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# PRESTON EMPLOYMENT PARTNERSHIP (PEP) - LOCAL JOBS FOR LOCAL PEOPLE

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## PRESTON

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### Background

Preston Employment Partnership (PEP) began with a pilot project that aimed to reduce unemployment in the most disadvantaged wards of Preston, Lancashire. The project is now in the second phase.

In Preston there are a number of wards that are amongst the 10 percent most disadvantaged in the U.K. and many of these wards suffer from high levels of unemployment. Due to the recession of the 1970's and the closing of certain industries, there are two and three generations of families who are now long-term unemployed. There are high concentrations of benefit claimants, including incapacity benefit claimants, within these wards.

Statistical evidence shows that individuals who have been long term unemployed are more likely to have multiple barriers that prevent them from accessing employment such as poor health, housing, debt issues, low education and have little or no knowledge of how to improve their circumstances. Individuals who have either never worked or are not currently in employment are further disadvantaged as they do not have the relevant skills that employers require or the appropriate work ready attitude that will help them sustain employment. PEP helps to remove these barriers to work that individuals face. PEP clients are provided with the support they need to get them job ready.



### What is the overall goal and specific objectives of the project?

The project provides a single holistic approach to employment designed to engage and impact upon the hardest-to-reach members of the community.

PEP came about as a result of the failure of previous regeneration initiatives to reduce unemployment levels in the area. Preston City Council, Job Centre Plus and the Local Strategic Partnership came together to put together a partnership which would address a gap in services to engage the hard to reach client group. PEP provides a seamless service of interventions with a tailored approach to support individuals. These services are designed to help remove the barriers to employment.

### Who is responsible for the project's implementation?

Preston City Council is responsible for implementing the project and PEP is a service of the City Council within the Communities and Business Directorate.

### How does the project work?

Individuals who have been out of work for a long time are uncertain as to where to go to

get help and therefore PEP provides an access/outreach service within the wards. In doing so it works along side neighbourhood management to try to engage this hard to reach client group.

Employment Development Officers work with individuals on a one-to-one basis and provide a range of support services, such as assistance with job applications, CV writing, interview techniques, work on soft skills and referrals to other agencies for specific skills or work experience requirements. This also includes assisting in building self-esteem, confidence, building upon any level of existing skills by encouraging and providing access to volunteering to provide experience that will put them closer to the job market. Some individuals have little or no knowledge of the job market or have no knowledge of what employers are expecting from employees. PEP provides mentoring and coaching, assists with job searches, suitable job matches and interview coaching.

## What are the results of the project (so far)?

Between September 2005 and March 2008 PEP supported 225 individuals into employment and a further 639 former clients. Since January 2009 PEP has assisted 122 people into employment, 86 into voluntary work or training, helping them to get closer to the job market. PEP works closely with training organisations and a variety of different partners to provide this seamless service.

Most clients who access PEP's service leave with a positive impression of the service.

"I couldn't have done any of this without you, I did not know where to start".

"The interview was great and fun, and the interviewer mentioned that my application form to be the best (credit goes to you)".

"Words are not enough to thank you for all the motivation, encouragement and support which I have received from you and PEP".

## Was the project evaluated and were there any follow-up activities?

PEP evaluates its activity and information is collated from individual clients on the support they have received. Two evaluation reports have been undertaken since 2005 on activity and this has been incremental in building upon previous phases to improve its service. The evaluations have showed there to be positive work being undertaken with the client group and that data collected shows how far the clients have come, helping to track the clients' progression.

Key evaluation indicators are:

- the number of conversions of client registrations to job outputs (e.g. PEP currently averages around 60-65 new clients registered per month and is averaging 30 job outputs per month, therefore a conversion rate is 50% of clients into work);
- number of additional people successfully referred into voluntary work or training as a result of PEP's interventions;
- the number of clients who return to use PEP's service, should their work come to an end.

The resources used to undertake this are time allocation of Employment Development Officers in collecting the data and evaluation sheets, time allocation of the data programmer to record and produce data, officer time for analysis and report writing. It is intended that a full evaluation will be undertaken at the end of phase II probably undertaken by external consultants.

## What lessons did you learn?

People are an unpredictable commodity and when you try to be too prescriptive it doesn't always bring success. The constraints of previous initiatives and funding have failed to embed employment sustainability. Individuals have different needs and therefore being flexible and responding to different needs helps to bring success. We have been able to work to catch those individuals who would otherwise have fallen by the wayside. This has resulted in shared success for PEP and Partners but most importantly our clients. Having the clients' needs and not targets as the main objective has seen targets achieved.

## How is the project funded and what resources (financial and human) are dedicated to its delivery?

PEP is now funded by the Working Neighbourhoods Fund and its annual budget is £632,220. (€730,000). The staff structure includes PEP Manager, Senior Employment Development Officer, 11 Employment Development Officers, Finance Officer, Database programmer, Administration Officer and Customer Liaison Officer.

## Who is the contact officer for the strategy/project?

Preston City Council, Town Hall, Lancaster Road, Preston, PR1

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If you have an example of a good practice that you would like to include in the database, please send an email to [caroline.greene@eurocities.eu](mailto:caroline.greene@eurocities.eu).