ESP Specification of Service Requirement from August 2007

1. This Services to be delivered are in support of a new Programme procured by THE COUNCIL for unemployed Jobcentre Plus (JCP) customers in receipt of benefits (or credits). The new Employability Skills Programme has 2 different levels of offer, informed by provision trials in 2006/07, and aims to help those people for whom poor basic (literacy, language and numeracy) and employability skills are the key barrier to sustainable employment. Eligible Jobcentre Plus customers will be offered a full-time or part-time Programme with learning aims at the appropriate level, as described below.

2. All adult basic skills courses funded under this provision, in any subject must lead to approved adult basic skills qualifications i.e. Adult Certificates in Basic Literacy and/or Numeracy and ESOL Skills for Life. Approved qualifications can be found on the DFES website: http://www.dfes.gov.uk/section96/ http://www.dfes.gov.uk/section97/

3. Programmes should comprise more than one basic skill subject learning aim, according to need, delivered concurrently or in succession. Consequently THE CONTRACTOR must assess the numeracy needs of all referred customers, as well as literacy/language, and include a numeracy learning aim in the Programme where appropriate. Learners should be enrolled onto Literacy or ESOL but not both as they are designed to meet the same needs for different learners. Learning aims for literacy/ESOL and numeracy can be at different levels in order to reflect learner needs and spiky profiles. THE CONTRACTOR will be expected to deliver provision at all levels in all subject areas unless alternative sub-contracting arrangements as described in Appendix 2 have been made locally between THE COUNCIL and THE CONTRACTOR.

Aims of the Programme

4. The Employability Skills Programme aims to offer Jobcentre Plus Learners a personalised programme that recognises the different backgrounds, needs and goals of Jobcentre Plus Learners and:

- Enhance their employability skills
- Improve their literacy, language and numeracy skills
- Secure and sustain employment
- Ensure that their learning journey continues and is supported once they gain employment.

5. The Programme will enable Learners to gain nationally approved employability and basic skills qualifications through:

- Activities that will enhance their employability skills
- Opportunities to update their knowledge and understanding of the local labour market
- Opportunities to update their job search skills, to participate in guaranteed interview and to spend trial weeks with local employers
- Personalised literacy, language and numeracy programmes
- Progress reviews every 3 weeks

6. A further focus for this Learner group is to provide advice and guidance which helps them progress into programmes that enable them to gain skills at higher levels, for example, by helping them to secure employment with a Train to Gain employer under the agreement between THE COUNCIL and Jobcentre Plus. Consequently, THE CONTRACTOR should encourage Learners who drop-out of a Programme, for any reason including starting a new job, to continue learning through other COUNCIL-funded provision or through non-COUNCIL funded provision funded by the employer, where this is appropriate.

**Eligible Learners**

7. All Jobcentre Plus customers claiming benefit or credits who are aged 18 or over and have a literacy, language or numeracy need at Level 1 or below are eligible for the Programme. The CONTRACTOR will determine the Learner’s level of need at initial assessment.

8. Jobcentre Plus customers who have been unemployed and in receipt of Jobseekers Allowance for at least 6 months are a priority group for the Programme and with Jobcentre Plus advisers. Customers identified with a potential need before the six month review stage may be referred to the Programme on an early entry basis.

**Assessment of learner need**

9. THE CONTRACTOR will be expected to assess learner ability and needs appropriately. THE COUNCIL expects THE CONTRACTOR to manage appropriate learner assessment in the same way as for most other learning provision, through existing pre-course guidance, enrolment and on-course induction processes, and to incorporate diagnostic assessment into longer learning programmes leading to qualifications.

10. Improvement within the *Skills for Life* Strategy is defined by and measured as a learner moving up a level of attainment from, for example, Entry 3 to Level 1. The learning aim(s) should therefore be at the appropriate level to ensure that all learners move up at least one level of attainment. For example, a Learner assessed as having literacy skills at Entry Level 3 should be enrolled onto a Level 1 programme.

11. Learners who are assessed as having a need at Level 2 in one subject are eligible for support on the Programme as long as they are also undertaking a qualification in another basic skills subject at Level 1 or below.
Customer suitability

12 THE CONTRACTOR must determine Learner suitability for a specific level (Foundation Employability or Employability Skills) of the Programme, or alternative COUNCIL-funded basic skills provision or other more appropriate provision.

13. Learners with no or very poor English language skills (significantly below Entry level 1 and considered unlikely to achieve a qualification) must have these needs addressed before being considered for entry to the Programme, as they may not be able to benefit from the employability elements until these needs have been addressed. Alternatively, some customers may have poor English language skills but a high level of other skills and no other obvious employability needs. THE CONTRACTOR must refer these Learners to other funded, nationally approved, ESOL Skills for Life provision that is available in their organisation or by arrangement with a nearby provider.

14. Some Learners may only succeed with the help of JCP Additional Needs Support (see paragraph 7.2 of this Schedule above.) Other Learners will not be suitable because they have different, more complex problems over and above basic skills and employability needs that need to be addressed before any learning can be undertaken. THE CONTRACTOR should refer these customers back to Jobcentre Plus for an alternative programme to be considered and return the REF2 giving a reason for Learner unsuitability.

Programme offers

15. The required provision takes the form of two alternative offers for learners with different levels of need as described below. THE COUNCIL expects THE CONTRACTOR to offer both types of provision on a continuous basis.

Foundation Employability

16. A Foundation Employability programme should be offered to suitable, eligible customers who have basic skills needs at Entry level 1 or 2. The Programme will comprise nationally approved literacy/language and/or numeracy qualifications delivered in the context of employability.
skills, to find, apply for and keep a job. Provision should therefore follow best practice by being delivered in the context of job-search, interview, presentation, time-management and other skills associated with improving employability.

17. Full-time or part-time provision should be offered as follows:

a. Full-time for more than 16 hours a week\(^3\), according to learner need and ability, for an average\(^4\) of 239 guided learning hours (glh) per learner programme. These Learners may be eligible for a Job Centre Plus Training Allowance (benefit plus the appropriate training premium) plus travel and childcare expenses and additional needs support.

b. Part-time for 16 hours or less a week for an average of 239 guided learning hours (glh) per learner programme. These learners will remain on benefit (or credits) and must continue to attend the Jobcentre as instructed by Job Centre Plus. They will not be eligible for a Job Centre Plus Training Allowance but will be eligible to apply to the provider for financial help through the Learner Support Fund.

c. To include regular progress reviews against the ILP every 3 weeks.

18. THE CONTRACTOR and Learner must together agree a full or part-time Programme to meet Learner needs and circumstances. Some Learners will not be able to undertake full-time provision immediately or might need to progressively build up the number of learning hours to 20 or more hours a week. Similarly, some Learners who start learning programme of at least 20 hours a week may not be able to sustain this, or might progress to a stage where the number of learning hours might be reduced to less than 16 hours a week.\(^5\)

19. THE CONTRACTOR should aim to ensure that, by the end of the programme, Learners will have found work or moved closer to obtaining sustained employment through the achievement of nationally approved basic skills qualifications.

**Employability Skills Programme**

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\(^2\) In accordance with Jobcentre Plus regulations. The LSC expects full-time provision to be 20 hours or more a week.

\(^3\) For funding calculation purposes we have used an average glh per learner. This acknowledges that some learners will achieve their learning outcomes in fewer hours and some in more than the average hours.

\(^5\) Where a learner’s programme changes from full to part-time they will no longer be able to claim a Training Allowance and associated expenses. Jobcentre Plus must be notified immediately so that a Training Allowance can be stopped. The customer must attend the Jobcentre to reclaim benefit.
20. An Employability qualification should be offered to suitable, eligible customers who have basic skills needs at Entry Level 3, Level 1 or Level 2, as part of an Employability Skills Programme. This Programme aims to move Learners into a job and will comprise:

a) Nationally approved basic literacy/language and numeracy qualifications at Entry Level 3 to Level 2;

b) A nationally approved, unitised Employability Award at Entry Level 3 or Level 1 such as that developed by ASDAN for use in the Programme Pathfinder trials.

c) Work experience placements/tasters and learning in the workplace wherever possible;

d) Regular progress reviews against the ILP every 3 weeks;

e) Continued learning and support post-employment, as appropriate on a part-time basis and, preferably, in the workplace.

21. Full-time and part-time provision should be offered, as appropriate to the Learner’s circumstances, as follows:

a. Full-time for more than 16 hours a week for an average of 270 glh per learner programme. These learners may be eligible for a Jobcentre Plus Training Allowance (benefit plus the appropriate training premium) plus help with travel and childcare expenses and additional needs support.

b. Part-time for up to 16 hours a week for an average of 270 guided learning hours (glh) per learner programme. These learners will remain on benefit (or credits) and must continue to attend the Jobcentre as instructed by Job Centre Plus. They will not be eligible for a Job Centre Plus Training Allowance but will be eligible to apply to the provider for financial help through the Learner Support Fund.

Learner progression

22. In line with current policy to ensure that learners embark on clear progression pathways, it will be possible for learners to progress:

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6 Learners with a basic skills need at Level 2 are eligible as long as they are undertaking one other basic skills qualification at Level 1 or below.

7 An Entry level 3 employability award will normally require a learner to be at or working towards Entry Level 3 literacy attainment.

8 A change from full to part-time learning will impact on the learner’s eligibility for a Training Allowance and associated expenses. Providers should work with employers to encourage continuing training, including basic and vocational skills provision, through Train to Gain as appropriate.
➢ From mainstream LSC-funded or other funded adult basic skills provision onto the Programme subject to learner suitability. This includes learners who had initially been referred to undertake ESOL Skills for Life provision prior to being enrolled onto the Programme, as described in paragraph 13 above.

➢ From one level of achievement in a basic skills subject to another within the Programme if there is time available. Wherever possible, progression to the minimum functional levels for literacy and numeracy defined by Lord Leitch as Level 1 and Entry level 3 respectively, should be pursued.

➢ From Foundation Employability learning aims to the Employability Skills programme where basic skills qualification learning aims can be pursued at the next level of attainment, together with an Employability Award, subject to learner eligibility, suitability and progress on employability. Wherever possible, progression to the minimum functional levels for literacy and numeracy defined by Lord Leitch as Level 1 and Entry level 3 respectively, should be pursued.

➢ From the Programme into a job.

➢ Into employment with an employer who has committed to further training such as those using the Train to Gain Service.

23. Progression in full-time learning within or between Programme offers will be dependent on the continuing availability of a Jobcentre Plus Training Allowance. 

24. All learners who continue in learning after starting a job, in order to complete a programme/qualifications, must transfer from full to part-time provision where appropriate.

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9 The current maximum period for receipt of a Training Allowance under this Programme is 15 weeks. This may be extended subject to the agreement of all stakeholders and funding availability.