

**ROCKET
SCIENCE**

**Planning employment support for and
beyond Covid-19 – Ideas for local
authorities and employment services**

April 2020

Evolving employment services



In only a matter of days, a public-health crisis caused by the Covid-19 pandemic has become a socio-economic crisis of a magnitude which this country has not experienced since the Second World War. Despite announcements and support to help keep businesses afloat including, furloughing and VAT holidays, the impact of Covid-19 on both those in and out of work will be unprecedented, presenting challenges for national and local government on how to support a diverse group of people back to work;

- Employment services generally focus on entry-level roles including in retail and hospitality, sectors which have been impacted the most - ***How can local responses be developed to support impacted sectors, particularly micro businesses and SMEs? Where are the entry level roles going to come from in the future and do we have the resources and tools to help people transfer and develop their skills?***
- Employment services are also designed to focus on those furthest from the labour market - ***How are we going to manage very different client groups and adapt to supporting people with different levels of experience and qualifications?***
- The impact on the low paid, under 25's and particularly women will be profound <https://www.ifs.org.uk/publications/14791>, but there are already many vulnerable people in supported employment, apprenticeships (care leavers) and in work. ***What can we do to mitigate the impact of Covid-19 on women and young people? How do we ensure those already in work or programmes are protected from the impact? How can we maintain the progress we have made in supporting those that are furthest away from the labour market into employment?***

How?



Our work developing employment and skills strategies has identified various roles local authorities can play in supporting the employment and skills agenda and how these could be adapted to respond to Covid-19;

- **Convenor and influencer** – using convening power to bring together different interests, develop unified and coordinated offers and use insight and evidence to champion for funding and support – **In a time of crisis, coordination of services and support is critical as is the ability to identify and secure larger scale funding**
- **Employer** – be an exemplar in Inclusive Employment practice and provide employment and training opportunities for the more vulnerable and furthest from the labour market – **Covid-19 is a risk to the inclusion agenda, where resources might be redeployed and focus shifts to tackling immediate labour market responses**
- **Commissioner** – using social value and active contract management to identify opportunities for work-related activity including apprenticeships and jobs for local people – **Contractors are likely to be impacted, particularly small business and charities so important to think about what support could be given to help them keep people employed or protect apprenticeships**
- **Corporate parent** – using role to give children in care and care leavers the best start in their working life through work experience, apprenticeships, careers advice and learning opportunities – **Care leavers are most vulnerable and less likely to be resilient to disruption and change and need to be protected**

The following slides set out some ideas for immediate and medium term responses

What role for Local Authorities?

Role	Immediate	Short to medium term
Convenor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bring employment and learning providers together to assess capacity and impact on local infrastructure to identify gaps in referral pathways, provision and funding • Implement system to collect local intelligence and insight on business closures and redundancies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use opportunity to bring greater coherence of local employment and skills infrastructure through developing a local taskforce of providers and services with clear roles and responsibilities. • Develop clear data and narrative for funding applications and investment for Covid-19 related funding and future funding
Commissioner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review existing contracts and identify at risk contractors (charities/SMEs) and ensure they have access to Government support • Identify contractors who might be able to offer work experience, apprenticeships and/or have short term recruitment needs that could be filled by newly unemployed people • Carry on commissioning! 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue contractor monitoring and providing access to existing and emerging business support • Create links between businesses with immediate vacancies into existing job brokerage and ensure seamless pathway for the business to recruit from local people • Review and adapt social value clauses to respond to new local labour demands • Carry on commissioning!
Employer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify any opportunities within council services that could be developed into apprenticeships, work experience for more vulnerable. • Work with temporary agencies to prioritise newly unemployed into short term roles in the council 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with HR and service leads to provide easy access into roles and opportunities including mentoring, good practice support and support around workplace adjustments • Establish recruitment funnel from employment services into temporary agencies – using their insight for pre-work training
Corporate parent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify any care leavers who are at risk of losing their job, placement or apprenticeship • Develop package of support to minimise impact ie funding, business advice to their employer • Move those at risk or have lost apprenticeships into short-term roles until others can be found to keep care leavers in EET 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Care leavers and young people with EHCPs/SEN or in the Criminal Justice system are likely to be impacted the most by Covid-19 and that impact will last a lifetime. Although councils have a legal responsibility for corporate parent they could extend this voluntarily. • Consider potential to extend role and invest in supporting apprenticeships, traineeships for all vulnerable young people
Council functions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review any impact on planning gain/Section 106 funding used to support employment activity and identify funding shortfalls • Review and identify at risk placements or jobs for adults in supported employment/or have LD or disability • Provide emergency financial capability and benefits advice for tenants or at risk groups. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use powers through Homeless Reduction Act to integrate and/or bolster employment services and support as homelessness prevention activity • Put in place measures to support at risk adults including investment in additional staff and identification of replacement opportunities within the council or more receptive employers – consider alternative roles beyond retail • Consider offering business-rate relief to key sectors taking on apprenticeships

How should we be evolving services?

Activity	Things to consider
Existing employment services (ESF etc)/brokerage	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review existing capacity in council provision and explore skills and expertise needed to respond ie proactive employer engagement, changes to provision, assessment process and triaging• Consider role of the sector-based academy model to help individuals retrain for different jobs in 6-8 weeks• Explore how existing adult learning provision could be adapted to respond to emergency need• Work with other providers to agree referral pathways and responses to avoid duplication, ensure people are going to the right service and not falling through cracks• Build in greater support and access to mental health and resilience services to help people who are newly unemployed look at providing services through existing hubs• Talk to funders about reorienting provision to respond to recruitment needs arising from Covid-19
Priority groups Women, young people, disabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Research and explore the potential impacts on these groups, looking at trends in data and outcomes to plan provision and support• Work with other providers to identify services that support priority groups, assess what is on offer and work with those services to bolster their offer and support (not duplicate)• Identify and bid for emergency funding opportunities together (avoid competition)• Continue to work with employers to support good work, inclusive employment and work towards Good Work Standard (London)
Supporting businesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Need to work more proactively with business to look at short and long term impact of Covid-19 in terms of staffing, business growth and retention. Ensure advisors have the right skills and personality to work with business• Consider the opportunity of providing a single point of access and support for employers looking to recruit, building on the learning from job brokerages but on a larger scale to facilitate coordinated employer service – build skills and capacity in staff to work with employers proactively
Data and intelligence	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Real time labour market information is going to be critical in shaping and developing provision, need to find ways to invest in capturing local insight from employer engagement activities and matching this to statistics and data.• Produce regular bulletins and communications amongst providers and services including redundancies, new jobs, case studies and labour market data
Learn as you go and share it	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use test and learn approaches to explore new ways of working, innovations in delivery and capture what works and what does not to provide real time insight in the design of services• Create connections beyond existing networks, share learning and approaches, be open about failure and honest about success• Work with others to influence change in commissioning and accreditation to make the learning landscape easier to access and accelerate achievement



Next steps

These are just some of the ideas and actions we have been thinking about.

As employability specialists we have seen many challenges and changes to employment and skills over the past thirty years. We have seen what works and equally what does not.

We recognise that we are all working in new territory and need to share our learning and approaches in more dynamic and rapid ways.

How the employment and skills sector responds now will have immeasurable impact on the opportunities, lives and wellbeing of the existing and emerging workforce.

We have an opportunity to make this impact positive and sustainable.

If you would like to find out more or join our regular share and learn discussions contact:

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