

COMMON ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK TRAINING

Session 1: Setting the Context

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**

Worklessness Rising Up UK Policy Agenda

- **Worklessness now at highest point ever on UK policy agenda**
- **Even 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**

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**

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**
- **But 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**

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 agencies with same clients**
 - **Less duplication**

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**

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 the total on workless on inactive benefits**
- **Securing further declines difficult because of credit crunch – good old days temporarily suspended**
- **If labour market slackens and employers find recruitment easier – it makes our jobs more difficult**

Characteristics of ESA Clients

- **We know a bit about characteristics of formerly IB clients and these are often challenging**
- **Health issues are 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**

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?**