NOLB/Child Poverty Co-production Summary

City of Edinburgh Council's Business Growth and Inclusion Team currently fund a large number of grants relating to employability support in Edinburgh. These grants, funded via Scottish Government's No One Left Behind (NOLB) and Child Poverty funding streams, are due to come to an end in March 2025.

With the two main grant programmes under NOLB (NEST and PESF) coming to an end, a period of significant co-production has been undertaken by Capital City Partnership to review these grants and the strategic direction for future funding. This follows on from multiple co-production processes over the last few years relating to NOLB and Child Poverty funding.

The intention is to align future grants with the priorities outlined in the recent Local Employment Partnership (LEP) Strategy 2024-26. The co-production covered stakeholders, service providers and citizens accessing services.

Stakeholders

- Meetings were held with Skills Development Scotland (SDS) and Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to gain insight on issues facing citizens and advisors' thoughts on current employability provision
- A call was made to members in the Lothian Association of Youth Clubs (LAYC) to hear about support for young people and the current provision available.
- The Youth Employment Partnership (YEP) and 16+ Schools network in Edinburgh was consulted on plans for co-production and support for young people and will continue to be updated throughout the recommissioning process.
- The New Scots Edinburgh group were consulted on the co-production process and current provision, focusing on services delivering to ethnic minority clients, including New Scots.

Service providers

- A presentation was made to the JUFJ Forum in May, outlining the co-production process and allowing providers to ask questions and input to the process.
- Multiple service provider sessions were held, where providers were updated on the co-production process and broke off into workshops to provide feedback based on standard co-production questions.
- A specific session for organisations which are ethnically led or whose aim is to support ethnic minority clients was held, which allowed organisations to discuss support for ethnic minority clients and the difficulties faced when making funding applications.

Citizens

A number of in-person sessions were held with people who are either currently engaging with employability services, or who may be interested in engaging with services in future. This included sessions with:

- Jack Kane Centre
- Barnardo's
- Linknet
- Cyrenians
- Access to Industry
- Scottish Prison Service, engaging with current prisoners in HMP Edinburgh.

Surveys

Stakeholder and citizens surveys were also circulated to gain written feedback. These surveys included similar questions to those asked during sessions with stakeholders/citizens. An additional 12 organisations responded to the stakeholder survey, while almost 150 citizens responded to the citizen survey. All information collated within the surveys fed into the development of a procurement plan for future funding.

Client Survey Feedback

Summary
Key survey areas included:

- Challenges in finding work: participants mention various challenges such as low confidence, mental health issues, and language barriers.
- Employability services used: participants listed services like employability courses, IT skills courses, and specific organisations.
- Experience with services: participants provided feedback on their experiences with these services, including how they found them and what the outcomes were.
- Preferences: there are questions about preferences for in-person vs. online support and the importance of having services tailored to individual needs.
- Additional feedback: participants also had the opportunity to provide additional comments on their experiences and suggestions for future services.

Detailed Analysis

1. Challenges in Finding Work

Key Issues identified were:
- Low confidence and mental health: many participants struggle with these issues, impacting their ability to find work.
- Language barriers: English as a second language is a significant challenge for some respondents.
- Other challenges: additional concerns include balancing responsibilities, lack of skills, and limited job opportunities.

2. Employability Services Used

Respondents reported using a range of services, including:
- Employability courses & IT skills: basic courses to improve job readiness.
- Support from specific organisations: such as Access to Industry and Shakti Women's Aid.
- Referral sources: many found these services through referrals from job centres, link workers, or other support services.

3. Experience with Employability Services
- Rights and support: some participants appreciated learning about their work rights and receiving individual support.
- Comprehensive help: others found that these services met all their needs, improving their employability.
- Areas for improvement: a few responses hinted at the need for more tailored support or additional services.

4. Outcomes from Employability Services

- Diverse outcomes: the outcomes varied, with some participants gaining employment, others improving their confidence, and some engaging in volunteer work.

5. Preferences for Service Delivery
- In-person vs. online support: most respondents preferred in-person support, often due to the hands-on nature of help needed, but some valued a blend of both.
- Tailored services: there is a strong demand for services tailored to individual needs, recognising the unique challenges each person faces.

6. Location of Services
- Many highlighted the need for services to be close to their homes, particularly those with caregiving responsibilities or limited transportation options.

7. Additional Feedback

Future needs identified by respondents included:
- More training opportunities: some respondents expressed a desire for additional training programmes.
- Improved access and flexibility: suggestions for making services more accessible, flexible, and inclusive.

Client Focus Group Feedback

Summary

The survey underscores the importance of tailored, accessible, and holistic employability services. Key challenges include waiting lists, travel issues, and lack of childcare, all of which hinder individuals' ability to access necessary support. Clients value personalised and holistic services that cater specifically to their needs and appreciate the flexibility of both in-person and online options. Recommendations include increasing service capacity, offering localised and hybrid service models, securing unrestricted funding, and building robust practitioner networks. These changes would enhance the quality and accessibility of employability services, ultimately improving client outcomes.

Detailed analysis

1. What challenges do you face moving into work?

Summary of challenges identified:
- **Long waiting lists:** a significant number of respondents mentioned long waiting times to access essential services, such as English language classes (ESOL) and other educational programs, which delay their ability to become employable.
- **Travel and accessibility issues:** challenges related to travel time and accessibility were frequently noted. Some respondents find it difficult to access services that are far from their homes, especially when these services are only available in specific locations.
- **Lack of childcare support:** the absence of childcare options is a major barrier for parents, making it challenging for them to attend courses or job interviews.
- **High demand and limited resources:** there is a recurrent issue of high demand for services against a backdrop of limited resources. This results in clients feeling overlooked or not receiving the necessary attention.
- **Administrative barriers:** some clients feel they are repeatedly passed between different services without receiving effective help, leading to frustration and confusion.

2. Thinking about the issues that the organisation helped you with, how important was this type of support? What was most important about the support they offered?

Summary of key support features:
- **Personalised support:** many respondents valued personalised support tailored to their specific needs. This included one-on-one mentoring, help with interview preparation, and personalised job coaching.
- **Holistic services:** some organisations offer a comprehensive range of support, including healthcare registration, language support, and job placement services. This holistic approach is appreciated as it addresses multiple aspects of the clients' lives.

- **Confidence building:** Support that helps clients build confidence, particularly in interviews and workplace settings, was highlighted as crucial. This includes workshops, mock interviews, and mentorship programs.
- **Language and translation services:** For many, especially those not fluent in English, language support is critical. Services that provide translation or help with completing forms in English are highly valued.

3. How did you find and access the service you used? Why did you decide to go to this service?

Summary of access and decision-making factors:
- **Word-of-mouth and recommendations:** a large proportion of respondents found services through word-of-mouth, either from friends, family, or community members. Trust in recommendations played a significant role in their decision to use a particular service.
- **Referrals from other organisations:** many respondents were referred by other services, indicating a network of interconnected support services.
- **Reputation and past experiences:** some clients chose services based on the reputation of the organisation or their past positive experiences.
- **Proactive outreach:** instances where organisations reached out directly to potential clients, especially those involved in specific programs like the U.K. Refugee Resettlement Scheme, also facilitated access.

4. How important is it for you to access services which are close to your home? Do you prefer in-person meetings or online?

Summary of Preferences:
- **Proximity matters:** for many respondents, the proximity of services is very important. Those needing regular or specialised support prefer services that are easily accessible.
- **Willingness to travel:** despite the importance of proximity, many are willing to travel for services they perceive as high-quality or particularly suited to their needs.
- **In-person vs. online:** preferences are mixed. Some respondents prefer in-person interactions for more personalised support, while others appreciate the convenience of online services, which can save travel time and offer flexibility.

5. How important is it for you to have access to a service that meets your specific needs? For example, this might be a service that is designed for your age group, suited to New Scots or a particular disability.

- **Highly important:** access to services that cater specifically to individual needs is seen as crucial. This includes services that are sensitive to age, cultural background, or specific challenges (e.g., disability, language barriers).
- **Tailored programs:** respondents value services that offer tailored programs, whether for young people, older adults, refugees (New Scots), or those with disabilities. Such

targeted support can better address unique challenges and facilitate successful outcomes.

- **Anxiety around change:** some respondents expressed concerns about changes in services, which can lead to anxiety and uncertainty. Stability and consistency in service provision are important.

6. Is there anything else you would like to tell us related to your experience of services in Edinburgh and what you think is needed in future?

- **Need for unrestricted funding:** respondents called for more unrestricted funding to allow organisations to be flexible and responsive to client needs.
- **Time and resource investment:** many highlighted the need for greater investment in time and resources to adequately meet the complex needs of clients.
- **Practitioner networks:** building networks for practitioners to share best practices and support each other was seen as beneficial. This can lead to better outcomes through shared knowledge and resources.
- **Clear criteria and processes:** suggestions included having clear and consistent criteria for clients and organisations, which would make navigating services easier and more transparent.

Stakeholder and Service Provider Feedback

Summary:
The analysis of responses from stakeholders and providers regarding employability services in Edinburgh highlights several key areas for improvement and focus. While there is a consensus that a substantial level of provision exists, there is a pressing need to enhance the targeting of these services to specific areas and demographics, such as those in low-income neighbourhoods or individuals with additional support needs. Common barriers faced by service users include mental health issues, housing challenges, health conditions, and difficulties faced by non-UK citizens regarding sponsorship.

The types of support most in demand include childcare assistance, financial support for both employed and unemployed individuals, and career preparation services like CV building and interview coaching. Respondents stress the importance of providing holistic support, integrating services that address mental health, budgeting, and childcare to better meet the needs of the community. Lastly, there is a significant call for tailoring services to specific demographic needs, ensuring that these tailored services are accessible and that users are aware of the available resources. Addressing these areas could enhance the effectiveness and reach of employability services in Edinburgh.

Detailed Analysis

1. **Is the current employability provision in Edinburgh meeting the level of need in the city?**

   Key Themes:
   - **Adequacy of provision**: acknowledgement that there is a substantial amount of employability services available.
   - **Targeted focus needed**: emphasis on focusing services towards specific areas, such as SIMD (Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation) areas 1 and 2, which are likely to have more concentrated needs.
   - **Sector-Based support**: Suggestions to continue or increase the focus on sector-based training to align with job market demands.

2. **What are the main barriers the people you support face with regards to moving towards employment?**

   Key Themes:
   - **Mental health**: a significant barrier identified, indicating a need for services to include or better integrate mental health support.
   - **Structural issues**: housing and health conditions are prominent barriers, highlighting socioeconomic challenges.

- **Legal and citizenship issues**: non-UK citizens face hurdles such as sponsorship requirements, which complicates access to employment.

3. **What are the main types of support people are looking for when accessing your service?**

Key Themes:
- **Childcare and financial support**: these are critical needs for many individuals, with childcare being a recurring issue.
- **Career preparation**: support in CV building, interview skills, and even appropriate work attire is sought after.
- **Confidence building**: psychological and emotional support is also crucial, indicating that employability extends beyond skills training.

4. **To what extent is it important that employability organisations offer holistic support, inclusive of aspects such as help with budgeting, mental health support, and childcare advice?**

Key Themes:
- **Holistic approach necessary**: there is a consensus on the need for holistic support, with specific emphasis on mental health and financial advice.
- **Integration with other services**: suggestions for better links with advisory services and possibly signposting to external support services.

5. **How important is it to have services tailored to specific demographics and needs?**

Key Themes:
- **Customisation of services**: importance is placed on ensuring services are bespoke and tailored to the individual needs of various demographics.
- **Awareness and access**: the need to make clients aware of the tailored services available and addressing geographical disparities.

Ethnicity and Employment Round Table Analysis

Summary

The insights from the Ethnicity and Employability Round Table event provide a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and needs faced by ethnic minority clients in accessing employability services and support. The responses suggest a balanced approach, combining bespoke services where necessary with efforts to make universal services more inclusive and accessible.

Detailed Analysis

1. Bespoke services vs. tailored universal services

- **Individual needs**: many responses highlighted the importance of recognising that individuals have diverse needs, particularly around language and cultural barriers.
- **Language support**: there is a significant demand for more language support services, such as ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) courses, which would help overcome communication barriers.
- **Integration into existing services**: Some respondents suggested that universal services should be more inclusive and welcoming, potentially through staff training and cultural competency.

2. Broadcasting funding opportunities for BME services
- **Use of existing networks**: respondents suggested utilising established networks like the EVOC (Edinburgh Voluntary Organisations' Council) newsletter to reach more organisations.
- **Longer-term funding**: there was a call for fewer funding pots but with longer-term grants, enabling more sustainable service planning and delivery.
- **Transparency**: more transparency about available funding was recommended, alongside specific outreach efforts to make sure that relevant organisations are informed.

3. Making application processes more accessible
- **Simplified application process**: a two-stage application process was proposed, starting with a short initial application or expression of interest, followed by a more detailed submission if shortlisted.
- **Support for applicants**: there were suggestions for offering translation support to help organisations complete applications, ensuring language barriers do not prevent access to funding.
- **Reducing complexity**: making applications shorter and less complex, while still maintaining robustness, was emphasised as a way to increase accessibility.

4. Other issues faced by ethnic minority clients

- **Tailored services for specific groups**: there was a noted need for tailored services for specific groups, such as those on sponsored visas or recent arrivals from places like Hong Kong.
- **Employment barriers**: respondents highlighted that many people face significant barriers to employment due to language skills, qualifications not being recognised, or lack of experience in the local job market.
- **Anti-racism and employer engagement**: it was suggested that more work is needed with employers to address systemic racism and create more inclusive workplaces.