

Specification Document

The Brief – Kickstart Wrap-Around Support

'Better Placed' is a strategic employment and skills partnership between the London Boroughs of Lambeth, Lewisham & Southwark. Reference to 'Better Placed' indicates all three of the organisations in a single term, and responses to this brief should reflect a single, equal approach to service delivery across these three boroughs.

Introduction

[Kickstart](#) is the government's flagship youth employment scheme developed in response to the significant rise in unemployment caused by Covid-19. Information on the programme can be found [here](#). Employers who wish to provide a placement through this scheme, but have less than 30 vacancies, can apply through a 'Gateway'. Lambeth, Lewisham and Southwark Councils are collaborating to act as a single Gateway across our boroughs, submitting applications on behalf of small employers. We recognise many of these employers do not have experience in managing young people in their business or providing employability support.

The Better Placed Partnership is seeking a provider with significant experience in providing employability training support to young people aged 16 – 24 in order to support employers and young people participating in Kickstart. Better Placed is looking to collectively commission employability and wrap-around support to ensure that Kickstart placements provided by local employers are of a high-quality and maximise the learning and progression potential for every young person who participates in the scheme.

Covid-19 has presented significant challenges to the ways in which people normally learn, train and work. We are seeking a provider who can mitigate against this by providing employability support virtually, when necessary, which can be accessed by learners wherever they may be working. We recognise that a diverse range of Kickstart placements will result in variable working hours and locations, with an expectation many 'Kickstarters' will be working from home for a significant proportion of their six-month placement.

Due to the need to establish this support service rapidly, Lambeth Council are using Public Contract Regulations (2015) to call for competition using a standard procedure with accelerated timescales. This ensures that the Kickstart Employability Support (KES) is in place for when placements are expected to commence in mid-March 2021.

We expect Invitations to Quote to outline how the scope of services will be delivered:

- A cost based on a minimum of 90 participants; it is expected there will be additional participants during the duration of the contract and therefore we are also seeking a unit cost per participant for any additional participants.
- Based on the full scope of services outlined
- Provide details on how each objective heading will be achieved
- Indication of when you will be able to commence delivery. We aim for this service to begin delivery as soon as possible, onboarding participants for initial engagement flexibly as learning content is finalised

Quotes should be returned to Spike van der Vliet-Firth (svandervlietfirth1@lambeth.gov.uk) by 09:00 on Monday 1st March 2021.

Background

Kickstart aims to tackle sharp increases in youth unemployment by providing employers with a salary subsidy for 6-month work placements for 16-24 year olds. Better Placed support this scheme and initiatives that aim to reduce unemployment. Between March – September 2020, we have seen alarming rises in the amount of young people claiming unemployment support. Over 3000 young people now claim Universal Credit in each of our boroughs. The scale of the youth unemployment challenge is stark and continues to grow.

Long-term unemployment can have a particularly scarring effect on young people. Someone aged 16 – 24:

- Will not have as much experience and skills to compete for vacancies in a tight labour market
- Will have been more likely to experience a reduction in hours, loss of employment or be furloughed as a result of Covid-19.
- We have a high BAME population, with evidence showing that these groups are also more likely to experience structural racism and disadvantage in the labour market. BAME residents are also more likely to have lost their job in recent months, given the over-representation in low-paid and insecure work of BAME employees as well as heavily impacted sectors such as retail and hospitality.

This loss of employment can also lead to significant challenges for the individual:

- Evidence shows long-term unemployment can lead to lasting impact of career potential and future earnings.
- Long-term unemployment can have significant impact on mental wellbeing, leading to diminished confidence, self-esteem and motivation as well as disengagement with education, employment and training.

It is because of this challenge we wish to match local employers who are providing Kickstart placements with a high-quality employability skills offer. We want this to result in more young people being retained by their employer. Where this is not possible, we want the young person to be as well-equipped as possible with new skills, experience and the ability to present this to prospective employers. This aims for participants to be better positioned to compete for roles in the labour market. By working with local employers, we can also help ensure these young people are better joined up to the wider support ecosystem in their local area.

We have received expressions of interest from over 300 employers locally. 150 local employers attended engagement sessions with us to learn more about the scheme. We have already received over 200 placement submissions that we are developing or submitting to DWP as a Gateway. It provided us with a chance to understand the needs of employers, and this specification is designed with the needs of young people and their employer at heart. Through this engagement, we have determined that:

- This service needs to be able to be provided either face-to-face or remotely, depending on the preference of the young person and current health guidance.
- This service needs to comply with the employability skills DWP require participants to develop during their placement. Where possible, there should be a range of content that can be selected based on the need of the individual and the skills they need to develop within that role/sector.
- Smaller employers with less experience in providing employability skills and support want to be able to access a comprehensive, high-quality package that is delivered on their behalf directly to the young person.

- Employers also want to be able to receive advice and support throughout the Kickstart placement in order to support their young employee effectively.

Unless there is an exceptional case (e.g. the employer is a training provider) all employers utilising the Better Placed Gateway will utilise this employability support offer. As commissioner, we will ensure and underwrite the minimum contract value to ensure the awarded provider receives the minimum contract value outlined in this specification. We expect this offer to be in place for the duration of Kickstart. We expect placements to start up to December 2021, meaning the support offer needs to be in place up until July 2022 as a minimum. There is potential for this to be extended, depending on whether DWP choose to extend the programme beyond December 2021 and we may choose to extend this employability skills contract if this happens.

This service should be deliverable from anywhere – we recognise there will be significant challenges to work and training participation in the coming months due to Covid-19. As such, this programme must be able to achieve all the objectives outlined below online, as distance learning. But there should also be the ability to provide some face-to-face provision where health and social distancing guidance allows. We are looking for creative suggestions on how this programme can be delivered online, and how the support can be engaging and manageable alongside work commitments.

Objectives

Scope of Services

- **Skills development**
 - Equipping young people with an understanding of basic employability skills, including but not limited to CV writing, interview techniques, job searching, completing a job application & workplace skills such as timekeeping and professional conduct.
 - Standard workplace skills such as presentation skills, customer services, active listening, prioritisation, effective writing, communication skills and basic project management would be delivered.
 - This would be delivered in an appropriate amount of modules over the course of the placement.
 - We are looking for a mix of core/compulsory modules and additional/optional modules.
 - Core modules should focus on employability & workplace skills and well as skills to progress from Kickstart.
 - Participants should complete their placement with a clear understanding of the world of work and professional conduct
 - Participants should be comfortable with searching, applying and interviewing for jobs
 - Participants should finish their Kickstart placement with a good-quality personally tailored CV.
 - We also expect employers to deliver/facilitate reasonable, limited job-specific training where required to effectively carry out the role.
 - Participants should also be able to access additional, optional skills modules that are relevant to the individual's needs and aspirations. This would be proportionate to the amount of time employed on Kickstart

- Participants should be given access to a reasonable amount of modules if employer, coach or participant identifies a clear benefit from the specific training.
- Access to additional modules should be identified in mentoring/coaching sessions.
- We expect the structure to be around 5 compulsory modules to 3 optional modules
- In addition to flexible online modules we are also looking for Kickstart specific group 'master-classes' that focus on transferrable skills and providing careers insights to participants.
 - Can be linked to the core employability skills outlined above, but should not be limited to.
- **Coaching**
 - Provide monthly 1-1 coaching sessions, lasting around 1 hour with Kickstart participants.
 - Additional sessions may be required. This will be determined based on risk of disengagement or additional support needs.
 - This provides an avenue to provide feedback on placements and identify any issues
 - Facilitating a conversation about thinking to the future, and helping Kickstarters plan to achieving longer-term goals and aspirations.
 - Use coaching as an opportunity to motivate participants to engage with their progression
 - Using session 1 to design and agree a personalised learning plan, which can then be tracked throughout placement. This also helps identify individual skill needs and aspirations.
 - Monitoring records should be kept by the mentor/coach and recorded using the online system provided by Better Placed.
- **Monitoring placement progress**
 - Regular check-ups with the Kickstart participant to ensure the placement is going well and address any challenges that may arise through conversations with participant and employer.
 - This would be a once a month and light touch. This could be linked to coaching sessions as described above.
 - Ensuring the young person is engaged with the Skills and Careers IAG offer outlined in these objectives and that the young person is keeping a journal/record of their experience and skills development.
 - This could be monitored through a module-based skills and employability programme online
 - There should be a process to notify employers of progress and raise concerns regarding non-completion of training
 - Making sure expectations are managed and understood, with interventions made where there is a risk of disengagement with the programme
 - This would be as needed when issues are flagged through the lighter-touch regular check-ups.
 - Tracking of the individual's participation in all activities via a placement journal.
 - This would be the responsibility of the Kickstarter to complete, although consistent input into the journal may need encouragement.

- Every Kickstart participant should exit the programme with the ability to articulate the skills and experience gained, and how to utilise this for job applications
- **Careers Information, Advice and Guidance**
 - Participants gain an understanding of different careers and sectors relevant to them and opportunities in the local labour market.
 - Kickstarters should be well equipped by the end of their placement to seek out and apply for jobs that are suitable and interesting to them
 - Careers IAG should be locally rooted – focussing on immediate and future opportunities in London.
 - Advice on post-16 education offer locally and how to identify suitable courses
 - Participants should be aware of the offer and how to enrol. Participants should be supported to engage with education options when an appetite is expressed in 1-1 coaching sessions.
 - How to identify skills and held and how to understand their transferability
 - Critical self-reflection of their skills and experience and how to articulate this to potential employers
 - Participants should keep a placement journal, used to structure coaching conversations. Participants should be able to understand the skills they have gained and how to match these to employment opportunities and express this experience in interview/application scenarios.
- **Progression support**
 - Every participant creating a placement exit plan which includes
 - How to plan for the next steps and develop a progression plan
 - Looking at next step opportunities such as apprenticeships through virtual job brokerage sessions targeted at Kickstarters. This could be a monthly event or a suite of online resources.
 - Instigated 6-8 weeks before the end of placement.
 - Focus on progression and staying active with employment and skills
 - A record of achievement through their placement journal so each participant can reflect on the experience and skills they have developed during their Kickstart placement.
 - Ensuring participants know where to receive ongoing support, and helping that individual make links to local employment support services.
 - How to independently manage job searching and CV updates once they have progressed from Kickstart. Every Kickstarter should have a completed CV for review at the end of placement.
 - Encouragement to start applying for next roles 6-8 weeks before end of placement where progression with the same employer isn't assured.
 - If participants have not secured immediate progression from Kickstart, the provider should undertake referrals/warm handovers to established youth provision (such as Youth Hubs) so they can access additional support for securing long-term work, education or training.
 - Participants should also receive transition support

- Continued support for 1 month following end of placement by coach/mentor if progression hasn't been secured
- Continued access to the flexible online learning toolkit post-placement, for a minimum of 1 month
- **Employer support/resources**
 - Resources for employers who have had a placement approved and secured through a Better Placed Gateway who require support on how best to manage the young person and get the most out of a placement.
 - Resources for planning/mapping the 6 month work placement and how to get the most out of the experience for employer and young person, in recognition of the needs of young people
 - Providing advice when requested, on delivery of employability plan, how to manage and support a young person and providing a source of advice on how to resolve challenges that risk disengagement with employment by the Kickstart participant.
 - Providing advice on progression and retaining the Kickstarter. If this is not possible, making sure that the participant engages in the progression support offer outlined above.
 - Supporting employers to develop a high-level 6-month workplan for their placement, if required.
 - This can take the form of written materials and guidance, as well as the opportunity of a verbal discussion if desired by the employer (e.g. a "good Kickstart placement guide")
 - Please note: There is no requirement to deliver pre-employment support for participants within this contract
- **Peer networks**
 - Forums for Kickstart participants to share their experiences and receive peer-to-peer support
 - This would require light touch oversight, and established to be a sustainable peer-to-peer forum.
- **Addressing barriers to participation and progression**
 - Providing routine encouragement to ensure as many Kickstarters complete their full placement – should be treated as compulsory and utilise positive persuasion to complete. However, no penalty for not completing

We would expect all of the compulsory activity above to be delivered evenly across the 26-week placement and take around 26 hours to complete, equivalent to one hour per week. Optional learning modules would not be counted in this time.

Outputs & Milestones	Timescale/Due Date
Enrolment of young person onto programme	Rolling starts over 2021
Completion of compulsory skills modules	Monthly
Engagement with careers IAG support	End of Month 3
Provision of virtual job search and brokerage	Month 5
Delivery of 6 mentoring sessions	End of Month 6
Completion of reflective journal & exit plan	End of Month 6
Successful progression of Kickstart participant	Conclusion of placement

Fees and Costs
An Invitation to Quote is adjoined to this specification. By supporting 'Better Placed' as three separate Kickstart Gateways under a single contract, we expect that quotes will reflect the economy-of-scale this opportunity presents.

Selection Criteria & Award Criteria	Weighting (%)
Significant experience of providing education, training and coaching support to 16-24 year olds	20%
Flexibility to provide services remotely or face-to-face, depending on Covid-19 public health advice	10%
Quality of support – bespoke content for Kickstarters and access to wider resources	40%
Experience of working with employers to provide high-quality employment opportunities for young people	10%
Cost	20%

Questions for responses

We are asking all interested providers to answer the following questions as part of their submission:

- 1) How would your organisation meet all the requirements set out in the Kickstart Wrap-Around Support Specification requirements? **(40% - 1000 words maximum)**
 - a. Skills Development
 - b. Coaching
 - c. Monitoring of placement progress
 - d. Careers Information, Advice and Guidance
 - e. Progression Support
 - f. Employer Support/Resources
 - g. Peer Networks
 - h. Addressing Barriers to Participation and Progression

- 2) How would your service be delivered and how will it be responsive to delivery challenges arising from Covid-19? *We request an outline of how you will provide both digital and face-to-face delivery (when this is possible to do).* **(10% - 250 words maximum)**
- 3) What is your experience of providing education, training and coaching that supports access to employment opportunities for 16-24 year olds? *Here, we are interested to hear about support provided alongside employment.* **(20% - 500 words maximum)**
- 4) What is your experience of working with employers to provide high-quality employment opportunities for young people? **(20% - 500 words maximum)**
- 5) A quotation for services provided **(10% - 250 words maximum)** including:
 - a. Cost of delivery to initial 90 participants, valued between £36,000 - £45,000
 - b. Unit cost for spot purchasing of placements above the initial 90 placements, either provided as an individual unit cost or as an additional 5-10 placement cost.

Timetable for responses

All responses must be received by 09:00 Monday 1st March and sent to svandervlietfirth1@lambeth.gov.uk. These will then be assessed by a panel comprising of officers from Lambeth, Lewisham and Southwark Councils.

Questions relating to the specification or application process

We welcome partnership and consortium bids for this contract. Any consortium bid would need to have a lead provider and Lambeth Council would only enter a contract with one provider for this service.

If you have any further questions on this specification or the accompanying Submission Form or Quotation Confirmation Letter, please send questions to svandervlietfirth1@lambeth.gov.uk by 17:00 on Tuesday 16th February 2021. We will publish an FAQ of all questions and responses within one week of this deadline.

Key Performance Indicators

1. *Completion of core employability skills modules by participants*
2. *Completion of reflective journal on skills and experience*
3. *Delivery of 1-1 coaching sessions*
4. *Completion of careers IAG offer*
5. *Feedback from participants on the quality of the offer*
6. *Progression into Employment, Education or Training post-placement and not a return to NEET status*

7. Responsible Procurement Policy

Lambeth Council is a London Living Wage employer and expects all individuals employed as a result of entering a contractual relationship with Lambeth Council to be paid at least

the London Living Wage. In this context, this requirement will apply to any employment coaches, advisers or trainers who are delivering the support outlined in this specification. It does not include the young people who are on a Kickstart placement.