

## **Edinburgh Blended Employability Service – Emerging Themes Event Notes**

### **Q. Do you have any thoughts in terms of duration of this contract?**

A. We have tried to find a balance to give providers certainty but also something that is flexible. We are currently working with procurement to make sure the terms are flexible as possible and the current thinking is looking at a 3 year contract and have the option to extend this for further 3 years, therefore 6 years in total and hoping that will fit in with our available budget and plans.

### **Q. In terms of the role of mental health being a barrier to employment, many people experience low-level mental health problems. In the presentation, it was mentioned that those with mental health as a main barrier should be signposted to a Supported Employment service and I wondered how low-level and main barrier mental health would be separated?**

A. Our discussions so far have been centred around if a client's main barrier is mental health then we want to make sure they are signposted to the right and appropriate and specialised support. Our suggestion is that would be through the supported employment contract as that's where the specialised provisions are likely to be available.

However, that doesn't mean a client who is engaging in other aspects of other services due to other barriers couldn't engage because mental health is one of the support barriers they need help with. Therefore, it depends on what the main barrier is and then that would define what the referral route would be.

Mental health will likely be an aspect of all the services within the contract to some degree but if the main barrier is mental health and, especially if specific support is required around this, then we are looking for clients to be signposted to that supported employment contract.

### **Q. If someone was offering mental health support as part of their bid in one of the other areas, is that OK?**

A. Yes, that would be fine as we are aware that there is likely a much greater need for low-level mental health support in general.

### **Q. Regarding ESF, in terms of the current requirements we are required to look at two barriers to employment, is that likely to continue and what are your thoughts about what will come to replace it and when?**

A. The plan currently is we have ESF funding in place until March 2022. There is scope within the programme to extend that if a budget is available but our approval from Scottish Government is only until March 2022, therefore we are looking towards the Shared Prosperity Fund as a replacement for that funding as it does seem that the objectives fit in with what we are planning to deliver.

However, until we see the detail of that fund, it is difficult to gauge how that will be able to part fund what we are looking at. Our current plan is to keep ESF in place for our contracts up until March 2022. This does have an implication on the contracts because we can't just look at the add on in terms of who must be ESF eligible as anything that is ESF funded has to have the whole of that

contract in terms of participants that are ESF eligible. Therefore, that means we must look at the two barriers for anyone who is engaging with a service.

In terms of the contracts that are ESF funded, the plans that we are looking at should be able to fit that criteria for barriers as the employability service we want to offer will be more focused, intensive service for those that have barriers and should fit with ESF still and again the same arrangement with support employment.

**Q. Are there any comments on the impact or the linkage with the grant funded projects?**

A. Our expectation is that the third party grants will remain the niche, specialist provision and these main contracts will complement that.

We would want to see any bids coming in that were offering to deliver for these contracts working in parallel to what's currently in place at a local and national level.

**Next steps**

- Posting the presentation and questions and answer on Joined up for Jobs
- Subject to approval in January the specification will be put up on Public Contracts Scotland so people can make comment on those and post any questions.
- The Bidder Briefing Event will be held on 26 January.