

## West Lancashire Local Strategic Partnership

### Employment, Learning & Skills Thematic Group

#### Minutes of Meeting 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2012

##### Present:

Councillor Adrian Owens	Portfolio Holder Regeneration and Estates (Chairman)
Sara Gaskell	West Lancashire College, Business Solutions
Dawn Lord	Skills Academy for Health
Alison Quirk	Job Centre Plus (JCP)
Greg Swift	West Lancashire Council for Voluntary Service (WLCVS) & Quarry Bank Social Enterprise
Maureen Fazal	Exsel (Int) CIC (West Lancashire Community Recycling)
Hugh Shields	Groundwork Wigan and West Lancashire
Emma Francis	I2I
Phil Russell	Lancashire County Council (LCC)
Paula Huber	West Lancashire Borough Council (WLBC)
John Corish	WLBC and West Lancashire Challenge
Alex Lambie	WLBC and West Lancashire Challenge

#### 1. Welcome and Introductions

Cllr Owens welcomed everybody to the meeting and all the attendees introduced themselves to the group.

#### 2. Apologies

Apologies given: Sue Hogan (Young People Service), Pat Perkins (Skills Academy for Health), Jane Friend (Groundwork) and Matt Wynn (I2I)

#### 3. “The Families Programme” Presentation, LCC

- 3.1 PR explained The Families Programme and how the programme aims to move individuals/families closer to the labour market.
- 3.2 PR informed the group that the programme was designed to break down any barriers for people looking to gain employment. They will do this by working with existing organisations such as care centres and JCP.
- 3.3 EF asked “what is the selling point?” For example, what would I2I say to the individuals they feel may need referring. PR explained that it was an opportunity for individuals to get help to gain employment.
- 3.4 In response to a query from MF, PR said they would be very happy to receive any referrals, including domestic violence referrals. MF also asked how LCC define a family. PR replied there was no definition of a family, but as a guide “Individuals with significant impact on each other”.
- 3.5 PH asked if LCC have already identified ‘families’, would referrals be checked against this database? PR explained that LCC would trust the judgement of the contract deliverer as they are the experts within this area of work

- 3.6 Chairman queried how partners would know what tier an individual would be or whether they are eligible. PR explained that the only eligibility check is if they are on a DWP benefit and it was voluntary. The different tiers come in to place after an evaluation of circumstance is undertaken by the contract deliverer.
- 3.7 GS asked how details are being disseminated to the Voluntary Community Faith Sector. PR said that the programme was being advertised through Lancashire CVS and other voluntary services throughout Lancashire including CAB.
- 3.9 Chairman thanked PR on behalf of the group for his presentation and invited him to stay for the remainder of the meeting.

#### **4. Minutes of the last meeting, 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2011**

With an amendment to the acronym to read SWAP and not SWOP, the minutes were agreed as a true and correct record.

#### **5. Matters Arising**

JC explained that the Work Experience scheme is up and running and other service areas in the Council have shown interest in the scheme. Electoral Services are taking on an individual in the near future.

#### **6. Economic Regeneration Manager- Funding & Finance Update**

- 6.1 PH updated the group on several areas of funding, including:

Access to Finance NW and Accelerating Business Growth in Lancashire

An organisation aiming to secure funding for SMEs and a funding programme to support business development/expansion/job creation.

Sefton & West Lancashire Visitor Economy Project

5 themes to this project, including walking and cycling, cycle hire and promoting the visitor offer.

Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE)

Still approximately £600k available within this programme (as of Nov 11), new funding will be coming on stream and it is thought that this is likely to be through the current RDPE mechanisms.

#### **7. Policy Update on Employment and Skills**

- 7.1 JC informed the group about the Apprenticeship Grant for Employers (AGE), key areas include:
- £1,500 grant to encourage employers to take on new apprentices
  - Employer can take on a max of 3 apprentices with grant assistance.
  - Eligible to small and medium sized employers that have not taken on an apprentice in the previous 3 years
- 7.2 JC gave an update on the Youth Contract, key areas being:
- At least 410,000 work places will be available for 18-24 year olds

- Offering a work experience placement of up to 8 weeks for every interested unemployed 18-24 year old, lasting 2-8 weeks, with an optional extension to up to 12 weeks
- Half of under 25 year olds coming off benefits within 3 months

7.3 JC informed the group that the West Lancashire Challenge had given feedback to BIS about apprenticeships. With the key point being that NAS are supportive of the Challenge project in raising awareness of apprenticeships and that there is an opportunity for Government to do more to promote apprenticeships through procurement practices.

7.4 AL updated on West Lancashire Apprenticeships, key points being:

- There are currently 16 apprenticeship vacancies advertised- offered by 14 separate employers
- 7 of the vacancies are being offered by 7 Skelmersdale companies
- 4 vacancies are being offered by 4 Ormskirk companies
- 5 vacancies being offered by 3 rural or Burscough companies

The team identified there have been 156 advertised apprenticeship vacancies by 54 separate businesses (since w/c 22 Aug):

- 26 vacancies have been filled
- 16 are being advertised
- 12 have fallen through
- 4 no answer/reply or are untraceable.
- 98 are still interested or are going through the interview process.

7.5 JCP Vacancies in West Lancashire. On the 21 Feb 2012, there were 192 job vacancies registered with JCP website for the West Lancashire area:

- 88 vacancies in the Skelmersdale area.
- 74 vacancies in the Ormskirk area.
- 8 vacancies in the Burscough area.
- 22 vacancies in the rural areas of the Borough.

The total JSA claimant count for West Lancashire was 2,357 as of 12 Jan 2012, which is down by 87 since the last LSP Report. West Lancashire's Claimant count rate, at 4%, is higher than Lancashire's average, at 3.4%, but 0.6% less than the North West average (4.6%) and is a 0.2% raise on the year. AL believed that the higher claimant count percentage, compared to the last update, was due to the working age population being lower.

7.6 Chairman requested that JC do a follow up press release with the details of AGE and how businesses express an interest.

7.7 Answering a query from GS, JC informed the group that he had been to discussions on how the voluntary sector would be able to reap the benefits of the grant.

7.8 EF stated that i2i do not have many young people (18-24 Year olds) in Skelmersdale on their books as young people are generally doing well at getting jobs.

7.9 EF stated that people do not want to work for agencies because it is not a secure job and some agencies are getting a bad reputation for the way they treat the people. DL stated that companies try to avoid agencies because if they find a good worker and want to hire them, agencies expect money from the company for outsourcing the person, which adds an additional barrier for that person gaining more secure employment.

## **8. West Lancashire Challenge Project**

- 8.1 JC went through the Challenge project outcomes,
- Outcomes 1-3 are underperforming but the focus was on the quality of the service. There are currently 56 people on the passport. Mainly through CVS and West Lancashire College with a couple from YPS referrals
  - Outcomes 4-7 the Asset Map is on the CVS website for all to go on and view.
  - Outcomes 8-11 assisted 21 apprenticeships. Pepsico and Co-op Financial Services, hopefully, will add quite a lot of people to that number soon.
  - Outcomes 12-13 the challenge is on target if not already exceeded the target through Lancashire Community Finance
  - Outcome 16 the apprenticeship events went well and currently looking into planning an Olympic event.
  - Outcome 18 the target was exceeded in September.
  - Outcomes 19-20 both are being carried out as the project develops
- 8.2 Chairman and GS commented that the apprenticeship event was a great event but disappointed with the low number of businesses in attendance.
- 8.3 SG informed the group that West Lancashire College plans to hold fortnightly 1/2day sessions on what apprenticeships are, look at any barriers and employer events. The college is starting 2 new programmes called Access to Apprenticeships. It will be very much a supply and demand service trying to meet the aspirations of the apprentice. It works similarly to the Pathways to Work programme. The second programme is called the NEET Project, which is aimed at 14-16 year olds that have dropped out or left school. Aiming to get the young person back into education, employment or training.
- 8.4 GS asked how successful Outcome 7 has been. JC said that so far there had been 7 volunteers signed up with more expected by April.
- 8.5 GS enquired as to what volunteering WL College staff were doing? SG said that the staff were doing Outdoor Activity events and the hair and beauty staff were going out to day centres to offer their services. GS said that he would like CVS to be more involved in this.

## **9. Any Other Business**

- 9.1 JC- SAS Scheme. He informed the group about the schemes aims and objectives. Guidance notes and Expression of Interest forms have been produced, ready to distribute.

- 9.2 GS- Quarry Bank has had an increase in referrals from the Work Programme and Job Centre Plus. The referrals have trebled in the last few weeks. Good feedback has been given to JCP for their involvement.
- 9.3 MF-Pilot Contracts that West Lancashire Recycling are taking on or completing are:
- South Ribble Bulky Waste
  - Ikea
  - John Lewis
  - Argos
  - Silent Night
- Currently in talks with Preston, Warrington and Knowsley for potential contracts. MF informed the group that she is also working 2days at Wigan and Leigh School for Entrepreneurs, giving support to over 50's.
- MF- SELNET received more than £500,000 for a transforming infrastructure project -mapping of frontline services.
- 9.4 AQ- Get Britain Working:
- 132 people started Work Experience and 55% gained employment.
  - 19 DWP Work Experience starts in Lancashire
  - Sector Based Work Academies, 8 people have gained employment
  - Working with Co-op regarding the 60 apprenticeships that are being recruited, Co-op are also looking to take on 12 people per month and looking to remove barriers into work due to the Credit Checks.
  - Continuing to work with SME's but been very little interest, considering a leaflet drop to make them aware of JCP services.
- 9.5 EF- i2i met their targets for January (50% in Jobs), 50% of the jobs being filled are through agencies. i2i will monitor sustainability and continue are trying to sell the benefits of volunteering work to unemployed clients.
- 9.6 SG- informed the group that the College will be helping to run two new projects, working with LCC, aimed at NEETs. Both projects are to find routes that suit both employers and potential employees. As part of these projects the College is hoping to hold a Job Match Day with the focus being on apprenticeships.
- 9.7 HS- informed the group that Groundwork is running a programme called Rathbones Back to Work Programme for 14-16 year olds. In Preston they are working on a project called Bluesky where they try to gain employment for ex-offenders within 12months of their release from prison.
- 9.8 DL- in discussion with the College about an "Advance into Care" Programme, which will be 14 weeks, 4 weeks in college/10 weeks in a work placement. 9 people recruited with 7 moving into employment.
- 9.9 Chairman closed the meeting asking the group to continue communicating as the group are stronger working together.

## 10. Date of Next Meeting

Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> May 2012- 10am at West Lancashire Investment Centre