

What is the European Social Fund

- The ESF was set up to improve employment opportunities in the European Union and so help raise standards of living. It aims to help people fulfil their potential by giving them better skills and better job prospects.
- As one of the EU's Structural Funds, ESF seeks to reduce differences in prosperity across the EU and enhance economic and social cohesion. So although ESF funding is spread across the EU, most money goes to those countries and regions where economic development is less advanced.
- Since 2000, the ESF has supported the EU's goal of increasing employment by giving unemployed and disadvantaged people the training and support they need to enter jobs. By focusing on those most in need of help, it contributes to policies to reduce inequality and build a fairer society.
- ESF also equips the workforce with the skills needed by business in a competitive global economy. During 2007-2013 the ESF programme invested £4 billion in 2007-2013 of which £2 billion will come from the ESF and £2 billion will be national funding.

What is Co-Financing?

- Co-financing is a method of administering ESF money which brings together European funding and other public funding to provide complete packages of funding for providers delivering activity that aim to:
 - > Extend employment opportunities
 - > Develop a skilled and adaptable workforce

What can Co-Financing do and how does it affect me?

- ESF money is used to help deliver the types of activity shown above and provides funding for actions over and above what existing funding can support (this is called 'added value').
- There are many different ways of showing added value and, therefore, many different types of activity which can be funded. These could range from providing: extra hours of support; funding complete training programmes to increase the number of people receiving training; and/or providing financial support to companies to enable employees to participate in a training programme.
- Being part of a co-financed project might mean that you are receiving additional support direct from ESF or it could mean that you are supported through another publicly funded programme that forms part of the larger co-financing package.
- The fact that you have taken part in a project that was supported in this way does not affect any benefits or other entitlements you receive, nor do you have to declare it to anyone else. If you would like to know more about ESF programmes and how they work go to: www.esf.gov.uk