

City Deal Working Together: Project Toolkit



Contents

1. About this project toolkit	3
2. Building the management and partnership framework	6
3. Place Based Employment Support	9
4. Community Support for Work	14
5. Financial Incentives	19
6. Sustainability and Project Legacy	21
7. Contact Details	22

Cover Photo: Working Together A Celebration of Success Event

1. About this project toolkit

1.1 Introduction

We would like as many people as possible to share in the learning from the City Deal 'Working Together' project. 'Working Together' was a five-year demonstration project aimed to reduce welfare dependency and increase employment in areas of high unemployment in the Black Country, West Midlands.

The toolkit has been designed to support practitioners and other interested parties to implement, manage and deliver similar place-based employment support projects. It contains information on the structure and component parts of the Working Together project, along with key learning which can support the development of future projects.

The information should be read alongside the final evaluation report and other resources¹.

1.2 Overview of the Working Together Project

The City Deal 'Working Together' project formed part of the wider Black Country City Deal proposal between government and the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and Black Country Local Authorities. It was initiated by the LEP as part of the devolution deal.

Originally referred to as the Housing, Jobs and Prosperity Demonstration Project, the purpose of the project was to 'test new ways to reduce unemployment in local areas of deprivation' using learning from the US Jobs Plus programme. The project title became Working Together to reflect the collaborative nature of the project.

The geographical areas to be targeted were identified through a robust assessment by the Local Authorities based on multiple deprivation indices:

- Bilston East Ward in Wolverhampton
- Darlaston South Ward in Walsall
- St. Thomas' Ward in Dudley (expanded from Kates Hill Estate from 2015).
- Princes End Ward in Sandwell

With an initial focus on social housing tenants (expanded to private rental after 12 months), it aimed to increase the employability of 2,800 unemployed and economically inactive residents and move 900 into sustained work.

¹ Final evaluation report and resources can be sourced via the project evaluators www.futureexcel.co.uk

The project modelling estimated delivery of a £1.1m reduction in the welfare bill and £19.7m in earnings gained. The project also monitored a range of other outcomes including increased confidence, digital inclusion, skills and qualifications.

1.3 Component parts of the project model

The original delivery model had three key pillars; employment support services, community support and financial incentives:

1.3.1. Placed Based Employment Support Services

This included intensive job search, career planning, CV preparation and tailored Information, Advice, Guidance on jobs and benefits; pre-employment training and skills such as literacy, numeracy, employability and bespoke employer led training; mentoring; work trials, work experience and work placements; and post-employment support and re-employment activity to aid progression.

1.3.2 Community Support for Work

This was described as support to assist residents from the same household, family or peer group. This was delivered through the paid employment of community connectors, as opposed to volunteers in the Jobs Plus model, who themselves were unemployed or economically inactive individuals who lived or previously lived/worked in the areas, with a good local area knowledge and a commitment to the principles of the project.

1.3.3 Financial incentives

It was originally envisaged that this would be a combination of a flexible support 'bursary' to support the costs associated with the transition to work, which may be repayable over time once a set salary has been achieved. This would be coupled with rent freezes from housing providers and enhanced by the use of financial incentives for providers using performance-related payments for staff based on job sustainability and earnings progression.

1.4 Why use this project model and approach?

A final evaluation report was produced in Spring 2019 by the project's commissioned evaluators, Future Excel. It found that the project had:

- Achieved significant reach in terms of engaging with under-represented and key priority groups including not traditional jobseekers, women, lone parents, BAME communities, people with disabilities and health conditions, older residents and those with a history of offending.
- Been successful in addressing long-term unemployment and economic activity in those areas and in supporting sustained employment for those who moved into work.

- Generated a range of benefit savings, increase in wages and income tax contributions, along with reductions in health expenditure and offending rates.
- Created a range of wider and unintended impacts as a result of the place-based nature of the project and the community engagement strategies used, for example physical regeneration of areas, community capacity building of local communities and new partnerships being developed.

These findings should also be read against the background of the significant needs that the project addressed. All the wards selected were in the top 20% most deprived wards in England²; with similar characteristics relating to high levels of residents on out of work benefits, with no qualifications and who reported bad health outcomes.

The early years of the project focused on the needs of social housing tenants. Research from this period³, showed social renting householders were more likely than other tenures to contain a householder who was economically inactive; with the economic status of partners following a similar pattern and a higher proportion claiming ESA (long term illness) or ISLP (Lone Parent households). They were more likely to be female; attributed to households being more likely than other groups to have lone parent households.

The model also supports the wider policy move to devolved structures and the drive to implement more localised and targeted employment support provision. It supports reaching a larger number of people in a concentrated community, rather than recruiting and serving participants from a dispersed area.

² Index of Multiple Deprivation 2015

³ English Housing Survey Household Report (2013-2014)

2. Building the project management framework

Comprehensive project planning and establishing a robust project management and partnership framework is the critical first step to a successful project of this type.

2.1 Establish a clear picture of the local area

It is important prior to any delivery taking place that some time is spent by the project management team or strategic leads researching the areas where the project is being proposed. This will involve having access to up to date local data and information and may require help and support from Local Authority or similar partners. Key questions will include:

- What does our local community look like?
- What are their specific needs?
- Who are the local stakeholder organisations?
- What services and provision already exist locally?
- What needs are currently not being made?
- Where are the gaps in services and support?
- What community assets exist locally?

It is essential that the project does not operate in a 'silo' and is aware of the wider employment policy developments and new initiatives potentially starting locally over the lifetime of the project. A collaborative dialogue with strategic and operational stakeholders both before and after commencements will ensure the project delivers complementary, aligned and potentially sustainable activities

Working Together Case Study: Mapping, Gapping & Stakeholder Engagement

Prior to any delivery starting, the Project Director with support from each individual Local Authority lead officers undertook:

- A detailed analysis of socio-economic data for each area.
- A mapping exercise to establish what local employment support and related provision already existed in the localities.

The purpose was to ensure the employment support element to be developed was targeted to meet specific local needs and did not duplicate existing provision. For example, at the time of the project, Talent Match targeted at supporting 18-24-year olds into education, training and employment was commencing. As this resource was already in place, the project agreed to focus employment support resources on the 25 years plus unemployed and economically inactive eligible residents and work collaboratively with Talent Match in regard of younger residents.

2.2 Stakeholder Engagement

For each area where a place-based employment solution is being developed, a dedicated and bespoke local partnership needs to be created. As a minimum, this should comprise of all the key strategic players including housing, welfare, benefits, employment support and community engagement partner organisations and representation. Jobcentre Plus and Local Authority partners should be engaged early in the programme design, particularly around process development relating to referrals and job tracking.

Where organisations work across more than one field i.e. Local Authority partners, it is important that each specialism is individually represented within the partnership.

The level of representation in the partnership should be a significantly senior to ensure efficient decision making and appropriate 'buy-in' across the partnership.

Working Together Case Study: Strategic Partnership and Steering Group

There was a steering group in place with representation from the Project Team (Accord Group), Accountable Body (Walsall MBC), Black Country Consortium, Black Country Local Authorities, Housing Providers, Department for Work and Pensions (DWP)/Jobcentre Plus (JcP), Voluntary Sector, Local Further Education Colleges, Talent Match and Training Providers.

Its purpose was to oversee, guide and support the delivery of the project. It met on a regular basis and meetings are documented in writing. There was openness and transparency by the project team with the steering group and the steering group is proactive in their involvement and challenging.

For example, impartial members of the steering group formed the assessment panel for the employment support tenders for both operational year one and two, with the project team acting in an advisory role. In the latter stages of the project, the chair was the JcP District Office representative.

These were well attended by local stakeholders.

2.3 Governance arrangements, accountability and lead organisation.

The designated lead organisation does not have to be a particular type of organisation provided there is the co-operation and 'buy-in' of senior leadership of key local stakeholders and partner organisations.

Whilst the accountable body for the funding can be a separate organisation to the designated lead organisation, it should be noted that this will add extra layers of complexity. Multiple tiers of reporting and complicated governance structure can be cumbersome, and time can be wasted getting agreements within a time limited project.

It is essential the project management team have the right skills and experience. Specifically, the project manager or director should have a broad range of skills and experience relating to the employment, community and housing sector; as well as the ability to manage and develop complex partnership arrangements.

Working Together Case Study: Accountable Body & Project Lead

The accountable body for the City Deal project was Walsall MBC. The day to day management of the project delegated by the Local Enterprise Partnership and Black Country Local Authorities to social housing provider, Accord Group.

The project was led and managed on a day to day basis by a dedicated Project Team, led by a Project Director who was appointed in June 2014. There was a detailed grant agreement, quarterly reporting, monitoring and claim process in place between the accountable body (Walsall MBC) and Accord to manage the contractual and financial arrangements.

There was a small project team in place comprising of the Project Director, Partnership & Monitoring Officer and Project Administrator. They were supported with finance and marketing functions by the wider Accord Group infrastructure. Good working relationships and a joined-up approach existed between the accountable body and project lead (regular meetings and dialogue, joint monitoring visits to providers), this was facilitated by stability and consistency in the point of contact at the accountable body. Over time an open and supportive relationship developed.

The rationale for a social housing provider lead linked to the original project aim to target and support social housing tenants within the identified areas. Social housing providers were also identified as key stakeholders; leading the project, hosting the community connector roles to facilitate targeted marketing and promotion of the project to their tenants, supporting referrals and having representation on the steering group.

The Research and Evaluation team undertook baseline data work in the first operational year to establish the number of eligible social housing tenants in each ward. As a result, the engagement targets were deemed challenging and widening of eligibility criteria was agreed with the funder to include unemployed and economically inactive private rental residents from delivery year 2.

3. Place based employment support

A place-based approach is a person-centred, bottom-up approach used to meet the unique needs of people in one location by working together to use the best available resources and collaborate to gain local knowledge.

3.1 How will the employment support be delivered?

To achieve a joined up and collaborative approach which supports a place-based approach, there are a number of questions for the project and partnership teams to answer prior to implementing this strand of the project model.

- Is there a clear picture of the area and the specific local needs?
- What employment support is already available locally and what gaps exists?
- How will local stakeholders and delivery providers be communicated with and consulted about the project?
- How will the support be commissioned?
 - Should there be a definitive specification and/or budget for the support, or should the provider base/market shape the provision?
 - What type of delivery partner or partnership will meet the needs best?
 - What outcome and payment models should be used? Should this include a payment by results element?
 - How will delivery partners be assessed and selected?

Working Together Case Study: Approach to commissioning delivering providers

In Year 1, the project management team carried out market warming events across all four wards to share the mapping and data analysis. There was no set specification, but a requirement that support should meet specific area needs and not duplicate existing provision.

Providers were asked to demonstrate innovation approaches to engagement and delivery. Participation in the programme would be voluntary and supported by community connectors.

Consideration needed to be given in proposals to all strands of the project including employment support, community support and financial incentives.

Funding was in the form of a one-year grant agreement with contractual and financial target monitoring arrangements in place and providers able to propose costs and outputs/outcomes.

In year one, multiple providers were selected (two per area) and one provider delivering specialist self-employment support across all four areas.

Working Together Case Study: Approach to commissioning delivering providers

In Year 2, there was one market warming event to share what had happened in the first year of delivery and bring potential partnerships together.

Learning from lessons in year one where multiple lead providers operating in each area led to over saturation in some areas, the model designated one lead provider per geographical area.

The specification still focused on meeting individual needs but with a stronger emphasis on sustainable jobs and with a clear engagement strategy required. Housing provider involvement also had to form part of the provider 'offer' in order to support the engagement strategy.

Unlike year 1, there was a prescribed financial budget per each area, along with set targets and outcomes. A payment by result element was introduced, with 30% of funding retained and payable on sustained job outcomes. This was introduced to drive improvements in jobs outcomes and competitiveness. 70% would remain grant funding to encourage small local providers to get involved.

3.2 The role of the community hub

The evaluation findings for the project found the community hub to be an essential element in delivering effective place-based employment support. A good community hub provides a locally based, friendly and 'safe' delivery space in the heart of a defined area. However, it is important to remember that within local neighbourhoods, space to deliver activities is often at a premium, and therefore the types and nature of interventions have to be carefully considered and planned.

In identifying a community hub for a project, consideration needs to be given to:

- What community assets currently exist in the locality?
- Of those potential premises/hubs identified, will their location reach all of the target community?
- Do additional satellite hubs need to be identified to reach isolated or hard to reach communities?
- Are there any opportunities for co-location with complementary services and support?
- Is the space fit for purpose in terms of size and facilities?
- Does additional capital investment for the hubs need to be secured to make them fit for purpose? If so is this achievable within the project budget or is additional funding required?

Working Together Case Study: The Community Hub – St. Thomas's Ward

At the start of the project, St. Thomas's Network premises was the nominated hub for the project as it was a well-established community venue. The organisation closed in mid-2015, within months of the project starting and leaving the delivery partnership without a primary hub. Delivery continued in the area, albeit on an outreach basis. Engagement and recruitment to the programme was slow during this period.

An alternative location was secured late 2015. The new hub was Roseland House; it was part of a housing unit being used as a meeting space for older people. It was used by multiple providers to deliver the project, with various activities being delivered, from one to one mentoring sessions to therapeutic craft sessions to work based skills training.

Project participants particularly valued the Roseland House hub because it supported not just employment and skills support but wider community development opportunities. However, due to the nature and repurposing of the building, space was often a constraint.

Whilst other locations were utilised on an outreach and ad hoc basis e.g. Cromwell Street, Roseland House was the main focus. To ensure reach, the delivery lead partner proactively mapped engagements by road; identifying less engagement in Buffery and Sledmere area. Work was undertaken using the Children's Centre and Buffery Park to increase engagements in this area. At December 2017, 63% of roads had residents engaged; with 6% of roads with no social housing.

More case studies relating to the community hub approach can be found in the final evaluation report.

3.3 The nature of the placed based employment support

In broad terms, the nature of the employment support will include intensive job search, career planning, CV preparation and tailored Information, Advice, Guidance on jobs and benefits; pre-employment training and skills such as literacy, numeracy, employability and bespoke employer led training; mentoring; work trials, work experience and work placements; and post-employment support and re-employment activity to aid progression

However, by providing a flexible specification and framework linked to meeting local needs, there is the opportunity for local delivery providers to develop locally tailored and innovative approaches, as opposed to a one size fits all employment support programme.

Working Together Case Study: Tailored Employment Support Approaches

The working together model enabled providers, particularly in year one the flexibility to deliver employment support provision which targeted either a wide range of needs or enabled them to focus on a particular support need or group.

Examples of the broad range of delivery approaches included:

- The delivery of tailored employment support for people with disabilities and long-term health conditions. This provision integrated therapeutic and peer support interventions to underpin improvements in health and wellbeing.
- The use of the arts as a means of engagement and delivery, with a strong focus on mentoring and digital inclusion, through the creation of a community-based internet café.
- The provision of bespoke and tailored self-employment provision.
- Employment support with a skill focused element, linked to local employment opportunities.

The most common forms of support offered included job-search skills and coaching, skills-based training (literacy, numeracy, language, digital/ICT), employer led/vocational skills training, work experience and volunteering, mentoring and confidence building, employer led pre-employment training and job brokerage/matching. Other common interventions related to the provision of advice, guidance and support on a wide range of issues including housing, benefit and debt/financial advice and therapeutic/wellbeing linked activities.

The majority of participants accessed a wide range of employment support and often holistic packages of support tailored to their individual needs.

Throughout the project evaluation, participants commented positively about the choice and flexibility in their engagement and interaction with the project; stating that this approach allowed them to be more open and honest about their situation and access the type of support they needed 'at that point in time.'

Participants particularly highlighted the benefits of the digital inclusion elements i.e. being able to access ICT equipment, get training and support with an email address and being able to online job-search.

3.4 Employer Engagement

Alongside the provision of employment support, effective engagement of employers is a key component of this model in supporting local people into sustainable employment.

It is important to understand prior to commencing a project of this nature how employer engagement will be delivered and the skills and resources that are required to deliver this effectively. This might include mapping and aligning to existing local infrastructure where it exists e.g. Local Authority employer engagement teams to maximise local resources.

Working Together Case Study: Sector Specific Courses and Routeways

The development of sector specific courses and routeways, in conjunction with local employers was particularly successful for one of the project providers. It included co-designed training elements and guaranteed interviews for participants.

Primary target sectors included the Security Industry and Health and Social Care. This contributed to an increase in jobs for the provider in the later part of the project; and accounted for 40% of the day one job starts in year 3.

Working Together Case Study: Jobs Fairs

The facilitation of Jobs Fairs was a key feature of the project from year 2 onwards. They offered opportunities to the delivery providers to:

- Engage with new residents interested in finding work;
- Build relationships with employers; and
- Provide opportunities for existing participants to meet face to face with employers.

Each area held its own Job Fairs or aligned with existing local Job Fairs. These ranged from sector specific events to those with a wide range of sectors represented.

Feedback from events included:

- 75% of employers said they had a better understanding of the local employment picture since working with the project.
- Over 60% of employers said they were more likely to employ unemployed people after attending the event.

Over the lifetime of the project 309 employers were engaged.

4. Community Support for Work

4.1 Community Connector Role

A key strand of the community support for work element was the role of a community connector in each of the project areas. The original scope of this role was to work in the community, developing relationships and trust with local people and organisations and facilitating project referrals and engagement through offering support and signposting to relevant provision.

A key principle for the project was to employ unemployed or economically inactive individuals who lived or had previously lived/worked in the identified area, with good local area knowledge and a commitment to the principles of the project.

In taking this approach detailed consideration needs to be given to the:

- 1) The scope of the community connector role.
- 2) The skills, experience and local knowledge requirements.
- 3) The type and level of ongoing support and training that might be required.

Working Together Case Study: The development of the community connector role

To support the recruitment and selection process, a two- week customised pre-employment training programme with work experience was delivered in conjunction with JcP and a local provider; with guaranteed interviews for all those who completed the training. The development and introduction of the community connectors role (initially referred to as community champions), as part of the community support strand took place between November 2014 and March 2015. Four community connectors were appointed and in place between April – May 2015.

Finding individuals with the right skills and experience to carry out the role of the community connector proved challenging. Despite initially appointing four community connectors, the role proved particularly challenging for the two connectors with no previous experience of delivering similar community engagement work. They required lots of additional support and development to carry out the role but despite this left the roles. However, for the two connectors with previous experience and good local knowledge there were some positive results in year one around the engagement of stakeholders and the wider community.

A sample person specification for the community connector role can be found in the additional resources, along with the final report evaluation report.

Working Together Case Study: The evolution of the community connector role

With lessons learnt from year one, the decision was taken to reshape and extend the roles of the two remaining community connector roles. The aim was to provide a more focused and co-ordinating function across the project, employment support providers and the wider community. On this basis, each connector was allocated two project areas— dedicating two days a week resource to these areas; one with lead providers/in the community and one promoting the project within the local Jobcentre office as the single point of contact for the project.

There was still a requirement for delivery providers to promote and market the project in order to engage local residents. One area, St. Thomas's in Dudley employed a dedicated engagement worker (a local resident with extensive knowledge of the area). They worked in tandem with the community connector to market and promote the project and increase engagements. Engagements generated were then distributed on an equitable basis to consortia members by the lead provider.

The decision to make the community connectors the single point of contact for Jobcentre Plus (JcP) local office engagement and referrals facilitated a more effective and productive working relationship with JcP; although it is acknowledged by both parties that this could have been improved further.

In general, this approach facilitated improved working relationships by bringing clarity to the roles of the community connectors and more collaborative approaches with lead delivery providers. Marketing, promotion and other activities to engage residents in the project was a critical factor in reaching large numbers of the community.

The key success factors for both community connectors and community engagement roles are the ability of those individuals to build the trust quickly of the communities they serve. This proved to be particularly effective where those individuals were already known to the local community, had lived in the local area and had experience of similar community engagement work.

4.2 The management of the community connector roles

Consideration to where best within the management and partnership framework the community connector roles should sit is helpful prior to project commencement. For example, there are several options that could be considered including management by the project lead, the lead delivery partner(s) or with another strategic partner or even a hybrid management/hosting arrangement with two stakeholders.

All options will have their benefits and challenges relevant to individual areas and partnership makeup. Due consideration to these should form part of the planning process prior to project commencement and the recruitment of community connectors.

Working Together Case Study: Management and hosting of community connector roles

Whilst employed and managed by the lead project partner (Accord) the initial four community connector roles were 'hosted' by one of the larger social housing providers in each identified area.

During 2015/16, the hosts were Walsall Housing Group (Darlaston South), Dudley MBC (Kates Hill/St Thomas's), Wolverhampton Homes (Bilston East) and Sandwell MBC (Princes End). The purpose of the hosting arrangements was to facilitate targeted recruitment of eligible social housing tenants, with an initial expectation of data-sharing to support this. The community connectors would in turn signpost potential participants to the employment support providers and other relevant support in each area.

This approach did not work in the way originally anticipated. In most cases, the connector was not fully integrated into the nominated housing team and data-sharing expectations not supported or practical workarounds implemented – in effect making the purpose of the hosting arrangements redundant. The reasons behind this and the role of housing providers in the project has already been outlined in Section 2.

The development of working relationships with the housing providers was not helped by those connectors who lacked experience in working with stakeholders and partners. However, it should be noted that there was some evidence of integration and good working arrangements developed between the Bilston East (Wolverhampton) housing provider and community connector in Year 1.

4.3 Targeted and Joined Up Community Engagement Strategy

It is essential that where there are multiple delivery providers and stakeholders operating in the same project areas, roles and responsibilities are clearly defined to avoid duplication of recruitment and referral processes.

Additionally, where project eligibility is narrowly defined, it is important to have sign posting and support structures in place to support those local people who hear about the project but may not be eligible to participate.

Where there are no existing resources and services being delivered in a defined area, sufficient lead time must be planned into implementation and the initial delivery period in order to establish these services and most importantly build trust with the local community. This should also be taken into consideration where there are planned changes to delivery and services mid-project.

Working Together Case Study: Community Engagement – Year 1

In year one, both providers and community connectors undertook 'direct' recruitment of project participants through a range of activities from 'door-knocking' in the identified area, networking at community events and venues (local schools), promotion within Jobcentre Plus local offices and running specific 'engagement' events. There was no structured engagement strategy and as a result there was lots of duplication of engagement activities across individual wards.

The focus on community engagement campaigns was heavily on promoting skills and employment interventions. There was a level of cynicism from the community that it was just another project that would raft in and raft out once the funding was finished.

Relationships with the key referral agency, Jobcentre Plus (JcP) were underdeveloped; and with no co-ordinated engagement strategy, multiple providers were attending local JcP offices to try to promote the project. Feedback indicated a lack of join up across the partnership and duplication of engagement activity. Providers and connectors also felt this led a perceived sense of competition to meet engagement targets.

Referrals and starts were low during this first operational year of the project, and it took significantly more time than anticipated to build trust with local communities around what the project was trying to achieve.

Working Together Case Study: Year 2 - A joined up community engagement strategy

A refocus in year 2 saw the project focused on increasing engagements, particularly targeting non-traditional and hidden jobseekers. There was a shift towards creative, family and inclusive community engagement activities. Project participants placed a real value of these events and activities, as they often benefited the whole family and provided an informal and friendly environment in which to initiate discussions about the future.

Community connectors were designated the single point of contact for JcP promotion, engagement and referrals. Previous participants continued to support the project in a volunteer capacity as community ambassadors, to spread the word locally about the help and support available.

The engagement activities in the main were co-ordinated by the delivery partners, with support from the remaining community connectors. Referrals and starts were low during this first operational year of the project, and it took significantly more time than anticipated to build trust with local communities around what the project was trying to achieve.

5. Financial Incentives

5.1 The meaning of financial incentives

It was originally envisaged that this element would be a combination of a flexible support 'bursary' to support the costs associated with the transition to work, which may be repayable over time once a set salary has been achieved. This would be coupled with rent freezes from housing providers and enhanced by the use of financial incentives for providers using performance-related payments for staff based on job sustainability and earnings progression. The financial incentives as originally intended were not able to be rolled out. Work-related incentives and support did however form part of the project model.

A key consideration for future projects needs to be a detailed review of how financial incentives can be realistically and practically implemented, along with a detailed cost analysis to deliver this aspect.

Working Together Case Study: Financial Incentive Challenges

The financial incentives were a feature of the original US Jobs Plus model which did not translate well into the Black Country project. For example, in the UK, the amount of rent paid is not linked to your income (as in the US); what is linked to income is the financial support (housing/council tax benefit) you may be able to receive to support these costs.

In the US model, increases in rent were viewed as the primary disincentive for residents to 'work or earn more'; which is not the case in the UK. In the UK, it is the potential loss of benefits for housing and other costs that may act as a disincentive (this is also relevant to some extent in the US). However, the UK has to some extent provision for continued support for those in-work on lower incomes. With the inclusion within most employment support provision of in-work benefit calculations, we are more likely in the UK to talk in terms of residents being stuck in the benefits trap rather than having a financial disincentive.

The US Jobs Plus 'Guide for Practitioners' recognised that financial incentive was a complex area; which required an understanding of how benefits and earnings interact to avoid incentives creating 'penalties' and to maximise opportunities for residents.

In this project, there were significant challenges faced by housing provider partners during the implementation stages, in translating this element. A number of ideas were explored including 'rent holidays' or 'reduced rent' for those who moved into work, but with the focus solely on implementing 'rent-incentives' and with no project funding budgeted to pay for this element, agreement was unable to be reached of how this could be implemented.

Working Together Case Study: Work Related Incentives and Support

As part of the Employment Support element, delivery providers supported participants with in-work benefit calculations and raised awareness of in-work support to ensure work paid. For those who required additional support, provision was made in meeting the costs of initial travel to work expenses, interview clothing and workwear.

In addition to the project team maintained a flexible pot of discretionary funding to support additional needs. This was mainly use for employment related items and costs e.g. DBS checks, interview clothing, copies of ID, PPE, additional travel to work costs, specific work-related licenses.

6. Sustainability and Project Legacy

6.1 Developing a clear exit plan and recording project legacy

Part of any project planning process is looking ahead to what will happen at the end of the project in terms of sustainability and exit planning. Early evaluation findings and feedback from participants reinforced this a vital and essential strand in the process. This was particularly relevant in areas where previous activities and projects had been delivered but no longer existed; where communities had a perception of projects 'parachuting in' and leaving nothing behind when the funding finished. It reinforced the need to ensure at all stages of the project interventions created meaningful and lasting impact, with project legacy for each area recorded.

Working Together Case Study: Exit strategy & sustainability

A significant focus on exit planning activities were undertaken by the project team and delivery partners during the final year of the project to ensure there was a clear and communicated exit strategy in place. This included:

- Project engagements stopped at the end of July 2018, with support continuing for those already recruited to the project.
- Between July – October 2018, transfer arrangements for those furthest from the labour market to other provision were carried out. This was to provide at least some level of support for ongoing needs and to ensure progress towards employment made during the project was not lost.
- By having smaller caseloads in the final months focus was given to those closer to the labour market where the project could still make an impact.
- Project delivery partners formally finished delivery on 31st October 2018 but had a period of job tracking which ran up to 31st December 2018 for job outcomes.
- Continued monitoring and tracking of sustained (retained) jobs was carried out to March 2019.
- Of the final cohort, 70% completed their training plan or had a positive destination.
- Delivery partners continued to claim payment by results funding up to the end of March 2019, with some of this funding supporting aspects of legacy and sustainability work.
- Delivery partners committed through the delivery of other activities/leverage of alternative funding to continue to run the hubs set up as part of the project.

The final evaluation report and additional project resources are accessible through the project's research and evaluation partner Future Excel and via the website www.futureexcel.co.uk

For further information please contact:
Christine Brown, External Evaluator and Principal Consultant
Unit F3, Lasyard House, Underhill Street, Bridgnorth, Shropshire, WV16 4BB
Email: Christine.brown@futureexcel.co.uk