



west midlands  
police and crime  
commissioner

## Enterprise for Employment

### Background Information

#### 1. Service background

- 1.1. The Commission on Gangs and Violence was established in 2016 by the then West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC). The purpose was to bring the local community, partners and decision-makers together to develop and implement a community-led partnership response to the rise in gang-related violent crime in Birmingham. The Commission's report, *Uniting to improve safety*, was launched in December 2017. It delivered a significant body of evidence that represented community partners' main concerns. It included 24 recommendations that set out a community response to prevent serious violence and reduce harm. [The full report can be found here.](#)
- 1.2. The report highlighted that one of the key challenges for those involved, or impacted by gang violence, was the lack of meaningful employment opportunities. This was particularly the case for those with criminal records, who had been released from prison, or involved in serious offending. It showed the linkages between serious violence, gang-related activity and other social issues, including unemployment. The report therefore made recommendations for a partnership response to improving business, employment and training support, specifically for people involved or impacted by gangs and violence. The two recommendations below set this out:
  - Recommendation 23 in the report states: The Commission should establish a community-led 'interdisciplinary business hub' for supporting individuals and families associated with gangs and violence. This hub will show people routes into employment, training, self-employment and business start-up possibilities.
  - Recommendation 24 in the report states: The Commission should work with business to provide spaces for activity, training, mentoring and advice for individuals and families associated with or impacted by gangs and violence.
- 2.3 Recommendation 23 advocated for an 'interdisciplinary business hub' to be established. However, upon further investigation, it was agreed that there are logistical concerns that may arise with this model. Service users may struggle to get to the hub if they are geographically removed from that location. There are also territorial implications, which may be associated with the target cohort for this model. The Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) therefore came to the position that a single business hub had the potential to be counterproductive.
- 2.4 The OPCC therefore carried out a scoping exercise to identify other best practice models for employment support. Out of this research, it was found that the Individual Placement and Support (IPS) model, had seen the most positive outcomes in supporting vulnerable people into employment. IPS offers intensive, individually tailored and ongoing support to help people into meaningful and sustained employment. The IPS model is well-established internationally as best practice,

particularly for supporting people experiencing mental health and addiction issues into vocational employment.

- 2.5 The Enterprise for Employment model was then established in 2020 as a direct response to the report recommendations and the OPCC scoping research. The model was intended to trial whether using an IPS-style model would work effectively when supporting people involved/impacted by gangs and violence into employment or self-employment.

## **2. Background to the current service**

2.10 The Enterprise for Employment service has been funded by the OPCC since 2020.

2.11 The service has been externally evaluated by an academic at Birmingham City University. The evaluation, published in 2023, found:

- The service had a competitive employment rate of 27.5% (out of 236 service users and 59 ongoing clients at the time of the evaluation, 60 were in full-time employment and 5 had become self-employed).
- The target cohort had a 2.1% re-offending rate (statistically significant).
- The service provider applied/met the key principles of the IPS model.
- Analysis of service user feedback showed they experienced greater support in breaking the cycle of offending, greater personal confidence in securing competitive employment or enterprise opportunities, increased financial stability, improvements in personal and family relationships, personal empowerment and self-actualisation.

2.1 The full evaluation report can be [found here](#).

On average over three years, the service caseload has been circa 90 referrals.

## **3. Background to the IPS model**

2.6 The service seeks to borrow heavily from the IPS model. IPS is an evidenced based practice, developed in the USA in the 1990s, that has been implemented across the world, including the UK and Europe. The research evidence base for IPS is strong. International clinical trials have confirmed that it is the most effective approach for supporting people with mental health problems to find and sustain paid employment. IPS also has more evidence than voluntary work or supported training schemes. IPS is increasingly being implemented with different cohorts of people in a range of settings, including trials to support people leaving prison who have mental health conditions.

2.7 The IPS model is based on 8 principles and a 25-point fidelity scale. IPS has been shown to be more effective, the more closely it follows the 8 evidence-based principles and the higher the fidelity score. The 8 principles are set out below:

- It aims to support people into competitive paid employment
- It is open to all those who want to work – there is an emphasis on service users deciding when it is the right time to return to employment
- Job search is based on service user choice and preferences
- Job search is rapid within four weeks
- Employment specialists are integrated into the clinical team

- Employment specialists develop relationships with employers based on a service users' preferences
- It provides ongoing, time unlimited support for the service user
- Benefits counselling is provided to support service users through the transition from benefits to paid work.

2.8 More information about the 8 principles and the 25-point fidelity scale can be found here:

- IPS Grow, [8 principles of IPS](#)
- Centre for Mental Health, [25-item Supported Employment Fidelity Scale](#)

2.9 As the Enterprise for Employment service is intended for people involved/impacted by gangs and violence, it will not have mental health needs as one of the referral requirements or part of the eligibility criteria. The service will not be based within a clinical setting or team. There are therefore some principles which will need to be adapted to suit the service. As a result, this service won't be labelled as IPS. However, the service is expected to align as closely as possible to the IPS evidence base, and the performance management of the service will be based on IPS outcomes frameworks.