

Jobcentre Plus and Thurrock Council Partnership Agreement

This Partnership Agreement outlines the approach that Jobcentre Plus, Thurrock Council and the Work Programme Providers, Ingeus, and Seetec will take to reduce unemployment in Thurrock in 2014/15. This Partnership Agreement will be underpinned by a Joint Action Plan that will be used as the vehicle to monitor performance against agreed action.

The Agreement will be reviewed by partners on a quarterly basis. Actions will however be progressed as the need arises throughout the year, and recognises flexibility as priorities change throughout the year. Changes to the agreement will be subject to one months notice.

The Agreement builds on the successful commitment that Jobcentre Plus gave to Thurrock Council that they would work to reduce the number of claimants in Thurrock to below 3,600 by October 2013 (although there are more contemporary figures available). It looks to develop this further and build in aspirational targets across three key elements of the JSA register for 2014/15.

The agreement recognises that Jobcentre Plus, the Local Authority and the Work Programme Providers must work collaboratively to achieve these targets.

We can measure success of our partnership work against four main target indicators:

Our aspirations for reducing unemployment levels in Thurrock are:

- **Reduce the JSA register in Thurrock to 2,900 by the end of October 2014, with a further reduction to 2,600 by March 2015.**
- **Reduce youth unemployment by reducing the number of 18 – 24 year olds claiming JSA to no more than 600 by March 2015**
- **To deliver the agreed outcomes from the co-located Troubled Families – Social Justice – REED Advisers**
- **To deliver agreed outcomes for NEETs.**
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Data Sharing Protocols

It is recognised that working in partnership to tackle worklessness will be enhanced by all parties working collaboratively to share information and data. To support this, notwithstanding legislative and commercial restrictions, Jobcentreplus will work with Prime Providers to explore how data sharing protocols can be set up locally to establish effective joint working to tackle worklessness. In addition Jobcentreplus and Thurrock Council will ensure that the Protocols are in place to support the Welfare Reform and Troubled Families agenda.

1. Working in Partnership

The Economic Development and Skills Partnership (EDSP), reporting to Thurrock Business Board, will provide the formal structure for partners to develop and implement the strategies required to achieve these targets.

The Work Programme Prime Providers will provide appropriate strategic representatives to the EDSP.

The Local Authority will provide the secretariat for the board.

To support the Employer Offer the Local Authority will ensure that all development or regeneration initiatives in the Borough will have agreements built in that will commit access to jobs for unemployed residents in Thurrock. These will be formalised in planning discussions and through the use of Section 106 or, where appropriate, through any formal project agreements relating to specific schemes which the Council is a partner to – such as those within the six Growth Hubs.

Employment opportunities secured through LA planning and regeneration activity will be made available to Jobcentreplus and the Work Programme Providers

The Local Authority will ensure that employment opportunities both in-house and through its supply chain are made available to Jobcentreplus and Work Programme Providers and continue to develop Apprenticeship initiatives that are accessible to unemployed residents through Jobcentreplus and the Providers.

2. Our joint approach

These reductions cannot be achieved unless all parties work collaboratively to ensure that there is a transparent and effective offer for Thurrock Employers and that Thurrock residents have access to a wider labour market across local authority boundaries.

Jobcentreplus will develop a bespoke offer for employers that is effective and ensures that Thurrock residents are able to compete for Thurrock jobs. It will work in partnership with the Work Programme Providers, and other partners (for instance South Essex College and Thurrock Adult Community College) to ensure that unemployed Thurrock residents have the skills required to compete for vacancies.

Jobcentreplus will continue to make full use of the “travel to work” area for Thurrock residents, working collaboratively with Jobcentres and employers in the surrounding areas to ensure that Thurrock residents have the opportunity to compete effectively for all available jobs.

Thurrock Council and Jobcentreplus will work together to ensure that businesses across all key sectors in Thurrock can access the appropriate support to recruit the right candidates with the right skills.

3. The Employer Offer

The employer offer, facilitated by working in partnership with Thurrock Business Board and associated ‘umbrella’ groups, will be focused on ensuring that more employers use Jobcentreplus and its partners as the recruitment partners of choice. Opportunities created will be opened up to the Work Programme Providers and their supply chain.

4. Self-employment

Jobcentreplus, and its partners, will work in partnership with Thurrock Council and Thurrock Local Enterprise Agency to maximise the support available to residents who wish to follow a self-employment path out of unemployment. In addition Jobcentreplus will promote the use of available allowances and support to help Thurrock residents into self-employment.

5. Skills and Employment

This Service Level agreement recognises that to achieve the outcomes required it is necessary to align the skills levels of unemployed residents and school leavers with labour market demand. Through this agreement Jobcentreplus and Thurrock Council will work collaboratively with Skills Providers, for instance South Essex College and Thurrock Adult Community College, to provide bespoke and timely skills training to meet employer demands.

6. Addressing barriers

The aspirations set out in this document cannot be achieved unless all partners work collaboratively to address the barriers faced by unemployed residents in Thurrock. The Council will, therefore, work with appropriate partners to develop strategies that address the key barriers for residents. This might include, for example, residents for whom English is a second language, and affordable childcare to support parents into employment.

Jobcentreplus will use the Flexible Support Fund in Thurrock to ensure that recognised barriers are addressed through co-ordinated programmes of support. To facilitate the effective use of this fund, Jobcentreplus will invite appropriate EDSP members to participate in the commissioning process for grants.

Jobcentreplus will monitor the effectiveness of programme delivery to ensure that barriers are being addressed.

The Work Programme Providers will continue to offer bespoke support to long term unemployed residents, helping them to move into employment. They will also provide feedback on barriers faced to inform employment support delivery across the partnership. All partners will work collaboratively to ensure that a cohesive offer of support is provided to long-term unemployed residents in Thurrock.

All partners will continue to develop strategies to support disadvantaged groups, particularly carers, those with ESOL needs, care leavers, unemployed women and those with mental health conditions and disabilities. Jobcentreplus and the appropriate departments in Thurrock Council (Adult Learning, Connexions) will work together to ensure that a cohesive offer of support is in place.

It is recognised that employment opportunities in Thurrock are in some circumstances limited by gaps in public transport. Thurrock Council will work strategically with key partners to ensure that the impact on employment opportunities is considered

The partnership will work together to maximise the use of all of the support available for young people to get into employment in particular; apprenticeships, traineeships, sector based work academies, wage incentives and work experience.

7. Employment services of the future

In an increasingly digital age, where Universal Credit will be principally an online service, it is essential that all partners respond collaboratively to meet the needs of employers who are using on-line services as the recruitment method of choice and unemployed residents.

Jobcentreplus will work with employers, unemployed residents and partners to ensure that Universal Jobmatch is the preferred method of recruitment and that unemployed residents have the digital skills to navigate online services.

Jobcentreplus will also explore whether there are opportunities to pilot digitally based service delivery in Thurrock.

The Local Authority will promote on-line services through its own website and look to increase accessibility of digital services in Council premises.

The Work Programme Providers will ensure that access to online employment opportunities is a key component for every long-term unemployed claimant and will work with them to ensure that they have the skills to compete in the digital era.

8. Addressing embedded deprivation and embracing Social Justice

The aspirations set out above focus on reducing the JSA register over a 12 month period. However Jobcentreplus, the Local Authority and the Work Programme Providers all recognise the need to develop existing strategies that support those furthest from the Labour Market. All partners to this agreement will therefore continue to work collaboratively to address the needs of our most deprived residents.

Thurrock Council, Jobcentreplus and the Work Programme providers will work collaboratively to support those impacted by the benefit cap through effective employment solutions and build the taskforce to facilitate the implementation of future welfare reform.

Jobcentreplus will continue to work with Thurrock Council to ensure that implementation of the Benefit Cap in Thurrock is fully supported ensuring that employment is promoted as the main mitigation.

All partners will continue to develop strategies which tackle the key areas of ex-offenders, drugs and alcohol addiction and deprivation in localities, Although this agreement does not propose specific targets for this agenda, it recognises that co-ordinated activity in these areas together with a focused approach on tackling unemployment will result in an overall reduction in those claiming Out of Work Benefits in Thurrock and all partners will monitor performance trends to ensure that longer term objectives remain on track.