

Outline proposal for a Local Supported Pre-employment programme for consideration by South Area Council

Recommendation:

That the South Area Council welcome the progress made and support in principle the pursuit of a Pre-employment Support Programme.

Background:

This outline proposal has been put together by a Local Economy and Young People's working group, meeting on behalf of the South Area Council. This group has met once to outline this proposal and comprised:

- Cllr Robin Franklin
- Andrew Ainsworth (Barnsley Development Agency)
- Gary Leach (BMBC Human Resources, with responsibility for Apprenticeships)
- Tom Smith (BMBC Education Services, with responsibility for Integrated Youth Support Services)
- Kate Faulkes (South Area Council Manager)

Cllr Chris Lamb also volunteered to sit on this group, but was unable to attend the first meeting.

The South Area Council had initially identified a possible need to offer support to Apprenticeship opportunities through their devolved budget from 2014 onwards. However, at an additional Area Council workshop held in October 2013, it became apparent that the 'pressure point' for unemployment and lack of economic opportunities existed at 18+ rather than at 16+. A lot of attention is currently focused on avoiding young people from becoming NEET (Not in employment, education or training) on leaving school at 16; meaning that only a relatively small number become NEET and this is usually for specific reasons like pregnancy, illness or custody.

However, statistical information and local intelligence shows that young people who **do** remain NEET or who drop out from their positive first destination often get lost at this stage, with unemployment then continuing on into early adulthood. Many people who were not 'settled' into employment or further/higher education at 18 remained at high risk of unemployment throughout their 20's and beyond.

This proposal outlines a possible model to deal with these issues around unemployment, employability and skills amongst a significant minority of unemployed

people over 18, whose needs are often not being met by current provision and for whom job opportunities are not in their immediate reach without extra support to tackle a number of issues which may be holding them back.

It is anticipated that further meetings of the working group will be needed to bring together the final specification for commissioning, if the model is agreed in principle by the South Area Council. Work with a range of partner organisations will also be needed to highlight possible collaborative approaches and their costs.

Identified need for the approach:

There is a clear need for this approach through figures and intelligence collated by a variety of partner organisations, including:

- Whilst a lot of work has been done to reduce the level of young people who are NEET (not in employment, education or training) on leaving school at 16, there is a clear and emerging pressure point on young people at 18+, with around one third of 18 year olds' currently unemployed. This continues for a small minority into adulthood, with just over 2% of adults in the South Area unemployed for more than two years and only 60% of the adult working age population in work.
- Many of these are identified as young people or adults who:
 - Did not have a first destination on leaving school and who have remained 'NEET' after 18
 - Had a first destination on leaving school which did not work out for them, and who subsequently become unemployed; sometimes for a prolonged period of time
 - Often have few or no formal qualifications (32% of people aged 16+ in the South Area are unqualified)
 - Are in and out of poor quality and often temporary work and are often the most vulnerable to becoming and staying unemployed (37% of working age families in the South Area have no adult who is in work)
 - Often have very little contact with the range of support agencies who may be able to offer the wider support they may need to compete for and keep a job
 - Have often been through a Work Programme provider, but have not found long lasting work as a result
 - May have a range of additional needs, including basic skills, substance issues, problems with childcare, mental or physical health issues (6.5% of working age people in the South Area are unemployed because of long term illness or disability)
 - May not be able to cope immediately with full time hours in either work or training

- With forthcoming changes to government policy, there will also be a requirement for unemployed young people/young adults to take place in mandatory volunteering/community activity or skills training. There is a real need to make this experience meaningful for participants, with activities sufficiently flexible to meet individual needs and to offer proper support which helps people towards stable employment. There is also a need to respond to issues which will arise from the elevation of the school leaving age to 18 in 2015.
- Emerging research also shows that local employers often find that many job applicants lack the skills/attitudes to succeed in the workplace, with issues around:
 - Low level of basic skills, including IT
 - A mismatch in terms of expectations of work
 - 'Soft skills' like persistence, resilience, versatility, flexible skills
 - Many people who are very unsure of their own interests and skills and who need access to skills or vocational 'tasters'
 - Poor levels of confidence and self esteem
- Overall, there is a need for flexible, local provision which offers the chance to work towards the labour market over time for those who would not qualify for provision at 'apprenticeship level' and for whom Work Programme is either inappropriate or has proved unsuccessful.

The proposed 'Supported Pre-Employment' approach:

This approach would look to provide a supported local programme of up to a year for local people over 18 who are out of work, but are struggling to find employment. Further work would be needed to design a way of assessing people which is fair but ensures that those who most need it can take part. Participants may have already taken part in Work Programme, although some may have not.

There would be no minimum period of unemployment in order to qualify for this programme. All of the evidence shows that the longer a person is out of work, the more difficult it is for them to re-enter the labour market, so it would be imperative for the programme to work with people sooner rather than later.

The approach would offer a range of help, support and placement, which would be tailored to meet the needs of each person taking part. There would be a deliberate attempt to use local and trusted providers, businesses and community organisations to offer placements to people living in the area. This would enable strong links to be built between the local business community and those taking part in the programme - networks which people facing long term unemployment often lack.

In order to put together the appropriate programme for each individual, the approach would require the employment of a local coordinator, who would need a strong background in advice, jobsearch and building links with businesses.

The programme also needs to work closely with existing and emerging business opportunities to ensure that those taking part are being prepared for real opportunities.

These 'themes' could include:

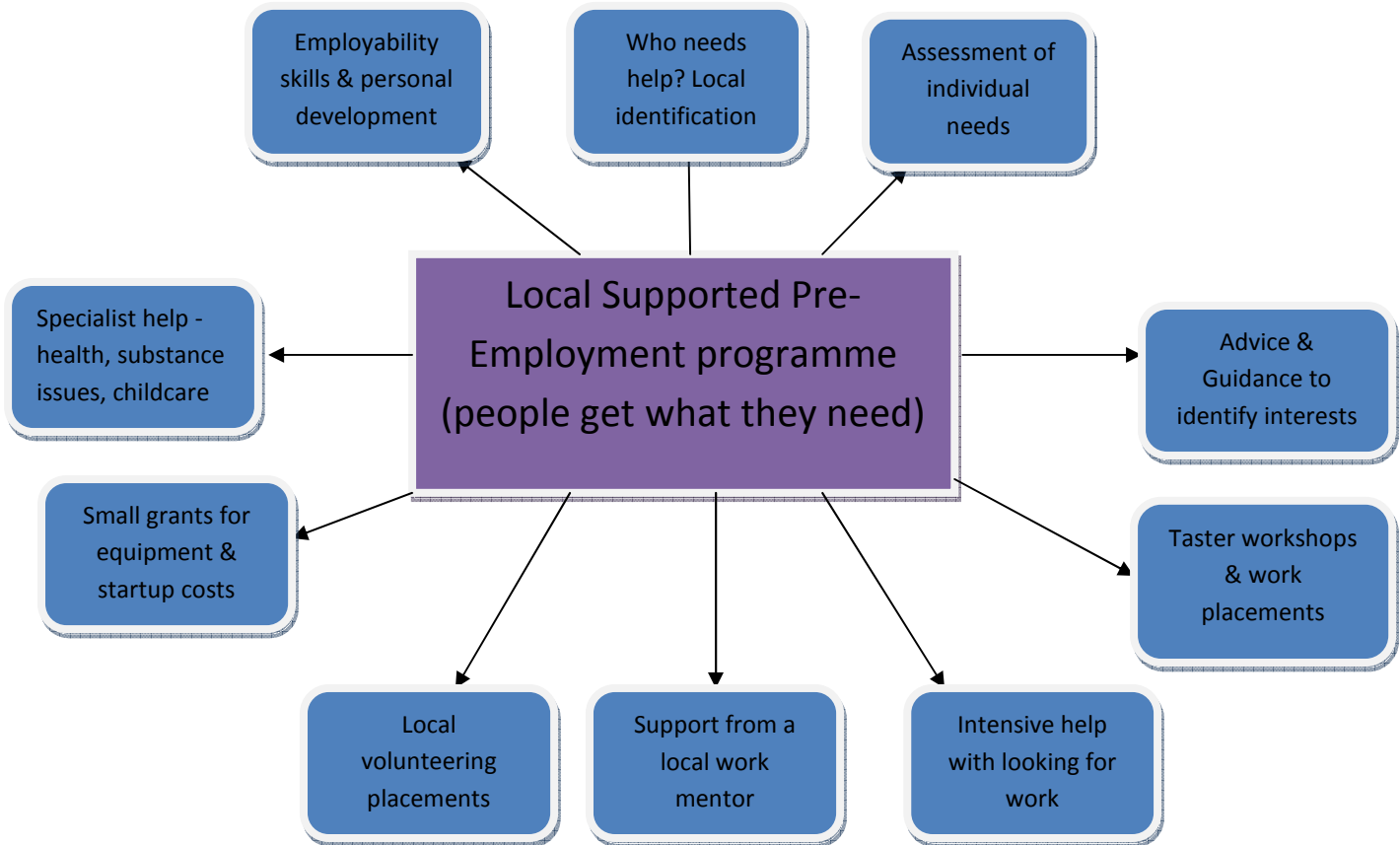
- Retailing, warehousing, distribution and forklift truck skills - to prepare people for the four new supermarkets planned within the area, the new distribution centre planned for the Dearne and other new opportunities emerging through developments at Junction 36 & Shortwood. This would also include other existing large employers like ASOS
- Future Carers skills - to prepare people for the heavily expanding care market, which looks set to continue as the local population ages and lives for longer
- Work with children - to prepare people for the expanding market in early years and childcare work due to increased government funding
- Neighbourhoods & Environment work - to prepare people for potential work opportunities which can be created by the heavy reduction in Council services, possibly through small businesses and/or social enterprises
- Other community based work - for example, handyman/woman or gardening opportunities through the development of small businesses or social enterprises which could also offer real benefits to the wider community

There are a number of ways in which this could be offered and funded to the individual, and these will need careful consideration and in-depth discussions with Department for Work & Pensions/Jobcentre+ to ensure that no one taking part would be in danger of benefit sanction.

The following would need to be considered in more detail:

- Offering the programme to individuals as a temporary job opportunity with training, in which case this could possibly attract the £2270 wage incentive from Jobcentre+ which could be topped up with Area Council funding
- Offering the programme as a volunteering opportunity whilst existing benefits are being paid. Although this would allow more places to be created, we would need to be aware that the 'working for benefits' approach can often be seen as exploitative and thus create unwilling participants.

Although each person taking part would have a different experience depending on their individual needs, the following parts would be needed to design an approach which could meet all needs:



Background papers -

1. Area Plan Priorities and Area Plan Leaflet - Sac.18.10.2013/6