



Improvement

## **Customer led transformation programme**

Case study – Liverpool City Council

**Streets Ahead Plus – finding  
employment for lone parents**

18/58

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## The Customer Led Transformation Programme

Liverpool's work has been funded under the CLT programme. The fund aims to embed the use of customer insight and social media tools and techniques as strategic management capabilities across the public sector family in order to support place-based working.

The CLT programme is overseen by the Local Government Delivery Council (supported by the Local Government Association).

The fund was established specifically to support collaborative working between local authorities and their partners focused on using customer insight and social media tools and techniques to improve service outcomes. These approaches offer public services bodies the opportunity to engage customers and gather insight into their preferences and needs, and thereby provide the evidence and intelligence needed to redesign services to be more targeted, effective and efficient.

## About Speke, in Liverpool

Liverpool City Council is a unitary authority which provides services to 442,000 citizens and is the most deprived local authority in England. Despite the success of the council and others to attract inward investment and although there are undoubtedly some "leafy suburbs" and areas of prosperity and affluence there are also areas, such as Speke, with some of the worst poverty and deprivation in the UK.

Speke Garston is located on the southern border of the city of Liverpool. The ward is dominated by the Speke housing estate in the south of the ward and Garston to the north. Centrally the ward is dominated by John Lennon Airport, Estuary Business Park, Speke Retail Park and Bio Manufacturing and adjacent to Jaguar / Ford in neighbouring Knowsley.

According to the Indices of Multiple Deprivation 2007, the Speke area is in the worst 1 percent of overall deprivation, including the most deprived in terms of low incomes, high levels of worklessness, lone parents, and health.

As one of the most deprived wards in the City and has been the focus of much regeneration over many years but the statistics for Speke Garston still paint a gloomy picture:

- a population of 18,698 (2007) includes a higher proportion of females and children than the city average
- 63 percent of residents living in the most deprived 1 percent neighbourhoods in the country
- household income levels are low at £23,122 compared to a city level of £29,285

- child poverty rates are double that of the national average
- there are 3,707 workless residents (May 2010) and the worklessness rate (30 percent) is significantly higher than the Liverpool average (21.9 percent) and well above the national rate of 12.4 percent (with correspondingly high numbers of claimants of Incapacity Benefit / Employment Support Allowance)
- 46 percent of the housing stock in the ward is social housing, one of the highest rates in the city
- low levels of privately owned housing and over 88 percent of properties in Speke Garston fall into Council Tax Band “A”
- all crime and violent crime figures (including anti-social behaviour) are higher than the national average
- life expectancy much lower than the Liverpool and national averages
- women in the city have the highest rates for smoking and smoking related diseases
- obesity at 23.8 percent it is higher than the Liverpool average of 19.1 percent
- of the 3 schools in the ward none have achieved attainment levels above the Liverpool average for 5+ A\*–C grades including Maths and English.

Against this background, Liverpool City Council and its partners used their Customer Insight to identify and select an area within Speke Garston to pilot a new approach to support lone parents into employment. The selected area clearly had much to gain but would also present the greatest challenges.



## Background

The original Streets Ahead project started as a joint initiative in outreach working in 2003. Streets Ahead was established by the Jobs, Education and Training (JET) Service of Liverpool City Council (LCC) to bring together staff from a wide range of agencies to help improve residents' access to the job opportunities and services that are available in the South Liverpool area.

Each week a team of staff from organisations such as JET, JobCentre Plus (JCP), Greater Merseyside Connexions, Shaw Trust and Citizens Advice Bureau would visit houses, schools, community and health centres in Speke, Garston and Netherley Valley to promote awareness of local job opportunities and the wide range of support services available to people living in the area. After an initial pilot, this model was rolled out across the city.

The Streets Ahead Plus project aimed to take this work one stage further by focussing on a specific, difficult to reach, customer group – lone parents.

Given the limited timeframe and resources available for this pilot, it was estimated that a realistic but stretching target for the project would be to engage with around 100 residents in one of the most deprived Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs) in the Speke ward, and to support 20 of these lone parents into employment.

An earlier Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) data sharing pilot across the Liverpool City region provided some sound information from a range of partners at Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs) level. This enabled the partners to select a pilot area within Speke ward where around 90 lone parents had been identified and where

staff with local knowledge believed that there were additional “hidden” cases.

Feedback directly from community representatives and local residents suggested that there was a need for greater personalised support to address the complex barriers for lone parents returning to the labour market. So, Streets Ahead Plus sought to use greater customer insight to develop a more focused family/household approach, providing an enhanced advisory and support service tailored to meet individual needs. This would be delivered through a variety of partners and different locations including registered social landlord's office, schools, children's centres, and community groups.

As well as supporting individuals, the project aimed to establish a model that would create efficiencies through enhanced partnership working and deliver direct savings from the benefit system. It was calculated that twenty lone parents entering employment would realise a benefit saving of £80,000 during the 6 months of the project.



Although it will not be measured within the scope of this pilot project, it is anticipated that the project would also contribute to the reduction in child and family poverty and, as part of the wider social impact of individuals returning to work, would make indirect contributions to other social benefits including:

- improvement in health and well-being
- reduction in crime
- increase in take up of childcare
- reduction in worklessness
- improved community cohesion due to the project being designed in partnership with residents.
- increase in attainment and aspirations of children of previously workless parents at primary school level, up to age 11
- increase in attendance levels at school.

## Objectives

The ultimate aim of the project was to increase the number of lone parents in employment and consequently to reduce the costs of benefits provided to this group as well as improve the quality of their lives. To achieve this, the project sought to engage unemployed lone parents in order to address the barriers they face in securing employment. A target was set to support 20 of the sample group back into sustainable employment by March 2011 (i.e. 3 percent of the known lone parents in receipt of benefits within the Speke ward).

The project set out to capture and analyse a range of sources of customer insight to help understand this group. Customer insight intelligence was gathered from existing data held by Liverpool City Council, Job Centre Plus (JCP), Registered Social Landlords (RSLs), and feedback and consultation with the lone parents engaged on the project. The analysis of the data captured and feedback would be used to design a more customer focused service, better meeting the needs of these individuals resulting in more lone



parents returning to labour market in future.

In addition, the project investigated ways to redesign local delivery around customer need. By collaborating effectively with local delivery partners the aim was to redesign the way in which this specific customer group was supported – eliminating duplication, and reducing costs.

To achieve these objectives the project aimed to engage directly with a sample group of 100 lone parents from the identified area, focussing on those who were disengaged from mainstream provision and claiming Incapacity Benefit / Employment Support Allowance (IB/ESA).

## Approach

In preparation for the project, 689 lone parents in receipt of different benefits within the Speke ward were identified. Streets Ahead Plus aimed to engage with a sample of 100 from an identified Lower Super Output Area (LSOA).

To recruit the sample group, staff attended resident / community groups in the area to offer and promote the services available to get lone parents back into work.

The aim was to recruit the first 100 that responded to the offer as the sample group and then segment this group by demographics, for example male/ female, BAME etc. The next stage would be to map the customer journeys of the sample group to identify the barriers to employment and use their input to redesign service delivery to meet their specific needs.

With assistance from DWP Work Psychologists, Streets Ahead Plus made use of the following customer insight tools and techniques:

- one to one interviews
- questionnaires
- customer Journey Mapping
- focus groups
- consultation
- analysis via DWP Work Psychologists
- business / employer questionnaires.

They used the questionnaires and one to one interviews to further understand the experiences of the sample group in accessing current worklessness services, and from this feedback, highlighted five key issues for further discussion and investigation at focus groups, i.e.

- childcare
- housing
- availability of jobs
- skills and qualifications
- financial / debt problems.

In conjunction with customer insight data already available (e.g. RSL tenant profiles, benefit information etc) the partners used the consultation / customer journey mapping to dig deeper under the surface of these issues.

The information gleaned from these processes has enabled JCP and the LCC to better understand the customer experience. Consequently, the team engaged with partners/employers to deliver this project, develop further training and identify job opportunities for this customer group.

A number of customer engagement activities were undertaken during the project:

**Questionnaire** – A meeting was organised between the work psychologists and members of the Streets Ahead Plus project team. This was to determine what information the team hoped to capture in its initial contact with the target group. An initial brief outlined four areas of interest, including:

- what social media was most effective in engaging with the target group
- what the target group perceived as barriers to employment, and what could be done to encourage access
- best use of venues/locations/facilities in order to establish and maintain contact with the target group
- general perceptions around reasons for worklessness.

These were all included in a questionnaire. Questions pertaining to perceptions around worklessness included a confidence scale (0-10) regarding belief in finding work in six months' time, and Yes/No responses to issues which may present possible barriers to employment.

**Focus Groups** – Four focus groups took place on three separate occasions (21st February, 9th and 31st March). These were held at the Matchworks 'Can Cook' studio. The aim of conducting focus groups was to gather further qualitative information from those who had engaged with the project around areas highlighted by the project team as emerging barriers to employment.

**Adviser Interview** – At the close of the project (following the last focus group) the two principal advisers on the project were asked to provide their views on those who had engaged with the project versus those who had not, and the possible reasons for



this. This was a semi-structured interview. After summarising the views the advisers were given the opportunity to review the information to ensure it was an accurate reflection of their perceptions/feedback.

## Findings

The focus groups were asked to discuss the potential barriers to employment and the customers expressed the following views.

### Childcare

By an overwhelming majority the barrier that caused the greatest concern was related to childcare. The main issues were connected to funding and a desire for more flexible access to childcare services. Some of the participants reported that they often found it difficult to get childcare at very short notice and for a short period of time, e.g. organising care to allow them to attend a day course or event.

Some of the participants felt it would be useful to have opportunities for childcare whilst they were training; in most cases training is unpaid and therefore they could not afford to use childcare services. As a consequence, they sometimes felt they



missed out on opportunities that might help them move into work.

Participants seemed to feel that the hours available for childcare were not flexible enough. As lone parents, most of them would be looking for part-time jobs between childcare hours (e.g. typical school or preschool hours). Moreover, participants felt jobs with these hours are not common.

Discussion in the focus groups seemed to indicate that the participants did not always fully understand the cost of childcare and what they would be expected to pay once they went into work; this would include advice on tax credits etc.



## **Employment Services**

As with childcare, the participants had much to feed back with respect to employment services in their area. There was the belief among participants that there were not enough jobs available in their area.

They also expressed a need for more specialised services to help them find work. For example, participants felt they would benefit from help with CVs, job applications and general career advice. Some felt that although services may already exist, they would like more information on these services through means such as advertisements. Similarly, some expressed an interest in gaining work experience or jobs where training might be provided.

Participants expressed frustration over jobs where there is a requirement for one's 'own car,' feeling that these limit opportunities.

Participants found it helpful when they have had a rapport with advisers. Some gave very positive feedback on advisers they had worked with, stating they would not have even considered attending some of the focus groups (e.g. the 'Can Cook' day) without adviser encouragement and support, and felt having a friendly and inclusive adviser was important.

Similarly, some participants stated they felt more at ease at events tailored specifically to lone parents. Some expressed a lack of confidence in dealing with others and this was mirrored in a request by some for workshops or other training that would help them to build confidence and self-esteem.

In addition to the above, the participants seemed to feel that outreach services are a valuable resource for them and they would like to have more easily accessible services in their area.



### **Education and training**

There seemed to be less of a response in relation to services linked to education and training. However, some of the participants indicated they would like to have access to courses such as IT, First Aid, Health and Safety and Customer Services which they believed would enhance employability.

The participants who were interested in opportunities seemed to feel their options were limited by childcare issues and access to information about available courses.

Some of the participants felt it would be useful to have follow-up or aftercare upon completion of training or a course to aid the transition onto other programmes or employment. Some stated they would like advisers or courses that provided guidance or next steps.

### **Housing**

Some participants felt more guidance around rent and council tax would be helpful as some may find it difficult to manage the transition from benefits to having a salary.

They also reported a need for more flexibility from housing association services. For example, they noted that housing associations will not send representatives outside of work hours.

Some of the participants felt they were living in bad conditions, and in areas where they were housed alongside other vulnerable people, e.g. ex-addicts so they had concerns about their immediate environment.

Although issues such as housing are sometimes connected to worklessness, it was difficult to establish from customers how improvements in this area might help them to gain employment. In facilitating the focus group the aim was to see how improvements in housing may allow a lone parent to concentrate on other goals, be it training, job search, or the like, but this connection was not readily made.

## Other

During the discussions at the focus groups a number of other topics were raised.

The following, existing services that were seen as positive:

- Sure Start centres
- Lone parent advisers in the Five Centre
- JET presence in the Five Centre
- Streets Ahead has offered a group that's helped single parents to train and network
- Parklands Drop In Study Centre (DISC) – there are courses available but not enough people know about them
- CAB in Speke
- JET centre also does debt counselling.

The groups also identified a number of other services that would be useful. The partners will consider these in future when redesigning services and initiating projects:

- better advertisement of opportunities
- more for Job Seekers Allowance (JSA) clients e.g. Partnership for Learning (PFL), DISC, community college, Speke library
- services linked in with schools for advertisement of what's going on in the area
- more group activities in our area to be arranged
- more advice of how to handle your money so it's easier to live
- financial advice
- parent forums to share information (these do exist but not everyone has access to them)
- events where parents can access services but that also involve the children
- debt counselling – some other places locally.

## Adviser's perspective

The adviser perspective provided further, sometimes contrasting, insight into the customer experience. For example, whilst the customers suggested that more advertising was needed to inform them of local services, the advisers noted that the wide range of methods used to make contact did not always appear to work.

Whilst the advisers found much to praise around those who engaged with the project, these customers were far lower in number than projected. For those who had engaged, the advisers felt interest grew at the 'grassroots' level, i.e. through word of mouth, and they had more success when they felt the customer related to them.

The advisers noted that when they structured their interviews and impressed the importance of attendance, customers were more likely to attend than if the advisers kept their diaries open for ad-hoc appointments. There was a consensus that a flexible ad-hoc approach did not encourage engagement.

The advisers felt that when working at the children's centre customers engaged more readily because they had reasons to be there, e.g. they brought and collected their children daily. Advisers also noted that engagement was higher when there were courses to go to and where childcare was attached.

In reflecting on why customers did not / may not have engaged, the advisers felt there were several issues. To begin with, customers did not respond to conventional channels used to advertise services (e.g., leaflets, house visits).

The advisers also noted that newer methods of communication such as texting and Facebook were no more effective in generating interest from customers.

It appears that the clients utilise these channels to communicate with families and friends but seemed reluctant to open them to engage with official service providers. Moreover, because of the lack of facilities available to the advisers (e.g. they have no facility to produce group texts so had to issue multiple individual ones) this method was very time intensive for the advisers.

The advisers felt that momentum was hard to achieve due to breaks such as Christmas, New Year and Half Term, or after customers had completed courses. The advisers felt they had to work hard to re-establish contact after these gaps and consequently sought to provide events, with child care provision, during the holiday periods.

The advisers sometimes encountered behaviours from customers which they felt made it difficult in gaining commitment. For example, customers appeared to operate more comfortably in familiar groups, and were less likely to commit to attending an

event unless they knew others who were also participating. Customers appeared to find difficulties in engaging as individuals.

Advisers sometimes got the impression that customers were settled in their current benefit regime and feared any changes to it. Some customers had shared with them that they felt 'stuck in a rut,' or described a feeling of 'lazy-itis.'

The advisers wondered if customers had role models, e.g. did/had their own parents work(ed)? Advisers also felt that a change of circumstance for some customers could have an impact on current relationships. Work would involve a change not only in routine, but with whom customers might interact or socialise.

Finally, in some instances, the advisers reflected on customers' lone parent status, and the extent to which a current or former partner was involved in their lives.



## Outcomes

The Streets Ahead Plus project was set up as a pilot to test the use of outreach activity to support lone parents to find suitable employment. The pilot project formally ran for 7 months and consequently, some of the targeted outcomes were achieved after the formal conclusion of the pilot.

However, the project was considered to be a success and the outreach activity introduced during the pilot has continued, with joint working between Liverpool City Council and JobCentre Plus in Speke, ensuring a continued presence on the ground and on going support for lone parents in the area.

Consequently, the impact of this work on local people's lives and outcomes are still being realised – i.e. individuals started on a path towards employment (e.g. through training) during the project have now found jobs as a direct result of the pilot.

“I got a job because of the training Streets Ahead Plus arranged”

“Streets Ahead Plus was a really good project to start up ... it helped me gain a lot of confidence ...”

**Bonnie Belladonne**

The original target for the project was to engage with 100 residents and secure employment for 20. By the end of the project (March 2011) 80 had been engaged with nine starting full time employment and one increasing her part time hours. However, in subsequent months a further 6 of the engaged clients had entered employment and another two are continuing with their training programmes.

Using the JCP formula to calculate the savings in benefits achieved, when individuals return to work, an annual saving of £120,000 will be achieved if these 15 remain in employment for a year or more.

“Wow, I didn't know all this was available. I am so glad I met my adviser and I am now working and didn't know all this was available to me.”

**Newly employed lone parent**

In the longer term the partners believe that lone parents returning to work will contribute to the social benefits mentioned earlier (e.g. reduction in crime, improvements in health and well-being). However, it has not been possible to see this within the limited timescale of the pilot.

For the organisations concerned, the success of this pilot has resulted in outreach working being considered more actively in other areas of their work. For example, as part of the Child Poverty Strategy in the Liverpool City region that is currently being developed.

## Benefits

There have been a number of benefits as a result of the Streets Ahead Plus project, to Liverpool City Council, JCP and other partners, as well as to the customer groups involved:

### Internal benefits:

#### Customer Insight

There are a number of benefits arising from improved customer insight including:

- the insight provided evidence to clarify and support existing ideas and previous experience (e.g. in relation to child care, pester power, etc) which can be utilised in other areas and with other groups thereby helping to improve engagement levels with “hard to reach” sections of the community
- the drive to achieve customer insight provided the advisers and the customers the opportunity to discuss issues, problems and barriers in more detail
- customer insight highlighted the ways of engagement which were preferred by the customers (e.g. face to face through their children, peers and friends)
- the pilot demonstrated that certain levels of structure around interviews and appointments were preferred by customers.

#### Staff development

The staff involved in this project further developed their knowledge and understanding of their customers as well as more detailed information about the local area and population. They also learnt about each others organisations, management structures, objectives, etc which helped support greater collaboration.

This improved knowledge has had a knock-on effect beyond those directly involved in delivery of the project. For example, in JCP, senior managers indirectly involved with the project are now “on board” with the partnership agenda to a greater extent than before.

#### An outreach model

The outreach model piloted in the Streets Ahead Plus project has been rolled out to other client groups and this will also influence the delivery of other services across the city. Liverpool City Council’s JET Service is moving from an office based to a community outreach delivery model, concentrating on pockets of deprivation across the city, and the Streets Ahead Plus project will inform the development of this strategy.

In addition, JCP is also using an outreach delivery model to target other customer groups, and this project has demonstrated that this approach can be more effective when used alongside more traditional engagement methods.



### Partnership working

The involvement of other partners, such as Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) and community groups, in a particular area has also proved to be of great value. Sometimes seemingly differing agendas (such as housing) can be interlinked making it easier to engage with these shared customers as a direct result of partners working together.

Joint delivery also helps in times when there are reduced resources. One of the benefits of this project was that extra offers of free help were received from other partners in the area, including training for the project beneficiaries, use of venues, use of office space etc.

Some of this resulted from the governance structure of the project's Steering Group which provided an opportunity for partners to spot opportunities to collaborate. It also helped that the project was focused on a specifically geographic community where these partners were already working.

In addition, there was also evidence from an early stage that the project was successful in engaging with people who were deemed as 'hard to reach' and therefore, other partners wanted to exploit this success.

Links with local key players, not usually directly involved in the delivery of the worklessness agenda, have been strengthened through the project, including the local councillor, RSL, and the church. The local councillor became an ambassador and champion for the project, helping to engage local residents and other stakeholders.

The Steering Group for the project established good strategic links with key agencies e.g. Police, RSL etc, and this was translated into improved engagement on the ground through the direct links that other partners had with the client group.

The Steering Group also helped attract additional resources to support the project by using their contacts e.g. with Everton FC, Can Cook studios, DWP Work Psychologists, etc., to provide activities for the targeted client group.

This project has demonstrated that, once invited, many partners are willing to get involved in such projects and the sum is greater than the parts when resources are shared. There was a real commitment to making a difference locally.

### Communications

The project team decided to use venues sited in areas where the customer felt more comfortable as opposed to using JCP/LCC buildings. This helped reduce any perceived barriers to their participation and facilitated the development of a greater rapport between the advisors and the customers.

This project has provided evidence to support existing theories about the barriers facing this particular customer group and has allowed testing of other methods of engagement such as use of social media channels (e.g. Facebook) even if this has been of limited initial value. This will serve to inform future marketing campaigns to this particular client group.

## External benefits:

### Employment

As a direct result of the pilot 15 lone parents have moved into employment, one has increased her hours of employment and others are undertaking training as part of a journey towards employment.

This has made a massive difference to the lives of these individuals. The employment taken up by these lone parents covers a range of areas including hotel housekeeping, school assistant, catering and hospital assistants.

The move into work will also generate an annual saving of over £120,000 in benefit payments for as long as these individuals remain in employment.

### Local opportunities highlighted

The business questionnaires were developed as a result of the customer insight work done with the unemployed lone parents and helped to generate a greater understanding about the local business community and the opportunities available within the area.

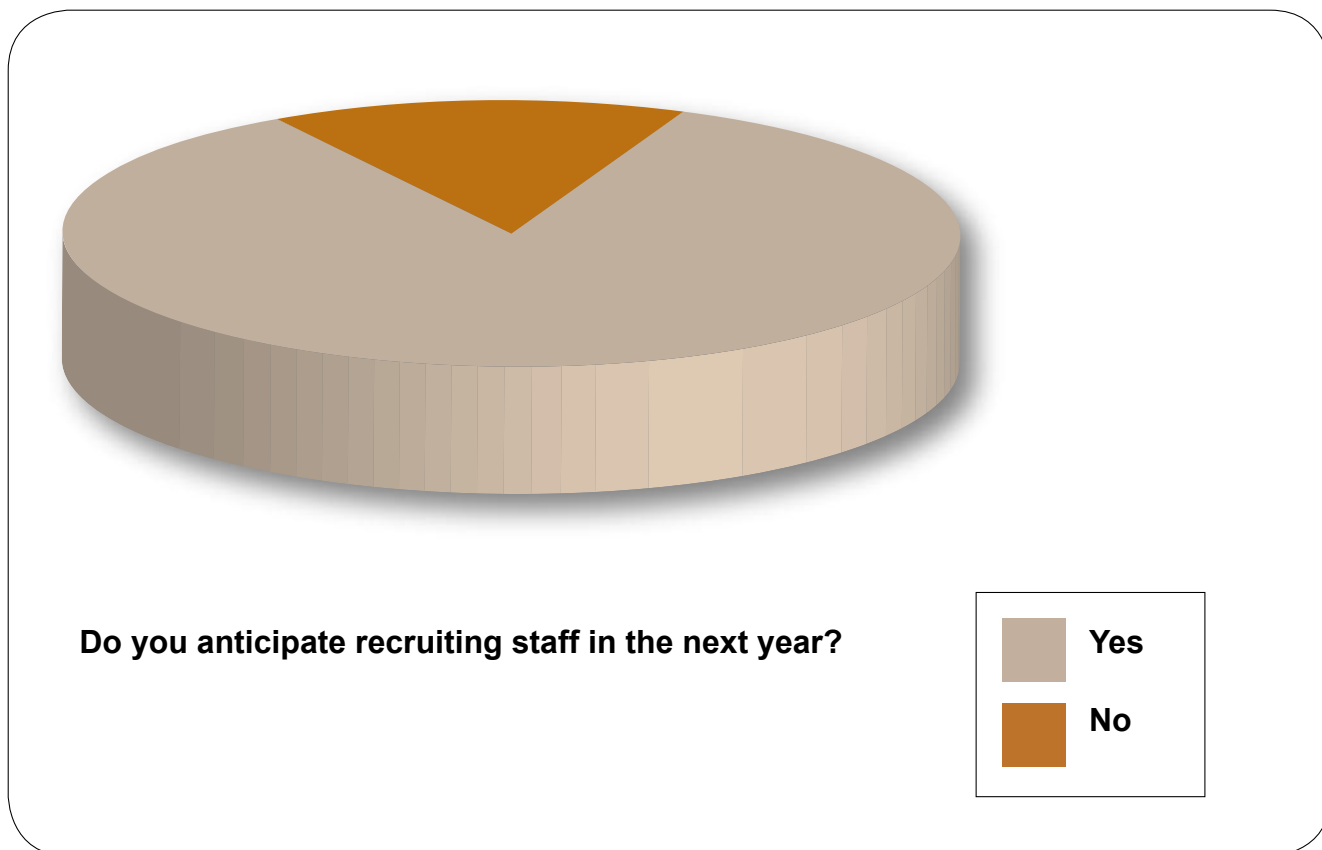
These questionnaires were completed by 20 businesses in the South Liverpool area (predominantly in the Speke Garston area) and have provided valuable information about the employers, including:

- who their contacts were
- how to engage with them most effectively
- specific opportunities available in the labour market now and in the forthcoming months.





Of the businesses surveyed 85 percent stated that they would be recruiting more staff within the next year.



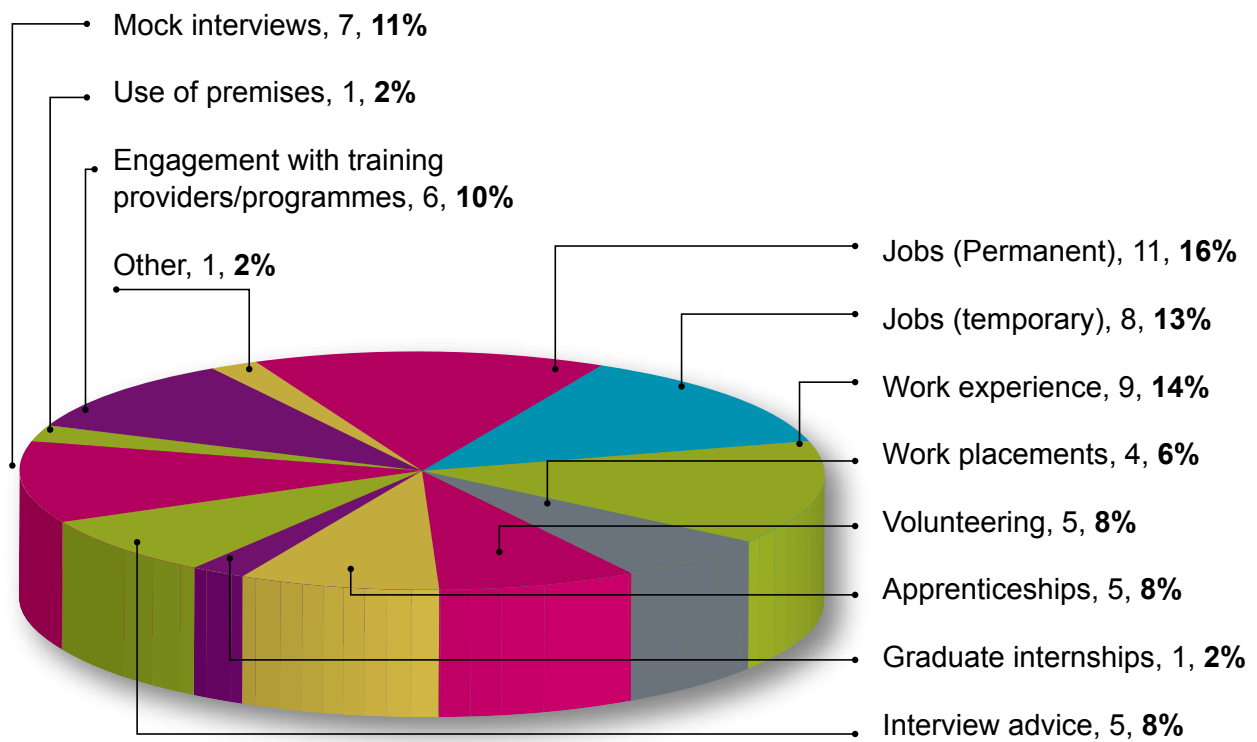
Staff not directly involved with Streets Ahead Plus, such as employer engagement staff from both JCP and JET, were issued with an analysis of the questionnaires and details of the businesses recruiting. Using these, they have been able to schedule joint employer meetings and use the feedback to raise particular issues (e.g. training, transport, child care etc) with local employers for the benefit of the lone parent client group.

Furthermore, a large number of employers were willing to offer a range of support to those seeking employment.

“I feel better, feel like a normal person again. I have my self-esteem back, I have my confidence back.”

**Lone parent**

## Percentage of employers willing to offer support to South Liverpool residents



“The project aimed to engage with a number of lone parents to get some customer insight from their perspective about what services work for them in terms of moving them back into employment, or into training or other opportunities.”

**Julia McNally, Employer Engagement Manager, Liverpool City Council**

The questionnaires highlighted that local employers were keen to recruit from the local population, and to offer additional support to those further from the labour market through e.g. work experience, work trials, flexible family policies etc.

The feedback provides valuable evidence when, in future, potential employees or their representatives are requesting this type of support from these businesses.

## Governance

A Steering Group was established to manage the project. This group reported to Liverpool First – Liverpool’s Local Strategic Partnership (LSP).

The Steering Group was comprised of the following organisations:

- local Councillor (chair of the group)
- Liverpool City Council (LCC)
- Jobcentre Plus
- South Liverpool Housing (Housing Association)
- JET Service (LCC)
- Neighbourhood Management Service (LCC)
- Merseyside Police
- Speke Training and Enterprise Council (STEC) (Community Training Provider)

Although not represented on this group the Children’s Centre acted as a key partner on the ground.

The Steering Group provided feedback to

- the Economic Growth Partnership of the LSP
- the local Economic Development and Employment Group in the South Liverpool area
- the sub-regional City Employment Strategy (CES) group.

The Governance worked well and the allocation of additional resources contributed to the success of the project. The Steering Group also supported the continued outreach activity and changes to working practices which have taken place beyond the funding of the project.

In addition, CES is now using the Streets Ahead Plus project as a good practice example to highlight issues and practices

around the developing Child and Family Poverty Strategy.

At the outset an Operational Group was also set up, to manage day to day activity. However, this was quickly disbanded as it was deemed unnecessary because partners were working well on the ground and meeting regularly as part of their day-to-day work. Also most organisations on the Operational Group were represented at Steering Group level which would enable them to raise any issues or problems at these meetings.

## Resourcing

The Streets Ahead Plus project received £65,000 from the CLG Customer Led Transformation Programme. The funding was used to pay for:

- two Project Advisers - salary and on costs for the duration of the project
- customer insight activities including interviews, questionnaires, focus groups, customer journey mapping, data analysis etc (as described in the section entitled Approach)
- marketing to establish presence and awareness in the area
- overheads including costs toward use of premises etc.

However, the partners contributed additional resources costing £33,068, without charging the project. These included:

- a JCP Adviser full time
- two JCP Work Psychologists for approximately one week over the duration of the project
- two Operations Managers (one LA and one JCP) for approximately 1 day per week over the duration of the project

- input from other managers in JCP and LCC regularly
- use of venues for staff and for project activities e.g. church, RSL, Children's Centre, JET for use as interview / outreach facilities and desk space
- engagement through Crosby Training – use of learning / resource bus and training programmes for client group within the community (Crosby Training have existing contract with JCP)
- STEC – training offered to client group and office space for meetings including monthly Steering Group meetings
- advertising and promotion of the project via e.g. RSL website, leaflets, newsletter etc
- local school engagement, and links with another DWP funded engagement project – “School Gates”
- IT and telephony – sourced from JCP and LCC.

## Challenges and lessons learnt

A number of valuable lessons were learnt during this project and these are described below.

### Partnerships

Ultimately this project has changed the way services are delivered by the partners involved. The project has transcended the boundaries between organisations to ensure a seamless and consistent service for the customer. The success delivered through this partnership working provides an effective model for future projects and initiatives.

The selection of the staff working on the ground and delivering the project on a day to day basis was a key factor for the success of this project. The personal experiences



of these individuals (e.g. single mothers who had lived on the estate and been unemployed) gave them a credibility that was respected by both the customer group and those managing the project. Therefore it should be recognised in future work that the personalities and experience of the individuals involved in a collaborative project are very important in ensuring good working relationships and effective delivery.

### Governance

The project had to be set up very quickly

because of the timing of the funding. Hence, the initial consultation didn't include all local partners, or local key players even within the main delivery organisations. Therefore the lesson is to try making more time available for planning as this will help reduce avoidable problems (e.g. the setting up of the operational group which proved unnecessary).

Managers for the project had full time roles within their respective organisations, and the establishment of this project required significant amounts of time in terms of attending meetings, revising plans etc. It may have been more effective to appoint a dedicated project manager for the project, as the number of staff/ managers involved from the outset contributed to some initial "confusion". However, as a result of the managers from various agencies having to work together, they have subsequently developed a greater understanding and new ways of working which will influence future working practices and relationships.

Engaging the local councillor on the project was invaluable, as she has the ear of the community which helped engage the target customer group. The councillor is also the Assistant Cabinet Member for Employment and Young People so was well versed in the issues facing the project. However, consideration would need to be made in engaging other councillors who were less familiar with this agenda and support might need to be offered.

Initially an Operations Group was established, to manage the day to day activity. However, in the light of experience it quickly became clear to the Steering Group that this was not necessary. In fact a more efficient working model was to allow the operational managers from JCP and LCC to coordinate daily activities, supported

"This project was absolutely fabulous for our community. Anything that connects and supports our vulnerable families is always welcome. The group in our area has been particularly hard hit by funding cuts and so it was even more important we engaged them and understood how we could support them back to work. The team did an outstanding job in connecting with so many residents and supporting so many back to work."

**Councillor Rasmussen**

by the existing resources within the two main partners, and reporting directly to the Steering Group. Consequently the Operations Group was disbanded.

In retrospect, a possible improvement to the governance model would have involved the inclusion, on the Steering Group, of someone to act as a champion of the lone parents.

### **Operations**

Feedback, received from the community during the early stages of the pilot, identified that it did not want "another initiative" which would test an approach and then leave the area and the customers with no point of contact. Consequently, the partners have maintained a presence on the ground in the area after the completion of the pilot.

This project, alongside other pilots that were operating in the city, have helped the partners to develop a range of outreach models that will be used in future to tailor their approaches to the needs of individuals, targeted areas and customer groups.

It is worth noting the environment in which the focus groups took place. On these occasions customers had been invited to a day of cookery lessons. Though these were undoubtedly useful for any single parent,

these were busy days with a packed agenda, so there may not have been the level of involvement that a more neutral environment would have provided.

It is worth noting that those participating in the various events had an incentive to do so. For the future, it is worth considering which incentives or pressure points are successful in engaging target groups. Some clearly work, with advisors pointing to “pester power” as an obvious success (i.e. lay on something for the children and they’ll pester the parents to attend providing an opportunity to engage the adults). However, different groups will need different approaches and the use of customer insight will be invaluable in identifying the best pathways.

“What we’ve done is engage with a number of lone parents over a period of around about 6 months and we’ve managed to move some of those into jobs in the local area and beyond.”

**Julia McNally, Employer Engagement Manager, Liverpool City Council**

## Next steps

A number of activities will either flow directly from this project or have their design influenced by the learning generated during the Streets Ahead Plus pilot:

- The Streets Ahead Plus project itself will continue and will evolve throughout 2011/12 and tie into various work programmes such as the Liverpool Employment & Skills Framework which will develop ward based “Local Employment and Skills Plans”.
- The development of a joint JCP / LCC post will help encourage joint activity across the city – both agencies are committed to joint delivery at a senior level which will cascade to operations.
- A revised approach for the LCC JET Service is being developed – which will result in increased outreach delivery across the city on targeted areas.
- Within JCP there is a flexibility programme for additional outreach activity across the city.
- LCC and JCP outreach programmes will be collaborative and make best use of expertise and resources.
- The use of Customer Insight will help shape the future engagement with customers and the subsequent redesign of services.
- The use of customer questionnaires – both for customers and business – will continue within JCP and LCC.





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