



SUNDERLAND COMMUNITY LED LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME - ESF PROJECTS ONLY

Participant Identification, Eligibility and Referral Guidance (adapted from DWP Provider Guidance ESF 2014 to 2020 and ESF Data Evidence Requirements – Eligibility and results).

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Identification of Potential Participants

- 1.1 You are responsible for identifying and recruiting eligible participants to the Sunderland Community Led Local Development Programme. You should make links with other local organisations to market the provision within your local CLLD target area/s ensuring you maximise opportunities in order to achieve the required participant numbers. It is critical that your organisation works with other local CLLD delivery organisations within the city to avoid duplication and to maximise participant referral and progression opportunities.
- 1.2 This provision is voluntary and suitable participants should be identified using different sources including but not limited to:



- Lead applicant recruitment methods
- Jobcentre Plus
- Community and voluntary sector organisations
- Local Authorities
- GPs/Health workers
- Self-referrals

Eligibility and Referral Meeting

- 1.3 Each project must hold a face to face eligibility / referral meeting with potential participants to discuss this voluntary provision and how it could help the individual, assess their eligibility and if appropriate complete the registration form.
- 1.4 It is an ESF requirement that all participants are informed about the support they are getting from ESF. Ways to ensure this is achieved include:
- Mention during induction sessions as part of a training course.
 - Note the support in any contracts or paperwork given to beneficiaries/participants.
 - State the support in internal newsletters and bulletins.
 - Provide the beneficiary/participant with a leaflet explaining European programme investment in your project.
 - Ensure that plaques and posters are used in line with this guidance.
 - Use of the relevant funding stream Logo on publications and electronic media.

Eligibility for the Provision

- 1.5 It is the responsibility of the project applicant to obtain eligibility evidence at the point of enrolment and to verify with the potential participant **that they are entitled to work in the UK and eligible for the Sunderland Community Led Local Development provision using the CLLD post code checker.** You must retain evidence to confirm eligibility for ESF purposes for the full retention period as this will be an integral part of audit assessments. Should any ineligible participants be found to have participated on provision, the Accountable Body / Local Action Group reserve the right to recover any corresponding overpayment of grant relating to ineligible individuals and adjust any performance MI accordingly.
- 1.6 To be eligible for ESF, all participants must be legally resident and have the right to take paid employment in the UK. Participants must be aged 16 or over. There is no upper age limit for participants. The ESF Operation Programme 2014-2020 also allows for ESF support for at risk young people



age 15yrs to prevent them becoming NEET (not in education, employment or training).

1.7 Individuals must CLLD area residents and be either **unemployed or inactive** and must fall into one or more of the following categories:

- Long term Unemployed and/or inactive (26 weeks or longer)
- Basic Skills need (Below NVQ level 1 or equivalent)
- Have more than one barrier to employment. Barriers may include:
 - a lone parent
 - an older worker (50+)
 - an ex-offender
 - Caring Responsibilities (including those returning to employment when caring responsibilities end)
 - have physical disability or health condition, including Sensory Impairments
 - Mental Health
 - Learning Disability
 - Drug / Alcohol dependency
 - an ethnic minority
 - have low or no qualifications (below NVQ Level 2 or equivalent)
 - language barrier (English not first language)

1.8 Long term unemployed (over 26 weeks) relates to those individuals who are defined as being 'unemployed over 6 months' by Jobcentre Plus. This may not always be a continuous 6 month period as some periods of unemployment can be linked together and not affect the individual's Employment Status with Jobcentre Plus i.e. they could remain 'unemployed over 6 months'. This can happen where the individual has taken part in certain types of provision or had employment resulting in their claim of 28 days or less. If you cannot establish whether an individual meets the long-term unemployed category, you can refer to the provision and await confirmation from Jobcentre Plus.

1.9 The ESF Operational Programme in 2014-2020 allows additional ESF support for at risk young people age 15 to prevent them becoming NEET (not in education, employment or training).

Priority Groups

1.10 The priority groups for the Sunderland Community Led Local Development Programme are set out in the Local Development Strategy and in the Call for Projects.



Identity Check

1.11 You must ask participants to provide information to you to undertake an **appropriate** identity check.

Examples of suitable documentation for identity checks are:

- Passport
- Driving license
- Proof of DWP benefit recipient
- Birth certificate
- Utility bill
- Visa or Work Permit or a combination of these.

1.12 You should not keep copies of passports, driving licences, birth certificates or identity cards. You will need to note the participant's file with the type of identity document seen and their reference/serial number.

1.13 Further information on the types of identity documents employers use prior to Offering employment can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/check-an-employees-right-to-work-documents>

Eligibility Evidence and Supporting Information

1.14 Evidence or information to support your eligibility decision should be obtained at the Eligibility and Referral Meeting as best practice. If the required specific evidence is not available at this meeting, the participant should be asked to return with evidence at a convenient time.

1.15 The eligibility criteria which requires specific evidence are:

- UK resident
- right to take paid employment in the UK
- aged over 16 (unless aged 15 or older at risk of NEET)
- unemployed
- receipt of benefits
- specific age requirements (e.g. over 50)

1.16 The intention is to obtain documents that are readily available to the participant without the need to incur additional time, effort or costs trying to obtain something they don't currently have. Some eligibility is difficult to evidence and self-declaration by the participant is acceptable information to support your eligibility decision (see self-declaration section below).



Preferred Documents for Assessing and Evidencing ESF Participant Eligibility

- 1.17 As with the identity check evidencing, you should not keep copies of passports, driving licences, birth certificates or identity cards. In the case of the documents not to be retained, you will need to note the participant's file with the type of identity document seen and their reference/serial number. Eligibility evidence must be in accordance with the European Social Fund Evidence Requirements: Eligibility and Results Guidance Document which can be found on the CLLD website.
- 1.18 It should be noted that some documents are never out of date (e.g. qualifications certificates), but information related to a participant's current circumstances need to be supported by recent evidence. The following guidelines apply (if in doubt, follow the 'alternative evidence' approach).
- Recent payslip = issued in last 3 months
 - Documents produced annually (tax related, tax credits) = latest issued (should therefore be no older than 12 months)
 - Award letters (grants, benefits, student loans) – original letter acceptable unless recurring award letters are issued (e.g. annual tax credits notification).
 - Other correspondence (non-recurring in nature) = no longer than 12 months old
 - Introductions / referrals from relevant third party = within the last 3 months.
- 1.19 **Where no preferred evidence available, consider alternative documents**
The intention is to obtain documents that are readily available to the participant or an introduction / referral from a relevant third party organisation that the individual is already engaged with and is familiar with their personal circumstances. The participant should not be asked to spend additional time, effort or costs trying to obtain something that they don't currently have.

Examples of alternative evidence include:

- Documents from the 'preferred evidence' list that are too old / expired
- Documents with partial information e.g. surname but no forename
- A combination of documents not listed as 'preferred' evidence e.g. TV licence correspondence; digital TV subscription letters etc.

Where satisfied with such alternative evidence, document the justification for proceeding, to include:



- Reasons why the participant does not have any preferred evidence available and confirmation that credible and plausible reason have been provided and acceptable;
- Explain why the alternative items provide persuasive evidence that the participant meets the criteria.

1.20 If no alternative documents, consider whether an exception to the evidence requirements can be justified

Where satisfied that, despite the absence of any evidence, the participant qualifies for support, document the justification for proceeding, to include:

- Reasons why participant does not have any preferred or alternative evidence available.
- Document how the participant / delivery partner has attempted to collect the required evidence.
- Explain how / why satisfied that the reasons provided by participant are credible / plausible.

If there is no case to justify an exception then the individual will not qualify for ESF support.

You should try to select an item of the preferred evidence that will verify more than one eligibility condition.

Type of condition	Examples of entry conditions	ESF Evidence Requirement (only one item from list required)
Basic rules to participate in the England ESF programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legal right to live in the UK during the period of ESF support • For operations helping participants to gain work for other work-related outcomes: the legal right to work in an EU member state. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Insurance Number: either the plastic card or letter from HMRC (you must have the right to work or study in the UK to get a National Insurance Number) • Full passport (EU member) • Full passport (non EU Member State) • Passport either endorsed indefinite leave to remain – proceed (settled status) or includes work or residency permits or visa stamps (unexpired) and all related conditions met • Some non-EEA nationals have an Identity Card issued by the Home Office in place of a visa, confirming the individual’s right to stay, work or study in the UK – these cards are acceptable • Letter from the UK Immigration and



		<p>Nationality Directorate granting indefinite leave to remain (settled status)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Birth/adoption certificate (EU Member State) • Residency permits for foreign nationals (usually in a passport) • Marriage/civil partnership certificate (if partner has legal right to live in the UK and this can be evidenced).
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ESF support for individuals who have attained a specific qualification (s) or certain level of qualification • ESF support only for individuals qualified in a specified subject / field • ESF support for those individuals studying full-time 	<p><u>Qualifications held</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Qualification certificate issued to individual. Projects should retain a copy of the certificate in the participants file, certified as a true copy of the original. • Records of the academic institution / qualification body if such direct access would be available to auditors / MA staff in future, then the project must retain copies of the records inspected. • Project or the participant to request confirmation of qualifications in writing from the academic institution / qualification body.
Employment Education Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young person aged 15 years or above at risk of becoming NEET 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Referral letter from school and preferably, an additional confirmation letter from the local authority confirming that the individual is at risk of becoming NEET
Age	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimum age; maximum age; age ranges 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Birth certificate • Full driving licence • Full passport • National Identity Card (EU) • Firearms certificate / Shotgun licence • Northern Ireland voters card • Employment contract / payslip (if date of birth is quoted) • Pension statement (if date of birth is quoted)



		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence that in receipt of age-related state benefits • Letter / confirmation from educational institution (if applicable)
Address/geographic location of individual		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Home address • Letter/confirmation from home owner (family/lodging) • Full driving licence (EU) • Recent statement from bank/building society/credit card company/credit union • Evidence of registration on electoral roll • Benefits/State Pension notification letter • Recent utility bill or council tax demand/correspondence Tenancy agreement/documents • Mortgage statement/correspondence • HMRC correspondence • Rent card/statement • Solicitors correspondence
	Age – participants must be aged 16 or over. There is no upper age limit for participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Birth certificate • Full driving licence • Full passport • National Identify Card (EU) • Firearms certificates/Shotgun licence • Pension statement (if date of birth is quoted) • Evidence that in receipt of age-related state benefits • Letter/confirmation from educational institution (if applicable)
People not in work (Unemployed including long term unemployed)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DWP/Jobcentre Plus benefits decision notification letter – new claims award/decision or change of circumstances decision letter • Written confirmation from DWP/Jobcentre Plus or a referral from Careers Service
People who are Inactive		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where an individual is not engaged with DWP/Jobcentre Plus: written confirmation from a relevant third



		<p>party that has been assisting the individual and so has an understanding of their current circumstances (e.g. Non-Government Organisation (NGO), voluntary organisation, charity, third sector/not for profit organisation, social services or other professional providing support and guidance etc.) As an alternative to written confirmation, sight of original case notes and support records are acceptable. Photocopies must be suitably redacted to remove sensitive personal data or if photocopies are inappropriate or not permitted, a written agreement that auditors can access the original records on request</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For full time students: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Correspondence from institution • Student ID card (if identifies name of institution)
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Worked Example

Project-specific criteria (target group)	ESF Evidence requirement
<p>Economically inactive (aged 25 and over), not in education or training, who have complex barriers to employment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Evidence that legally able to reside / work in the UK (applies to all participants) - Evidence that economically inactive (but not required if project also provides the same level of support to those who are economically active) - Evidence that 25 or over (but not required if project provides same level of support to under 25s) <p>Note: no requirement to try and evidence that an individual does not have any formal qualifications.</p>



Self-Declaration

- 1.21 For some eligibility criteria it may not be possible to provide evidence, for example, if a lack of basic skills is an eligibility requirement there is no documentation to prove this (it is not possible to prove a negative). In this type of scenario, the participant must self-declare their eligibility.
- 1.22 A self-declaration will be needed where a participant is defined as inactive or to show they have combined unemployed and inactive periods to meet the Long-term criteria. Self-declaration is also needed to support most of the eligibility categories. The only eligibility categories which require evidence, rather than self-declaration, are long-term unemployed, benefit entitlement and any age requirements i.e. over 50. You must evidence these as detailed in the tables above.
- 1.23 Where any of the following eligibility categories apply, a self-declaration must be completed by the participant:
- Long-term inactive or the combined inactive and unemployed period
 - basic skills need
 - a lone parent
 - an ex-offender
 - caring responsibilities (including those returning to employment when caring responsibilities end)
 - a physical disability or health condition, including sensory impairments
 - mental health or learning disability
 - drug/alcohol dependency
 - an ethnic minority
 - have low or no qualifications
 - language barrier (English not first language)
- 1.24 Where they meet the long-term criteria with a combination of inactive and unemployed periods, a participant self-declaration must be completed to confirm that throughout the 26 week period they have either been unemployed or inactive and also to detail how they meet this criteria, noting the periods of each.
- 1.25 Where a self-declaration statement will be used as evidence you must support participants in completion to ensure the information is specific and fully supports your eligibility decision. 'Specific' means that the information included to support the participant's eligibility must detail the circumstances relating to their inactive status (if appropriate) and individual barriers to work.



- 1.26 When supporting completion of the self-declaration you must respect the sensitive and personal nature of the participants' information, which they may not want to include in their statement. It is acceptable for you to word and write the statement so long as it accurately reflects what the participant has said to you and they are content with the statement.
- 1.27 The self-declaration must provide sufficient information relating to the participants circumstances to show that the eligibility criteria has been met. Replicating the criteria wording or 'generic' statement such as 'I meet all applicable criteria' is not acceptable. The self-declaration must further explain their personal circumstances in relation to the eligibility criteria so that an auditor (with no prior knowledge of the participant) can be satisfied with the evidence. For example, where someone is eligible because they are in categories "Carer" and "Disability", the participant would need to state who they care for, what their caring responsibilities are and how this is a barrier to work. They would need to state the same type of information relating to their disability.
- 1.28 You should of course remain alert to the possibility that false information is being provided in order to gain access to ESF support. Suspected fraud must be properly investigated and you must not enrol participants unless satisfied, to the best of your knowledge, that they meet the criteria.
- 1.29 The self-declaration statement must be signed and dated by you and the participant. It is not to be sent to the Sunderland CLLD Team, but must be securely held and easily retrievable and accessible with the participant records.
- 1.30 An example of an Eligibility Self-declaration Form can be found under Annex 3 from the following link - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/esf-2014-to-2020-provider-guidance>
- you can use this or choose to create your own.
- 1.31 The onus on checking and confirming eligibility, and retaining appropriate evidence, rests ultimately with you. It is not possible for this guidance to demonstrate all participant circumstances.

Referral Documentation or registration

- 1.32 The registration form must also be completed form each eligible participant who has declared their wish to take part in your provision.
- 1.33 The completed form should be sent securely to the Sunderland CLLD team as part of the claims and monitoring process. Please comply with GDPR requirements when transferring personal data.



Last date for Referrals

- 1.34 All participants are required to complete provision by the end of the project delivery period. For participants referred in the last year, it may not be possible for them to receive the full provision duration.
- 1.35 CLLD projects should be realistic about the last date for referrals, taking into account the realistic prospect of you delivering the service and outcomes to participants who will not be able to receive the full provision duration.

Evidence of results

- 1.36 Proof of evidence must be obtained to support any result indicators that link to payments. Results have to be achieved within 4 weeks of the participant's leaving the operation and will typically fall under one or more of the following broad 'result categories' and may also be combined with 'output' (on starting) characteristics – for example the 'into employment on leaving' result may have to demonstrate a progression from the 'on starting' output characteristic 'unemployed'

It is likely that most of the results will fall under one or more of the following headings.

Labour market

- Into work on leaving
- Into self-employment on leaving
- Into job search on leaving (actively seeking work)

Education / training

- Into education / training on leaving
- Gaining a qualification

- 1.37 Obtaining evidence of results and when the evidence should be obtained

- The beneficiary organisation should obtain evidence of results.
- Results evidence should be gathered in a timely way within 4 weeks of the date when the participant left the operation.
- Where possible, project applicants should always request 'preferred evidence'. If not available they should consult with the Accountable Body (AB) so that alternative evidence can be considered.



1.38 Methodology for obtaining evidence of ESF results

The methodology for obtaining evidence of ESF results is potentially a three-step process as follows:

- Step 1: The applicant organisation should obtain documentary evidence of the result (in line with the list of evidence – see table below)
- Step 2: If the preferred evidence is not available, the applicant organisation should consult with the AB to agree alternative evidence that may be acceptable.
- Step 3: If no alternatives, suitable evidence can be found, no payment should be made or counted.

Preferred evidence for accessing evidence of results achieved in ESF

Result type	Indicative list of supportive documentation (only one item from the list required)
Into employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Confirmation of employment from employer (this could be a letter, email or a template) - Wage slip (this could be linked to other conditions where appropriate – e.g. wage slips covering a specific time period) - Contract of employment
Into self-employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Confirmation of self-employment – e.g. HMRC letter evidencing registration - Bank statement for business account - Registration with Companies House
Into job-search	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Award letter / notification detailing Jobseeker's Allowance - Copy of individual's bank statement showing benefit payments - Signed referral from DWP - ES40 (Jobseekers card) or My Work Plan demonstrating current status - Signed referral / template from



	<p>recognised agency / service who can reasonably be considered to have an accurate knowledge of the participants circumstances (e.g. local authority, public body or organisation receiving public funding)</p>
<p>Into education / training</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Evidence of enrolment / registration at school, college, university or learning provider (documentation) - Letter / template from educational / training institution - Signed referral / template from recognised agency / service who can reasonably be considered to have an accurate knowledge of the participants circumstances (e.g. local authority)
<p>Gaining a qualification or part of a qualification</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Qualification certificate issued to individual. (Project should keep a copy of the certificate in the participant's record and certify it as a true copy of the original). - Letter / template / award letter / confirmation from awarding body - Project or the participant to request confirmation of the qualifications in writing from the academic institution / qualification body.