

## **WELFARE REFORM COMMITTEE**

### **THE FUTURE DELIVERY OF SOCIAL SECURITY IN SCOTLAND**

#### **WRITTEN SUBMISSION RECEIVED FROM REED IN PARTNERSHIP**

Reed in Partnership has delivered employment support services in Glasgow, Edinburgh, Lanarkshire and East Dunbartonshire and since 1998 we have helped over 11,000 unemployed people in Scotland move from benefits into work.

Reed in Partnership is part of the Reed family of companies, which has a long history of helping Scots find work. In addition to four Reed Specialist Recruitment offices across Scotland in Aberdeen, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Reed.co.uk works with organisations like NHS Scotland, Scottish Power, Aberdeen SCP and Amey to advertise over 6,000 Scottish jobs every day.

We have focused our response to the Welfare Reform Committee on the future delivery of the Work Programme. As per the Committee's request, we have made several practical suggestions for the new system.

#### **Summary**

The devolution of further employment support gives the Scottish Government an opportunity to develop solutions that tackle Scotland's health, social and geographical issues.

The Work Programme's replacement in Scotland will include a broad range of customers who will vary in their individual needs, work histories and time out of the labour market.

It's success will rest on providers being able to manage complex needs within an integrated and personalised service. The programme will cover large geographical areas, incorporating both rural and urban districts, each with their own delivery challenges.

#### **Improving assistance for those with complex needs**

The design of new employment support programmes in Scotland gives the Scottish Government the opportunity to learn the lessons from the Work Programme.

In particular, while the Work Programme has performed well for many on Jobseekers' Allowance (JSA), it has not been as successful for those in receipt of Employment and Support Allowance (ESA).

The disability employment rate in Scotland is 43.9%, compared to 80.9% of non-disabled people who are in employment.

The Scottish Government should make a priority of reducing the disability employment gap by ensuring the new employment support programme is equipped to help participants with complex needs

One of the core issues that will determine the success of Scotland's replacement programme is the approach the Scottish Government takes to funding the provision.

The Work Programme is a payment by results model that is focused on job outcomes. While we believe that payment by results is important, as providers need to be focused on improving the employability of participants, the current system does not sufficiently recognise the often many different points of 'distance travelled' progress for ESA claimants.

Reed in Partnership successfully delivered the European Social Fund (ESF) 'Support for Families with Multiple Problems' provision in London, the North West and the East of England. The programme was designed to support those furthest from the labour market through a series of Progress Measures which included interventions such as personal, family, health-related skills and employment related barriers. We believe that this focus on progression and distance travelled would help improve the employment rate of ESA customers in Scotland.

These progression points included:

- **Interventions to overcome family related barriers** - e.g. improving family dynamics and parenting, supporting individuals caring for adults in work, and reducing the impact of domestic violence.
- **Reducing social economic isolation** - e.g. assistance with tackling debt, work experience and digital inclusion.
- **Interventions to tackle work related barriers** - e.g. achieving vocational qualifications and skills, assisting with transport solutions, raising aspirations and confidence building.
- **Addressing health and housing related barriers** - e.g. housing stability, managing substance abuse or improving health condition management.
- **Neet prevention by engaging young people** - e.g. staying in post-16 education or training, or removing barriers to work for parents.
- **Reducing the impact of crime** - e.g. action to reduce re-offending, reducing antisocial behaviour, or tackling gang culture.

We also believe that the new programme's assessment process should be flexible enough to recognise the different needs of participants. The current Work Programme funding model links the attachment payment with the creation of an initial action plan. Some of the new programmes being commissioned for ESA customers have broken this link providing an attachment fee on programme commencement and then allowing providers more time (up to 12 weeks) to produce a detailed Action Plan.

We believe this would be helpful with the hardest to help customers as it allows the Adviser/Caseworker to develop a trusting relationship with the customer and to develop over 2/3 meetings an holistic action plan than can fully take account of health, family and personal needs

### **Contracting approach**

We believe there should be a national contracting approach, with clear key performance indicators where providers are able to design local solutions.

We would recommend 3-4 regional contracts to create competition and reduce the risk of provider failure with the successful provider expected to create and support a range of delivery partners. Commissioning at a very local level would remove economies of scale and impact on employee engagement attitudes.

This approach would provide consistent and measurable service standards and transparency for the Scottish Government.

We believe that the approach developed for the Steps2Success service in Northern Ireland provides evidence of how a national contracting strategy, commissioned across smaller regional contracts, can be used to ensure both localisation and value for money for the taxpayer.

### **Integrated employment services**

Reed in Partnership believes joined up service delivery is important to support someone into employment.

The Welfare Reform Committee should encourage the Scottish Government to give a clear signal about the importance of integration and for work to be undertaken to remove any policy or funding obstacles.

Building a joined up approach requires a broad partnership network with strong links within local communities. We believe that Skills Development Scotland should be utilised as the contracting body for future national employment programmes in Scotland, as their experience of current delivery would allow for services to be developed in an integrated way.

Avoiding fragmentation of provision is important to prevent people 'falling through gaps' and not maximising benefits from the available programmes.

Our experience shows that there is great benefit in collaborative working between prime providers and third sector organisations. Large organisations such as Reed can bring capital, coverage and a range of expertise. Small third sector providers, on the other hand, can bring specialist knowledge and provide a link to the most disadvantaged communities.

Reed in Partnership has extensive experience working with third sector partners, particularly in the provision of specialist services such as health, counselling and childcare.

## **Conclusion**

Reed in Partnership believes that key to delivering the aspirations of the Scottish Government is to build on the skills of public, private and third sector providers.

The devolution of employment programmes gives Scotland the opportunity to learn lessons from the Work Programme and develop joined up, personalised support for participants.

Reed in Partnership would be happy to provide further information to the Committee on any of the points discussed in this submission.

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Reed in Partnership  
19 August 2015