

## **Job Linkage**

### **REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

#### **Strategic Links: Prosperous City; CIO3**

#### **1. Why has this report come to the Committee?**

- 1.1 To provide the Committee with information about the Job Linkage service.
- 1.2 This was requested by members at the Review Committee meeting on 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2009. The service update also corresponds with other items on the agenda: the Jobcentre Plus service overview; and the Economic Conditions in Sunderland report, all of which form part of the Committee's review of the response by the Council and its partners to the economic downturn.

#### **2. Background**

- 2.1 Job Linkage was established in 1996 as a part of an SRB II funding programme. A key partnership initiative, it sought to address high levels of unemployment in the City by supporting '*Local People into Local Jobs*'. As a result of its success, the initiative has subsequently evolved into the Local Strategic Partnership's primary response at a neighbourhood level to the challenge of concentrations of worklessness across the City.
- 2.2 The Service is currently delivered through a partnership between the Local Authority and the voluntary and community sector (VCS), supplemented periodically with secondments from Jobcentre Plus. VCS delivery partners currently include Sunderland North Community Business Centre (SNCBC), New View and Grindon Action Technology Enterprise Service (GATES). The service is currently delivered from 13 neighbourhood-based centres across the City. Service users are working age adults, from 16 – 64 who live in Sunderland and are looking for work. Participation by clients is on an entirely voluntary basis.
- 2.3 The Service also works closely with a wide range of other organisations, which both refer clients into Job Linkage, or provide specialist advice and support to existing Job Linkage clients. Examples include directorates within the Council such as Children's Services, Health Housing and Adult Services and numerous external organisations such as Connexions, North East Probation Service, Fiscus, Hendon Young People's Project, NECA, the Carer's Centre, Catholic Youth Centre, Social Enterprise Sunderland, Remploy, RBLI, North East Refugee Service, the Bangladeshi Centre and Shaw Trust, to name a few. Our extensive network allows the service to provide flexible, client-centred outreach, signposting and referral opportunities to a very diverse range of service users.
- 2.4 A specialised team of staff within the Job Linkage service focus on working closely with and responding to the needs of local employers. The Employer

Link service was launched in 2008, building on the success of the previous 'Jobshop 2000' initiative, to offer a dedicated recruitment and job brokering service to employers. The team currently has a secondment from Jobcentre Plus, to maximise the potential for partnership working. The Employer Link team has recently had notable success with the design and delivery of pre-employment route-ways, particularly for the care sector in Sunderland, targeting both the private care sector and also the NHS.

### **3. Current Position**

- 3.1 The Job Linkage service has been selected to act as the 'Managing Agent' for the Assisting People into Work strand of the WNS, in recognition of its ability to consistently deliver a high-quality employability service to workless residents living in the City's key areas of deprivation. This decision was agreed by Cabinet in December 2008.
- 3.2 In order to meet the ambitious employability targets set out in our Local Area Agreement (LAA), the WNS recognises that a partnership approach is needed. This approach will utilise a range of appropriate community-based employment specialists working alongside and complementing mainstream Jobcentre Plus provision, to give primarily our 'hard to help' workless residents the necessary levels of intensive support, especially at the early stages of engagement. Clients such as lone parents, people on incapacity benefits, those with low or no skills, people with substance mis-use problems, ex offenders, older workers, to name a sample of the 'harder to help', can benefit greatly from being engaged through alternative, intensive support services, which work on a one-to-one basis, over long periods of time, to remove barriers and increase confidence and motivation, to a point where eventually the client can be referred into mainstream Jobcentre Plus services and then successfully moved into employment. This is the approach which has been set out in the WNS and endorsed by Cabinet and this is the essence of the Job Linkage offer.
- 3.3 Under the WNS proposal, a strategic expansion of the Job Linkage service will take place, bringing on board a range of 'specialist providers' to enhance the service's ability to more effectively tackle the multiple and complex barriers often faced by 'hard to help' clients in their journey from benefits and into employment. This expanded team of delivery partners will complement the Jobcentre Plus mainstream provision available to Sunderland residents, by making available a wider range of tailor-made interventions designed to engage clients, remove barriers, improve employability and ultimately achieve sustainable employment.
- 3.4 In the last operational year, 1,362 residents who had received support from the Job Linkage service successfully moved into employment. Of these, 792 then went on to sustain that employment for over 13 weeks.
- 3.5 The Job Linkage service is underpinned by four key principles, which have been adopted by the WNS

\* a neighbourhood approach, with delivery centres established within the key areas of economic deprivation across the City. The unique partnership with the VCS enhances the service's ability to reach into communities of greatest need and stimulate meaningful engagement with 'hard to reach' client

groups.

\* a demand led approach, through the 'employer facing' Employer Link team, the service will respond to local recruitment needs and so effectively progress those suitably prepared 'job ready' clients into real employment opportunities.

\* use of an integrated management information system, in order to track clients along their journey into employment and so to ensure the service is delivered to quality standards. Every client is allocated to the caseload of a fully qualified, experienced guidance officer who is responsible for their progress.

\* a 'whole journey' approach using the right referral specialists at the right times to suit the client's needs, with the client being tracked throughout their journey, to ensure continuity and avoid gaps in provision.

- 3.6 The service has traditionally been funded by a number of external strategic funding sources. Currently these include specific area-based funding such as New Deal in the Community (NDC) for the Hendon and East End area, citywide funding such as Disadvantaged Area Funding (DAF) and Working Neighbourhoods Funding (WNF) and sub regional resources such as Single Programme.
- 3.7 On a regional basis, the service is an active participant of the Tyne and Wear City Region Employment Consortium. The Consortium strategically informs the delivery of the employability strand of the Tyne & Wear City Strategy Pathfinder, which is tasked with responding to local priorities for worklessness and improving the Region's employment rate and skills levels. The Job Linkage service helped to inform the development of One North East's Regional Employability Framework (REF) which has been accepted as the model for best practice in the delivery of employability services. Today, the REF has been adopted as the model for Sunderland's WNS.

#### **4. Conclusion**

- 4.1 In order to achieve the mutually-owned LAA employment targets, tackle worklessness and improve the economic prosperity of the City, it is concluded that the partnership approach of Job Linkage for the provision of employability services for workless residents will continue and will be strengthened under the WNS. The local authority will continue to work in partnership with both Jobcentre Plus and the VCS, to deliver a client-centred, holistic, flexible, community-based service to engage the hardest to help workless residents, to complement mainstream Jobcentre Plus provision.
- 4.2 The Job Linkage service will prioritise client engagement and progression activities to increase the number of economically inactive clients that could potentially move into and benefit from participation in mainstream Jobcentre Plus employability programmes. Harder to help clients, such as lone parents, the long term unemployed and people in receipt of incapacity benefits, with individualised packages of support, will be assisted to move off benefits and into sustainable employment.

## **5. Recommendation**

Members are asked to consider this report within the context of the committee's review of economic conditions in Sunderland.

## **6. Background Papers**

6.1 List of Job Linkage delivery centres.

## **7. Glossary**

Disadvantaged Area Funding (DAF)  
Local Area Agreement (LAA)  
North East Council for Addiction (NECA)  
New Deal in the Community (NDC)  
Regional Employability Framework (REF)  
Royal British Legion Industries (RBLI)  
Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS)  
Working Neighbourhoods Funding (WNF)  
Working Neighbourhoods Strategy (WNS)

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## 6.1 List of Job Linkage delivery outlets

Address	Service	Managed by
Hetton Centre Welfare Road Hetton le Hole, DH5 9NE	Job Linkage	Local Authority
50 Vilette Road Hendon Sunderland, SR2 8RN	Job Linkage	Local Authority
3 – 4 St Ignatius Close Hendon Sunderland, SR2 8BD	Job Linkage	Local Authority
17 Lombard Street Hendon Sunderland, SR1 2HS	H.E.L.P. @ SR1 Multi agency centre, involving Job Linkage, Shaw Trust, NECA and PCT health advisers	NDC - Back on the Map
76 Newbottle Street Houghton le Spring, DH4 4GB	Job Linkage	Voluntary Sector (SNCBC)
The Washington Millennium Centre The Oval, Concord Washington, NE37 2QD	Job Linkage	Voluntary Sector (SNCBC)
Thorney Close Action & Enterprise Centre 120 Thorney Close Sunderland, SR3 3JR	Job Linkage	Voluntary Sector (SNCBC)
609 Hylton Road Pennywell Sunderland, SR4 9BY	Job Linkage	Voluntary Sector (SNCBC)
51-52 Blackwood Road Town End Farm Sunderland, SR5 4PT	Job Linkage	Voluntary Sector (SNCBC)
19 Chiswick Square Hylton Castle Sunderland, SR5 3PZ	Job Linkage	Voluntary Sector (SNCBC)
283 Southwick Road Southwick Sunderland, SR5 2AB	Job Linkage	Voluntary Sector (SNCBC)
205-211 Gleneagles Road Grindon Sunderland, SR4 8JD	Job Linkage	Voluntary Sector (GATES)
36 St Lukes Terrace Pallion Sunderland, SR2 8BD	Job Linkage	Voluntary Sector (New View)
Winchester House Baxter Road Town End Farm Sunderland, SR5 4LN	Employer Link	Voluntary Sector (SNCBC)