

Overview

Claimants and labour market needs vary dramatically throughout the country. Freedoms & Flexibilities offers us scope to tailor our services to individual claimants and local labour markets by focusing on support, which addresses individual barriers to employment and the effective supply of labour to local employers. It is about doing the right things to get more claimants into work more quickly and meet the needs of local employers.

However, Freedoms and Flexibilities is not a 'free for all'. Our context is that we must deliver the biggest welfare reform since Beveridge, with Universal Credit and Personalised Independent Payments requiring brand new operating models, based upon differentiated and personalised services for claimants built upon digital by default.

Our back-to-work services are, therefore, part of an end-to-end customer service with many inter-dependencies. So, pushing further at the boundaries of local freedoms and flexibilities to get more claimants into work more quickly must be done collaboratively, working with OSNs, key stakeholders and business partners in a way that protects the integrity of our overarching business models and principles.

To this end, the Operational Framework within which local Freedoms & Flexibilities will operate includes:

- A Yes/No Framework to help Districts determine what is totally within their gift to develop and implement locally, working closely with their OSN, relevant stakeholders and business partners; and what is off-limits, e.g. where we have a legal or political obligation to deliver; major DWP contracts; DWP and/or Civil Service terms and conditions.
- A process through which Districts can develop proposals around things they do not control or cannot simply implement, but are not off-limits, i.e. 'Maybe' proposals.
- Access to analytical tools and support to ensure proposals and decisions are well informed.
- Help from the Corporate Support and Enabling Group, which oversees the Operational Framework and supports Districts with Freedoms & Flexibilities changes where progress seems to be slow or stalled.
- A Catalogue of 'Maybe' initiatives that are in progress, or that have been considered previously, as well as "Yes" items that have been shared. The Catalogue enables emerging/good practice to be shared and helps avoid unnecessary duplication.
- Local innovation require a proportionate approach to evaluation and deciding how to evaluate is not a case of 'one size fits all'. Further help and support on evaluating proposals within Work Services Directorate is now available in the Evaluation Approach and Definitions.