



West Lothian Council

COUNCIL EXECUTIVE

TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR 16-19 YEAR OLDS

REPORT BY HEAD OF AREA SERVICES

A. PURPOSE OF REPORT

To update the Council Executive on the commissioning of additional pre-employment training opportunities for young people.

B. RECOMMENDATION

That Council Executive agree to the commission of additional pre-employment training opportunities for young people as outlined in this paper.

C. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

I Council Values	Developing our economy and working in partnership
II Policy and Legal	None
III Resources - (Financial, Staffing and Property)	Financial: A total of £860,000 over the two year period September 2011 to August 2013 including the previously agreed current Skills Training Programme budget and additional confirmed European Funding.
IV Consultations	MCMC and Community Planning Partnership (CPP) Economic Forum, Skills Development Scotland, Service Managers, Council's Business Support team, Development and Transport Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel.

D. TERMS OF REPORT

1. Background

The More Choices More Chances (MCMC) challenge remains a key priority for the Council and Community Planning partners. It contributes to Outcome 4 in the Single Outcome Agreement (SOA) viz *“Our young people successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens”*, and is included in several other strategic documents across the Council. The SOA also identifies the lack of training capacity in West Lothian as one of our five strategic asks of the Government and is identified as a key inhibitor to the delivery of the MCMC agenda.

The national training programmes managed by SDS (Skills Development Scotland) remain broadly at the same level as last year and the Scottish Further Education Funding Council has reduced further education opportunities for West Lothian young people and likewise across all local authority areas. This proposal assists the training deficit through West Lothian Council directly commissioning additional training opportunities for young people.

West Lothian Council, acting on behalf of the Community Planning Partnership, has been awarded £1,101,600 towards total costs of £2,448,000 from the ESF Objective 5 programme for a Employability and Skills Pipeline (see Appendix 1). This is for the period 1st September 2011 to 31st August 2013. The bid included £860,000 for Stages 2 and 3 interventions as in the table below which will be commissioned by the council's MCMC team :-

Table 1 : Employability and Skills Pipeline Stage 2 and 3 Interventions			
Stage	Intervention	Investment	Opportunities offered
Stage 2	Additional pre-employment support	£280,000	500
Stage 3	School based tasters	£184,000	250
Stage 3	Additional vocational skills programme	£260,000	180
Stage 3	Job specific short programme	£136,000	100
Total		£860,000	1,030

The commissioning exercise will allow for additional interventions to be offered over this cost if more further additional funding becomes available.

2 The Challenge

While improvements in reducing the number of negative destinations has been made, the scale and extent of the MCMC challenge in West Lothian is still considerable as summarised below:

MCMC School Leavers from School Leaver Destination Report 2009/10

- In 2009/2010 West Lothian's positive destination level has increased by 2.2 percentage points on the 2008/09 level. This is twice the overall increase for Scotland of 1.1 percentage points from 85.7% to 86.8%.
- Negative destinations in West Lothian are now at the lowest level they have been since 2000/01
- Particular areas of increase for West Lothian have been in further education (up 1.1%) and training (up 2.5%).
- West Lothian's position against other local authorities has improved by one place from 30th out of 32 local authorities to joint 29th with Glasgow City Council but clearly much remains to be done to further improve this.

MCMC 16-19 Year Olds

- On average there are over 950 16-19 years in West Lothian in need of MCMC, and not in any positive destination.
- The economic downturn has resulted in there being no significant change in this figure over the last three years

3. The need for greater Training and Employment Opportunities

The Scottish Government agenda, 16+ Learning Choices, ensures that every young person who reaches their statutory school leaving date must be provided with a suitable offer of learning. This was to be achieved by December 2010. This requires having sufficient education, training, work or volunteering placement opportunities for young people and it is crucial that the right mix of training opportunities are available. Larger numbers of young people are returning to school to complete S5 and S6 but there remain challenges:

- Under provision in West Lothian of training capacity particularly Get Ready for Work (GRfW) type provision
- Current recession will make it more difficult for MCMC youngsters to compete in the labour market
- Currently 5 unemployed people in West Lothian chasing every JC+ vacancy
- Employers favour more experienced skilled workers rather than young people with no employment track record
- Competition is tough; there were 1651 applications for the 18 Modern Apprenticeships available in the Council this year

The Council is West Lothian's largest single employer and is in a position to provide appropriate opportunities for young people as a placement provider and prospective employer.

4. Current GRfW programme provision

GRfW is the main Scottish Government training programme for young people aged 16-18 who have additional support and development needs before they can progress into mainstream training, learning or job opportunities. It is therefore the type of programme that is most appropriate for the MCMC group once they have left school. From a young person's perspective, GRfW usually consists of a period of off-the-job training and activity followed by an extended placement with an employer. Whilst on the GRfW programme the young person will receive a trainee allowance of £55 per week.

Recent evaluation work on GRfW identified a number of features as good practice:

- Good quality group work providing practical and meaningful project based work
- Employer engagement at the earliest stage
- Mixing young people with adults
- Use of accreditation and awards for participants to develop a culture of achievement
- Linkages to health, sports and related activities to maintain motivation
- Imaginative development of core skills through practical exercises and sports related activity

In West Lothian GRfW is delivered through 4 main providers:

- BLES (Blackburn Local Employment Scheme)
- Forward Training
- Sibbald Training
- ACT (hairdressing)

The SDS provision will offer around 150 “starts” in West Lothian in 2011-12.

West Lothian Council has its own small GRfW contract from SDS in the form of a specialist Life-skills package for the most challenging and least job ready youngsters. This is closely linked to the Youth Inclusion Project (YIP).

5. Other support to the MCMC group

The other main government funded programme for young people is Modern Apprenticeships (MAs). West Lothian Council has a workforce of approximately 8000 and in 2010 took on 17 apprentices. This was down from 20 in 2009 and 26 in 2008. These are all in practical vocational areas including Roads, Horticulture and Construction trades. Around 80% of MAs are employed full time by the Council on completion of their apprenticeship.

There is likely to be Targeted Pathways to Modern Apprenticeships contracts offered in September 2011. Allocation of these contracts are based on the targeted skills areas namely hospitality, tourism, engineering, financial services, energy and renewable, administration and retail. West Lothian Council could provide appropriate placements for each of these targeted areas.

Future Jobs Fund (FJF) placements and other voluntary placements take place within the council, but recruitment to this programme has now ended and all participants will finish by 30th September 2011. The FJF programme run in West Lothian by Access 2 Employment has one of the highest success rates in Scotland with a progression into jobs rate of 65% compared to the national average of 40%.

The Scottish Government is introducing a Scottish Community Jobs Fund similar to FJF but to be delivered through the voluntary sector. Councils appear to have no role in this.

6. Investment by West Lothian Council to create additional opportunities

In 2009 West Lothian Council agreed a three year New Employee Support Initiative (NISI), at a cost of £1M, to support 240 additional Get Ready for Work (GRfW) opportunities available and to also provide grants to employers to encourage them to recruit 45 young people requiring more choices, more chances.

This Skills Training Programme recognised a training deficit locally, and commissioned additional GRfW places. In the first two years (to 31st March 2011) 128 trainees have started the programme, and 17 trainees are currently on placement with a range of council services.

Of the 111 leavers 25 are in employment, 5 are now in modern apprenticeships, 18 are now in further education or training and 3 are doing voluntary work while seeking employment. The progression rate of 46% into positive outcomes is above the national average for GRfW.

The subsidised employment opportunities, now badged as “16–18 Job Grant” was initially promoted through GRfW providers viz Sibbald, BLES and Forward Training, and take up was slow. However this has picked up and over 20 grants have been made since September 2010.

In addition to these there are a number of confidence building and skills development programmes were run including the Prince’s Trust TEAM Programme, Journey to Employment (a partnership between West Lothian Council, West Lothian College and West Lothian Youth Action Project), the Youth Inclusion project (YIP) and RUTS (Rural and Urban Training Scheme) which is a motor cycle based programme in Whitburn.

Co-ordination of all the activities above is required to allow the council to streamline, effectively monitor and increase the demand on each of the services already involved and to ensure that those services not yet involved become so.

7. The Employability and Skills Pipeline

The Pipeline shown in Appendix 1 shows progression by those currently out of the labour market through a number of stages, with specific interventions at each stage, through to being in work. It is recognised that people will enter, and leave, the pipeline at different stages and will not necessarily require all the interventions at each stage.

Young people aged 15-19 are the priority group for the EU funded interventions, and there is a specific on focus young people requiring More choices, More chances. The council’s MCMC team within Area Services will be commissioning support as indicated in Table 1 above.

- The **Additional pre-employment support** will include engagement activities aimed at harder to reach young people, with the aim of both increasing their confidence and motivation and also assisting them to address other barriers to employment linked to their life circumstances.
- The **School based tasters** will provide tasters of the world of work, including input from employers and visits to workplaces.
- The **Additional vocational skills programme** extends the New Employee Support Initiative outlined above.
- The **Job specific short programme** incorporates vocational skills training programme and work experience across a range of key skill sectors.

It is anticipated that the Council will be the primary provider of work placement opportunities.

E. CONCLUSION

The proposals have been developed to make a real difference in increasing the opportunities open to young people on leaving school. The proposed package of activity would demonstrate the Council’s commitment to addressing the MCMC challenge through practical actions and as the area’s largest employer, and the additional investment offers the opportunity to significantly improve the proportion of school leavers achieving a positive destination.

The Council Executive is asked to agree to commissioning additional pre-employment training opportunities for young people as outlined in this paper, and to receive a further paper on additional interventions that could be delivered.

F. BACKGROUND REFERENCES

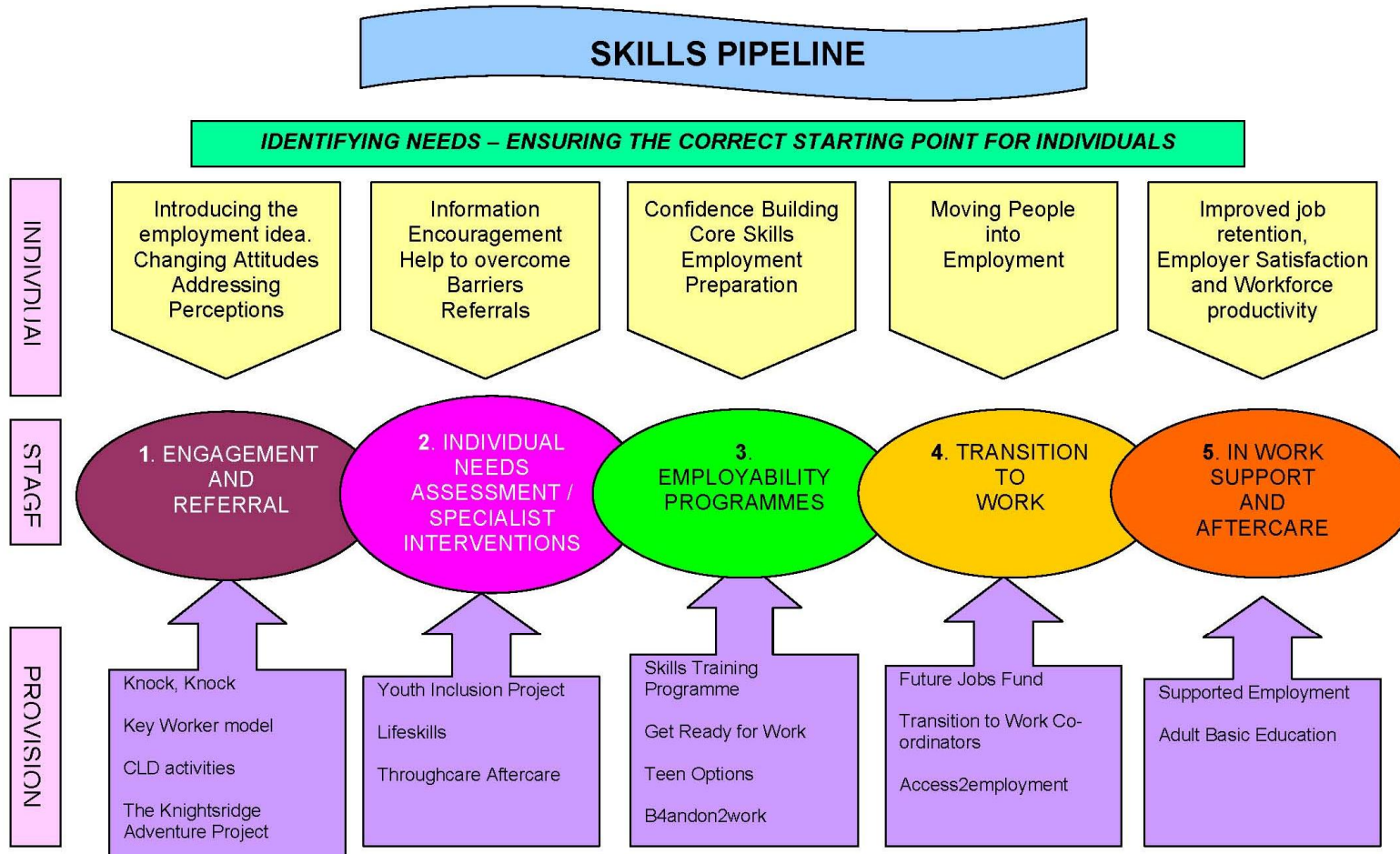
Files in Community Planning and Regeneration

Appendices : Appendix 1 : Skills Pipeline

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Appendix 1 : Skills Pipeline