



Report of the Director of Neighbourhoods and Housing

Development Scrutiny Board

Date: 20 February 2007

Subject: Addressing Worklessness

Electoral Wards Affected:

Specific Implications For:

Equality and Diversity

Community Cohesion

Narrowing the Gap

Eligible for Call In

Not Eligible for Call In
(Details contained in the report)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The previous reports to the Scrutiny Board (Development) summarised the changes in national strategic priorities relating to 'Worklessness', the wider agenda of Skills and Inclusion along with the impact that these priorities will have on the Council. The reports also detailed the nature and scale of the problem of worklessness and began to outline the strategies being developed to tackle these challenges at a local level.

Addressing worklessness will make a significant contribution to the Council's aim of 'Narrowing the Gap' between the most deprived neighbourhoods and the rest of the City. This report outlines the current and planned work within the Neighbourhoods and Housing Department to develop a more coordinated approach to this challenge.

1.0 Purpose Of This Report

- 1.1 A detailed report setting out the background of the worklessness issue in Leeds was considered by the Scrutiny Board (Development) meeting in November 2006. This report will provide an update on the Councils plans to meet the strategic and operational issues outlined in the previous paper.
- 1.2 In the light of the new national policy drivers and in the context of Departmental reorganisation as part of the Councils 'Change Programme' this is a developing agenda and solutions have not yet been identified to address all of the issues raised. This report will summarise the key areas where work has been undertaken and set out key priorities to move this forward.

2.0 Background Information

- 2.1 Unemployment describes people of working-age who are not working but who are looking for a job e.g. someone claiming jobseekers allowance (13,657 claimants at December 2006). Economically inactive describes people of working-age who are neither working or looking for a job e.g. someone claiming incapacity benefit (31,360 at May 2006). Worklessness includes both these categories and describes people who are unemployed and people who are economically inactive.
- 2.2 The previous report highlighted the nature and scale of the issues that need to be addressed to tackle worklessness, in particular neighbourhoods where there are concentrations of worklessness where people will have lower expectations and a lower probability of securing employment. Removing the barriers to work for these individuals can involve a wide range of interventions. A key intervention is skills training but the wider issues of childcare, physical and mental health problems, substance abuse and addiction may also need to be addressed.
- 2.3 The Council is in an unique position to undertake a lead strategic and operational role that better coordinates the activities of a wide range of public services and other providers to address these needs.

3.0 Strategic role

- 3.1 The Council has a key role to play in the local strategic partnership in advocating the needs of communities and leading and influencing the plans and interventions developed through partnership with other public services and providers. Alongside partners such Job Centre Plus and the Leeds Primary Care Trust, the Council is working through the Narrowing the Gap Executive of the Leeds Initiative and the Economic Development and Employment theme of the Leeds Local Area Agreement (LLAA) to develop appropriate strategies and interventions to address the PSA floor target on worklessness.
- 3.2 The Council is the accountable body for a number of external discretionary funding streams and has a role as the commissioner of activity from a range of services providers across the public and voluntary, community and faith sector (VCFS) to address worklessness. In 2007/08, the Regeneration Service will manage over £5million of external discretionary grant funding to enable the targeted delivery of activity to meet gaps in provision and provide community based interventions that build the capacity and skills of individuals and community based organisations to address worklessness and its causes.

- 3.3 The Council has a key role in co-ordinating the activities of a range of service providers at a local level through Area Committees and the District Partnerships to better meet needs of workless households and communities. Good examples of multi-agency working to tackle the complex problems of such communities is provided by the Intensive Neighbourhood Management programme led by the Regeneration Service and targeted at the Super Output Areas (SOAs) in the 3% most deprived nationally.
- 3.4 The Regeneration Service takes the lead role in developing and implementing major regeneration schemes and programmes which provide opportunities to harness the resources of both public and private sectors to address the physical, social and economic well-being of communities and include specific interventions to address worklessness. Examples include the East and South East Leeds Mixed Communities initiative and the regeneration of the Aire Valley which include activity to support businesses, create employment and assist local people into training and jobs.

4.0 Direct Delivery

- 4.1 The Jobs and Skills Service will transfer to the Department of Neighbourhoods and Housing on 1 April 2007. The Service has attracted funding from a variety of sources to support its delivery activities. Holding 24 contracts, it has access to nearly £7million of funding, £4.3 million from external project funding and the balance from core budgets to deliver mainstream programmes for adults and young people. In 2006, over 2,000 individuals were re-engaged in some form of employability delivery and contact was made with a further 3,000 individuals.
- 4.2 Many of these contracts target the residents of the most deprived SOAs, particularly those eligible for funding through the European Social Funding (ESF) programme and include discrete provision for women, lone parents, Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) communities and people in receipt of benefits such as Incapacity Benefit. These programmes are delivered through the Service's network of Family Learning Centres located in Seacroft, Chapeltown, Middleton, Armley and through the Construction Skills Learning Centre but more increasingly through neighbourhood centres. Additionally, advice is available on jobs and training opportunities through Jobshops in central Leeds, Chapeltown, Harehills and Beeston and other learning opportunities through community venues in partnership arrangements with local organisations.
- 4.3 To reflect the changing environment Jobs and Skills has refocused its services to both adults and young people focussing on access to employment through the development of employability, vocational skills and Skills for Life. To reflect the diversity of the needs of individuals delivery models vary but most programmes consist of a number of 'individualised' packages. They vary in duration, content and flexibility and with increased access to European Regional Development Funding include broader regenerative objectives such as organisational capacity building.
- 4.4 Further provision of local and accessible learning for families and adults is available in over 200 hundred locations across the city through core funding received by the Adult and Community Learning Service of Jobs and Skills. This Personal and Community Development Learning can, in some cases, lead to 'first rung' qualifications.

5.0 Priorities for action 2007/08

5.1 The revised reporting arrangements under the Council's Change programme and partnership drivers to deliver the worklessness targets in the LLAA provide the opportunity and impetus to review existing arrangements and realign programmes and resources to agreed priority targets in a coherent forward plan. This plan should maximise the opportunities provided through partnership pooled funding and commissioning arrangements under the LLAA to achieve agreed priority targets and accelerate outcomes.

5.2 Work to develop a forward plan will include:-

- Developing a strategic overview of needs and existing provision; developing greater clarity regarding roles relating to strategic commissioning, programme and contract management and delivery.
- Developing the capacity to effectively influence resource allocations of the commissioning and funding bodies and regional agencies such as the Learning and Skills Council and Yorkshire Forward through active participation in local, sub-regional and regional forums.
- Securing partnership agreement on targeted priority groups, neighbourhoods and the scale and type of intervention required.
- Developing effective performance management frameworks and accountability reporting and identifying and learning from good practice in Leeds and elsewhere.
- Build effective links across services and within partnership forums, in particular the Narrowing the Gap Executive, the Going up a League Executive and the Economy and Skills Partnership.

6.0 Conclusions

6.1 It is widely acknowledged that whilst worklessness is predominantly concentrated in the inner-city neighbourhoods its effects have a negative impact upon the city as a whole. The inter-related causes, which have been well documented in earlier reports, can affect all communities and present major challenges to the 'Going up a League' and 'Narrowing the Gap' agendas. Taking a bold approach and driving the development of the strategies outlined and supporting the continued delivery of programmes to tackle worklessness will enable the Council to contribute to the achievement of other key priorities facing the City.

7.0 Recommendation

The Scrutiny Board (Development) is asked to note the issues raised in this paper and use these as a basis for further discussion.