

**Priority One: Provide comprehensive support in order to increase employment opportunities****Key Issues/background**

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 for which they are eligible.

**Current activities**

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.

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.

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. Route ways 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 and interventions.

Funded through WNF, the Working Links part of 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.

SAFC Foundation is working in partnership with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and Job Centre Plus targeting people over 18 who are not in work or training. The programme began in October 2009 and will run for an initial 18 month period. SAFC Foundation is

consulting the North East Chamber of Commerce and Job Centre Plus to identify occupations where there are skills shortages and to invite employers to engage with course participants.

Social Enterprise Sunderland (SES) provides 1:1 self employment business start up advice, training and assistance from New view in Pallion, Job Linkage offices, Gentoo housing offices and community venues. SES has nine full time business start-up workers.

SES provides Social Enterprise start up and development advice, training and assistance from the above outlets.

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.

Gentoo's Enterprising Futures is part of the City Wide Business Start up support. It links with other organisations in the City such as Sunderland North Community Business Centre (SNCBC), SES and the North East Business and Innovation Centre.

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

Farringdon Jubilee Centre delivers Job Start Mentoring Services, across St Chad's and Silksworth. Also it provides wrap around opportunities for those looking for work supporting them from initial contact stage to moving gradually closer to the labour market.

### **Actions**

Receive regular updates on measures to increase employment opportunities.

## **Priority Two: Provide access to educational activities for all adults**

### **Key issues/background**

The working age population in West Sunderland aren't as well qualified as those in other areas of the city. 42.2% of residents have no qualifications compared to a city average of 37%. These levels are particularly high in Pallion (44%), Sandhill (47%) and St Anne's (46%).

### **Current activities**

Gentoo customer contact arrangements – Focus Groups, 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

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.

There is support from Welfare Rights in relation to benefits/ affect college courses training/ further education – what can be claimed etc whilst studying

By March 2010 a report will be produced by Family, Adult and Community Learning (FACL) to identify what learning opportunities carers would like to see available.

HHAS clients are using Direct Payments scheme to pay for college courses to enhance chances in workplace.

FACL seeks to support new activity to complement and add to existing provision by seeking new providers in local communities.

The Volunteering Programme in Health Housing and Adult Services (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

Farrington Jubilee Centre delivers a range of non accredited and accredited adult learning courses; the centre also has 11 laptops with a mobile broadband connection which allows outreach delivery in areas with no information technology (IT) capacity.

There are a range of learning opportunities delivered at Community Centres, schools, Children's Centres and other community venues.

Digital Challenge actively supports access to IT facilities and training to assist with skills training, job seeking etc, Links in with public access personal computers in libraries

### **Gaps/Comments/Needs**

Farringdon Jubilee Centre can't meet the demand within the area. Non accredited learning contracts are not sufficient to meet the need. In addition, community based accredited provision has additional associated costs with accreditation. However this type of learning is not currently funded within Sunderland and creates a major gap in provision as many adult learners prefer to access learning within supportive community environments rather than main stream educational establishments.

Access to additional funding to support accredited learning and progression for individuals to move on and improve their employability skills and increase their confidence.

Additional contracts from FACL are now issued on a termly basis, which can affect progression or continuity, as well as leaving little capacity to plan annual delivery, making it hard to attract learners and tutors to deliver courses.

### **Actions**

Review of learning provision (also within Learning thematic).

## **Priority Three: Focus on community based and informal learning**

### **Key issues/background**

Due to a range of factors, including the demise of traditional industries, the West has families who are 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> generation unemployed. Lack of availability of local employment, and other economic issues, has resulted in low aspirations that can pass from parents to children and young people.

### **Current activities**

SAFC Foundation delivers family learning at St Anne's School.

Sunderland City Council's Family, Adult and Community Learning (FACL) service provides a range of courses through various providers to improve confidence and build skills and knowledge. A partnership approach to adult learning is being developed to encourage more adults into educational activities, including community based learning.

Within the Children's Centres a volunteer gateway has been established to support recruitment and induction of volunteers. This offers an opportunity for adults to experience and explore their individual preferences and an early induction into further training, education or employment.

City of Sunderland College deliver family learning programmes in 7 primary schools across the West area.

The extended Job Linkage service provides support for individuals in relation to training and employability.

The use of community venues by the City of Sunderland College enhances access to learning opportunities and helps widen participation

Farringdon Jubilee Centre delivers initial first steps learning within a safe comfortable community environment and have the capacity to deliver this informal learning on an outreach basis, we teach a diverse range of subjects from arts based, ICT and employability skills, we also offer support around driving theory and constructions skills training.

There are a range of learning opportunities delivered at Community Centres, schools, Children's Centres and other community venues.

Digital Challenge actively supports access to IT facilities and training to assist with skills training, job seeking etc, Links in with public access PCs in libraries

### **Gaps/Comments/Needs**

There is a capacity issue across the area as there is not sufficient delivery to ensure that all local community members can access this type of provision.

There is a shortage of providers who are able to deliver family learning opportunities for FACL.

FACL provision is predominantly day time. There is limited evening and weekend provision in some venues. Programmes will be developed to meet the needs of adults who cannot attend during daytimes

### **Actions**

FACL identify and support the development of new providers.

## **Priority Four: Develop an holistic approach to raising the skills and aspirations of adults, in relation to employability**

### **Key issues/background**

There are people in the area who have lived in households of second and third generation levels of unemployment and therefore have aspiration levels that need addressing. High levels of unemployment and low paid work further compound this issue.

### **Current activities**

Across the West Area Committee area there are a wide range educational activities working to link people with training and employment. Opportunities for educational activities exist at the Sandhill Centre, WNF funded projects, Sunderland College, Sunderland Libraries and a number of Community and Voluntary Sector projects such as Thorney Close Action and Enterprise Centre, Farringdon Jubilee Centre, St Mary and St Peter's Community Project, Gates.

The Working Neighbourhood Fund (WNF) programme will launch a promotion campaign early in 2010, this will evaluate and promote success of the WNF funded projects and focus on raising aspirations and opportunities across the City.

The national skills service, Train to Gain provides support and to employers to enable them to develop their workforce and increase skills and opportunities for those in work. It aims to meet the needs of employers of all sizes and from all sectors to improve the skills of their employees as a route to improving their business performance and is a valuable resource for employers, unlocking employees' potential and increasing company productivity. A broad range of training is covered – from basic level skills to Level 2, Level 3 and other higher-level skills such as Leadership and Management.

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 numeracy and literacy). All courses are free and run in local schools or at an SAFC Foundation site.

SAFC Foundation has a successful trainee scheme which targets young people aged 16+. Trainees are with the organisation for two years, gaining qualifications and employability skills, on the job training, coaching and mentoring. During the last 12 months 5 out of 11 trainees were recruited on to permanent positions within the organisation.

Through the Carers Strategy, carers and ex-carers are being assisted into employment. Advice and guidance on vocational training provides part of the service.

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

A new Transitions Team has been set up to ensure vulnerable young people who have been receiving care and support from Children's Services have a smooth transition into adulthood and receive the care and support they need.

Sunderland City Council's Family, Adult and Community Learning Service (FACL) have a range of learning programmes across the area designed to engage hard to reach adults.

Job Linkage is a nationally accredited Information, Advice and Guidance service, with over 11 years experience of delivering community based employment services. Co-ordinated by Sunderland City Council it aims to 'Link Local People to Local Jobs'.

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 West Area.

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.

**Action**

Sunderland learning Partnership to continue to develop a holistic approach to raising aspirations

## **Priority Five: Promote social inclusion, engagement and well being to encourage participation in employment training**

### **Key issues/background**

People gaining work after periods of unemployment, or those undertaking a change in career/sector sometimes require support to sustain employment.

### **Current activities**

Included in the extended Job Linkage service, in work support is prioritised through Working Neighbourhoods Funding. All projects funded via WNF offering specialist support e.g. to those leaving care, offer continued support for a period of six months after they have gained work.

Welfare Rights advice is being given by Sunderland City Council and partners funded by the Council in relation to benefits, in-work benefits, housing and debt issues.

The Housing Options Team at Sunderland City Council has five resettlement workers across the City who will work with Job Linkage to provide support to clients who have housing issues. This is to ensure they do not lose their home which would affect their ability to gain/stay in a job.

HHAS are working with Remploy to support people with disabilities into employment. The project co-ordinates employment and social care needs.

Health, Housing and Adult Services (HHAS) have developed a service model for vulnerable adults to prepare them to a point where they are ready for employment, and aims to support employers to enable vulnerable people to enter/remain in employment.

HHAS are delivering a WNF project focusing on supporting people with mental health needs into employment. The project also supports clients to remain in sustainable employment.

Education Business Connections are delivering a WNF project supporting ex- offenders and homeless people and those with dependency issues in skills development and employability.

The Libra partnership, a network of advice organisations, offer financial advice and support. A new website was launched in October 2009 [www.librasunderland.co.uk](http://www.librasunderland.co.uk)

The delivery of learning and training opportunities through community venues supports the promotion of social inclusion and engagement reducing levels of isolation and improving wellbeing and due to awareness raising and changed behaviour supports reduction of lifestyle related disease therefore supporting the move toward employment.

The establishment of the new West Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) Network, linked directly to the Area Committee, will help to promote engagement and social inclusion and assist in delivering well being.

Digital Challenge is helping to promote social inclusion through its work within communities.

### **Gaps/Comments/Needs**

Community based delivery has suffered due to a lower number of providers coming forward.

Worklessness strategies to recognise the importance of first rung informal learning as a mechanism to move people into employment and make long term area changes.

### **Actions**

Promote more VCS providers across the area, particularly in areas of social exclusion.



## **Priority Six: Ensure a strong economic infrastructure**

### **Key issues/background**

Businesses, which are starting up and in a stage of development, receive assistance and it is important to co-ordinate this approach to provide consistency and quality to those who seek such a service

### **Current activities**

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.

The Business Investment Team are promoting investment, including attracting automotive industries into the area to build on the success of existing businesses. There are opportunities for future development such as the development of the Nissan battery plant to support the electric vehicle programme.

Sunderland arc is promoting the Groves site, along the riverside for mixed housing, business and retail use.

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 SNCBC and Job Linkage offices, Sunderland BIC, Gentoo housing offices and community venues.

The activities of the SEC are 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 nine new enterprises, including an artist, an entertainer, a design consultant and a builder.

### **Gaps/Comments/Needs**

The services are currently emerging and need to be supported and mainstreamed to develop long term and provide the continuity the area needs to ensure ongoing economic infrastructure.

Nexus are consulting on its 'Secured Services Strategy' and the subsequent 'connectivity' of employment opportunities.

**Actions**

Support long term grass roots employability services and community based first rung learning opportunities.

Receive a report on the 'Visible Workspace' project.

Receive updates from Sunderland arc on the development of the Groves site.