  - **Needs and strengths**
  - **Stage on pipeline**
  - **Where best placed to help**
- ***Ongoing* assessment used to**
  - **Measure progress and review goals**
  - **Assessing ongoing support needs**

8

1. We also need to think about ***when*** to assess. All projects need to assess at the beginning to get a baseline position from whence they can measure progress.
2. When the review takes place depends on the type of intervention - is this a short or long term process? How do clients respond to assessment? What method is used?
3. Probably most critical is the early assessment as this determines whether the programme or intervention can help.
4. Ongoing assessment is useful to check progress and see how things change.
5. The ***needs led model of assessment*** draws together all of the elements of an effective approach we have been discussing and is presented on the next slide.



1. The model shows that the aim of assessment is gathering information and making use of available evidence in a structured and progressive manner to build understanding of the client's strengths and needs.
2. All clients will not need to be taken through all stages of the process. The key is to develop a robust assessment to identify and address a client's need. For many clients it may be perfectly possible to proceed with client engagement and writing of an Action Plan at the ***Presentation Stage*** so long as adequate and accurate information on the client has been collated and communicated. This is more likely where there is effective prior assessment and good quality information transfer. Thus, a common assessment framework with a high degree of sharing will be valuable.
3. If further information is required, the ***Observation Stage*** allows a fuller picture to be built from direct contact with the training provider or other relevant partners. This allows for greater confidence in the planning process where information gathered supports and reinforces initial understandings and serves to build an accurate picture of client need.
4. The ***Functional Assessment Stage*** follows on from ongoing experience of the client in practical training and working settings to establish basic skills, social competence, motivation etc. Ongoing contact with the client should continue to feed into a Review Process, with updating of goals; it provides further evidence to confirm initial understanding of client need, or to offer new understandings. Outcomes from intervention become the critical evidence in

this continuing process, ultimately aiming to bring about a positive sustainable outcome for the client.

5. According to this needs-led, staged model, further investigation using ***Specialist Assessment*** tools should ***only*** be required when all other opportunities to build a picture of client strengths and needs have been utilised. This is most likely to be when more information is needed to clarify the presence of a barrier specific to the individual’s situation. It may involve further internal detailed assessment or external assessment by specialists, when all other information sources have been drawn upon.

PRINCIPLES OF EFFECTIVE NEEDS LED ASSESSMENT

- **Done to identify individual needs to maximise skills and promote improved outcomes**
- **Process that promotes minimal effective involvement of relevant partners**
- **Staged, to ensure coordination and collaborative working**
- **Requires proactive sharing – through good quality information transfer and agreed protocols**
- **Recognises centrality of the client and requires confidentiality issues to be addressed at the outset**
- **Uses specialist roles only where roles explicit and agreed**
- **Benefits from the shared development of a shared model that ensures that each partner recognises the interdependence of roles**

12

1. It is critical that participants understand the principles of effective needs led assessment and implement them into their processes.
2. There needs to be buy in to the purpose – ultimately it is to improve client outcomes.
3. It is a process that promotes the minimum effective involvement of relevant partners.
4. Employability services need to know who our partners are and the role they can play.
5. The process is staged to ensure coordination and collaborative working.
6. It requires proactive sharing.
7. Confidentiality issues are addressed with the client when they set out on this process.
8. Specialist roles are only used when there is a need for them.
9. Working together in events like this training allows participants to develop a model together that increases understanding of the interdependence of our partners' roles.
10. **Large Groups Discussion – How closely do you think this model describes what is happening locally?**

COMMON ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK TRAINING

SESSION 4: Homework Task

Session 4: Homework Task

This session is a short session to tell the participants about the home work task to be completed for the next day’s training.

The suggested length of time for this session is 10 minutes

DAY 2 HOMEWORK TASK

1. **Think about the assessment process used in your service/organisation**
   - **What are you trying to achieve by carrying out assessment?**
   - **Who does the assessment?**
   - **What methods are used?**
   - **How long does this take?**

2. **You can use the grid below to record your answers for the next session**

1

The next day's training will give participants the chance to hear about the ways participants currently do their assessment. The aim is to increase knowledge and understanding of the methods and to assess similarities and differences. It is important to encourage participants to think about their own methods and bring this information to the next session.

Participants' 'homework' for the next session is to answer a few questions about the methods used in their organisation and prepare a very brief presentation about these methods.

DAY 2 HOMEWORK TASK

Purpose of assessment	
Who assesses	
What method (s) used	
How long does this take	

2

1. For the presentation participants should explain:
    - The purpose of assessment
    - Who does the assessment
    - What method(s) is/are used
    - How long assessment takes
2. The presentation should be brief: No longer than 5 minutes!

COMMON ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK TRAINING

SESSION 5:LOOKING AT THE ASSESSMENT METHODS USED

Session 5: Looking at the Assessment Methods Used

One of the key aims of the training is to get participants to develop a better understanding of how different partners work on assessment. This is essential to develop effective ongoing referral processes and to encourage progression towards employment. In Day 2 participants should be encouraged to take an active role in developing this understanding by sharing information about their assessment processes. Day 2 consists of:

- Feedback on the homework task to collect information about how participants' organisations assess in a standard format.
- An exercise to give participants a set of questions to evaluate their processes and methods. The aim will be to develop a set of criteria necessary for effective assessment that all organisations working together locally can work to.
- A session to consider how common assessment could be implemented locally – what are the factors that support implementation and what work against it?

Learning Outcomes

- **Participants develop their knowledge and understanding of other participants' assessment methods.**
- **Participants have a greater understanding of how they can contribute to a common assessment process locally.**

The suggested length of time for this session is 90 minutes

A Reminder Of The Homework Task

- **Think about the assessment process used in your service/organisation**
  - **What are you trying to achieve by carrying out assessment?**
  - **Who does the assessment?**
  - **What methods are used?**
  - **How long does this take?**

1

1. All of the participants get ***up to 5 minutes*** to feed back on their assessment methods.
2. The other participants take notes on this and have the opportunity to ask questions.
3. Notes on a flipchart around the key general points can be taken by the facilitator.
4. Discussion around similarities and differences can also be encouraged especially around:

   - purpose of assessment in the different organisations
   - the value placed upon it
   - methods used
   - the way information is shared

COMMON ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK TRAINING

Session 6: Reflecting Further on Assessment Methods Used

Session 6: Reflecting Further on the Assessment Methods Used

This session carries on from the previous session and allows the participants to discuss what they have heard about the methods used locally in more detail.

Learning Outcomes

- **Participants have a greater understanding some of the strengths and weaknesses of assessment methods used locally.**
- **Participants have increased understanding of what needs to happen to improve these processes and develop a common assessment framework.**

The suggested length if time for this session is 75-90 minutes

Reflecting On Our Approach

1. **Think about the assessment process used currently. Answer these questions in your group. Be prepared to feedback to the larger group.**
   - **Are client needs and strengths being identified?**
   - **Are clients being matched to the right service?**
   - **Is their progress measured?**
   - **Is the principle of minimum intervention for maximum outcome being applied?**

2. **Think about:**
   - **What is there that is already working well?**
   - **Where is there room for improvement?**

1

1. This session is designed to get the participants to think further about the strengths and weaknesses of assessment in their locality.
2. They need to think about what they have heard in session 5 and think about the ***overall*** assessment process currently being practiced by all of the employability organisations.
3. Discussion together can pick out where the process is working well and where there need to be improvements. In the feedback it is important to consider

   - what is already working well;
   - where there is room for improvement;
   - how close the process matches the needs led model.

COMMON ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK TRAINING

SESSION 7: Implementing a Common Assessment Framework

Session 7: Implementing a Common Assessment Framework

In this final session it is important to emphasise the benefits of implementing a common assessment framework – the bottom line is that outcomes are improved. The previous session may have raised some issues around what needs to happen to make this work locally. This session aims to allow participants to make some suggestions to tackle these issues and some of the practical issues associated with implementing the approach locally.

Learning Outcomes

- **Understand how joint working in employability and outcomes can be improved through implementing a common assessment framework.**

The suggested time for this session is 45 minutes

Implementing Common Assessment

- Understanding the needs led model and implementing common assessment should improve outcomes
- A common assessment framework should deliver a range of benefits
  - The number of assessments clients go through should be minimised
  - Transitions to services should be improved
  - Resources should be used more effectively
  - Outcomes should be better sustained

1

1. The bottom line is that approaches will be more effective.
2. Locally, a common assessment framework should deliver a number of benefits including:
   - minimising the burden of assessment on clients;
   - improving transitions between services; and
   - using resources more effectively because fewer clients go to an inappropriate service or staff time is used more effectively.

Common Assessment Building Blocks

- **Signing up across key agencies to a common business case for introducing CAF**
- **Acceptance of a particular approach to assessment (e.g. needs led model)**
- **Developing assessment and information gathering documentation which is common to specific sets of services**
- **Developing core elements of assessment**
- **Adopting a common approach to securing client sign off to share their information and assessments with other organisations**
- **Developing data sharing protocols where necessary**
- **Committing to release of front line staff to training and awareness raising**

1

1. This slide shows the key elements of a template of a local implementation plan.
2. This gives some guidance around the ‘building blocks’ that need to be in place to take forward common assessment locally.
3. **Discuss: How many of these building blocks are in place?**
    - **Is there buy in from the local agencies?**
    - **Is the needs led model acceptable?**
    - **Could common assessment documentation be developed? And common core elements of assessment among organisations working with similar client groups?**
    - **Could an approach to client sign off be introduced?**
    - **Could (some) data be shared?**

COMMON ASSESSMENT TRAINING EVALUATION FORM

The training is designed to allow participants to reflect on assessment and develop a framework for considering what effective assessment is.

1. To what extent did you feel you increased understanding of how a framework for common assessment?

Very much		Quite a lot		A little		Not at all	

Comments……………………………………………………………………………………
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2. To what extent did you feel you learned more about other partner organisations' assessment methods?

Very much		Quite a lot		A little		Not at all	

Comments……………………………………………………………………………………
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3. To what extent did you feel there was discussion of what needs to be done locally to make a CAF happen?

Very much		Quite a lot		A little		Not at all	

Comments……………………………………………………………………………………
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How could the training be improved?

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What else is needed to help implement Common Assessment locally?

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