

New Deal for Communities

The National Evaluation

Research Reports

Job Brokerage: Inter-agency working

Research Report 15

The Neighbourhood Renewal Unit is currently sponsoring the 2002-2005 national evaluation of New Deal for Communities. This evaluation is being undertaken by a consortium of organisations co-ordinated by the Centre for Regional Economic and Social Research at Sheffield Hallam University. The views expressed in this report do not necessarily reflect those of the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit.

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Sheffield Hallam University

Job Brokerage: Inter-agency working

Research Report 15

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Executive Summary

Job brokerage projects have been established in a number of New Deal for Communities (NDC) areas as part of the worklessness theme of the programme. This review of inter-agency working in job brokerage projects is based on case study visits to three NDC areas where such projects are in progress. This stage of the research seeks to examine inter-agency working, particularly in terms of the relationship with Jobcentre Plus, and the potential for mainstreaming.

A range of organisations are involved in the development of job brokerage projects. The key partners include:

- Jobcentre Plus
- Training providers
- Business related partners (representatives and intermediaries as well as employers);
- NDC and NDC projects
- Community organisations

From the research, a number of factors can be identified to indicate why and how these organisations work together on job brokerage. These are shown in the table below.

Why and how agencies work together

Why?	How?
Funding and funding streams	Formal contracts
Mutual benefits	Informal relationships
Obligation	Strategically and operationally
Added value	Through other shared partners
Avoid duplication	Shared activities: Events; information; referrals; networking and communication.
Co-location	Developments over time
Continued success	

A number of these factors are particularly relevant to the role of Jobcentre Plus in relation to job brokerage. These include the following:

Why?

- **Funding:** Up to £50,000 is provided to Jobcentre Plus to work with each of the NDC partnerships. In the case study areas, this resource has been used to varying degrees to provide secondees to the job brokerage projects. Secondees provide an important bridge between the two organisations and are considered to be “part of the job brokerage team” within some of the case study areas.
- **Mutual benefits:** The relationship between Jobcentre Plus and job brokerage can be mutually beneficial. The two organisations provide complementary services, with each targeting a particular client group. Working to the strengths of each organisation, there is potential to assist more individuals into work, with both agencies able to claim an output. Complementary funding streams are essential for this.
- **Added value:** In working together, Jobcentre Plus and job brokerage are able to provide a more effective service for clients. In particular, job brokerage is viewed as “filling a gap in the market” in helping particular client groups that Jobcentre Plus either

finds difficult to access, or does not have the resources to support. Job brokerage also provides strong links into the local community. Jobcentre Plus are able to add value in a number of ways including the provision of benefits advice, resolving benefits issues, referral of clients and the sharing of information about vacancies.

How?

- **Formal contracts:** Service Level Agreements have been developed between Jobcentre Plus and the job brokerage projects in each of the case study areas. These identify the services that each will provide and define roles. The relationship is also established on a formal basis through the appointment of the secondees; outreach work by Jobcentre Plus staff at job brokerage premises; some formal referral mechanisms; and Jobcentre Plus representation on appropriate working groups.
- **Informal relationships:** In the areas where the relationship between the two organisations is strong, there is evidence of good informal linkages between the two, building upon the foundations of the formal agreement. In these areas, communication and information sharing between the two is good; there is mutual respect for the work that they are undertaking; and informal meetings and drop in sessions are held. Personal relationships are identified as an important factor in this process.
- **Shared activities:** To a varying degree across the case study areas a number of shared activities including events, information and referrals take place. The willingness and ability to share information appears to be particularly critical.

The potential for mainstreaming job brokerage activities has been considered in each of the case study areas. There is a view that Jobcentre Plus is already adapting some of its practices to reflect those of job brokerage, but barriers to mainstreaming this activity fully within Jobcentre Plus were also identified. In particular, there was concern about the extent to which the Jobcentre, as a national body, can adapt its practices sufficiently to respond to the local context within which it is operating.

In conclusion, a range of factors have been identified that contribute to more effective inter-agency working on job brokerage projects. These include:

Who? The need for the appropriate and relevant agencies to be involved;

Why? The need for complementary funding streams; added value; and sharing of success;

How? The need for formal contracts, where appropriate; understanding of roles and responsibilities; participation in shared activities; and the most appropriate individuals to be engaged in building relationships.

1 Introduction

Job brokerage projects have been established in a number of New Deal for Communities (NDC) areas as part of the worklessness theme of the programme. This review of inter-agency working in job brokerage projects is based on case study visits to three NDC areas where such projects are in progress. These are:

- Bradford – delivered by @Work Recruitment, began in April 2002.
- Greets Green in Sandwell – delivered by Pertemps Employment Alliance, began in August 2002.
- West Ham and Plaistow – now delivered in-house under the Elite brand, after initially being contracted to Reed in Partnership for one year.

This report is the second in a series of research publications relating to the development of job brokerage projects. The first report provided an overview of the early findings from the case study projects examining the following: the nature of the problem addressed; the range of interventions offered; delivery of projects; early outputs and key lessons. The report concluded that there are a number of issues to be aware of in the development of job brokerage activity. These are:

- The most appropriate methods for **embedding the project into the community** and tapping into informal networks;
- The need to reach the **hardest to help groups** whilst also achieving the specified job targets;
- The most appropriate method of **delivery of the project**, whether internally or using an external contracted agency;
- Relating to the above, whether the focus of the project is on **soft or hard outcomes** and, if the former, how these can best be measured;
- The development of a service that has the opportunity to **experiment, innovate and evolve** whilst also achieving specified job targets;
- The ways in which **barriers to employment for the client group**, including transport and travel horizons, can most effectively be addressed;
- The need to provide a service for the **economically inactive** that is appropriately reflected in the project outcomes;
- What aspects of the project should be **mainstreamed** or should remain a supplement to statutory services;
- The need to **work effectively with Jobcentre Plus** and to build a complementary service;
- The extent to which developing **strong relationships with employers** is included as a component of the service and how to develop this in the relatively early stages, and its impact on effectiveness;
- The most effective methods of **engaging with and developing networks** with the key agencies and service providers in the locality;
- The need to provide a service that delivers **sustainable, high quality jobs** and which can also facilitate **career progression**.

The second stage of the research seeks to examine a number of these issues in more detail. Most specifically, the research considers issues around inter-agency working, particularly in terms of the relationship with Jobcentre Plus, and those relating to mainstreaming. In order to maintain continuity and identify evolving issues, the same case study areas were used as for the first research report.

The remainder of this report covers the following areas:

- An initial overview, generally, of progress in the case study areas, identifying specific issues arising over the last 6 months;
- Background and context to the issue of inter-agency working, with particular reference to the role of Jobcentre Plus in this capacity;
- An examination of inter-agency working on the job brokerage case study projects including:
 - Agencies involved
 - Why and how agencies work together
 - The role of Jobcentre Plus
 - Potential for mainstreaming
 - Effective inter-agency working – lessons learned
- Finally, conclusions of the report are presented in the form of a checklist for other NDC areas undertaking inter-agency working on job brokerage projects.

2 Case study overview

2.1 Context

Job brokerage projects have been developed in response to the problems that NDC residents have encountered in accessing jobs. Issues that limit access to employment have been identified as:

- Detachment from the labour market;
- Detachment from services aimed at improving employment prospects;
- Lack of appropriate knowledge, skills and experience of work;
- The recruitment practices of employers.

Through a package of interventions, job brokerage seeks to address these issues, providing the bridge back into work for unemployed and economically inactive residents.

2.2 Delivery models

Different models of job brokerage projects have been developed in the different case study areas. The key difference between the areas is in the organisation delivering the project. In Bradford and Greets Green an external agency has been contracted for delivery, whilst in West Ham and Plaistow the project was initially contracted out, but is now being delivered internally.

2.3 Aims and objectives

All of the job brokerage projects have specified targets, largely relating to the number of local residents accessing jobs. Within this, some breakdown of the type of residents finding work, in terms of economic status, ethnic group, etc is also specified. Additional targets might relate to the number of residents using the service and the sustainability of jobs accessed. These targets for the project also tie in with the wider objectives of the NDC in terms of reducing unemployment and increasing the wealth within their locality.

One of the issues that has become apparent over the last six months is the extent to which the projects are working with non NDC residents, for which they do not receive funding and who cannot be counted towards the output targets. In one of the areas it is estimated that approximately 20-25 per cent of their clients are from outside the specified geographical area. They are now beginning to monitor the work that they do with non NDC residents and may seek funding from alternative sources for this work.

2.4 Interventions

Broadly speaking, the range of activities undertaken by job brokerage projects can be summarised as:

- Attracting clients;
- Working with clients;
- Working with employers;

- Post placement support;
- Partnership building and networking.

All of the projects continue to use this model of implementation, although there is a stronger focus in some areas on particular components. Over the last six months the projects have continued to evolve and there have been changes in terms of new activities undertaken and adaptations of existing activity. The key changes are summarised below.

2.5 Increased training activity

Within two of the case study areas the provision of training activity has increased considerably. This is particularly in response to local developments which will lead to new job creation. Examples include:

- Provision of customised Customer Service Training in West Ham in order to meet the demand for jobs in the hospitality sector;
- Provision of training in childcare in response to a shortage of qualified employees, in particular to meet the demand that will be created in the Resource Centres that are being built in West Ham;
- Provision of three day retail courses to prepare potential employees for jobs that are being created in the development of the Bullring in Birmingham.

2.6 Increased activity with employers

Work with employers was identified as one of the less well established aspects of the job brokerage projects in the previous research report. Over the last six months, however, all of the case study areas have undertaken considerable work with employers, particularly in linking in with large local developments and identifying future employment opportunities. Other ways in which the employer focus has been adapted include:

- In Greets Green they have appointed a dedicated officer to work specifically with local employers;
- In Bradford they have undertaken a range of work with employers. This includes:
 - Allowing employers to use @Work premises for interviews;
 - Working with large companies including Abbey National, Grattan and Morrisons;
 - Developing ‘terms and conditions’ which employers have to sign. These relate to issues such as recruitment methods, job descriptions, wages etc.

2.7 Additional contracts

There is an indication that the organisations delivering the job brokerage projects are expanding their activities within the local area and have obtained additional funding from alternative sources. In West Ham, Elite have been contracted to deliver a Neighbourhood Renewal Fund project to provide small scale bursaries for training and education; and in Bradford, @Work have contracted with Jobcentre Plus to deliver Minority Ethnic Outreach work. There is clearly potential for synergy with these activities and they provide options for the future sustainability of job brokerage activities.

2.8 Partnership building and networking

Issues relating to partnership building and networking are addressed in more detail in sections 3 and 4.

2.9 Outcomes

All of the projects are currently achieving their targets in terms of placing individuals into work. A summary of outputs indicates that:

- In the year April 2002 – 2003, 186 individuals were placed into work in Bradford (to qualify as an output, individuals have to remain employed for a minimum of four weeks). The project achieved both its target and its bonus. Since April 2003, 32 NDC area beneficiaries have been placed into jobs. In relation to previous outputs, this is relatively low. However, there have been changes in staffing at @Work and during this period a number of new team members have been recruited.
- In Greets Green, 110 individuals were placed into work during the period August 2002 – June 2003. The target, to March 2004, is for 200 individuals to be placed. It is anticipated that this will be achieved relatively easily. Sustainability issues are being considered. Currently, approximately 30 of those who have been placed have remained in work for 13 weeks or more.
- In the year 2002 – 2003, 157 new residents used the Elite service; 39 unemployed and 16 economically inactive residents were placed into work; and 40 unemployed residents undertook training. They currently have around 150 'active' members on their database.

Whilst the projects are achieving their targets, a number of issues still remain in relation to progress. In particular:

- In one of the areas there was some concern expressed about the 'quality' of the jobs that are being accessed, with many offering salaries at, or just above, the minimum wage. However, it was acknowledged that those entering employment have limited experience, qualifications and skills and that, therefore, their employment options will also be limited. Of key importance is their ability to use the initial job as a stepping stone to 'better' employment with a higher wage.
- Relating to the point above, the extent to which the job brokerage projects are currently facilitating career progression is being questioned. There may be potential for a greater emphasis on improving the career prospects of those currently in employment.
- The issue of sustainability of jobs and retention in employment once individuals are placed was also raised.

3 Context – Inter-agency working and the role of Jobcentre Plus

The remainder of this report examines the role of inter-agency working in the implementation and delivery of job brokerage projects in the case study areas. In particular, there is a focus on the relationship between the projects and Jobcentre Plus. This relationship needs to be viewed in the context of the contribution of Jobcentre Plus, more generally, to NDC.

Currently, funding is provided by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) that equates to up to £50,000 per annum for each NDC area. Most commonly, this provides one or two dedicated members of staff to work in support of the partnership. Although the NDCs worked with the Employment Service and Benefits Agency prior to their merger, the creation of Jobcentre Plus is believed to have enabled DWP to provide “*more effective support for NDC’s employment strategies*”.¹

During 2003-2004, DWP will develop Service Level Agreements with each Partnership and by March 2004 should have agreed a complete timetable specifying when the support each Partnership receives can be mainstreamed into the Jobcentre Plus work programme.

Work has taken place within some NDCs to examine the relationship with Jobcentre Plus. In particular, an event was held in November 2002² to consider partnership working between the two and identify how best to meet local residents’ needs. During the workshop sessions, a number of issues were discussed that are of particular relevance to the role of Jobcentre Plus in job brokerage. In sharing good practice, the following points were made:

- The relationship with other agencies is vital. Understanding what they offer and signposting people to them provides a more rounded, customer friendly service;
- A structure needs to be established – there needs to be a decision between both parties about how communications will take place;
- Build a good relationship with the district management team (at Jobcentre Plus) and make sure that they buy into what you are doing – this is vital;
- Jobcentre advisors should be better trained to support partnership working in outreach centres and Jobcentre Plus should tap into existing NDC outreach sites;
- Secondments both ways have proved valuable;
- Pooling of knowledge is very important. Jobcentre Plus need to know their community better to help them with targeting of customers and have a better understanding of needs.

Key barriers to overcome in working with Jobcentre Plus were also identified. These included the need to recognise that the organisations have common goals and are not in opposition to each other; and the need for good communication between the two. In particular, if communication is poor, it is important to find out why this is the case.

¹ NDC Programme Note, 14/2003, February 2003

² See Evaluation Report of the New Deal for Communities Partnership Event held in Derby 19/20 November 2002

4 Inter-agency working in job brokerage projects

4.1 Agencies involved

A range of agencies are involved, to a lesser or greater degree, in job brokerage projects in the case study areas. In broad terms, the majority of these can be grouped into a number of categories. These include:

Jobcentre Plus

Jobcentre Plus is the key 'partner' involved with job brokerage projects. Similarities in remit and objectives make close working with Jobcentre Plus essential if the potential for synergy between the two organisations is to be maximised. Given its importance, the relationship between the two is examined in more detail in section 4.3 below.

Training providers

Job brokerage projects work with training providers including local colleges, private sector and community sector providers, as well as developing their own, in-house bespoke training packages for clients. Increasingly, job brokerage projects are working in partnership to deliver pre-recruitment training in identified occupational areas including, for example, retail and childcare, in order for residents to improve their prospects of accessing newly created jobs. Training providers are key partners in developing the employability skills of the job brokerage client group, thus providing the 'bridge' into work.

Business related partners

The focus of business-related partnership working varies across the case study areas from working with intermediaries such as Business Link (see Figure 4.1) and other recruitment agencies (be it private sector, Jobcentre related or those funded through other government programmes such as Action Teams for Jobs), to direct contact with employers. The common theme is to improve understanding of the demand side of the labour market and develop appropriate relationships in order to assist residents in accessing job opportunities. In addition, working with agencies such as Business Link provides opportunities for job brokerage clients to tap into entrepreneurial activity and job creation projects.

NDC and NDC projects

Two of the case study projects are delivered by private sector organisations, external to the NDC. For these projects, the NDC itself is an important partner. The projects are contracted to the NDC, but also work with the NDC, for example at a strategic level in Bradford through the Jobs and Economy Working Group. In acting as an 'umbrella' for the employment, enterprise and skills related NDC projects, the working group helps to ensure that all of the relevant agencies operating in the NDC locality are aware of each other and of all relevant activities.

There is clearly potential for a number of NDC projects to work together in relation to employment issues. This is evident in all of the case study areas where job brokerage, business start up, skills development and occupational training projects feed off each other. The Greets Green Build and Train Project (see Figure 4.2) is one example of how two NDC projects have worked successfully together. Within Greets Green, job brokerage has also worked closely with other training related NDC projects and those which provide benefits advice.

Figure 4.1: Working with Business Link

Within Bradford Trident, @Work have developed a close working relationship with Business Link. The two work together in a variety of areas including:

- Job descriptions, personnel specifications and business plans for new businesses;
- Sharing information about training courses to ensure that they are not duplicating provision, and for Business Link to pass information on to local businesses;
- Specifically, they are working together to provide training for the development of a Centre of Excellence for Food Technology in order to establish a fully traceable Halal meat industry in the area;
- Business Link raises awareness of @Work amongst the local business population. Through NDC they also offer a wage subsidy that enables an employer to offset the cost of specific training that an employee may require;
- Business Forums are held every quarter attended by local businesses. @Work have attended on an ad hoc basis in order to give presentations and raise awareness;
- Business Link use @Work in order to ensure that local people are recruited to local jobs. For example, they recruited 42 people through @Work for a local clothing company.

The relationship between the two organisations has been developed, initially, through the formal channel of the Jobs and Economy Working Group, but has been strengthened through informal phone conversations, visits to the @Work premises and, more generally, keeping each other informed and updated about the latest activities.

Community organisations

Whilst community organisations may not be directly involved with the delivery of the job brokerage projects, their involvement was identified as critical in order for the projects to most effectively meet the needs of the local community. Within one of the case study areas it was suggested that door knocking had not been as successful a method of outreach work as had been hoped, and that developing relationships with established community representatives and organisations had been much more fruitful. The employment of those with appropriate language skills and cultural awareness was identified as an important factor in strengthening these relationships.

A number of other partners were also identified in the case study areas. For example, in West Ham, Elite also work closely with London Borough of Newham Access to Jobs Team and Sure Start.

Figure 4.2: Greets Green Build and Train Project

The Greets Green Build and Train Project is funded through the NDC and the Learning and Skills Council. The project recruits and trains disadvantaged young people aged 16-24 in the construction sector. The young people undergo an initial two week 'taster' at Sandwell College before choosing whether to specialise in brickwork, carpentry, plastering or painting and decorating. After an induction period of up to two months in college they will start a placement at an appropriate place of work. The placement involves four days on-site training and one day a week at college working towards an NVQ level 2. As part of the package, each young person receives:

- £75 per week (attendance generated)
- a set of tools for the appropriate trade
- a bus pass for the duration of the scheme
- personal and protective equipment
- college tuition fee

Working with job brokerage

Job brokerage has played an important role in the Build and Train project. Initial contact with job brokerage came through the NDC. The two organisations have worked together to identify appropriate young people for the project, with job brokerage providing vital local knowledge and contacts. Their understanding of the local community and linkages to young people and their parents were important in this process.

In addition, all young people that attended the job brokerage premises who expressed an interest in construction were put forward to the project. These young people were rated as having a high chance of success in the project as they have already demonstrated a willingness to work and an interest in the occupational area. Overall, approximately 50% of young people enrolled on the Build and Train project came through job brokerage.

4.2 Why and how agencies work together

During the case study visits, interviewees identified a range of reasons as to why and how agencies work together on job brokerage. The main reasons given are presented in Table 4.1. Below we provide more details about activities in the case study areas relating to each of these. Clearly there is some overlap across some of the categories and, therefore, some are dealt with in tandem.

Table 4.1: Why and how agencies work together

Why	How
Funding and funding streams	Formal contracts
Mutual benefits	Informal relationships
Obligation	Strategically and operationally
Added value	Through other shared partners
Avoid duplication	Shared activities: Events; information; referrals; networking and communication.
Co-location	Developments over time
Continued success	

Why agencies work together

The **funding** of a project has a key role to play in determining whether agencies are able to work together effectively. During the interviews, funding was identified as being both a catalyst and facilitator of partnership working, as well as being a potential barrier.

Within the NDC area generally, the significant investment of NDC resources was identified as a major incentive for organisations to work together. The result of this has been the development of partnerships and inter-agency working that would not otherwise have taken place. In particular, the NDC itself has enabled the larger, regional and national organisations to tap into local communities because they have developed the appropriate community links.

Whilst the NDC funding is therefore regarded as an important catalyst to partnership development, the level of resources invested in the area can also act as a potential barrier to other organisations investing further resources in the locality. Within one of the case study areas there is a perception that a number of agencies believe that sufficient funding has been channelled into the NDCs and that, therefore, any additional funding that is available should be targeted elsewhere. As a result, NDC areas are being excluded from some funding streams.

At a more specific project level, funding models across different organisations were identified as critical in enabling the agencies to work together on job brokerage. This is exemplified by the situation in West Ham and Plaistow where Elite, Jobcentre Plus and Reed Action Team for Jobs (funded through Employment Zone and Action Team for Jobs) have developed a mutually beneficial working relationship, partly as a result of their different funding streams. Each of the agencies is willing to refer clients to the others as there is potential for all organisations that have had input into helping a client access work to claim an output. There are no double funding issues as the NDC can match fund against either of the other agencies. It is important that everyone involved in the different agencies is clear that this is the case as this prevents potential tensions arising, as has occurred in other areas.

One of the key reasons for agencies working together is that they recognise the **mutual benefits** of doing so. The majority of organisations are constrained in what they can do by resources and time and, as such, are unlikely to invest in developing relationships unless they can see 'what's in it for us?'. Within the networks developed by the job brokerage projects there are clear benefits for all of those involved. In particular, for training providers and other employment related agencies, improved access to the client groups is the major benefit to be gained from working together. The benefits for business related agencies include access to potential employees, and the opportunity to influence their training and development.

Funding streams and an understanding of the mutual benefits of a relationship are important factors in developing effective partnerships. It is also the case that some organisations work together because they have to. Within job brokerage, the prime example of this is the role of Jobcentre Plus. Funding is in place specifically to enable the Jobcentres to work with the NDCs (see section 3) and in all of the case study areas this has been used partly to fund joint working with the job brokerage projects. Whilst this means that there is an **obligation** for the two organisations to work together, there are also a range of other factors including mutual benefits, added value and avoiding duplication that make this relationship vital.

Improving the service provided by job brokerage is a key consideration in identifying and working with partners. This is the rationale behind the need to **add value** and to **avoid duplication**. Client referrals are a key way in which inter-agency working adds value.

Clients who are not job ready can be referred to appropriate training providers, before returning to job brokerage to seek employment; there is also the potential for referral to alternative intermediaries if they are able to provide more resource intensive support for a client. The ability of job brokerage to invest both time and money in an individual was identified as a key reason for referrals by other employment related agencies. Overall, the need to identify where an individual can receive the most appropriate support and advice is paramount. Having a range of partners helps to facilitate this process. On the demand side, the linkages with businesses and business intermediaries adds value by providing employment opportunities for clients once they are considered to be job ready.

Within all of the case study areas there is considerable potential for duplication of services across a number of different agencies. The aims and objectives of the NDC job brokerage projects are not unique and are shared by, amongst others: Jobcentre Plus; other job brokerage projects operated by, for example, local authorities; and other private sector employment agencies funded through a variety of Government Programmes (e.g. Reed Action Team). In most of the areas duplication is avoided by clear designation of geographical boundaries and the identification of particular target groups of clients. This process is most effectively achieved when the agencies work co-operatively together and are willing to share information about their services.

Interviewees in two of the case studies identified the **co-location** of the project with other agencies as a factor in the development of partnership working. Within Greets Green, the main job brokerage premises are located next door to the NDC offices. This has particularly helped in raising awareness of the other NDC projects, resulting in some successful joint working (see Figure 4.2, Greets Green Build and Train). Within Greets Green, there is also a 'spoke' office based within the community. The location of this office is felt to have been particularly beneficial in attracting individuals who are reluctant to travel to the main job brokerage and Jobcentre Plus offices.

The Elite project in West Ham and Plaistow is located alongside a number of other projects, including Sure Start. The informality of being able to 'knock on the door' at Elite was identified as an advantage for clients of other projects, meaning that they are able to access a range of services at one location. To some extent the premises occupied by Elite and others offer a one stop shop for holistic support. Although informal joint working has been beneficial, discussions are now underway with Sure Start about the possibility of a more formal contracting relationship that will extend the Elite service to the entire Sure Start client group, not just those resident in the NDC area.

The final reason identified as to why agencies work together on job brokerage was because there is **evidence of the success** that this approach brings. The achievement of positive outcomes for all involved provides a significant incentive for continued joint working. Through this process, personal relationships and trust are both strengthened and the willingness to work together is, therefore, reinforced.

How agencies work together

Agencies working with the job brokerage projects do so through a variety of **formal** and **informal** means. Formal relationships include:

- Service Level Agreements with Jobcentre Plus;
- Provision of secondees by Jobcentre Plus;
- Relationships developed through established working groups e.g. Jobs and Economy Working Group at Bradford Trident.

Although these formal mechanisms exist for inter-agency working, the majority of interviewees stressed **informality and personal relationships** as being the key to effective co-operation. It was also acknowledged, however, that this can take some time. There is a need to tap into **existing networks**, but it is also important to identify the right person, operating at the right level, with whom an appropriate relationship can be developed. Whilst this process is relatively straight forward with Jobcentre Plus, where an individual from the district office is nominated to work with the NDC, this can be far more problematic in other, large organisations. Within the larger organisations in particular, it is also important to have a shared understanding of roles and responsibilities at both a **strategic** and **operational** level. This is particularly the case within Jobcentre Plus where an understanding of the principles involved in shared working need to be cascaded down throughout the organisation. As a result, those working with the client group are fully aware of the most appropriate channels through which they can link into the job brokerage project.

Despite the general agreement that individual personalities are a critical factor in inter-agency working, within one of the case study areas it was also acknowledged that the lack of any formal framework for joint working may have hindered the development of some relationships. Where joint working has been achieved, this is largely considered to have been on an 'ad hoc' basis; as a result there is no established structure within which this process can be replicated.

Agencies working together on job brokerage do so through a variety of **shared activities** that, broadly speaking, can be summarised as:

- Shared events;
- Shared information;
- Referrals;
- Networking and communication.

Within the case study areas there are a range of specific activities that fall into these categories. Figure 4.3 provides details of one of the networking events that takes place in Bradford on a regular basis. Other examples of shared activities include:

- In West Ham and Plaistow, Elite provide a range of services including training, working with clients once in employment, business start-up information and benefits advice at the Reed Action Team premises;
- Elite also provide training specifically targeted for other NDC projects, for example customised customer care packages for individuals working with the Food Access Project;
- Some degree of sharing of vacancy information with Jobcentre Plus is evident in all of the case study areas. In Bradford, the Jobcentre Plus secondee takes a laptop to the @Work premises from which she is able to access LMS;
- In Bradford, the job brokerage project shares examples of best practice working with employers with training providers;
- In Greets Green, job brokerage representatives have worked with the Bangladeshi community organisation, doing drop in sessions, in order to improve access to employment opportunities;
- Within all of the case study areas, clients are referred to and from appropriate training providers.

Figure 4.3: Inter-agency breakfast meetings

Networking is an important component of the development of the @Work job brokerage project that has been implemented in the Bradford Trident area. Whilst relationships have been developed through both formal and informal methods, the holding of regular breakfast meetings is identified as one way in which networking has progressed.

Breakfast meetings, where continental breakfast and tea and coffee are provided, are held approximately every two months and include representatives of the job brokerage project, training providers, Jobcentre Plus and local community groups.

A variety of topics are discussed at the meetings including current vacancies; the training needs of existing candidates (i.e. NDC residents who are seeking work); the identification of available training; and any additional opportunities there are for agencies to work together.

The meetings are seen as beneficial by all involved as they result in improved understanding of each others roles, responsibilities and objectives and enable information sharing that will help to improve services that can be offered to NDC residents.

One of the key messages to emerge from the case study visits is that the development of such joint working takes time. An example was given in Bradford where difficulties were initially encountered in referring clients to training providers because a number of clients were then failing to attend courses, which could cause potential tensions between organisations. However, joint work has been done to overcome these problems and they have reduced the dropout from courses by holding them at the @Work premises. Overall, it was stressed that organisations need time to understand each other's 'purposes and systems', and that once this is achieved, joint working can be much more effective.

4.3 The role of Jobcentre Plus

Jobcentre Plus has an important role in ensuring that job brokerage projects achieve their maximum potential. There was a recognition in more than one of the case study areas that the change from separate Employment Service and Benefits Agency to Jobcentre Plus has helped to facilitate better joint working with external organisations. As part of this change, it is felt that there is increasing pressure within Jobcentre Plus that "*the only right way to work is to work together*".

The role of Jobcentre Plus can be examined by considering the issues identified in section 4.2 above in relation to why and how organisations work together.

Why Jobcentre Plus works with job brokerage

The role of Jobcentre Plus in job brokerage projects stems initially from the provision of significant **funding** (up to £50,000 in each NDC area) for it to work within the NDC areas. Whilst this can be used to resource a variety of activities, one of the most common is in relation to job brokerage projects operating in the areas.

Within all of the case study areas the funding has been used to provide **secondees** to work with the job brokerage projects. In West Ham and Plaistow, two Jobcentre Plus employees are employed as outreach workers, based at the Elite offices; in Bradford, a

secondee from Jobcentre Plus works at the @Work offices four half days a week; and in Greets Green a Jobcentre Plus employee is seconded to the project for two days a week. The extent to which the remainder of the £50,000 funding given to Jobcentre Plus has been used to work with the NDCs appears to differ across the case study areas.

The way in which the secondees are presented varies in the different job brokerage projects – within West Ham they are full-time members of the Elite team; and in Bradford the secondee wears an @Work badge during her time in the @Work offices. Here, the secondee is considered to be “*part of the @Work team*”. This removal of Jobcentre Plus identity is deliberate, with all parties acknowledging that a proportion of the client group with which they are working remain suspicious of, and ill at ease with, the Jobcentre culture. Within Greets Green, there is a feeling at the Jobcentre that if the linkages between Jobcentre Plus and the job brokerage project aren’t made explicit from the outset, then this could become a problem when job brokerage ends and Jobcentre Plus assumes some related responsibilities.

A number of additional issues relating to the secondees and their work were raised during the interviews. These included:

- Elite has found it beneficial that the same two secondees have remained in post throughout the lifetime of the project – this has helped to ensure continuity for the client group;
- That there are considerable benefits to employing secondees as they are aware of the issues from both sides and can, therefore, help to build bridges between the organisations;
- Within Bradford they have recently appointed two new secondees to work with the NDC, one with a particular focus on job brokerage. Both of the appointees are from ethnic minority groups and are fluent in Urdu and Punjabi. This was felt to be important in helping to develop relations with the job brokerage client group.
- The important role that secondees play is also acknowledged in Bradford, where it was suggested that “*It’s not so much about systems, it’s about how energetic and flexible individuals can be*”. The expertise and commitment of the secondees is felt to be critical. In Bradford they have appointed individuals who are experienced but “*not just going through the motions*”. The role of the seconded staff was summarised as follows:

“Seconded staff need to know what they are there to do, how to do it and they need to be monitored to make sure that they are doing it effectively”.

The funding of Jobcentre Plus activities more generally, and the way that this links into their performance targets, is also of relevance to the way in which they work with job brokerage. If a client is referred from Jobcentre Plus to job brokerage and is subsequently helped into work, Jobcentre Plus can still claim the output. These **mutual benefits** provide an incentive to ‘share’ clients and to ensure that they are made aware of agencies that can provide the most appropriate advice and support.

In one of the case study areas the job brokerage project provides Jobcentre Plus with details of all of the clients that they place. This gives Jobcentre Plus staff the opportunity to identify if they initially referred any of these clients to the job brokerage. As a result, they are more willing to do so in the future.

Work has been done to ensure that there is no “them and us” situation. There is a generally held view at the Jobcentre that whatever job brokerage do is a bonus for them. There is no sense that the two organisations are in competition and all of the staff understand this. The foundation of the relationship is identified as the fact that “*Jobcentre Plus believes in the project and they sell the project to their clients*”.

Within this area, Jobcentre Plus targets have recently been altered so that they get half as many points again if they place an individual into work from one of the six most deprived wards in the district. This includes the NDC area. This has altered the focus of the Jobcentre Plus activities, and they now need to pay greater attention to these wards.

Within another of the areas there appears to have been some confusion over issues relating to “*who counts what job entry*”. This has only recently been resolved. There is a concern in this area that the two organisations do not have a good understanding of what they each bring to the relationship, and that each is working to its own agenda.

Part of the reason why resources have been given to Jobcentre Plus to work with job brokerage projects is the recognition of the **added value** to be gained from this. The added value of joint working was identified in relation to a variety of issues:

- There is a recognition in two of the case study areas that **job brokerage provides a service that Jobcentre Plus is unable to**. It is therefore seen as “*filling a gap in the market*”. This is particularly the case in relation to working with specific client groups. In the different areas, examples of this include ethnic minority groups and those who are ‘hardest to help’ and require the most intensive one to one support. In one area, the services that job brokerage are able to offer in this respect are considered to be “*quite enviable*” from a Jobcentre perspective.
- The development of **strong links into the local community** is another area where job brokerage projects are able to enhance the services of the Jobcentre. This is particularly because of the outreach work undertaken by job brokerage, for which Jobcentre Plus does not have the resources. In addition, the provision of alternative premises that are not associated with Jobcentre Plus enables secondees to work with a client group that may be reluctant to visit their premises.
- Job brokerage projects are able to deal with certain **client groups** better than Jobcentre Plus. Part of the reason for this is that it is not within the job brokerage remit to have to deal with benefits issues such as the black economy.
- Jobcentre Plus is able to **learn from the job brokerage activities** – secondees see alternative ways of placing individuals and can learn from the different business processes that are in operation.

How Jobcentre Plus works with job brokerage

Joint working between Jobcentre Plus and job brokerage projects is built upon a combination of **formal procedures** and **informal relationships**. Formal procedures that are in place include the following:

- In each of the case study areas **Service Level Agreements** (SLA) have been drawn up between Jobcentre Plus and job brokerage identifying the services that each will provide and defining roles. In one of the areas, joint working is regarded as a considerable success and the SLA is simply seen as a “*rubber stamp*” on the activities that are already being delivered. In another of the other areas, however, it is felt that there is a need to re-visit the SLA to ensure that services are being provided as originally agreed.
- Funding of **secondees** (see above).

- **Outreach work** at Jobcentre Plus premises by job brokerage staff on a regular basis.
- Some **formal referral mechanisms** have been developed e.g. in West Ham, Elite are included as an option on the 'Opportunities' section of the Jobcentre Plus database.
- Jobcentre Plus has **representation on appropriate working groups** within the NDC.

In one of the case study areas it was suggested that, initially, the links between the two organisations were formal because Jobcentre Plus “*was expected to contribute to the manpower*” but that the links are now “*considerably more relaxed*”. Where the relationship between Jobcentre Plus and job brokerage is strong, there is evidence of this informal approach in the way that the two organisations undertake activities together. For example, in both of these areas the manager of the job brokerage project has visited Jobcentre Plus to talk to advisors about the role of job brokerage and, generally, to raise awareness of its services. Where the relationship is less well developed, ‘ad hoc’ events such as this are less evident.

Whilst the secondees provide the strongest link between Jobcentre Plus and job brokerage, their role is supplemented by a range of **shared activities** that are undertaken by the two organisations. One example of this is the Gallions Reach Jobs Fair in West Ham and Plaistow, presented in Figure 4.4. Other shared activities that have been undertaken in the cases study areas include:

- **Shared events** – there have been a number of shared events in the case study areas. These include visits to Jobcentre Plus by job brokerage staff; work on pre-recruitment training and other recruitment opportunities; and occupational jobs fairs such as that outlined in Figure 4.4.
- **Shared information** – this takes place to some extent within all of the areas. Most commonly, information about clients is shared, enabling both parties to claim outputs when individuals are successfully placed into work. In one of the areas, however, data protection issues have limited the amount of client information that is being provided to the Jobcentre. This has caused some tensions which have hindered the development of a more effective relationship.

Information sharing also takes place, to a more limited degree, in relation to vacancies. In one of the areas, Jobcentre Plus allows the job brokerage project to advertise their vacancies and the secondee has access to LMS on their laptop. However, job brokerage staff do not have access to LMS themselves, again for data protection issues. In the other areas, job brokerage are able to access Jobcentre vacancies through the Internet.

- **Referrals** – in theory, the two organisations are in a strong position to refer clients to one another if they feel that this is appropriate. In practice, this only takes place to any great extent within one of the case study areas. In this area, where the job brokerage project is very strongly focused on reaching the hardest to help, Jobcentre Plus frequently refers clients that they feel need more intensive one to one support than they are able to give. Within the other areas, referrals do take place but are less common. In one, this is largely because the job brokerage project is currently serving a very specific client group who tend not to be claimant unemployed. However, there appears to be good awareness of the project and a willingness to refer in the appropriate circumstances. Within the other area, awareness of the project within Jobcentre Plus appears to be more limited and the project is regarded as only one of many alternative intermediary organisations.

Figure 4.4: Gallions Reach Jobs Fair in West Ham and Plaistow

The Gallions Reach recruitment was led by a partnership between Jobcentre Plus and the Access to Jobs team which is part of the London Borough of Newham. Gallions Reach is a new retail development in Beckton, located next to a new housing estate. There are about 28 retail outlets and potential for up to 500 jobs.

The employers were offered support in accessing candidates for their jobs. Jobcentre Plus sifted applicants and provided training for candidates prior to employment. In return, employers were asked to target London Borough of Newham residents and only recruit from the partnership route. Newham Council also contracted four agencies experienced in delivering training and job preparation to provide support to every applicant going through the interview process to ensure that they optimised their chances of gaining work. Further training was also provided if required before they started work.

The aim of the jobs fair was to provide a showcase to candidates of the types of employers and range of jobs available. The day itself was staffed primarily by Jobcentre Plus staff, including those working on secondment for Elite. They encouraged applicants to complete a first stage application form which gave broad details of their background and the areas of work they were interested in.

The jobs fair was widely marketed via Jobcentre Plus staff and offices, partners (including Elite) and in the local press. On the day itself, the event was heavily over-subscribed. The average jobs fair attracts up to 3,000 candidates, whereas the Gallions Reach jobs fair attracted 8,000! Lessons were learnt about managing events of this nature, and if a similar event were to be held again, a larger venue with more suitable event management support would be chosen.

Indications from Jobcentre Plus are that the employers have been able to source many suitable candidates from the day and subsequent recruitment via the local Jobcentres. Recently, recruitment via the Jobcentre by the shop Borders resulted in filling 17 out of 22 jobs.

The partnership working extends to following up unsuccessful candidates with further offers of support. Elite have an agreement to follow up all NDC residents who are not successful at each stage.

4.4 Potential for mainstreaming

Consideration has been given to the potential for mainstreaming job brokerage activities in all of the case study areas. Overall, there was a view that the activities of Jobcentre Plus are moving to become more in line with those of job brokerage and that there is potential for this to continue. Particular examples of relevant Jobcentre Plus activities include:

- In West Ham and Plaistow, Jobcentre Plus is becoming increasingly involved in outreach work, targeted on particularly 'deprived' wards. They are working more proactively to identify 'customers', rather than "*sitting back and waiting for them*". This is viewed as *adapting* the way that Jobcentre Plus deals with individuals, rather than providing additional services.

- In Bradford, Jobcentre Plus has been influenced by the activities of @Work in the way in which it has established its two Employer Services Teams, whose sole aim is to fill vacancies for employers. They offer employers a package of services that includes sifting and interviewing of candidates.

Although Jobcentre Plus is seen to be moving towards a job brokerage approach, a number of barriers to the mainstreaming of this activity by Jobcentre Plus were identified. These include:

- The local context and ‘specificity’ is particularly important in determining the services that are required. There is a concern that these factors could be lost if ‘blanket coverage’ of job brokerage services was attempted.
- There is the potential for small agencies to lose their identity – they can be “*swallowed up by policies and procedures*”.
- Targets for the job brokerage projects tend to be relatively modest, reflecting the intensive work that is required with a particular client group. If the emphasis is too greatly placed on targets and ‘number crunching’, it is felt that this could mitigate against the success of these types of activities.
- Fundamental changes in the Jobcentre Plus culture, staffing and systems would be required in order to work with a different client group. For example, in Bradford, more than half of the ethnic minority clients with which job brokerage are working are not claimant unemployed. Jobcentre Plus would struggle to attract these individuals.
- Job brokerage activities are “*a different business process*” to those provided by Jobcentre Plus, which is ‘distracted’ by other functions, particularly in terms of benefits.

Overall, a view was expressed by several interviewees that Jobcentre Plus may be ‘constrained’ by what it does and too inflexible to undertake this role fully. However, the potential for Jobcentre Plus to contract out these services, if given the resources to do so, was acknowledged.

Whilst Jobcentre Plus was, inevitably, considered as the most likely ‘home’ for job brokering activities, there were some suggestions that other agencies might adopt some of these practices. The role of local authorities, in particular, was identified. Within two of the case study areas the local authorities are already responsible for job brokerage projects. They are considered to be ‘closer’ to mainstream funding than the private sector organisations that currently run these activities in the NDC areas. As an alternative, it was also suggested that there may be a role for the Local Strategic Partnership in identifying and rolling out best practice.

4.5 Effective inter-agency working - lessons learned

All of the interviewees have been involved with the development of job brokerage projects and have experience of developing relationships to enable inter-agency working to be effective. A range of factors were identified as being critical in order for this to happen. These include:

- Common goals / ***mutual objectives***;
- Clear ***understanding*** of everyone’s objectives and a ***transparent agenda***;
- Clear ***expectations*** of everyone involved;

- Good **communication**; the development of **good personal relationships** and networking;
- **A willingness** to help each other;
- Be able to **demonstrate added value**;
- Confirm the situation with regards to **funding, targets and sharing outputs**;
- **Do not be in competition** and make sure that this is understood throughout the organisation;
- Provision of **sufficient resources**;
- Removal of potential barriers and an open mind – **do not pre-judge** an organisation.

5 Conclusions

The research has identified a range of factors that contribute to more effective inter-agency working. From this, a series of issues relating to inter-agency working that are of relevance to NDC areas that are developing job brokerage projects can be identified. These include:

Who

- Are all of the **appropriate agencies** involved (including Jobcentre Plus; training providers; business representatives / intermediaries; other NDC or publicly funded projects; community organisations)?

Why

- Are **funding streams complementary** and do all partners fully understand how funding impacts on the counting of outputs?
- Can the **added value** of partnership working be clearly identified by all agencies?
- Has inter-agency working helped to reduce **duplication**?
- Are projects located in the most appropriate **premises**?
- Are **successes being identified and shared** in order to reinforce the benefits of partnership working?

How

- Are **formal contracts** in place, where appropriate, to identify each partner's contribution to the project?
- Are the appropriate organisations represented on the **relevant working groups**?
- Are the **most appropriate and effective individuals** engaged in building relationships with and for the project?
- Are there any **existing networks** that could provide additional useful contacts?
- Is there an **understanding of roles and responsibilities** at both strategic and operational levels?
- Are all appropriate agencies participating in relevant **shared activities**? Is there potential for this to be expanded?
- Has sufficient **time and resources** been invested in developing inter-agency working?