



EFFECTIVE **ACTION**

# FLEXIBLE SUPPORT FUND

## ACCESSING JOB CENTRE PLUS PARTNERSHIPS MONEY



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# FLEXIBLE SUPPORT FUND

Accessing Job Centre Plus Partnerships Money

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## FLEXIBLE SUPPORT FUND – PARTNERSHIPS MONEY

### WHAT IS IT?

The Flexible Support Fund (FSF) is money administered by Job Centre Plus (JCP) to help reduce barriers to people accessing employment. While this can be applied for by individual JCP customers for help with costs such as travel to interviews, a 'partnerships' element can be awarded to organisations who want to run programmes in partnership with JCP to support Jobcentre customers either into work or closer to the labour market.

### WHY CONSIDER APPLYING?

Some of your service users may have never worked before or spent several years away from the labour market. They may have complex support needs that mean they struggle to engage with mainstream JCP programmes such as The Work Programme and often experience sanctions. If you can show that your service users need extra support in working towards employment, and that your organisation is best placed to provide this support, your local JCP may be interested in funding your project.

### WHAT PROJECTS CAN BE FUNDED?

Each JCP district administers their FSF money independently, according to local need. While different areas will have different local priorities it is likely that all successful projects will need to demonstrate that they:

- Can support a client group that does not engage, or struggles to engage, with JCP programmes
- Have a strong emphasis on partnership working
- Reflect local need and gaps in local provision (through detailed research)
- Are innovative, unique and do not duplicate a service already being delivered
- Can present a feasible plan for how they will engage with this client group to break down barriers to employment
- Present value for money
- Have measurable outcomes that meet JCP objectives

While programmes will ideally support customers into employment, the DWP recognises that some groups with complex needs may experience multiple barriers to employment and need assistance in breaking down these barriers first. Therefore not all funding will necessarily be linked to 'job outcomes'.

Some ideas for initiatives could include apprenticeship schemes, social enterprises, mentoring schemes, motivational courses and sector specific training.

### CASE STUDY: THE PURFLEET TRUST - KING'S LYNN

The Purfleet Trust was granted £50,000 from the Flexible Support Fund to support the set up their new Training Academy.

**What was the aim of the project?** To reduce the number of vulnerable people claiming out of work benefits, reduce instances of JCP sanctioning, prepare people for the Work Programme and reduce the negative impact of worklessness in the area.

**Who does the project support?** The project focuses on vulnerable people living in King's Lynn and West Norfolk who fail to engage in existing employment support services and face multiple barriers to work including:

- ❖ Low literacy and numeracy
- ❖ Never had a job
- ❖ Lack of stability in their lives
- ❖ Intergenerational worklessness
- ❖ And additional support needs like drugs, alcohol dependence and mental health, criminal record etc.
- ❖ Homelessness

**Evidence of need?** The Purfleet Trust used their existing relationship with JCP to develop a picture of local need and an understanding of gaps in services. Of the 160 people accessing The Purfleet Trust services, 158 were in receipt of out of work benefits. The Purfleet Trust have extensive experience of supporting people with complex needs and are therefore in a strong position to deliver the project, targeting those who need it most.

**How was the project delivered?** Through opening their own charity shop and tea room, The Purfleet Trust offered a programme of volunteering and work experience alongside training, mentoring and qualifications in retail, customer service and painting and decorating.

**Working in partnership?** Local partnerships added value to the project. A local community housing association provided premises for the project and work placements for project participants; the local football club provided volunteering opportunities; a local training provider supported delivery of the vocational courses and a local supported housing provider committed a staff member to support the project.

**Outcomes achieved?** Over the first 6 months in operation the programme has worked with 82 individuals. 40% moved into paid work within 16 weeks with an additional 10% by 26 weeks. The remaining 50% are engaged in further training that will support their progression into paid employment within one year. The Purfleet Trust has also been able to offer a full time position as Shop Manager to one of its programme graduates.

**Sustainability of the project?** The Training Academy continues to run through The Purfleet Trust's partnership with a local training agency. Further partnerships with local businesses have developed and the shop and tea room are becoming successful social enterprises.

<http://www.purfleettrust.org.uk/our-services/purfleet-employment-training-academy/>

#### **HAVE AN IDEA FOR A PROJECT? - WHAT YOU SHOULD DO NEXT:**

Your first step should be to contact your local **JCP Borough Partnership Manager / Community Engagement Manager**.

A list of regional Partnerships Managers can be found here:

<http://www.dwp.gov.uk/about-dwp/customer-delivery/jobcentre-plus/stakeholders-and-partnerships/partnerships/local-opportunities/>

Try to establish:

- What local initiatives have already been funded through FSF?
- Are there any gaps in local provision?
- What are JCP local priorities?

Explain why you feel your client group is in need of extra support and how you might be able to provide this. Be clear on how your project will help JCP achieve their objectives of moving people closer to the labour market and into employment.

For more information relating to this guidance please email [Laura.Mccullagh@homelesslink.org.uk](mailto:Laura.Mccullagh@homelesslink.org.uk)

You may also wish to read our accompanying guidance on engaging with Job Centre Plus available here:

<http://homeless.org.uk/effective-action/workingwithjcp>