

What works when helping people get into work

10 lessons from the past two decades

- 1) The success of a programme designed to find people jobs is the number of people that find jobs and keep them. This is what needs to be measured and rewarded.
- 2) Multiple providers delivering services in the same geography provides the best way for benchmarking and improving performance. Competition drives innovation and forces organisations to deliver to survive. Providers can be from any sector.
- 3) Providers should be free to deliver what works. Centrally specifying a set of detailed interventions to be indiscriminately provided to jobseekers regardless of their individual needs is ineffective and wastes precious resources.
- 4) Performance information should be published regularly. Performance information should be used to regularly reward top performing providers with more work and take work away from poorly performing providers. This moves jobseekers away from ineffective provision and into good provision, increasing the number of people finding work.
- 5) Providers need to be responsible for the whole journey, from an individual being referred to the service through to them getting a job and staying in that job. Breaking up the journey means that no-one is responsible for the ultimate outcome and incentivises delivering the specific 'step' that part of the system is responsible for rather than delivering sustained jobs.
- 6) Financial rewards to providers should be based on the number of people that provider helps into employment and the number of people that stay in employment for a significant period of time. In Work Programme this caused significant financing challenges to the detriment of the diversity of the provider base. It does not have to. Funding should be provided up-front based on assumed performance levels and then recovered/increased based on performance data. A well-designed financial model can both be ruthlessly

outcome-focussed and not create impossible funding demands.

7) Referrals of unemployed people to the programme need to be made centrally and not by providers competing for unemployed people to come onto their provision. In programmes where providers compete for referrals resources are diverted away from delivering job-finding services into sourcing people who are very close to having a job anyway.

8) In a world of limited resources those resources need to be best deployed to get the most people into lasting jobs. This means only giving really expensive interventions to those who cannot be helped into work more economically. Accelerating interventions should be used to increase the intensity (and hence cost) of the provision available to unemployed people if they are not successful in finding work. At the beginning of a person's unemployment, light touch support should be tried. If this does not work after a few months' then more intensive support should be given. If this does not work, then yet more intensive support should be provided. No provider should be allowed to deliver concurrent steps of support to take away the incentive to leave someone on the programme rather than to try and find them a job immediately. For some individuals fast-tracking through interventions will be necessary if it is clear they are not working.

9) Support for individuals to become self-employed should be embedded in all providers provision. Evidence for a successful self-employment outcome should show that there is genuine, sustained, external revenue coming into the new enterprise.

10) Providers need to be managed by a supportive, imaginative, tough, numerically literate local performance management team, actively rewarding providers that are doing well and rooting out underperformers. This team should work with all stakeholders to evolve the ecosystem so that it drives continuous improvement over time supporting more people into sustained jobs.

Sean Williams

Adecco Working Ventures
adeccoworkingventures.com