ESP Requirement 2008/09

The requirement is to deliver Phase 4 ESP provision from 1 August 2008 to 31 July 2009. Successful providers will deliver alongside existing Phase 3 programme providers whose contracts will be extended by variation for a further year, subject to a successful performance assessment against nationally consistent criteria. Additional provision for Phase 4 is sought primarily as a result of the expansion of the Programme funding from £23 million in 2007/08 to £32 million in 2008/09. Further expansion is forecast in 2009/10 2010/11 and successful Phase 4 providers will have an opportunity to have 2008/09 contracts extended by variation subject to a successful performance assessment review.

In addition to Programme funding from DIUS (£32 million in 2008/09), DWP has made £14.8 million available in 2008/09 to support Training Allowances for full-time learners.

ESP is at the heart of a fast moving and ambitious policy area and so some requirements and/or processes may change as a direct result, for example, of the introduction of new benefit regulations and programmes by DWP/JCP and the trialling of integrated employment and skills delivery and Skills Accounts during the contract period. Some ESP providers may be asked to take part in such trials once geographical locations have been finalised.

Customer eligibility and referral
All JCP customers aged 18 and over with basic skills needs are eligible to be referred to an LSC-contracted provider for an initial assessment of basic skills needs.

JCP Advisors will refer eligible customers to an initial provider assessment interview based on either:
1. An observed difficulty with English speaking, listening, reading, writing or numeracy during a fresh claim or review interview; or
2. An identified difficulty with English listening, reading, writing or numeracy as a result of using a JCP screening tool, currently Fast Track. (The Fast Track screening tool is used only with Jobseekers Allowance (JSA) customers who have been unemployed for 6 months at a 26 week review interview).

JCP Advisors will refer all eligible customers, on the basis of 1 or 2 above, to a contracted ESP provider. They will not refer on the basis of a specific level of provision.

Jobcentre Plus will contact the provider to arrange an interview for the customer and will issue a referral form (REF2). JCP Advisers can direct a JSA customer to attend the referral interview, whereby the customer is

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1 Receipt of a Training Allowance (benefit plus a training premium) gives customers access to support with travel and childcare costs.
mandated to attend, where appropriate, otherwise attendance is voluntary. The REF2 will indicate whether a JCP training allowance is available to support the customer in full-time training of at least 20 hours a week for ESP participants.

Successful providers must work closely with local JCP contacts and will need to put in place a strategy with local Jobcentre Plus personal advisers to raise awareness of this provision with customers, clarify eligibility criteria for referral purposes, and ensure that referrals are made. Providers must supply the name, telephone number and office address of a working contact to Jobcentre Plus. The name of the local working contact within Jobcentre Plus will be supplied to the provider by the LSC.

Providers should also work with other local organisations who deal with Jobcentre Plus customers to promote the Programme’s benefits for potential participants. Any provider generated customers must be referred via Jobcentre Plus, who is primarily responsible for customer eligibility for referral, in order to be issued with a REF2.

LSC-contracted providers are responsible for ensuring that all learners are eligible for LSC-funded provision in accordance with the LSC Learner Eligibility Guidance for 2008/09.

**Provision type and duration**

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

- **Full-time for at least 20 hours a week**, according to learner need and ability, to cover all learning aims undertaken. These learners may be eligible for a JCP Training Allowance, as above. The maximum number of weeks that a full-time ESP participant can receive a Training Allowance is currently 15 weeks, although this can be extended in specific circumstance with Jobcentre Plus agreement. Learners for whom no Training Allowance extension can be agreed but who need to continue in learning beyond 15 weeks will need to do so on a part-time basis.

- **Part-time for less than 16 hours a week** to cover all learning aims undertaken. These learners will remain on benefit (or credits) and must continue to attend the Jobcentre as instructed by JCP.

The provider and learner must together agree the most appropriate provision (full or part-time) 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 a learning programme of at least 20 hours a week may not be able to sustain this, or might progress to a stage

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2 Jobcentre Plus customers undertaking training for at least 16 hours a week are eligible for a Training Allowance. In order to be consistent with these regulations and to preserve the right to define full-time provision for a specific Programme, the LSC full-time definition for ESP participants is 20 hours and above the minimum for the receipt of a Training Allowance. Consequently, ESP provision cannot be delivered for 16, 17, 18 or 19 hours a week.
where the number of learning hours might be reduced to less than 16 hours a week.

Provision should be offered continuously throughout the year on a roll-on-roll-off basis so that referred customers can start at any time. If a provider needs to close for a holiday period, the period of closure will need to be added to the duration of a learner’s Programme in order to ensure continuation of a Training Allowance for full-time learners.

For full-time ESP participants the duration of a learning Programme is dependent on the number of weeks that Jobcentre Plus will offer a Training Allowance, currently 15 weeks. This can be extended for some learners in specific circumstances but, where Jobcentre Plus cannot approve an extension to the learning Programme, the participant can continue on a part-time basis.

To enable Jobcentre Plus to make accurate payment of training allowances for full-time learners undertaking at least 20 hours per week, the provider must confirm promptly (within 48 hours of the referral interview) to Jobcentre Plus the actual dates the Jobcentre Plus customer starts and finishes training, by completing and returning a Jobcentre Plus SL2 form.

**Basic skills provision**

All adult basic skills courses funded under this provision, in any subject, must lead to approved adult basic skills qualifications; that is, Adult Certificates in Basic Literacy and/or Numeracy and ESOL Skills for Life. Approved qualifications:

- For those **Under 19** can be found at [http://www.dfes.gov.uk/section96/](http://www.dfes.gov.uk/section96/)
- For those **19 and over** can be found at [http://www.dfes.gov.uk/section97/](http://www.dfes.gov.uk/section97/)

The LSC expects successful providers to offer all basic skills subjects (literacy, ESOL and numeracy) at all levels i.e. Entry Level 1, Entry Level 2, Entry Level 3, Level 1 and Level 2.

Programmes should typically comprise more than one basic skills subject learning aim, according to need, delivered concurrently or in succession. Learners should be enrolled onto Literacy or ESOL but not both as they are designed to meet the same needs for different learners. In line with the national focus on numeracy and its added premium in terms of a learner’s employability, all learners should have numeracy needs assessed and, where appropriate, met. This can be at any time during the learning programme with the timing and rationale included on the Individual Learning Plan (ILP). Learning aims for Literacy/ESOL and Numeracy and Employability can be at different levels in order to reflect learner needs and spiky profiles.

Providers will be expected to assess potential learner ability and needs through appropriate tools to determine learner suitability. The LSC expects

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3 ESOL for Work qualifications are not currently within the scope of the ESP offer.
providers 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. Providers will be paid a flat rate of £50 in respect of every Initial Assessment and guidance session that is undertaken for a customer who does not enrol onto the Programme, for example because they are referred to other more suitable provision or fail to attend the Programme.

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 Literacy Qualification.

**Employability provision**
All ESP participants should undertake suitable provision that will help them to find, apply for, keep and progress in a job. In line with research evidence from the NRDC on delivery that achieves the best results, providers will be expected to offer basic skills through embedded delivery within employability. All basic skills provision for learners at all levels of ability, should be delivered in the context of job-search, interview, presentation, time-management, communication at work, team working and the generic skills, attitudes and behaviours that employers want to see in new recruits.

Providers should offer suitably able participants the opportunity to take an approved Employability qualification at an appropriate level. There are now a number of different qualifications offered by Awarding Bodies at Entry Level 2, Entry Level 3 and Level 1. The LSC does not recommend any Awarding Body specific awards/qualifications for employability but seeks to ensure that all that are supported are consistent in coverage of appropriate units and do not duplicate basic skills elements covered and funded via other approved qualifications.

Providers should use their judgement of a learner’s ability to achieve an employability qualification at a specific level before registering them with an awarding body. Learners who may not be able to achieve a full qualification are not precluded from being enrolled onto specific units with an awarding body. Achievement of a unit will boost a learner’s confidence and encourage progress.

Providers who use the ASDAN Employability award (that was developed under pathfinder trials for the Qualification and Credit Framework (QCF) and was used successfully by providers who took part in the pathfinder trial for this Programme) should be aware that, for the purpose of delivering the Employability Skills Programme, Unit 5, Applying for a Job, is mandatory.

As provision is aiming to lead to a job outcome for ESP participants, providers will be expected to have arrangements in place, through links with local
employers, to offer work experience/trials/tasters and placements for a part of the Programme duration, where it is considered appropriate, and where learners can remain supported by a Training Allowance.

Customer suitability
It is the responsibility of the contracted provider to determine customer suitability for the Employability Skills Programme. Where customers are considered unsuitable (see below) providers will be expected to refer customers to alternative, more appropriate provision that could be LSC-funded or funded by Jobcentre Plus. It is therefore important for contracted providers to have an understanding of all the available provision available to the customer group in a given geographical location. Where customers are referred elsewhere the REF2 should be returned to Jobcentre Plus giving a reason for customer unsuitability.

Customers with no or very poor English language/literacy skills (significantly below Entry level 1 and considered unlikely to achieve a qualification) must have these needs addressed before being considered for entry to this provision, as they may not be able to benefit from the employability elements of the programmes 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. Providers must refer these customers to other-funded, nationally approved, adult basic skills provision that is available in their organisation or by arrangement with a nearby provider.

Some customers may not be suitable because they have complex problems over and above basic skills and employability needs that should to be addressed before any learning can be undertaken, such as homelessness, addiction or other health problems. These customers should be referred to other sources of help that, wherever possible, should be provided alongside the ESP learning provision.

Learner progress and review
An Individual Learning Plan (ILP) must be completed for, and agreed with, each learner. The ILP should include a record of the initial assessment of basic skills needs, employment history and goals, the agreed learning programme including details of subjects, qualifications and levels to be undertaken. Learner progress must be reviewed every 3 weeks and recorded, including any changes in programme content, on the ILP.

ESP aims to ensure that all participants can continue in learning and/or complete qualifications with contracted provider support once they have started a job. This in-work provision and support can still be funded under ESP, but learners will have to continue on a part-time basis as they will no longer be able to undertake full-time provision, nor receive a Training Allowance, once they have started work.

Providers should ensure wherever possible that employers who take on ESP participants are able to continue to help them to progress through further learning, and the achievement of higher levels of qualifications, with the
support of Train to Gain funding or an Apprenticeship, whichever is the most appropriate.

Links with other provision/programmes
ESP providers will need to understand the extent of provision available for this customer group in order to ensure that they can be referred to the most suitable provision, either before undertaking ESP (see paragraphs 29 and 30), during or after a period on the programme. Similarly, referral to ESP from other LSC or Jobcentre Plus funded provision/programmes is likely in the context of delivering a more integrated employment and skills service. Providers will need to develop links with the following:

- **Skills for Jobs.** A range of LSC discretely funded and European Social Fund (ESF) co-financed activities will be available to the economically inactive, including Jobcentre Plus customers and ESP participants, in all regions. These activities primarily include short inputs focused on improving an aspect of employability and do not need to lead to formal qualifications. We anticipate that ESP participants are likely to progress from ESP to a Skills for Jobs provision offer, at an appropriate time, in particular to **Local Employment Partnership (LEP) generated pre-employment provision.** ESP participants can be considered for short, pre-employment training for Jobcentre Plus customers, leading to actual vacancies. This training is likely to last for 2 to 8 weeks and can include specific provision developed by Sector Skills Councils known as Sector Employability Toolkits.

- **Flexible New Deal (FND)**. JCP Advisers will be able to refer long-term unemployed customers eligible for FND to ESP where this is considered the most appropriate provision. In addition, FND participants could be referred to ESP by the Jobcentre Plus primary provider.

- **The Employment Support Allowance**. ESA recipients will be able to be referred to ESP in the same way that incapacity benefits recipients (i.e. IB, SDA and IS on the grounds of incapacity) can be referred under ESP Phase 3.

- **Other JCP-funded provision.** Jobcentre Plus is procuring ESF co-financed and other-funded provision for its customers, which include ESP eligible customers. This could be suitable for customers before or after a period supported by ESP.

Providers will be expected to work together in partnership to ensure that Jobcentre Plus customers get the most appropriate provision and suitable

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4 Flexible New Deal, whereby those who have been unemployed for 12 months are referred to a Jobcentre Plus-funded primary provider to support achievement of a job, will be introduced nationally from April 2009.

5 The Employment and Support Allowance will replace incapacity benefits (i.e. IB, SDA and IS on the grounds of incapacity) from October 2008.
support to move them most effectively from welfare to work, without
duplication or double funding of activities/outcomes.

**Exclusions/Ineligible Activity**

The following are not in scope for ESP delivery:
- Non-approved qualifications
- ESOL for Work qualifications
- Employability qualifications that have not been agreed as appropriate by the LSC.