



**ALL PARTY URBAN DEVELOPMENT GROUP  
AUTUMN 2008 INQUIRY REGENERATION:  
DELIVERING CITY JOBS**

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### **How can major city-centre regeneration projects do more to boost employment in inner-city neighbourhoods?**

Launched in late 2002, WorkDirections UK is now one of the leading welfare-to-work providers in the country, delivering Government-funded employment programmes across London, Birmingham, Nottinghamshire and Edinburgh. WorkDirections recognises the individual needs of our clients and their unique sets of skills and potential, and we offer each client one-to-one support to find a job that suits their personal circumstances.

We are delighted to submit this response to the All Party Urban Development Group's autumn 2008 inquiry. WorkDirections is engaged in policy development as part of our commitment to continue to improve services delivered to all stakeholders - clients, government, employers and staff.

Our response is informed by our experiences of delivering Pathways to Work services in the Olympic boroughs, and a Private Sector Led New Deal programme in West London close to the new Westfield Shopping Centre:

#### **Contracts awarded to employers with a good track record of fair recruitment practices, employee learning and development, and flexible working opportunities**

The employers who are awarded regeneration contracts should demonstrate that they support the Department for Work and Pensions' agenda of achieving an 80% employment rate and eradicating child poverty. To this end, it would be valuable if they committed to achieving and maintaining employee diversity, marketing vacancies locally and offering flexible working hours. This could be facilitated through signing up to the Local Employment Partnership scheme.

#### **Transparent and sustainable recruitment practices**

Clear plans for recruitment, shared with local employment service providers and Jobcentre Plus offices, will enhance local employment by ensuring that unemployed people have the knowledge and information required to apply for job vacancies. Local residents must also have clear expectations of the volume of jobs being created by the regeneration initiative, and employers' requirements for applicants for those positions. More transparency and communication between recruiters and providers would facilitate more effective matching between job seekers and job vacancies. Programmes could also be developed to provide employers with candidates prepared for the specific types of work available. Recruitment must be for employment that is sustainable, giving employees the opportunity to develop work skills and experience for their future career progression.



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### **Direct communication between recruiters and employment service providers**

An 'Account Manager' model can work well, where the employer has a direct point of contact with the employment service provider, with whom they can discuss their recruitment and training needs. This will facilitate targeted pre-employment training. For example, those of our clients who successfully secured work in London's new Westfield shopping centre were supported by undertaking valuable induction training to prepare them for the opening of Westfield.

### **Recruitment in line with Jobcentre Plus priorities**

Where recruitment of staff for regeneration projects is managed through local Jobcentre Plus offices, many vacancies are taken up by people who have been out of work for only a short amount of time. In order to maximise the added value of such recruitment, employers could direct their vacancy advertising at client groups prioritised by Jobcentre Plus (the long-term unemployed, homeless, ex-offenders, etc). This would be more likely to have a greater impact on sustained employment outcomes. Again, direct communication between employers and those providers working with these priority groups would facilitate this.

### **Employers reflect the diversity of the local community**

Employers should recognise the needs and capabilities of those without work in the local area, and recruit local residents for jobs at all pay levels. For example, although the focus of the Olympic Delivery Authority's recruitment is on construction and logistics, not all residents are committed to or suitable for entry-level manual jobs in this industry. Many WorkDirections clients have a physical health issue which means manual work is not possible for them. Others are not interested in the construction industry because they perceive the work to be irregular, and are hesitant to risk their stable benefit income without guarantee of ongoing permanent work. In this case, employers should look equally to recruit locally for non-entry level and non-manual work where possible, to ensure diversity across their job profiles. In addition, the provider must take account of local labour market conditions and help job seekers prepare for jobs which actually exist.

Here we have highlighted some key features of successful city-centre regeneration projects from our experience of delivering employment programmes in inner-city neighbourhoods. Where successful, regeneration can deliver a 'triple win' - for the individual, the employer, and the local area. When large regeneration projects are embarked upon the local area stands to increase its economic productivity and sustainability, including increased employment of local residents. Partnership that unites employers with the local labour supply can facilitate this outcome, and maximise the opportunities that regeneration projects can bring.



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