

New Deal for Communities

The National Evaluation

Research Reports

Job Brokerage: Early Findings

Research Report 2

The Neighbourhood Renewal Unit is currently sponsoring the 2002-2005 national evaluation of New Deal for Communities. This evaluation is being undertaken by a consortium of organisations co-ordinated by the Centre for Regional Economic and Social Research at Sheffield Hallam University. The views expressed in this report do not necessarily reflect those of the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit.

Those wishing to know more about the evaluation should consult the evaluation's web site in the first instance
<http://ndcevaluation.adc.shu.ac.uk/ndcevaluation/home.asp>



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Job Brokerage: Early Findings

Research Report 2

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Executive Summary

Job brokerage projects have been established in a number of New Deal for Communities (NDC) areas as part of the worklessness theme of the programme. This overview of job brokerage is based on case study visits to three NDC areas where such projects are in progress. All three projects are in the relatively early stages of development and findings from the research at this stage should be treated as provisional.

The aim of these projects is to remove barriers to employment experienced by individuals living in disadvantaged areas. Issues that limit access to jobs include:

- Detachment from the labour market
- Detachment from services aimed at improving employment prospects
- Lack of appropriate knowledge, skills and experience of work
- The recruitment practices of employers

The research to date has identified a number of key attributes of effective job brokerage projects:

- **Embedded:** Having the support of the local community; based upon a good understanding of the local context; linked to local community networks
- **Holistic:** Focused on clients' individual needs and circumstances; providing a personalised service with a 'package' of advice, support and guidance tailored to individual need
- **Synergistic:** Developing good links and relations with key agencies to provide services needed; working in close partnership with Jobcentre Plus to ensure 'added value' and avoid duplication
- **Employer-focused:** Developing strong relationships with local employers to secure vacancies and ensure a good understanding of employers' needs and circumstances
- **Sustained:** Providing appropriate 'aftercare' for clients and employers in order to promote sustainability of job placements and job progression for employees

The research also suggests that the following areas require particular consideration:

- **Project delivery:** particularly in terms of whether it is most appropriate to deliver the project 'in house' or to contract out to an external supplier. Issues relate to: identifying priorities for the project (ranging from hard outputs to 'softer', less tangible outcomes); the most effective ways of embedding the project within the community; the potential for experimentation and innovation; and opportunities for synergy with other NDC projects. If an external supplier is chosen, these issues may need to be addressed through formal contractual processes
- **Engaging the 'hardest to help':** These groups will require more intensive support and, therefore, greater resources. Targets for job brokerage projects need to allow for this. As a result, a balance between achieving job outcomes and allowing the time and resources required for engaging the most disadvantaged groups and building their job-readiness needs to be achieved

- **Building an employer-focus:** A client-focused approach to provision needs to be balanced by an employer-focused approach, with strong relationships with local employers, to maximise the potential for obtaining vacancies, to ensure that clients have the attributes and skills required by employers and to promote sustainability and progression after clients are placed in jobs
- **Establishing an appropriate relationship with Jobcentre Plus:** For a job brokerage project to work effectively and to truly add value, a close working relationship with Jobcentre plus is very important. Establishing clear roles and responsibilities, sharing of information and good personal relationships are all significant in this respect

1. Introduction

Job brokerage projects have been established in a number of New Deal for Communities (NDC) areas as part of the worklessness theme of the programme. This overview of job brokerage is based on case study visits to three NDC areas where such projects are in progress. These are:

- Bradford – delivered by At Work Recruitment, began in April 2002
- Greets Green in Sandwell – delivered by Pertemps Employment Alliance, began in August 2002
- West Ham and Plaistow – now delivered in-house under the Elite brand, after initially being contracted to Reed Employment for one year

Whilst the projects have been established for slightly different lengths of time, all are in the relatively early stages of development and findings from the research at this stage should be treated as provisional.

This report covers the following areas:

- The context in which job brokerage projects have been established and the problems that they are trying to address
- The nature of the intervention in terms of objectives and targeted beneficiaries
- The way in which job brokerage has been delivered, in particular focussing on the different types of intervention that are offered and the assumptions behind these interventions
- Current outcomes and impact of the projects (although these are, inevitably, somewhat limited given that the projects are in the relatively early stages of development)
- And the key lessons that have been learnt so far from such interventions

2. Context and Problem

The development of job brokerage projects in NDC areas is proceeding in the context of broader strategies for employment and such projects are therefore one component of a wider set of interventions. Over time, research will be undertaken to investigate the inter-relationships between various projects (and with projects in other theme areas) but at this early stage the focus has been on the job brokerage projects. The context for these projects has analysed by the Policy Action Team for Jobs which identified four principal reasons why people living in the most deprived neighbourhoods might fail to obtain jobs that are on offer nearby. These are:

- Lack of skills and aptitudes, especially self confidence and personal skills
- Inadequate matching between employers and jobless people
- Worries about making the transition from benefits to work, and
- Racial discrimination against ethnic minorities (DfEE; HM Treasury)

In each of the case study areas there is evidence of these factors being key barriers to employment. In particular, residents' detachment from the labour market, and from services that may enable them to access the labour market, has been an important consideration in the development of the job brokerage projects.

Labour market context

The socio-economic context in which the job brokerage projects have been developed is common to many NDC areas. Key issues include:

- High levels of unemployment and economic inactivity
- High proportions of those who are in employment work in low skill, low pay jobs
- Underemployment amongst some residents
- Low levels of household income
- Poor educational attainment and outdated skills
- Changing labour market conditions and job opportunities requiring new skills
- Significant proportion of ethnic minority residents

When research was undertaken in the NDC areas to help to establish baselines and identify local need, it was found that the residents perceive that there are high levels of unemployment because there are 'no jobs'. In each of the case study areas, however, it is apparent that there are significant employment opportunities, if not necessarily in the immediate NDC area (particularly in West Ham and Plaistow which is largely residential), then in the Travel To Work Area. In addition, there is potential for job brokerage projects to link into new developments that are taking place. For example, in Greets Green the need to take advantage of regeneration in West Bromwich Town Centre, the Bullring in Birmingham and development in Merryhill, which will lead to the creation of up to 20,000 new jobs in the next decade, was identified.

Whilst it is necessary to challenge the residents' perceptions that there are 'no jobs', their access to the jobs that are available can be limited for a number of reasons. These include:

- Finding out about the jobs
- Possessing or developing the appropriate skills to meet employer requirements, and
- Developing the willingness to travel outside of the immediate locality

This latter issue is one identified in all of the areas and relates not only to problems with geographical access and transport, but also to a general lack of confidence in travelling to locations with which residents are not familiar.

On the demand side of the labour market, the recruitment practices of employers can also restrict access to jobs amongst those in disadvantaged communities. Many employers, particularly when recruiting to relatively low skilled positions, attract new employees through word of mouth. For individuals whose networks do not tend to include those who are in employment, there is little likelihood that they will ever hear about these jobs. In addition, there is some indication of 'postcode discrimination' amongst employers who are reluctant to employ individuals from particular geographical localities. Some employers in the NDC areas are known to struggle to identify potential employees and, therefore, the job brokerage projects are designed to be of benefit to employers as well as to individuals seeking work.

Access to services

Barriers to employment on the supply side of the labour market are compounded by a general lack of services in the most deprived areas that aim to alleviate some of the problems identified. The lack of access to services, in particular to Jobcentre Plus, is one of the reasons why the linkages to the labour market are so weak. The limited use of Jobcentre Plus in the case study areas stems from a number of factors, both geographical and attitudinal. For example, there is no Jobcentre located in the Bradford NDC area, which presents an immediate barrier to residents wanting to use the service.

In addition, there is evidence of significant mistrust of the Jobcentre amongst many residents in disadvantaged communities and research on New Deal programmes has indicated that the service offered does not necessarily meet the needs of those considered to be 'hardest to help' (Hasluck; Atkinson) Mistrust of the Jobcentre can arise for a variety of reasons:

- Individuals can be intimidated by the surroundings
- There are tensions regarding the issue of signing on and working (which those employed in the 'grey market' are particularly cautious about)
- Distrust and bad experiences of the mandatory programmes for the unemployed, such as New Deal
- The perception amongst some ethnic minorities that they are not offered an equal service

All of these factors can lead to a reluctance to use the Jobcentre, thereby closing off one of the key intermediary avenues to employment.

Whilst the Jobcentre is the key statutory agency in terms of linking people to jobs, other service providers such as training providers and advice and guidance providers tend to have limited presence within the most deprived communities, again necessitating travel by residents wanting to access these services. As a result, detachment from training and employment opportunities is compounded further.

3. Nature of the Intervention

Delivery models

Different models of job brokerage projects have been developed in different areas. In particular, within the case study areas the key difference is in the organisation delivering the project. Whilst Bradford and Greets Green have contracted with an external agency for delivery, in West Ham and Plaistow the project was originally contracted out but is now being delivered internally. After the first year of external delivery it was felt that the project was not meeting the specified needs of the NDC and delivery was brought back in house.

The different models of delivery reflect the potential for different approaches to job brokerage. These range from having a strong focus on hard outcomes and getting people into work, to a slightly 'softer' approach which deliberately targets the 'hardest to reach', with the personal development aspect of the service being emphasised in order to improve employability and overcome individual barriers to work. Contracting with an external, commercially focused agency that develops good linkages with employers and seeks to deliver a professional service to them tends to lead to the former of these. In Bradford, in particular, the emphasis is on getting individuals into work rather than training, based on the assumption that skills development can take place within the work environment and that once in work it is easier to access other employment opportunities. Within NDC areas taking this approach, other projects that focus on skills and personal development are being delivered in order to complement this more 'hard-edged' approach to job brokerage.

Despite these different approaches, the development of all of the job brokerage projects has been based on similar assumptions. By carrying out research within the NDC communities the problem of individuals' detachment from the labour market was identified as a key barrier to work. The job brokerage projects are implemented on the basis that providing information about, and access to jobs enables individuals to recreate the linkages with the labour market, through an intermediary who can operate on their behalf, thereby overcoming key barriers to employment. The projects then offer a series of additional interventions to improve individuals' ability to carry out those jobs and sustain employment.

Aims and objectives

All of the job brokerage projects have specified targets, largely relating to the number of local residents accessing jobs. Within this, some breakdown of the type of residents finding work, in terms of economic status, ethnic group etc is also specified. Additional targets might relate to the number of residents using the service and the sustainability of the jobs accessed. These targets for the project also tie in with the wider objectives of the NDC in terms of reducing unemployment and increasing wealth within their locality.

In addition to the hard targets, individuals engaged in delivering the projects also identified a range of broader aims, some of which are considerably less tangible. These include:

- Improving employability
- Raising skill levels
- Increasing clients' aspirations, helping them to realise their potential and widening their horizons
- Addressing under-employment
- Increasing the numbers accessing education and training
- Raising awareness of employment opportunities
- Increasing household incomes through access to welfare benefits
- Engaging employers and increasing their confidence in employing local people

- Developing the referral process to other services including support agencies to tackle social problems
- Building the local job and service provider networks and developing appropriate and effective partnerships
- Learning lessons for future mainstream service delivery

In each of the case study areas the issue of career development and progress within the labour market was stressed as a key component of the job brokerage project. Whilst the most visible component of the projects tends to be helping local unemployed people to access work, the need to improve the quality of the jobs accessed, for both the unemployed and those already in employment, is also an important objective, particularly in terms of increasing wealth in the neighbourhoods.

Beneficiaries

In the broadest terms, all of the job brokerage projects aim to serve all of the residents in the NDC areas. In this way they seek to attract both those in employment as well as the unemployed and the economically inactive. More specifically, however, each project tends to work most closely with particular groups, largely those specified by the targets. Therefore, the unemployed, and those from Black and Minority Ethnic communities (particularly the unemployed from these communities) tend to be the key focus of the intervention.

The extent to which projects of this nature are reaching the 'hardest to help' is a potential issue. Whilst one of the case study areas was keen to emphasise that their aim is to avoid 'cherry picking', in one of the other areas it was acknowledged that attracting the 'hardest to help' and being able to address their needs is a longer-term aim which will take considerable time and resources. Clearly, having job entry targets as the primary measurement of success could mitigate against investing the required resources in these groups. However, the job entry targets set in each area tend to be relatively modest, allowing for the development of the service for those who are less job ready and whose achievements are less obviously tangible.

Whilst not necessarily targeted, some groups appear to have used the job brokerage services to a greater extent than others. For example, in West Ham and Plaistow there was some recognition that more younger than older people access the service, partly as a result of confidence and their increased willingness to use it. In each of the areas, a significant number of economically inactive residents are also accessing the service. Whilst this is encouraging in terms of improving access to the labour market, the targets for the projects tend to relate to the registered unemployed rather than the inactive. It was indicated that this aspect of the targets may need to be examined in the future.

Use of the service by the economically inactive is particularly apparent in Bradford, where the majority of the clients are from the Asian community. For cultural reasons, many residents in this community are not registered unemployed. The project has done particularly well in attracting Asian clients to the service, and puts this down to the employment of a high number of ethnic minority staff and the successful placing of Asian males into work, which then results in word of mouth recommendations throughout the community.

4. Delivery

Although the approach to the job brokerage project may differ across the different NDC areas, there are certain elements of delivery that remain common to all projects. These are outlined below.

Attracting clients

One of the identified problems in relation to worklessness is the reluctance of the target community to participate in, and make use of, the statutory services for access to employment. As a result, the initial focus of all job brokerage projects needs to be on attracting clients to use the service. Given the shortcomings of mainstream services in this respect, job brokerage requires a different approach if it is to be successful.

The case studies provide examples of three possible approaches to this issue:

- The first approach is to establish premises in a location that is central to, and accessible for, the local community. All of the projects have established relatively high profile premises that are highly visible or well known within the NDC areas. In Greets Green, these premises are supplemented by an additional outreach centre that is located in the heart of the residential area of the community. A key element in this approach is the view that it is important to have premises that are welcoming and less intimidating for clients than the Jobcentres are sometimes perceived to be
- A second approach to attracting clients that is used in all the job brokerage projects is outreach work. A variety of methods are employed including door knocking, leaflet drops, attendance at community meetings and venues, other publicity and marketing work and the use of an outreach bus. Outreach can be a particularly effective way of engaging the ethnic minority communities and as a result work has been done in each area with individual faith groups and to ensure that outreach workers with the appropriate language skills are working within the community
- A third approach, which is being used successfully in Bradford to encourage residents to use the service, involves the employment of local people as advisers. In particular, they have employed a relatively high proportion of individuals from ethnic minority groups in order to attract these groups into the premises

All of the case study areas stressed the importance not only of understanding the local community, but of *embedding* the project within the community in order to increase the willingness of local residents to use the service. For example, At Work Recruitment operate a number of job brokerage projects across the country. Their approach is: you can 'open a branch out of a box' but that you then need to 'bring the local in'. Thus, the fundamental building blocks of job brokerage remain the same across the country, but these need to be supplemented by local information and an understanding of the local area.

Whilst high profile premises and the development of outreach, publicity and marketing are important elements in building the service, projects also need to operate within their capacity and care needs to be taken to ensure that the service does not become overloaded.

Working with clients

The work that is undertaken with clients is predominantly aimed at assessing and/or developing their employability or 'job readiness', and linking them into appropriate labour market opportunities. Depending on the circumstances of the client, they may be placed into work relatively quickly or there may be a number of identified barriers to employment that need to be addressed before accessing a job becomes a realistic prospect. Job brokerage projects are in a position to deliver across the range of circumstances because they seek to offer a range of services (whether directly or through referrals to other organisations) to suit each individual client's needs. Although each project delivers these in a slightly different way, many of the services are common across all projects. These include:

- A **personal coach/adviser** to work on a one to one basis providing support to each individual client.
- **Diagnosis/registration** that includes assessment of client needs in terms of skills, labour market aspirations etc
- **Training/support/activity planning** which may relate to personal or skills development; improving employability; motivational courses etc. The extent to which projects deliver training and support themselves varies. Different models include: in-house provision; bringing external organisations in to deliver at job brokerage premises; paying for individuals to undertake training at an external provider; and referrals or signposting to other services and agencies in order to meet identified need. Particular projects also provide additional support. For example, the Newham Elite project provides advice and information regarding childcare, which is a particular barrier to employment in the area
- Advice on **in-work benefits** in order for clients to understand the level of salary required to make it worthwhile for them to start work. Provision of advice in this area aims to encourage individuals into work who perceive that they are better off on benefits
- Access to **welfare benefits** to help to improve household incomes
- Support in **job preparation** i.e. in terms of writing CVs and application forms and attending interviews
- A **job matching/job search/job information and guidance** service. This varies considerably in the case study areas. Within Bradford a customised software package is used to match clients to appropriate jobs that have been sourced through employers in the Travel to Work Area. In Sandwell, a management information system contains downloads from the job pages in local newspapers and other jobs that are available on the database owned by Pertemps Alliance. More traditional sources of jobs are used in West Ham and Plaistow including newspapers, the Internet and employer job fairs. Whilst all projects have close links with the local Jobcentre, all have struggled to gain direct access to their Labour Market System, although there is potential for this to be accessed via laptops on the job brokerage premises in some areas
- **Employment grants/Personal Job Accounts** for use to buy work clothes, pay for transport, access appropriate training etc

Each of these interventions is designed to address identified barriers to employment and to improve the linkages between the client and the labour market. In particular, it is an *holistic* approach – the combination of interventions, and the ability to tailor these to individual needs – that enables job brokerage projects to function effectively. They provide a step by step, progressive approach to training and work, helping clients to access jobs through a process of support, confidence building and upskilling. By providing appropriate information, help and support, job brokerage projects deliver a key intermediary service that NDC residents have struggled to access through mainstream sources.

Working with employers

Whilst much of the focus of job brokerage projects is on the work undertaken with individuals in order to help them to access job opportunities, working with employers and developing an *employer-focused* approach is a further component of the project that enables it to perform its intermediary function.

The extent to which work is undertaken with employers varies considerably in the different case study areas. On the whole, this area is less well developed than the service to clients, partly because projects are still in the relatively early stages and have not yet had the opportunity to build this side of the service sufficiently. In addition, in West Ham and Plaistow there is a strong client focus, and less emphasis is placed on building personal relationships with employers. As a result, in both Greets Green and West Ham and Plaistow many of the jobs that are identified come from existing sources rather than being sourced through direct contact with employers in the local area.

Within Bradford, where the project has been established for a greater period of time, sourcing jobs through direct links with employers is an important element of the business process. The project in Bradford is organised in a different way from the other case study projects, employing staff in one of two roles – either client-facing or employer-facing. In this way, staff are responsible either for supporting and guiding clients into work or for developing and maintaining relationships with employers in order to identify vacancies. The two functions are kept entirely separate. The job matching process then takes place using the customised software.

Sourcing jobs in this way is a key element of the project in Bradford and, as a result, maintaining the trust of employers and meeting expectations is critical in order for the employer to continue to use the service. It is therefore important that the job matching process is undertaken carefully. Employers in the area can benefit considerably from this process as they receive good candidates for their vacancies, who have already been screened, which saves considerable time and money. Part of the aim of the project is to provide a professional service to employers and to ensure that their recruitment needs are met. This is one element of the job brokerage project where it is seen as adding value relative to the service offered by Jobcentre Plus, which has less resource to develop close relationships with employers.

Post placement support

One of the aims of the job brokerage projects is to achieve *sustainable* employment for residents of NDC areas. The provision of post-placement support is one method through which the projects aim to improve the retention of clients in jobs. By providing in-work support and acting as a broker between the employee and the employer, it is possible for any potential problems to be identified at a relatively early stage and for employment to be sustained when it might otherwise be lost.

In Bradford a process has begun where they identify 'HRDO' clients – these are clients that are at 'High Risk of Dropout'. These clients then receive more intensive post-placement support. For example, a member of staff will telephone them the night before beginning work to make sure that they know where they are going, how to get there and what time to be there. They will also telephone on the morning of the job to make sure that they are going. Support can then be offered throughout the early stages of work in order to provide encouragement to any employee that is finding work difficult and any employer that is encountering problems with their staff.

These interventions seek to address the problems of some disadvantaged groups who find it particularly difficult in moving to the work environment after long periods of unemployment. Whilst, in many cases, it appears to have resulted in high levels of retention in jobs, it is also acknowledged that some individuals may need to be placed two, three or four times before they are settled into appropriate employment.

Post-placement support is a further component of job brokerage projects that is provided more intensively than by mainstream services to provide effective personal support to clients who are considered the 'hardest to help'.

Partnerships and networking

In delivering job brokerage projects, working in partnership with a range of organisations is key to improving effectiveness. The key partner for job brokerage tends to be Jobcentre Plus, partly because of the potential for duplication, which needs to be avoided, and partly because of the potential for *synergy*.

Within the case study areas the projects work with Jobcentre Plus in areas including client referrals, provision of benefits advice, accessing vacancies (even if not necessarily directly from the job brokerage premises) and by undertaking marketing and publicity exercises. Jobcentre Plus staff are seconded to the job brokerage projects and are able to provide benefits advice as well as information about other Jobcentre services. Although there are mutual benefits to be gained from these links and, even though, in many ways, the two organisations are targeting different client groups, there can be tensions in the working relationship. Ensuring good communication and identifying individual roles and responsibilities through Service Level Agreements are ways in which the case study areas have sought to overcome potential problems.

Developing networks with a range of other organisations is important to the effectiveness of job brokerage projects. Examples from the case studies include:

- Referrals both to and from job brokerage projects increased through improved networking with the range of service providers
- Clients' education and training needs met through effective linkages with local training providers
- Additional jobs sourced by linking into employer networks, and
- Further employment opportunities identified through building relationships with those responsible for regeneration, such as local authorities, who can provide information about new developments in the Travel-To-Work Areas

Job brokerage projects also tend to link with other NDC projects that provide complementary services such as education and training. In the case study areas there is, however, potential to develop all of these networks further.

5. Outcomes and Impact

The projects are still in the relatively early stages. As a result, much of what has been achieved so far in the case study areas is in terms of establishing the job brokerage infrastructure, including premises, outreach work and developing networks. Setting up the groundwork for such projects takes some time and it is difficult to achieve high levels of job entries immediately.

Despite this, job entry targets are being achieved. In Bradford an average of 12 residents have been placed into work each month (a total of 90 placements over the lifetime of the project) and in Greets Green eight residents were placed into work in the first quarter. Whilst set up times can be slow, Bradford, in particular, has benefited from contracting to an organisation that has undertaken this work in many other localities, including other NDC areas, and which was, therefore, able to move quickly to establish itself. There is some recognition, though, that the expectation that the organisation will be able to deliver immediately leaves little room for experimentation or time to think how to do things differently.

In all of the case study areas there is a belief that the project is considered to be of value by the local community. In West Ham and Plaistow this is evidenced by the fact that around 60 per cent of those using the service are doing so as a result of word of mouth recommendation.

One of the unintended outcomes has been the use of the service by a large number of economically inactive, rather than registered unemployed residents. This is only a potential issue, however, because the specified targets for the projects tend to relate to reducing the numbers registered unemployed. Measuring impact by considering changing levels of economic activity in a locality may, therefore, need further consideration.

The projects are also achieving some 'softer' outcomes that are more difficult to measure. For example, in West Ham and Plaistow support has been given to individuals with drug and alcohol problems and in relation to issues such as housing benefit. In addition, targets for the project in West Ham and Plaistow have been diversified to include income maximisation and upskilling in employment.

Local employers are also benefiting from the projects. In Bradford one employer who had used the service acknowledged that it had resulted in a change in recruitment practices and improved retention of employees because of the accuracy of the job matching process.

6. What Works and Lessons

Job brokerage projects provide a multi-faceted approach to accessing employment, based on the principle that an effective intermediary service can improve the efficiency of the labour market in terms of bringing appropriate employers and employees together. The case study projects are at different stages of development, but a clear picture is emerging of what works in relation to the development of these projects, and what lessons can be learnt from what has taken place so far.

One of the key differences in the case study areas is in the organisation that is delivering the project. Contracting out the service in West Ham and Plaistow did not work to the satisfaction of the NDC, largely due to lack of control over the strategic direction of the project. It was therefore decided that in-house delivery would be a more appropriate route. However, in Bradford and Greets Green the contracting option is felt to have been a positive one, as they have built upon the previous experience of the contractor, who has been able to deliver the service relatively quickly as a result of the lessons that they have learnt in other localities. The more commercial, private sector approach is also felt to be more attractive to employers in a bid to deliver a professional service that businesses will use time and again.

Whilst all of the projects are positive about the progress that has been made, a number of areas were identified that will require more work. These include:

- Attracting more clients who are already in employment but who can benefit from upskilling and career development
- Accessing higher quality and higher pay jobs, although this may take some time
- In Bradford, there has been considerable success in attracting clients from the Asian community, but more work is needed to encourage Afro-Caribbean and white residents to use the service
- In some areas the outreach work hasn't reached all of the communities and targeting the 'hardest to help' may require more resources

Across the three case study areas, it is apparent that certain elements of the project are considered to be essential in order to deliver the most effective service. Whilst all of these elements may not be fully established in all of the areas, all of the projects identified a combination of these as being the key drivers of change. These can be grouped under five key characteristics of the required approach:

- ***Embedded***
 - Support, commitment and trust of the NDC
 - Location of premises in an appropriate and accessible venue
 - Early work to familiarise with the local area and understand the local context in which the project is to be developed
 - Widespread outreach work, linking to the informal and cultural networks in the locality
 - Good relations with, and understand of the local community; based on consultation
 - Development of links to the wider labour market, not just to jobs in the immediate area

- ***Holistic***
 - Provision of one-to-one, personalised support
 - Provision of a 'package' of advice, support and guidance that is tailored to individual need
 - Employment of committed and high quality staff
 - Employment of local staff with similar ethnic/cultural mix to local population

- ***Synergistic***
 - Development of partnerships and networks with other agencies (particularly with Jobcentre Plus) and other projects operating in the area
 - Capacity to signpost and refer individuals to a range of appropriate services in order to meet their needs
 - Maximising the benefits of links with other NDC projects

- ***Employer-focused***
 - Development of strong links with local employers and a good understanding of their needs and expectations
 - Ensure individuals are prepared appropriately for job opportunities
 - Effective and accurate job matching process to ensure that employers expectations are met

- ***Sustained***
 - The need to provide appropriate 'aftercare' in order for employment to be sustained

7. Conclusions

This overview of the job brokerage projects has raised a number of issues that other NDC areas developing such projects may need to be aware of and to address. In addition, these are issues that may benefit from further research. They include:

- The most appropriate methods for **embedding the project into the community** and tapping into informal networks
- The need to reach the **hardest to help groups** whilst also achieving the specified job targets
- The most appropriate method of **delivery of the project**, whether internally or using an external contracted agency
- Relating to the above, whether the focus of the project is to be on the **soft or hard outcomes**, and, if the former, how these can best be measured
- The development of a service that has the opportunity to **experiment, innovate and evolve** whilst also achieving the specified job targets
- The ways in which **barriers to employment for the client group**, including transport and travel horizons, can most effectively be addressed
- The need to provide a service for the **economically inactive** that is appropriately reflected in the project outcomes
- What aspects of the service should, in the long-run, be **mainstreamed** or should remain a supplement to statutory services
- The need to **work effectively with Jobcentre Plus** and to build a complementary service
- The extent to which developing **strong relationships with employers** is included as a component of the service and how to develop this in the relatively early stages, and its impact on effectiveness
- The most effective methods of **engaging with and developing networks** with the key agencies and service providers in the locality
- The need to provide a service that delivers **sustainable, high quality jobs** and which can also facilitate **career progression**

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