

Merseyside Employer Coalition – Business Plan 2009 to 2011

Employer Coalition (EC) Merseyside Employer Coalition

Named Contact Colin Geering

EC strategic fit for local integration

Structure – Part of Liverpool City Region employment and skills partnerships

Lead organisation – Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council (As E&S Lead for all 6 Local Authorities)

Number of EC staff and location – 4, stand alone office, Speke, Liverpool – co- location with City Region Employment and Skills Team in Huyton from 1st October 2009.

Actual or virtual EC Board? – Actual Board – Meets Quarterly

Governance structure

Accountable body and Staff employer – Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council (KMBC)

Reporting route to DWP – KMBC

Members of the Employer Coalition (EC) network and Governance Structure

EC Board

Alan Walker	Manufacturing Controller	Jaguar Land Rover
Judith McGregor	Head of Programmes	NHS
Jacqui Pemberton	Senior Business Partner	Debenhams
Steve Roche	Personnel Services Manager	Jaguar Land Rover
Dave Pendleton	Business Development Director	Mersey Maritime
Stephen Roberts	General Manager	Crowne Plaza
Steven Smith	ICT Sector Director	Merseyside ICT Boards
Neil Dutton	Regional Manager	FSB
Sara Barker	Human Resources Director	Merseyside Police
Andrew Nembhard	Equal Opps Director	Liverpool City Council
Sara Carthy	HR Manager	Liverpool One
Roy Jones	Regional Manager	Scottish Power
Margaret Jackson	HR Director	Aintree NHS Trust
David Day	General Manger	Thistle Hotels
John Barry	HR Manager	Arena Convention Centre
James Flannery	Director	Atom Regeneration
Steve O'Connor	Director	Eddie Stobart
Sue Riley	District Manager	Jobcentre Plus
Helen France	Executive Director	LSC

Please comment on the diversity of your Board such as

The Board consists of 19 members, 10 private sector employers. 14 different

Sectors (Manufacturing, Health, Retail, Construction, Maritime, Hospitality, ICT, SME's, Law Enforcement, Public, Facilities Management, Utilities, Tourism & Logistics sectors), 4 public sector employers, 2 public sector partners

EC Network

Please comment on the diversity of your network including sectors covered, sizes of businesses, geography covered, ethnic background and gender of business leaders engaged

The Merseyside Employer Coalition network at its largest definition extends to over 1,000 businesses. This is the entire business base that have some historic or current connection to the Employer Coalition. This includes almost all sectors and geographies within the Liverpool City Region. At this level there is a good representation of gender balance. Data on the ethnicity of employers is not currently connected.

At the level of the Employer Coalition board there are issues of representation which will be priorities for action in 2009/2010. The Gender split is $\frac{3}{4}$ male and $\frac{1}{4}$ female and there is currently only one ethnic minority member. Crucially for our long term localisation there is a dominance of employers based within the Liverpool Local Authority area – 10 of the 19 members. With the exception of St Helens all Local Authority areas are represented but throughout 09/10 we will be actively recruiting more employers from outside the Liverpool Local Authority area although it has to be recognised that this location is also where there is the highest concentration of employers. 14 of the largest employment sectors are represented on the Board.

Key aims and objectives of the Employer Coalition

By April 2011:

- Support the Liverpool City Region Employment and Skills Board's strategic role on skills and influence on the delivery of employment programmes as part of an integrated employment and skills system.
- Support the delivery of the Employment and Skills Board development programme.
- Develop innovative approaches that engage employers in shaping and using public employment and skills services; particularly those working with people disadvantaged in the job market
- Engage with employers to raise their demand for and investment in skills provision.
- Share and promote positive employment practices across Merseyside businesses.
- Develop partnerships outside of Merseyside to exchange good practice in employer-led strategies

Planned activity 2009-11, rationale and how it links to DWP objectives

- **Continually strengthen and diversify the Employer Coalition Board by attracting new members from across the Liverpool City Region (LCR) and developing existing members to create 40 Merseyside Business Champions.**

Business champions are critical to a many DWP objectives as they are the businesses that actively promote the initiatives and working practices that DWP require in order to maximise the employment opportunities of disadvantaged groups. Employers that stand up and advocate for this agenda are a key communication device and influencing factor.

- **Provide a trusted communication and consultation channel between the Employment and Skills Board, City Employment Strategy and Merseyside Employers. Providing 6 consultation exercises and 6 communication exercises involving 200 local businesses (Consultation) & 1,000 local businesses (communication).**

Merseyside Employer Coalition is a forum of like minded businesses. As a group of individuals they work together exceptionally well and each has been selected for their connection to wider sector groupings and business networks.

As respected business brands and individuals they command the respect of other businesses and are therefore an effective route to channel the views and needs of the demand-side of the labour market into the local employment and skills system. This employer-leadership has been widely sought by DWP in its ongoing approach to devolution and local empowerment, be that City Strategy or the departments response to the Leitch Review and collaborations such as 'Work Skills' with the former Department for Employment and Skills.

- **Increase the understanding of 300 front-line employment and skills staff of the recruitment and skill needs of local businesses. Particularly focusing on employers experiencing labour and skills shortages.**

Frontline adviser, tutors and trainers working with jobless individuals have a critical role in directing and supporting individuals on their journey from welfare to work. Whether through inhouse advisers in Jobcentre Plus or commissioned activities the Department recognises that the advice, guidance and support delivered to Jobseekers is integral to their chances of labour market success. The Department also recognises that the labour market looks different in each of our cities and regions – hence the continuing push for devolution. It is important therefore that those individuals charged with working with the disadvantaged are given an understanding of the recruitment and hiring requirements and process of local employers. This increases the quality of direction and ultimately the job match.

- **Through employer participation, capacity build 15 employment and**

skills service providers, who work with a combined 3,000 benefit claimants each year, to become more demand-led.

Through its national Commissioning Strategy DWP is committed to a competitive and diverse provider market that is focused on outcomes. By definition the outcome requires that providers are more adept at identifying and meeting the needs of employers. This requires that the whole of their provision is built around employer-needs – not just that they can ‘sell’ their services but that the services themselves involve employers in their design and delivery. The Programme for Change is a refined and proven product in supporting providers of all shapes and sizes on this journey.

• Deliver employment and skill policy or practice improvements to 100 local businesses.

DWP recognises that the decisions and choices made by employers have a direct impact on the chances that certain groups access employment. The Department itself (along with Jobcentre Plus) has implemented national campaigns that promote employment practices that are likely to benefit priority groups, be they people with disabilities, lone parents or other groups. The Local Employment Partnership initiative contains a mechanism for employers to commit to changing their policy and/or practice. Employer Coalitions have a successful track record in actualising this and through hard case studies or employer to employer relationships, supporting employers through the implementation and maintenance of such changes.

Local Performance Indicators/ Targets (showing link to key aims and priorities) – KPI’s shown in **Bold**

1. Employer Engagement Targets 1000 employers engaged at level 1 ¹
2. **200 at level 2 (Active Member)**
3. **40 at level 3 (Employer Champion)**
4. 300 front-line employment and skills intermediary staff supported to better understand and meet employers needs
5. **15 intermediaries** supported through Programme for Change, IOK and other events, routeway development
6. **50 employers** change their recruitment practices to benefit recruitment and retention of disadvantaged groups
7. **6 Employer Consultations** delivered on behalf of the Liverpool City Region partners.

¹ Employers engaged at Phase 1 actively receive information such as e-zines, newsletters; at Phase 2 employers give of their time responding positively to targeted information and attend briefings/seminars/workshops/events or introduce other employers to our agenda; at Phase 3 employers are actively involved in integrating employment and skills resulting in an increase in jobs and skills opportunities for people disadvantaged in the labour market - developing routeways to work, offering vacancies, working with JCP and other advisers, working with providers, involved in LEPs, active members of EC Boards or sector sub groups

Key Activities/Programmes, success criteria, risks, monitoring, evaluation, funding levels and sources

- **'Hope in the City'** – Creating Employer Diversity Champions

The key success criteria for this project will be the creation and completion of 10 Diversity Development Plans for Employer Coalition and sector champions. The delivery of 2 Conferences (1 x Employment Practitioners Conference & 1 x recruitment and candidate support conference). The delivery of Diversity Surgeries at various networking activities, primarily the Liverpool Chamber of Commerce.

The key risk is the failure to secure funding to deliver all aspects of the project (conference & surgeries). However in mitigation the funding is not essential for all aspects of the programme, particularly the creation of Employer Champions (The key Employer Coalition objective and contribution).

Monitoring and evaluation will be shaped by the eventual size and scope of the project, but each employer champion created will be recorded along with the support given and impact they achieve. Should the project draw in the wider capacity and funding to achieve its aims, then full capacity for more detailed monitoring and evaluation will be built into the delivery model.

The additional funded aspects of this project are being led by partners (Liverpool City Council). The Coalition is inputting funding towards self contained aspects of the programme that will be delivered irrespective of the larger funding ask for this project. That funding equates to £3,000 and is from the core Coalition budget and will be supplemented by in kind support from executive staff and employer members. The total value of the extended project will be around £250,000.

- **'Clean Slate'** – Ex-Offender strategy – creating new employment opportunities for ex-offenders

The key success criteria for this project are the initial engagement of 80 employers into the process of opening up their job and career opportunities to the offender population.

This will include some preliminary employer engagement work followed by an evening event aimed at challenging employer perspectives. The Employer Coalition will then work with Jobcentre Plus and other providers to mainstream the employer connections.

Key risks are primarily those associated with the delivery of an event (venue, catering) and ensuring employers attend and appropriate follow up is made. These are low risks and are straightforward to mitigate against based on the Employer Coalition's experience in managing events on a similar scale.

Monitoring will be undertaken based on employer attendance and conversion to mainstreamed employer relationships by partners.

The total cost of this project will be £25,000 - £5,000 from the Employer Coalition as well as additional funding from Jobcentre Plus and Criminal

Justice sector partners. This will be supplemented by significant in-kind support from the Employer Coalition executive team.

- **'HR ProActive'** – Employer Communication Strategy to promote positive employment practices and employer-led initiatives on behalf of the Liverpool City Region employment and skills partners.

This project is still at the design stage but the key success criteria will be the establishment of regular communication with 1,000 local employers. Connecting 200 of them to direct participation and activity within the Employment and Skills system. The strategy will be designed in collaboration with partners across the LCR employment and skills landscape.

Key risks are around the potential for duplicate channels and mixed messages resulting from that. This risk will be mitigated through embedding this communications channel into the Liverpool City Region employer engagement framework (currently being devised).

The communication strategy will also clearly indicate how impact will be monitored. This is likely to be in both reach (number of employer connections) and penetration (number of employers following up calls to action).

The cost of this project is yet to be determined as the employer engagement framework for the city region is yet to be agreed. As a minimum the strategy will be devised to utilise existing Employer Coalition resources maximise communication of key employment and skills messages to local businesses.

- **'Programme for Change'** – Provider Capacity Building programme to improve the demand-led focus of local Employment and Skills service providers using international good practice and local employers.

The key success indicators of this programme are the comprehensive support of 15 employment and skills service providers to embed a demand-led culture into their organisation. This will also test their ability to devise employer-led solutions and assess their practical employer engagement skills.

A key risk for this project is failure to recruit a cohort of providers. Previous experience of delivery in Greater Manchester, Sheffield, Yorkshire and London has proven that this risk is exceptionally low.

The evaluation of this project is a two way assessment. First of all the participating providers assess the impact of the programme for upto 6 months after completion. Employers also assess the ability of the provider to connect to them, engage them and develop proposals to meet their need.

This project will require around £9,000 plus the in-kind support of the Employer Coalition Executive team and Employers.