**Report on partnership activities.**

**Summary.**

**1. The partnership was designed to support delivery of employment support to local disabled residents and had achieved nearly 200 contacts and the target of 50 job outcomes by December 2013. This report does not address delivery in detail but more general issues identified by partners and the steps taken to resolve them. Key products were:**

* **The directory of support available on-line at** [**www.helptowork.org.uk**](http://www.helptowork.org.uk)**.**
* **The Steps to Success model of activities clients may need to undertake to achieve employment.**
* **The Flexicurity model of steps to make employment sustainable .**

**Other reports , especially the group discussions at the final conference, identified key themes for successful collaboration between employment support providers.**

2. Two of those themes were good communications and sharing of knowledge which featured strongly throughout the project. Partner meetings, training sessions and conferences were underpinned by regular information e-shots and reports:

* Nearly 900 people representing over 300 partner organisations received partnership information. This meant that nearly 12,000 reports and nearly 43,000 partner updates were received across the partnership over 18 months – and many were cascaded further.
* There were over 10,000 page views on the Help to Work website.
* There were over 400 attendances at project meetings, training sessions and conferences - feedback was over 90% positive for all and usually more.

**Report.**

3. **Help to Work Plus project.** This is one of six initial projects in Europe funded by the EU to test partnership working between public and other sector employment support providers . It started in June 2012 and ended December 2013 and extended the original partnership to cover providers and disabled people in Chesterfield Borough.

4. **Project goals**

* Evaluation on partnership working.
* Work outcomes for 50 local disabled people.

5. **Project funding/management.** All the following donated funds/time to the project:

* Shaw Trust (lead).
* Phoenix Enterprises.
* Disability Dynamics.
* Bolsover District Council.
* Chesterfield Borough Council.
* Derbyshire County Council.

However, we were hugely grateful to the many more partners that actively contributed throughout the project.

6. **Partnership principles.**

From the outset, our approach was that effective collaborative working would need:

* **Shared goals and vision** based on
	+ legal and ethical factors
	+ analysis of demand,
	+ Potential contribution to the sustainability of partner organisations and the local community.
* **Good communications** between partners to
	+ create mutual trust
	+ improve understanding of each other’s provision and capabilities
	+ achieve cost-savings through shared activities that also improve clients’ progression.
* **Shared approaches/models** to clients and service delivery based on
	+ understanding the target client group
	+ tailoring provision to meet their needs/overcome barriers.
	+ improving partner capacity to support the client group and optimise use of existing support.

7. **Partnership activities.**

Each type of activity was aimed at putting one or more of the partnership principles in to practice. The approach was to identify various issues from discussions with partners, client experience and research and then take action to both strengthen the partnership and project delivery.

Note: Other practical aspects of joint working (e.g. contracting, project management, project steering group and team meetings, press releases and advertising, client documentation/information sharing, cross-referral processes etc) were undertaken by Shaw trust and Phoenix Enterprises.

7.1 **Partnership growth.**

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| **What was discovered** | **What was done** |
| Partnerships are more likely to succeed when they have clear goals and adequately funded practical roles to achieve. | The Help to Work partnership developed from a previous project that was focussed on provision of employment support for disabled residents of Bolsover District. The EU PARES funded project enabled the partnership to:* Be extended to neighbouring Chesterfield Borough.
* Develop its vision and objectives .
* Build partner capacity.
* Create further robust delivery models.
* Create a network of partners able to support delivery of the project.
* Consider other unemployed disadvantaged groups (particularly ex-offenders.)

The prospect of funding to develop a social enterprise underpinning the partnership with the possibility of longer-term delivery funding was debated at a special partner meeting. This resulted in:* a shared vision and objectives.
* investigation and SWOT analysis of different legal structures plus their implications for management, membership and finances.
* delivery models.
* extensive research into potential ex-offender clients, their local demographics, needs and barriers,
* governance with consideration of trustees, management, partner membership and appointment processes.
* business planning and funding streams to assess cash-flow, potential income sources, viability and sustainability.

Partners’ priorities and own financial constraints would not have permitted this initial work without the support of the EU PARES project which was still not sufficient to enable the social enterprise to be achieved.Other funding opportunities continued to be investigated where feasible.  |
| There was a very large range of employment-related support provision available from at least 50 public, private and voluntary sector organisations delivering in Bolsover District and Chesterfield Borough. The landscape of provision had changed across both areas with the ending of Working Neighbourhoods Fund projects and the implementation of Work Programme provision. However, while a few providers catered specifically for disabled clients, the majority were “mainstream”: supporting anyone including comparatively low proportions of disabled people.  | The research paper showed that improving levels of employment locally and the viability of partners’ services are likely to require continued/increased focus on disabled clients.A directory of support (www.helptowork.org.uk) provided a concrete manifestation of the partnership: covering the partners’ provision, eligibility criteria, disability experience and contact details. (Example entry at Annex C). New Work Programme providers were included in the directory.Partnership activities (meetings, training sessions, regular information e-shots etc – full programme at Annex D) supported more joint working: promoting partners’ activities, networking, building closer contacts and relationships. Throughout the project, partners were provided with a wide range of resources: * Programmes were issued before all meetings and conferences and, subsequently, summary notes, presentation and key documents were issued to partners.
* Attendees at the disability workshops were provided with session workbooks covering all presentation material plus further information.
* Other key papers were issued with partner updates.

The partnership also maintained contact with other PARES projects:* Circulating the Netherlands project research paper and partnership approach and providing a compilation response to their questionnaire.
* Receiving a briefing from the Bradford project in September 2013.
* Attending the Green project final conference.
* Including them in partner updates.

The partnership also provided collective responses to the Department of Work and Pensions consultation papers on:* Future commissioning strategy.
* Office for Disabled People paper on future disability advice to Government and Gaining wider input from disabled people.
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* 1. **Potential demand for employment support**

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| Desk research showed that Bolsover District and Chesterfield Borough have higher proportions of unemployed disabled people than either regionally or nationally due in part to the areas’ high levels of disabled people and the economic background (largely reliant on mining and heavy industry). As a result, for each person claiming unemployment benefits (Job Seeker’s Allowance), there are over two claiming disablement benefits. | The original Bolsover District research paper was extended to cover Chesterfield Borough data and subsequently amplified with Census data (. Both were shared with the Council and partners so that all were better aware that effective measures to tackle local unemployment requires emphasis on disabled people.  |

7.3 **Barriers to client progression**

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| Procurement of employment support and associated services has not always sufficiently taken account of local demographics meaning that contracts/funding may not target groups with highest demand (e.g. disabled people). This was evident from most “mainstream” providers reporting levels of disabled clients well below those of the local population. This, in part, reflects the equality/disability requirements of their various funding sources: in a tight labour market, it can be more difficult placing disabled people into jobs. Other factors included: | An input was provided to Bolsover District Council to ensure that its procurement strategy/plan was compliant with Equality and Human Rights Commission guidance and legislation. Input to the DWP commissioning strategywas also made. An input to the Office for Disability Issues plans for disability advice to Government and increasing consultation with disabled people was also made. |

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| * Some “mainstream” providers reported limited disability awareness and training amongst their staff
 | 3 disability awareness workshops covered both service provision and employment - future partner training needs and feedback were gathered.Partners shared expertise through briefings at a series of 6 partner meetings plus the three conferences); notes of each partner meeting were also issued). Regular information e-shots covered national policy and disability topics. |
| * The long-term unemployment of many disabled people produces its own negative consequences on finances, housing, personal relationships and Health – with additional mental health conditions being common. Loss of “work disciplines”, self-confidence, motivation and aspiration are all well-recognised barriers. Hence, successful support needs to encompass such personal circumstances plus emotional and psychological well-being.
 | A paper had been compiled previously drawing on partners’ perceptions of the barriers faced by clients(xx insert link to paper). This recognised the impacts of acquiring a disability during working life which affect the majority of disabled people (xx insert link).Partners developed a client progression map of Steps to Success(xx insert link): achievement of work including practical employment support, personal circumstances, self-confidence etc. The map was tailored for each partner’s directory entry – showing which steps that partner supported.This initial model was developed further to create a Flexicurity model (xx insert lin) – steps to sustainable work . It describes actions that clients may need to take over an extended period to improve their long-term employability and overcome life-changing circumstances. This was supported by partners’ discussion of how clients could demonstrate the attributes sought by employers.The full partnership programme sought to increase partners’ understanding of disability employment issues and what support existed. |



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| * Significant travel problems due to limited and costly public transport in this geographically dispersed area.
 | The local project offering transport and travel assistance supported the project. |
| * Some disabled people may have had difficulty navigating through the wealth of help and associated eligibility criteria.
 | The on-line directory (www.helptowork.org.uk(was available to the public personally, through libraries and Citizen Advice Bureaux. It was promoted via press releases, Jobcentres and leaflets. Data on use of the website is below. The web directory Search option enables users to navigate easily through all relevant information with links to partners’ own websites. The project Work Buddies used the directory, which continued to grow, to identify suitable support for clients. |
| * Some partner provision was not sufficiently tailored to disabled clients.
 | The disability workshops had covered the reasonable adjustments that partner organisations were legally required to provide when delivering their services. However, in some instances such adjustments would not have been reasonable when clients needed high levels of one-to-one support and/or training/activities split in to shorter modules over longer periods. The availability of project funding to achieve these adjustments was promoted to partners at the meetings and in e-shots. |
| * Some clients needed to consider new types of work when their health conditions precluded returning to previous careers but had insufficient knowledge to decide what options might be viable.
 | Partners were requested to identify potential “work tasters” which could provide clients with shadowing opportunities to gain better understanding of alternative work.Jobcentre Plus was a key partner and was able to assist in organising work experience for clients. |

8. **Partnership data.**

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| **Activity** | **Numbers** | **Notes** |
| Partner representatives engaged | 874 | More than double numbers from the previous partnership. via meetings, e-mail, training workshops etc |
| Partner organisations engaged | >300 | More than double numbers from the previous partnership. via meetings, e-mail, training workshops etc |
| Partner meetings | 6 | Documented by agendas and meeting notes. Numbers of attendees ranged from 18-45.attendees at each meeting. |
| Attendances at partner meetings, training sessions and conferences | 438 | Many attended several events. |
| Partners featuring in directory | Around 50 | Numbers fluctuated as provision/organisations changed |
| Partner information updates | 83 | E-mails and supporting attachments issued to around 500 individuals each time - many further cascaded within their organisations |
| Training workshops | 3 | 3+ hour workshops. |
| Attendees at workshops | 33 |  |
| Research and information papers | 25 |  |

* The Help to Work website achieved the following use from December 2012 –mid November 2013:
	+ Visits – 1516
	+ Unique Visitors – 1169
	+ Page views – 10054
	+ Steps to Success Page – 716
	+ News Page – 1002
	+ Organisations Page – 2002

