



Report of the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods

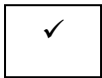
Executive Board

Date: 4th March 2009

Subject: The EASEL and West Leeds Gateway Worklessness Project

Electoral Wards Affected:

Armley
Burmantofts and Richmond Hill
Gipton and Harehills
Temple Newsam



Ward Members consulted
(referred to in report)

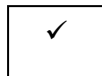
Specific Implications For:

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 report outlines an approach taken to addressing worklessness which builds on the issues arising from the round table discussions on worklessness in Leeds with John Healey, the Minister for Local Government.

The report provides details of the project, a new pilot approach to tackling worklessness in Leeds. The project will be a key intervention specifically linking to the priorities in the East and South East Leeds (EASEL) and West Leeds Gateway regeneration initiatives.

1.0 Purpose Of This Report

- 1.1 To set the context of the worklessness pilot following the Round Table discussion on worklessness in Leeds with John Healey, the Minister for Local Government September 2008. This involved cross party representation of elected members along with council officers; and partners including Jobcentre Plus, the Learning and Skills Council and Yorkshire Forward.
- 1.2 To advise members of the new pilot project developed in response to these discussions.

2.0 Background Information

- 2.1 Worklessness is a key issue faced by communities, in the East and South East Leeds and West Leeds area it is an important aspect of the approach to regeneration described in the EASEL Regeneration Planning Executive Board Report (February 2009) in order to tackle deprivation and to build sustainable mixed communities. It is recognised that we need to provide opportunities and lift the aspirations of local residents. Without a successful approach to economic inclusion and worklessness in particular, we will not address poverty and long standing deprivation. A major priority is to change the behaviour, aspirations and life chances of residents living in our most challenging neighbourhoods. To achieve this goal requires intensive support for struggling families to raise skills and motivation and eliminate the culture of worklessness and dependence.
- 2.2 It is recognised that in Leeds there is a good strategic understanding and partnership approach to addressing worklessness and there is a clear lead assigned in the Local Area Agreement to Jobcentre Plus. Progress on bringing together funding and programmes, joining up activities on the ground and recognising and filling the gaps was noted but it was acknowledged that there is more to do in support of individuals facing multiple barriers to work.
- 2.3 The need for support and investment in first step engagement work with people in the most deprived areas who are furthest away from the labour market is a priority. It is acknowledged that this is intensive and complex work requiring individually tailored approaches to be successful. The benefits gained from such approaches were demonstrated by the successes of projects such as Signpost and Building Family Wealth, which not only brings lasting benefits to individuals, the communities in which they live in but also potentially offers savings to the public purse over the longer term.
- 2.4 A pilot project has been developed to target and test interventions to address the needs of particular client groups in areas with concentrated high levels of worklessness. This may include people with a broad range of barriers including people who are claiming Incapacity benefit and lone parents through to those who need more support integrating into the labour market such as offenders and those with drug and other issues. A new person centred approach is being developed and tested that would identify and remove barriers to individuals moving into and staying in work. The pilot requires a flexible and individually tailored response to move individuals along the journey to work and will engage employers with identified job opportunities.
- 2.5 One aspect of the approach is to work with Government departments, in particular Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) and Communities for Local Government (CLG), to consider a number of freedoms and flexibilities in support of the pilot

including data sharing and exploring the eligibility and access of individuals to mainstream programmes. These will be developed in parallel and if successful will support the delivery of economic inclusion projects across the city.

- 2.6 The aim of the pilot is to reduce worklessness and contribute to the achievement of the NI 152 (working age people claiming out of work benefits) and NI 153 (working age people claiming out of work benefits in the worst performing neighbourhoods) targets in the Local Area Agreement. Targeting those communities that experience high and persistent levels of worklessness will also help us achieve our wider objectives of reducing poverty, especially child poverty, developing opportunity and promoting cohesive and socially inclusive mixed communities.
- 2.7 Whilst the economic context is changing and it is becoming increasingly likely that there will be a significant reduction in jobs available in the local economy. One of the aims of the worklessness pilot is to respond to the impact that an increase in unemployment will have on the most at risk and vulnerable group of unemployed to improve the resilience of communities to the economic downturn.

3.0 Worklessness Project

- 3.1 The business plan has been developed in partnership with the members of the Leeds Strategic Worklessness Outcomes Group and was approved by Leader Management Team on 27 November 2008 and endorsed by the Narrowing the Gap Board in December 2008.
- 3.2 Funding has been secured from Yorkshire Forward through the Leeds Access to Employment programme 2007-2010. The total cost of the pilot is £244,745 and will be delivered from 01 March 2009 to 31 March 2010. This will enable the initial establishment of the project however, other funding opportunities across the partnership are being explored.
- 3.3 The objectives for the project are three fold: that we achieve positive outcomes for the case managed families moving them along their journey to work; to develop and strengthen partnership approaches across the public, private and the voluntary, community and faith sectors; and to improve individual and community wellbeing.
- 3.4 The project activity will target four neighbourhoods who are amongst the highest NI 153 areas: Halton Moor, Osmondthorpe and Gipton (all of which are in the EASEL area) and New Wortley (in the West Leeds Gateway area). Each neighbourhood sits in a key regeneration priority area for the city and has a neighbourhood management structure to support delivery.
- 3.5 The operation of the project will recognise that often families will have a wide range of service interventions addressing problems encompassing housing, health, education, childcare, debt as well as low skills levels.
- 3.6 The proposed approach is intended to demonstrate that there are efficiencies to be achieved by removing duplication between the programmes of different agencies and more effectively joining up the broader service offer. The approach will also demonstrate that investment in a potentially wider range of flexible interventions to support individuals and their families to achieve the desired outcomes will be effective in reducing the overall public sector spend required to support them in the longer term.

3.7 We will be working with service providers to identify an initial cohort of individuals / families who will best benefit from intensive support through this approach including social landlords, Children Services, Jobcentre Plus and the Councils Jobs and Skills Service. This will enable the project team to provide in depth support to those individuals and families in addition to clarifying the levels of public sector resources needed.

4.0 Project Delivery

4.1 The project has been developed and will be led overall by the EASEL Area Regeneration Team to ensure the best fit with service priorities and the objectives of the regeneration programmes in the EASEL and West Leeds Gateway areas.

4.2 The Leeds Worklessness Strategic Outcomes Group is the overarching governing board for the pilot ensuring the project has comprehensive partnership support and it aligns with the city's priorities.

4.3 A team of four Family Mentors will be recruited to work locally in each of the target neighbourhoods. Where appropriate secondments will be offered due to the short term nature of the funding. Each Family Mentor will manage a case load of families working with service providers, linking to neighbourhood management, to identify bespoke packages of support that will meet the needs of the individuals.

4.4 As a pilot, how we learn from and evaluate its success is particularly important. An external evaluation will be commissioned to appraise the project and will be used to roll out learning and good practice to other areas across the city.

4.5 EASEL Ward Members were consulted on the project in their briefing on 12 January 2009. The Armley Ward Members have been consulted through the West North West Area Management Team.

4.6 Effective working across the authority will be key to ensuring the successful delivery of the project and will support the implementation of the One Council Approach.

5.0 Implications For Council Policy And Governance

5.1 There are no direct policy or governance issues raised by this report.

6.0 Legal And Resource Implications

6.1 There are no direct legal and resource implications raised by this report.

7.0 Recommendations

7.1 Executive Board is asked to:

- Endorse the project and request a report on the outcome of the evaluation.

8.0 Background documents

8.1 Executive Board Report (13 February 2009) EASEL Regeneration Planning.