

**EXTRACT SCRUTINY BOARD (CITY AND REGIONAL PARTNERSHIPS)
MINUTES THURSDAY, 26TH MARCH, 2009**

65 Session 5 - Skills Inquiry

The report of the Resources Manager, Regeneration Service referred to the Board's Inquiry into Skills and outlined how partners are working together to tackle worklessness and improve Level 1 skills and under in Leeds and how they are commissioning and co-ordinating provision.

This report had been produced following concerns at the Board's last meeting as to what support was being given to those young people who have few or no qualifications. Members wanted to know how they could access further training and what support was available through our partner organisations.

The Chair welcomed the following to the meeting:

- Diana Towler – Job Centre Plus
- Cath O'Grady – Learning Partnerships
- Ruth Davany – Archway
- Julie Staton – Resources Manager, Environment & Neighbourhoods
- Val Snowden – Head of Jobs & Skills, Environment & Neighbourhoods

Diana Towler gave a presentation on "Worklessness – Making a Difference"
The presentation focussed on the following areas:

- Welfare Reform
- Reference was made to the Houghton Review of Worklessness which looked at the role of local authorities.
- How to increase employment to 80% - the employment rate in Leeds was currently 73%
- Changes to the benefits system
- Key Changes
- Flexible New Deal programme
- Work for benefit proposals
- Changes to benefits for lone parents and families with young children to encourage a return to work.
- Local Employment Partnerships – Agreement between Job Centre Plus and employers to move more disadvantaged people back into work.
- Reducing Child Poverty by reducing worklessness.
- The Story so Far:
- Area Worklessness Groups – linked to Area Management wedges
- Mapping employability and skills with activity of providers and partners – helping to co-ordinate activity, align funds and prevent duplication.

- Worklessness Pilots in Gipton, Halton Moor and Osmondthorpe and New Wortley.

In response to Members comments and questions, the following issues were discussed:

- Pathways for individuals to return to work – these could involve various partners to assist with debt advice, childcare, basic skills and many other issues. There was a need to simplify the process as far as possible.
- Issues for people on disability benefits.
- Effects on those who were in receipt of tax credits.

Cath O’Grady informed the Board of the New Opportunities Experience for Lone Parents. This outlined the pathway following referral from various sources through support from case workers and partner organisations leading to development of skills and ultimately employment and continued post employment support. An information sheet was circulated to all Members of the Board on this matter.

Ruth Davany informed the Board of the work of Archway. This focussed on the following areas:

- Leeds Youth Employment Network
 - Employment support and benefits for 19-25 year olds.
 - Support for those not in education, employment or training.
 - How to encourage those with a lack of interest and low confidence.
 - Links with Park Lane College and enabling key skills qualifications.
- The Board’s attention was also brought to the following issues:
- The role of the Leeds Strategic Outcome Worklessness Group. This had helped people reach work in their own localities.
 - The impact of the Houghton Review and the positive impact on the local authority co-ordinating role.
 - How to get those without Level 1 skills trained and skilled for life – this was considered to be one of the most challenging issues.
 - The LSC Capital Building Programme – it was reported that the new Leeds City College proposals remained a priority.

Further issues discussed in response to Members questions and comments, included the following:

- Learning Partnerships and Archway were commissioned by the Council and received funding from Yorkshire Forward and European Social Funds.
- Concern that the curriculum for the Leeds City College was still unclear and for those who did not have Level 1 skills – it was reported that the curriculum reform programme looked at foundation training and

developing clear pathways through the training ladder. Issues surrounding the development of curriculums involved various partners.

- Employment rate figures related to those of a working age, normally between 18 and 65, who were in employment.
- Performance Indicators in relation to reducing those on benefits. These were monitored by the Department for Works and Pensions (DWP)

The Chair thanked those present for their attendance.

RESOLVED – That the report and the information presented be noted as part of the Board's Skills Inquiry.