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Department for Work & Pensions

Invitation to Tender Questionnaire

Response Template

Question 2.4.4 Claimant Needs Barriers and Support

Wellbeing and Work Trials – Group Work

PeoplePlus Group Ltd

Merseyside

Question 2.4.4 Claimant Needs Barriers and Support
Please provide details of how you will manage participants who are unable to engage in the JOBS II group process or that your group leaders recognise have additional needs that cannot be met by JOBS II. This could include immediate, urgent needs or needs that should be met before attending JOBS II, and could range from clinical or social support to training. You must explain how you will ensure appropriate action is taken and detail the organisational policies you have in place to support action. You must also explain how you will communicate and justify these decisions to each individual participant, their work coach and the DWP performance management contact. A **2** score for this question may be considered a knock out score in relation to this competition. We reserve the right to exclude any Tender which scores 2 or less on this question from this Procurement. This methodology will be applied to ensure equitable treatment and consistency across all providers for this question. A **0** score for this question will be considered a knock out score in relation to this competition and the bid will not be considered any further.
Present your response **at the top of a new page,** within these preset margins in Arial font size 12 up to **2** sides of A4, **excluding** the question text and these instructions.

PeoplePlus has a proven record of supporting participants with mild to moderate limiting health conditions and disabilities through our current delivery of DWP's Work Programme across 9 CPAs, and our historic delivery of comparable provision including Flexible New Deal and Pathways to Work. We recognise and understand that the pilot is primarily aimed at participants who are struggling with their jobsearch or work search related activity as a consequence of a self-reported mental health issue. We have supported over 25,000 similar participants to this through our Work Programme provision (Payment Group 6). We are therefore acutely aware of the needs of such customers, and how to effectively support them in a training room environment. In this respect, it is very unlikely that a referral with a mild to moderate mental health need will be rejected by PeoplePlus on the basis of their condition.

Participants with Additional Needs: Some referred jobseekers may have additional needs which may inhibit their productive and meaningful participation in Group Work activity. This could include, for example, significant English language needs, sensory impairments, acute learning disabilities, other acute disabilities, caring responsibilities, or motivational / confidence barriers. Such barriers may make it more challenging for them to make progress with JOBS II, and could result in them having a detracting influence on other group participants (e.g. where Leader time is disproportionately taken up by participants who are significantly struggling with the course). To address this, we will work with DWP to develop an appropriate process to manage participants who our Group Work Tutors identify as having additional job readiness needs that cannot be met by the JOBS II programme. This process will be mapped against all appropriate contract requirements, including DWP's Group Work Provider Guidance, to ensure that there is an appropriate and robust rationale for any resultant decisions or recommendations. In the first instance, we will work with DWP to develop a light-touch "back-stop" assessment as part of the Reception Interview, based on the more in-depth diagnostics we apply within our Work Programme initial participant assessments, to help verify participant suitability. Through a series of scripted questions, our Tutors will identify any factors, such as those listed above, which may hinder effective Group Work participation, or result in a higher risk of participant drop out prior to completion.

Where such an issue is identified, the Tutor will have a further discussion with the participant's Work Coach in the first instance to better understand any additional needs, and the rationale behind the original referral. This could help steer more sensitive delivery methods to support participation, without materially deviating from the JOBS II manual. It may equally identify strategies which PeoplePlus can adopt, in consultation with DWP, to help encourage participation e.g. groups with female only or 50+ only intake groups, to be less "threatening" to less confident participants from these groups. Solutions may also include travel planning support, running courses in hard-to-reach communities, and structuring courses to fit around caring commitments such as the daily school run. In this respect, every effort will be made to accommodate participants with additional or specific needs where this can be readily achieved without detracting from the parameters of the pilot exercise.

It may, however, be the case that the participant may require additional specialist support outside of the pilot before they are "provision ready" to engage in JOBS II

Group Work. This may include, for example, targeted skills support from the Flexible Support Fund or SFA Adult Skills Budget, or condition management support through Community Mental Health teams, or other local health services.

Any Leader who is proposing to decline a referral based on perceived additional participant needs will be required to set out their rationale for doing so to our Group Work Supervisor and Contract Manager for approval. This rationale will also include details of alternatively suitable local support programmes and schemes which best may address the additional need in question, with a signposting recommendation. Only where the Contract Manager agrees, and provided the recommendation does not otherwise contravene Group Work Provider Guidance, will the referral be rejected on PRaP and the DWP Single Point of Contact (SPoC) notified, with details of our accompanying rationale. Where we have identified alternate specialist local provision which the participant may benefit from we will make a recommendation to DWP of a referral to that end. Should the participant's initial needs be addressed through alternate support, and they are re-referred to Group Work at a later date, then this referral will be accepted, assuming no additional material support needs have emerged in between. Where PeoplePlus is directly in a position to provide relevant support to the participant by virtue of our other funded provision locally, this will be offered and facilitated.

We will work with the SPoC more broadly to ensure the eligibility of all participants at the point of referral, ensuring that those already participating on The Work Programme, Work Choice, or SES are not-referred, and equally to monitor the inclusion of any potential referrals from outside of the immediate pilot area.

Participants Unable to Engage: In some cases, an inability to engage in the JOBS II group process may be a result of the participant's own choice. This may be linked to anxiety, depression, a lack of self-esteem, or other similar barriers to this type of provision. Our Group Work Leaders will take every step to placate such concerns during the Reception Interview, coaching, motivating and reassuring more apprehensive participants, showcasing JOBS II benefits, and sharing case studies of how other participants have gained new found confidence through JOBS II. This may involve the application of condition management techniques during the Reception Interview process (e.g. mindfulness, cognitive behaviour and neuro linguistic programming) where these help to build participant comfort levels and a commitment to participate. In this respect, we are confident that the level of voluntary opt-outs between the Reception Interview and course start will be minimal.

Organisational Policies: We have a suite of wider operating policies and procedures which support our approach for participants with additional needs, available to all staff. This includes appropriately robust policies on equality, diversity and safeguarding. All Group Work activity and Group Work Leader development will be aligned against these policies, and relevant associated statutory measures, to ensure that the wellbeing of participants is always our priority, and that all have a parity of treatment and opportunity within our provision.