

Merged Programme based on progress2work and progress2workLinkUP and 2010 Problem Drug Users Employment Support Pilots

Since the publication of the Pre Qualification Questionnaire (PQQ) we have continued to listen to concerns raised by both the public and Peers as the relevant legislation has been subjected to Parliamentary scrutiny. As a result of this we will no longer be mandating customers to medical treatment where they have not given their consent. As a consequence, we have amended our policy in this area (more detail attached at Annex 1) and, for the PQQ, potential bidders should note that:

- additional support in pilot areas will no longer be mandatory. It will be offered on a voluntary basis in conjunction with a treatment allowance to Problem Drug Users (PDU) in Tiers 3 and 4 of the National Treatment Agency's Models of Care, who have been randomly assigned into the pilot treatment group;
- as before, we anticipate that the focus for customers entering the pilot programme will initially be on stability and then on re-engagement with the labour market and into work;
- it should be noted that, where a customer is stabilised in treatment at the beginning of the pilot programme, or reaches this stage partway through, it is envisaged that the type of support they will receive through the pilot programme to facilitate labour market engagement, will be not dissimilar to that delivered by the merged programme. In particular, this will facilitate a smooth transition between the two programmes for appropriate individuals at the end of their period on the pilot programme.
- it will no longer be a requirement that attendance will be full-time as a matter of course. Attendance and activity should be dependent on the needs and circumstances of the individual, with the aim of building up to 30 hours once the individual reaches a sufficiently stable point in their treatment journey
- customer progress will still be based around a distance travelled tool, further information will be provided at the Invitation to Tender (ItT) stage

This update also confirms that Halton is included in the Merseyside pilot.

Annex 1

In pilot areas, where individuals have been randomly assigned in the 'treatment' group:

- Where claimants are in treatment, they will be offered a Treatment Allowance and a place on a new drug and employment support programme which will provide integrated and personalised support for problem drug users on JSA or ESA.
- This allowance will be payable on a voluntary basis to the claimant for up to 12 months as long as they maintain their treatment and take advantage of the additional support available, and will remove some of the normal conditions of entitlement for benefit in order to allow drug users the time and space to focus on their recovery. For example, this will mean that those on JSA will not be required to sign on or show that they are actively seeking work. There will be no sanction should an individual withdraw from treatment.
- Where problem drug users are not already in treatment, and are neither prepared to, nor ready to engage with treatment services, they will be required to sign up to a rehabilitation plan that will direct them attend a series of assessments and a motivational programme, with the aim of encouraging them into treatment. However, if they fail to engage in these activities without good cause, they will be subject to benefit sanctions. It should be noted that where there are reasonable grounds for suspicion that problem drug use is an issue, claimants can also be mandated to attend these assessments.
- Where advisers have reasonable grounds to suspect that drug use is an issue, they can refer the claimant to an assessment with a treatment adviser to establish whether or not this indeed the case. Should the claimant fail to attend this assessment on the grounds that they do not use drugs then, prior to any sanctions being applied, they will be offered the opportunity to take a drugs test to show that this is indeed case, in which case no further action will be taken.
- Should such individuals refuse a voluntary drugs test, and receive two consecutive sanctions for failure to attend at the assessment, then they will be mandated to a drugs test.