

## 1 Provide support to businesses to increase employment opportunities

### Current Activity

There are a number of services and organisations who can provide business advice and support. It is recognised that there needs to be a co-ordinated approach to ensure that businesses get the full range of services they are eligible for.

As part of the Government's Solutions for Business initiative to simplify and streamline services, a Sunderland Business Support Network has been established. The Network meets regularly to discuss and co-ordinate activity. Business support agencies hold weekly meetings to discuss individual cases and ensure they are being offered relevant support.

Key partners in the local business support network include Business Link, Sunderland City Council, NE-BIC, SES, University of Sunderland, City of Sunderland College and Gentoo.

**Business Link** is the national advice service that provides access to a wide network of business support and information services for new and small businesses. It delivers integrated business support through two main channels: an online portal ([www.businesslink.gov.uk](http://www.businesslink.gov.uk)) and a team of advisors working at a local level, supported by a national helpline (0845 600 9 006).

Support from Business Link covers a range of business activities, including:

- Starting Up
- Finance & Grants
- Tax, Returns & Payroll
- Employing People
- Health, Safety & Premises
- Environment & Efficiency
- IT & eCommerce
- Sales & Marketing
- International Trade
- Intellectual Property

Face-to-face support uses an IDB (information, diagnostic, and brokerage) model to advise businesses based on their individual needs. Additionally, Business Link runs a variety of events and workshops on topical issues and general business skills.

**Sunderland City Councils Business Investment Team** provide a range of services to support the growth and development of the local economy. These include:

- Developing measures to increase the level of business activity and stimulate sustainable economic interest and investment in the City;
- Providing support and assistance to local and incoming businesses in order to develop employment opportunities and support business growth;
- Providing proactive and reactive support and assistance to secure direct investment and re-investments within the City to create and safeguard local jobs;
- Promoting physical and infrastructure improvements for business growth;
- Working to develop a skilled and motivated workforce to support the long term goals of Sunderland as a competitive location;

Between April 2009 and January 2010, 21 businesses in the Coalfield Area successfully applied for financial assistance from the Business Investment Team to implement business growth plans, creating a potential 195 new jobs. It is expected that these investments will generate an additional £1,753,000 in company turnover.

Recent projects and investments the Business Investment Team have been involved with include:

- Rainton Bridge South Business Park – £3.4m infrastructure improvements for the 54 acre site
- Evolve Business Centre - £8.4m state of the art high technology Business Centre providing 50,000 sq.ft
- Installation of High Capacity Broadband fibre between Doxford and Rainton Bridge
- NPower are investing £5-6m in fitting out offices and will eventually employ 2200 staff at the 250,000sq.ft. facility. A programme to maximise employment opportunities for local people is now underway. The City's Contact Centre Development Officer is working with NPower and recruitment support is being offered.
- Goodman Property has created a 'village' of five speculative office units totalling 107,000 sq.ft. The first tenant is Irish property developer McInerney Homes, which has established its regional headquarters on the site.
- In total, Rainton Bridge South is expected to attract £100 million of investment, 4,000 jobs and 850,000 sq.ft. (80,000 sq.m.) of high quality office space. Around a third of the business park is still available for development. The remaining land is being marketed for high quality projects such as corporate headquarters and technology-based businesses.
- A19/A690 Improvements - £1m Highway Junction Improvements to improve traffic flows to key employment site at Rainton Bridge
- Sunderland Business Network – establishing a city-wide business forum
- Markets Feasibility Study – research project looking at the potential to hold markets, including Houghton, Shiney Row and Hetton.
- The Maxim Brewery at Rainton Bridge began production of a range of former Vaux beers during 2008, with help from the City Council. Double Maxim and other products have not been produced in Sunderland since the Vaux brewery closed in 1999.

The **North-East Business Innovation Centre (BIC)** is one of the leading enterprise agencies in the United Kingdom. The BIC has a team of experienced advisers and helps hundreds of businesses to start up each year. They also offer an array of technical resources and support services. Established in 1994, the facilities have grown in line with the needs of industry and include specific incubator units to help nurture aspiring businesses.

**Sunderland Enterprise Consortia (SEC)** is a unique and long established Wearside based partnership that is focused upon the stimulation and development of enterprise within the City of Sunderland. Each partner brings a specialist route way and reach to the stimulation and growth of the enterprise market within Wearside. The consortia, including SES, BIC, SNCBC, FISCUS, Gentoo and Sunderland City Council, have designed an intensive Enterprise Talent Scout initiative funded through Working Neighbourhoods Funding. Talent scouts and business advisers are working throughout Sunderland to target new potential entrepreneurs and support them on the route to setting up in business. SEC promotes self-employment, social enterprise and aims to increase business creation amongst people from the City of Sunderland, including residents from deprived communities and under-represented groups and/or individuals. The objective is to capture the imagination and engage Wearside residents via Talent Scouts and Community Enterprise Coaching, delivering intensive customer facing support whilst supporting and assisting residents to access business start up support. The SEC provides 1:1 self

employment business start up advice, training and assistance from ELCAP. Bethany Centre, Job Linkage offices, Gentoo housing offices and community venues.

The activities of the SEC is backed up by a small and larger grant fund to help new businesses develop and existing businesses grow.

In terms of Business starts, the Enterprise Activity of partners has supported the start up of 14 new enterprises, including an wheelie bin cleaning service, professional entertainer, contract caterer and a mobile beautician.

The Working Neighbourhood Fund (WNF) programme have launched a promotion campaign, Just The Job, to promote successful WNF funded projects and focus on raising aspirations and opportunities across the City.

Funded through Working Neighbourhoods Funding, Working Links, part of the Job Linkage service, is working closely with employers to ensure that job vacancies can be matched with skills development to ensure employment training is appropriate for the vacancies both current and anticipated.

Procurement practices are designed to enable local businesses to compete for council contracts and information/ training is being provided on how to tender for contracts

The Libra Partnership has developed a plan 'The Route to Advice' to co-ordinate advice available from providers. A new website was launched in October 2009  
[www.librasunderland.co.uk](http://www.librasunderland.co.uk)

Industrial sites and Premises: –.

**Rainton Bridge South Industrial Estate**, is a development of four large advance factories totalling 145,000 sq.ft (13,500 sq.m.), provided by Sunderland City Council on a 12 acre (5 hectare) site beside Rainton Meadows Nature Reserve. These were built in the late 1990s and provide employment for a total of 350 people. Occupiers are Connor Solutions (electronics manufacturing), Sumitomo of Japan (automotive wiring) and the most recent addition, Double Maxim Beer Company, which brews speciality beers.

**Rainton Bridge North Industrial Estate**, an industrial estate totalling 57 acres (23 hectares), with a mixture of small nursery units and large advance factories. This is now home to USA-owned automotive components supplier TRW Systems, which has two units on the site and employs 350 people. In 2006, the biggest advance factory ever constructed by the City Council - a 121,600 sq.ft. (11,300 sq.m.) unit on Rainton Bridge North - was occupied by Tacle. The company is a joint venture between Lear Corporation (USA) and Tachi-S (Japan), producing seats for the Nissan Qashqai. It currently employs 250 people, although it is continuing to expand and recruit additional staff due to the tremendous success of the Qashqai.

Another major employer on Rainton Bridge North is TNT Express, which operates a parcel delivery depot on the site, taking advantage of its strategic accessibility. The company has recently expanded its presence, with the creation of a new 12,500 sq.ft. (1,160 sq.m.) vehicle maintenance unit. The latest development on Rainton Bridge North is a 20,000 sq.ft (1,850 sq.m.) production facility being constructed for Herrington Gate Furniture, a local company that manufactures high quality bespoke interiors.

**Sedgeleth Industrial Estate** is located between Houghton le Spring and Washington, adjacent the proposed Central Route. Site owners Onesite North East (a joint venture of One NorthEast and Langtree Group) have secured occupiers for most of the remaining land, with new developments recently completed by The Durham Company Ltd. (recycling plant) and Fencehouses Truss Company Ltd. (manufacture of roof trusses). However, there is still around 9 acres (3.5 hectares) of vacant land on the site in a range of plot sizes (2 x 2.5 acres and 1 x 4 acres).

**Houghton Enterprise Centre** provides 31 units for both office use and light industrial activity, and range from 15 sq.m. (150 sq.ft.) to 100 sq.m. (1,000 sq.ft.). Each unit is fully serviced, and has 24-hour access. Tenants can also make use of fully equipped metalwork and woodwork machine shops and paint spray areas.

**Other industrial sites include** Philadelphia, New Herrington and Hetton Lyons.

Many opportunities outside of Coalfield area – e.g. Doxford Park, Washington, Durham, Peterlee

The ‘Visible Workspace’ project, through Working Neighbourhoods Funding (WNF) is a demand survey being carried out to look at all opportunities to develop workspace across the City. Results will inform further work to match up the supply and demand for premises/workspace at specific locations.

Early in 2009 Sunderland City Council commissioned an Employment Skills Survey to establish what current and future skills needs are in order to match skills with employers’ needs. Routeways to Employment in the public sector, healthcare and contact centre have been developed as a result. In partnership with Sunderland University, the exercise will be repeated in 2010 to ensure that information is relevant and updated. Results will be used to influence future WNF development.

Through Working Neighbourhoods funding, talent scouts and business advisors are working throughout Sunderland to target new potential entrepreneurs and support them on the route to setting up in business. This is backed up by a small and larger grant fund to help new businesses develop and existing businesses grow. (see Annex 1b)

## **Action**

Business and Investment Team to provide the results of the Visible Workspace survey
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## **2 Provide access to educational activities for all adults**

### **Background/Key Issues**

#### **Current Activity**

Gentoo customer contact arrangements – Focus Groups, Tenant and Resident Associations, newsletters, Wear Living etc provide an ideal opportunity to raise awareness of any activities either existing or being developed (and indeed consulting with the communities re: gaps)

SAFC Foundation has 15 Foundation Community Clubs (FCC’s) each with a football team in Russell Foster Leagues. There are currently 23 volunteers connected to the FCC’s many of whom have gained their Level 1 FA Coaching through the programme

Support is provided by welfare rights in relation to benefits/ affect college courses training/ further education – what can be claimed etc whilst studying

Health, Housing and Adult Services clients are using Direct Payments scheme to pay for college courses to enhance chances in workplace

The Volunteering Programme in HHAS recruits, trains and places volunteers in a variety of roles within the Learning Disability Service and in Sunderland Community Mental Health Partnership

People into Employment (PIE), Sunderland College and Bridge are providing training for carers to assist them towards employment

PIE and Job Linkage are assisting carers and ex-carers into employment, offering advice and guidance on vocational training and sources of funding

### **Gaps/Needs**

SAFC Foundation has a successful Family Learning programme, which for the last six years has delivered a range of courses using the power of football to improve skills (including literacy and numeracy) and relationships in the family.

In the last 12 months, no SAFC Foundation courses have been delivered in the Coalfields area. There is a strong need for this provision to be extended to ensure courses run in the Coalfields area.

### **Proposals**

Explore the potential of SAFC Foundation delivering Family Learning in the Coalfield area. This may involve providing funding to tailor provision to the needs of the area.
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## **3 Ensure community based and informal learning provision is accessible**

### **Background/Key Issues**

There is a shortage of relevant community based learning provision in the Coalfield Area. Learning provision needs to be available at venues and times to suit the local community.

### **Current Activity**

A range of adult and community learning courses are provided at the Hetton Centre and in Copt Hill through Age Concern. Courses are delivered during the day and include crafts, dancercise, IT and digital imagery.

Sunderland City Council's Family, Adult and Community Learning (FACL) service deliver a range of courses to improve confidence, build skills and knowledge and help people to develop healthier lifestyles. Further details are available from FACL.

'Turning Point' has secured funding through Family, Adult and Community Learning. The project will be based in a community location in the Coalfields area and will target unemployed adults who misuse drugs and/or alcohol and who live in the 'Coalfields Corridor' from Peshaw to Easington Lane. In addition to the focus on employment, the courses on offer will include, How to be a Good Tenant and How to better understand the negative effects of Substance Misuse (both in terms of their physical health and the community they live in).

## Gaps/Needs

- Lack of sustainable funding to deliver successful 'pilot' programmes
- There is a shortage of providers who are able to deliver family learning opportunities under the current FACL requirements

## Proposal

**Review (also addressed in the Learning theme)** - FACL to identify and support the development of new providers of family learning

## 4 Raise skills levels and aspirations of adults in relation to employability

### Background/Key Issues

Due to a range of factors, including the demise of local industry, the Coalfield area has families who are 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> generation unemployed. Lack of availability of local employment, and other economic issues have resulted in low aspirations which pass from parents to children and young people.

### Current Activity

Gentoo Living Focused Neighbourhoods work in Moorsley/Peat Carr – pilot aimed at responding to the specific needs of the community & subsequent capacity building. Gentoo Living have carried out surveys in Peat Carr & Moorsley to identify needs which in turn will inform what activities are required to fulfill those needs.

SAFC Foundation is working in partnership with the Department for Work and Pensions and Job Centre Plus targeting people 18+ in Sunderland who are not in education, employment or training (NEET). Starting in October 2009; the project is for an initial 18months running five x 10week courses with participants gaining accreditation, increasing employability skills and progressing into employment either with the Foundation or with other employers. A key demographic for this project are the 18-24 NEET young people / adults.

A community liaison officer based within the Job Linkage service has been appointed to the Coalfield area to target recruitment and ongoing support at the most vulnerable residents.

Through the Job Linkage service, the Working Neighbourhoods Fund is ensuring the strategic expansion of the existing job linkage service to ensure that support for individuals to move from unemployment into work is both coordinated across the City and tailored to the specific needs of the Coalfield area.

The Working Neighbourhoods Fund (WNF) programme has brought a significant level of funding to the City, as set out below;

- 2008/2009 - £8.590m
- 2009/2010 - £10.456m
- 2010/2011 - £10.904m

A Working Neighbourhoods Strategy has been developed resulting in a number of projects being supported in the City:

- Employment Specialists (Mental Health) - addressing people long term mental health needs and problematic substance abuse and NEET groups;

- Kickstart – addressing young offenders, parents, care leavers, young people;
- The Hub project – young people in or in a risk of being in NEET;
- Work it out! – addressing workless people on inactive benefits and disadvantaged people and groups living in deprived areas, which is based in Pennywell;
- PIE – addressing Carers/ex Carers aged 16 – 65;
- Sunderland Coaching Academy addressing a wide range of disadvantaged groups;
- Skills Bridge – addressing low skilled, hardest to reach benefit claimants;
- Employment support for people with disabilities;
- Sunderland Council's Job Linkage Core Delivery Services;
- Essential Steps to Employability, addressing people with no or low skills;
- Unlocking potential addressing young people in the NEET group;
- Boosting Enterprise.

Through the Carers Strategy HHAS are assisting carers & ex-carers into employment, offering advice & guidance on vocational training & sources of funding.

Working Neighbourhood Fund projects are running with HHAS focusing on supporting people with disabilities and mental health needs into employment and to raise their skill levels to increase employability.

A pilot is currently underway placing people with learning disabilities into NHS placements

The Working Neighbourhoods Fund is ensuring the strategic expansion of the existing Job Linkage service to ensure that support for individuals to move from unemployment into work is both co-ordinated across the City and tailored to the specific needs of the North Area.

A specific community liaison officer within the Job Linkage service has been appointed for the Coalfield Area to target recruitment and ongoing support at the most vulnerable residents

Employability skills courses are being developed to be delivered in 2009/10. These courses are aimed at developing individual's skills so that they become sustainable in the local economy in terms of participating in volunteering opportunities or progressing into options that will lead to future employment

### **Gaps/Needs**

There needs to be a wider range of work experience opportunities made available to young people.

Opportunities to access alternative support (such as employability skills in partnership with Springboard) needs to be available to mainstream learners.

There is a lack of employer led apprenticeships. This hinders progression from from level one and two training up to full qualification level.

### **Proposal (also addressed in the Learning theme)**

**Escalate to LSP** - review apprenticeship opportunities. Greater public sector commitment to the creation of more full apprenticeships is required - Either by providing apprenticeships within statutory sector organisations or providing financial incentives to other employers.