European Social Fund in England
Improving people’s lives
2012-2013
Introduction

The European Social Fund (ESF) aims to improve employment opportunities in the European Union (EU). It supports Member States’ employment and skills policies and contributes to the Europe 2020 strategy for jobs and growth.

This booklet sets out how the ESF is making real and sustained changes to the lives of unemployed or disadvantaged people. By focusing on those who need support the most, the ESF is helping to tackle poverty and promote social justice. At the same time, the ESF also supports the Government’s ambition to create a more educated workforce that is the most flexible in Europe.

The 2007-2013 England ESF programme is investing £2.5 billion in jobs and skills. Priority groups for support include young people not in education, employment or training, families with multiple problems, offenders and people with low skill levels.

The next round of ESF funding from 2014-2020 is currently being developed, although at this stage key decisions have yet to be taken at EU level on the budget and regulations. The latest information on the current and future ESF programmes can be found on the national ESF website: www.dwp.gov.uk/esf

Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Funding</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance and participation</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment opportunities and Social Justice</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offenders</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young people</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skills for growth</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustainable development</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WorldSkills, The Skills Show and ESF award winners</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal opportunities</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community grants</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Innovation</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014-2020 programme</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicating ESF</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Funding

The European Social Fund is investing over £2.5 billion in England in 2007-2013. This is matched to a similar amount of national funding. The investment is providing new opportunities to people who face the greatest barriers to work and learning.

“Our ESF Co-financing allows DWP to increase the availability of employment support for disadvantaged customers. During 2008 – 2011 our ESF provision helped almost 75,000 individuals find employment and now, from 2011-2013, it is enabling us to focus on entrenched worklessness amongst families with multiple problems, helping them to overcome the difficulties they face and to move closer to employment.”

Alan Cave, Contracted Customer Services Director, Department for Work and Pensions

In 2011-2013, the main activities supported by the England ESF programme are:

- Department for Work and Pensions employment related support for Families with Multiple Problems (around £200 million), and voluntary places on the Work Programme for people on Incapacity Benefit and Income Support (£66 million);
- Skills Funding Agency support for young people not in education, employment or training (£154 million), skills support for the unemployed (£98 million), Next Step (£47 million), grants for small community groups (£12 million), skills support for redundancy (£100 million), Apprenticeships (£181 million) and workplace learning (£86 million); and
- National Offender Management Service employment and skills support for offenders and ex-offenders - particularly groups that are extremely hard to help (£89 million).

The 2007-2013 programme covers Gibraltar as well as England. Gibraltar receives £2.8 million ESF to address its specific employment and skills challenges. The Government of Gibraltar is responsible for ESF within Gibraltar.

Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland have their own ESF programmes.

ESF allocations by priority (£ million)
Performance and participation

ESF aims to help people fulfil their potential by giving them better skills and better job prospects. By the end of May 2012, there had been over 3.4 million participant starts on the 2007-2013 England ESF programme. ESF investment is providing new opportunities to people who face the greatest barriers to work and learning:

- 298,094 unemployed or inactive participants have entered jobs;
- 133,750 participants have gained basic skills;
- 389,772 participants have gained qualifications at level 2 or above;
- 324,450 disadvantaged young people have been helped to enter employment, education or training.

The higher than expected number of participants is the result of shorter interventions in response to the economic downturn, as well as additional funding that became available as a result of the revaluation of the programme in 2008 to take account of sterling/euro exchange rate changes.

Progress against 2013 targets
Employment opportunities and Social Justice

“Social Justice is about making society function better - providing the support and tools to change lives around. Tools like the tailored interventions and support across the country through the European Social Fund.”

Mark Fisher, DWP Social Justice Director

Social Justice tackles the root causes of disadvantage and the pathways to poverty such as family breakdown, educational failure, worklessness, addiction and debt.

DWP Support for Families and the Work Programme

DWP ESF funding for the period 2011-2013 focuses on two main strands of activity to tackle disadvantage:

- Support for families with multiple problems to help address the issues they face such as inter-generational worklessness and lack of qualifications; and
- Support for additional Work Programme provision for Incapacity Benefit and Income Support recipients. Participation is on a voluntary basis and their places on the Work Programme are funded through the ESF. This supports the Government’s policy intent, as set out in the coalition agreement, that there should be a welfare to work programme to help all unemployed people back into work.

Families with Multiple Problems

Through this provision, DWP’s providers are helping to move families closer towards and into sustained employment.

The programme is designed to complement existing services that take place within a Local Authority supporting families and individuals to break the welfare dependency cycle, whilst reducing the wider impacts of inter-generational worklessness.

Providers have designed their programme with a family-centred approach in mind and will deliver a series of individual and family based activities to progress people closer towards employment.

Provision lasts a maximum of 52 weeks and will offer a wide range of support such as; overcoming educational difficulties, addressing social and economic barriers, dealing with health and housing issues as well as help with CV writing and job applications.

“Thanks to The Families Programme I now feel I can achieve my dreams by setting goals and challenging the obstacles in my way.”

Participant with Reed in Partnership on The Families Programme in Liverpool
Offenders

Since 2010 the National Offender Management Service (NOMS) ESF programme has been successfully working with participants in England whose needs for training and work experience may not be met through mainstream provision.

The first two year phase, which concluded in December 2011, engaged with over 41,000 offenders and ex-offenders and exceeded all of its contractual targets. It helped over 4,500 participants gain full-time, part-time, self or voluntary employment and 8,400 embark on further learning courses. However these hard outcome achievements tell only half the story as participants achieved a number and range of soft outcomes; for many NOMS ESF participants soft outcomes represent important steps in what can be a long and difficult road to gaining employment.

The second phase of the programme, worth £89 million, is underway and will run to December 2014. In the second phase additional sub-projects are being delivered in each region which will provide bespoke delivery for groups identified as ‘hard to help’. These include female sex workers, the travelling community, dual diagnosis offenders (offenders who have substance misuse and mental health issues) and ex-service personnel. Early indications are that the success achieved in the first phase will be continued in the second.

"ESF funding has allowed NOMS and its providers to focus on those who, because of a whole range of barriers including alcohol and substance misuse, are unable to access the mainstream support that is available. The programme aims to engage and motivate participants so that they find purposeful direction and can become an asset rather than a burden to society."

Mark Nickson, Head of NOMS Co-financing

Case study: Luke

“We all make mistakes, it’s what we do about them that’s important.”

Luke had never gone into further education, or found sustained employment with the exception of some bar work. This, with a developing problem with alcohol abuse, resulted in Luke serving a 12 month sentence in HMP Ranby for offending behaviour.

This prison sentence allowed Luke to reflect on the mistakes he had made and think about how he could change his life. He decided to use his time in custody constructively and gained employment cutting inmates’ hair.

With two months of his sentence left, Luke was referred to the Leicestershire and Rutland Probation Trust REACH programme which receives ESF funding from NOMS. After his initial interview with REACH, his next action was finding a college or training provider where he could study and gain an accredited qualification.

Luke got in touch with the Cooper and Taylor Hair and Beauty Academy in Nottingham, which offered a City & Guilds Level 2 Diploma in Gents Barbering. To start the course he needed financial support for his tuition and barbering kit, which was obtained through the ESF Discretionary Access Fund. Luke also needed 15 hours industry experience, which he gained by volunteering at a local barbershop.

Luke continues to volunteer and progress at the barbershop, whilst working hard on his studies and is about to start an Apprenticeship. Karen Saunders, Business Development Manager from Cooper and Taylor commented, “We all make mistakes, it’s what we do about them that’s important, Luke’s determination to obtain his qualification is inspiring, since leaving custody he has never failed to attend his college sessions.”
Young people

Young people are a key target group for ESF, especially those who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) or at risk of becoming NEET.

ESF supports a range of employment and skills provision to help young people prepare for working life. It is used to deliver activity that engages young people and stimulates their interest in educational and vocational activity. It also supports their progression into employment, education and training.

The Skills Funding Agency is working on behalf of the Education Funding Agency (EFA, formerly the Young People’s Learning Agency) to fund ESF projects for young people aged 14-19 who face multiple barriers to their participation. The EFA liaises closely with Local Authorities to ensure ESF funding is used to target key areas of need. As the Co-financing Organisation, the Skills Funding Agency uses well-established systems to effectively procure, contract and manage the performance of a wide range of customised education and support packages.

These projects help young people gain skills and knowledge that will improve their future employment and learning opportunities. This includes extra training and support for young people to succeed in an Apprenticeship, or to consider an Apprenticeship as an opportunity to increase their skills and contribute to the economy.

Case Study: Michael

“...a job helping give young people a better future is great for me.”

When unemployed keen inline skater Michael was helping to get Hartlepool’s Rozzy Plaza skate park off the ground, little did he know that he would soon have his ideal job there.

Fortunately, Michael was put in touch with Hartlepool Council’s Connect2Work and Going Forward Together ESF projects - which arranged a year’s paid youth worker placement for him with the Youth Service at the Rozzy Plaza.

Michael works at the skate park during the day and at the nearby Rossmere Youth Centre youth club during the evenings.

This experience has also provided him with a stepping stone to securing an additional post as a part-time sessional Youth Support Worker within the Youth Service. He is hoping to start studying for an NVQ soon.

As well as receiving a much-needed salary, he’s also getting a string of youth work qualifications under his belt, and is now in no doubt he’s found his true vocation.

“I have always been a family-orientated person and a job helping give young people a better future is great for me,” says Michael, who is organising events, helping the youngsters with any issues and playing his part in further developing the skate park.
Skills for growth

“In order to support economic recovery, we are turning our focus more towards skills that will promote economic growth, particularly for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). We are also exploring how else we can further the growth agenda and bring a greater dimension of entrepreneurship into the ESF programme.”

Julie Hobbins, Head of Funding Operational Policy, Skills Funding Agency

Using ESF to fund skills training can increase economic growth, both by improving the employability of people seeking work and by improving the skills levels and productivity of the workforce. ESF can also help entrepreneurs establish new businesses, with the potential to grow and create further job opportunities.

Skills Support for the Unemployed provides training and development to unemployed individuals on benefits who are looking for work but face a skills barrier to entering the labour market. Adults aged 19 and over can receive individually tailored skills and employability support to improve their chances of gaining employment, including starting an Apprenticeship.

Skills Support for Redundancy responds to the local economic conditions. It provides training opportunities for individuals who are: recently unemployed; under consultation or notice of redundancy; or under notice of company downsizing or closure.

Employed individuals with low skills can benefit from workplace learning, which promotes in-work progression through the delivery of work related skills training, with particular focus on helping those more vulnerable to future unemployment.

With the most recent procurement of Apprenticeships and workplace learning, ESF will add value by preparing participants with pre-Apprenticeship training and supporting access to and progression within Apprenticeships and other workplace learning. Through a prospectus approach to procurement, the Skills Funding Agency supports training providers to deliver the elements of ESF support most needed in their local area.

“The Skills Funding Agency understands that in order to maximise the impact ESF has in changing people’s lives, we must do more to understand the needs of local communities. For this reason, we are building in better engagement with stakeholders across all Local Enterprise Partnerships, cities and representatives from the Third Sector. It will now be these partners that determine the right priorities for the current programme, whilst retaining all of the efficiency and governance benefits a national system brings.”

Keith Smith, Executive Director, Delivery, Skills Funding Agency
Sustainable development

Sustainable development is a cross cutting theme in the 2007-2013 England ESF programme. In ESF, sustainable development has a particular focus on ensuring that the environment is taken into account during the delivery of provision. This focus is reflected in providers’ sustainable development policies and implementation plans.

The ESF Sustainable Development Mainstreaming Plan, which is available on the national ESF website:

- describes the progress that has been made in mainstreaming sustainable development in the first half of the ESF programme; and
- sets out the priorities for the second half of the programme period, such as training in sustainable development and encouraging more specialist provision.

Recycling Lives and Clear About Carbon were joint winners of the ESF Sustainable Development Mainstreaming Leader (Specialist Project) award in October 2011.

Case study: Recycling Lives

Recycling Lives is an innovative recycling and waste management company, which has established a charity that offers accommodation, education, training and work experience to homeless and long-term unemployed individuals. The aim is to help them back into full-time work and find them a home to call their own.

The 2011 award was for their work with the Achieve North West ESF project which aims to empower offenders - to give them the motivation, opportunity and support to enable them to engage and progress to improve their employment prospects and lives. Participants often undertake voluntary work to help reduce waste sent to landfill. This and other voluntary activity leads either to employment with the work placement or further assistance towards securing employment.

Case study: Clear About Carbon

This ESF innovative project aims to find new ways to increase carbon and climate awareness within businesses and the public sector by:

- Working with suppliers - Raising awareness amongst staff and senior management within Cornish businesses, particularly in the construction, transport, and food and farming sector, about the need to provide low-carbon products and services to public sector organisations.

- Working with buyers - Advising the Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly’s public and voluntary sector on how to integrate low-carbon considerations into their purchasing policies – for everything from school buses to heating in care homes to building services.

The project has developed a number of training aids and tools to help people begin to understand carbon metrics and become carbon literate.

Clear About Carbon is delivered by a partnership between: Cornwall Council, Cornwall Development Company, University of Exeter Business School, Duchy College and the Eden Project.
Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly

“ESF Convergence complements and extends mainstream provision through the Department for Work and Pensions, Skills Funding Agency, National Offender Management Service and our direct bids. As a total properly integrated package they are a powerful and vital force for improving people’s lives. This is made that much more important by the present climate of economic uncertainty.”

Michelle Maslen, District Manager, Jobcentre Plus, Devon and Cornwall and Chair of the ESF Convergence Steering Group

As the only Convergence area in England, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly has its own ESF priorities. The programme in both Priority 4 (tackling barriers to employment) and Priority 5 (improving the skills of the local workforce, including Higher Education activity) continues to perform very well - having already made excellent progress towards projected outputs and results, including the targets for people getting into sustainable jobs.

The real impact is the difference being made to people’s lives and frequently those of their families as well – with the many personal and work related challenges and barriers in life being faced up to and overcome.

Being out of work affects not just individuals and their opportunities in life, but also those of their family – such as the ability to provide for children and to care for family members. It is important that ESF works alongside and adds value to other help for families to ensure that the right package of support is in place for all members of a household.

An example of ESF Convergence improving people’s lives is Cornwall Works WISE Award 2012 winner Kernow Mill, a company that has both had a long-term impact on the economy of its area and in particular played an important role in helping local people back to work. The company has supported a wide range of jobseekers including people with disabilities, those over 50, and lone parents. In all cases the jobseekers were given support to, where necessary, change their circumstances and, if needed, offered practical support as well as work placements – all suited to the needs of the individual. The company also arranges training – helping build skills and ambitions.

As the only Convergence area in England, Cornwall and Isles of Scilly benefits from ESF investment in higher level skills and research. This recognises the importance of the Combined Universities in Cornwall to the economic regeneration of the area. For example, ESF is investing in the graduate placement scheme Unlocking Cornish Potential, providing opportunities for graduates and boosting the performance of local businesses. Some of their case studies are available at www.cornwall.ac.uk

For further information on ESF Convergence visit www.cornwallworks.org.uk
Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly

“The unique breadth of the ESF Convergence programme means that it plays a vital role in helping unleash the talents and potential of people throughout the economy of Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly.”

Mark Yeoman, Head of ESF Convergence Communication

Case study: Rich

“For some people trying something new can be a great step to building their confidence.”

Rich served with the Queen’s Royal Irish Hussars as a tank crewman in 1991, during the first Gulf war in Iraq. After leaving the army in 1993 he suffered from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). He took up surfing and was inspired to set up Surf Action, North Cornwall, after visiting a surf camp for combat veterans and their families in California.

With support from ESF Convergence via Cornwall Works and Jobcentre Plus, Surf Action uses surfing as a platform to help re-build motivation and confidence and develop employability skills. The model is now being used in the Government’s Work Programme with combat veterans supported by Surf Action acting as mentors and role models for the unemployed.

Rich’s personal story and the story of the charity Surf Action were featured early in 2012 on BBC1’s Saints and Scroungers - a programme looking at different approaches to the benefit system.

A major role for Surf Action is helping armed forces veterans - including amputees and those with PTSD - and their families. Rich said, “For Surf Action about the first 20% is actually the surfing and then we can work with these people on other therapies. The other important thing for them once they start with us is the camaraderie when they find they are with people who understand them and who they trust. Our biggest battle is getting to those guys who are often sitting in a dark room, in a dark place.”

Surf Action also runs courses via Cornwall Works. Rich explained, “Surf Action is about giving people a chance to experience the good vibes that come from being in and around the sea. No matter whether you’ve surfed before or are trying it for the first time it is great fun and good for both the mind and the body. For some people trying something new can be a great step to building their confidence.”

“The DWP Co-financed programmes of the first half of Convergence have been exemplary in making a real difference to people’s lives – we are determined that the family based approach of the second half of the programme will be just as effective.”

Steve Matthews, European Programmes Manager, Jobcentre Plus, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly
Celebrating ESF success

The achievements of ESF projects and participants of ESF projects are highlighted at events throughout the year.

WorldSkills London 2011 & the Skills Show 2012

In October 2011, through an ESF technical assistance project, ESF activities and achievements were showcased to thousands of visitors at WorldSkills London 2011. Over four days young people from 51 countries and regions competed to be the best of the best in a huge range of vocational skills competitions. In an ESF pavilion located in the ‘Make it Happen’ exhibition zone, around 50 ESF projects promoted a wide range of jobs and skills provision for disadvantaged young people.

Other publicity measures included an awards presentation (see below) and two ESF seminars attended by ESF stakeholders and other organisations.

In November 2012, ESF is at WorldSkills UK – The Skills Show, at the NEC, Birmingham – which follows a similar format to the 2011 event in London. Through a part-funded ESF technical assistance project this year’s major information activity includes:

- ESF providers promoting ESF investment in skills and jobs by exhibiting at the main event;
- seminars to showcase effective practice from the ESF programme; and
- presentation of the ESF Mainstreaming Leader Awards 2012.

ESF Mainstreaming Leader Awards

The England ESF Mainstreaming Leader Awards take place annually to give recognition to providers and sub-contractors that have made a special effort to mainstream equal opportunities or sustainable development.

The 2011 award winners, who were presented with their awards at WorldSkills, were:

**Equal Opportunities Mainstreaming Leader (policy and plan) - Avanta Enterprise Ltd**

Avanta delivers DWP ESF funded training and employment programmes. Their award recognises the work they have done in raising equality and diversity awareness, through a sustained process of customer, staff and stakeholder feedback and discussion - leading to effective equality and diversity impact measures and a national Equality and Diversity plan published in 2011.

**Equal Opportunities Mainstreaming Leader (specialist project) - Cornwall Works for Learning Disabilities**

The programme provides pathways to sustainable employment for people with learning disabilities in Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly. With ESF Convergence investment it has greatly exceeded its targets by helping to support over 600 people, with over 130 securing employment.
Celebrating ESF success

Gender Equality Leader - ARC Women’s Wisdom

This innovative project provides administrative services and meeting facilities with a staff of female offenders on community payback. The project addresses the long term challenge of reducing female offending, alongside delivering meaningful skills and employment support that enables women to progress into sustainable employment.

Sustainable Development Mainstreaming Leader (policy and plan) - Groundwork London

Groundwork London is an ESF Innovation, Transnationality and Mainstreaming project that is helping unemployed and disadvantaged people move into the green labour market by setting up and testing sustainable social enterprises in areas like recycling, landscaping and energy efficiency.


Adult Learners’ Week Awards

Adult Learners’ Week (ALW) is an annual week-long national campaign each May, which seeks to engage and inspire people to pursue adult learning. Organised by the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE), and part-funded by the ESF to help promote ESF activities and successes, ALW is the UK’s largest learning campaign. In 2012 there were nine regional ESF awards plus three ESF national awards at ALW.

ESF Outstanding Learner of the Year Award - Faye Garley (East Midlands)

“With the encouragement and guidance of the REACH project and volunteering, this has turned out to be the most positive experience of my life.”

Faye Garley

ESF Learning Works Award – Louise McKenny (Cornwall)

“I cannot start to describe how much my life has changed in the past two and a half years. I feel like I am part of the world and have a purpose in life.”

Louise McKenny

ESF Inspiring Learning Project Award - Digital Activist Inclusion Network - DAIN (Nottingham)

“Our surveys show that DAIN changed people’s attitudes to technology and empowered them”

Andria Birch, DAIN project manager

There are other ESF and awards events around the country, many with a local focus. More information about ESF events can be found on the national ESF website: www.dwp.gov.uk/esf
Equal opportunities

“I knock on doors; I know lots of people in the area; I tap into networks in the community and use health visitors, social services and other agencies to help raise awareness about what we do”.

Surrey Care Trust Family and Community Education - quoted in National Institute of Adult Continuing Education Report “Engaging Unemployed Women in ESF”

Gender equality and equal opportunities is an important cross cutting theme in the 2007-2013 England ESF programme.

The programme has a dual approach to mainstreaming equal opportunities:

- integrating equal opportunities into planning, procurement, contract management, implementation, monitoring and evaluation;
- funding specialised and niche support to promote equal opportunities for groups at a disadvantage in the labour market.

The England ESF equal opportunities mainstreaming plan seeks to ensure that equal opportunities is embedded throughout the programme. There are indicators to measure the participation and achievements of: women; disabled people; people aged 50 and over; and ethnic minorities.

“Unlocking the potential of everyone - no matter what their family background, life experiences, where you were born, gender, age, race, sexuality or ability - is fundamental to both a fully functioning society and economy. It is great to see that ESF is helping to make this happen in our local communities.”

Tarn Lamb, Equal Opportunities Champion, ESF Convergence Regional Committee

Equal opportunities targets and participation rates

![Graph showing equal opportunities targets and participation rates]

- Female participants: 51% (Target 2007-13), 36% (Cumulative Achievement)
- Participants from ethnic minorities: 19% (Target), 19% (Cumulative)
- Participants with disabilities or health conditions: 19% (Target), 17% (Cumulative)
- Participants aged 50 or over: 19% (Target), 16% (Cumulative)
Equal opportunities

The ESF Equality Impact Assessment (2011) analysis found that, at programme level, good progress had been made in ensuring that participants from ethnic minorities, disabled people and participants aged 50 or over were accessing the programme. So far the percentage of female participants has been lower than expected because during the recession the programme helped a large number of people who had been made redundant who were predominantly male. ESF Co-financing Organisations are taking appropriate action to aim to increase female participation during the second half of the programme.

To help promote gender equality a Gender Equality Good Practice Guide has been produced by the Department for Work and Pensions. This identifies measures that can be taken by providers to meet the needs of women so that they can be helped into training and employment. This and other good practice guides focused on employment and skills support for disabled people, ethnic minorities and over 50s can be found on the national ESF website.

Case study: Chantal

“**I have been able to find the perfect balance between my family and my work.**”

Young mum Chantal hadn’t had a job for a number of years, but with the help of an ESF funded project she now has an administrative job working for the London Borough of Newham.

Chantal came to England 8 years ago and had a son and a younger daughter here. She decided that when her daughter reached the age of one she would try to get back into work because she missed the career she once had in her country of origin. A leaflet about helping parents back into work gave her the contact number for the ESF 5 Borough Single Point of Access project. The project has a special focus on long term workless parents who face multiple barriers to the labour market and who are distanced from existing mainstream welfare to work support. The following day she visited the project for the first time. Chantal explains what happened next.

“I met this fantastic lady, who was my work coach and helped me to work out my journey to where I am now.

“When I came to the project my confidence level was zero. My work coach understood me so well, and she put me into soft skills training to boost my confidence. On top of that she put me on a work experience position for five weeks, and from there on I got the confidence to apply for my current position.”

“I am currently a monitoring officer for the London Borough of Newham Workplace. This is for me, for now, the best place to be, because everybody is nice, and I have been able to find the perfect balance between my family and my work. Because of the flexibility that we have, I am able to achieve that.”
Community grants

ESF community grants are grants of up to £12,000 which enable small voluntary and community organisations to reach out to some of the most disadvantaged and excluded people.

The grants have a local focus and seek to move people closer to the labour market. They support a wide range of activities including:

- initial help with basic skills;
- taster work experience, including voluntary work;
- training, advice and counselling; and
- confidence building.

Because of the nature of the target groups, project outcomes usually involve progression towards a job or further training, rather than the immediate achievement of a job or qualification.

Case study: MerseySTRIDE

MerseySTRIDE, a Community Interest Company has used a community grant to buy computer equipment and employ workers to provide training.

MerseySTRIDE was established in June 2009 and offers volunteering and employment opportunities for unemployed people, especially those affected by homelessness, drugs, alcohol and mental health issues. MerseySTRIDE is supported by a number of trusts and foundations, and has also been awarded funding from the Department for Communities and Local Government.

A European Social Fund community grant of £12,000 enabled the company to purchase computer equipment and to employ sessional workers when it started up. One worker was employed to encourage people from the project’s target groups to get involved, and to help build their confidence and overall employability. The grant also paid for other sessional workers to deliver various training sessions including health and safety training, customer service training and furniture assembly/basic joinery training.

The project has offered volunteering and employment opportunities in recycling, repairing and assembling flat pack furniture, which is then sold at affordable prices to the local community from its own shop HOME. Employment and work experience is also offered in reconditioning of domestic appliances, retail, dispatch, delivery, administration and sales. Those involved also received education and training opportunities in order to break down barriers to employment. The training included basic skills, Information and Communications Technology, job search and interview skills.
Innovation

Innovation is essential to future economic prosperity. In the context of ESF, innovation means new approaches, tools, methods and service provision to extend employment and raise skills. It can also mean adapting existing approaches to new sectors or target groups.

The innovation, transnationality and mainstreaming (ITM) strand of the England ESF programme supports 32 projects. Starting in 2009 and backed by £23 million of ESF funding they are aiming to develop and deliver new ways of extending employment opportunities and raising workforce skills.

Each project includes an element of cooperation with at least one other EU Member State. Across all 32 projects there are 64 transnational partners from 19 countries.

The six themes for innovation are: active inclusion; demographic change; engaging with employers; information and communication technology and the digital divide; skills for climate change and sustainable development; and social enterprise. Each theme is supported by a network which brings together ESF projects and policy makers.

Details of innovative projects and the thematic activity can be found in the innovation section of the www.esf-works.com website.

Case study: Pluss-Future Clean

“This job has really picked me up out of the dump. It’s given me something to get up for in the mornings.”

Pluss is a social firm creating opportunities for some of the most disadvantaged in the labour market. It is owned by a group of local authorities in the South West of England and supported through the ESF ITM strand.

One of their social enterprises is Future Clean, an innovative project providing work mainly for people with learning disabilities. Future Clean is principally a car valet service operating in local authority car parks which uses a lightweight and eco-friendly car cleaning system. All cleaning products are biodegradable and the simple, portable system can easily be carried with one hand, making it accessible for people who may have complex disabilities.

The project is designed to get disabled people into steady employment. It works with them in teams, helps them to gain vocational qualifications and supports them to move onto more mainstream jobs in the community. In addition to creating opportunities for people with moderate to severe learning disabilities, complex mental health issues and multiple physical disabilities, Future Clean employs ex-servicemen with disabilities as job coaches to train and support these employees.

Since its beginning in April 2010 Future Clean has expanded across a number of sites and delivered around 40 paid jobs. In 2012, Future Clean will recruit a further 12 six-month traineeships in Exeter and 12 more in Plymouth.

Dave Smith, 50, spent 25 years with the Royal Marines and has multiple disabilities. He is now a Future Clean job coach. “Basically my job is working with disabled adults, teaching them the trade,” said Dave. “Before this, I applied for lots of jobs. It can be hard because usually as soon as you mention disability employers just don’t want to know. This job has really picked me up out of the dump. It’s given me something to get up for in the mornings.”
Preparations are now underway that will shape the 2014-2020 round of the European Social Fund. The European Commission published a package of proposals on the future of EU cohesion policy in October 2011, including a draft regulation on the European Social Fund. This proposes four objectives for ESF:

- promoting employment and supporting labour mobility;
- investing in education, skills and lifelong learning;
- promoting social inclusion and combating poverty; and
- enhancing institutional capacity and efficient public administration.

Under each thematic objective, there are a number of investment priorities, with 18 priorities in total. Programmes will be expected to concentrate most of their ESF funding on up to four investment priorities.

The Commission proposals aim to target EU investment on Europe’s long-term goals for jobs and smart, sustainable and inclusive growth (‘Europe 2020’). The proposals are currently being examined by the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union, which will jointly adopt the final version of the regulations.

In England, the Government is considering how best to deliver 2014-2020 EU programmes, including ESF, to support sustainable growth and jobs. ESF is expected to continue to support the social justice strategy by improving employment opportunities and skills for people at a disadvantage in the labour market.

In April 2012 the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills carried out an informal consultation to look at delivery options in England. It received 187 responses from local and non-departmental government bodies, universities, civil society and business organisations. The Government published its response to the consultation in July.

The Government is now considering how to take this forward and will gather further evidence during autumn 2012 before an expected formal consultation in spring 2013.

When the regulations have been adopted, Member States will need to develop and submit Partnership Agreements and Operational Programmes for 2014-2020. The timetable for this and the launch of programmes will depend on when agreement is reached on the EU budget for 2014-2020, as well as the regulations.

More information on the latest 2014-2020 developments can be found on the national ESF website.
Communicating ESF

**England ESF programme**

www.dwp.gov.uk/esf

The England ESF website provides general information about the 2007-2013 ESF programme in England, including news, lists of projects, case studies and guidance. It also provides information on preparations for the 2014-2020 ESF programme.

**ESF-Works**

www.esf-works.com

ESF-Works is the showcase and forum for policy and practice lessons from the 2007-2013 England ESF programme in England. It is aimed at all professionals working in the areas of employment and skills, regardless of their European funding experience. ESF-Works is part-funded by ESF technical assistance.

**Europa**

www.europa.eu

The Europa website is the website of the European Union and provides information on a wide range of EU activities including ESF.

**Convergence**

www.cornwallworks.org.uk

The Cornwall Works website provides information on the ESF in Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly. The website is part-funded by ESF technical assistance.

**Adult Learners’ Week**

www.alw.org.uk

Adult Learners’ Week (ALW) is the UK’s largest and longest-running learning campaign - celebrating the achievements of learners and encouraging thousands of people, whatever their background or age to give learning a go. ALW is part-funded by ESF technical assistance.

**The National Council for Voluntary Organisations**

www.ncvo-vol.org.uk

The National Council runs a part-funded ESF technical assistance project. It provides advice to civil society organisations on matters related to the ESF programme.

**TAEN – The Age and Employment Network**

www.taen.org.uk

The Age and Employment Network (TAEN) works to promote an effective labour market that serves the needs of people in mid and later life, employers and the economy. TAEN runs an ESF technical assistance project to provide information and guidance to projects that are targeting older workers.

**Social Media**

Social media is used by ESF Division to support our publicity and communication strategy. This includes Twitter and Facebook. Access to these is through the ESF-Works technical assistance project featured on this page.