



European Union
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Investing in jobs and skills



Ideas on ways to achieve better ESF 50+ results

The following contributions were gathered during the facilitated table discussion session at the TAEN ESF conference in Birmingham in November 2009. In some instances they have been edited to avoid repetition and to make them easier to understand – we hope that in doing so, we have preserved their intended meaning. The comments have been organised under the following two main headings:

A. How could ESF resources and aims / targets be better structured

B. What could be done on the wider labour market intermediary scene

A. How could ESF resources and aims / targets be better structured

Comments regarding training:

- Train to Gain to be available to others, not just those in work – others also need to be able to retrain
- Increase support in gaining qualifications via NVQ
- Funds for specific training to meet skills goals
- Insufficient training programmes – increase numbers
- *(More)* Apprenticeships for older adults and better marketing of this aspect of the programme
- Accreditation of prior learning (Grandfather's rights) - needs to be implemented in UK
- *(Establishing)* Skills transfer programmes
- Funds for re-skilling / cross sector
- Lack of adequate provision for training to be funded for people to move from Level 2 in one area e.g. engineering/ manufacturing into Level 2 in another area e.g. services
- Remove focus from training
- Improve awareness of options - eg apprenticeships clients and advisors
- *(Improving)* Awareness of advisors – to know how a training can help

More focus on working with individuals:

- Individual approach – designed with the needs of the individual in mind
- Individual approach to working environment
- *(Need)* Greater flexibility within programme e.g. to be able to treat people as individuals and meet their needs – more pre-entry level provision
- More one to one time with 50+
- 1 to 1 support funding
- Additional funding to support greater one to one consultation
- Current funding does not meet requirements – (covering cost of) additional sessions

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To increase the expertise / knowledge base of providers:

- (A 50+) Toolkit
- Funding for advisor training / staff development for staff involved in delivering training to 50+ client group
- Accurate, robust data and improved data transfer and systems
- Breaking down statistical information that is relevant to individual projects
- List of SME business's or contacts with 50+ participants (e.g. owners / managers)

Reshaping of ESF targets:

- ESF contracts should have a range of targets to measure performance rather than just the job outcome target
- Recognition of progression through participation in ESF provision
- Greater flexibility within contracts to respond to changing economic circumstances
- (*Avoiding*) Over ambitious targets not withstanding local areas and top down approach
- Focused targets for up-skilling people already in employment to sustain their ability to work

Other things to consider in ESF contracting:

- Longer term funding: min 4-5 years
- Sustaining projects

- ESF specifications for 50+
- Ring fence ESF for 50+

- Specific provision for working with 50+s in (*future*) tender opportunities
- Funding earmarked to promote specific 50+ events.
- Funding to support Third Sector providers to work with over 50's
- Need to be able to market provision to 50+s to promote the benefits of mixed age group provision
- (*Government Office*) Programme for how to ensure that the hardest-to-reach individuals within the target group are being focused on

- A way has to be found to incentivise providers to target the most disadvantaged, some of which will be 50+
- Breaking down barriers to get more organisations (*already*) involved with 50+s to engage with these programmes

- Need greater investment in geographical hotspots + encourage business investment (looking at sustainability)
- More funding / resources
- Improve publicity for CFO's

B. What could be done on the wider labour market intermediary scene

Comments related to Jobcentre Plus:

- The stigma of JCP is strong amongst the 50+ group
- JCP not perceived (*by many over-50s*) as welcoming
- Statutory organisations for engagement generate resistance. Reputation of Dole!

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- Can I have a 50+ JCP advisor (*expert*) to promote ESF in JCP
- JCP don't always know what local provision is available
- ESF message varies in different Jobcentre Plus advisors (possibly because of vast provision available)
- Training (*for JCP advisers*), better information at JCP
- JCP is too reactive – respond to flavour of the month

- Practise what we preach - recruit more over 50+ workers and put them in frontline Jobcentre services
- Better engagement of JCP locally with partners

Improved links and cooperation among labour market intermediary bodies, general and ESF:

- All agencies to work more closely to offer the customer the right package (LSC / JCP / CFOs)
- Support via JCP, DWP to improve processes and relationships

- Increased and shared customer assessment
- Increased feedback to JCP from providers regarding outcomes
- Feedback on success sharing and referrals

- One stop shop approach – universal face of provision
- Better co-ordination between JCP and companies/providers
- Working collaboratively – joined up thinking
- More holistic support
- Enhanced mainstream provision

- Campaign to sell the real benefit of ESF to all
- Aid from central government – more direct targeting
- Rebuild trust in government funded programme
- Better communication with national and local government
- Relationship between central government programmes and local programmes for 50+ has been poor, but is getting better
- Patchy co-ordination of work on the 50+ 'market' – LA + central government but also between providers. "Local providers who know the patch" versus "National providers who want to muscle in"

Better cooperation among providers:

- Sharing good practise
- Providers working (*more*) closely to communicate their programmes to each other
- Larger programmes now – more coordinated. Difficult for smaller organisations to engage in the Programme. 'Fear of collaboration'
- Better joint working between providers – support each other + greater flexibility
- Sharing knowledge of good practise in targeting other diversity groups (*e.g. disabilities, ethnic minorities*) and applying to 50+ (*possibly with some adaptation*)

Better cooperation among local stakeholders:

- Talk to communal organisations to find out how they target 50+ e.g. (JCP use employer contracts)
- Accessibility of programmes – use village halls
- Improve links with organisations / societies who have contact with 50+ clients

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- Build capacity in communities for when money has gone
- Publicising whole project – local media

Policy / Legislation – improving conditions for the success of 50+ provision:

- If an older worker does not get JSA then they do not go to the job centre and then do not find out what the ESF programme can offer
- Small difference between minimum wage and social benefits – meant individual(s) refused work
- Tax credits for older workers
- Government focus on skills to shift away from 14-19; more funding needs to go into older people + to be less restrictive regarding what provision is funded and who is eligible
- No funding for full time courses in colleges for adults due to resources going to younger people
- Old style New Deal – too generic
- *(Need)* Legislation covering job application forms – remove all references to dates
- *(There is)* Lack of knowledge re the Age Discrimination Regulations
- Legislation does not always achieve what it is aimed to achieve
- Need government agenda to drive employers and encourage them to address these issues (employer is key to this)
- Flexibility for the employee – extension of Flexible working rights

Improving conditions on the demand side:

- Employers not convinced 50+ will achieve if re-training provided
- Organisations must have a business need to recruit & retain older workers
- Encouraging employers to look differently at their recruitment practise
- Educating employers to be more empathetic towards their employees
- Generating a greater understanding of employers

- Improving links with employers

On a national level:

- *(More and better use of)* Case studies in marketing activities
- ESF to publicise good practise and successes in targeting 50+ participants e.g. as individuals, and where participating on behalf of organisations / employers
- TAEN should raise awareness of their existence nationally. Possibly through media / more events.
- TAEN might consider raising awareness by engaging with SAGA. Using publications to be distributed alongside offers

Other – long term:

- Start early! Curriculum – kids need to understand employability + what employers need. Get 50+ people into schools to teach / explain / mentor.