

**Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire
European Strategic Investment Framework (ESIF)**

Priority 4

**Skills, Employment and Social Inclusion
Commissioning Plan and Prospectus 2014 - 2020**

Monday, 26 October 2015

Foreword

K Stepney to write

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CONFIDENTIAL

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1.0 Introduction

1. This Plan sets out the case for the EU investment required to improve the skills, employability and the social inclusion of the people of Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire, and supports the growth of our businesses, economy and the prosperity of our people by helping to provide access to skills and employment support.
2. The purpose of this plan is to convey our priorities for the ESIF and the interventions and outcomes we want to achieve by investment with our partners in delivering shared outcomes. In addition it sets out specific and defined areas of focus for each of the Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire's delivery partners to ensure that all delivery partners work collaboratively in order to maximise impact addressing these priorities.
3. The 2014 – 2020 EU Programme will provide £138 million of investment over the programme period and this Plan covers the £55 million investment that will be made in skills, employability and social inclusion. There will also be an amount of ESF from the allocation made to Greater Birmingham and Solihull LEP (GBSLEP) for investment in Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire owing to 4 districts being in GBSLEP.
4. This Plan operates within our Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) for Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire, which sets out how we will utilise the EU investment to support and contribute to the delivery of our priorities.

2.0 Strategic Context

2.1 Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire LEP (SSLEP) Strategic Economic Plan (SEP)

5. The Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Enterprise Partnership Strategic Economic Plan (SEP)¹ states the SSLEP aims to grow the economy by 50% and generate 50,000 new jobs in the next 10 years (50:50:10).
6. There are five objectives the SSLEP Economic Strategy will focus on to achieve its goal:
 - **Core City of Stoke-on-Trent** with growth of the conurbation and the city centre brand.
 - **Connected County** that utilises our location to develop the infrastructure for key employment sites.
 - **Competitive urban centres** in the city and towns for people to live, work and enjoy.
 - **Sector Growth** supporting the innovation and investment in priority growth sectors in Advanced Manufacturing (Energy, Auto-Aero, Medical Technologies, Agri-Tech, Applied Materials), along with Tourism and Business/Professional Services.
 - **Skilled Workforce** to ensure a balanced supply of people with the right skills and know-how needed to drive economic growth.

2.2 Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Education Trust Education Trust Skills Priorities

7. The Education Trust brings together all organisations which have a commitment to raising education and training achievement, employability, and aspirations amongst young people and adults in the sub-region.
8. The purpose of the Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Education Trust is to shape a high performing, relevant and responsive education and skills system that meets today's business needs and anticipates the challenges and opportunities of tomorrow.

¹ Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire LEP Strategic Economic Plan (March 2014)

9. The aims of the Education Trust are to secure:
- i. **An absolute increase in the number of people in employment, particularly in the priority growth sectors***
 - ii. **Growth in productivity as people and businesses have the right skills and the opportunities to use them in work***
10. The skills agenda in the SSLEP area presents a significant challenge across the following **five priority areas** of focus:
- **Higher Level Skills:** develop high level skills to meet the needs of our priority and other high-value and growth sectors
 - **Employability:** improve skills for employment to allow all people to participate in the workforce
 - **Career Choice:** improving careers decision making and skills development to ensure strong match-up between local skills and employment opportunities
 - **Business Engagement in learning and skills:** develop greater involvement of businesses with skills provision
 - **Learning and skills infrastructure:** development of high quality education and training facilities in our area

Delivering the Skills Programme

11. In order to deliver the priorities and actions in the Strategic Economic Plan the SSLEP and its Education Trust has and will need to continue to utilise a combination of funding mechanisms and levers. This includes:
- Influencing mainstream investment from the government such as the Skills Funding Agency (SFA), Education Funding Agency (EFA), BIS, DWP
 - leveraging private sector investment
 - aligning public sector investment
 - deals for investment with the government such as the City Deal and Growth Deals
 - European Structural Investment Funds
12. The Education Trust has already had success in securing funding and resources to deliver its priorities from these routes which all have their own project plans and performance measures. The purpose of this Commissioning Plan is to demonstrate how the EU investment supports delivery of the SSLEP ambition and Education Trust Skills Strategy.

2.3 Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire European Strategic Investment Framework (ESIF)

ESIF Programme Priorities and Ambitions

13. There are four Priority Themes in the ESIF Strategy and seventeen areas for strategic investment which can be summarised as:
- **Innovation:** infrastructure, knowledge transfer and commercialisation
 - **SME Competitiveness:** growth hub, enterprise support, high value growth, access to finance and internationalisation
 - **Place and Environment:** energy supply, energy efficiency and carbon reduction sites, infrastructure and sustainable transport
 - **Skills, Employment and Social Inclusion:** employability, high level skills, vocational routeways, access to work and social inclusion
14. To better reflect the EU Thematic Objectives and the programme period (2014-2020) we have developed a set of ESIF ambitions which complement and reinforce our wider and longer term SEP objectives:
- **A more productive economy:** Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire will make progress towards closing the existing productivity gap between itself (£14,900 per head) and the national average (£21,300) by creating new, higher value added jobs, and by helping the existing business base to grow and engage with emerging sectors.
 - **A more diverse and resilient economy:** building on established (and acknowledged) strengths in a number of high value added priority sectors including Advanced Manufacturing, Advanced Materials, Creative Media and Energy Generation.
 - **An innovation driven economy:** with established relationships between major companies, R&D functions and Higher Education, and with a SME business base, which has the capacity and knowledge to engage and add value to local and regional supply chains.
 - **A strong and growing base of SMEs across both urban and rural areas:** as a result of a comprehensive and joined up approach to the provision of support.
 - **A leading low carbon economy:** driven by its unique approach to local energy generation and by an SME base, which has evolved and embedded low carbon principles, practices and activities.

- **A well-qualified and adaptable workforce:** with the skills sets appropriate to the needs of existing business sectors in Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire, as well as those in which we have aspirations for economic growth.
- **More inclusive communities:** having made progress towards addressing issues of low aspirations and worklessness, through targeted approaches to engagement, training and employability.
- **A more attractive place to live, work and visit:** renowned for its vibrant and diverse places, strong cultural and leisure offer in Stoke on Trent, complemented by visitor attractions and a high quality environment across the LEP area.

ESIF Resources for Investment

15. European Growth Programme allocations of relevance to the Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire LEP are:

- **ERDF and ESF** funding for Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire LEP of £83.0 million and £55.4 million respectively (£138.4 million in total)
- **EAFRD** funding for the Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire LEP of £3.13 million
- An additional £27.4 million **ERDF and ESF** funding must be spent on interventions within the Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire LEP transition area. However, this funding is part of the **Greater Birmingham and Solihull (GBS) LEP** allocation and will be administered by GBSLEP in partnership with the Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire LEP.

Priority Theme Strategic Investment Areas

Priority Area	Strategic Investment Areas	ESIF Allocation (£M)	Total Value including Match (£M)
Priority 1 Innovation	1.1 Infrastructure for Innovation	£8.00	£13.30
	1.2 Knowledge Transfer	£7.50	£12.50
	1.3 Commercialisation	£7.50	£12.50
	Subtotal	£23.00	£38.30
Priority 2 SME Competitiveness	2.1 Growth Hub	£6.00	£10.00
	2.2 Support for enterprise	£6.50	£10.80
	2.3 Support for high value growth	£7.00	£11.70
	2.4 Access to finance	£13.00	£21.70
	2.5 Internationalisation	£5.00	£8.30
	Subtotal	£37.50	£62.50
Priority 3 Place and Environment	3.1 Whole Place Approach to Energy Supply	£10.00	£16.70
	3.2 Energy Efficiency & Decarbonisation of the Business Base	£2.50	£4.20
	3.3 Sites and Infrastructure	£6.00	£10.00
	3.4 Green Infrastructure and Sustainable Transport	£4.00	£6.70
	Subtotal	£22.50	£37.60
Priority 4 Skills, Employment and Social Inclusion	4.1 Skills for Employability	£9.00	£15.00
	4.2 Higher Skills to Support Growth	£12.00	£20.00
	4.3 Vocational Routes into Employment	£12.00	£20.00
	4.4 Access to Employment	£11.00	£18.30
	4.5 Social Inclusion	£11.4	£18.90
	Subtotal	£55.40	£92.20
Total		£138.40	£230.60

2.4 Investment in Skills, Employment and Inclusion

16. There are five **Strategic Investment Areas** that have been identified in the ESIF Priority 4 for investment and these are:

- **Skills for Employability**
- **Skills to support growth, innovation and enterprise**
- **Vocational routes into employment**
- **Access to employment**
- **Promoting social inclusion among disadvantaged groups**

3.0 Strategic Needs Assessment

17. This part of the report sets out both the context and the needs this EU Commissioning Plan will seek to address for skills, employment and social inclusion.

3.1 National Picture

18. National research tells us that we need to make it easier for people to retrain and undertake lifelong learning. A report by the Skills Commission concluded that the UK skills system does not adequately match the modern structures of work, and highlighted other problems – uncertainty around who has responsibility for training, declining social mobility which is exacerbated by poor alignment of skills provision to work, and a fragmented system making it difficult for employers to engage.
19. Careers advice for young people is declining, and needs to create a movement which includes employers, education and career development professionals. ‘Softer’ skill sets – communication, teamwork, time and self-management, responsibility and decision making, digital skills – are viewed as vital for employability, and that by 2020 the importance of such skills will be reflected in a value of £109bn to the economy, and a deficit of such skills exists in the UK. A wealth of national research exists beyond just the reports mentioned above, but the conclusions are often the same, and the same issues are reflected in Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire.
20. Alongside the national research, these issues are reflected in changes to national government skills policy in recent years – aspects like the Employer Ownership of Skills Pilots and the introduction of Advanced Learning Loans for lower levels demonstrate a changing emphasis to focus on individuals and, importantly, employers, taking responsibility for training and skills. This policy context is detailed much further in a range of other key documents (for example the Strategic Economic Plan).

3.2 Local Picture

21. The economic structure in Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire has changed considerably over recent years. In 2013, health, manufacturing and retail continued to provide the highest number of jobs across Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire (mirrored in apprenticeships take-up). As well as existing locally important sectors, such as health and social care and logistics and distribution, the SSLEP has identified a number of high value, priority industrial sectors seen as having the greatest growth potential locally, which include advanced manufacturing; tourism & leisure; professional & business services; and digital & creative. Total jobs numbers have increased by nearly 7,700 since 2011 to over 424,300 in 2013, raising the employment rate across Staffordshire, though it remains lower in Stoke-on-Trent. In terms of travel to work, in all areas of the county and city (except for a small surplus in South Staffordshire) a clear majority of people work in the same area that they live.

22. In parts of the SSLEP area, particularly the north, there exist considerable socio-economic challenges, which present barriers to economic growth and have implications for levels of social and community inclusion. In urban areas, challenges are multi-faceted, with the potential for economic growth constrained by a historic reliance on lower value manufacturing activities, challenges regarding the delivery of new sites and infrastructure and complex labour market challenges, including low skills levels and concentrations of worklessness and deprivation. In rural areas there are pockets of deprivation where the economic structure tends to be less growth orientated, with a higher than average dependence on sectors such as agriculture and related land based activities and tourism.
23. There are clear areas of multiple need in the north (largely in Stoke-on-Trent and Newcastle-under-Lyme but also in Staffordshire Moorlands) and in the south of the county (largely in Cannock Chase and Tamworth, but also in Lichfield and Stafford to an extent). Some pockets of multiple need also exist in East Staffordshire.
24. In the north, there are high rates of worklessness, and a particular issue of adults with no qualifications. In the south, there are issues of unemployment in urban areas. Across the entire SSLEP area, there is a significant issue of higher level skills gaps, which is impacting upon economic growth and the development of the key priority sectors outlined in the Strategic Economic Plan.

3.3 Strategic Needs Analysis

Unemployment, Worklessness and Inactivity

25. While unemployment is not as large an issue in Stoke-on-Trent as in comparable metropolitan areas, the City does suffer from high levels of economic inactivity – with rates amongst the highest in England, well above the national average and currently more than 28% of the working age population fall into this category. Geographically within Stoke-on-Trent, 21 of the city's wards exceed the national rate and three of these have a rate double the national average. The 2013 JSNA for Stoke-on-Trent highlighted worklessness as a health issue and called for further investigation.

26. **ISSUE: There are high rates of worklessness in the north of the SSLEP area (particularly in Stoke), and areas of unemployment in urban areas to the south of the county as well as in Newcastle-under-Lyme.**

In terms of the geographical JSA split across the SSLEP area, 57.04% of claimants are in Stoke-on-Trent, Newcastle-under-Lyme and the Staffordshire Moorlands. 15.67% are within Stafford and South Staffordshire, and 27.26% are within Tamworth, Cannock, Lichfield and East Staffordshire.

The ESA/Incapacity Benefit split is very similar, implying a similar geography of multiple needs: 56.9% in Stoke, Newcastle and Staffordshire Moorlands, 13.41% in Stafford and South Staffordshire, and 29.69% across Tamworth, Cannock, Lichfield and East Staffordshire.

Economic inactivity is a particular issue in Tamworth, Cannock Chase, Stoke-on-Trent and Newcastle-under-Lyme, particularly among males.

27. **ISSUE: The youth unemployment rate in Stoke-on-Trent is above the national average and concentrated pockets exist elsewhere within the county.**

Across Staffordshire as a whole, this is a lower rate, but again there are areas with concentrations of youth unemployment, with eight wards in the county exceeding the national average. Three of these wards are within Cannock District, one is in East Staffordshire (Shobnall), two in Lichfield (Chadsmead and Curborough), one in Newcastle-under-Lyme (Butt Lane) and one in Stafford (Penkridge).

28. **ISSUE: Some groups in Stoke-on-Trent face particular multiple barriers, such as ethnic origin, age and place of residence.**

Work in Stoke-on-Trent identified in particular that multiple barriers to employment and economic security are faced by those aged 18-24 and 55-64 years old, those from Black and Minority Ethnic communities (in particular new migrants and those from Pakistani or Black African and Black-Caribbean heritage), and those living in large local authority housing estates on the periphery of the city or in private rented accommodation in the urban core of the city. Single adult households, another of the key beneficiary groups of the first stage of the pathway, are also identified as facing multiple barriers such as these.

29. **ISSUE: A clear need exists in Staffordshire to support young people with care responsibilities.**

The under 18 conceptions rate exceeds the national rate of 34 births per 1000 in 18 of Staffordshire's wards with East Staffordshire, Cannock, Tamworth and Newcastle districts accounting for most wards.

30. **ISSUE: High levels of disability exist across many areas of Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire.**

The rate of Disability Living Allowance (DLA) Claimants is 7.8% in Stoke-on-Trent (the 25th highest rate in England & Wales), exceeds the national rate of 5.1% in 33 of the City's 44 wards – and exceeds double the national rate in four wards. In Staffordshire, the rate of DLA Claimants exceeds the national rate in 60 wards. The extent of the issue is particularly evident in Cannock district, Newcastle under Lyme, Tamworth and parts of Staffordshire Moorlands.

31. **ISSUE: Stoke-on-Trent has a high rate of 16-18 NEETs and Staffordshire again has areas where this is a particular issue.**

In Stoke-on-Trent the number of 16-18 year olds not in education, employment and training (NEET) is 5.6%, higher than both Staffordshire (4.8%) and national rates. The trend over time has been for these rates to gravitate towards these averages.

There are 16 wards in Staffordshire where NEET levels exceed the county average of 3.7%. Cannock and Newcastle-under-Lyme Districts account for 4 wards each. In Huntington & Hatherton (South Staffordshire) NEET levels stand at 9.0% whilst Curborough (Lichfield) exceeds this at 9.9%.

This is an area where interventions will be more necessary, with the withdrawal of the Youth Contract and SFA ESF NEET programme in July 2015.

32. ISSUE: There is an identified gap in provision for some in this area.

Hard to reach groups with multiple barriers, particularly related to drug/alcohol abuse, are identified as a particular group where there is a gap in provision/interventions.

Educational Attainment and Progression

33. ISSUE: Basic skills attainment (at Key Stage 4) is an issue, particularly in Stoke-on-Trent – there are clear requirements for innovative programmes to support and motivate young people with few qualifications across the SSLEP area

Attainment at Key Stage 4 is an important indicator as pupils attaining good GCSEs and equivalent level qualifications are more likely to continue with some form of structured learning, leading to higher levels of skills and improved employability.

Pockets of low educational attainment are evident in several areas of Staffordshire. Achievement of 5 GCSEs (inc. Maths and English) falls below the national rate of 59% in 22 Staffordshire wards. Eight of these wards fall below 40%. Glascote (Tamworth) has the lowest level in the county at 31%.

In Stoke-on-Trent 49% of young people achieve 5 A*-C GCSEs (inc. Maths and English), which puts the city at 137th out of 151 areas nationally.

34. ISSUE: At Key Stage 5 / Level 3, there are issues for both Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent in terms of attainment

In 2014, Staffordshire pupils on average achieved grade 'C' equivalent in all subjects taken (lower than the national average but improving). At Key Stage 5 in Stoke-on-Trent the percentage of pupils achieving 3 A Levels or equivalent is at its lowest point for the last five years, with 6.4% achieving compared to 11.6% nationally.

35. ISSUE: Progression onwards into higher education is below the national average, and more so in Stoke-on-Trent

In Staffordshire, of the students who entered an A level or other Level 3 qualification in 2010/11, 53% went on to study at a UK Higher Education Institution (HEI) in 2011/12. This is a slightly lower proportion compared to the 54% nationally, but in Stoke-on-Trent the figure was only 50%.

36. ISSUE: Individuals with no qualifications face seriously impacted employability, and there are areas within Stoke-on-Trent and the county where this is a significant issue.

Stoke-on-Trent has double the national rate of adults with no qualifications, and the 6th highest rate in Britain. There are also 91 wards in Staffordshire which exceed the national rate of no qualifications. 26 of these wards exceed 30% and a further 8 exceed 35%.

5 of these wards are located within Newcastle under Lyme. Cannock East and Cannock North have rates of 35.4% and 38.5% respectively, while Himley and Swindon ward in South Staffordshire has a rate of 35.1% and Leek North in Staffordshire Moorlands has a rate of 36.2%.

Hard and Soft Skills Development

37. **ISSUE: Apprenticeship starts have fallen year-on-year, and are heavily weighted on the 16-24 age group. Apprenticeships being taken also do not always match the key sectoral growth aims of SSLEP.**

Apprenticeship figures year-to-date to the start of December 2014 show that there have been 8,340 apprenticeship starts in 2014 in Staffordshire (two thirds of which are in the 16 to 24 years age group). This total compares to 9,620 starts during 2013/14 and suggests that Staffordshire is unlikely to match the total 2013/14 apprenticeship levels in 2014/15. The top three sector subject areas for apprenticeships were Business Administration and Law, Health Public Services and Care, and Retail and Commercial Enterprise – accounting for 71% of apprenticeship starts in Staffordshire.

38. **ISSUE: ‘Softer’ skills like team working and communications are vital for some of the LEP’s key sectors**

Strategic management, team working and communications skills – i.e. some of the softer skills issues that contribute towards employability – are key to sectors such as Health and Social Care, Manufacturing and Tourism & Leisure, and will continue to be so.

39. **ISSUE: Enterprise rates in the city and county are low**

Historically the SSLEP area has seen lower rates of enterprise than national and comparable averages, and these are skills which many of the key sectors need. There is a need for work which creates a culture of enterprise and entrepreneurialism at a younger age. This links to the retention of graduates in the city and county – increased support for this group would impact positively on both enterprise rates and labour market skills levels.

40. **ISSUE: There are some gaps in current provision in this area**

There are identified gaps in provision for those who are employed but require additional skills to progress their career or move to different jobs within their employer’s company. For these categories there are some programmes available (such as SFA ESF Skills Support and JCP) but programmes such as SFA ESF WP, Workforce learning for 19-24 end in July 2015.

Workforce Skills Development

41. **ISSUE: Some of our key sectors have a high rate of churn or struggle with staff retention**

Sectors such as retail are dependent on sales and customer service, so in-work skills development is important for helping individuals to retain their job. A wider point than this is the rate of labour market churn in many of the key sectors – in areas such as Agri-Tech, Retail and Logistics, the workforce is highly dependent on seasonal trends, and in Construction there is a strong cyclical link to the wider economy.

This can mean that skilled individuals can be lost in a downturn, only for employers to have to start again later; in Construction this is particularly acute because individuals are more difficult to recruit during the recovery period, and because of the high levels of self-employment in the sector. In Tourism & Leisure (because it has the highest turnover rate of any sector) a large proportion of training expenditure is on induction training, causing skills gaps among elementary staff as well as managerial and customer service skills.

The key point is that in such sectors, individuals should be supported to ensure that jobs at risk can be treated as stepping stones to continued employment, or retained through in-work development.

42. **ISSUE: The proportion of the working age population qualified to National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) Level 4 or above in both Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire areas being below the national average.**

This is concentrated at two ends of the SSLEP area – in the south in Tamworth and Cannock and in the north in Stoke-on-Trent and Newcastle-under-Lyme. In Stoke-on-Trent less than 16.5% of residents have a level 4 or above qualification. Across Staffordshire, there are 94 wards that fall below the national qualification rate of 27.2% including 11 wards where the rate is less than half this level.

43. **ISSUE: Some of the key sectoral growth areas of the LEP will see a rising demand for higher level skills, with Leadership Skills in particular**

Priority growth areas like Agri-Tech, Health and Social Care, Retail, Logistics & Distribution, and Digital will all see a rising emphasis on higher level skills, particularly related to digital and technological developments that will impact on ways of working. In Advanced Manufacturing in particular, strong international competition means that sustained growth relies on increased productivity and innovation, again needing higher level skills.

This also means that in sectors such as Logistics and Distribution, increased automation is changing the workforce to be more weighted on technological skills, senior leadership and organisation, again meaning a growing requirement for in-work development and higher level skills delivered in combination with businesses themselves. There are also other sector changes, such as in Business and Professional Skills, where increased regulation means that higher level knowledge and skills are again a demand which will continue to grow. This is also a sector which recruits from Higher Education.

44. **ISSUE: Inward investment requires a mass of higher level skills**

Linked to the above, must be linked to skills provision to the needs of the employment sites we are focusing on through the City Deal, Local Growth Deal and other programmes. These are sites which have a heavy focus on Advanced Manufacturing, Medical Technology, Logistics & Distribution and other sectors where the right advanced skills are going to be crucial in attracting strong inward investment to sites which will benefit the wider economy.

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4.0 Skills, Employment and Inclusion Priorities

4.1 Priorities and Objectives

45. The key priorities for this Commissioning Plan within the context of the SSLEP Strategic Economic Plan are to:
- Address the below average skill levels in the labour market
 - Tackle the skills shortages in priority sectors
 - Reduce unemployment concentrations
 - Reduce the levels of relative multiple deprivation and social exclusion
46. The objectives for the EU investment through this are to:
- Provide a highly skilled workforce to meet the needs of industry
 - Increase the number of people in paid employment
 - Reduce social deprivation across the Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire LEP area

4.2 Strategic Investment Areas

47. To deliver these objectives investment will be in five areas of activity which are:
- **Skills for Employability**
 - **Skills to support growth, innovation and enterprise**
 - **Vocational routes into employability**
 - **Access to employment**
 - **Promoting social inclusion among disadvantaged groups**

i. Strategic Investment Area: Skills for Employability

48. To improve employability skills across the Stoke-on-Trent & Staffordshire labour market with a particular focus on the unemployed, NEETS, school leavers, graduates and vulnerable groups.
49. To deliver programmes that support local communities and disadvantaged groups, to deliver local employability training solutions to engage disadvantaged learners (broad employability programmes, delivered by local networks with a focus towards building stronger local communities).

ii. Strategic Investment Area: Skills to support growth, innovation and enterprise

50. To ensure that the Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire labour market has appropriate skills to meet the needs of existing and emerging priority sectors and technologies, and to drive enterprise, including retaining and attracting graduates and ensuring that existing employees / residents are given the chance to up-skill and re-skill. Focusing on building upon existing, strong linkages between employers, sector

organisations and education institutions to identify future skills needs and ensure suitable provision.

51. To support local communities and VCSE organisations to develop social enterprise and investment projects.

iii. Strategic Investment Area: Vocational routes into employability

52. To work with education providers and employers to support the development and implementation of vocational routes into employment, in particular actions to support the coherent delivery of vocational training activities, placements and apprenticeships across the area.
53. To deliver programmes to develop employability skills and job outcomes (programmes aimed at people who are “close to the labour market” i.e. training that will get someone into a job).
54. To deliver programmes that help to develop better links between the education and business sectors.

iv. Strategic Investment Area: Access to employment

55. To improve employability across the Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire labour market, with a particular focus on the unemployed, people not in education, employment or training (NEET) and vulnerable groups. Ensuring that residents are signposted to routes to employment and have support in accessing these (for example brokerage).
56. To deliver programmes that address access to employment issues for Stoke-on-Trent & Staffordshire residents. Barriers to employment come in various and multiple guises, and include (soft and basic key skills, language, childcare and transport issues).

v. Strategic Investment Area: Promoting social inclusion among disadvantaged groups

57. To support key disadvantaged groups and communities to improve social inclusion and employability, with a focus on areas of multiple deprivation.
58. To deliver programmes that support local communities and disadvantaged groups to improve social inclusion and employability (employability provision that it is particularly targeted to engage socially excluded groups).

4.3 Commissioning Strategy

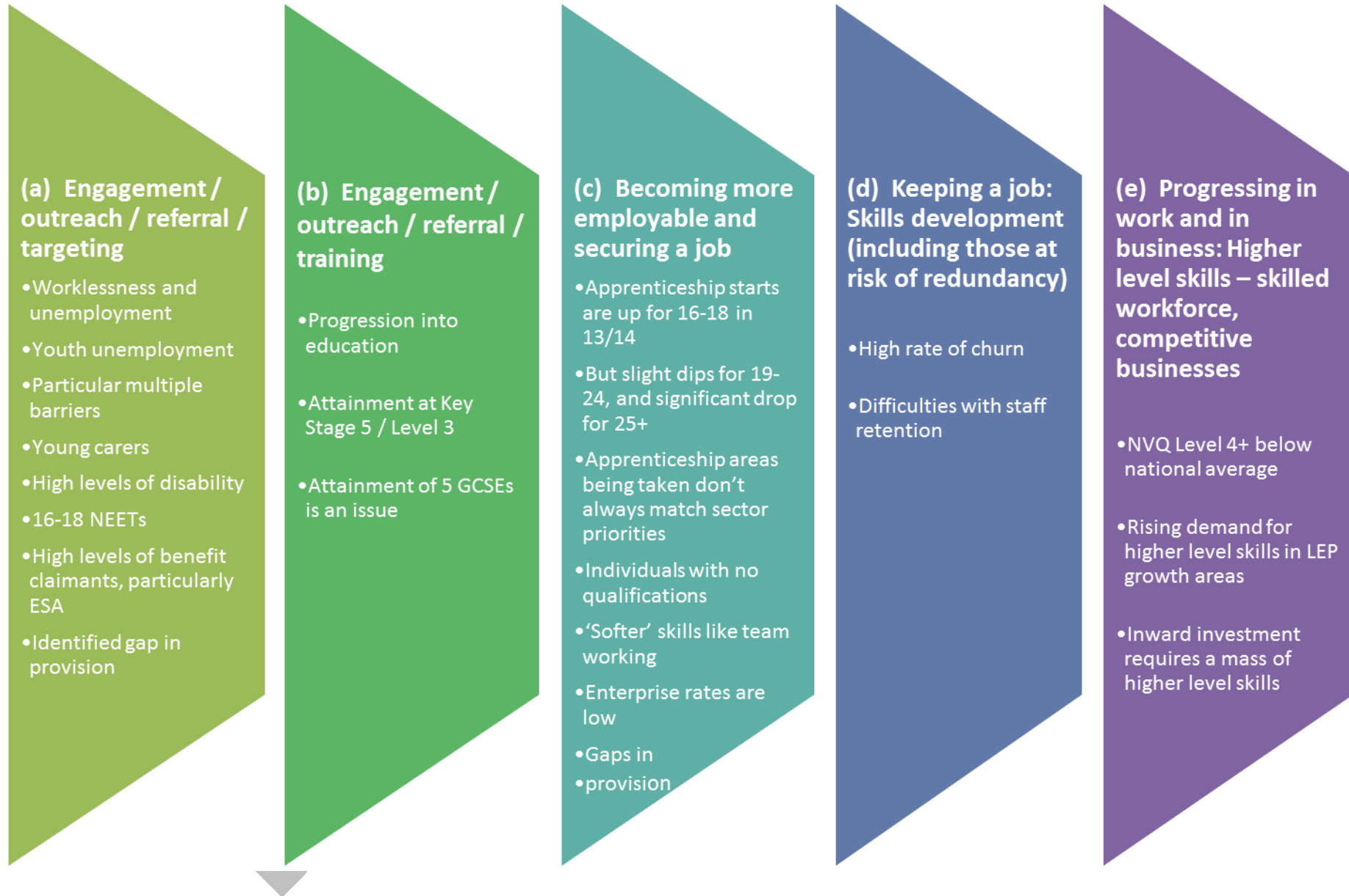
Skills, Employment and Enterprise Pathway

59. Based on the needs analysis the SSLEP has developed an Employment Skills and Enterprise Pathway that provides the underpinning strategy to ensure we deliver the priorities for the plan are delivered, and that people and business in the SSLEP area receive a coherent and seamless offer of support. This pathway will support all people across the spectrum from those quite distant from the labour market and are socially excluded to people who want to start and grow in business.

Customer Journey

60. The needs analysis presents five key areas for intervention, which have been developed into a pathway model for programme delivery. As people's support needs change, they would move along the pathway and be supported differently, bringing the most appropriate opt-in partners as support for that stage. The diagram below sets out how this would work and how the different partners would be engaged in this process, as well as the cohorts involved. Sitting over the entire pathway is strong information, advice and guidance, enabling informed individuals to make the right choices for what they want to achieve.
61. There are therefore a wide range of issues with which individuals might need support, depending on their position relative to the labour market, whether in or out of work, looking to progress their career or starting and running a business. Relative position and stages of people and business have different needs and are summarised in the diagram below. The relative needs of people and business will require a different set of interrelated interventions underpinned by consistent and high quality information, advice and guidance.
62. The Big Lottery Programme has its strengths in the early steps which people take – in initial engagement, working with people to address barriers they face, and in activities focused around social inclusion. This then feeds into DWP programmes around work readiness, which leads to addressing skills gaps on an individual level. As the pathway continues, the SFA activity comes in, to take people along the path from employability to higher level employment. ESIF funding is the anchor that will enable better and more joined up working between these partners, allowing each individual learner's journey to be tailored to their circumstance.

Pathway Model



(a) Engagement / outreach / referral / targeting

63. Individuals requiring help in this area are those needing initial support. Individuals may be disengaged with opportunities and programmes, or may have complex barriers preventing them from entering training or work – as such, relevant cohorts here include those who are NEET, those who are hard to reach (for example those who have been unemployed for less than 6 months but are not claiming JSA or ESA), or those who may face obstacles such as being care leavers or young offenders.

(b) Getting sorted / getting started

64. There is some overlap between the cohorts of beneficiaries involved in the first and second stages of the pathway, but the second stage is designed to build on the work of the first: having been engaged by the first stage support, and supported to overcome multiple barriers, the second stage is about helping individuals to ensure they have the right skills to progress. This includes issues such as attainment and qualifications, as well as 'softer' skill sets such as teamwork, leadership and attitude.

(c) Becoming more employable and securing a job

65. This is the stage of the pathway where the groundwork achieved in the first 2 stages means that individuals can now be supported to hone their employability skills and move into work. Part of this involves looking at routes into work and training such as apprenticeships, and part is about employability more generally.
66. Stages following this focus on supporting individuals to develop in-work skills, and retain their employment, as well as ultimately moving into higher level skills development. As such, the relevant opt-in partner for this area moves from being Big Lottery and DWP to Skills Funding Agency-led interventions.

(d) Keeping a job: Skills development (including those at risk of redundancy)

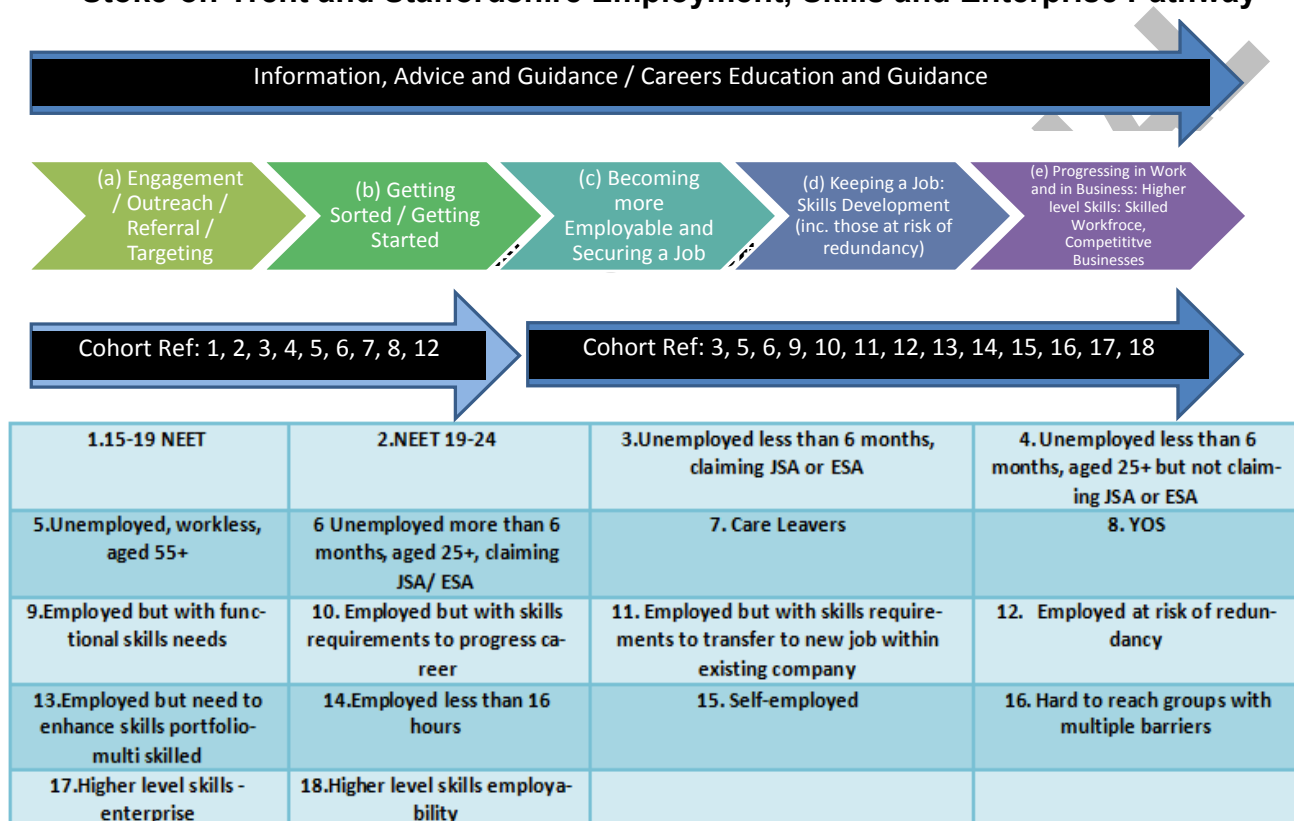
67. This area of the pathway focuses on supporting individuals to develop their skills from within employment, and in doing so to also help ensure they can retain a job.

(e) Progressing in work and in business: Higher level skills – skilled workforce, competitive businesses

68. The final stage of the pathway is about supporting individuals to continuously develop their skills and take this into higher level skills that will support economic growth, and drive growth in the SSLEP's key priority sectors.
69. Skills development programmes will be delivered via the ESIF Strategy, which will support the delivery of the key actions identified in the Strategic Economic Plan for

skills, employability and social inclusion. It is envisaged that programmes delivered through the EU Investment Strategy will support the customer journey through a **Employment, Skills and Enterprise Pathway** identified below, which moves people back into work and helps them progress in work and in business with CEAIAG support throughout the journey. The journey and potential beneficiaries at each stage is set-out below.

Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Employment, Skills and Enterprise Pathway



4.4 Outcomes for Skills, Employment and Inclusion

70. The key outcomes as a result of this investment will be:

- Improved economic participation across the labour market
- Reduced income disparity and increased social inclusion
- Increased employment levels and productivity

71. The key measurable outputs to ensure investment is on track will include:

- Participants on the programme
- Unemployed participants
- Employed participants on the programme
- Young people participating in the programme

72. The key measurable results to ensure investment is making a difference will include:

- Number of people supported into work

- Number of people with improved basic/higher level skills
- Number of people in employment
- Reduced skills deficits

4.5 Key Outputs and Results

73. The key measurable outputs and results to ensure the investment is making a difference are summarised in Annex A (to be supplied) which provides details of the spread of need across the Districts of Staffordshire and the City of Stoke-on-Trent.

Pathway Programme: Interventions and Outcomes

Big Lottery					
Pathway	Engagement, outreach, referral, targeting	Getting Sorted, Getting started	Becoming more employable and securing a job	Keeping a Job, skills development including redundancy	Progressing in work, in business, higher level skills, skilled workforce, competitive business
Interventions	Managed client journey	Intermediate employment	<i>Gap picked up via DWP intervention</i>	<i>Gap picked up via SFA intervention</i>	<i>Gap picked up via SFA intervention</i>
Key Features	Engagement of those furthest from the labour market, needs assessment, preparation of route to work plan, information, advice and practical support in accessing services that remove barriers to employment	Opportunity to experience work through: work placement, work trial, volunteering. Supported role involving support from key worker, 'employer' and mentors. Support to be provided to 'employers' to manage the placement.	Addressing needs of beneficiaries who face real or perceived barriers to work. At the same time, engaging employers who can offer opportunities to 'work ready' candidates, and supporting the individual to take this up (Big Lottery). (Crossover between BL and DWP).	<i>Gap picked up via SFA intervention</i>	<i>Gap picked up via SFA intervention</i>
Target Beneficiaries	NEETS, long term unemployed, people with long term health problems, people without skills and qualifications, people living in the	People furthest from the labour market who have a 'route to employment plan' who have had some barriers to employment removed but who need support to build self-	People with a range of multiple barriers. In a crossover from BL to DWP, beneficiaries move in this category once they have had almost all their barriers removed and become 'work ready'.	<i>Gap picked up via SFA intervention</i>	<i>Gap picked up via SFA intervention</i>

	20% most deprived communities	confidence, have a recent work record, have a referee			
Dependencies and Referrals	Referrals from voluntary organisations and job centre plus It is expected that the successful bidding organisation will engage with appropriate delivery partners to develop and deliver responsive packages of interventions.	Voluntary organisations and employers to offer work placements /work experience	<i>Gap picked up via DWP intervention</i>	Existing programmes include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ESF Skills Support • Workforce Learning (ends July 2015) 	Existing programmes include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ESF Skills Support • Workforce Learning (ends July 2015)
Outputs	Participants – 2277 Unemployed – 1138 Inactive – 1138 Participants with disabilities – 455 Participants over 50 – 340 Participants from ethnic minorities – 180		<i>Gap picked up via DWP intervention</i>		
Outcomes	People will have improved skills and/or qualifications which will enhance their chances of getting a job; individuals from the 20% most deprived communities will	Workless people will have improved their chances of getting a job as a result of having completed x days' work experience/volunteering	Supported employment jobs will have been taken up within employer organisations by previously workless individuals; employers will be engaged in providing supported employment opportunities leading to	..reductions in employee turnover	<i>Gap picked up via SFA intervention</i>

	have a 'route map' to work and been supported in receiving support that removed one or more of their barriers to employment; individuals will have progressed from being workless into learning, volunteering or employment		more people accessing work and reductions in employee turnover; individuals who were previously workless will have been sustained in employment for six months		
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DWP					
Pathway	Engagement, outreach, referral, targeting	Getting Sorted, Getting started	Becoming more employable and securing a job	Keeping a Job, skills development including redundancy	Progressing in work, in business, higher level skills, skilled workforce, competitive business
Interventions	<i>Gap picked up via Big Lottery intervention</i>	<i>Gap picked up via Big Lottery intervention</i>	Flexible Pathways to Work (FPW), supported employment	<i>Gap picked up via SFA intervention</i>	<i>Gap picked up via SFA intervention</i>
Key Features	<i>Gap picked up via Big Lottery intervention</i>	<i>Gap picked up via Big Lottery intervention</i>	Addressing needs of beneficiaries who face real or perceived barriers to work. At the same time, engaging employers who can offer opportunities to 'work ready' candidates, and supporting the individual to take this up (Big Lottery). (Crossover	<i>Gap picked up via SFA intervention</i>	<i>Gap picked up via SFA intervention</i>

			between BL and DWP).		
Target Beneficiaries	<i>Gap picked up via Big Lottery intervention</i>	<i>Gap picked up via Big Lottery intervention</i>	People with a range of multiple barriers. In a crossover from BL to DWP, beneficiaries move in this category once they have had almost all their barriers removed and become 'work ready'.	<i>Gap picked up via SFA intervention</i>	<i>Gap picked up via SFA intervention</i>
Dependencies and Referrals	<i>Gap picked up via Big Lottery intervention</i>	<i>Gap picked up via Big Lottery intervention</i>	Complementing mainstream DWP provision, referrals from providers, LA targeted services, self-referral, ACL providers, VCS organisations, National Careers Service and JCP Work Coaches. In addition, BL will work with employers to uncover vacancies offered by employers.	Existing programmes include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ESF Skills support • Workforce Learning (ends July 2015) 	Existing programmes include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ESF Skills support • Workforce Learning (ends July 2015)
Outputs	<i>Gap picked up via Big Lottery intervention</i>		Participants = 5000 Unemployed (JSA) = 1500 Unemployed (ESA/IS) = 2750 Inactive = 750 Aged 18-24 = 800 20% with disabilities or health issues 10% lone parents 15% 50 or over 6% from ethnic minorities		
Outcomes	<i>Gap picked up via Big Lottery intervention</i>	<i>Gap picked up via Big Lottery intervention</i>	Results will be numbers into: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Jobs 	Existing programmes include:	<i>Gap picked up via SFA intervention</i>

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Education/Training Positive Activities Gaining Qualifications (Figures to be confirmed)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ESF Skills support Workforce Learning (ends July 2015) 	
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SFA					
SFA colour codes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Independent information, advice and guidance to all ages on career opportunities and pathways Vocational routes to employment Skill support to reduce worklessness amongst the hardest to reach communities Skills support within the workplace Support for NEETs or those at risk of NEET 					
Pathway	Engagement, outreach, referral, targeting	Getting Sorted, Getting started	Becoming more employable and securing a job	Keeping a Job, skills development including redundancy	Progressing in work, in business, higher level skills, skilled workforce, competitive business
Interventions	Independent information, advice and guidance to all ages on career opportunities and pathways. Vocational routes to employment Support for NEETs or those at risk of NEET	A series of interventions to support the customer journey into work programmes with clearly defined career pathways Skills support to reduce worklessness amongst the hardest to reach communities	This project will work with education providers and employers to support the development and implementation of vocational routes into employment Build upon existing strong linkages between employers, sector organisations and educational institutions to	Leadership and management skills training at a range of levels for SMEs Programmes that address the difficulties of the shortage of learning provision and employment opportunities in rural areas	Skills support within the workplace Retain and attract graduate enterprise and ensure that existing employees/residents are given the chance to up-skill and re-skill

		Provision to reduce the number of young people aged 15-25 who are NEET or at risk of becoming NEET	identify future skills needs and ensure suitable provision		
Key Features	<p>The project will focus on efforts to improve employability across the Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire labour market. with a particular focus on the unemployed, NEETs and vulnerable groups.</p> <p>In particular there will be actions to support the coherent delivery of vocational training activities, placements and apprenticeships across the area</p> <p>This project will support key disadvantaged groups and communities to improve social inclusion and employability, with a focus on areas of</p>	<p>The project will meet the local skills needs identified by the LEP and will include key activities such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Careers guidance and labour market information for young people and adults • Transition into work programmes with clearly defined career pathways • Programmes to develop the skills and aspirations of young people adults and vulnerable groups • Initiatives that increase the number of apprenticeships and traineeship opportunities, especially for the 16 to 18 year olds • Functional skills training, including literacy and ICT, 	<p>Skills for employability including work experience placements/ internships</p> <p>Initiatives that develop better links between employers and the education sector so that young people are more employable when they leave education.</p> <p>Building the capacity of SMEs to provide internships and work placements</p> <p>Programmes to support the transition of graduates into employment</p>	<p>New approaches to meet the re-training needs of those facing redundancy or recently made redundant to enable them to re-enter the labour market</p>	<p>This project will facilitate local business growth, support the Advanced Manufacturing Hub, encourage graduate enterprise, place emphasis on individuals progressing to higher levels of learning and provide skills support for those at risk of redundancy</p>

	multiple deprivation	<p>promoting digital competence within the labour market</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support to local communities to deliver local training solutions to engage disadvantaged learners 			
Target Beneficiaries	<p>15-25 years old who are at risk of NEET of who are already NEET. Beneficiaries will also include vulnerable groups e.g. lone parents, ex-military personnel.</p> <p>Beneficiaries will include pre-16 and post-16 young people, plus the companies offering the work experience and apprenticeships</p> <p>Long term unemployed, families with multiple and complex needs, NEETs, school leavers, graduates</p>	Gap picked up via Big Lottery intervention	Gap picked up via Big Lottery intervention	Older workers looking to re-train and remain in the labour market	Local residents in work, looking to further their careers through up-skilling or re-skilling

	and vulnerable groups 15-25 years old who are at risk of NEET or who are already NEET				
Dependencies and Referrals	<i>Gap picked up via Big Lottery intervention</i>	<i>Gap picked up via Big Lottery intervention</i>	<i>Gap picked up via DWP intervention</i>		
Outputs	Support to young people who are at risk of NEET or are who already NEET to help them into sustainable education, employment or training (3,512 - IP 1.1)		<i>Gap picked up via DWP intervention</i>		
Outcomes	The project will ensure that residents are signposted to routes to employment and have support accessing these.	Increase the number of local people following a vocational route into employment according to the needs of the local area which will drive and support productivity and growth.	Target beneficiaries will have improved skills and/or qualifications which will enhance their chances of gaining employment Improve education, employability and personal skills which will enable them to progress successfully into work or further learning and improve chances of gaining employment or starting an apprenticeship	Older workers re-trained and remaining in the labour market	Ensure that Stoke-On-Trent and Staffordshire labour market has the appropriate skills to meet the needs of existing and emerging priority sectors and technologies.

			<p>or traineeship</p> <p>Improve the employability skills across the Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire labour market with a particular focus on the unemployed, NEETs, school leavers, graduates and vulnerable groups</p>		
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5.0 Commissioning Delivery

74. This Plan is designed to be delivered through a series of three opt-in partners who will secure a pathway of support for people and business in the SSLEP area. The following section details the programme to be commissioned with each opt-in partner and what investment, outputs and outcomes they will help SSLEP to achieve.
75. To deliver the European Programme requires match-funding which the SSLEP is using a series of opt-in partners to commission with as they will provide the match funding from their programmes. The benefit of the opt-in is not only does it provide match funding but it will also enable SSLEP to achieve a better fit and strategic alignment of its investment with mainstream public investment. The opt-in partners are also beneficial in that they will provide the procurement advice and service on behalf of the SSLEP and performance manage the providers in a cost effective way, manage the procurement and ensure EU compliance and governance requirements are met.
76. The three opt-in partners are:
- Skills Funding Agency (SFA)
 - Department of Work and Pensions (DWP)
 - Big Lottery-Building Better Opportunities Fund
77. As the SSLEP is a Transition Area, the opt-in partners must match the ESF funds on a 60:40 basis. DWP and SFA match funding will be provided from mainstream programmes that are ESF eligible. The Big Lottery match funding, is “clean” match and therefore will be included in the total funding eligible for procurement exercises.
78. The Big Lottery has decided to divide the ESF 2014 - 2020 programme into two halves and is currently preparing for the first; termed Building Better Opportunities 1 (BBO1). The Fund expects to run the application process more than once throughout the ESF 2014 to 2020 period. BBO1 will run the process for the first time during 2015 and 2016 and will result in grant-awards for the first group of activities in the LEPs’ ESIF strategies.
79. Providing the Big Lottery continues as an Opt In Organisation it will expect to run the process a second time, in around 2018, in order to award grants for the remaining activities in LEP strategies. Decisions regarding this second round (Building Better Opportunities 2) will be made once the programme is underway.

5.1 BIG Lottery Building Better Opportunities

Introduction

80. The Big Lottery is matching European Union (EU) funding to create a fund aimed at delivering against the 'Promoting Social Inclusion and Combating Poverty' part of the 2014-2020 European Social Fund (ESF) programme launched in 2015. The programme seeks to deliver employment outcomes for those furthest from the labour market. The funding will be delivered in the Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (SSLEP) area according to local priorities through a relatively small number of specific, highly targeted, projects.
81. The Big Lottery have been keen to recognise the role that voluntary and community organisations can play in supporting workless individuals furthest from the labour market getting closer to employment/accessing employment, and have invested significant resources in raising awareness of the Building Better Opportunities (BBO) programme as a whole. Similarly the SSLEP has sought views from the sector about its initial investment priorities in respect of the use of BBO funding, and whether these priorities adequately reflect what needs to be done to support those furthest from the labour market in getting a job and/or increasing their chances of getting a job.
82. Over the period 23rd February to 5th March 2014, a number of workshops (attended by over 130 organisations) were held involving a broad cross-section of organisations across Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire from the voluntary and community sector. The workshops sought to consider how best to make use of the opportunities presented by the Building Better Opportunities Programme and, in this context, to provide feedback to the SSLEP in relation to the appropriateness of its initial five priorities for the targeting of BBO funding and the allocation of resources between each.

Aims and Objectives

83. This project aims to provide holistic support for disadvantaged people who are not in work across the SSLEP area. It will provide a coordinated individualised approach to give those with multiple barriers, tailored support to move closer to employment as part of a 'managed client journey'.
84. The project will offer a range of 'entry points' into support, including, for example, existing clients of organisations, referrals from Job Centre Plus, self-referrals from promotional activities, community engagement activities and so on. Irrespective of the point of entry an individual should receive an individual needs assessment leading to the preparation of a personalised support/development plan.
85. The project will focus on those who are furthest from the labour market, helping them onto the pathway to employment. Employment will be one measure, but so too will be the confidence of these people to progress onto other training, education or volunteering opportunities. The project will therefore need to:

- provide the means through which disadvantaged people become work-ready, and are able to access learning, training and job opportunities;
- engage and support disadvantaged people who are socially or geographically isolated to enable them to overcome barriers to employment;
- provide support to assist with the transition to work or learning;
- provide individuals with the necessary skills to secure employment or self-employment; provide digital and financial skills to support employment.

Priorities

86. The BBO project is specifically aligned to Priority Theme 4: Skills, Employment and Social Inclusion of the EUSIF Strategy.
87. The range of activities that will be delivered to support the priorities include:
 - a holistic assessment of an individual's needs and individualised action planning
 - flexible support that enables participants to self-refer to the project
 - the provision of employment and training opportunities suitable for the local economy, such as volunteering, work experience and job search support
 - supporting joint working that is additional to existing provision, such as working with local community groups, social landlords and Job Centre Plus to help participants to address wider barriers, signposting and referring people on to mainstream support as appropriate
 - activities to build motivation, confidence and soft skills such as communication, interpersonal, organisational and analytical skills
 - providing bespoke support on practical issues such as childcare options and travel planning
 - activities providing money management skills and debt counselling
 - support to improve individuals digital skills
 - the provision of ongoing support for those who progress into employment.

Outputs

Output targets		Men	Women
Participants over 50 years of age	425		
Participants from ethnic minorities	191		
Participants	2848	1424	1424
Unemployed, including long-term unemployed	1424		
Inactive	1424		
Participants with disabilities	570		

Funding

Building Better Opportunities 1

ESF - £6,834,245

Big Lottery - £4,556,163

Total - £11,390,408

Results

Results targets		Unemployed	Inactive
Participants in education or training on leaving	13%		
Participants into employment, including self-employment on leaving	13%	50%	50%
Inactive participants into job search on leaving	27%		

Governance

Please refer to Section 6.2

5.2 Department of Work and Pensions

Introduction

88. Within the context of this investment plan the DWP ESF opt-in arrangements are key to providing a flexible pathway of provision that will be branded as a 'Flexible Pathway to Work' (FPW).
89. FPW will have to complement existing DWP and Employability provision and it will have two key strands:
- **Intensive Work Focused Support** - To provide an innovative approach to address the barriers and issues of those individuals who are furthest away from the labour market, including people who are not engaged with Jobcentre Plus.
 - **Work Focused Training** - For unemployed individuals who are unable to access training via mainstream funded provision such as the SFA Adult Skills Budget or SFA ESF programme, or Low value procurement via Jobcentre Plus Flexible Support Fund. This strand should focus on specific work related provision that needs to be flexible and specifically designed to support the individual, whilst meeting the needs of the local labour market and local business requirements.
90. It will be imperative that for effective delivery access to local support and delivery is an integral part of any contact award by DWP, in order to offer the delivery of the widest range of support and training on a flexible customer needs basis.
91. The focus will be on unemployed and economically inactive people who are not fully supported by existing employment programmes. Through flexible and personalised packages of support, it will enhance engagement and work readiness provision, as well as help to ensure sustained employment outcomes for disadvantaged people facing multiple barriers to work.

Aims and Objectives

92. The provision is for a package of tailored support for the unemployed and economically inactive residents of the SSLEP area, who are not fully supported by existing employment programmes, to enable them to gain and retain employment. It should be designed to enhance engagement and improve employability skills and work readiness activity with the aim of sustaining employment outcomes for unemployed residents, particularly those disadvantaged and facing multiple barriers to employment. The successful Provider should deliver individually tailored provision, which provides a full and inclusive range of support in order to move individuals into employment. It is envisaged that a range of approaches will be used to achieve this aim, including person-centred support and modular training.

93. This provision will aim to tackle entrenched worklessness by progressing multi-generational families with multiple problems closer to employment. This will involve working closely with families with multiple problems and supporting the Troubled Families agenda (branded as: Building Resilient Families and Communities in Staffordshire; and Families Matter in Stoke-on-Trent).

Priorities

94. The FPW provision will address the needs of those beneficiaries who face barriers to work, real and perceived, who are subsequently disadvantaged in the labour market. The provision will motivate, inspire and empower beneficiaries to achieve their potential by identifying and providing the attributes and skills to find sustainable work. Activity should deliver individually tailored provision, which provides a full and inclusive range of support in order to move beneficiaries into work or closer to the labour market. Beneficiaries will be eligible to access multiple interventions across both strands of FPW.
95. The range of activities that will be delivered to support the priorities include:
- helping unemployed and economically inactive people with disabilities or health conditions to enter and remain in work;
 - helping lone parents, economically inactive recipients with children and other disadvantaged parents enter and make progress in the workplace, including access to childcare where that is a barrier to work;
 - delivering tailored and personalised packages of support by providing pathways to work such as mentoring and advocacy support, access and practical soft skills training, job-related customised training (including job specific qualifications for employability that cannot be funded via existing mainstream government programmes), labour market orientation and work experience and post-employment support;
 - deploy measures which ensure early identification of the needs of disadvantaged people, including individual action plans and personalised support, work search activities, information, advice and guidance including signposting to organisations with expertise in financial management advice, and access to childcare and care for dependent people (where caring responsibilities are a barrier to labour market participation);
 - activities to extend working lives by re-engaging inactive older workers, including those who have become disabled or develop health conditions;
 - activities to support local recruitment, including brokering work trials and delivering pre-employment training programmes;
 - providing short pre-employment training and the acquisition of certification for participants where the opportunity to start work exists and the absence of the training or certification is the final barrier to that individual securing employment.
 - helping those who have a limited work history and difficulty in attaining sustained employment by identifying and addressing the circumstances that lead to frequent/repeat benefit claims being made;
 - increasing the participation by people from ethnic minorities in employment;
 - developing the skills and employability of offenders to help them enter the labour market;

- activities to tackle specific barriers to work faced by unemployed inactive people in rural areas including community-based activities and outreach.

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Outcomes

96. This provision will support the following priority groups move into employment with day one eligibility criterion being applied:
- Unemployed people – short and long-term with multiple barriers (including those identified within the Troubled Families programmes)
 - Young people aged 18-24 clients who are NEET
 - Unemployed disadvantaged people (e.g. homeless people, people with drug or alcohol dependency, persistent returners to JSA)
 - Unemployed and inactive people with disabilities or health conditions (particularly existing claimants of incapacity benefit and ESA)
 - Unemployed people 50 plus
 - Ethnic minorities and those with basic language needs
 - Ex-offenders
 - Lone Parents including those on Income Support (IS)
 - Other people with children, including teenage parents (18-20 year olds).

Funding

	Funding £	Estimated Number of participants
Total funding estimate for length of the contract	Transition Area 60:40 £8,210,909 DWP Match Fund £12,316,364 ESF N.B. ESF includes £1,819,664 made available from GBSLEP Transition Area.	Total = 5865* *N.B. Estimated participants over the full life of the ESF programme/contract
Year 1 - 2016	£2.520m (tbc)	1200
Year 2 - 2017	£2.940m (tbc)	1400
Year 3 - 2018	£2.520m (tbc)	1200

97. A single payment model for the 2014-20 ESF DWP Opt-in service is being proposed by DWP. DWP will therefore be adopting a standard Payment by Result Model for ESF 2014-20. This will consist of Monthly Delivery Fee, Job Outcome Payment and Sustained Job Outcome Payment.

Outputs

98. Outputs will be focused on Participants into employment, including self-employment on leaving FPW.

Outputs/Results volumes will be confirmed with DWP at the specification writing stage along with the funding methodology.

Governance

Please refer to Section 6.2

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5.3 Skills Funding Agency

Introduction

99. This programme has been designed with local SFA partners and takes into account programmes available to support SFA learners available at this time to ensure complementarity and additionality.

Aims and Objectives

100. The devised programme will address both employer skills and enterprise needs and equip people with the skills to progress into and through work by improving their skills and abilities.
101. The SFA programme features both demand side employer led programmes centred on the Growth Hub to ensure business has the access to the skills and training it needs to grow productivity and the economy, and a set of programmes aimed at engaging and equipping individuals through education and training to achieve their potential and help provide a productive and prosperous community.

Priorities

102. The SFA over-arching programme is split into various programmes and sub-programmes across two EU Priorities as follows:

Priority 1.1 Access to Employment for Jobseekers and Inactive People

Priority 1.2 Support for NEETs or those at Risk of NEET

Priority 1.4 Skills support to reduce worklessness

Priority 2.1 Skills for Growth

Further details on the various programmes are outlined below. Indicative outputs and outcomes (SFA have “results”) are given per Priority. Further split of outputs and outcomes within Priority 1.1 and Priority 2.1 will take place at the Procurement Initiation Stage (PID) before specifications are drawn up and calls to tender issued.

Governance

Please refer to Section 6.2

Outcomes (results)

Priority 1.1

Indicative results are as follows:

Unemployed participants into employment (including self-employment)	22%	773
Inactive participants into employment, or job search on leaving	33%	1,159
Participants gaining basic skills	4%	140
% those with childcare needs who get childcare support	36%	1,264

Priority 1.2

Indicative results are as follows:

Number of participants previously unemployed or inactive now in education or training or gaining a qualification or in employment = 2,397

Number of participants gaining basic skills = 228

Priority 1.4

Indicative results are as follows:

Unemployed participants into employment (including self-employment)	14%	189
Participants into education or training	17%	229
Inactive into employment or job search	27%	364
Childcare support received	36%	486

Priority 2.1

Indicative results are as follows:

Participants gaining basic skills	11%	515
Participants gaining a level 2 or below qualification or a unit towards one (excluding basic skills)	25%	1,171
Participants gaining a level 3 or above qualification or a unit towards one	8%	375
Employed females gaining improved labour market status	35%	1,639

Funding

Priority 1.1: ESF funding is £4,020,000, plus match

Priority 1.2: ESF funding is £6,500,000, plus match

Priority 1.4: ESF funding is £1,500,000, plus match

Priority 2.1: ESF funding is £11,000,000, plus match

Please note: Each programme will also have its own set of deliverables and associated payment, that will be included in the specification issued at the invitation to tender stage.

Outputs

Priority 1.1

Indicative outputs are as follows

3,512 participants

Total participants who are unemployed (including long term unemployed)	70%	2,459
Total participants who are inactive	25%	878
Participants who are over 50	20%	702
Participants from ethnic minorities	9%	316
Female participants	46%	1,616
Participants without basic skills	21%	738
Participants with a disability or health problems	25%	878
Participants who are lone parents	14%	492

Priority 1.2

Indicative outputs are as follows:

5,708 participants

Total participants who are unemployed (including long term unemployed)	70%	3,995
Total participants who are inactive	25%	1,427
Participants from ethnic minorities	10%	571
Female participants	46%	2,625
Participants with a disability or health problems	10%	571
Participants who are lone parents	6%	342
Participants without basic skills	18%	1,027

Priority 1.4

Indicative outputs are as follows:

1,349 participants

Total participants who are unemployed (including long term unemployed)	47%	634
Total participants who are inactive	48%	648
Participants who are over 50	14%	189
Participants from ethnic minorities	12%	162
Participants with a disability or health problems	22%	297
Female participants	36%	486
Participants who are offenders or ex-offenders	29%	391

Priority 2.1

Indicative outputs are as follows:

4,683 participants

Participants who are over 50	20%	937
Participants from ethnic minorities	7%	328
Participants with disability or health problems	8%	375
Participants who are lone parents	5%	234
Participants without basic skills	18%	843
Female participants	49%	2,295

5.4 Wider ESF Investment (£5m)

Introduction

100. This part of the plan sets-out what we will commission outside of our opt-in partners to deliver our priorities, outputs and outcomes for skills, employability and social inclusion. This programme has been designed to ensure there is sufficient coverage across the programme and is complimentary and provides additionality to support skills, employability and social inclusion secured through the opt-in partners.
102. The programme we have devised will address both employer skills and enterprise needs and equip people with the skills to progress into and through work by improving their skills and abilities and support business growth through the Growth Hub.

Aims and Objectives

103. The wider ESF investment will:
- Ensure skills provision is more responsive to the needs of the local economy and that more individuals progress into or within skills provision.
 - Seek to address skills shortages or needs in particular sectors or local areas which are not currently being addressed by employers or individuals.
 - Support links between higher education and businesses, both to meet local business higher level skills needs and to improve the employability of students.
 - Contribute to developing science and technology skills, potentially through creating a centre of excellence in one of the SSLEP key sectors (linked to smart specialisation and the eight great technologies).
 - Seek to address the under-representation of some groups in completing tertiary or equivalent education by supporting local initiatives to widen participation and support retention in higher education for these groups (not through funding the course itself but for example through providing short tasters or providing access support).
104. These aims and objectives will be achieved by:
- Support for collaborative projects, placements, internships, joint PhDs or other activities with SMEs that enable students (at both undergraduate and

postgraduate level) and graduates to gain industry relevant experience and skills.

- Building capacity in SMEs to provide project/placement/internship opportunities and enhance the contribution of advanced skills to SME growth.
- Supporting activity to develop self-employment or entrepreneurial skills to start and grow a business or social enterprise.
- Support intermediate and advanced vocational provision for career [progression (but not tuition fees and not where mainstream provision is available)]
- Supporting activities to start and grow a business, including promoting entrepreneurship, social enterprise and self-employment
- Providing leadership, management and innovation training/advice within existing businesses and entrepreneurs and developing internal capabilities and growth potential.
- Funding specific activity (development or delivery) targeted at increasing the employability of particular groups (including graduates) who are under-represented in the workforce or who face particular barriers to gaining employment (for example, those with a disability).
- For disadvantaged groups funding for development and delivery of outreach and access activities to remove barriers to participation in HE and enhance student retention e.g. taster or access courses, bursary support for course related costs (additional to government grants, loan schemes and learning support packages), additional learning support.
- Supporting employability and the transition into employment including funding the costs of specific modules (additional to the core credit-bearing element of higher education programmes) designed to better prepare under-graduates and graduates for employment or self-employment or to increase the effectiveness of those recently securing employment in SMEs.
- Supporting different routes to degree level skills through the promotion and development of employer-led higher apprenticeships

Priorities

105. The investment priorities of direct relevance to ESF non-opt in investment are as follows:

Priority 2.1 Enhancing equal access to lifelong learning.

Priority 2.2 Improving the labour market relevance of education and training systems

Outcomes (Results)

Priority 2.1

Indicative results are as follows:

Participants gaining a qualification, or unit or successfully completing a course, or progressing into or within education or training = 993

Priority 2.2

Indicative results are as follows:

Successfully completed projects (which increase employer engagement; and/or the number of people progressing into or within skills provision) = 7

Funding

Priority 2.1: ESF Funding £1,500,000 plus match

Priority 2.2: ESF Funding £3,500,000 plus match

Outputs

Priority 2.1

Participants who are women or over 54 or ethnic minorities or disabled - 103

Priority 2.2

Number of supported micro, small and medium sized enterprises (including co-operative enterprises, enterprises of the social economy) - 145

6.0 Delivering the Plan

6.1 Commissioning Arrangements

The three opt-in partners have their own processes and procedures for the commissioning of provision.

Big Lottery

106. The BBO Programme will be awarded via a two stage application process. The call for bids will be made by the Big Lottery on their website, and promoted via local, regional and national media. Applicants will be invited to submit bids in response to area-based specifications – “lots”. The SSLEP programme will be split into three geographic areas:

- Stoke-on-Trent, Newcastle-under-Lyme and Staffordshire Moorlands;
- Stafford and South Staffs
- Cannock, Tamworth, Lichfield and Burton-upon-Trent

107. Applicants will be able to bid for as many lots as they wish. The programmes will have a three-year duration.

108. Following appraisal, the Big Lottery will invite shortlisted applicants to submit a full bid. Following evaluation of the full application, Big Lottery will contract delivery with the successful applicant.

109. The Big Lottery will monitor and review the contract in accordance with ESF regulations. It will report on programme progress to the ESIF Task and Finish Group, who will in turn report to the ESIF committee, the Education Trust and the LEP Executive.

DWP

110. The DWP programmes will be awarded via their usual tendering process, which is a single stage procedure. The programme specifications will be published online, and all interested organisation will be invited to submit their tenders online, in response to a rea-based specifications – “lots”. Applicants will be able to bid for as many lots as they wish.

The programmes will have a three-year duration.

111. All tenders will be appraised by DWP, following their usual evaluation process, and DWP will contract delivery with the successful applicant.
112. DWP will monitor and review the contract in accordance with ESF regulations. It will report on programme progress to the ESIF Task and Finish Group, who will in turn report to the ESIF committee, the Education Trust and the LEP Executive.

SFA

113. The SFA will produce programme specifications following submission of a Project Initiation Document (PID) for the programme by the SSLEP's ESIF Task and Finish Group. The specifications and programme deliverables will be agreed between the SFA and SSLEP on an individual programme basis.
114. The SFA programmes will be commissioned via the SFA's usual tendering process. All programme specifications will be published online, on "Bravo", the SFA's e-tendering portal.
115. All interested organisations will be invited to submit their tenders online, in response to area-based specifications – "lots". Applicants will be able to bid for as many lots as they wish.

The programmes will have a three-year duration.

The SFA will issue the invitation to tenders in the following order:

Priority 1

- NEEETs
- Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG)
- Apprenticeship/Traineeship Hubs (Vocational Routes to Employment)
- Skills Support for Unemployment

Priority 2

- Skills Support for Employees (Skills for Growth)
- Skills Support for Employers (Skills for Growth)

116. There is currently no timetable for the above, but the SFA intend to issue tenders three times a year.
117. All tenders will be appraised by SFA, following their usual evaluation process, and SFA will contract delivery with the successful applicant.

118. SFA will monitor and review the contract in accordance with ESF regulations. It will report on programme progress to the ESIF task and finish group, who will in turn report to the ESIF committee, the Education Trust and the LEP Executive.
119. Please note that for all three opt-in partners, all applications may be made by a single applicant or by a consortium of delivery organisations, which will require a lead partner (accountable body).
120. All partners must be included at the point of tender/bid submission, with full details of their role in the delivery, and their relevant experience in similar programmes. Partners cannot be added later.

119. Please note that for all three opt-in partners, all applications may be made by a single applicant or by a consortium of delivery organisations, which will require a lead partner (accountable body).

120. All partners must be included at the point of tender/bid submission, with full details of their role in the delivery, and their relevant experience in similar programmes. Partners cannot be added later.

6.2 Governance Arrangements

121. The diagram below summarises the reporting structure associated with the ESIF governance arrangements. The wider ESF investment will fall into the remit of the ESF Task and Finish Group (T&FG). As a sub group to the LEP ESIF Operational Working Group (OWG) it will be responsible to and report directly to the OWG. The T&FG will also report regularly to the Education Trust on progress and performance issues.

ESIF Governance Structure:



122. Moreover, in accordance with the ESIF Committee terms of reference, the OWG will establish joint working and operational protocols with Greater Birmingham and Solihull LEP (GBSEP) to manage proposals for ESIF of mutual interest to the

Stoke-on-Trent & Staffordshire and the GBSLEP ESIF allocation which has to be allocated to activities in the Staffordshire Transition Area. The role of the Joint Commissioning Group can also be extended to collaborative activities with other neighbouring LEPs.

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Part Two – Opt In Commissioning Prospectus

Introduction

1. This part of the plan sets-out what will be commissioned with the opt-in partners to deliver SSLEP priorities, outputs and outcomes for skills, employability and social inclusion through the ESIF.
2. Our investment over the six years is up to £55 million plus additional match funding activity. Below we set out what we will commission and the interventions we will secure through our opt-in partners to improve skills, employability and social inclusion in the area.

7.0 BIG Lottery Building Better Opportunities

Introduction to the Building Better Opportunities Programme

3. This part of the plan sets out what will be commissioned with the Big Lottery opt-in partner to deliver SSLEP priorities, outputs and outcomes for skills, employability and social inclusion. This programme has been designed with the local Big Lottery partners and through the Partnership Development Framework Organisation Project that has worked with the VCSE forum.
4. The devised programme will address unemployment, inactivity and worklessness across a range of needs and will be delivered through a single coherent pathway through a **Managed Client Journey** that provides intermediate and supported employment, ultimately helping people back into work.

Purpose of the Programme

5. Previous experience has shown that for those furthest from the labour market, services are remote, inappropriate, short term, poorly coordinated, unresponsive and not led by outcomes that are appropriate for individuals. As such, there is a need for a managed client journey model which continuously supports individuals through engagement, assessment of needs, provision of tailored support, securing employment and sustaining employment.
6. Services and support to employers which remove some of the risk of employing those furthest from the labour market are either very limited or non-existent. There is a need for a package of services which:
 - Changes employer perceptions about those furthest from labour market (particularly those with learning difficulties or mental health problems) based on their achieving work readiness.
 - Incentivises and/or removes risk from providing employment opportunities for those furthest from the labour market.
 - Provides post-employment support over a sustained period for both employee and employer to ensure an effective transition into work.

7. Services that sought to change the perceptions of individuals, families and, sometimes, entire communities about the value of work and its role in contributing to improving opportunities and reducing poverty have been found to be virtually non-existent. Combined with a lack of opportunity for people to experience work in a “supported” environment as part of a process of becoming work ready, effectively creates a barrier for those who do not perceive work as being for them.
8. There is a need to create ‘**stepping stone**’ employment services and opportunities, including, for example, expanding support for volunteering, peer mentoring and social enterprise, so that those furthest from the labour market are able to gain a positive experience of work, to receive some financial, social and health benefits from it and to progress into full employment when ready.

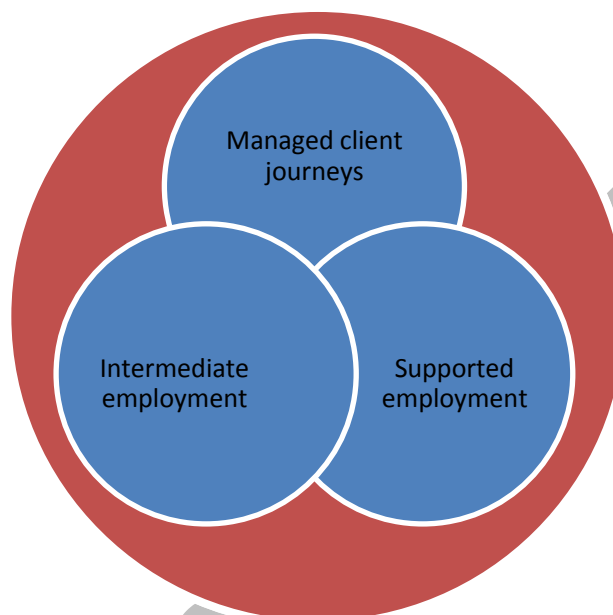
Barriers to be addressed

9. Barriers to employment are considered to include:
 - Lack of vocational/basic skills, lack of qualifications;
 - Financial problems - debt, insecurity, benefit delays;
 - Lack of self-confidence/personal development skills;
 - Ill-health and disability;
 - Employer uncertainty in recruitment;
 - Lack of local, affordable childcare;
 - Discrimination – including ex-offenders, people with disabilities, race, gender, postcode;
 - Transport - access and availability;
 - Pay, work conditions, working hours; and
 - Lack of advice and support - particularly for people with multiple advice and support needs
10. Key solutions fall within three broad categories:
 - **Holistic approaches** – complex and multiple needs cannot be dealt with in isolation or in “silo’d” services. This is particularly true where conditionality is placed on access to services; for example services which require people to be drug or alcohol free before being accepted for treatment or services with strict assessment criteria which only consider one aspect of someone’s needs.
 - **Overcome stigma and oppressive attitudes** – blaming people for the circumstances in which they find themselves adds to the stress and anxiety that individuals experience which in turn adds to complexity. Given that the genesis of many of the problems lie in adverse childhood experiences, individuals should not be held to blame for any misfortune they might now experience in relation to being workless.
 - **Effective and efficient services** – services which continue to fail this group of people cannot be afforded; appropriate services are best designed by listening to those with lived experience.

Key Features of the BBO Intervention Model

11. The programme of investment will cover three interlinked areas of intervention, which are described below:

Relationship between Project Components



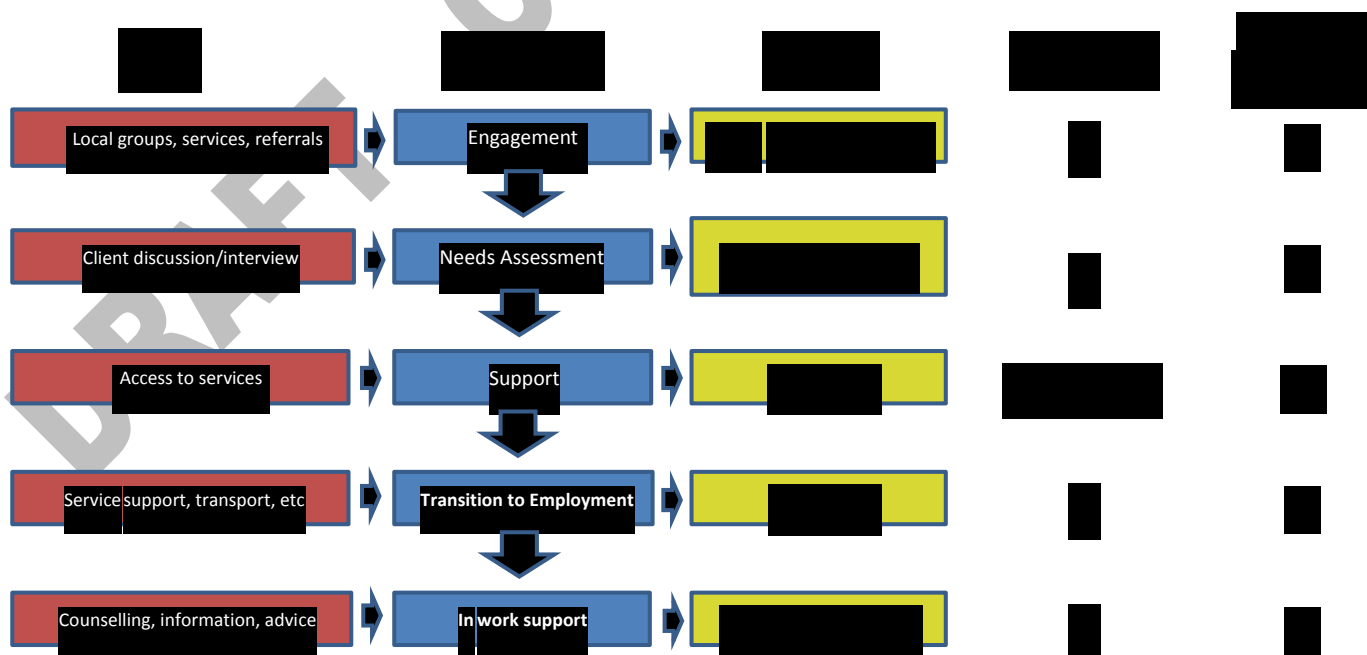
- **Managed client journeys to employment** – involving engagement, assessment of needs, packaging support around individual needs, providing a supported transition into work, including self-employment, and then providing ‘in work’ support leading to sustainable employment.
- **Intermediate employment** – providing pre-employment work opportunities through support for volunteering, the development of social enterprise and work trials.
- **Supported employment** – providing work ready individuals into employment based on employer needs, one-to-one support for those transitioning into employment, support for employers in managing those transitioning into employment.

Programme Delivery

12. The programme will offer a range of ‘entry points’ into support, including, for example, existing clients of organisations, referrals from Job Centre Plus, self-referrals from promotional activities, community engagement activities and so on. Irrespective of the point of entry an individual should receive an individual needs assessment leading to the preparation of a personalised support/development plan. The client should actively participate in this process. A number of organisations working to a common model could provide this.

13. The client will be 'appointed' a support worker to provide information, advice, guidance and practical support in helping the beneficiary work through her/his support/development plan. Support workers could be provided by a number of different organisations in accordance with client needs/preferences.
14. The programme will be delivered by consortia that comprise organisations capable of helping individuals access the support they need, including, for example, development of independent living skills, achieving basic skills qualifications, building self-confidence, accessing financial services, accessing business start-up advice, recovering from substance misuse, housing advice and so on.
15. Funding will follow the client so that organisations get paid for the services they provide. This needs to be achieved within a funding framework that encourages organisations to refer clients to the organisation best placed to meet their needs, and therefore avoiding a perverse incentive to "hang on" to clients whose needs could be better met elsewhere. This requires a very carefully designed and managed client journey model where needs are regularly reviewed, in which the client is involved, and consortia members have clearly agreed between themselves the outcomes they aim to achieve to ensure maximum beneficiary benefits.
16. The diagram below illustrates the relationship between the managed client journey, the three project types, the SSLEP priorities and the allocation of funding. While the actual amounts of funding shown are for illustrative purposes only, the illustration is intended to reflect a shift in the use of resources to favour pre-employment support in contrast to supporting the development of skills and qualifications.

Managed Client Journey Model



17. We believe a consortia approach is the best approach to delivering this programme that properly links the expertise and capabilities with the needs of individuals so that bespoke packages of support are accessible through seamless services. Such an approach, where it properly recognises and responds to the needs of employers, as part of the 'service mix', is felt to offer the best chance of enabling those furthest from the labour market to move closer to a job and/or to get a job.

7.1 Key Activities of the BBO Programme

18. The Programme will offer these activities as part of each of the three intervention types, which are detailed below:
- Managed client journey to employment
 - Intermediate employment opportunities
 - Supported employment

Managed client journey to employment

- **Engagement** – local community group (e.g. youth clubs, church groups, community centres, etc), registered social landlords, specialist services (e.g. learning disabilities groups, young people's music group, sports groups);
- **Assessment** – nominated providers and specialists depending on client needs providing information, advice and guidance;
- **Support** – range of National and Local groups with specialist knowledge of the local community,
- **Transition to employment** – nominated providers working to a partnership model; employers, employer organisations; and
- **In work Support** – nominated providers working to a partnership model; employers, employer organisations.

Intermediate employment opportunities

- **Jobs and Work Placements** – social enterprises providing jobs and work placements
- **Employment Agency** – creating a social enterprise employment agency
- **Volunteering** – community groups providing volunteering opportunities
- **Capacity Building** – VAST and Support Staffordshire providing capacity building for voluntary and community groups and delivery of supported volunteering
- **Business Support** – BES providing business support for social enterprises

Supported employment

- Employers providing work placement/work trial and contributing intelligence to training/personal development requirements
- Employer organisations

- Training organisations providing in work training/apprenticeships

Target Groups

19. The target group are described as those who are furthest from the labour market. A commonly used concept to identify this group is that of 'multiple disadvantage'. This is derived from research showing that combinations of disadvantage can significantly increase the risk of worklessness. The combinations of disadvantage that most commonly lead to higher levels of labour market exclusion amongst those experiencing multiple disadvantages are:
- The over 50s;
 - Those without partners, including individuals with no children and lone parents;
 - Those with low skills or qualifications;
 - People with a long-term health condition or disability;
 - Ethnic minority groups;
 - Those who live in 'low employment demand' areas as measured by the Index of Deprivation;
 - Young people, particularly those not in education, training or employment;
 - People who experience more than one of; homelessness, substance misuse, histories of offending and mental ill-health.

Beneficiaries

20. Beneficiaries are individuals who are considered to be workless, i.e. unemployed and actively seeking work or those who are economically inactive, who are not in, or seeking, work.
21. It is important to recognise that as we are working with people, everyone is different and that individuals will have additional barriers to overcome and therefore other indicators of progression can demonstrate a result of the intervention of the programme. In essence, it is important to recognise the uniqueness of the individual and the great variety within 'target groups' within the overall description of those furthest from the labour market.
22. The results we would expect to see delivered as part of the programme for specific target groups, include for example:

Disaffected young people

- Improved behaviour
- Improved attendance at school or at project sessions
- Improved engagement with learning or project activity

Women returners

- Recognition of prior skills and experience

Drug/alcohol (ex)abusers

- Better health
- Lower levels of drug or alcohol use
- Improved personal appearance/presentability

Ex-offenders

- Lower rates of reconviction
- Lower rates of reoffending
- A slowing of reoffending

Homeless people

- Permanent accommodation

People with learning disabilities or mental illness

- A greater level of self-awareness
- Reduced anxiety and depression

Outputs

Output targets		Men	Women
Participants over 50 years of age	425		
Participants from ethnic minorities	191		
Participants	2848	1424	1424
Unemployed, including long-term unemployed	1424		
Inactive	1424		
Participants with disabilities	570		

Funding

Building Better Opportunities 1

ESF - £6,834,245

Big Lottery - £4,556,163

Total - £11,390,408

Results

Results targets		Unemployment	Inactive
Participants in education or training on leaving	13%		
Participants into employment, including self-employment on leaving	13%	50%	50%
Inactive participants into job search on leaving	27%		

8.0 DWP Opt In Programme

8.1 Introduction to DWP Programme

24. This part of the plan sets out what will be commissioned with the DWP opt-in partner to deliver SSLEP priorities, outputs and outcomes for skills, employability and social inclusion. This programme has been designed with local DWP partners and takes into account programmes available to support DWP clients available at this time to ensure complementarity and additionality.
25. The devised programme will address unemployment and worklessness across a range of needs and will be delivered through a single coherent pathway - **Flexible Pathways to Work** - that is flexed around two strands based on client beneficiary needs.

8.2 DWP Flexible Pathways to Work

Introduction

26. The provision is for a package of tailored support for the unemployed and economically inactive residents of the SSLEP area, who are not fully supported by existing employment programmes, to enable them to gain and retain employment. It is designed to enhance engagement and improve employability skills and work readiness activity, with the aim of sustaining employment outcomes for unemployed residents, particularly those disadvantaged and facing multiple barriers to employment. The programme will deliver individually tailored provision, which provides a full and inclusive range of support in order to move individuals into employment. It is envisaged that a range of approaches will be used to achieve this aim, including person-centred support and modular training.
27. The SSLEP Economic Plan produced in January 2014 refers to over 70,000 residents claiming an out-of-work benefit, this figure will have reduced over the last year as the number of Job Seeker Allowance (JSA) claimants has reduced. However, ensuring that these people have the appropriate support required to access employment opportunities will be important in developing a more dynamic local workforce. The unadjusted claimant count in October 2014 showed 9,565 in the SSLEP area, whilst this is a reducing figure (17% reduction from August 2014), 29% of these claimants were aged 18-24; 28% were long-term (52 weeks plus) unemployed; and 19% were over 50 years of age. These claimant cohorts will be a priority along with those on the Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) register.

Aim of the Flexible Pathways to Work programme

28. The aim of this programme is to provide a range of provision that will ensure people have the relevant support to access jobs and also to make sure they are best placed and aware of a range of suitable employment opportunities. The provision will address the needs of those customers who face barriers to work, real and perceived, who are subsequently disadvantaged in the labour market. The provision must motivate, inspire and empower customers to achieve their potential by identifying and providing the attributes and skills to find sustainable work.

29. The programme of investment we will make will cover two interlinked areas of activity and focus on unemployment and worklessness. In the SSLEP area it will be important to target worklessness initiatives in areas where aspirations of individuals have been affected by intergenerational worklessness in a family.
30. Activity should deliver individually tailored provision, which provides a full and inclusive range of support in order to move customers into work or closer to the labour market. It is envisaged that a variety of approaches will be used to achieve this aim, including person-centred support and modular training.
31. FPW will have to complement existing DWP and Employability provision and it will have two key strands:
- **Strand 1: Intensive Work Focused Support**
 - **Strand 2: Work Focused Training**
32. It will be imperative that the successful Provider(s) will work with local specialist providers in order to offer the delivery of the widest range of support and training on a flexible customer needs basis.
33. The focus will be on economically inactive people who are not fully supported by existing employment programmes. Through flexible and personalised packages of support, it will enhance engagement and work readiness provision, as well as help to ensure sustained employment outcomes for disadvantaged people facing multiple barriers to work.

Key Activities within the Flexible Pathway to Work

34. The range of activities that will be delivered to support the priorities in the FPW include:
- helping unemployed and economically inactive people with disabilities or health conditions to enter and remain in work;
 - helping lone parents, economically inactive recipients with children and other disadvantaged parents enter and make progress in the workplace, including access to childcare;
 - tailored and personalised packages of support by providing pathways to work such as mentoring and advocacy support, access and practical soft skills training, job-related customised training (including qualifications for employability), labour market orientation and work experience and post-employment support;
 - active and preventative measures which ensure early identification of the needs of disadvantaged people, including individual action plans and personalised support, work search activities, information, advice and guidance including financial management advice, and access to childcare and care for dependent people where caring responsibilities are a barrier to labour market participation;
 - activities to extend working lives by re-engaging inactive older workers, including those who have become disabled or develop health conditions;
 - activities to support local recruitment, including brokering work trials and delivering pre-employment training programmes;

- helping disadvantaged people who persistently return to Jobseekers' Allowance, and addressing barriers to their retention in sustainable employment;
- increasing the participation by people from ethnic minorities in employment;
- developing the skills and employability of offenders to help them enter the labour market;
- activities to tackle specific barriers to work faced by unemployed inactive people in rural areas including community-based activities and outreach.

8.4 Features of Provision

Common Features across the FPW

35. Key features across both strands of the FPW will include the provision of caseworkers, initial assessment, individualised action planning, childcare, travel and other support, and post-employment support with continued access to the caseworker. The programme will run for a period of up to 52 weeks and will be flexible in delivery and ensure it is not detrimental to the participant's benefits. These features are covered in more detail as follows:

Caseworkers

36. The provision of 'Caseworkers' who have the ability to use their mentoring/advocacy skills to gain the trust of unemployed people and are able to give professional advice tailored to meet their individual needs and personal circumstances. Caseworkers must have knowledge of employment issues, the local labour market and training provision, and other relevant agencies. A caseload for each key worker must be pro-actively managed and regular contacts made with participants.

Initial Assessment

37. The provision must offer a full diagnostic assessment for each individual to identify the barriers and issues that are preventing the individual from gaining employment. The assessment should be robust enough to determine which of the three pathways or elements of pathways are most relevant.

Individualised Action Plans

38. Following the initial assessment all participants who are engaged onto the initiative should be supported to complete an individually tailored Action Plan. The Action Plan must set out a series of goals agreed with the individual to take steps to overcome their problems and make the necessary step-change to their lives. It should be signed and agreed by the participant and should include steps to assist them to move closer to the labour market or into work.
39. A holistic approach to the individual's needs should be taken into account and may include support for the partner or the whole participant's family. Where appropriate functional literacy and numeracy skills should be embedded within the Plan. The action plan will need to be reviewed on a regular basis, at least fortnightly, by the caseworker to ensure progress is being achieved.

Additional Requirements

40. The Provider(s) will need to ensure travel, childcare and any other additional costs are covered as part of the provision.
41. The programme will be delivered for at least 3 days a week (9 hours) in each delivery location and the Provider(s) must ensure that there is no detrimental impact on the individual's benefit position.
42. Duration: Maximum of 52 weeks
43. Delivery may also vary according to location and the FPW provision will only be delivered where it is complementary and it must not duplicate existing provision in any locality.
44. Post-employment support for up to 6 months after starting employment must be provided with access to the caseworker for any further employment help or support that is required. No limit would be set on the number of interventions required.

Networking and Referral Links

45. The successful Provider(s) must build partnerships with existing local provision and organisations who are active in either the employment or training arena or in related support to unemployed individuals and households (e.g. in the area of neighbourhood management, housing, health, debt management etc). These partnerships will span the public, private, voluntary and community sectors. The Provider must build links with local employers to broker work tasters, work placements, employment opportunities for the participants and work with the Growth Hub.

Geography

46. The Programme will cover the SSLEP area. The boundaries of which are congruent with the boundaries of Stoke-on-Trent City Council and Staffordshire County Council and the geography of the area is diverse. To the north lies the City of Stoke-on-Trent home to some 249,000 people within a larger conurbation including the county districts of Newcastle-under-Lyme and Staffordshire Moorlands. The county includes a number of urban areas including Stafford, Cannock, Rugeley, Lichfield, Tamworth, Burton, Uttoxeter and Leek. At nearly 80% of the physical area, rural areas play a significant part in the SSLEP area's economy with a strong agricultural sector, market towns and an attractive environment where lifestyle businesses choose to locate and where the visitor economy continues to thrive.

Transportation

47. Fast, reliable, frequent and connected transport networks are fundamentally important to the economic growth and competitiveness of the SSLEP area. Strategic linkages shape the economic opportunities facing its business and local linkages influence labour, residential and leisure flows particularly in its urban areas.

48. There are a number of connectivity challenges which constrain growth ambitions:
- Constraints on movement: efficient transport systems are critical in supporting the activities of the business base, promoting the area to investors, linking labour markets to employment centres, and delivering high quality places. Several of the urban areas experience significant congestion during peak travel times and the built-up nature of North Staffordshire makes sustainable and attractive transport alternatives difficult options. If unchecked, these constraints will get worse as the economy grows, inhibiting the flows of labour, commerce and leisure which underpin inclusive and sustainable economic growth.
 - Constraints on development and growth potential: connectivity is a constraining factor at many of the strategic investment opportunities. Addressing these limitations will help to support existing employment areas, open up priority employment and housing sites, and improve the quality of the urban centres.
 - Strong connectivity and transport networks are critical to the skills and employment interventions. To deliver socially inclusive and sustainable economic growth, residents across the area must be able to readily access learning and training opportunities. Learning facilities in the town centres contribute to their vitality and vibrancy and represent an opportunity to maximise the benefits of investment.
49. SSLEP has a number of transportation and geographical problems in relation to ensuring people access employment. Some of these, such as the availability of good transportation for shift workers are common to both rural and urban areas. Others, such as the phenomena of rural deprivation leading to client isolation are specific to rural areas. These are recognised and specifically catered for in the development of a “home to work” transportation initiatives referenced in part 4 under Access to Employment.

8.5 Intensive Work Focused Support: Features of Provision

50. This strand will provide an innovative approach to address the barriers and issues of those individuals who are furthest away from the labour market including people who are not engaged with Jobcentre Plus.
51. A comprehensive package of support to include:
- Identifying and addressing particular barriers to work;
 - Understanding and influencing motivation and attitudes;
 - Identifying transferable skills;
 - Considering and exploring employment options;
 - Work skills specific to, and in partnership with, local employers
 - Job search skills, including electronic channels;
 - Promoting and providing work experience (tasters/trials)
 - Promoting and providing relevant training opportunities;
 - Discussing opportunities for self-employment and referral to enterprise start-up programmes;
 - Motivation and confidence building;

- Money management and debt counselling
- Travel Planning
- Support in finding suitable accommodation
- Where appropriate, accompanying the customer when accessing other services;
- Contributing to their personal development including reducing any sense of isolation and stress, assisting them in becoming more independent;
- Structured volunteering linked to progression and sustained employment;
- Ongoing 'aftercare' to customers who secure work to assist them to remain in employment and plan for progression.

52. These options are not exhaustive, and will vary across locations according to customer needs. The sessions delivered by the Provider will need to evolve throughout the duration of the contract, to meet the changing needs of the target groups, the local economy and labour market.
53. In addition this strand will include support for individuals that require pre-entry level work focused ESOL. This provision will support individuals with ESOL needs below Entry Level 1. The activity will focus on unemployed and economically inactive individuals who are prevented from accessing mainstream SFA provision due to age, or not receiving a qualifying benefit or because a fully funded place is not available in their location. This provision should be an intensive short-term focused intervention in order to promote a seamless progression to higher levels of learning and/or work.
54. Provision should be tailored to the learning and training needs of the individual, and should incorporate a work experience placement or volunteering opportunity to assist with language development. There needs to be full diagnostic assessment in line with national standards. Tutors delivering this provision must have both a recognised subject specific qualification and recognised teaching qualification at least at level 4.

8.6 Work Focused Training: Features of Provision

55. This strand will provide support to unemployed individuals who are unable to access training via the SFA Adult Skills Budget or ESF, or Low value procurement via Jobcentre Plus Flexible Support Fund. This strand should focus on specific work related provision that needs to be flexible and specifically designed to support the individual, whilst meeting the needs of the local labour market and local business requirements in particular growth areas within the SSLEP area.
56. Providers will be expected to offer qualifications and/or certification in relation to either identified priority growth sectors or sectors with skill shortages, for example: Fork Lift Truck, CSCS card, CPCS card and associated training, Food Safety, SIA licences etc.
57. There will also be a requirement to provide pre-employment vocational training, for example short bespoke courses relating to a particular employer recruitment, ICT or general training that supplies a skills shortage area. These short bespoke programmes will target and support those unemployed individuals who are ready for work and receiving benefits to secure employment. This strand is designed to help

meet immediate and future recruitment needs as well as to recruit a workforce with the right skills to sustain and grow local businesses. A key benefit of this strand is the ability to offer a flexible approach that can be adapted to meet the needs of the individual as well as the business. This tailored package of support must be agreed with local Jobcentre Plus and the candidates must receive an intensive initial assessment with appropriate advice and guidance which determines the training and support undertaken.

58. This strand should offer provision that will cover a wide range of occupational areas and typically include a work placement to consolidate any training. The Provider(s) will be responsible for providing any equipment or protective clothing that is required for the training and placement.

8.7 Referrals and Recruitment Mechanisms

59. The express aim of this package is to complement mainstream DWP provision and it is expected that the following will be the main mechanisms of referral:

Primary Referrals:

- Provider referral – where successful applicants actively engage communities where they know long-term unemployment is an issue;
- Local Authority targeted services such as those supporting Troubled Families;
- Self referral, when beneficiaries see the programme advertised either in Job Centres or work/job clubs/community venues and self-refer to provision;
- Adult Education and Community Learning Providers;
- Voluntary and Community Sector Organisations;
- National Careers Service.

Secondary Referrals:

- DWP JCP Work Coaches referring eligible beneficiaries with a focus on those coming off long-term core provision to additional support;
- DWP JCP Work Coaches referring eligible beneficiaries with identified additional needs (e.g. pre-entry ESOL; learning disabilities and/or difficulties; ex-offenders)

8.8 Target Groups

60. This provision will support the following priority groups:

- Unemployed people – short and long-term with multiple barriers
- Young people aged 18-24 clients who are NEET
- Unemployed disadvantaged people (e.g. homeless people, people with drug or alcohol dependency, persistent returners to JSA)
- Unemployed and inactive people with disabilities or health conditions (particularly existing claimants of incapacity benefit and ESA)
- Unemployed people 50 plus
- Ethnic minorities and those with basic language needs
- Offenders and ex-offenders
- Lone Parents including those on Income Support (IS)

- Other people with children, including teenage parents (18-20 year olds)

8.9 Outputs

61. Expected % of target group participants are:

% of participants who are unemployed	68
% of participants who are inactive	32
% of participants who with disabilities or health issues	20
% of participants who lone parents	10
% of participants who are 50 or over	15
% of participants from ethnic minorities	6
% of participants who are 18-24	25

8.10 Payment on achievement of outcomes

62. A single payment model for the 2014-2020 ESF DWP Opt-in service is being proposed by DWP. DWP will therefore be adopting a standard Payment by Result Model for ESF 2014-2020. This will consist of a Monthly Delivery Fee, a Job Outcome Payment and a Sustained Job Outcome Payment. We believe this will give the best chance of a successful outcome, and ensure delivery of the provision.

8.11 Funding Breakdown

	Funding £	Estimated Number of participants
Total funding estimate for the duration of the whole programme 2014 - 2020	Transition Area 60:40 £8,210,909 DWP Match Fund £12,316,364 ESF N.B. ESF includes £1,819,664 made available from GBSLEP Transition Area.	Total = 5865* *N.B. Estimated participants over the full life of the ESF programme/contract
Year 1 - 2016	£2.52m (tbc)	1200
Year 2 - 2017	£2.90m (tbc)	1400
Year 3 - 2018	£2.52m (tbc)	1200

9.0 SFA Opt-In Programme

Each programme will have its own set of deliverables and associated payment, that will be included in the specification issued at the invitation to tender stage.

9.1 Priority 1.1

9.1.1 Vocational routes to employment

Introduction

63. This programme is part of SSLEP Skills and Jobs Plan which aims to support SSLEP residents into employment via vocational routes.

Key Activities of the vocational routes programme

64. This programme will comprise the following indicative activities:
- Programmes to develop employability skills and job outcomes;
 - Initiatives that increase the number of apprenticeship and traineeship opportunities, especially for 16 to 18 year olds;
 - Innovative programmes that support and motivate young people with no or few qualifications, providing them with the employability skills required by employers;
 - Programmes to support hard to reach young people who need more intensive support to enable them to enter traineeships / apprenticeships;
 - New innovative vocational programmes that enable marginalised groups to enter employment, e.g. lone parents, carers, ex-offenders;
 - Work experience programmes for young people aged 15+, with better advice and guidance to encourage technical / vocational education and training;
 - Initiatives that develop better links between employers and the education sector, so that young people are more employable upon leaving education;
 - Initiatives that support employers, particularly SMEs, to offer traineeships and apprenticeships to all cohorts;
 - Initiatives to support employers, particularly SMEs, in their mentoring and support of their trainees and apprentices, especially those from vulnerable groups who may present additional challenges to their sustainable employment.

Outputs

65. Indicative outputs are as follows:

Other outcomes

Funding available

66. The ESF funding available for this programme is £2,020,000, plus match funding.

9.1.2 Independent Information, Advice & Guidance (IAG)

Introduction

67. This programme is part of SSLEP Skills and Jobs Plan which aims to support the delivery of an integrated employment and skills system through the **skills, employment and enterprise pathway, and this IAG programme must support this pathway**. In delivery terms, this means connecting skills and employment in a clear journey for individuals through the stages of pre-recruitment, skills development, sustainable employment, and further learning. The role of IAG is to ensure that participants come first and are enabled to make informed decisions about a range of learning, personal support, job opportunities and further learning that meet their personal needs and aspirations.
68. The IAG service will also need to take account of a range of developments, including the National Careers Service, other providers of IAG and local authority IAG for young people, and will need to track the progress of clients through the pathway, undertaking different activities into and during work and training.

Aims of the IAG Service

69. The aim of this programme is to both enhance existing Information, Advice and Guidance services and to provide targeted support to unemployed and economically inactive young people and adults to make informed decisions about learning and job opportunities that meet their personal circumstances, skills needs and aspirations, and lead to sustainable job outcomes and further learning. The service will have appropriate accreditation e.g. Matrix, Careers Quality Mark.
70. This will be achieved by linking people who want to work with employers/sectors where there are vacancies and supporting individuals to identify pathways of activities which will progress their skills and abilities to secure and sustain employment and further learning.
71. A key opportunity for providers of IAG is to identify gaps in pre-employment provision and influence the responsiveness of providers, in particular where gaps exist in appropriate responses to the needs of relevant priority target groups and to take account of skills needs from the Growth Hub Skills Brokerage.

Key Features of the IAG Service

72. The service will provide effective diagnosis of participants' skills need, improved provision of labour market information, and influencing learning provision in order to ensure that there is access to appropriate learning to prepare participants for specific jobs, upcoming local labour market opportunities and key priority growth sector requirements.
73. The service will work with a range of providers to develop a comprehensive menu of progression opportunities and ensure smooth transition arrangements for participants to navigate through pre and post-employment provision. It is expected that successful applicants will forge relationships with existing mainstream

providers), Jobcentre Plus, VCSE and organisations that are successful under the various ESF programmes.

74. The service will provide impartial IAG that maximises the range of opportunities available for participants to secure and sustain job outcomes and further learning. This must enhance and be additional to existing bespoke IAG services under the ESF programmes and those funded by SFA and Local Authorities. The service will provide a continuum of support through a case-work approach that follows the participant through all stages of their progression including aligning provision to other existing pre and post-employment IAG.

Key Activities of the targeted IAG Service

75. The targeted IAG service will provide 5 key activities as part of the support that include:

- Stages 1 and 2 – Learner/Employer Engagement
- Stage 3 – Pre-Employment Phase
- Stage 4 – Entry to Employment Phase
- Stage 5 – Post-Employment Phase

Stages 1 and 2 – Learner/Employer Engagement

- Recruitment mechanisms to provide IAG to individuals who are being supported by LEP ESF activities to engage hard to reach communities or individuals facing many barriers to participation and businesses wishing to access skills through the Growth Hub brokerage service.
- Recruitment mechanisms to provide IAG to eligible individuals who are being supported initially by existing IAG services from the National Careers Service, but who would benefit from enhanced IAG to achieve sustainable jobs.
- Initial access interview to gauge the individual's suitability for support.

Stage 3 – Pre-Employment Phase

- Intensive, structured, one-to-one interventions. In-depth support to help individuals explore, clarify, assess and understand their needs, skills and aspirations in relation to learning and work and how to meet them together with the opportunities/options open to them and how to access them.
- Psychometric and aptitude tests; occupational inventories and checklists related to learning and work. Helping individuals to make realistic judgements about the appropriateness of a comprehensive menu of options/ opportunities in learning and work.
- Arranging learning tasters.
- Effective diagnosis of individual skills needs and production of Individual Development Plans. Helping individuals to construct a plan including realistic goals and objectives, identified barriers and timescales for action.
- Signposting individuals to additional specialist support where needed e.g. debt management, housing etc. including services delivered under SSLEP ESF Plan activities.

- Enabling individuals to develop and move through progression steps in their plan by supporting them in dealing with learning and work providers.
- Lobbying and negotiating with learning providers on behalf of the individual where provision to meet identified needs is not readily available or accessible.
- Following entry into learning, a 'learning check-up' to identify any issues and provide support.

Stage 4 – Entry to Employment Phase

- Progression interview to help the individual make the transition into sustained employment with learning.
- Intensive support in developing a CV from scratch or interview preparation through mock interviews / video interviews with feedback.
- Arranging work tasters.
- Enabling individuals to develop and move through progression steps in their plan by supporting them in dealing with employers.
- Lobbying and negotiating with employers on behalf of the participant where learning provision and support to meet identified needs is not readily available or accessible.

Stage 5 – Post-Employment Phase

- Managed transfer between pre and post-employment to ensure continuation of learning in work.
- In employment initiatives such as coaching for promotion and development, developing 'learning for life' plans in employment settings, ensuring continuity of learning.
- Supporting referrals to various work-based learning options, taking account of current and proposed in-work IAG services.

Target groups

76. SSLEP Skills, Employment and Enterprise Pathway is intended to create better engagement of disadvantaged adults who are unemployed or economically inactive, and who need additional IAG, training, upskilling and support to prepare them for employment; and in-work training and help to enable them to sustain and progress in employment.
77. The targeted service will focus on young adults and adults not currently in employment who want to work, but lack skills and qualifications that are up-to-date and relevant to the job market, and who are residents of the geographic locations identified for this commissioning plan. Within this broad category, groups facing specific barriers and experiencing significant disadvantage will be prioritised, reflecting local SSLEP needs, as detailed below.
 - Lone Parents
 - Workless Households
 - Incapacity Benefit/ESA claimants
 - Income Support and Universal Credit benefit claimants
 - Ex-Offenders and Offenders under supervision in the community

- People with Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities
- People from BME Communities
- People over 50 years of age
- Homeless people
- People with basic skill needs below Level 2

Area of delivery

78. Applicants will need to demonstrate how their proposed IAG service meets SSLEP skills priority areas.
79. All areas with concentration on hotspot areas of unemployment , and areas where SSLEP Skills, Employment and Enterprise Pathway activity takes place.

Referrals and Partners

80. In addition to the activities described above for individuals accessing the service, successful applicants will demonstrate clear plans for:
 - Working with a range of delivery partners to engage priority target groups.
 - Liaison with Jobcentre Plus Personal Advisors to promote the service and support individuals through a joined up service into employment.
 - Developing protocols with key partners to ensure smooth transition for customers and sharing of information. Joint development work around the National Careers Service alongside Jobcentre Plus and learning providers and the VCSE.
 - Improved provision of labour market information, developing a menu of skills and employment opportunities linked to local employers and real jobs, connected to the SSLEP and strategic employment sites where available.
 - Informing strategic partnerships and provider organisations of gaps in provision to meet individuals' needs.

Outputs

81. Indicative outputs are as follows:

3,512 participants

Additional outputs and outcomes will be finalised at Specification Stage.

Other outcomes

82. A key requirement of the SSLEP Skills, Employment and Enterprise Pathway is the integration of employment and skills solutions to improve lives through sustainable jobs in disadvantaged areas and communities. This requires real partnership work based on strategic dialogue, joined up planning and practical implementation.

83. It is a requirement of this specification that successful providers of IAG demonstrate their current awareness of and engagement with appropriate partners and a clear commitment to how they will work in the wider partnership context to meet the aims of the Skills Employment and Inclusion Plan.
84. In addition to the activities described above for individuals accessing the service, successful applicants will demonstrate clear plans for:
- Working with a range of delivery partners to engage priority target groups.
 - Liaison with Jobcentre Plus Personal Advisors to promote the service and support individuals through a joined up service into employment.
 - Developing protocols with key partners to ensure smooth transition for customers and sharing of information. Joint development work around the National Careers Service alongside Jobcentre Plus and learning providers and the VCSE.
 - Improved provision of labour market information, developing a menu of skills and employment opportunities linked to local employers and real jobs.
 - Informing strategic partnerships and provider organisations of gaps in provision to meet individuals' needs.

Funding available

85. The ESF funding for this programme is £2,000,000, plus match funding.

9.2 Priority 1.2 – Support for NEETs or those at Risk of NEET

Introduction

86. This provision will reduce the number of young people, aged 15 - 25 (to include those young people with LLDD or those who do not engage with JCP) who are not in education, employment or training (NEET), or are at risk of becoming NEET. The provision must improve their education, employability and personal skills which will enable them to progress successfully into work or further learning and improve their chances of gaining employment/starting an Apprenticeship or Traineeship
87. Despite recent progress in the reduction of NEET figures within the SSLEP area, performance remains below the national figure. Whilst performance for those aged 16 and 17 has improved significantly, the introduction of RPA to the age of 18 has placed an increased demand for effective IAG support and provision for young people. There is a marked peak in NEETs at 19 and 20, particularly amongst vulnerable groups, such as care leavers. This is set against a backdrop of low employability skills, poor GCSE achievement in Year 11, low aspiration and inter-generational worklessness.
88. In order to achieve its economic ambitions the SSLEP requires a skilled and flexible workforce, yet many of its young people lack the basic skills and employability traits that businesses require. Local employers report skills shortages and skills gaps, often resorting to migrant workers to fill key roles. Many local businesses have an ageing workforce, but struggle to implement succession planning as young people lack the skills and aptitudes required.
89. Many young people wish to enter the world of work instead of formal further education, but they have little understanding of what businesses are looking for, which sectors offer the best employment prospects, and what are the job roles within the growth sector.

Aims

90. This provision aims to reduce the number of young people, aged 15 - 25 (to include those young people with LLDD, and particular cohorts aged 19+) who are not in education, employment or training (NEET), or are at risk of becoming NEET. SSLEP is seeking to procure provision which will improve their education, employability and personal skills which will enable them to progress successfully into work or further learning and improve their chances of gaining employment / starting an Apprenticeship or Traineeship. This NEET programme will also address the isolation of specific vulnerable groups, such as those with LDD, and will seek to help such groups into EET.
91. The programme will be based on achieving the following for young people:
 - a bridge to positive outcomes such as further learning or employment;
 - they are emotionally ready to apply their learning, skills and behaviours to further learning or work due to the coping mechanisms developed during the programme;
 - they have higher self-esteem and are more optimistic about their future and opportunities;

- they are self-motivated to remove barriers to success.

Programme Features

92. Engagement of 15 - 17 year olds at risk of becoming NEET is aimed at strengthening the transition into and resilience within post-16 learning for young people, who find this particularly difficult. The programme should provide tailored support for each young person, with intensive personal guidance and help to develop their understanding of the post-16 opportunities available to them.
93. The key to this type of activity will be:
 - innovative induction to gain early engagement
 - robust initial assessment and needs analysis
 - the effective use of enhanced and impartial IAG
 - individual and continuous mentor/key worker support
 - the production of individualised learner transition plans
 - the availability of a range of opportunities such as work tasters and enterprise projects to raise awareness of the world of work, confidence building, motivational and summer activities to maintain interest and engagement, such as community volunteering
 - innovative activities to address barriers to learning and work and effective use of incentives.
94. Developing employability skills will be about reducing youth unemployment by developing the employability and skills of NEET and pre-NEET individuals. The programme should include both pre-employment support and work placement and training opportunities. It should include the following features:
 - Intensive Information, Advice and Guidance
 - Mentoring, Coaching and Counselling
 - Literacy and numeracy skills development where required, linked to other aspects of the programme
 - Employability skills including job preparation, interviews, understanding employer requirements
 - Employer-based vocational training and tasters
 - Development of personal action plans and programme of activity for each young person
 - Employment trials, work placements or internships
 - Support to small and medium sized enterprises to build their capacity to take on young people from the NEET group and sustain their employment, including enhanced induction and on-going mentoring
 - Successful delivery of job opportunities and training outcomes for the target groups
 - Roll on roll off flexibility of recruitment
 - Activities which stimulate and motivate

95. The programme will:

- be flexible so that young people can start and progress at the most appropriate times to them;
- have additional support needs identified and provided, particularly to support progression;
- include literacy and numeracy skills development where required, linked to other aspects of the programme;
- be delivered in a range of settings, avoiding excessive levels of classroom-based activity;
- develop a personalised transition or 'moving on' plan for every learner that will include a portfolio of activities and achievements whilst on the programme;
- engage specialist providers where necessary;
- offer opportunities in areas to which young people respond, such as sport, music and dance and outdoor activities;
- clarify the young person's vision (aims and aspirations) for their own future;
- include activities such as mentoring, counselling, motivation, team building, work preparation or tasters, particularly in priority sectors for employment growth;
- use a "whole family" approach, linking with other agencies working closely with young people from known workless families within the community;
- offer continuing support to maximise retention when they have progressed into learning.

Target Groups

96. This activity will support young people who are 15 - 25, NEET or at risk of becoming NEET. These young people will likely be those who face multiple barriers to their participation and need a different type of offer of 15 - 25 provision to engage them in learning and keep them engaged.

97. There are four priority areas:

- Engagement of 15 - 17 year olds at risk of becoming NEET
- Developing employability skills
- Engagement of hardest to reach NEET/Personal and Social Development and Mentoring
- LLDD / Vulnerable Groups

98. Such vulnerable groups include: young carers; looked after young people; care leavers; young people with mental health difficulties; young offenders; teenage parents; young people from black and minority ethnic groups; refugees or asylum seekers; homeless; those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities; etc.

99. Support for LLDD and Vulnerable Groups will address participation, retention, achievement and progression of young people with certain disadvantages, including:

- Young people with a learning difficulty or disability, or with severe behavioural issues.

- Young Offenders either serving or recently released from a custodial sentence
- Looked after children and care leavers
- Young Parents
- Drug and alcohol misuse

Area of delivery

100. Geographic eligibility will be based on the young person's residential location and only individuals resident in Stoke-on-Trent City Council and Staffordshire County Council areas will be supported.
101. Activities will support LEP Skills priority areas and strategic investment sites.

Quality

102. Effective Information, Advice and Guidance will form a key element of the programme. Therefore, the service will be accredited through appropriate standards e.g. Matrix standard and Careers Quality Mark.
103. The provision will adhere to the principles of re-engagement provision as set out in Annex 3 of the Statutory Guidance for Raising of the Participation Age.

Referrals and Partners

104. In order to provide support required by individuals delivery will target all vulnerable groups and 15 - 25 year olds who are NEET and at risk of becoming NEET, the service will develop strong working links with:
 - Local schools, colleges and universities;
 - Jobcentre Plus;
 - National Careers Service;
 - Public and private sector employers;
 - Post 16 training providers; and
 - Relevant local economic partners

Outputs

105. Indicative outputs are as follows:

5,708 participants

Outcomes (results)

106. Indicative results are as follows:

Number of participants previously unemployed or inactive now in education or training or gaining a qualification or in employment = 2,397

Number of participants gaining basic skills = 228

Funding available

107. The ESF funding for this programme is £6,500,000, plus match funding

Delivery Model

108. The preference is for one lead bidder with a consortium of partners with one contract. The partners will have capacity, expertise and experience to deliver NEET support to the identified targets across the entire SSLEP area. The consortium should be able to deliver interventions to support all target groups and their related needs across the whole of the SSLEP area.
109. Provision needs to be flexible and responsive to the changing economic and political landscape and take into consideration that the approach and associated processes may change during the life of this Programme. For the older age group (post 18), the successful applicant needs to work closely with DWP/LEP programmes. For the vulnerable groups and those with multiple barriers to EET, the successful applicant needs to work closely with SSLEP/Big Lottery programmes.

9.3 Priority 1.4 – Skills Support to reduce worklessness

Introduction

110. The Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire LEP area has significant numbers of adults, in particular geographical locations, who have no formal qualifications and who require robust and high quality skills interventions to facilitate entry into employment. Additionally, once individuals enter the workplace, many individuals require continued personal mentoring support and further skills development to foster further progression in the workplace, so they are an employee who is able to increasingly add value for their employer's business, and be capable of taking on more responsibilities within their current, or a potential new, job role.
111. Census/ONS data indicates that a number of areas of the SSLEP area have significant proportions of adults with no or low qualifications who are out of work and actively seeking employment and who, with the appropriate level of support, will be able to secure paid employment. The SSLEP wishes for provision to be targeted at individuals in particular geographical areas to help them get back into work.

Aim of the Programme

112. The Stoke- on Trent and Staffordshire LEP wishes to put in place additional, flexible, skills provision that meets the needs of those not in employment and who require a stronger / more relevant skills portfolio as the foundation to progress into and within the workplace, and which provides individuals with relevant and transferable skills required by employers. There will be customised provision to meet the needs of individual participants and a demonstrable link to the growth occupations and the priority sectors of the SSLEP area.

Key Features of the Programme

- The programme will support the objective of improving careers decision making and skills development to ensure a stronger match between local skills and employment opportunities;
- Our investment must ensure that individual engagement and subsequent identification of an appropriate package of employment and skills support reaches those communities and individuals most in need;
- Individuals will be supported to access further in-work skills support, mentoring and careers education / information advice and guidance support to enable them to keep a job by strengthening their occupational and sector-specific skills;
- The programme will provide the foundation for progression within the workplace, and in particular, through higher-level skills support for individuals - either in their current job role or in another. Where appropriate, an apprenticeship could be the agreed skills package of support and main progression outcome;

- Vocational and occupational skills training will support the priority sectors / priority geographical spatial areas of the SSLEP area, and assist those employers and sectors providing current or imminent employment opportunities, for which training is a pre-cursor, either as a consequence of new inward investment, or existing businesses expanding their current local operation.

Key Activities of the Programme

113. The focus of our investment must be on the right interventions for the priority groups identified and in those geographical areas identified as having the greatest need. Although not exhaustive, activities to be delivered through this investment area will include:-

- Engagement, Information, advice and guidance and initial assessment to identify the most appropriate skills intervention set out within an Individual Learning Plan (ILP) with the subsequent intervention delivered;
- Basic Skills, and diagnostic assessment and delivery of appropriate Maths, English or English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) at all levels including pre-entry ESOL up to and including level 2;
- Generic ICT skills that provide individuals with the foundation to function effectively in the workplace and which can be further developed as part of a more detailed occupational / vocational training intervention;
- Accredited vocational and occupational skills training where learners are supported with specific vocationally / occupationally relevant skills support to progress into sustainable employment or an apprenticeship, and with a particular focus (but not exclusively) on the LEP priority sectors of: Advanced Manufacturing; Applied Materials; Agri-tech; Aero-Auto; Medical Technology; Energy Generation, Business and Professional Services; Leisure and Tourism.
- Job Search and interview techniques embedded within activities and detailed in the ILP;
- Upon exit of the programme into employment (or further learning), and working with the employer and other learning providers, put into place a progression plan to ensure the provision of appropriate further training / in-work skills support with key support workers and regular progress reviews to support progression;
- Vocational and occupation skills pathways/ routeways for care leavers / Learners with Learning Difficulties and / or Disabilities;

- Higher Level units; Higher Level Enterprise Support via e.g. L3 Enterprise and Entrepreneurship diploma type activity.

Target Groups

- Those who have been unemployed less than 6 months and who are claiming JSA/ ESA
- Unemployed less than 6 months, over 25, not claiming JSA or ESA but who are seeking work
- Unemployed, workless and aged 55+
- Unemployed more than 6 months and who are claiming JSA / ESA - subject to JCP adviser/ Initial assessment
- Care Leavers;
- Those with Learning Difficulties and or disabilities
- NEET 19 - 24

Area of delivery

114. Geographic eligibility will be based on the person's residential location and only individuals resident in Stoke-on-Trent City Council and Staffordshire County Council areas will be supported.
115. Activities will support SSLEP Skills priority areas and strategic investment sites.

Outputs

116. Indicative outputs are as follows:

1,349 participants

Outcomes (results)

117. Indicative results are as follows:

Unemployed participants into employment (including self-employment)	14%	189
Participants into education or training	17%	229
Inactive into employment or job search	27%	364
Childcare support received	36%	486

Funding available

118. The ESF funding for this programme is £1,500,000, plus match funding

Other outcomes

119. A key requirement of the SSLEP Skills, Employment and Enterprise Pathway is the integration of employment and skills solutions to improve lives through sustainable jobs in disadvantaged areas and communities. This requires real partnership work based on strategic dialogue, joined up planning and practical implementation.
120. It is a requirement of this programme that delivery partners demonstrate their current awareness of and engagement with appropriate partners and a clear commitment to how they will work in the wider partnership context to meet the aims of the Skills Employment and Inclusion Plan.
121. In addition to the activities described above for individuals accessing the service, successful applicants will demonstrate clear plans for:
 - Working with a range of delivery partners to engage priority target groups.
 - Liaison with Jobcentre Plus Personal Advisors to promote the service and support individuals through a joined up service into employment.
 - Working with a range of post-16 education and skills providers.
 - Linking with key HR/recruitment and HR business leaders to secure LMI and vacancies.
 - Developing protocols with key partners to ensure smooth transition for customers and sharing of information. Joint development work around the National Careers Service alongside Jobcentre Plus and learning providers and the VCSE.
 - Improved provision of labour market information, developing a menu of skills and employment opportunities linked to local employers and real jobs, connected to the SSLEP and strategic employment sites where available.
 - Informing strategic partnerships and provider organisations of gaps in provision to meet individuals' needs.

9.4 Priority 2.1 – Skills for Employer Support

Introduction

122. Skills for Employer Support is the over-arching programme title of a series of sub-programmes, listed below:
- Skills support within the workplace;
 - Higher Education enterprise skills pathway;
 - Growth Hub skills brokerage;
 - Skills for growth.

Indicative funding for all programmes within this Priority is £11million. The funding per sub-programme and resultant outputs, results and deliverables will be agreed with the opt-in partner in due course.

9.4.1 Skills support within the workplace

Introduction

123. Within the local working age population, the proportion of residents qualified to a level 4 and above is below the national average, and many of those with no or lower qualifications are already in employment and would benefit from further skills support.
124. The SSLEP is keen for investment in skills to be made in the context of a customer journey that not only focuses on supporting individuals to become more employable and gain employment but also to strengthen the potential for them to not only retain their job but to progress further in their current, or a future job role. Additionally, the Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire LEP wishes to focus investment on activities that contribute to increased competitiveness of business in critical sectors with growth potential and where Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire has a distinct advantage. Increasingly, this support will focus on ensuring higher level skills development and progression.

Aim of the Programme

125. This programme is aimed at those already in the workplace and who require additional vocational / occupation-specific skills training to help them retain a job and progress in work, whilst supporting employers to become more competitive through a motivated and skilled workforce.
126. The programme will support the SSLEP objective of improving careers decision making and skills development to ensure a stronger match-up between local skills and employment opportunities and support people progressing through the workplace via skill development. Investment must ensure that individual engagement and subsequent identification of an appropriate package of employment and skills support reaches those communities and individuals most in need.
127. Succession planning

Key Features of the Programme

128. Features of the programme include:

- Individuals being supported to access further in-work skills training, mentoring and careers education/ information advice and guidance to enable them to keep a job by strengthening their occupational and sector-specific skills;
- The programme will provide the foundation for progression within the workplace, and in particular, through higher-level skills support for individuals, either in their current job role, or in another. Where appropriate, an Apprenticeship could be the agreed skills package of support and main progression outcome;
- Vocational and occupational skills support must develop the priority sectors/priority geographical spatial areas of the SSLEP area. Such provision must also support those employers and sectors providing current or imminent employment opportunities for which training is required, either as a consequence of new inward investment, or existing businesses expanding their current local operation.

129. The programme will provide flexible skills support for the workforce and progression pathways to respond to local skills priorities as identified by the SSLEP. Provision will target employees with low or no qualifications and will be sufficiently flexible to meet intermediate and higher level skills needs that respond to SSLEP priorities – including those set out in the Strategic Economic Plan and Skills Strategy. Key activities from the programme will include:

- Provision of vocationally/occupationally relevant skills for those with no or low qualifications;
- Higher level skills relevant to an individual's current job role or as part of supporting progression in the workplace, and potentially to a new job role. This could be L3 and L4 units - including a focus on leadership and management;
- Training of in-house trainers;
- Qualifications that are not a statutory requirement for individuals in their specific job roles, but which will/could enhance their effectiveness in the workplace and support the competitiveness of the employer's business;
- Licences to practice which are not a legal requirement;
- English and Maths qualifications with further vocationally / occupationally relevant in-work skills training;
- Training of key workers to be workplace assessors/ coaches/mentors to facilitate progression in the workplace;
- Provision of matrix accredited careers advice/ education through an appropriate provider.

Target Groups

- Individuals with low or no skills (subject to initial assessment and diagnostic);
- Individuals who require/would benefit from (subject to initial assessment and diagnostic) higher level skills support through skills provision that will enhance their effectiveness in their current job role or another role within the business;
- Particular emphasis should be placed upon working with SSLEP priority sectors: Advanced Manufacturing; Applied Materials; Agri-tech; Aero-Auto; Medical Technology; Energy Generation, Business and Professional Services; Leisure and Tourism.

Area of delivery

130. Geographic eligibility will be based on the person's residential location, and only individuals resident in Stoke-on-Trent City Council and Staffordshire County Council areas will be supported.

Outputs

131. Indicative outputs will be detailed in the final specification.

Outcomes

132. Indicative results will be detailed in the final specification.

Other outcomes

133. A key requirement of the SSLEP Skills, Employment and Enterprise Pathway is the integration of employment and skills solutions to improve lives through sustainable jobs in disadvantaged areas and communities. This requires real partnership work based on strategic dialogue, joined up planning and practical implementation.
134. It is a requirement of this programme that delivery partners demonstrate their current awareness of, and engagement with appropriate partners and a clear commitment to how they will work in the wider partnership context to meet the aims of the Skills Employment and Inclusion Plan.
135. In addition to the activities described above for individuals accessing the service, successful applicants will demonstrate clear plans for:
- Working with a range of delivery partners to engage priority target groups.
 - Working with a range of post-16 education and skills providers
 - Informing strategic partnerships and provider organisations of gaps in provision to meet individuals' needs.

Funding available

136. The ESF funding for this programme is £11,000,000.

9.4.2 Higher Education Enterprise Skills Pathway

Aim

137. To procure a customised learning programme that offers students within Higher Education (College and Universities) relevant business skills and business planning. In particular, to support them during their 'gap year'/'year out' or where timescales allow, during the summer break, to start their own businesses, or experience an entrepreneurial work placement as part of their studies. As a guiding principle, participation must support the student to experience the benefits of self-employment enabling them to complete their programme of studies and make informed choices regarding their future employment route.
138. This opportunity consists of a pathway, ultimately, into self-employment. Through this programme, the SSLEP would wish for any proposals submitted to be aligned with and adding value to, existing enterprise activity of this type. The deliverer must be able to work with student intermediaries-such as Careers Advisers, Personal Tutors, Student Unions etc.

Service requirement

139. This programme will be delivered on a flexible basis and can also help individuals who would not normally have been able to participate in this kind of programme. Features of the programme may include:
 - Location in managed workspace support;
 - A small expenses budget to reimburse costs of using public transport or using childcare;
 - Assistance with finding and completing short enterprise-related education courses;
 - Support with training to support new product development;
 - Sign language interpreters for hearing impaired learners;
 - Large print materials available for visually impaired learners;
 - Saturday sessions.
140. The programme will overcome difficulties by providing a comprehensive package of support, mentoring and funding in order to encourage and support the start-up and growth of new businesses.
141. All reasonable business ideas will be considered for support, and University or College spin-out company ideas are particularly welcome. As an example, a student following a creative media studies course, with product or service ideas could take these forward via their own business start-up upon graduation. During the 'Gap Year'/'Year out', or even summer break (subject to timescales), the proposed programme of support could be used to develop their product ideas and support the development / establishment of their own business.
142. The successful applicant will design and deliver a range of customised training which offers a range of practical skills such as strategic and creative thinking,

finance, business growth, funding and investment, marketing and presentational skills.

143. The programme will train and support students in developing business ideas and developing their entrepreneurial skills. Beneficiaries will go on to either develop their own business or work for a company where enterprise and innovation are valued.

Features of the Programme

144. Activities will, in the main, follow five stages. Providers will identify a streamlined continuum of support through each stage of the process; the stages must be personalised or made relevant for, the target groups as appropriate.
- **Stage 1:** This focuses on engagement, information, advice and guidance and initial assessment. This stage will provide a guide to starting a business and a start in business creation and unlocking the value of a business idea. This stage will explore how activities could add value to the student's primary programme of study.
 - **Stage 2:** This will focus on pre-enterprise development training and any core skills development needed to make individuals ready for business start up. This activity may involve some short targeted specific skills development, including an Enterprise qualification, confidence building or addressing social barriers or any additional problems the beneficiary may be experiencing. Training towards a certificate must be encouraged, and designed to continue and be built upon once in self-employment. This training may include: commercial awareness, creativity, ideas generation, leadership and project management. This stage will develop creative thinking skills and challenging assumptions, how to build ideas, use of simple business tools including profit and loss sheets.
 - **Stage 3:** This stage will support the beneficiary in their business planning and business readiness and any support they may require in order to be offered a contract and successfully gain support for their business idea from others. This will include the value of networks, including analysis and mapping of the public sector support available to establish a business.
 - **Stage 4:** Once in business it is thought that the beneficiary will need additional support to sustain their company and some specific development activity related to training and skills, either continuing or enhancing the training they commenced in Stage 2.
 - **Stage 5:** This stage comprises advice and information linked to accessing skills to enable their business to progress and become more sustainable. This must include, where appropriate, continuation of business-related training.
145. Activities in all stages should be both relevant to, and supportive of, the student's programme of study.

Marketing and Engagement Strategy

146. The successful applicant(s) will be required to produce and subsequently deliver a Marketing and Communications Strategy that clearly sets out how potential participants will be engaged and progressed, and how they plan to work with the Colleges and Universities to ensure complementarity with the requirements of the curriculum and the career aspirations of the individual.

Area of delivery

147. Students currently undertaking Higher Education Programmes of study within Colleges and Universities in the SSLEP area.

Outputs

148. The following outputs are required:
- xxx Individuals engaged on the programme and Individual Learning Action Plans produced
 - xxx individuals achieving modules in entrepreneurialism management and leadership
 - xxx individuals producing a business plan
 - xxx Production of 1 Marketing and Engagement Strategy
 - xxx Bursaries approved

Outcomes

149. The following results are required:
- 80% or xxx individuals completing the programme of learning
 - Other outcomes
 - 50% or xx beneficiaries accessing further business start- up support
 - xx Businesses commence trading

Funding available

150. The total funding available for this programme is £xx.
151. As part of this programme the LEP wishes to offer a £x bursary, however, applicants are required to note that ESF places a limit of £x per item of capital equipment.
152. The following unit costs have been calculated purely for comparison purposes, they do not reflect the actual unit cost that the LEP will pay providers for the delivery of the activity specified in this programme.
153. Specification. Applicants are required to identify, as required in the questionnaire, the average unit cost of their activity based on their proposed actual costs.

9.4.3 Growth Hub Skills Brokerage

Introduction

154. The SSLEP recognises that it must provide support for both high growth and innovative businesses in priority sectors and support the competitiveness and capacity of the existing business base. Additionally, it will seek to ensure that the necessary infrastructure and business support is in place to create the conditions for people to start up new businesses/ enterprises and for these to survive and grow. As the EU Structural and Investment Funds Strategy emphasises, business support available in Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire to SMEs is now fragmented as a consequence of the reorganisation of the business support funding bodies. Consequently, the business support offer to SMEs is both fragmented and less comprehensive; there is a multiplicity of channels and programmes.
155. It is therefore important for the support that is available for Businesses or individuals to be made more visible, for it to be more convenient to access and for the available funding streams to be better integrated as part of a package of support. With the right mechanisms put in place, the potential is there for business support to be more responsive, more flexible—offering real customer choice, better co-ordinated and for it to secure real business benefits.
156. Part of the support for businesses and individuals would include a co-ordinated package of skills interventions for employers and individual employees, based on a full skills diagnostic of need, and part of a joined-up package that maximised and simplified the available different funding streams.

Aim of the Growth Hub Skills Brokerage Service

157. The SSLEP will put in place a model of business support that will provide a more coherent approach to business support across the LEP and wider area.
158. As set out in the ESIF, we are developing a new 'Growth Hub' model - a simplified and coherent approach to business support across the SSLEP and surrounding area, which will take a strategic leadership role in the design and co-ordination of services to businesses, helping them to better understand opportunities and threats, and improving the efficiency, effectiveness and responsive of the available support.
159. A key part of the service will be the provision of 'Skills Brokers' who will provide a personalised and tailored package of support that meets the individual needs of the employer or a group of employers. A number of principles will underpin this support:-
 - Ensuring Employer choice whilst ensuring responsiveness from providers;
 - Securing added value and efficiency for the employer through access to relevant funding support that meets their needs and those of their employees, promotes progression and is delivered by bringing different funding streams together in a seamless manner;
 - Brokers will initially use their employer contacts and, working with key individuals within the organisation, will work to identify the employer's skills needs;

- Skills Brokers should act as a first point of contact or act as the lead co-ordinating function for inward investors in marshalling the services of other support agencies providing skills interventions.

Key Features of Skills Brokerage Activity

160. Through this proposal, Skills brokers will be expected to provide key services in relation to ensuring that employers are supported to access relevant skills support/ workforce development activities. In particular:-

- Support employers to receive impartial advice in relation to skills training and workforce development that ensures that they are made aware of all relevant programme options and the funding and eligibility associated with each of these;
- Support employers to be able to identify the skills and workforce development needs flowing from their business development plans and day-to-day operational delivery to ensure that interventions are relevant to the needs of the business;
- Ensure that employers are presented with information that relates to Higher Education, Colleges and Training providers who could be best suited to meet the needs of the employer, brokering introductions and responses from the providers in relation to delivery options;
- Where appropriate, work with partners –such as the Skills Funding Agency,- to meet new/ new high-volume apprenticeship delivery via a competitive bidding process where employers assess response proposals from a number of providers seeking to be the preferred deliverer;
- Capturing employer feedback to ensure that the quality, relevance and responsiveness of delivery is maintained;
- Facilitate the sharing and promotion of good practice as well as relevant business/ sector information and labour market information;
- Where appropriate, and where opportunity arises, work with employers as part of employer engagement to deepen their engagement in the skills system and progressing employers from solely being a customer to a position where they become more actively involved in the design and delivery of skills interventions and in providing performance feedback, or challenge, to those delivering work-focused learning and skills provision.

Primary target / beneficiary groups

161. The key business beneficiaries for this activity include:

- New enterprises
- SMEs
- large companies including their supply chain

- inward investors and companies restructuring
- priority growth sectors

Geographical Coverage and Spatial targeting

162. Delivery will be across the entire SSLEP area and will in particular provide support to businesses accessing strategic employment sites.
163. Whilst the LEP seeks to ensure that the provision it secures via its EU investment is sufficiently flexible to meet the needs of individuals and employers it will, through a robust monitoring and performance management process, regularly assess the impact of the interventions to ensure that the number of individuals participating and achieving outcomes from the programme - from the priority groups and priority geographical areas - is maximised.
164. In addition, employer focused interventions will be monitored to ensure that the LEP priority sector areas are benefitting from targeted support and that the investment is supporting improved business performance as well as contributing to improved economic performance in the SSLEP area. Underperformance will be challenged and whilst the LEP reserves the right to adjust contract values, the LEP will supportively seek to identify appropriate support from the wider partnership to maximise contract delivery and outcomes for learners and employers.

Outputs

165. The outputs for this activity include:
 - Xxx number Businesses advised –needs differentiating
 - Xxx number Training needs analysis/workforce development plans completed – needs differentiating
 - Xxx number Referrals to training providers for support
 - Xxx number Progression to apprenticeships/higher apprenticeships

Outcomes

166. The outcomes for this activity include:
 - Increased proportion of businesses engaged in training by %
 - Increased employer investment in skills/training by £
 - Reduction in skills shortages especially in key sectors
 - Job growth
 - Growth in skill levels in the workforce
 - Growth in traineeships, apprenticeships, higher apprenticeships
 - Increased number of businesses engaged in education e.g. with schools, offering work experience, placements, talks, visits, competitions, sponsorship, career fairs, have a go's

Funding/Payment Models

167. The outputs for this activity include:

- Xxx number Businesses advised at unit rate of £
- Xxx number Training needs analysis/workforce development plans completed at unit rate of £
- Xxx number successful Referrals to training providers for support at unit rate of £
- Xxx number of Progressions to apprenticeships/higher apprenticeships

9.4.4 Skills for Growth

Introduction

168. This programme has been established to stimulate and address demand for workforce development amongst Small and Medium sized companies (SMEs) in the SSLEP area specifically and foster a culture of workforce development, including the promotion of apprenticeships. The importance of responding to the needs of small and medium enterprises is paramount and we will look to develop a programme that can provide bespoke solutions depending upon the needs identified by the employer working with the Growth Hub and Skills Brokers.

Key features

The programme has key features that need to be included in its design that include:

- Demand Led – the identification of actual and the stimulation of latent demand so as to increase the number of SMEs locally actually investing in Workforce Development;
- Comprehensive – covering the full spectrum of demand as it is expressed by SMEs, including the full range of functional business areas, all training types, levels and delivery methods, specific sectoral needs and complete geographical coverage within the LEP area;
- Effective – ensuring the programme is streamlined and enables maximum impact to be derived from programme investments;
- Timely – capable of meeting SME needs rapidly;
- Accessible and Understandable - a straightforward process that enables SMEs to access support promptly and appropriately;
- Simple – uncomplicated for all users and stakeholders including SMEs.
- Establishes Clear Relationships – develops a sense of partnership and clarity of role for all partners and SME beneficiaries;
- Value for Money – ensures that available resources are focused upon the SME;
- Developmental – builds upon established good practice and effective practices and develops both new capacity and capability and a new culture of workforce development across LEP area;
- Deliverable – capable of enabling programme targets to be delivered;
- SME Choice– enabling, where possible, SMEs to have maximum choice and flexibility in the selection of providers and provision (content and delivery).

Responding to Need

169. This programme places an emphasis upon identifying and meeting the specific needs of SMEs including the development and delivery of customised training to support their growth and development. The programme of support will therefore meet a variety of workforce development needs including across a range of functional areas with a range of training subjects, content and level. Function areas of business include:
- General Management
 - Sales and Marketing
 - Operations
 - New Product/Market Development
 - International trade
 - Financial and Business Accounting
 - Information Computer Technology
 - Human Resources
 - Health, Safety and the Environment
170. This programme will also need to understand and respond fully to the needs of SMEs in terms of practical arrangements for delivery of provision e.g. timing and location, so as to minimise disruption to day to day operations, and including an explicit commitment to provide year-round delivery, meeting SME needs rather than institutional patterns of delivery.