

Pre-employment training to aid the unemployed

Research Summary

The ESRC-funded Centre for Learning and Life Chances in Knowledge Economics and Societies (LLAKES) has provided fresh insight into how local authorities can use Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act innovatively to achieve both economic goals and social cohesion. Integrating unemployed people back into the workplace and mainstream society is a huge challenge. But new research by Professor Alison Fuller and Dr Sadaf Rizvi on a scheme introduced by Southampton City Council reveals private businesses can help the long-term unemployed through new regeneration initiatives which incorporate pre-employment training. The researchers are now using the methodology to evaluate the success of initiatives in Manchester and Birmingham.



The research demonstrates the link between the training course which provides interview techniques, background on the company and exercises designed to help individuals identify their strengths and weaknesses and the success of the job seekers in securing jobs.

Impact

Researchers evaluated the innovative use of Section 106 agreements by Southampton City Council. These are usually private agreements negotiated in the context of planning applications between local planning authorities and persons with an interest in a piece of land, and intended to make acceptable development which would otherwise be unacceptable in planning terms. This council granted permission for the development of a new store on the condition the company guaranteed interviews to job seekers who had completed a special pre-employment training (PET) course.

While many training schemes already exist for the unemployed, previous studies have shown that workless people often have problematic experiences of jobs and finding employment. In the case of Southampton, a 'provider network' proved successful in delivering the initiative in a bid to reduce unemployment. This network included the retailer, the council, the local Jobcentre Plus and the Learning and Skills Council.

Therefore, this study shows that boosting economic progress and improving social welfare are not mutually exclusive and that Section 106 agreements can be used to achieve this.

These insights will help improve welfare to work policies as it demonstrates the benefit of a co-ordinated approach to pre-employment

preparation in helping people obtain and retain jobs. Private partners emerged as a significant factor in the delivery of publicly funded programmes.

The researchers also analysed the features of the scheme which made it a success to provide other councils an example of best practice.

One of the key messages from the research is that not-for-profit groups face a tricky balancing act. Their focus is on getting hard-to-reach people into work. But these clients may have been disappointed and let down by previous work experiences. Or it may be they are simply not in a position to hold down a job. In interviews with charities, it emerged that employment was generally seen as a longer term aspiration for their clients.

Professor Fuller says the experience of Southampton City Council highlights the potential

of section 106 powers to be used more widely.

It is now crucial, she says, to discover why some local authorities are being ambitious and innovative in their use of Section 106 and others are not. "We're now pursuing this study with other cities as there is still a lot more to discover about the ways 106 is being used, particularly as a 'tool' for encouraging employers to increase their training and adapt their recruitment strategies to encourage candidates from disadvantaged groups. For example through pre-employment training", says Professor Fuller.

Key Findings

- Local authorities can use Section 106 powers to encourage inward investing businesses achieve social cohesion goals. This can be achieved while still satisfying the economic goals of businesses.
- There is a link between pre-employment initiatives and the success of the unemployed securing jobs.
- But pre-employment schemes are not enough to meet the needs of some hard-to-reach people.
- Provider networks are crucial for the success of pre-employment training agreements.
- Organisations which operate in the area of job placement are diverse in their focus and funding models.

Further Information

RES-594-28-0001

Crossing the Public-private Line for Social Inclusion: Pre-employment Training in England

<http://www.esrcsocietytoday.ac.uk/esrcinfocentre/viewawardpage.aspx?awardnumber=RES-594-28-0001>

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