

A Helping Hand

Enhancing the role of voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations in employment support programmes in London

October 2015



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Chair's foreword



London has a wonderfully diverse voluntary, community and social enterprise sector. Many of our voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) organisations deliver education, employment, skills and training programmes and offer a wide range of employment opportunities. These organisations represent a fantastic resource for our city. Indeed, the sector has a particular strength in honing in on meeting individual needs.

However, the sector also faces a number of barriers that affect the extent to which organisations of all sizes can contribute. In fact, outcomes for people who are long-term claimants of out of work disability benefits are less successful in London than other parts of the country.

Our report focuses on the main challenges faced by London's VCSE sector in maximising its potential to support people into work. These barriers are found at different points in the process, from the design of programmes, contracting and payment models and a shortfall in promoting and adopting good practice.

There are a number of actions which the Mayor, government and others could take to address these challenges. The forthcoming design and commissioning of the next national welfare to work programme presents an immediate opportunity to take up our recommendations. During our investigation, we heard how voluntary schemes, or schemes with a high degree of choice, were more successful than mandatory schemes and 'what works' should take precedent. We also heard how changing the payment model from strict payment by results to allow some up-front payment would make a significant difference to smaller organisations in particular.

The devolution agenda offers welcome opportunities in delivery of employment programmes – there is a real opportunity to ensure the VCSE sector can play its part in tackling unemployment in the capital.

Crucially, we are not calling for 'special treatment' for VCSE organisations, but would like to see an approach which better recognises the particular characteristics of this important sector.

I would particularly like to thank all those who have contributed to this review.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'Fiona Twycross'.

Fiona Twycross AM
Chair of the Economy Committee

Executive summary

Executive summary

Employment support programmes encompass training schemes, volunteering, work experience and jobs brokerage. There are a number of funding streams and employment programmes where the intention is for the voluntary, community and social enterprise (or third) sector to play a role in delivery.

Those further from the labour market are not benefiting as much as hoped from some employment programmes. The Work Programme in London has performed at about the same rate as previous welfare-to-work schemes for people who are generally closer to the labour market. The success rate is much lower for those who face greater barriers to the labour market. Two groups in particular - disabled people and people aged 50+ - are not benefiting as much as they should. Supporting those who are long-term unemployed or have limited capacity to work due to illness or disability will continue to be a challenge.

VCSE organisations have a long history and established track record in supporting those further from the labour market. This report reviews the role of the third sector and, in particular, proposes practical changes to improve the likely outcomes of the next phase of the Work Programme.

The challenges to VCSE organisations' involvement in employment programmes

The financial pressure on VCSE organisations means that they need to ensure that their involvement in delivering public services, such as employment programmes, is financially viable for them, and compatible with their organisation. Their governance structure, trustee duties and social mission make them very different to the nature of private sector organisations. Our review has identified a number of challenges to their involvement in these programmes. These include:

- the demise of grant funding
- the move to outcome-focused commissioning and payment by results
- the size of contracts

What can be done to address the challenges to VCSE organisations' involvement?

This report highlights a number of ways that VCSE involvement in employment programmes can be supported, including:

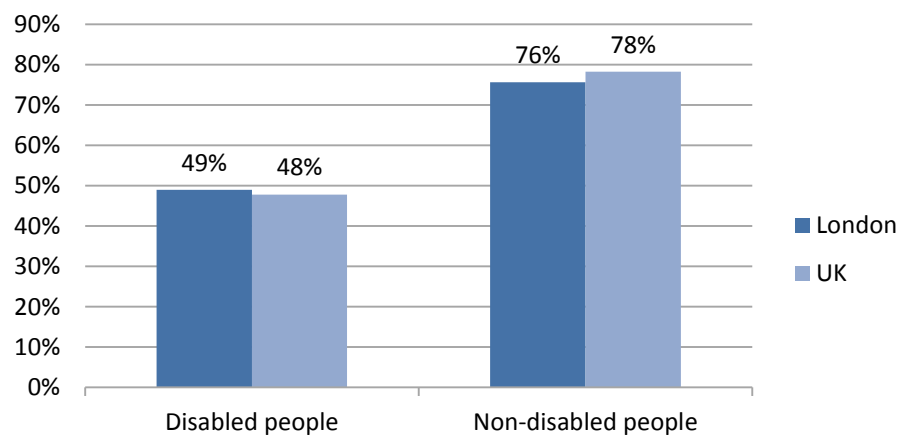
- reforming payment by results;
- promoting good practice;
- championing voluntary and choice-based approaches; and
- supporting in-work progression.

Devolution of employment programmes presents an opportunity to improve on current performance of nationally-led programmes by scaling up the good practice taking place across the capital. Therefore the Mayor and London Enterprise Panel should consider how devolution can support greater VCSE involvement in employment programmes.

1. Introduction

As the national economy has recovered from the 2008 financial crisis, the number of unemployed Londoners has fallen from over 440,000 at the end of 2011 to just under 300,000 in July 2015. While these figures are clearly good news for London, there remains a significant number of people who have been unemployed for more than a year.¹ Also, certain groups such as disabled people are less likely to be in employment.

Just under half of disabled Londoners are in work



Source: London datastore; Office for National Statistics (2014)

In addition, both the absolute number and proportion of people assessed to have a limited capacity for work due to illness or disability (and who claim Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) continues to rise.ⁱ

Nationally, there are a large number of employment programmes and initiatives within them; the major ones are set out in Appendix 2. The Work Programme (WP), launched in 2011, is the Government's main mandatory welfare-to-work programme. Unemployed people claiming Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA), or Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) on a voluntary basis, are referred on to the programme from their local Jobcentre Plus, and are supported for up to two years. Over 250,000 Londoners have been referred to the programme.

Employment support programmes encompass training schemes, volunteering, work experience and jobs brokerage. There are a number of funding streams and employment programmes where the intention is for the third sector to

ⁱ ESA is claimed by people who are assessed to have limited capability for work due to illness or disability.

play a role in delivery.ⁱⁱ This report reviews the role of the third sector and proposes practical changes to improve the likely outcomes of the next phase of the Work Programme.

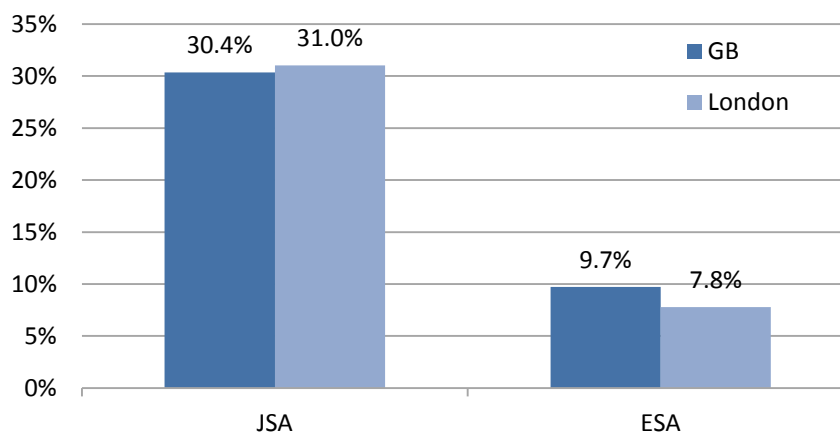
Limited success so far

Looking at the performance of the Work Programme in London, for people claiming Jobseeker's Allowance, the programme has performed at about the same rate as previous welfare-to-work schemes. According to the latest figures, 27 per cent of referrals who could achieve a job outcome did so; this is the same as the national average.

However, for ESA claimants, the success rate is much lower. As set out in the chart below, ESA claimants in London have a lower rate of job outcomes than the average across Great Britain. People who are new ESA claimants fare better than existing ESA claimants and those transferred from Incapacity Benefit (IB).² Longer term claimants of ESA/IB fare particularly badly.

Job outcomes are less likely for ESA claimants in London

Proportion of Work Programme attachments resulting in job outcomes



Source: DWP (June 2015)

Furthermore, looking at characteristics, rather than claimant group, can help identify the specific groups faring less well under the Work Programme. London Councils' recent analysis of Work Programme outcomes for different equality groups sets out the significantly lower success rate for two groups in particular - disabled people and people aged 50+.³ For example, recorded 'mental and behavioural disorder' is the most common primary health condition on the programme, but also the poorest performing primary health

ⁱⁱ The 'third sector' collectively refers to a wide range of voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations (VCSE). Third sector organisations are typically designed for public benefit and they include charities, voluntary or community groups, not-for-profit organisations, social enterprises, civil society organisations and others.

condition by outcomes. Only 6.7 per cent of the 22,990 participants referred with a 'mental or behavioural disorder' as their primary known condition achieve a positive outcome in London.

There has also been a historical trend of Work Choice, the voluntary employment scheme for disabled people, performing less well in London. According to the latest statistics, 34.6 per cent of starters on the programme in London achieved a job outcome compared to 42 per cent nationally.⁴

The value of voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations

There is an important role for VCSE organisations in supporting those furthest from the labour market back into the world of work. Often they have greater knowledge of how to better differentiate the support that needs to be offered to different groups; a keener sense of cultural awareness; a willingness and history of 'doing what works'; and the potential to harness volunteer capacity. They can also more readily earn the trust and respect of local people. They can work efficiently and secure better value for money from limited public resources.

Examples of VCSE sector activity in the capital

Shaw Trust

In Waltham Forest, for example, Shaw Trust collaborated with the council, Jobcentre Plus and other Work Programme prime providers to coordinate efforts to reduce unemployment in the borough. Shaw Trust signed up to a service level agreement committing to the sharing of vacancies and joining up services to support more people into work in the most disadvantaged wards of the borough. This coordinated approach has seen the unemployment rate in the borough halve in the last year of the pilot (2014).⁵

Peabody

Peabody are currently working in partnership with the London Borough of Hackney on a ten-year programme called the Pembury Children's Community which aims to significantly improve the life chances of children and young people aged up to 24 on the Pembury estate. This work aims to address the multiple causes of child poverty in a holistic way through targeted interventions such as helping parents into work and providing employment, education and training to young people on the estate. Through this programme Peabody and the local authority have been able to bring their resources, expertise and contacts to bear to tackle entrenched disadvantage.

The challenge

Our review heard of numerous barriers which affect VCSE engagement in employment programmes in London. In particular, how there is a significant level of duplication or ‘chasing the same individuals in the system’ and bureaucratic confusion of a ‘spaghetti junction’ in how employment programmes are funded.⁶ Furthermore, given their narrower focus, national programmes address issues in isolation from each other and do not have sufficient flexibility.⁷

Providing a range of pastoral and economic support can increase trust and engagement but this aspect is rarely acknowledged in contract design.⁸ However the Big Lottery Fund has designed programmes to offer more holistic support.⁹

London has a very diverse VCSE sector and it is well-placed to work in partnership with others. There are an estimated 60,000 voluntary and community sector organisations in London, of which a significant proportion deliver education, employment, skills and training programmes.ⁱⁱⁱ There are a further estimated 15,800 social enterprises in London, which can offer a wide range of employment opportunities.¹⁰

Government has accepted that the commissioning of the Work Programme could be improved, specifically to ensure a diverse supply chain which includes VCSE organisations. The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) committed to taking forward a number of actions on the back of the 2014 report of the Work Programme Best Practice Group, including:

- Longer tendering periods;
- More standardised procurement processes;
- Exploring a uniform IT system for all providers;
- Holding events for SME providers; and
- Providing a toolkit for third sector organisations on financial modelling and commercial tendering.

We heard how a number of national, regional and borough-level initiatives have sought to foster a healthy environment for VCSE organisations. These include national and local Compacts, which are voluntary agreements which aim to foster strong, effective partnerships between public bodies and

ⁱⁱⁱ LVSC submission: The largest group (23 per cent) work in the area of education and training, a further eight per cent are active in poverty prevention or relief and a further six per cent work in economic or community development or employment. Also, many organisations working with specific groups and/or communities carry out employment and skills activities.

voluntary organisations and the government-supported *Merlin Standard* to recognise and promote sustainable excellence within supply chains.^{iv}

Furthermore, the Social Value Act 2012 requires commissioners of public services to consider how they can also ‘secure wider social, economic and environmental benefits’ – collectively known as social value.¹¹ A government review of the first year of the Act presented evidence to indicate both a growing consideration of social value by commissioners and an increase in third sector delivery partners.¹² Indeed, we heard that most London boroughs have changed their procurement processes in response to the Social Value Act. While this is positive, a focus on short-term cost persists.¹³

We heard that the Act has gained only limited traction with commissioners.¹⁴ Also, commissioners can face difficulties in identifying social value so despite support from the Social Value Toolkit, there is a lack of sophistication in quantifying social value outcomes.¹⁵

VCSE organisations have a long history and established track record in supporting those further from the labour market. Supporting those who are long-term unemployed or have limited capacity to work due to illness or disability will continue to be a challenge. Government has recognised the contribution of the sector but there is more it could do as it looks to roll out the next phase of the Work Programme.

^{iv} The Merlin Standard has been designed to recognise and promote sustainable excellence within supply chains and provide guidance to those seeking to achieve it. The Standard is built around four fundamental and integrated principles; supply chain design, commitment, conduct and review. These principles have been designed to examine key areas of the relationship between a prime contractor and its supply chain partners. The aim of the Standard is to encourage excellent supply chain management and within this to ensure fair treatment of partners and subcontractors by Prime Contractors, to support development of healthy, high performing supply chain.

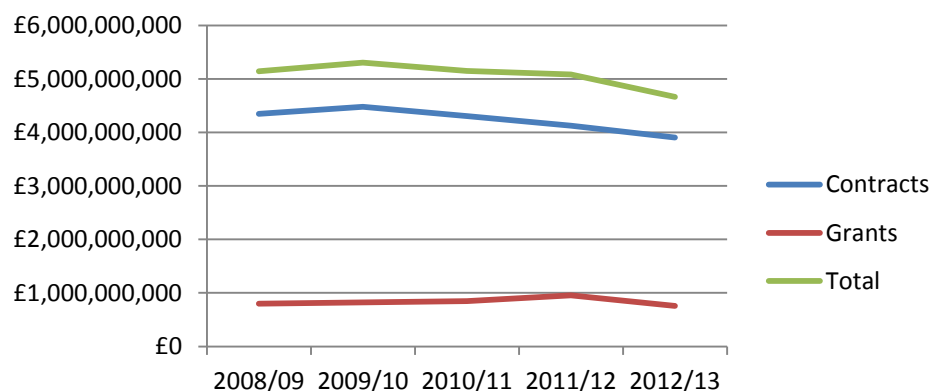
2. The challenges to VCSE organisations' involvement in employment programmes

- 2.1 The financial pressure on VCSE organisations means that they need to ensure that their involvement in delivering public services, such as employment programmes, is financially viable for them, and compatible with their organisation. Their governance structure, trustee duties and social mission make them very different to the nature of private sector organisations. Our review has identified a number of challenges to their involvement in these programmes.

The demise of grant funding for charities

- 2.2 There has been a very significant shift from grant to contract funding for the voluntary and community sector. Nationally, figures for voluntary and community sector organisations' income from government grants fell from over half of income in 2000/01 to under a fifth in 2012/13.¹⁶ Also at a UK-wide level, VCS organisations working in employment and training have seen one of the biggest reductions: a fall of nearly £400m between 2010/11 and 2012/13.¹⁷ In London, there has been a fall in both grant and contracts from government (2008/09 – 2012/13).^v

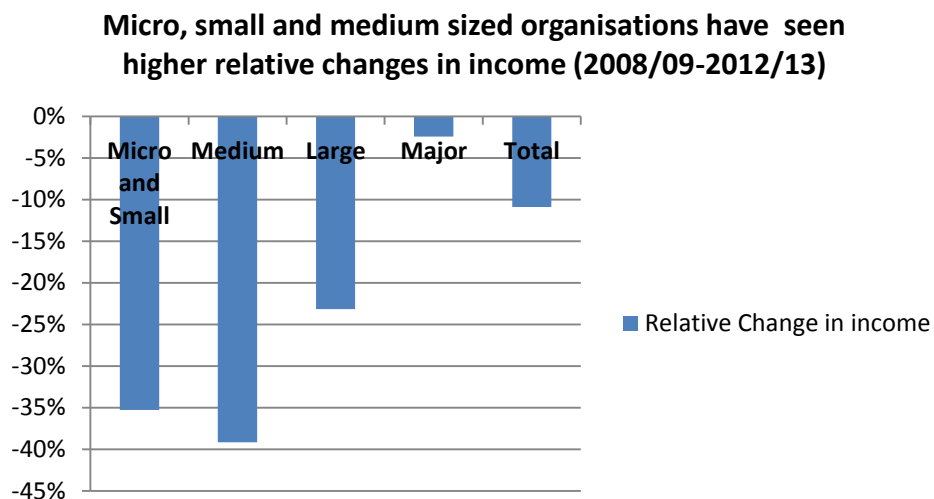
**London VCS income from government sources
2008/09-2012/13**



Source: NCVO UK Civil Society Almanac

^v This data includes all organisations headquartered in London, including national and international organisations.

- 2.3 This trend is significant. We heard that while there are benefits from a move to using contracts, for example ensuring that the relationship between parties is well defined and there is effective monitoring of outcomes, grants have historically allowed organisations to innovate and, crucially, have encouraged the participation of smaller, more specialist providers.¹⁸ It is therefore important for commissioners not to completely exclude the option of grant-giving.
- 2.4 The London voluntary and community sector also experienced the biggest proportionate decrease in government income (7.6 per cent) of any English region between 2011/12 and 2012/13.¹⁹ Furthermore in London, micro, small and medium-sized organisations have experienced higher relative changes in income.



Source: NCVO UK Civil Society Almanac

- 2.5 This shift from grants to contracts is having a significant impact as voluntary organisations scramble to secure funding. A recent National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) report found that many organisations have reached or are heading towards a ‘capacity crunch’ as they simply lack the capacity to apply to familiar funders, let alone new ones.²⁰ This is likely to be a particular issue in outer London where VCSE organisations tend to be smaller and where there is less voluntary sector infrastructure support overall. This situation is compounded by the recent trend of households affected by welfare reforms and/or increasing costs moving to outer London where there have traditionally been fewer organisations to meet the needs of those on very low income.²¹
- 2.6 Social investment is emerging as a possible alternative source of support for the sector. Social investment is attractive, particularly for smaller organisations, as risk is shared with the investor. However, the sector is still limited in scope. For example, there are fewer than 20 Social Impact Bonds

(SIBs)^{vi} in operation in England, and not all of them are relevant to skills and employment.²²

Outcome-focused commissioning and payment by results

- 2.7 Outcome-focused commissioning and payment by results (achieving outcomes) has been evolving over recent years. Payment by results (PbR) is a payment model whereby a contractor is paid for a successful outcome rather than for undertaking specified activity. It is intended to give providers the freedom to decide how to achieve results, rather than requiring them to follow directions from commissioners. However, it acts as a deferred payment method with organisations not paid up front but only after they have delivered particular outcomes.
- 2.8 The PbR model has rightly received significant scrutiny, particularly in terms of whether it genuinely drives greater efficiency and effectiveness, as well as the extent to which it facilitates delivery by a range of providers, including more specialist or smaller VCSE organisations.
- 2.9 The DWP introduced the use of PbR for the Work Programme from 2011 resulting in a significant expansion of that payment model across the sector. The Work Programme and other outcomes-focused programmes have encouraged providers to take a so-called ‘black box’ approach to delivery of programmes. Ministers have defined the ‘black box’ approach as giving providers the freedom to meet individual needs in innovative ways and reward outcomes, rather than prescribe how providers should deliver services. The principle of paying for impact and outcomes is not generally disputed. We heard that the VCSE sector has traditionally had a focus on achieving outcomes and applying ‘what works’. We were told that outcome-based approaches should, at least in theory, further support this approach and that this model should allow providers a greater degree of freedom.²³
- 2.10 However, we also heard about a number of difficulties from VCSE organisations linked to payment by results. In particular, this model can engender unequal relationship between prime contractors and their subcontractors. This is due to a number of factors including the payment model, bidding process and contract size.
- 2.11 The payment model is one significant contributor to this. Differential payments to providers are calculated according to claimant group. These are thought by some to be overly simplistic.²⁴ For example, this system fails to recognise that a significant proportion of Jobseeker’s Allowance (JSA) claimants face significant challenges to moving into work. For example, a

^{vi} SIBs aim to improve the social outcomes of publicly funded services by making funding conditional on achieving results. Investors pay for the project at the start, and then receive payments based on the results achieved by the project.

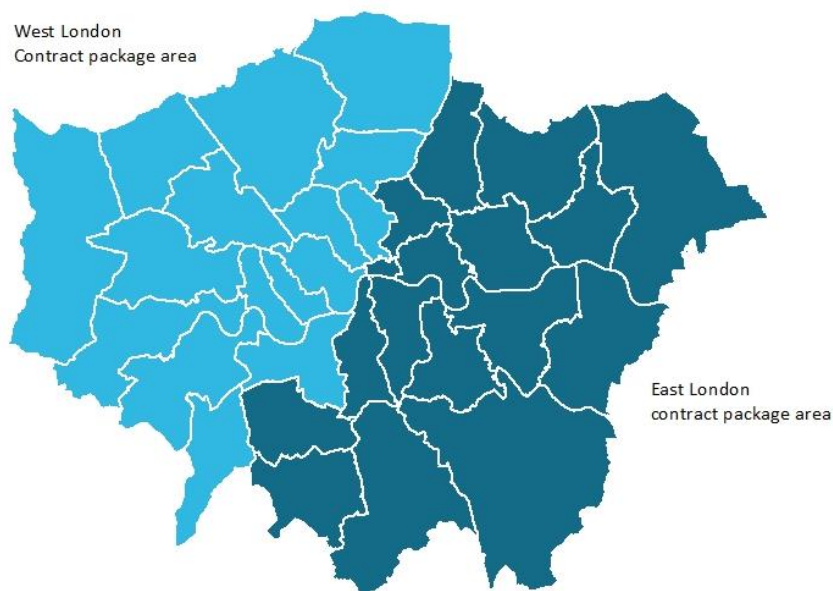
significant proportion of JSA claimants are disabled people, who, unlike ESA claimants, are considered work-ready, but who may still require significant support to enter employment. Some also argue that the system fails to recognise that some groups, such as ESA claimants, will have lower success rates, therefore payments should acknowledge this cost.²⁵ These issues can have a particular effect on VCSE organisations that are often contracted to work with JSA claimants with specific challenges and ESA claimants. However, moving away from using claimant groups as a basis for differential payments to developing alternative proxies is challenging.²⁶

- 2.12 The bidding process also contributes to this problem. Some organisations report feeling like ‘bid candy’²⁷ when they are included within a list of subcontractors when prime organisations are bidding for major contracts, to demonstrate diversity of suppliers, but then may not receive the expected referrals during delivery. Conversely, we heard of instances when subcontractors can be asked for a ‘pay-to-play’ fee by some providers, if they want to be part of an organisation’s bid.²⁸ An additional burden for VCSE organisations is that each prime or lead contractor is likely to have their own format for their expression of interest (EOI) forms and there are continuing calls for a level of standardisation between these forms.

The size of contracts

- 2.13 Alongside payment models, voluntary sector organisations are concerned about the size of contract package areas. We heard how the size of a contract can affect its viability for organisations, in terms of being able to tender and deliver programmes, as well as implications for their organisation’s operating costs and wider income flows. Broadly, commissioners of national programmes have been letting them out on a larger geographical basis.
- 2.14 Two live examples of these contracts are the Work Programme and the new European funding round. The DWP commissions prime (or primary) providers to deliver the Work Programme over 18 contract areas nationally. London is split into two contract areas – East and West. Prime providers for these areas are then responsible for managing their supply chain of subcontractors, rather than the DWP. In London, there are three prime providers for each contract area. For some projects under the first tranche of projects for the new round of European funding, grant areas are split to cover 16 or 17 boroughs.

Work Programme contract package areas (CPAs) in London



- 2.15 This geographical design of contracts is intended to reduce the administrative burden and associated costs. The DWP's own modelling estimates that the government will spend £41m less than it would have for similar levels of performance under previous programmes.²⁹
- 2.16 However, others are sceptical of the value of moving to larger contract areas. For example, Locality, which promotes locally-owned and led organisations, has identified that instead of providing efficiencies; larger contracts can increase administrative burdens, reduce flexibility in the offer to individuals and inhibit innovation and cooperation.
- 2.17 There are concerns that the size of these new contracts can exclude smaller organisations which do not have the scale to deliver over large areas. Shaw Trust is only one of the two third sector organisations able to act as a prime provider for the Work Programme, and the only one in London. However, the Salvation Army also pointed out that working to a large number of small contracts can increase financial strain on organisations.³⁰
- 2.18 **Providing support to consortia and other groups of VCSE providers is one way to address this issue. There is a balance to be struck when deciding on contract size. But ultimately commissioners should give greater consideration to the setting of contract sizes. The rationale for contract sizes should also consider the impact of contract size on differently-sized and more or less specialist VCSE organisations.**

3. What can be done to address the challenges to VCSE organisations' involvement?

Reforming payment by results

- 3.1 Deferred payment models are a particular challenge for VCSE organisations. With a very small number of exceptions, these organisations simply do not have the capital to mitigate cash flow delays, and provide financial reassurance.
- 3.2 One specific disadvantage for third sector organisations is financial risk and the need to have the working capital to commence work before outcomes are achieved and rewarded. For third sector organisations in particular, the cash flow problems that PbR contracts can create can be a major barrier to taking on contracts, even in areas where a charity would expect to be successful.³¹ Proposed remedies for addressing these concerns include some upfront payments from commissioners, bridging loans from the social finance sector or commissioners conducting more detailed assessments of financial and delivery risks at an early stage.
- 3.3 A level of upfront payments can make contracts viable for smaller organisations and/or organisations working with the hardest to help.³² Indeed, this is something that is reported to work well under the *Work Choice* payments system (a specialist programme for disabled people). Providers received a 70 per cent services fee with the remainder paid according to outcomes.³³ This has been seen as fostering positive rates of both VCSE involvement and outcomes. However, the services fee was recently reduced to 50 per cent, placing greater risk on providers. For example, Mencap, the learning disability charity, told us this change has led to the organisation not renewing their Work Choice sub-contract in London. Nationally, Mencap had previously been delivering eight sub-contracts, all of which they report were exceeding targets for job outcomes and sustained outcomes.
- 3.4 It is welcome that both Shaw Trust and the GLA implement an adapted payment model which provides some upfront funding.³⁴ We heard that this does not appear to have had a negative impact on the quality of outcomes.³⁵ Indeed, addressing cash flows could put more liquidity into the market which could help increase the size of the sector and hence increase competition.
- 3.5 As well as allowing for some form of upfront payment, we heard multiple calls for the payment by results model to be reformed to reflect the “distance travelled” by a client.³⁶ Individuals can often face multiple barriers to moving into employment. Organisations with particular skills can help address some

of these barriers, but not necessarily bring about a job outcome. For someone with a chaotic lifestyle, getting them settled in safe accommodation, securing a workable volunteering opportunity, and attending self-help groups can be a significant achievement and vital first step to eventual employment. There is potential for payment models to reward moving people closer to work or keeping them close to the labour market, even where they do not achieve a (sustained) job outcome.³⁷ This can keep people at much lower risk of falling into long-term unemployment. However, there is a gap in understanding of how to ensure these milestones, or proxies for them, can fit into a robust payment model.³⁸

To ensure a mixed market, payment by results should be reformed to address:

- **power imbalances between prime and sub-contractors**
- **the cash flow implications of pure PbR deferred payment models**
- **limited co-design**
- **short procurement timelines**
- **unnecessarily large contracts**

Recommendation 1

The **Mayor** and **London Enterprise Panel** should champion the GLA's approach to advance payments within the payment by results model and a system which recognises milestones, rather than final outcomes only.

Recommendation 2

The **Department of Work and Pensions** should adopt a reformed payment by results model which allows advance payments and rewarding of milestones, rather than final outcomes only.

Promoting good practice

- 3.6 Successful programmes will benefit from a culture of shared good practice and learning. A rolling programme of learning and evaluation would assist services to be better tailored to meet need.
- 3.7 While evaluation should be robust and will take time, final evaluations of programmes are often only published after subsequent programmes have been developed.³⁹ There is therefore a need for providers and commissioners to share interim findings and good practice examples more quickly, in order to shape upcoming programme design more efficiently.
- 3.8 This is particularly relevant to the 'black box' approach Ministers are promoting for those furthest from the labour market, including ESA claimants.⁴⁰ Indeed, the NAO's recent report into payment by results found

that there is no overall assessment of how outcome-based payment models are working across government. The NAO is concerned that:

without a common source of shared expertise and a strong evidence base, PbR schemes may be poorly designed and implemented, and commissioners are in danger of 'reinventing the wheel' for each new scheme.⁴¹

- 3.9 Lack of data presents an ongoing challenge to inform programmes and demonstrate their effectiveness. We heard how better data-sharing would allow providers to develop a better picture of their service users.⁴² There is also a need to assist VCSE organisations to better capture data on sustained employment levels of their beneficiaries.⁴³

Recommendation 3

The **Mayor, London Enterprise Panel** and partners should develop a resource of shared good practice and lessons learnt to improve front-line delivery, showcase London and build the case for devolving employment programmes. This should include pilots, interim findings and case studies as they emerge, not just final evaluations. This could take the form of an interactive map illustrating the range of employment programmes and London-led initiatives in the capital. (See Appendix 3 for an illustration of what this might look like.)

Recommendation 4

The **Department for Work and Pensions** and its partners should continue to bolster the *Merlin Standard*. This should focus on improved monitoring of its implementation and enforcement where providers fall short.

Championing voluntary and choice-based approaches

- 3.10 Employment support schemes and the benefits system have traditionally been designed to include elements of both mandated and voluntary activity. This means that some groups of claimants are obliged to undertake some activities (for example, applying for a set number of jobs or participating in mandatory work placements) in return for payment of benefits, otherwise a sanction (loss of benefit) is applied for a prescribed period. The current sanctions regime applies to both JSA claimants and ESA claimants in the Work Related Activity Group.
- 3.11 As stated by Matthew Oakley in his 2014 review of the sanctioning regime 'while international evidence clearly outlines that conditionality can be effective in both reducing the number of benefit claimants and limiting

average spells of unemployment, there are also legitimate concerns surrounding the potential unintended consequences of sanctions.⁴⁴ For example, sanctions, or the possibility of them, can increase anxiety and stress levels and inhibit people's ability to move toward employment.⁴⁵

- 3.12 In recent years, there has been an increased application of mandated activity for some unemployed people in receipt of benefits. In return for the payment of these benefits, claimants can be required not only to be actively seeking work, but to also participate in work experience, training or learning.
- 3.13 There is an ongoing debate about the effectiveness of mandated activities over voluntary approaches. For the proponents of mandated activity, it is seen as necessary to motivate claimants and promote integrity in the welfare system. Previous DWP evaluations of mandatory work activity have found that participants said that mandatory activity had helped them to move into work, feel more motivated to move into work or strengthen their CV.
- 3.14 But many in the employment support sector oppose the principle of mandated activities. First, the quality of such schemes is often called into question. For example, the DWP's Day One Trailblazer pilot, funded by the DWP and European Social Fund, was launched in 2012 by the Employment Minister and the Mayor.⁴⁶ The programme required young people who have not previously completed six months of paid employment to undertake 30 hours of work experience a week for a 13-week period, as a condition of receipt of their benefits. The evaluation found that the mandated parts of the programme were so onerous that a significant proportion of participants had limited time to actually look for work.⁴⁷ The quality of mandated placements can also be diminished by the fact that they have to be arranged within very short timeframes⁴⁸ and there are reports of professionally-qualified people undertaking mandated placements of low value.⁴⁹ This can be counter-productive in terms of costs to the Exchequer, given welfare for support for those in low paid work.
- 3.15 Second, there is strong evidence that voluntary activities are more effective. For example, we heard how voluntary scheme outcomes can compare favourably with those from the Work Programme.⁵⁰ The voluntary approach is core to building individuals' trust in programmes, which is necessary to produce positive outcomes.⁵¹ Providers must make programmes attractive, compelling and well understood by participants. Securing individuals' buy-in to programmes can foster increased retention and progression within an employer. Voluntary approaches are also effective in addressing participants' wider support needs.⁵² For example, *vInspired*, which is a youth volunteering charity, specifically highlighted the value of young people taking part in social action to build the 'softer skills' which employers frequently remark are missing.⁵³

- 3.16 The increased focus on mandated activity has a particular impact for VCSE organisations. They have traditionally championed voluntary approaches and can have a dual role: they provide services for their clients but are also often advocating in their favour. This means that mandatory work placements schemes present a significant ethical dilemma for VCSE organisations working in this area.
- 3.17 Even so, organisations can use their social mission to either justify involvement or not in mandated placements. Some organisations became involved in supporting mandatory activities, partly to ensure that the scheme runs as well as possible for their beneficiaries. Others object to the policy and will not participate in programmes with a mandatory element.⁵⁴ We also heard suggestions that even where activities are mandated, it would be beneficial for claimants to retain some level of choice, for example in the type of placement they undertake. This can lead to greater engagement by claimants and is therefore more likely to lead to better outcomes.
- 3.18 The TUC told us that any work placement programme should include education and/or training outcomes. Indeed, the TUC proposes work trials as a better model than work placements.⁵⁵ Work trials are an employment programme run by Jobcentre Plus. They encourage employers to consider taking on people who are often thought to have difficulties getting jobs. This includes lone parents, long-term unemployed and disabled people. Work trials can help people looking for a job and to test whether a particular job is suitable. At the same time work trials can help them to overcome any misconceptions or concerns that the employer may have. Participation in work trials is entirely voluntary and people on a work trial continue to receive their usual benefit. People can leave at any time without risk to their benefit. Participants receive a daily allowance and travel expenses from Jobcentre Plus, but the employer does not pay a wage during the trial period. Work Trials can last for up to 30 working days, but Work Trials that last this long are expected to be the exception rather than the rule.

Hillside Clubhouse, LB Islington

Hillside Clubhouse has a 'three pronged' approach to employment support for people with mental health problems, a high proportion of whom have severe and enduring conditions. This very personalised and holistic model approach combines dedicated information, advice and guidance (IAG) on employment and training options from an experienced employment support worker with participation in the *Workday Programme and Recovery!* Project.

Hillside members are a fully integrated and equal part of the colleague team. On the Workday Programme they run all of the core business functions of the Clubhouse alongside staff, while receiving personalised IAG, informal training and peer support. They co-produce the business operations (including retail,

administration, finance, catering, maintenance and all other areas). This provides a powerful combination of up-to-date skills and experience for work both in terms of learning/relearning practical skills, but it also develops 'soft' skills like dependability, reliability, workplace routines, team working, colleague relationships and communication.

The Clubhouse also believes that employment support cannot be delivered in isolation and its members will often have a wide range of practical or personal problems that can be barriers to work. The Recovery! Project provides one to one support to overcome problems and prevent crises. This includes a vast range of support, including debt, benefits, housing, and disputes, improving mental health and encouraging physical wellbeing. The project also opens up social opportunities for members, as well as reaching out to those who may be at risk of becoming unwell or disengaged.

Most jobs secured by Hillside members are mainstream and through open competition. The Clubhouse also has a range of stepped employment options within its enterprises, including a catering service offering ad hoc opportunities; a food retail outlet with part time vacancies; a transitional employment programme with external employers; and jobs on a local reablement service in partnership with the local mental health foundation trust. This personalised approach enables the Clubhouse to exceed employment outcomes against contractual targets. In a recent evaluation, 94 per cent of members polled said that the service helps them to improve life skills, 98 per cent said it helps them improve motivation and 95 per cent said it helps them keep mentally well. Hillside Clubhouse provided support to 704 people in the last business year.

- 3.19 London's employment programmes should harness the benefits of voluntary and choice-based approaches, particularly when supporting those furthest from the labour market. The VCSE sector has considerable experience in this area, providing another reason to ensure VCSE organisations are part of a mixed market for employment provision. We welcome the fact that Boroughs are building the business case for voluntary approaches to support whole system change.⁵⁶**

Recommendation 5

The **Mayor** and **London Enterprise Panel** should champion choice-based and voluntary approaches within employment programmes and call for an end to mandatory placements. This should include robust analysis of the outcome within voluntary programmes, allowing robust comparison with analysis of mandatory schemes.

Supporting in-work progression

- 3.20 In-work poverty is an ongoing concern of the Committee. Our reports on careers services and low pay in London both identified the need to support progression of people out of low paid work.⁵⁷ As well as being detrimental for individuals themselves, a lack of progression limits the number of entry-level jobs available for young people.⁵⁸
- 3.21 The advent of Universal Credit is presented as a ‘game-changer’ in terms of the employment sector needing to support individuals to work more hours and/or earn more. A number of London boroughs and partners are piloting programmes to assist Universal Credit claimants. The Trust for London and Walcott Foundation are funding programmes to support the progression of low paid workers in Lambeth.⁵⁹ We welcome all of these initiatives. However, we remain concerned that too few organisations are funding programmes which address progression.⁶⁰ The evidence base of what good practice in this area looks like is also very limited.
- 3.22 **A devolved employment programme could start to address in-work progression in the capital, supporting individuals, freeing up entry-level opportunities and gathering good practice.**

Recommendation 6

The **Mayor** and **London Enterprise Panel** should champion programmes which support in-work progression and build a picture of good practice in this area.

4. Devolution of employment programmes

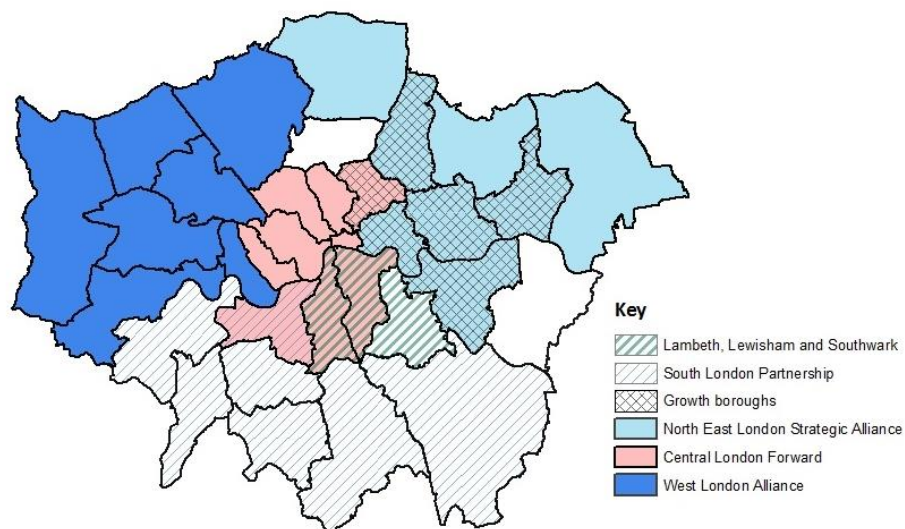
- 4.1 London government is calling for the control of employment programmes to be devolved to London. This should encompass decision-making powers, as well as sufficient funding. At present, up to £8 out of every £10 of the Government's employment support funding is spent on programmes that are designed and provided according to national guidelines. However, the over-centralised system of governance and the lack of flexibility at a local level mean the programmes are not delivering the outcomes required. Commentators and the public agree that more local decision making increases transparency and ensures clear lines of accountability.⁶¹
- 4.2 There is widespread support for more public services to be commissioned with a place-based focus.⁶² There is evidence that a devolved employment support system would increase the efficiency and effectiveness of employment programmes. And a more local, tailored system would also make it easier to foster an effective role for the VCSE sector.
- 4.3 In March 2014, the LEP's submission for Growth Deal funding set out a vision for a single ring-fenced flexible pot, which would have brought together the following funding streams:
 - Jobcentre Plus Flexible Support Fund (£19m p.a.)
 - Work Programme (£24m p.a.)
 - Work Choice (£10m p.a.)
 - Future Families Programme (£8.5m p.a.)
 - Youth Contract (£4.4m p.a.)
 - Work Programme Completers Pilot (estimated £12m p.a.)
- 4.4 The subsequent Growth Deal agreed with government did not include full devolution of this funding, opting for some piloting and co-commissioning instead.
- 4.5 In testimony to the Devolution Working Group, Sir Robin Wales (Mayor of Newham) argued that local authorities had the detailed labour market knowledge and experience to deliver more cost effective interventions. He argued that national programmes are not integrated with local services such as housing or social care, are overly complex and lead to duplication and higher costs. Sir Robin quoted the example of Newham's Workplace scheme, which, over a two year period, succeeded in getting 1,200 people into work, compared with the 350 that the Work Programme had helped in that area. Sir Robin argued that because local government better understood local

employers' needs, they were able to deliver more suitable job-ready candidates for interview. Employers benefitted because people stayed in their jobs for longer and it was all delivered more cheaply than the national scheme. However, Sir Robin also noted that “what works for Newham may not work for Redbridge”⁶³ and it remains unclear if ad hoc partnerships of “willing boroughs” are going to be sufficient to reassure government that they are sufficiently credible and accountable to receive significant commissioning powers and funding.⁶⁴

What needs to happen?

- 4.6 Across London, boroughs are coming together to design employment programmes that try to overcome some of these barriers. Cllr Philippa Roe (leader of Westminster Council), for example, told the Devolution Working Group about the Centre London Forward programme which sees eight boroughs working together across a sub-region to provide support for over 10,000 residents who are currently furthest away from the labour market. The employment support programme provides a comprehensive employment support service, which includes working with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and better information sharing across the sub-region. However, she noted how they were not able to support all those they wanted because of DWP’s caution: “They are not going to let us take over everybody we would like to have until we have proven success with this cohort. It is very much a lot of stepping stones on the way when we would have much preferred to have got the whole lot in one go, but we will do what we need to do.”

Sub-regional partnerships co-commissioning employment programmes



London Boroughs of Lambeth, Lewisham and Southwark joint commissioning of *Pathways to Employment*

Since 2013, Lambeth, Lewisham and Southwark have been collaborating with local partners to transform the way residents with complex needs move from benefits and into work. The joint ambition is for residents with most need to have the skills, motivation and support to be able to secure work through a personalised journey of support. This should ensure that those with complex needs do not end up becoming, or staying, long-term unemployed and cycling in and out of different employment support programmes. It should demonstrate a localised approach to service transformation which, developed across local authorities in the three boroughs with Jobcentre Plus and other partners, can lead to better outcomes for the residents and reduce demand on future services.

The process to develop the programme included research to understanding assets and need and prioritising desired outcomes, as well as analysing to local labour market, employers' skills requirements and the skills education offer. This process identified six key characteristics for an effective new system were:

- Customer-centric, with the needs of residents at its heart;
- Defined, strongly linked network of partners from which support can be drawn;
- A clear, single point of contact – a key worker – through which residents can access support and services they require;
- Tailored to suit specific journeys, treating people as individuals and not as homogenous groups;
- Access to a clear catalogue of services available and how to navigate them; and
- Responsive to local employment needs, linking in training matched to growth sectors and involving local businesses.

Tomorrow's People is an employment charity currently delivering phase one of Pathways to Employment. As of September 2015, it has supported 455 people of which 90 have secured employment and over 50 have achieved other positive outcomes including skills and training outcomes. As well as employment and skills related outcomes, the model of delivery as also helped people to address barriers such as debt, substance misuse, and mental health issues by working effectively in partnership with existing local services. The three boroughs have sought to encourage participation from third sector and smaller organisations in phase two of the project through:

- Communication – the councils have networks of local employment support providers and messages on the procurement of phase two have been disseminated throughout these networks to encourage local providers to engage.
- Online market warming event – the three boroughs hosted an online event to encourage suppliers who wanted to work in partnership to develop relationships.
- Extended bidding periods – to encourage partnerships to develop throughout the procurement period.
- Payment model – as the boroughs have sought to maximise funding through the European Social Fund, the contract payment model is a blend of grant and outcomes based payments; meaning that smaller providers are able to guarantee a level of funding until outcomes are achieved.
- Signposted to 'VCS Assist' to help smaller providers and consortiums.

- 4.7 There is further work for the boroughs and London Councils to do to gather the evidence that local devolution is a viable option for these funding streams and to put in place the necessary borough partnerships. The potential gains to the London economy are significant. Illustrative figures provided by the LEP indicate that a single employment funding pot for London could potentially move an estimated 34,700 people back into work per year and as a result save the Exchequer an estimated £230m.⁶⁵
- 4.8 The Greater Manchester Agreement offers up the prospect of joint commissioning with DWP of the next stage of the Work Programme, although what form that joint commissioning will take is still unclear. **London should be able to go further and benefit from a single funding pot for employment support which brings together all the existing major contracts let in London.** The single pot would come to the Mayor, in the first instance, before being devolved down to local authorities. This would create an incentive for boroughs in sub-regional partnerships to work with the LEP to better plan and integrate their employment support programmes with local job creation. To give Government the assurance it needs that the single funding pot will be effectively managed, services would be commissioned on a reformed payment by results basis with the Assembly scrutinising not just the commissioning process but also, as Sir Robin suggested, the outcomes too.⁶⁶
- 4.9 **We support the Mayor and London boroughs' objective of devolution of employment programmes. This devolution presents an opportunity to improve on current performance of nationally-led programmes by scaling up the good practice taking place across the capital. In relation to the VCSE sector, this includes more effective outcome-focused payment models, commissioning practice and supporting VCSE consortia.**

- 4.10 **London government should continue to build on experiences of co-commissioning and be given the opportunity to do so. London government will need to have a clear idea of common outcomes and expectations and how to measure impact in order to build the business case for devolution.**
- 4.11 **Regional and sub-regional devolution should be an opportunity to better integrate services, especially employment, health, and housing. We have heard how this would better meet the needs of those further from the labour market.**
- 4.12 **London can deliver a devolved employment support system, but this must be accompanied by sufficient resource. Successful programmes will be supported by maximum sharing of good practice and learning.**

Recommendation 7

The **Mayor** and **London Enterprise Panel** should set out how devolving employment programmes to London will address a number of shortfalls in programmes currently commissioned at a national level which inhibit the involvement of the widest range of VCSE organisations.

Recommendation 8

Over the longer term the **Government** should look to create a single funding pot for employment support programmes which would be devolved to the Mayor in the first instance with further devolution to sub-regional partnerships of willing boroughs.

Appendix 1 – Recommendations

Recommendation 1

The **Mayor** and **London Enterprise Panel** should champion the GLA's approach to advance payments within the payment by results model and a system which recognises milestones, rather than final outcomes only.

Recommendation 2

The **Department of Work and Pensions** should adopt a reformed payment by results model which allows advance payments and rewarding of milestones, rather than final outcomes only.

Recommendation 3

The **Mayor, London Enterprise Panel** and partners should develop a resource of shared good practice and lessons learnt to improve front-line delivery, showcase London and build the case for devolving employment programmes. This should include pilots, interim findings and case studies as they emerge, not just final evaluations. This could take the form of an interactive map illustrating the range of employment programmes and London-led initiatives in the capital.

Recommendation 4

The **Department for Work and Pensions** and its partners should continue to bolster the Merlin Standard. This should focus on improved monitoring of its implementation and enforcement where providers fall short.

Recommendation 5

The **Mayor** and **London Enterprise Panel** should champion choice-based and voluntary approaches within employment programmes and call for an end to mandatory placements. This should include robust analysis of the outcome within voluntary programmes, allowing robust comparison with analysis of mandatory schemes.

Recommendation 6

The **Mayor** and **London Enterprise Panel** should champion programmes which support in-work progression and build a picture of good practice in this area.

Recommendation 7

The **Mayor** and **London Enterprise Panel** should set out how devolving employment programmes to London will address a number of shortfalls in programmes currently commissioned at a national level which inhibit the involvement of the widest range of VCSE organisations.

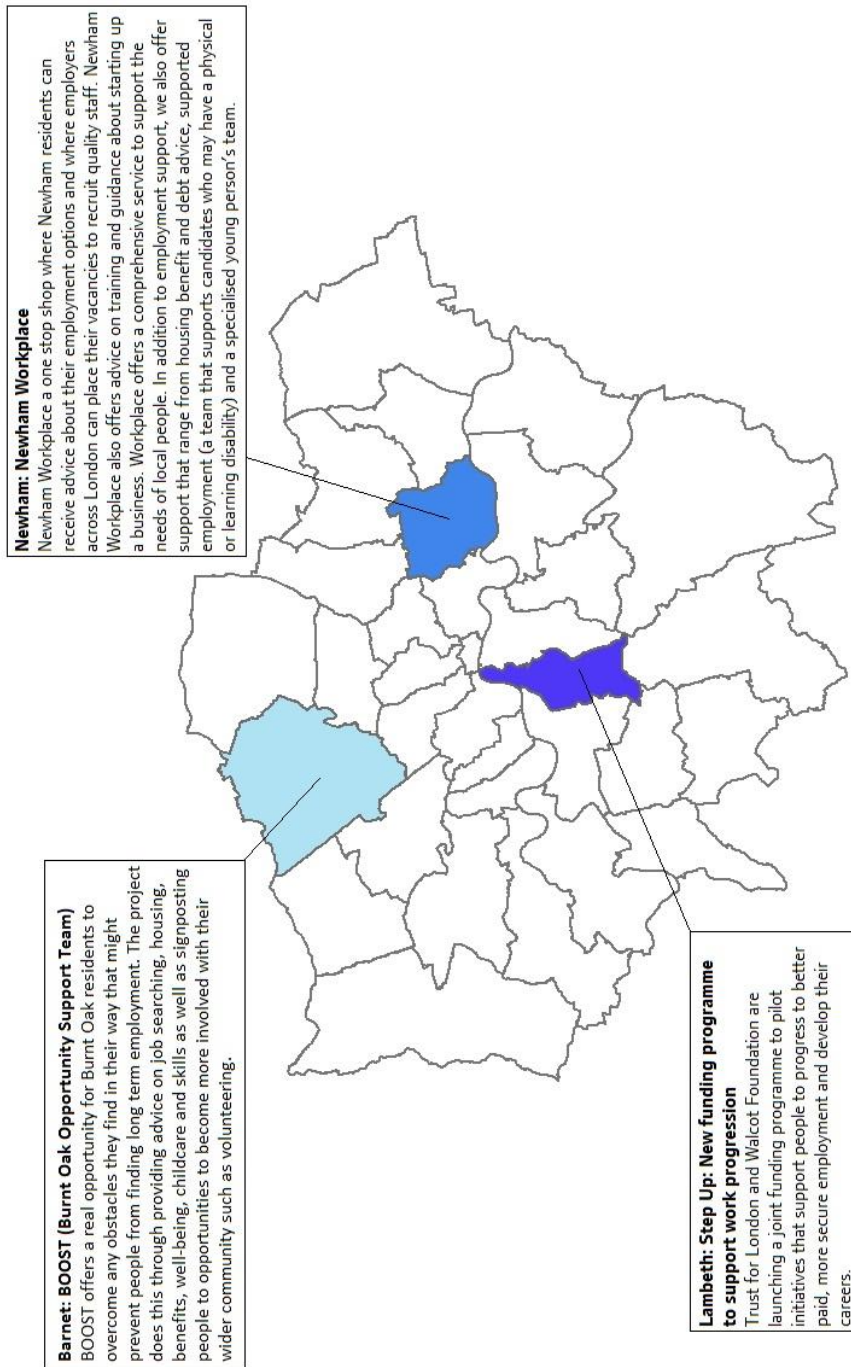
Recommendation 8

Over the longer term the **Government** should look to create a single funding pot for employment support programmes which would be devolved to the Mayor in the first instance with further devolution to sub-regional partnerships of willing boroughs.

Appendix 2 – Major employment programmes

Programme	Remit
<i>Jobcentre Plus</i> (including the Flexible Support Fund)	Voluntary and mandatory support for jobseekers
<i>Work Programme</i>	Two years of mandatory support for both JSA and ESA claimants
<i>Help to Work</i>	Mandatory activity for long-term JSA claimants who have not achieved a job outcome under the Work Programme
<i>Work Choice</i>	A voluntary specialist employment programme for some disabled people
<i>Specialist Employability Support (SES)</i> (replacing residential training programmes from Sept 2015)	Disabled people who need the most support to enter work or undertake work-related courses and activities
ESIF (DWP, SFA, Big Lottery Fund, NOMS)	Voluntary programmes focused on adult employment and skills, and youth employment
Targeted interventions, e.g. <i>Troubled Families</i> , ex-offenders	Specific groups

Appendix 3 – Illustrative example of interactive map of London-led initiatives



Appendix 4 - Views and information

Written submissions

1. The Salvation Army
2. Traveller Movement
3. London Gypsy Traveller Unit
4. London Borough of Brent
5. London Youth
6. Peabody
7. London Voluntary Service Council (LVSC)
8. Shaw Trust
9. St Mungo's Broadway
10. London Borough of Islington
11. Skills Funding Agency
12. City of London Corporation
13. vInspired
14. Department for Work and Pensions (DWP)
15. London Councils

Formal Committee meetings

18 June 2015 with the following guests:

- James Butler, Public Affairs Manager, Social Enterprises UK
- Nehal Depani, Policy and Project Manager (Employment & Skills), London Voluntary Services Council (LVSC)
- Duncan Melville, Chief Economist, Inclusion
- Kirsty McHugh, Chief Executive Employment Related Services Association (ERSA)
- Roy O'Shaughnessy, Chief Executive, Shaw Trust
- Dr Ian Thurlby-Campbell, Business Development Manager, Ingeus

For the transcript see:

<http://www.london.gov.uk/moderngov/ieListDocuments.aspx?CIId=255&MIId=5613&Ver=4>

14 July 2015 with the following guests:

- Laura Furness, Local Deals Manager, Big Lottery
- Adrian Smith, Director of Commissioning, London Borough of Lambeth
- Dan Gasgoyne, Director, West London Alliance

- Rob Hancock, Senior Education Officer, Southern and Eastern TUC
- Alex Conway, European Programmes Director, Greater London Authority
- Julie Sexton, Senior Programme Manager, Skills and Employment, Greater London Authority

For the transcript see:

<http://www.london.gov.uk/moderngov/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=255&MIId=5614&Ver=4>

Appendix 5 – Endnotes

- ¹ ONS, September 2015, Unemployment, by region
- ² CESI, June 2015, DWP Work Programme: how is it performing?
- ³ London Councils, August 2015, All's fair in the Work Programme? Understanding the equalities impact of the Work Programme in London
- ⁴ DWP, August 2015, Work Choice: Official statistics
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- ⁸ LVSC, Written submission, 3
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- ¹⁰ Based on 2012 figures.
- ¹¹ HM Government, Public Services (Social Value) Act 2013
- ¹² HM Government, January 2014, The Social Value act – One Year On
- ¹³ LVSC, Written submission, 13
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- ¹⁵ LB Lambeth, Economy Committee, 14 July 2015
- ¹⁶ LVSC, Written submission, 9
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- ¹⁸ LVSC, Written submission, 10
- ¹⁹ NCVO, UK Civil Society Almanac 2015
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- ²¹ Economy Committee, 18 June 2015; London Youth, Written submission, 3
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- ²⁴ London Councils, August 2015, All's fair in the Work Programme? Understanding the equalities impact of the Work Programme in London
- ²⁵ Traveller Movement, Written submission, 2
- ²⁶ Work and Pensions Select Committee, 20 July 2015
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- ²⁸ Economy Committee, 14 July 2015
- ²⁹ National Audit Office, July 2014, The Work Programme, 37
- ³⁰ Salvation Army, Written submission, 2
- ³¹ NCVO, April 2014, Payment by results and the voluntary sector
- ³² Centre for Economic and Social Inclusion et al, 2014, Work Programme evaluation: Operation of the commissioning model, finance and programme delivery
- ³³ Work and Pensions Select Committee, 20 July 2015,
- ³⁴ Shaw Trust, Written submission 5; Economy Committee 14 July 2015
- ³⁵ GLA, Economy Committee, 14 July 2015
- ³⁶ Salvation Army, Written submission, 1; Peabody, Written submission, 3; LVSC, Written submission, 10-11
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- ³⁸ West London Alliance, Economy Committee, 14 July 2015
- ³⁹ Economy Committee, 14 July 2015
- ⁴⁰ Economy Committee, 18 June 2015

- ⁴¹ National Audit Office, June 2015, Outcome-based payment schemes: government's use of payments by results
- ⁴² Peabody, Written submission, 3
- ⁴³ LB Brent, Written submission, 2
- ⁴⁴ Matthew Oakley, Independent review of the operation of Jobseeker's Allowance sanctions validated by the Jobseekers Act 2013, July 2014
- ⁴⁵ Catherine Hale, Fulfilling potential? ESA and the fate of the Work Related Activity Group, 2014
- ⁴⁶ Mayor's press office, Day One Support for Young People Trailblazer, Friday, 28 September 2012
- ⁴⁷ DWP, November 2014, Evaluation of the Day One Support for Young People Trailblazer
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- ⁵¹ Peabody, Written submission, 4
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- ⁵³ vInspired, Written submission, 3
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- ⁶³ Devolution Working Group, 18 June 2015
- ⁶⁴ Between 2000 and 2010, London had a settled set of sub-regional arrangements with the boroughs in five groupings for purposes of working with the now disbanded London Development Agency.
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