

Green Team Programme

This report provides information to the Washington Area Committee on the Green Team proposal that has been developed by Groundwork North East in partnership with Sunderland City Council, Gentoo and other partners. The proposal seeks to maximise the investment of an employability initiative so it can deliver locally identified aims within the Washington area Action Plan. Green Team will use secured Future Jobs Fund support to meet the objectives of the Attractive & Inclusive City Delivery Partnership at a local level. Additional funding is requested from the Area Committee to match this funding and support the successful delivery of this initiative. Groundwork has consulted extensively in the development of this proposal which has been informed and shaped accordingly by partners' contributions.

Project Description

The Green Team Programme seeks to establish a bridge to employment for unemployed young people aged 18-24 and other unemployed individuals who will assist in the renewal of the neighbourhoods of Washington. A programme of small scale community based environmental improvements will be delivered through a squad of five unemployed people who will be supported by a local supervisor.

Groundwork will work closely with local neighbourhood groups to develop a programme of environmental improvement works which will also be informed by consultation with key partners such as Sunderland City Council and Gentoo. The principle objective of this project is to provide a bridge to employment for young residents who are furthest removed from the labour market and are considered Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEETS). The project will also target other hard to reach long term unemployed individuals who are on other out-of-work benefits (Income Support, Incapacity Benefits, Employment support Allowance).

The Green Team Programme will create an extended period of employment (6 months) for unemployed clients by moving them from a culture of benefit dependency into a real world environment through support e.g. counselling & training, and then onto sustainable employment when they are 'job ready'. This project will provide at least 14 places in the Green Team over 18 months and cover Washington. It is anticipated that as the majority of the participants will come from the communities they will be working in and that this will engender a sense of respect and responsibility for their communities. If an individual gains further employment or moves on from the programme, a spare place will be available and will be advertised locally through the Job Centre Plus who will make direct referrals on to the project. Working in partnership with gentoo the project will provide business start-up advice to clients to actively encourage and support the establishment of new enterprises.

Rationale

This report seeks permission to submit for consideration an application for funding to support a Partnership approach that meets the aims of the Attractive & Inclusive City by working together with the local area arrangements. The Sunderland Partnership's Attractive & Inclusive City Delivery Group has discussed how programmes such as employability initiatives can be used to support the strategic aim of ensuring that Sunderland becomes a clean, green city with a strong culture of sustainability that nurtures its natural and built environment. This project has been devised as a direct response of these discussions.

Partnership working

Groundwork has undertaken extensive consultation about how the Green Team will work collaboratively with the City Council's Local Responsive Service and other council provision

– City Services Street Scene. A referral mechanism has been agreed to make sure that the activities delivered by the Green Team will complement and avoid any duplication. The environmental works will be of community benefit and entirely additional to any Council Services and other partners' statutory responsibility. Work requisitions will come from community partners including Friends of Parks Groups, Allotment Associations, Residents Groups, Neighbourhood Action Partnerships and Community Forums.

Groundwork recognised that the success of this project is dependent upon the partnership working and would not happen without the support and input of the Washington Area Committee.

Sunderland Washington Local Area Plan 2009-11

The project supports the following key priorities identified in the Washington LAP that relate to the Attractive & Inclusive City which the Washington Area prioritised as their second priority:

- To make the streets more attractive, landscaping rundown areas, removing litter and graffiti
- To make more of key attractions, and attract more visitors to the City to see them

In addition the project will support the Washington Area Committee's Work Plan which prioritises improving green spaces, cycle routes and paths, underpasses and unlit walkways, and develop a safe environment, that make the streets more attractive. The project also meets other identified priority items to plan training around jobs and target young people who are NEET supporting them into education and employment under the Learning City.

Funding & Value for money

Groundwork has successfully secured funding through Future Jobs Fund this would normally cover the costs associated with placing an unemployed young person in an existing organisation – pay their wage and cover some support costs. However, this initiative is creating the structure around which the individual can gain useful employment and the local communities can benefit from environmental improvements. In order to successfully deliver a squad based initiative within Washington these additional costs which cover the employment of the supervisor and management of the programme and also the equipment and vehicle hire and running costs need to be financed. It is this funding that Groundwork is requesting from the Washington Area Committee which is £53,850 to match secured funding of £91,000.

As these types of employability initiatives are intensive to run with the costs of wage subsidies and support structures, the unit cost is traditionally between £15,000-£18,000. However this programme will operate at a unit cost of under £10,500 which represents good value for money. Groundwork has experience of delivering these initiatives in other local authority areas at this level of budget.

Beneficiaries & outcomes

Unemployed young people (18-24) will benefit from

- Training in practical activities relating to environmental improvements that will provide them with direct skills required to access local employment opportunities in the environmental, landscaping or construction industries;
- Trainees are also supported to complete accredited learning;
- Training provides both direct, relevant skills and additional life skills;
- Young people receive a package of individual support plans including housing, childcare and alcohol and drugs advice;

- Ongoing jobs brokerage support offered after completion of project.

Local communities and neighbourhoods will benefit through the following ways

- Neighbourhood environmental focus will help increase residents overall general satisfaction with local areas and support the employment rate because it has the capacity to absorb new jobs;
- Support community cohesion and intergenerational focus based upon consultation with young people themselves and agencies such as Jobcentre Plus and witness improvements being undertaken by local unemployed young people will challenge established view of youths by elderly residents;
- Addresses the problems of take up of services caused by poor environmental quality there would then be a knock-on effect in terms of improved take up of services for the many health inequalities indicators.
- Support the eradication of child poverty through a waged temporary employment contract targeted at those who are Not in Education, Employment or Training.

Sustainability

Future Jobs Fund (FJF) which is the main funder of this activity could potentially be extended and therefore could support the activity beyond the stated end date. Additional support would need to be secured to enable the programme to continue in its envisaged form. Potentially some aspects of the delivery could become mainstreamed although a thorough evaluation would need to prove the effectiveness of the delivery and its cost implications which might be manageable through absorption. An alternative to FJF could be the planned Community Task Force which could be used to sustain part of the delivery.

Gentoo will offer the clients advice and support to set up a small enterprise. It is anticipated that at least one business start up would come from a city wide initiative. In addition, working closely with the Environmental Services, the programme seeks to provide interviews for clients with agencies such as LMR who supply staff to work for our Parks section each year carrying out grass cutting operations etc. Further discussion with Street Scene has indicated that successful clients could following an interview be directly recruited into Council workforce.

Conclusion

This report requests that the Washington Area Committee considers a funding application for £53,850 SIB to support the Green Team Programme at the March 2010 committee.

Samuel Palombella

Chair of Attractive & Inclusive Delivery Partnership

Director of Tyne & Wear, Groundwork North East