

Future Employment Support Programme – AKG Market Engagement Webinar

Date: 23rd July 2026

Question and Answer Sheet

Question

Given the scale of mobilisation likely to be required, particularly frontline recruitment, is AKG seeing any appetite from DWP to recognise recruitment and mobilisation costs within the bid model, similar to what we saw in some post-COVID programmes or are providers expected to absorb these costs?

Answer

DWP have not provided information on costs during their market engagement webinars to date, so we don't know either way. AKG as a prime, would work with selected delivery partners to identify where we can help to mitigate financial risks of mobilisation where possible.

Question

Do you anticipate TUPE applying to this contract? If so, what approach will you take to sharing that obligation with your supply chain?

Answer

DWP indicated in their most recent market engagement webinar that the application of TUPE from Restart to the new contract is still to be clarified although they stated at present the new programme would be a standalone programme. However DWP will clarify at further engagement events. If TUPE were to apply we would take a legally informed position to determine how this would be applied across delivery partners.

Question

To what degree do you envisage lived-experience engagement, focused on understanding cohort-specific employment barriers, forming part of the commissioned scope?

Answer

We highly value lived experience and have long seen the benefit of it through our group, with AKG's Intuitive Thinking Skills business being a recognised Lived Experience Recovery Organisation. We recognise Lived Experience as a valued asset contributing to supporting the full engagement of participants into our programmes and services. However, lived experience has not been mentioned as being part of the commissioned scope for the new programme.

Question

How different in your view is FES versus Restart? What do you think DWP has tried to change? And given that Connect to Work is focused on specialist support and health conditions, how would you describe the difference between FES and C2W?

Answer

Restart and FES have some similarities, for example the 12 month journey, personalised support and the mandation for long-term unemployed participants. But there are key differences around cohorts (e.g. voluntary participation for lone parents and carers, and disadvantaged groups) and CPAs (for example, Wales is not in-scope). With regards the Connect to Work programme, FES is mainly for those in the Intensive Work Search (IWS) regime. Connect to Work mainly targets non-IWS, individuals who are economically inactive.

Question

The DWP aspirational 40% target includes VCSE and SME. The 25% didn't mention VCSE, is this just a SME target?

Answer

That is correct, as far as DWP have stated at this early stage in the procurement process.

Question

You mentioned that the Government is codesigning the contract with Mayoral Authorities. CPA 6 includes more than one MCA, so is it likely the offering will look different in different parts of the CPA?

Answer

We would expect the programme to be consistent across all CPAs, as the procurement of the service is being led centrally by DWP. For example, the eligibility criteria for mandatory participation, the voluntary day one cohorts able to access the programme and KPIs. We do not know the extent of the co-design with MSAs or what that means in terms of the programme delivery. It would be that co-design with MSAs would ensure FES is locally tailored and responsive to local needs.

Question

As a delivery partner, are we allowed to work with multiple primes? If not, how soon would AKG be able to inform us if we are on your list so we don't liaise with other primes?

Answer

There is no restriction on the number of primes a provider could work with and AKG would not impose any restrictions of this nature.

Question

Skills training and ESOL support have been mentioned. Further to previous conversations about this, do you have any further detail on whether there is an expectation for any accredited training to be funded through the FES contract or is this something that providers need to source externally (e.g. via Skills Bootcamps and ASF provision)?

Answer

Market engagement events held by DWP have not explicitly stated that there is an expectation for accredited training to be funded through the FES contract. We assume at this stage that it would be down to prime bidders whether they decide to include accredited training within their delivery model. Equally these services could be sourced externally if funded through, for example ASF.

Question

Are there any opportunities for ITPs to become involved?

Answer

Yes. Please refer to our Expression of Interest and those currently being published by other prime bidders. How ITPs become involved depends on the delivery model being developed by prime bidders.