



This research project maps and analyses information about a range of initiatives in the London region that assist members of disadvantaged groups into the labour market. The research identifies factors that are helpful in tackling the barriers of disadvantage and will make a substantial contribution to the existing research on disadvantage in the labour market by identifying trends and gaps in provision.

### RESEARCH METHODS

The methods employed include:

- Questionnaire survey of London initiatives to help disadvantaged groups develop their employability skills. All questionnaire returns are being listed on the project's database
- Semi-structured interviews with provider organisations, beneficiaries, funders and policy makers and advocate organisations (42 interviews have been analysed to date)
- Focus groups with beneficiaries and employers (4 focus groups have taken place)
- Good Practice case studies

### PRELIMINARY INTERVIEW FINDINGS

#### Effectiveness of Education and Skills Support in Tackling Disadvantage

The research found that there is a wide measure of satisfaction with the present support measures for the disadvantaged in terms of

- the amount of initiatives offered across London
- the variety and inventiveness of the available projects
- the accessibility of support (although not in all London areas)

Some beneficiaries, especially the younger ones, point out that the initiatives in which they participated opened up opportunities to them.

Interviewees also made suggestions for further improvements including:

#### *Funding:*

- needs to be less fragmented and needs to avoid duplication of projects in the same area
- continuation of funding for successful projects instead of 're-inventing'
- more projects that link closely with employers
- more opportunities for work experience for participants

*Targets:* less rigid targets for those most disadvantaged

*Combating negative perceptions:* in society in general but more specifically amongst employers

*Need for preparatory work at earlier age:* particularly for 16-19 NEETs

*Advice and guidance:* can help improve motivation and self-confidence and outline choices for different skill levels

*Need for dialogue* between members of disadvantaged groups and funding agencies in order to increase understanding of barriers and needs.

## Disadvantage and Barriers to Employment

All interviewees agreed that lack of employment and/or barriers to employment are only one dimension of what is often a multi-layered experience of disadvantage and social exclusion – hence the need for a holistic approach towards disadvantage was emphasised. The research has identified six main areas of disadvantages and barriers:

*Economic:* poverty, growing up within a benefit culture

*Educational:* low qualifications or skills

*Psychological:* low motivation and confidence, unwillingness to travel

*Social:* family background, lack of social network, lack of appropriate childcare

*Negative Perceptions:* employer discrimination, negative public image

*Cultural:* wearing the hijab, ethnic/religious tensions

### THE RESEARCH DATABASE

The database lists London initiatives together with details such as target groups, the kind of qualifications awarded, progression rates of beneficiaries, objectives, information on geographical distribution, ethnic, gender and age information of the participants. The database will be made widely available together with a list of queries, tables and charts. The database currently lists 370 projects and will expand to 500 or more.

### CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS

A model of Critical Success Factors is being developed. To address the multiple dimensions of disadvantage requires the collaboration of many agencies. The education and skills system does however play an important role by giving targeted support to members of disadvantaged groups that opens up opportunities for them in employment and as citizens.

For more information about the progress of our research please visit our website:  
<http://www.workinglives.org/disadvantage.html>

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The membership for the Steering Committee for this project includes:

- Working Lives Research Institute, London Metropolitan University
- Central London Learning Partnership
- CITB-ConstructionSkills
- Disablement Association of Barking and Dagenham (dabd)
- Jobcentre Plus London Regional Office
- Learning Skills Council (LSC) London North
- London Voluntary Service Council (LVSC)
- London Voluntary Sector Training Consortium (LVSTC)
- North London Learning Partnership
- Refugee Council
- North London Strategic Health Authority
- South London Learning Partnership
- TUC Learning Services (SERTUC)
- London West Learning Partnership
- Open College Network London Region
- Learning and Skills Council (LSC) London Central



