



Improvement

Customer led transformation programme Case study – Wakefield Council

**Using customer insight to address
worklessness in Wakefield**

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The Customer Led Transformation Programme

Wakefield Council and Jobcentre Plus were jointly funded under the Customer Led Transformation 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 Customer Led Transformation 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 Wakefield

Wakefield district covers some 350 square kilometres in West Yorkshire and has a resident population of 326,000. Wakefield has good transport links to the wider region and UK, being served by the M1 and M62 motorways and an extensive network of rail and bus services.

The district is made up of open, attractive countryside surrounding the main centres of population in the Wakefield city and the towns of Pontefract, Castleford, Knottingley, Normanton, Featherstone, Ossett, Horbury, Hemsworth, South Elmsall and South Kirkby.

When compared with many other metropolitan districts Wakefield's age profile has smaller than average proportions of people in the late-teen and early 20's age bands, reflecting the absence of any sizeable university presence within Wakefield district.

Although economic migrants from the expanded European Union, particularly Poland, have swelled the population, Wakefield has a relatively small ethnic minority population with 93 per cent being White British.

Latest projections suggest that Wakefield's population will continue to grow and to age.

The 2010 Indices of Multiple Deprivation show that 40,459 people in Wakefield are living in neighbourhoods amongst the top 10 per cent most deprived in England. This is 12.5 per cent of the district's population and is down from 14.6 per cent in 2007.

Despite having high numbers of active businesses (8,900 during 2009) the overall worklessness rate is significant with the latest available figures showing that over 16 per cent of working age residents are claiming key out of work benefits of one sort or another (compared to 13 per cent and 12 per cent for the region and GB respectively).

Around 28 per cent of jobs are located in the public sector, compared to 22 per cent nationally, with other major sectors being distribution, hotels and restaurants (25.6 per cent) and banking, finance and insurance (16.8 per cent). Although there has been a decline in the number of manufacturing jobs, at 11 per cent, the proportion employed in this sector remains higher than the national average.



Background

Worklessness in Wakefield

Worklessness is a major problem for Wakefield and the recent economic downturn has made matters worse. Worklessness estimates for the 12 priority neighbourhoods in Wakefield show an average claim rate of 30 per cent, with the Priory Estate in Featherstone and Portobello in Wakefield exhibiting the highest rates at 35 per cent – more than two and a half times higher than the national rate.

Worklessness is the general term describing people who experience significant barriers, whether it be ill-health, low skills or low motivation, which prevent them from working.

Working age people claiming out of work benefits are frequently used as a measure of worklessness. These figures are an underestimate as there are workless people who do not receive benefits. However the figures do offer timely and reliable intelligence on local trends and comparisons to other areas.

A Worklessness Assessment carried out in Wakefield in 2010 highlighted the following facts.

In August 2009, 32,650 Wakefield residents were claiming key out of work benefits. This is 16.3 per cent of the working age population and is the highest in West Yorkshire. These claimants come from a number of backgrounds:

- ill-health is a major cause of worklessness in Wakefield with 58 per cent of the workless population claiming an incapacity benefit – this equates to 9.5 per cent of the working population

- Jobseekers Allowance (JSA) claimants is the second largest claimant group, representing 27 per cent of claimants, 4.4 per cent of the working population
- lone parents on Income Support account for 12.3 per cent of the workless population in Wakefield.

Youth unemployment is particularly high in Wakefield and is ranked in the 10 per cent highest nationally. Estimates suggest that 1 in 10 people aged 18-24 are out of work and claiming JSA. Older people are more likely to experience longer periods of unemployment. For those over 50 the average length of claim is 20.8 weeks compared to the median rate of 12.4 weeks.

The economic downturn has seen unemployment increase in all age bands. However young people have borne the brunt. Between November 2007 and August 2009 the number of claimants (aged 18-24) increased by 1,985.

Former coalfield areas display particularly high levels of claimants in receipt of Employment Support Allowance/Incapacity Benefit (ESA/IB) with 15 per cent of working age population in the South Kirkby ward claiming these benefits. IB claimants tend to be older and disproportionately male. Claim periods are lengthy with 78 per cent of claimants on benefit for more than two years.

The most common medical condition of claimants is in the mental and behavioural disorders category at 36 per cent of claimants. Diseases of the musculoskeletal system is the second most frequent reason for claims with more than 22 per cent, higher than both regional and national averages.

Wakefield has a small ethnic minority population and consequently a relatively low number of ethnic minority JSA claimants. However, during the economic downturn the number of ethnic minority JSA claimants increased at a faster rate than white claimants.

Offender caseload numbers in Wakefield were estimated at 1,531 in July 2010. At least 48 per cent of this group are economically inactive, more than 730 individuals.

The former coalfield wards of Castleford, Hemsworth and South Kirkby exhibit the highest rates of worklessness with almost one in four (23.9 per cent) of working age population in receipt of out of work benefits.

There are a number of known barriers facing those without work including sickness, caring responsibilities and low levels of qualifications.

The Annual Population Survey 2009 suggests that long-term sickness and looking after the home/family are the main reasons for not looking for a job for those who are economically inactive but would like to work.

It is estimated that more than 50 per cent of the workless population have less than a Level 2 qualification compared with 26 per cent of those in work. There is an increasing demand for formalised knowledge in areas of work than had not previously required qualifications, a particular issue for older people that have previously accessed unskilled work.

For many long-term claimants the detachment from the labour market has resulted in limited desire to look for work. For those that do want to work they are faced with fierce competition from the large numbers of job-seekers that have a recent work history. In March 2010 the number of JSA claimants per live vacancy stood at 5.3, but a high of 8.9 was reached in the spring of 2009.

National scenario

In 2010 the new coalition government came to power and launched the major welfare to work reforms including:

- a modernisation of the way Jobcentre Plus delivers its services
- a Work Programme to replace an array of employment schemes, pilots and projects
- a transformational reform of the benefit system and the introduction of Universal Credits
- a greater focus on partnership working – Jobcentre Plus, providers, local authorities, employers, and jobseekers working together to find new solutions to unemployment.

This project therefore had to change, as it went along, to reflect these changes and to adapt this national approach to meet local need by giving them a local focus.

Objective

This project aimed to use customer insight to identify opportunities for genuine service transformation and, hence, to get more people into work and training by improving access to services for workless people.

The prime objective of this project was to reduce worklessness for local people, by identifying and addressing the barriers that customers faced when trying to enter or re-enter employment.

The project set out to:

- build upon current and planned customer insight work around worklessness as part of the current Wakefield Total Place Programme
- discover what customers wanted and needed and to feed this information into the development of a holistic approach to worklessness across the district
- prepare for and support the introduction of the Department for Work and Pensions, Work Programme in 2011.

The project aimed to enable Wakefield Council and Jobcentre Plus to apply more intense and targeted levels of customer insight with citizens in order to develop a more customer focussed solution.

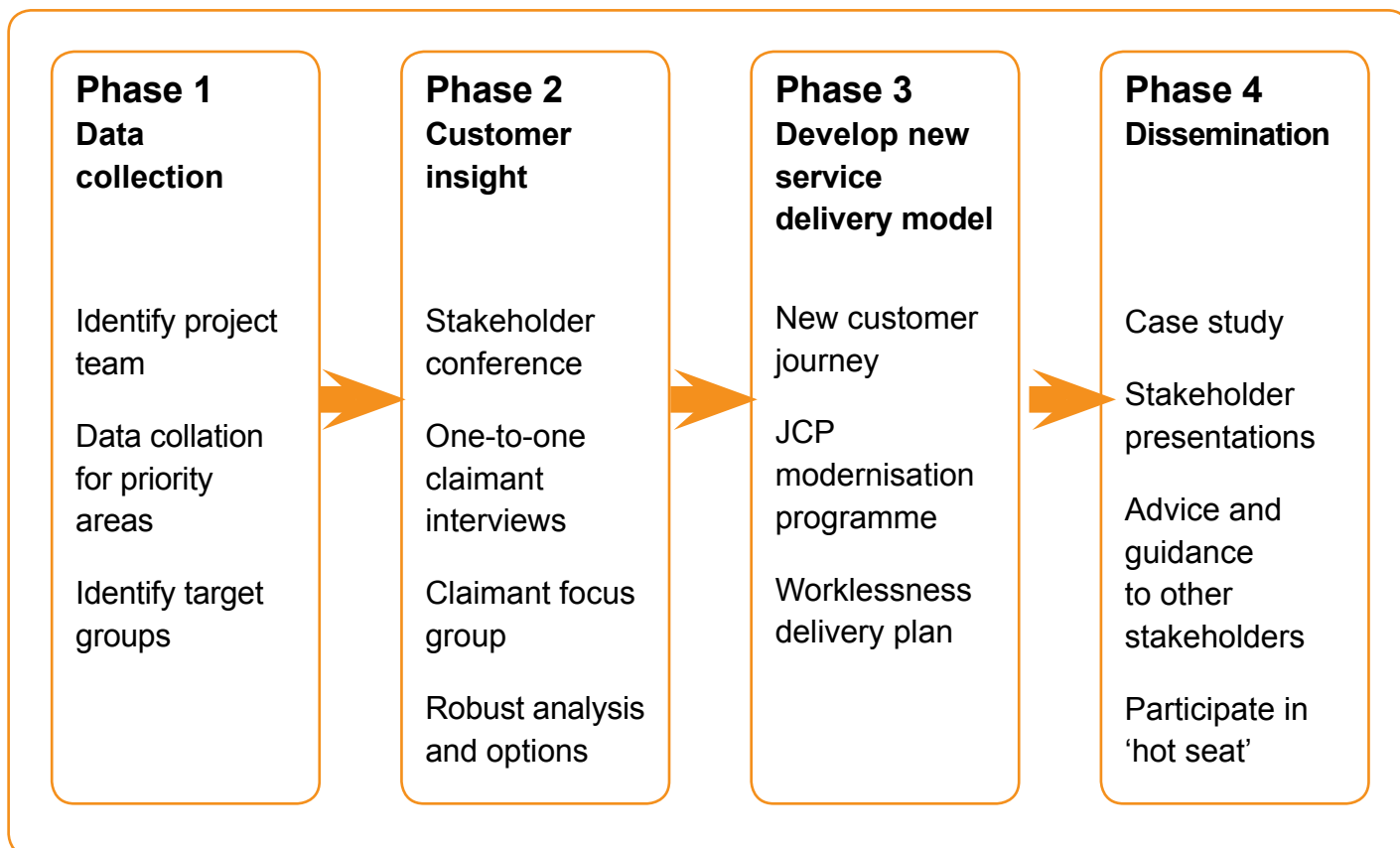
This project targeted those in the working age population who were unemployed and/or economically inactive. Specifically it sought to identify and recruit a sample group to work with of up to 150 people from the following segments:

- lone parents
- male claimants
- IB/SDA claimants
- offenders.

Approach

This project set out to undertake research to deliver an insight into the customer journey for workless people in Wakefield so that it could be improved across the whole district.

The approach involved the following four stages:



Project team

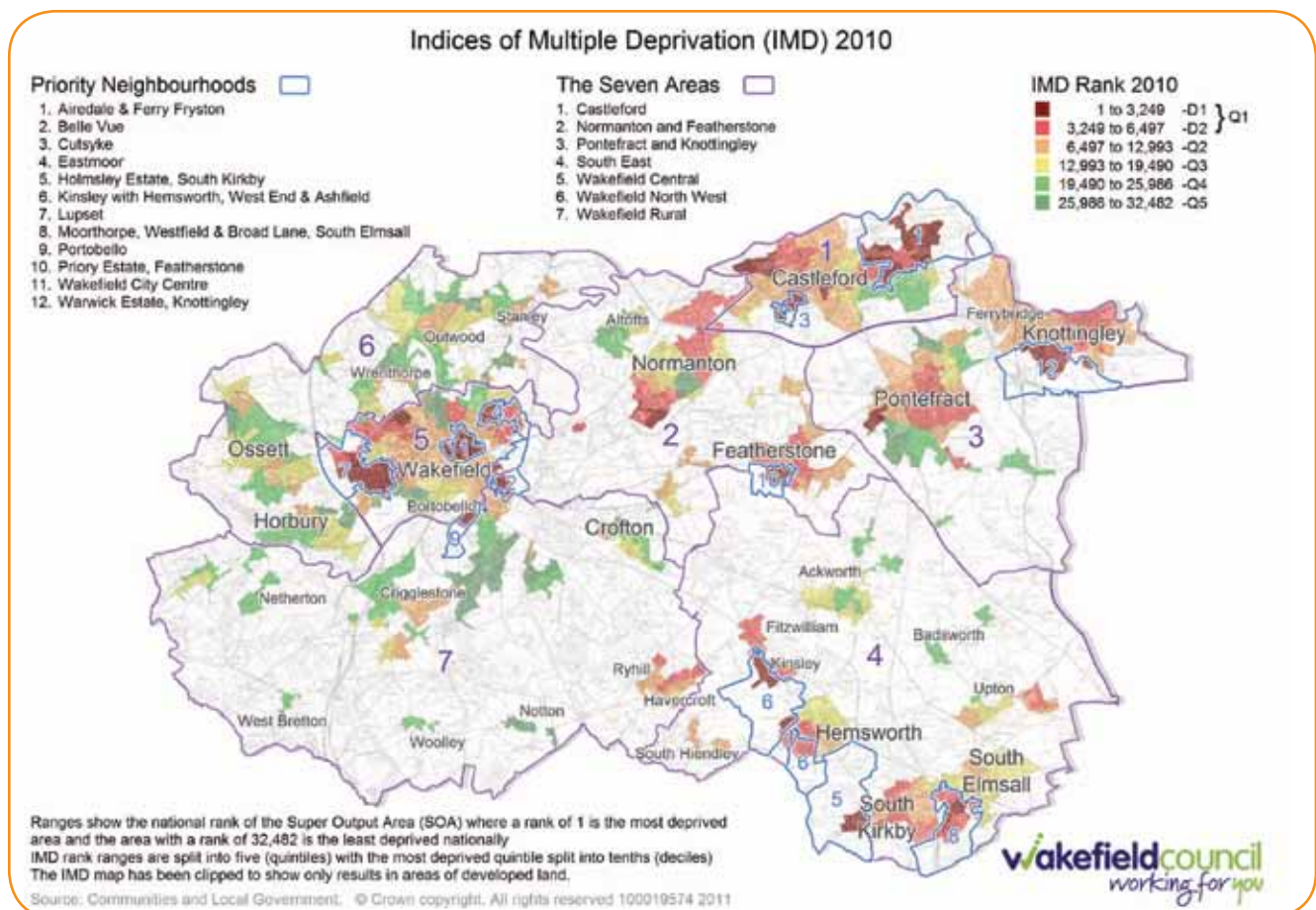
A project team was established, including staff from Wakefield Council and Jobcentre Plus, to be responsible for delivering the project and undertaking the customer insight.

Data collection

The Wakefield Together Partnership¹ agreed that against a commitment to district wide improvements in outcomes there is a specific need to reduce inequalities and improve the quality of life at a neighbourhood level, with a particular focus on those areas that are the 10 per cent most deprived in the district, as determined by the indices of deprivation.

In Wakefield the 12 priority neighbourhoods are:

- Airedale and Ferry Fryston
- Belle Vue
- Cutsyke
- Eastmoor
- Holmsley Estate, South Kirkby
- Kinsley, with Hemsworth West End & Ashfield
- Lupset
- Moorthorpe, Westfield & Broad Lane, South Elmsall
- Portobello
- Priory Estate, Featherstone
- Wakefield City Centre
- Warwick Estate, Knottingley



¹ This is Wakefield's Local Strategic Partnership and includes the council, NHS, police, housing and others.

Although similarly deprived in general terms, the 12 Priority Neighbourhoods vary in size, population make-up and character. The project team analysed the statistical profile of each area and determined that Eastmoor, Lupset and Wakefield City Centre would be the initial focus of the project and target the following customer groups:

- lone parents
- male claimants
- IB/SDA claimants
- offenders.

Key factors for this selection included:

- Lupset has the second highest number of JSA claimants within the 12 priority neighbourhoods with 340 claimants and the second highest number of key out of work benefit claimants with 1,265 claimants.
- The JSA claimant count rate is nearly double the national average (3.8 per cent) in Wakefield city centre (7.5 per cent) and is twice the national average in Eastmoor (7.9 per cent).
- Between November 2007 and 2008, Lupset saw the biggest net change increase of people claiming key out of work benefits within all priority neighbourhoods with an additional 180 claimants.
- Wakefield city centre has the highest level of long term JSA unemployment with 17.4 per cent of claimants out of work for more than a year.
- Lupset has a large number of lone parents, 280/5.9 per cent (national average 1.8 per cent).

- Wakefield city centre has a particularly high rate of ESA/IB claimants – 16.1 per cent compared to national average of 6.7 per cent. Mental and behavioural disorders are the most common reason for claiming IB/SDA.
- Claim rates for older age bands in Wakefield city centre are high with one in three 25 to 49 year olds and one in two of those aged between 50 and pension age claiming out of work benefits.
- Over 60 per cent male claimants in Eastmoor and Wakefield city centre, higher than the national average of 54 per cent, whereas Lupset has the largest share of female claimants.
- Unemployed people living in Wakefield city centre are more likely to have been employed in skilled trades (20 per cent).
- Youth worklessness is lower than the district average in Wakefield city centre and may reflect that the area has a very low proportion of lone parent households and those with dependent children.

“The big thing that came out of that was how much people wanted a personalised local approach to help them get work. When the work programme and the pre-work programme were introduced last year, we were able to use a lot of that research we did in order to inform how we would support people through that journey.”

Ian Hunter, District Manager of Job Centre Plus, Wakefield

Stakeholder conference

To provide a baseline of current delivery arrangements in Wakefield a stakeholder event took place with key organisations and agencies that provide support and services to worklessness customers within the three localities.

The main focus of the event was to:

- ensure that all stakeholders were involved in the project from the outset
- share information about current services provided by organisations focussed on the three priority neighbourhoods
- consider, in the context of cross agency working, what is working well in the district and specifically the priority neighbourhoods, is there scope for improvement and change and what some of the barriers may be
- outline the next steps as we move forward with the project and the national context around worklessness.

Attendees at the event included representatives from:

- Wakefield Council
- Jobcentre Plus
- Business Link
- Best (Work Programme Prime)
- Ingeus Deloitte (Work Programme Prime)
- Credit Union (White Rose)
- Eastmoor Work Club
- HMRC
- NHS Wakefield District
- Voluntary Action Wakefield & District and Voluntary Sector
- Wakefield College
- Wakefield and District Housing
- Workchoice Plus.

The information obtained from this event provided a baseline of the current position and informed the structure of the customer insight interviews and focus groups.



Focus groups

Five focus groups were undertaken with each of the targeted client groups. The project team worked closely with the West Yorkshire Probation Service to identify a cohort of ex-offenders in Eastmoor and with Family Services/Sure Start to facilitate a group of lone parents in Lupset. Furthermore, A4E supported the identification of Incapacity Benefit claimants in Wakefield City Centre and Jobcentre Plus was instrumental in pulling together a group of male claimants in Eastmoor.

All focus groups were offered a complimentary lunch to encourage attendance and paid childcare in terms of the Lone Parent focus group (at a cost of £8 per hour). Therefore it was essential to utilise venues in each of the localities that could support these arrangements.

The ex-offenders and male claimants' focus groups proved difficult to engage with initially, therefore it was essential to work collaboratively with West Yorkshire Probation Service and the voluntary and community sector to ensure there were a minimum of 10 claimants in attendance.

The male claimants' focus group was well attended however, only two of the invited ex-offender target turned up. To close this gap and increase customer insight in this area, it was decided to utilise the existing Offender Service User Group established by West Yorkshire Probation Service.

Individual interviews

Individual interviews with claimants took a two stage approach. Initial one-to-one interviews were held with claimants to provide an overview of their customer journeys and a second stage of interviews took place to follow a tranche of customers through their experience of the new customer journey within Jobcentre Plus.

A total of 60 interviews took place at the initial stage with claimants being selected by their postcode from one of priority neighbourhoods. The interviews took place jointly with Jobcentre Plus and council staff after the claimants had signed on at the jobcentre or after a discussion with their advisors. Although the project team initially had some concerns that some claimants may not be as open in their answers with the interviews being held in a formal environment this proved not to be the case.

At the time the interviews were being conducted substantial changes were taking place in the delivery landscape for job creation, skills, and benefits. It became clear from the customer journey being described and the national changes in Welfare Reform that the current journeys would be replaced. The challenge for the project team was to ensure that the new customer journey was tailored for Wakefield and the needs of its customers taking into account the results from the customer insight.

The second stage 'Voice of the Customer' interviews were undertaken to measure the effectiveness of the customer experience from the outset of their diagnostic interview through their new customer journey with their advisor and assistant advisor until they sign off the register.

A total of 60 customers were selected and interviewed following their 'Diagnostic' interview at Jobcentre Plus, the same tranche of customers were also interviewed following every intervention until they left the register.

Findings

The main findings from the customer insight work covered a number of topics:

The process

Customers felt that:

- the existing customer journey was too fragmented
- it was difficult to see a clear route through the process
- there were too many people involved in their journey and that there was a need for a single point of contact/liaison person such as a mentor/guide
- the information about the opportunities available, both training and jobs, needed to be communicated more clearly.

Comments made by customers included:

“The advisor was polite and listened but I would like to see the same person every time”

“The advisor was nice but I didn’t feel I got what I came in for.”

Training

Claimants wanted:

- to improve their IT skills – claimants recognised that computer skills were now needed in a wide variety of jobs and were also important for modern job search
- more proactive and personalised support from training providers, those long-term unemployed had experienced little of this to date
- an offer of training that more closely resembled the work area the customer wanted to enter
- a range of locally-based training at the ‘right’ level.

Comments made by customers included:

“I would welcome to opportunity for any work experience if it were available”

“I would like to have some computer skill training, I try to keep up with the times but its so competitive I am being left behind”

Support to find work

Those seeking work required:

- individual, personalised support: based on the concept that everyone is different and needs specific help and support to find work – some claimants reported feeling like a ‘number’
- a process that recognised that lack of confidence and self esteem was a key barrier in a number of claimants, particularly those who had been out of work for a long period of time
- mentoring supports from a specific individual
- in-depth help in job application and interview skills to be able to compete much more effectively
- regular access to computers
- help with managing finances, debt advice and support
- a greater focus on advice and the setting up of volunteering opportunities – where people were volunteering some had a route to paid work and all gained a ‘taste’ of work
- a greater focus on the possibility of self-employment, and the routes to advice about this option
- community-based venues providing informal support in a ‘safe’, rather than institutional environment.

Barriers to work

A number of practical barriers and difficulties were identified:

- affordable, local, quality childcare
- the high cost of transport to access support or employment
- jobs within school hours are difficult to find
- there was a perception that there was a lack of vacancies currently available – particularly in construction and warehouse for male claimants
- whether low skilled or highly qualified almost all claimants reported that they were looking for jobs in similar fields to those they had worked in before – some claimants appeared to have an inflexible attitude to consider other types of employment – however, some claimants, who were more highly qualified, were also considering jobs that did not require such high-level qualifications, possibly as a ‘stop-gap’
- for many long term claimants a key barrier is the fierce competition from a large number of job seekers that have a recent work history
- agencies were perceived to only provide short term temporary opportunities which can cause problems with claiming benefits – claimants looking for sustainable employment
- the lack of work experience was seen as a barrier, particularly for younger claimants who did not have enough on their CV.

In addition, the stakeholder event found both strengths and areas for improvement:

Strengths

- genuine commitment from all partners to improve the customer journey and the array of services provided
- co-locating is progressing where possible which is seen as beneficial to the customer and helps to break down barriers
- personalisation agenda within Jobcentre Plus is seen as a much valued step change in delivery arrangements
- pockets of strong delivery across the district although this may not be provided in a cohesive manner
- worklessness group is viewed positively by all partners and is looking to be the strategic lead for the district
- national programmes such as Future Jobs Fund enable greater joint working as they are well publicised with clear accessibility requirements.

Areas for improvement

- the restriction on data sharing across partners creates barriers to joined up working and presents a disjointed service to the customer
- the customer journey is fragmented which causes confusion for both agencies and customers.
- difficult for all agencies to keep updated with the various benefits/funding arrangements
- there may be duplication of services across the district
- potential to work more closely with the business sector to ensure courses are offered to particular client groups
- continue to develop case conferences and work more closely with other relevant agencies/partners

- potential for a tailored support package to be offered to those Incapacity Benefit Claimants who are re assessed to be fit for work – these clients may have been out of work for a substantial period with very low confidence and self esteem
- finite funding arrangements prevents long term planning and can restrict creativity
- huge cultural challenge to change the aspirations of some client groups, particularly those families where intergenerational worklessness exists and unemployment is deeply entrenched in families' attitudes to work.

Outcomes

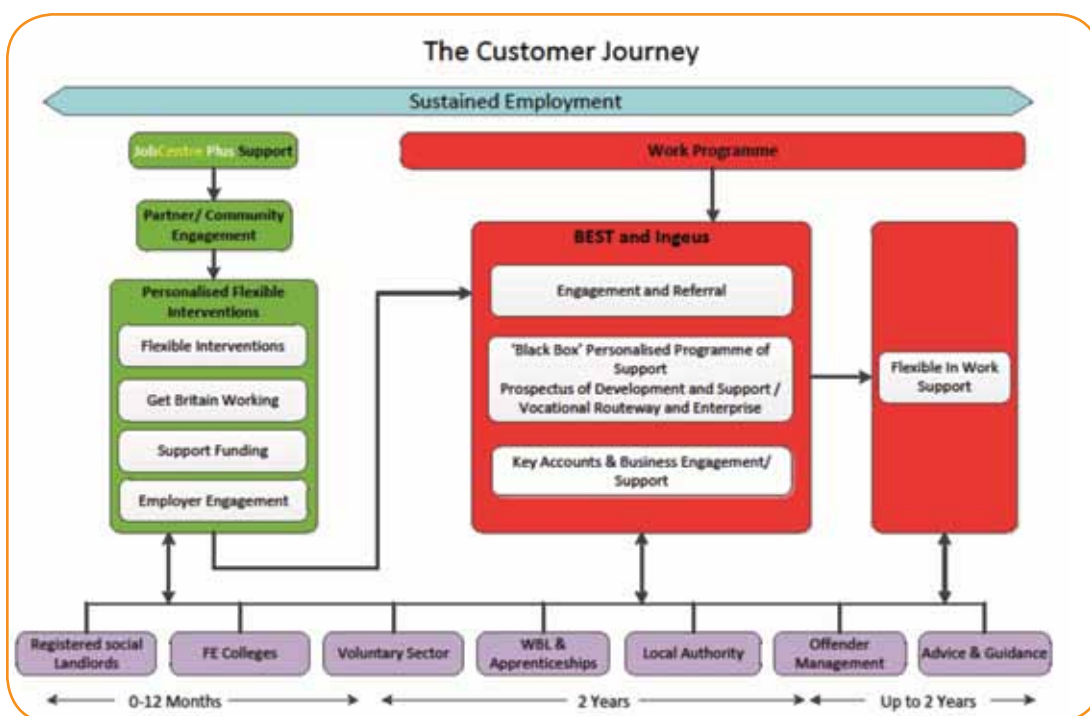
The significant changes in welfare reform had a considerable impact on the outcomes of the project. Closely linked to the introduction of the Work Programme was significant change to the operational delivery arrangements of Jobcentre Plus. The project embraced these changes to ensure that changes in the customer journey reflected the customer insight findings and provided a local interpretation to the national reforms that address the previous fragmented journey.

New customer journey

The findings of the customer's insight were used to inform and develop a new customer journey. One of the key outcomes from the customer insight was the need for a more personalised approach. The new customer journey is tailored towards the individual and focussed on sustained employment. There are no longer prescribed intervention points and advisors have much more flexibility in offering a broad menu of support options for clients based on their individual needs

The key to the success of the new customer journey is engagement with key providers so no matter what stage the customer is at on the journey there is a joined up approach between all of the key stakeholders providing skills provision that is aligned to their needs.

This new journey involves a more joined up approach of all skills based provision in Wakefield with Jobcentre Plus, Work Programme Primes and all key stakeholders working closely together to promote a single customer journey across the district.



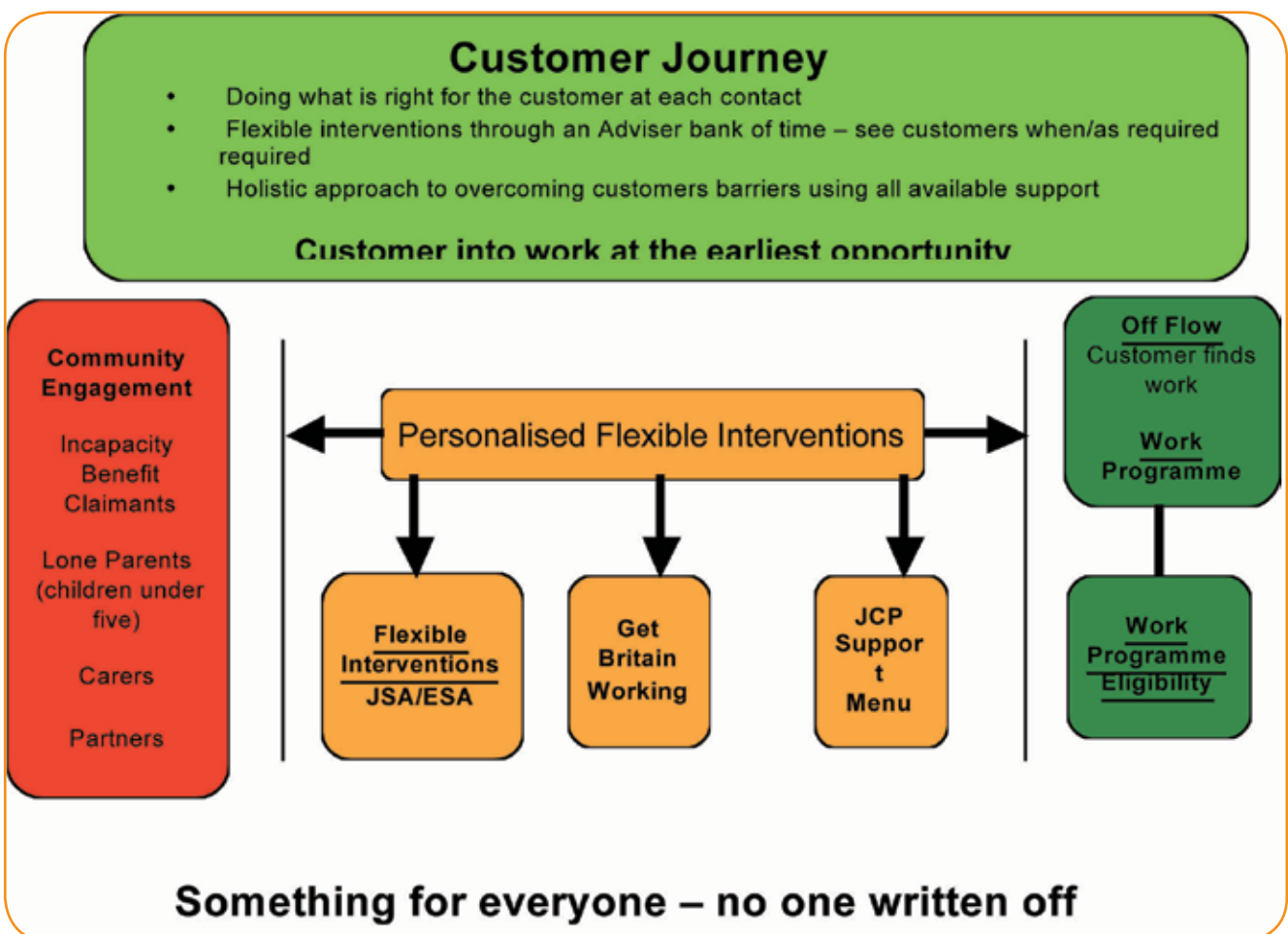
Jobcentre plus support

Changes in operational delivery at Jobcentre Plus include:

- more flexibility for Jobcentre Plus and local decision making with opportunities for managers to shape the nature and level of support in their local area
- greater use of non-contracted provision and discretion to tailor support to the individual
- a focus of delivering outcomes with local accountability.
- better local engagement
- increased focus on the quality of diagnosis at the new claim stage.

“The success to date is due to the facilitated groups that we run. People are given quite a lot of help in using the IT equipment in order to set up online applications. We also give lots of help and support within a friendly environment where they don't feel threatened or pressured into getting jobs.”

Lesley Wagstaff, Community Centre Manager at St George's Community Centre, Wakefield



Personalised flexible interventions

The customer insight identified that claimants wanted to have a mentor who stayed with them throughout their journey. Under the new customer journey, customers have a dedicated personal adviser throughout the length of the claim, who decides the appropriate timings of future interventions for each customer.

There is also a new approach to adviser work where there is a move away from most of the previous, nationally-prescribed adviser interventions that take place at certain fixed points in a claim (eg 13 weeks, 26 weeks, etc). In its place a more flexible regime has been introduced where the nature and frequency of adviser interventions are decided by advisers at local level.

The customer insight also identified that the traditional initial interview tried to cover too much ground and left some individuals confused or overwhelmed. In the new journey this is now split into two interviews. The first covers their benefit conditionality interview and the second includes a more work focussed diagnostic interview.

The additional adviser time freed up by ending some of the previous mandatory interventions will be used to set up alternative 'flexible' interventions more suited to the individual needs of customers.

In addition Jobcentre Plus are now providing an outreach service with 9 advisors working in community centres or with housing groups and acting as mentors to their clients.

Get Britain working

Under the banner of the national Get Britain Working measures, Jobcentre Plus has introduced a range of initiatives:

- Work Clubs (see below)

- Work Together – a scheme to promote volunteering
- Work Experience – aimed at JSA customers aged 18-24 and offers a work placement between 2 and 12 weeks in length
- Enterprise Clubs and New Enterprise Allowance – available to any customers interested in setting up a business or simply working for themselves
- Service Academies – to provide sector specific pre-employment training and work experience
- Community and Work Activity – for jobseekers that have been unemployed for a longer period of time.

Many of these initiatives have delivered excellent results. For example:

Work Experience at Country Baskets

After four months of unemployment one claimant was offered a work experience placement at Country Baskets (the UK's largest wholesaler of floral supplies).

Paul Ince, Company Director said:

"The scheme has been a huge success and enables us to help young people to have real life work experience..... Johnny came in for 8 weeks and we were so impressed with his attitude and commitment to customer service we have employed him on a permanent contract – not only have we received a number of compliments from our customers but he has just won Employee of the Month"

The claimant said:

"This scheme has been fantastic and I got a job out of it as well".

Work clubs

One of the most successful initiatives has been the creation of Work Clubs.

Where is your nearest
Work Club?

Work Clubs are a place to help share experiences with other people who may be in a similar situation to you.

You can get help with:

- Job search techniques
- Interview skills
- Developing your CV
- IT skills

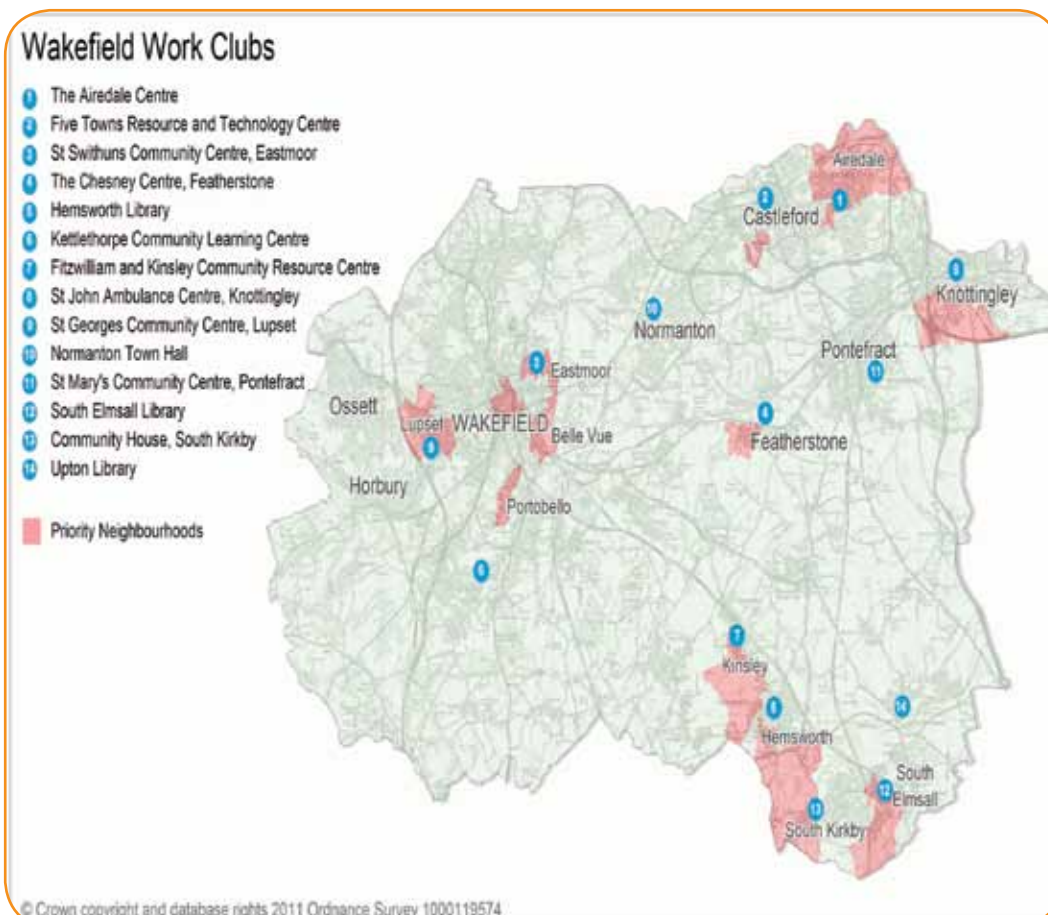
Eligibility: Work Clubs are open to all benefit recipients although they will primarily be aimed at unemployed jobseekers from Day 1 of their claim until they are referred to the Work Programme.

The customer insight identified the importance of community based provision, particularly with harder to reach groups to help support job search.

Work clubs address the needs of unemployed people by providing support at the heart of their community and provide a friendly and relaxed place to meet, exchange skills, share experiences, find opportunities, make contacts and get support to help them in their return to work.

Although two work clubs had already been confirmed in the district the project team worked with partner organisations across the district to create a further 12. A network of work clubs has also been established to share good practice and identify opportunities for further development.

The work clubs were strategically located near to priority neighbourhoods which are within easy reach of most people living on estates in areas which have the highest numbers of benefit recipients.



The Work Programme

The pre-work programme Jobcentre Plus offer and the Work Programme is central to the Government's plans to reform welfare-to-work provision in the UK.

The Work Programme providers in Wakefield have worked closely with Jobcentre Plus and all key stakeholders in streamlining the customer journey.

The approach was clear from the outset to work jointly on external engagement, marketing the Work Programme as a brand in itself rather than promoting any organisations individually. This would provide a joined up approach to tackling worklessness in Wakefield and the wider sub region.

Wakefield has also developed a joint approach to the skills offer in Wakefield by accessing accredited provision through FE Colleges and Work Based Learning Providers.

Customers can access appropriate, vocational learning regardless of which stage of the customer journey they are accessing. It is part of this joint approach that in time, as this additional service develops, customers who have not secured work whilst undertaking the Get Britain Working measures will be better qualified and closer to the labour market when they are referred to the Work Programme.

Benefits

Levels of unemployment

Clearly the obvious benefit arising from a project of this type relates to the number of individuals who are successful in becoming and remaining employed.

However, this pilot took place over a period when unemployment was growing significantly across the country.

In January 2012, the BBC reported that:

UK unemployment rose by 48,000 to 2.67 million in the three months to December. The unemployment rate was 8.4 per cent, according to the Office for National Statistics (ONS), the highest for 16 years.

Jobcentre Plus has supported claimants to enter and stay in work. In Wakefield, over 50 per cent are no longer claiming JSA after 13 weeks unemployment and over 90 per cent after 52 weeks.

Ian Hunter, Jobcentre Plus District Manager for West Yorkshire:

“Wakefield is a strong performing part of West Yorkshire - and this project has contributed to that success”

Of the 60 customers tracked through the new customer journey during this project 70 per cent had left the register at week 13. With each person on working age benefit costing an average of £3,971 this project has contributed to £250,000 of cost savings.

Customer satisfaction

The move from a “one size fits all” approach to one that is focussed on the individuals is proving popular with the customers encountering the new process. Jobcentre Plus has monitored 60 customers who were interviewed at each intervention as they go through the journey and nearly 100 per cent say that they now get the right level of support.

Individuals who have experienced the new journey have said:

- My personal advisor is very personable and approachable. She positively engaged me with extra steps she was prepared to take, signposting me to an organisation she had heard of, which matched my job aspirations.
- I feel I am moving forward; I had 5 job vacancies found for me, signposted to an Enterprise Club for possible self employment and referred to Nextsteps for training course. Felt service is tailored to me.
- Very informative and helpful. I have come away knowing all I need to know. I feel happy walking out of here today.
- Am happy with personal adviser process, good support seeing same advisor, don't keep having to explain things to everyone.

Organisational benefits

This programme has complimented Jobcentre Plus' use of customer insight and the benefits of utilising the views and experiences of workless people in the system.

In addition, the advisors report that the new system is providing greater job satisfaction for staff.

An advisor said:

“The new customer journey has made a big difference to my role, I enjoy being able to have a more flexible approach with customers and feel I am making a real difference in helping them find work”

The use of customer insight has also grown within the council. For example, CI was utilised in a recent review of the library service and its role in supporting unemployed people, 'Wakefield Speaks' events are also regularly held throughout the year where customer insight is used to inform plans and strategies that are aligned to meet the needs of citizens in the district.

Partnership working

This project has strengthened partnership working through the Worklessness network in Wakefield. This group meets monthly and includes a range of partners from the private, public and voluntary sectors and aims to remove barriers to joint working so that individuals receive the support and training they need in their journey towards employment.

The project identified a lack of support for lone parents and consequently Adult Education established a bespoke training course for this group.

There are numerous other examples of the success of this approach:

Wakefield Skills and Employment Partnership Group:

Jobcentre Plus and Wakefield Council worked with other key partners to support employers in the recruitment and training of staff for the Trinity Walk retail development in Wakefield. In partnership with employers and local training providers, this initiative developed bespoke courses which prepared jobseekers for job roles and interview processes. Feedback from employers was that customers who had been through the training were better prepared for interviews and to start work.

From the customer insight findings it was identified that there was a lack of support for lone parent customers in Wakefield.

To address this, the skills advisor had discussions with Adult Education to establish if there was a possibility of providing bespoke training to meet this customer need.

Consequently a course was developed which would run over four weeks one afternoon per week finishing at 3.00pm allowing time for school pick up. The course was designed to be a first step before moving on, into either other college courses, work or voluntary work. The course included looking at the customers' existing skills and how they can build on this and transfer these skills into future employment. It also includes sessions on how to develop a CV. The course has been accredited by the college.

The first course was run at Five Towns Resource Centre on 28 November and six parents attended with some children going into the crèche provided. Of the six who have attended four have enrolled to go on to a basic skills course in January. This is great as the course has helped to introduce them to college in a less formal environment. As a result they are improving their future chances of moving back into the work place.

A second course was run in Hemsworth in January and five others planned for February. Due to the success of the training, plans are now been put in place to deliver this across the Wakefield district.

Governance

This project was managed according to Prince 2 standards with a project manager from the council and a sponsor from Jobcentre Plus. The project team met regularly and fed progress reports to the Worklessness Review Group who also played a key role in the Total Place projects. It was important to build on the finding of the total place pilots and avoid duplication during the lifecycle of this project.

These governance arrangement has recently being strengthened with the establishment of a Housing Welfare and Benefits and Group that will inform the Local Services Board (Local Strategic Partnership) of the implications of national, regional and local policy and regulatory changes relates to housing, welfare and benefits and the impact upon individuals.

Resourcing

The **£68,500** provided for this project, from the Customer Led Transformation Fund, was used to cover the full and part time allocation of staff to the project.

Their objectives included:

- collating data from their own systems and databases to identify a target group of people
- taking a lead role for their organisations in developing knowledge of the customer insight activities used in this project
- engaging with the target group to build a picture of the different agencies which are required to meet their needs
- building customer journey maps reflecting the needs of customers which will then be used to redesign services
- identifying the barriers for customers seeking work
- project management.

Challenges and lessons learnt

Although the use of customer insight has clearly been a success, and enabled the delivery of an improved customer journey, the project wasn't without its challenges and difficulties.

Changing circumstances

The most obvious difficulty resulted from the fact that the project did not exist in isolation and had to change its direction to meet with the requirements of national initiatives such as the change in the operational delivery of Jobcentre Plus and the government's work programme.

Initially the project intended to map existing customer journeys and circles of needs and then to improve the processes to deliver the same service more effectively and efficiently. However, national initiatives changed the underlying assumptions about the service delivered. Consequently, the learning from the first stage was used to influence the local implementation of the new services required nationally. This has meant that it is not possible to directly compare service delivery and standards before and after the project.

This change in direction resulted in the need to redefine the outcomes for the project. For example, it was originally intended that the council and Jobcentre Plus would share front office accommodation, but the current economic climate meant that this objective had to be changed so that the partners would offer a virtual rather than a physical service integration.

Focus groups

Some of the focus groups suffered from very low turnout. The groups were aimed at the specific segments being targeted by the project and some of these are particularly hard to reach – for example ex-offenders. In these cases the project relied more heavily on individual interviews.

Segmentation

In retrospect, some members of the project team believe that it may have been beneficial to segment the target groups more. For example, it may have been informative to segment them by age, so that a greater understanding could have been achieved regarding the needs and aspirations of 18 to 24 year olds.

Work clubs

There is a question over the future sustainability of the work clubs given that there is no specific funding available for them. These have proven to be a success and the community centres would like to continue and even extend them. However, the community centres have to attract funding and if, for example, another service or group wanted to use the facilities and would be willing to pay (eg to provide a training facility) then the work club would no longer have access to the computers and would probably not survive.

Next steps

The partners are continuing to work together across a number of areas to further improve and align their provision across the district. An action plan to progress work, over a range of time periods, this has been agreed and includes:

Short term (next 6 months)

- continue to deliver joint presentations to partners and stakeholders to ensure that all agencies have an accurate understanding of the landscape of Jobcentre Plus and Work Programme provision
- facilitate a dialogue around provision between providers looking at joint planning, sharing responsibilities, sharing caseloads/ ownership, data sharing etc
- develop an online directory for advisers/ support agencies for signposting and progression
- communicate forthcoming changes to funding/welfare reform/Universal Credits and the impact it will have on individuals, through a range of media
- clarify the customer journey and communicate to providers and partners
- monitor to ensure that customer journey/ provision meets needs and is not just funding driven
- coordinate and identify support for those outside of the main stream provision eg Incapacity Benefit and Lone Parents
- money management with young children, starting at primary, encouraging them to learn how to save
- expand the single employer gateway model (Trinity Walk Employment and Skills Group).

Medium term (12 – 18 months)

- work with young adults, creating a culture of support to realise aspirations
- Priority Neighbourhood working – ensure worklessness is included as a priority and activity co-ordinated with that of Workless Group
- increasing personalisation
- flexibility in childcare – constraints of childcare availability outside 10 am – 2 pm – need facilities later into evening and weekends
- introduce the Wakefield and District Housing Lifestyle programme across all tenants, not just for new tenants
- support communities to access employment where there is no public transport provision eg Sherburn in Elmet
- establish data sharing protocols/systems
- encourage employer buy-in to employ long term unemployed
- pooling of budgets.

Long term (5 year plan)

- reflect priorities in the Economic Growth Plan (EGP) which will include regeneration of a district in its entirety, priorities around worklessness and skills.

In addition, and in response to the findings about the huge cultural changes required for intergenerational families who have an entrenched approach to benefit dependency there are some major government programmes being implemented designed to address this issue.

The DWP have commissioned a three year ESF programme 'Families with Multiple Problems' where working innovatively with partners will be essential to support severely disadvantaged families to move towards sustained employment. Being delivered alongside this project is the Troubled Families Programme which will mark a step change in the way that troubled families are supported through a targeted wraparound service approach.

In response to the challenge of youth unemployment the Government's recently announced Youth Contract will be implemented which is focused on helping young unemployed people find a job, including apprenticeships and voluntary work experience placements.





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