

## Aims

To assist residents primarily in the most deprived wards of Sunderland, but whilst also ensuring inclusivity, by providing a City-wide initiative.

To overcome barriers of employment as people re-enter and enter employment for the first time.

The overall aim of the initiative is flexible, but ultimately, seeks to get people back to work and subsequently to improve the local economic landscape.

## Location

Sunderland's population as at May 2001 was recorded as 280,807 persons

The initiative covers the entire City of Sunderland via a combination of venues, such as community bases and outreach locations. Both rural, urban and combination geographical areas are covered.

The City of Sunderland is organised into six framework areas for regeneration. Job Linkage appears in all, and has 'physical bases' in all six areas. With, on average, two outlets per area, the initiative has twelve outlets in total.

Facilities are also available in outreach centres, such as local libraries.

## The Intervention Strategy

### Staffing

Sunderland City Council leads the Job Linkage intervention, with support from mainstream and non-mainstream providers. These include, Sunderland North Community Business Centre, Backup North, Thorney Close Action and Enterprise Centre, Pennywell Community Business, New View and GATES.

The NRF supported an additional 5 new jobs and safeguarded 12 existing ones.

### Funding

The funding frameworks and structure of Job Linkage are highly complex. Both vary from area to area, and involve a cocktail of funding, including over £550,000 Neighbourhood Renewal Funding.

Job Linkage takes into account the specific social and cultural needs and characteristics of individual areas.

## Operating Method

Job Linkage aims to reduce unemployment in the wards with the highest levels of unemployment. The project intends to sustain a 10% reduction in unemployment in each of the NRF wards and hence make a significant contribution to the achievement of the employment floor target outlined in the Statement of Use and Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy.

The project will achieve its purpose by working closely with unemployed residents at a neighbourhood level and employers at a city-wide level to ensure "local people are linked to local jobs".

City of Sunderland manages part of the initiative, but other parts are managed and delivered by partnership organisations with local links, such as Sunderland North Community Business Centre, Thorney Close Action and Enterprise Centre, Pennywell Community Business, New View and GATES

Job Linkage facilitates 'drop-in' centres, and face-to-face assessments of those seeking employment. Package of various interventions are devised and customised after the assessment to suit individual clients' needs.

As such, approaches to the delivery of the service vary at a neighbourhood level, to reflect the characteristics of its labour market, but there are a number of overarching objectives:

- ◆ facilitating access to job vacancies
- ◆ assisting the development of flexible skill portfolios to compete for vacancies
- ◆ addressing motivational inertia associated with periods of unemployment
- ◆ providing customised support to overcome specific barriers

The programme also works with employers in order to better link vacancies with suitable applicants. Again, specific delivery changes depending on the employer, but in broad terms they:

- ◆ assist employers assess the requirements of their vacancies
- ◆ support and establish methods to deliver specific requirements

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- ◆ develop "local labour clauses" to encourage neighbourhood renewal
- ◆ provide customised support to employers in growth sectors

## Achievements of the Intervention

### Main Achievements

Job Linkage has dealt with over 30,000 enquiries, assisting over 2,000 residents to access employment.

The initiative's mid term evaluation highlighted high levels of satisfaction with the service, with 98% of 292 users surveyed, saying that they would use the service again.

In addition, there is considerable demand for Job Linkage in other parts of the City where such a scheme is not yet available.

One of the key strengths of the Job Linkage scheme was its voluntary and un-intimidating nature. People came to Job Linkage because they wanted to, as opposed to other enforced employment schemes. In addition, the locally-based provision meant that the scheme was easily accessible to those who may not have had the means available to visit a centre requiring significant travelling.

### Mainstreaming

Job Linkage maintains a keen interest in mainstreaming. A wide network of negotiation is in practice across the City of Sunderland with Backup North, the Employment Service, JobCentre Plus and others. All have a common initiative of getting localised provision to hard to reach groups. However, Job Linkage has been careful to develop partnerships with these organisations, in order to ensure that services are complemented rather than simply replicated.

## The Learning Curve

The Job Linkage initiative recognises the changing nature of employment in Sunderland, from the traditional heavy industries, to SME (small medium enterprises) and the potential for job growth in this area.

In order to strengthen relationships with local employers, many of whom recruit on an informal basis, Job Linkage has worked to actively assist employers to better assess the specific requirements of their vacancies. In addition, Job Linkage seeks to provide customised support to employers in growth sectors facing difficulties with recruitment



# Job Linkage

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### NRF Priority:

Employment

### NRF Authority:

Sunderland Local Strategic Partnership

### NRF Funding Level:

High

PTO for additional information

**Lead Agent:**

City of Sunderland Council

**Main Partners:**

Thorney Close Action and Enterprise Centre,  
Sunderland North Community Business Centre,  
Backup North, Pennywell Community Business,  
New View and GATES .

**Location:**

Sunderland City Council, Sunderland,  
Tyne and Wear

**Main Achievements:**

Assisted over 2,000 residents to access  
employment

98% of users say that they would use the  
service again

## Key lessons

The voluntary nature of the initiative was clearly a key strength;  
people come because they chose to.

The initiative found gentle, less intimidating steps more effective  
than forcing people to attend job interviews.

Locally based accessible provision was welcomed by users.

## Contact Details

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